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## Advertising & Copy Deadline

Ads and submissions must be received by the fifth of the month for the items to appear in the next issue:

**May 5 for the June issue; June 5 for July.**

**Submit all ads, donations, payments, changes of address and subscriptions to:**

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## Front Cover

NM Daniel He (R), 2024 Washington State Champion,  
along with organizer and WCF President Josh Sinanan.  
Photo Credit: Ani Barua.

## Back Cover

Siddharth Bhaskaran at the 2024 Washington State  
Championship, Invitational section.  
Photo credit: Meiling Cheng.

## Submissions

Submissions of games (PGN format is preferable for games), stories, photos, art, and other **original** chess-related content are encouraged! Multiple submissions are acceptable; please indicate if material is non-exclusive. All submissions are subject to editing or revision. Send via U.S. Mail to:

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**1514 S. Longmont Ave.**  
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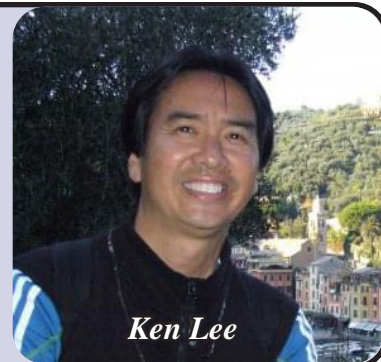
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# Interview With Alexandra Botez

Ken Lee



Ken Lee

**A**lexandra and Andrea Botez are among the most popular chess streamers in the world. Through their Twitch, YouTube and Facebook channels, they reach millions of chess fans around the world.

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Alexandra Botez to discuss chess, choosing your own path, and the future of chess.

**Ken:** When did you start playing chess?

**Alexandra:** I started playing chess when I was six. My dad was the one who taught me how to play.

He had grown up in Romania and his mom taught him how to play. My grandmother also plays chess, so it is a game that has been passed on through the generations in our family.

**Ken:** What is your connection with the Pacific Northwest?

**Alexandra:** We moved to Canada when I was four and then we moved back to Washington when I was 13.

Later, we moved to Portland, Oregon and that's where my family still lives. I spent my teen years playing a lot of chess in the PNW.

I am not taking any interviews right now because I don't have time. I made an exception for *Northwest Chess* because of my strong personal connection with the Pacific Northwest.

*Northwest Chess* is one of the magazines that I saw my dad reading and this is a community I care about.

**Ken:** How did you sustain yourself during those early years when there were a lot of challenges?

**Alexandra:** I actually think when you're a kid you don't feel the pressure. My dad would take me to tournaments,

and I would just try my best.

I didn't really like doing lessons on the computer. We would always find some Eastern European grandmaster and we'd have lessons over World Chess Network and Skype.

My dad would always push me to study and train, but I think since I had such good tournament results, I didn't feel much pressure. That early success also gave me confidence.

It was a lot more challenging when I started playing chess for myself. It starts getting difficult when you don't have anybody pushing you.

When I got into high school, I realized that the top universities take into account all four years when considering your application.

I really wanted to get a full ride scholarship and I saw chess as a means of doing that.

I remember when I was 15, I won the Kasparov Chess Foundation All Girls Nationals for girls 18 and under. I won a full ride scholarship to the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD).

But, by then, I had the realization that I didn't want to spend my entire life trying to get better at a board game.

At the same time, I found that chess teaches you to think through difficult things.

**Ken:** So, the correct question to ask yourself is what are the games you should be playing?

*“What I really respect about chess is that it teaches you how to work hard and how to think deeply. If you have those two things, you can apply them to anything and it's extremely powerful.”*

**Alexandra:** When I had that realization, I decided that I didn't want to go to UTD, and I would much rather get into a school that had the highest ceiling possible.

That's how I set my sights on Stanford which was my dream school.

Everybody applying to Stanford has perfect grades, great test scores, and good extracurriculars.

You really need ways to stand out. Chess was what tipped things in my favor.

When I was 16, I thought I could use social media to grow chess.

I started social media just to try to recruit students that I could teach online so that I could make some money.

Later, I got into Stanford and majored in International Relations.

By my senior year of college, I had 30,000 followers on my chess themed Facebook page, which seems like nothing today.

But back in those days, nobody was really working with chess on social media.

I got some criticism from people during those early days.

But the CEO of Chess.com noticed my Facebook page and he invited me to do commentary on chess.com.

I basically dove headfirst into streaming full time. At the start, it was just Twitch live streaming.

Now I am partnered with Chess.com and other sponsors.

We are going to be moving into higher quality productions, which is something my sister Andrea and I are really passionate about.

We are concentrating on new types of storytelling because when you're a content creator you realize that what works one day is not going to work two months from now. You have to constantly reinvent yourself.

**Ken:** It must be a difficult life lesson to be able to weather the criticism and comments from the trolls on the internet.

**Alexandra:** It's challenging.

It's even more challenging when you're live on Twitch and you're getting constant feedback about yourself.

The only time negative comments really get to me is when they echo the voice in the back of my head.

I've come to realize that the people who are commenting on these things are not the people whose opinion I would trust on anything else in life.

They are commenting on Alexandra — the product — not Alexandra — the human being.

They'll never know, nor do I know, that they have the emotional depths to understand who I really am.

I want to just start working on content that when I look at it, I think wow, this was a good piece of content. I don't care if other people don't like me. I care that I like me.

**Ken:** Do you have a vision about the future direction of chess?

**Alexandra:** I think I can create new and innovative chess content that will make chess more mainstream.

We're trying to combine storytelling with chess in new ways.

Andrea and I are going to be playing two tournaments in March back-to-back.

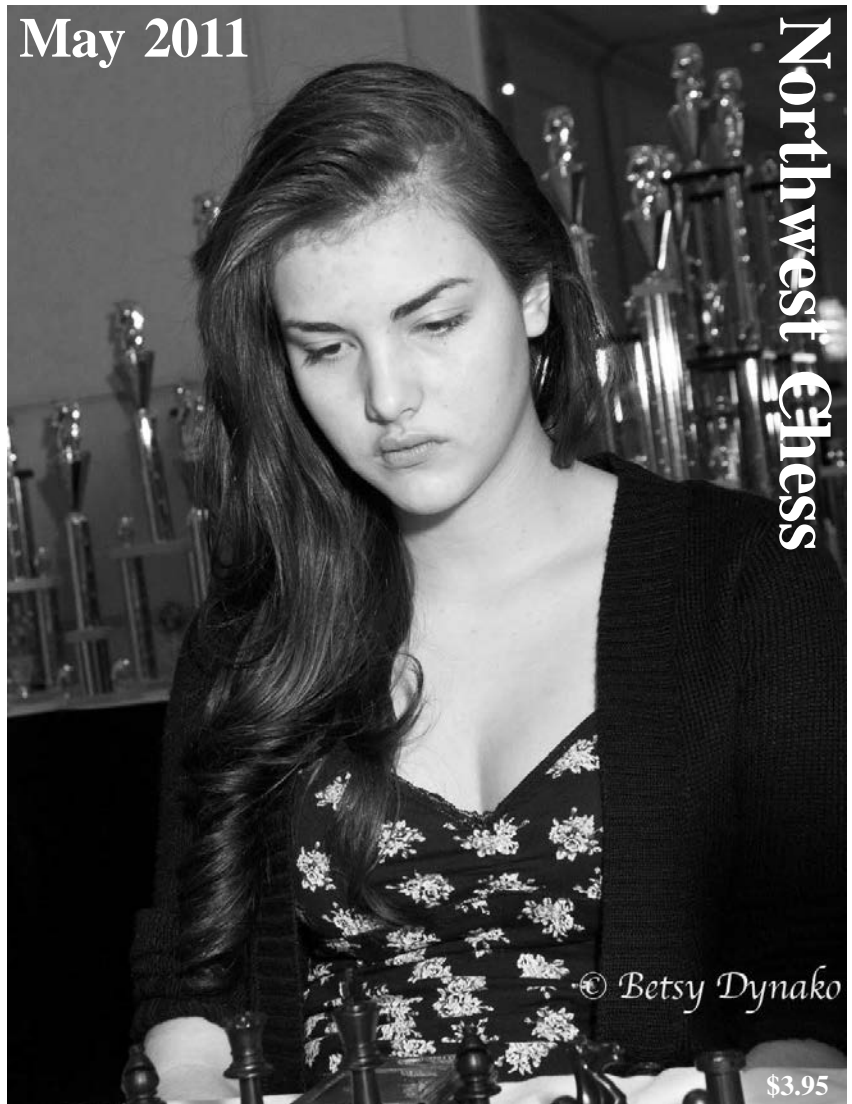
Later, we're going to launch our first new chess variant with a gaming studio.

It is the first chess idea I have seen over the last five years that I think has the potential to be a great game.

I think bringing a great game into the world, which is strategic, cerebral, fun, and social, is a good thing.

It's going to get more people interested in chess in general.

May 2011



V. Alexandra Botez. Photo credit: Betsy Dynako.  
Reprint of the cover of the May 2011 issue of Northwest Chess, Ralph Dubisch, editor.

**Ken:** What's it like working with your younger sister, Andrea?

**Alexandra:** When I was a kid, I always loved producing videos and I would force my little sister to act in them.

While my sister was still in high school, I was doing Twitch full time. I started inviting her to stream and I thought she was really talented and creative.

We like working together, and I'm honestly surprised that we survived four years of living and working together.

We're super close. Andrea and I are best friends so we spend a lot of time

hanging out even outside of work and it's really nice to not have to do this alone.

**Ken:** Do you have some overall bits of advice for the young readers of *Northwest Chess* who are making choices about studying and competing in chess?

**Alexandra:** What I really respect about chess is that it teaches you how to work hard, and it teaches you how to think deeply. If you have those two things, you can apply them to anything and it's extremely powerful.





# WASHINGTON OPEN

Sat-Mon, May 25-27, 2024

Redmond Marriott

7401 164<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Redmond, WA 98052

**\$11,500 Prize Fund**  
(based on 175 paid entries)

## Main Event:

**Format:** A 6-round Swiss event across 3 sections: Open, Premier (U1800), Rising (U1400).

### Time Controls:

- **3-day:** 30/90, SD/30; +30. Late default: 60 minutes.
- **2-day:** G/55; +15 (rds. 1-3), rds. 4-6 same as for 3-day.

### Schedule:

- **3-day option:** Sat @ 10 AM, 5:30 PM; Sun @ 10 AM, 6 PM; Mon @ 10 AM, 4 PM.
- **2-day option:** Sun @ 9 AM, 11:45 AM, 2:45 PM, then join 3-day schedule @ 6 PM (from round 4 onward).
- WCF Annual Meeting & Elections: Mon @ 3 PM.

**Note:** We encourage you to play in the Main Event *and* take part in side events too (see next page). The schedule permits doing this with minimum or no half-point byes!

**Entry Fee:** \$130 by Sun, 04/28; \$140 by Sun, 05/12; and \$150 after 05/12 or on-site. Less \$50 for Seniors (age 50+). Playing up one section is allowed (for \$80 extra) if the player's ratings (*both* NWSRS and USCF) are within 200 points of the section's lower limit (i.e., min 1600 for Open, min 1200 for Premier). Free entry for GMs, IMs, WGMs, WIMs, and USCF 2400+. Re-entry for ½ of original entry fee. Canadians may pay CAD\$ at par.

**Rating:** Dual rated (USCF & NWSRS), plus Open section is FIDE rated (except G/55 games). Highest of May 2024 USCF, May 2024 FIDE, and current NWSRS ratings used to determine sections, pairings, and prizes – unless USCF and NWSRS ratings differ by >200 pts, in which case their avg is used. Foreign ratings used for players w/o USCF rating.

## Registration, Information & Payment:

- **Before event:** Online (by Thu, 05/23 @ 5 PM) at [NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/](http://NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/) (pay by credit / debit / PayPal / SettleKing) or make checks payable to Washington Chess Federation. Mail to: Josh Sinanan, 4174 148th Ave NE, Building I, Suite M, Redmond, WA 98052. Info: [washingtonchessfederation@gmail.com](mailto:washingtonchessfederation@gmail.com), 206-769-3757
- **On-site:** Sat, 05/25 @ 8-9 AM for 3-day schedule, or 4:30-5 PM if entering with 1 half-point bye. Sun, 05/26 @ 8-8:30 AM for 2-day schedule, or 9-9:30 AM if entering 3-day schedule with 2 half-point byes. Late registrations may receive a half-point bye for round 1. 2 half-point byes available; request before the end of round 2.

## Hotel Info:

Redmond Marriott, \$125-\$135/night + tax. One King or two Queens or Doubles, single or double occupancy. Call (800) 228-9290 to request the WA Chess Federation block, or use the [online reservation](#). Group codes: WCFWCFQ or WCFWCFR. Cut-off date for discounts: Fri, May 03, 2024.

## Prizes:

- **Open:** \$1000, \$800, \$600, \$500, \$400, \$300; U2100: \$225, \$175; U1900: \$225, \$175
- **Premier (U1800):** \$500, \$400, \$350, \$300, \$250; U1650: \$175, \$150; U1500: \$175, \$150
- **Rising (U1400):** \$400, \$350, \$300, \$250, \$200; U1200: \$175, \$150; U1000: \$175, \$150; Unr.: \$175, \$150

**Championship Seeds:** Highest finishing Washington resident in the Open and Premier section is seeded into the 2024 Washington State Championship, in the Championship and Challengers sections, respectively. Ties for a seed will be resolved by post-event playoff games.

**Mixed Doubles Prizes:** Best male-female 2-player team's combined score: 1<sup>st</sup> \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$100. Average team rating must be under 2000; may play in different sections. Register (no extra fee) before round 3. Players may win a Mixed Doubles prize in addition to other prizes.

## Special Prizes (per section):

- **Best Female Player\*:** \$50. Requires min 3 eligible players.
  - **Best Senior Player\* (age 50+):** \$50. Requires min 3 eligible players.
  - **Highest (USCF) Rating Gain\*:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$50, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$25. Requires an established (non-provisional) rating. May not be combined with Biggest Upset Win.
  - **Biggest Upset Win (per round):** \$25. Max 2 per player.
  - **Fair-Play, Kindness, Spreading Joy:** \$25. Please share your nominations.
  - **Best Dressed (per day):** \$25. May not win repeatedly.
  - **Best Annotated Game:** 1<sup>st</sup> \$75, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$50, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$25. Submit one annotated game that you consider to be interesting or well-played. A panel of judges will select winners.
- Note:** \* = May not be combined with higher prizes.

## Miscellaneous / Procedures:

Current US Chess and WCF / OCF / ICA memberships required; other states accepted. Memberships may be paid at the time of registration. Wheelchair accessible. Please bring a digital clock, if available. Pairings and standings will be posted before each round in the hallway near the play area.

# WASHINGTON OPEN, May 25-27 (cont.)

## Fun Side Events!

(many run between rounds of the Main Event)

### Washington Open Abdusattorov Scholastic

**Sat, 05/25 @ 9 AM – 4 PM (during round 1)**

**Format:** Dual sections – Open and Reserve:

- **Open sections:** A 4-round G/40; +5 Swiss in two sections: **K-3 Open** and **4-12 Open**. For intermediate to advanced players. Dual Northwest and US Chess rated. US Chess membership required. Clocks and notation required. Rounds: 9:15 AM, 10:45 AM, lunch, 12:45 PM, 2:15 PM. Awards presentation: ~4 PM.
- **Reserve sections:** A 5-round G/30 Swiss in two sections: **K-3 U800** and **4-8 U900**. For novice to low intermediate players. Northwest rated only. US Chess membership not required. No clocks used from the start, but a G/10; +5 clock will be placed into unfinished games after 35 minutes. Rounds: 9:15 AM, 10:30 AM, lunch, 12 PM, 1:15 PM, 2:30 PM. Awards presentation: ~4 PM.

**Eligibility:** Open to all students registered in grades K-12. Out-of-state players welcome!

**Entry fee:** \$45 if registered by Sat, 05/18, or \$55 after. Room for 132 players – please register early.

**Awards:**

- Overall prizes (per section) in Amazon e-Gift Cards: 1<sup>st</sup> \$65, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$60, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$55, 4<sup>th</sup> \$50, 5<sup>th</sup> \$45.
- Special prizes (per section): Medals for first-timers and biggest upset win.
- Top performing player (by TPR) in K-3 Open and 4-12 Open sections wins free entry into the 2-day option of the 2024 Washington Open (Main Event) (see previous page).

**Rating:** Higher of May 2024 US Chess or current NWSRS ratings used to determine sections and pairings.

**Registration:** 100% pre-registered ([NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/](http://NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/) - pay by credit / debit / PayPal / SettleKing); no on-site entries or payments. Registration & payment deadline: Wed, 05/22 @ 5 PM. Unpaid players will be withdrawn from the event.

### Washington Open Adult Novice Swiss

**Sat, 05/25 @ 11 AM – 4 PM (during round 1)**

**Format:** A 4-Round Swiss in one section, 1 half-point bye available.

**Eligibility:** U1200 or unrated adults (age: 18+). No memberships required. Unrated. TC: G/30; +5. EF: \$25. Registration: 10:30-10:50 AM. Rounds at 11 AM, 12:15 PM, 1:30 PM, and 2:45 PM. Prize fund: \$400/b20. 1<sup>st</sup> \$150, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$60, 1<sup>st</sup> U1000 / U700 / Unrated \$30.

### Washington Open Fischer Chess960 Rapid

**Sat, 05/25 @ 2:15 PM – 4:30 PM (between rounds 1 & 2)**

**Format:** A 4-Round Swiss in one section, 1 half-point bye available. Unrated. TC: G/10; +3. EF: \$20. Registration: 1:30-2 PM. Rounds at 2:15 PM, 2:50, 3:25, and 4:00 PM. No memberships required. Higher of May 2024 US Chess and current NWSRS ratings used to determine pairings and prizes. A new (randomized) opening position for each round. Players will have 2 minutes before clocks start to examine the opening position. Prize fund: \$300/b20. 1<sup>st</sup> \$80, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$60, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$40, 1<sup>st</sup> U2000 / U1700 / U1400 / Unrated \$30.

### Washington Open Robson Puzzle Solving

**Sat, 05/25 @ 4:30 PM – 5:15 PM (between rounds 1 & 2)**

**Format:** Solve 15 chess puzzles in 45 minutes. Write solutions on paper. Evaluation based on accuracy and completeness. EF: \$15. Registration: 3:30-4:15 PM. No memberships required. Prize fund: \$150/b20. 1<sup>st</sup> \$50, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$35, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$20, 1<sup>st</sup> U1700 / U1400 / Unrated \$15.

### Washington Open Kosteniuk Chess Workshop for Girls & Women

**Sat, 05/25 @ 6 PM – 8 PM (during round 2)**

**Format:** Workshop led by WFM Chouchan Airapetian ([Chornyaa@msn.com](mailto:Chornyaa@msn.com), 206-914-4252), experienced chess coach, organizer, and promoter, former US Women's Championship contender, WCF Girls' and Women's Chess Director. Registration: 5:45-6 PM. Entry fee: Free! Schedule: 6-7 PM: "How to develop & cultivate girls' and women's chess." 7-8 PM: Q&A, complimentary pizza & refreshments, and ladies' bughouse.

### Washington Open 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Carol Kleist Memorial Adult Swiss

**Sun-Mon, 05/26-27 @ 11 AM and 4:30 PM (during rounds 3-6)**

Sponsored by *Seattle Chess Club* with generous support from Henry Yan. **Format:** A 4-round Swiss in two sections: Botvinnik (Open) and Korchnoi (U1500); may be merged based on entries. 1 half-point bye available. US Chess rated only. TC: G/120; +30. EF: \$50 online (by Sat, 05/25 @ 5 PM) or \$60 on-site; \$10 discount for SCC members. EF waived for unrated players who purchase memberships. Registration: Sun, 05/26 @ 10-10:30 AM (unless starting with a half-point bye). US Chess and WCF/OCF/ICA memberships required. May 2024 US Chess rating used for sections, pairings, & prizes. Gtd. prize fund: \$1,000. Botvinnik: 1<sup>st</sup> \$240, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$120, 1<sup>st</sup> U1650 \$80; Korchnoi: 1<sup>st</sup> \$120, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$80, 1<sup>st</sup> U1300 \$60, 1<sup>st</sup> Unrated \$50.

### Washington Open Carlsen Rapid

**Sun, 05/26 @ 2 PM – 5 PM (between rounds 3 & 4)**

**Format:** A 4-Round Swiss in two sections: Kasparov (Open) and Anand (U1600); may be merged if too small. 1 half-point bye available. US Chess Quick rated. TC: G/15; +5. EF: \$35 online (by Sat, 05/25 @ 5 PM) or \$40 on-site. Players rated 1400+ may play up into Kasparov section for a \$10 fee. Current US Chess and WCF/OCF/ICA memberships required. Registration: 1-1:45 PM. Rounds: 2 PM, 2:45, 3:30, 4:15 PM. Higher of May 2024 US Chess Quick and current NWSRS ratings used to determine section, pairings, and prizes. Prize fund: \$700/b25. Kasparov: 1<sup>st</sup> \$100, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$80, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$60, 1<sup>st</sup> U2000 / U1700 \$40, Biggest Upset Win: \$25; Anand: 1<sup>st</sup> \$90, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$70, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$50, 1<sup>st</sup> U1400 / U1100 / Unrated \$40, Biggest Upset Win: \$25.

### Washington Open Firouzja Bullet

**Sun, 05/26 @ 5 PM – 6 PM (between rounds 3 & 4)**

**Format:** A 6-Round Swiss in one section. 2 half-point byes available. Unrated. TC: G/2; +1. EF: \$10. No memberships required. Registration: 4:30-4:55 PM. Rounds: 5 PM, 5:10, 5:20, 5:30, 5:40, 5:50 PM. Higher of May 2024 US Chess Blitz and current NWSRS ratings used to determine pairings and prizes. Prize fund: \$200/b20. 1<sup>st</sup> \$50, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$40, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$30, 1<sup>st</sup> U2000 / U1600 / U1200 / Unrated \$20.

### Washington Open Ignacio Perez Memorial Blitz

**Mon, 05/27 @ 8 PM – 10:15 PM (after round 6)**

**Format:** A 9-Round Swiss in two sections: Nakamura (Open) and Tal (U1600); may be merged if too small. 3 half-point byes available. US Chess Blitz rated. TC: G/3; +3. EF: \$30 online (by Sun, 05/26 @ 5 PM) or \$35 on-site. Players rated 1400+ may play up into the Nakamura section for a \$10 fee. Current US Chess membership and WCF/OCF/ICA membership required. Registration: 7-7:45 PM. Rounds: 8 PM, 8:15, 8:30, 8:45, 9, 9:15, 9:30, 9:45, and 10 PM. Higher of May 2024 US Chess Blitz and current NWSRS ratings used to determine section, pairings, and prizes. Prize fund: \$600/b25. Nakamura: 1<sup>st</sup> \$100, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$80, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$60, 1<sup>st</sup> U2000 / U1700 \$40; Tal: 1<sup>st</sup> \$80, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$60, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$40, 1<sup>st</sup> U1400 / U1100 \$35, 1<sup>st</sup> Unrated \$30.

# Washington State Championship

Josh Sinanan

The 2024 Washington State Championship took place at Microsoft Building 99 in Redmond on February 10-11 and 17-19. The annual multi-section round robin, the last state championship of its kind in the United States, continued to expand by popular demand and added a new sixth section called the “Prodigies.”

This was in addition to the other five ten-player round robin sections: Championship, Premier, Invitational, Challengers, and Rising Stars. The fields of each section were determined by seeding and rating, with the highest rating among the January US Chess regular, January 31st Northwest, and January FIDE rating considered when determining section. All games were tri-rated in the Northwest, US Chess, and FIDE rating systems.

Senior tournament director and national arbiter Fred Kleist directed the tournament with assistance from chief floor judge and WCF Community Outreach Liaison Suresh Balaji and WCF Member-at-Large Ani Barua, who provided excellent video coverage of key games throughout the weekend. The event was hosted by the Washington Chess Federation and organized by WCF President Josh Sinanan.

Chess mom and WCF photographer extraordinaire Meiling Cheng was present through both weekends carefully documenting the proceedings.

## Championship

Daniel He, a 25-year-old data scientist from Redmond, was crowned the 2024 Washington State Champion, scoring an impressive 6.5 points from nine games.

Daniel had a rough start to the event, suffering a first-round loss against defending State Champion Brandon Jiang and drawing against Stephen Willy in round two. However, Daniel picked up

the pace on day two with back-to-back wins against Daniel Shubin and Viktor Pupols.

He was able to keep the momentum going on the second weekend, scoring key victories against Rozenfeld, Sang, and Vemparala. Heading into the final round, four players were in contention for the title: He, Srivastava, Vijayakumar, and Willy. Of the four contenders, Daniel was the only one who managed to win, with a clutch final round victory against the dangerous Nikash Vemparala. Congratulations Daniel!

Two chess kings, Vikram Srivastava from Seattle, and Stephen Willy from Sammamish shared second/third place honors with six points apiece. A triumvirate of chess men shared the fourth/fifth place prize a half-point back: Tian Sang of Redmond, Daniel Shubin of Redmond, and Advait Vijayakumar of Bothell.

## Premier

This year’s Premier section was an all-star tournament of sorts, with seven out of ten players qualifying for the Premier by seeding instead of by rating. With such a broad range of ratings from Class B to Master, matchups were more lopsided than usual, which resulted in mostly decisive games.

After the first weekend of play, it appeared that the younger ringer Vihaan Jammalamadaka was running away with the tournament, as he stood at a perfect 4.0/4. However, at the start of the second weekend, Jammalamadaka’s streak ended abruptly thanks to the efforts of Washington State High School Champion Carson Roesch in the fifth round.

This opened the door for rating favorites Nicholas Whale, David Zhou, and Leonid Gavrysh to catch up, with Whale ultimately prevailing. For his efforts, Whale took home the first place prize with seven wins and two losses and

is seeded into next year’s Championship section. Gavrysh and Zhou tied for second/third place a half-point back with 6.5 points apiece. Youngster Vihaan Jammalamadaka finished in fourth place with six points, and no doubt will be a force to be reckoned with in the years to come.

David Levine, the Premier’s lone master, finished on a “plus two” score of 5.5 points, which was good enough for fifth place.

## Invitational

The Invitational section featured an interesting mix of youth and experience, with young guns Siddharth Bhaskaran, Vijay Nallappa, Albert Eksarevskiy and Ted Wang taking on the wily adult veterans, including former US Women’s Championship regular WFM Chouhanik Airapetian.

Unfortunately, Ryan Ackerman, a popular chess coach, was forced to withdraw from the Invitational section after losing track of time while working on a chess project and arriving over an hour late for his fifth-round game. The rules of round robin tournaments are quite strict, and players are not allowed to miss any games or take byes in such a prestigious event.

Due to the withdrawal of Ryan Ackerman after the fifth round, the Invitational section was reduced to eight rounds instead of nine for all players except those who had already played Ackerman.

When the dust had settled, the youngest player and rating favorite, Ted Wang, reigned supreme, with an impressive 5.5 points from eight games.

Tying for second-fourth a half-point back were Pratik Thorwe, Bental Tagor, and Siddharth Bhaskaran. Seattle-based expert Oscar Sprumont finished in fifth place with 4.5 points to round out the prize winners.



# Challengers

The Challengers section featured perhaps the most balanced lineup of players of the six sections, with each player scoring at least 2.5 points and all players within 200 rating points of one another.

Seattle-based chess coach and WCF Tournament Coordinator Valentin Razmov finished in first place with 6.5 points, winning six games along the way and allowing just a single draw against second place finisher Odbayar Yondon. Despite finishing undefeated with three wins, Yondon was unable to keep pace with risky Razmov, whose decisive approach in each game was crowned with success.

A pair of chess kings shared third/fourth place honors with 5.5 points apiece: Amana Demberel from Seattle and David Merrikin from Port Angeles. Duvall wonderkid Dann Merriman and Bellevue chess queen Nola Fung split the fifth place prize with an even 4.5 score, which was par for the course.

# Rising Stars

The rising stars section, now in its second year of existence, attracted an abundance of young talent, with veteran starfighters Boas Lee and Saiya Karamali enlisted to supervise the youthful supernovas!

Fall City chess star Leonardo Wang broke the sound barrier with an impressive 6.5 points from nine games, dropping only a single game to runner-up Christos Boulis along the way. Boulis, a last-minute addition to the tournament coming off the alternates list, was pleased with his decision to play, finishing in second place a half-point back. Three interstellar chess explorers—Rafael Palathingal, Rishi Ramaswamy, and Gabriel Razmov—shared third-fifth place honors and earned their chess pilots’ licenses despite still being too young to drive.

The luckless chess lieutenant Boas Lee managed only two draws as his ship’s navigation malfunctioned and led him into a black hole!

# Prodigies

The brand-new Prodigies section spoke for itself and attracted ten precocious youngsters, some of whom wish to one day become grandmasters!

Three up-and-coming Eastside chess super talents—Yuchen Zhou from Bellevue, Deeksha Shankaranand from Redmond, and Andy Chen from Bellevue—shared the tournament victory with 6.5 points apiece.

Chess queen Kate Wong, a fifth grader at Lakeside Middle School in Seattle, was awarded the fourth place prize a half-point back. Redmond whiz kid Kanav Shah finished in fifth place with a solid “plus one” score. Congratulations to the winners!

Several of the players have graciously submitted chess bios and annotated games from the tournament for the *Northwest Chess* readers to enjoy. Photos without captions were supplied by the players.



## Daniel He

Daniel was born and raised in the Greater Seattle area, having mostly played at the Seattle Chess Club as he climbed the ranks. He achieved the National Master title in 2013 at the age of 14. He attributes his dynamic play style to playing lots of blitz online and solving tactical puzzles. He attended Redmond High School and he along with his twin brother Samuel founded the school’s chess club and formed a team.



Photo: Meiling Cheng.

Through weekly meetings to train together, he led Redmond to win their first ever Washington High School Team Championship in his senior year. Daniel took a break from competitive chess when he attended the University of Rochester to study data science and economics. Since graduating in 2021, he has picked up chess again while working as a data engineer in life sciences. His other interests include

weightlifting, playing board games, and listening to various podcasts.

**Nikash Vemparala (2220) – Daniel He (2318) [B30]**  
WA State Championship (Championship)  
Redmond (R9), February 19, 2024  
[Daniel He]

I was in a four-way tie for first before this final round game, which meant this was a must-win game to ensure at least shared first.

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6**

A sideline of the Rossolimo behind the main moves 3...g6 and 3...e6. My plan for the opening is to get out of mainline theory early and keep pieces on the board for a complicated battle!

**4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.d3 Qc7 6.e5**

6.0-0 e5 The solid type of position I was expecting and a long game ahead.

**6...Nd5 7.h3 h6**

With intention of giving my light-squared bishop a retreat square on h7, but also the subtle idea of meeting 8.0-0 with ...g5!?

now that White has created a hook pawn on h3.

**8.Nbd2**

8.0-0 g5! Engines will still evaluate this position as equal, but practically White has all of the difficult decisions to make to avoid getting busted on the kingside.

**8...Bf5 9.Ne4 0-0-0**

A very imbalanced position. White has the better structure temporarily while Black has the bishop pair. The game revolves around Black’s ability to open up the light squares with ...c4. This would solve the doubled c-pawn issue and open up the central light squares while White is missing his light-squared bishop.

**10.Ng3**

10.Nxc5 Of course the c5 pawn is poison 10...Qa5+

**10...Bh7 11.0-0?!**

White forgets about ...c4, which blasts open the light squares. 11.b3 prevents my ...c4 idea but looks quite passive 11...g5 12.Bb2 Rg8. It’s hard to say at which side of the board White’s king is safest.

**11...c4 12.a3**

12.d4 would solidify White’s position if not for my next move: 12...Nb4! My light

# Andy Chen



Andy started learning chess during the pandemic. He liked to watch chess kid videos and got excited playing chess. He is an active player and has attended several state tournaments. He currently lives in Bellevue and goes to Somerset Elementary School.

**Kate Wong (1277) –**

**Andy Chen (1419) [B52]**

WA State Championship (Prodigies)  
Redmond, WA (R4), February 11, 2024  
[Ralph Dubisch]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Bxd7+  
Qxd7 5.0-0 Nf6 6.Re1 Nc6 7.c3



Position after 7.c3

7...g6

The sort of “normal” way to play this position is 7...e6 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 d5 10.e5 Ne4 with rough equality. Development might continue 11.Nbd2 Nxd2 12.Bxd2 Be7 13.Rc1 0-0.

## 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 Bg7

The reason 7...e6 is preferred over ...g6 is seen in the line 9...d5 10.e5 Ne4±, where Black’s bishop has a more limited role on g7, biting on the white central pawn chain.

10.Nc3

White can also consider the space-grab 10.d5±, here or on one of the next few moves, with a small edge: 10...Ne5 11.Nxe5 dxe5 12.Nc3.

10...0-0 11.Bg5 Rfd8 12.Qd2 Rac8 13.Bh6 b6?!

Weakening the c6–square, which has the potential to become an outpost for White. 13...e5 instead requests some central clarification, and after 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 Black’s disadvantage is manageable.

14.Qg5

It isn’t clear what this is intended to accomplish. 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 15.d5 Ne5 and now instead of capturing on e5 as in previous lines involving the d5 advance, 16.Nd4! eyes that c6–outpost square.

14...Qg4 15.Qxg4

15.Qe3±

15...Nxc3 16.Bxg7 Kxg7 17.a3

Creating minor weaknesses. 17.Rad1 completes centralization with equality.

17...Na5 18.h3 Nf6 19.Rad1?

It suddenly becomes difficult to defend tactics involving the b2–pawn and under-defended knight on c3. 19.Rac1 was safer, adding protection to the knight on the open file.

19...Nc4! 20.Rb1 Nxb2

20...Nxa3! is more forcing, disallowing knight moves in reply by hitting the white rook.

21.Nb5!



Position after 21.Nb5

21...Nc4?!

Introducing various desperado-style tactics that muddy the position. 21...Rc2! 22.Nxa7?! Ra8 23.Nb5 Ra5±

22.Nxa7 Ra8 23.Nb5

23.Nc6 Rdc8 24.Nxe7 Rc7 25.e5!?!∞

23...d5 24.exd5

24.Nc7!?! Rxa3 25.Nxd5 Nxd5 26.exd5 Rxf3! 27.gxf3 Nd2 28.Kg2 Nxb1 29.Rxb1 with a position deserving an endgame study all its own. Evaluation? Certainly, no winning chances for White, but are there any for Black? No idea. Could be fun!

24...Nxd5 25.Rb3 Ra5 26.Rc1 Rc8 27.Rc2 Kf6?!

27...Rc6± prevents 28.Ne5.

28.Ne5 Ra4?! 29.Nc3

29.Rf3+! shifts the initiative to White! Since 29...Ke6?? 30.Re2 is winning for White, Black must retreat: 29...Kg7 (29...Kg5 30.Nxf7+±) 30.Rxf7+ Kg8 31.Rf3±

29...Nxc3 30.Rbxc3 b5 31.Nd7+

White plays for a repetition. 31.Rf3+ Ke6 32.Re2 Kd5 is probably heading toward a complicated draw.

31...Kg7 32.Ne5 f6! 33.Nd3?!

33.Nxc4 Rxc4 (33...Raxc4 34.Rxc4 Rxc4?? (34...bxc4: 35.Kf1 Kf7 36.Ke1! Ke6 37.Re2+! Kd6 38.Kd2 Ra8 39.Kc3.) 35.Rxc4 bxc4 36.Kf1 and White’s outside passed pawn is decisive.) 34.d5 f5 35.Rxc4 bxc4 36.Rc3 f4±

33...Rca8 34.Nb2 Nxa3 35.Re2 R4a7 36.Rb3?!

36.Rc5 Rb7 37.d5 leads to a tough defense, when Black certainly has some chances to convert the extra pawn.

36...Nb1?!

36...Rc8± puts Black’s rooks on both open files. Activity matters.

37.Nd1 Na3 38.Nc3

Now it is hard to hang onto the extra pawn, and even if Black manages to pick up the white d-pawn, four versus three on the kingside is a technically drawn single rook ending.

38...Nc4 39.Rxb5 Rd8 40.d5 Ra1+ 41.Kh2 Rd7 42.Re6 Rc1 43.Na4 Rc2 44.Rc5 Na3 45.Rxc2 Nxc2 46.Nb6 Rb7 47.Nc4 Kf7 48.Re2 Nd4 49.Rd2 Nb3 50.Re2 Nd4 51.Rd2 Nf5 52.d6 Rd7 53.dxe7 Rxd2 54.Nxd2 Kxe7 55.g4

Nd4 56.Kg2 Ke6 57.f4 Kd5 58.Kf2 Nc2 59.Kf3 Kd4 60.Nb3+ Kc4 61.Nc1 Kc3 62.h4 f5 63.gxf5 gxf5 64.Ne2+ Kd2 65.Ng3 Nd4+ 66.Kf2 Kd3 67.Nh5 Ke4 68.Nf6+ Kxf4 69.Nxh7 Kg4 70.Nf6+ Kxh4 71.Nd5 Kg4 72.Ne3+

A nicely-played tough battle.

Congratulations to the players.

1/2-1/2

# Additional Chess Bios

## David Levine

I started playing chess seriously in 1972 after watching the Fisher vs. Spassky match on TV. I was strongly influenced by Aron Nimzowitsch's book *My System* and took up many of the (sometimes dubious) hypermodern openings he championed. As I've gotten older, I've updated my opening repertoire to more classical openings. I mostly play blitz chess nowadays and come out once or twice a year to play in a classical tournament.

## Vihaan Pai



My name is Vihaan Pai. I am nine years old. I started playing chess at home when I was seven years old and have developed a great interest in it. Having mostly played scholastic games during these two years, I am starting to transition to the longer format of the

game. Following are some of my proud achievements so far:

- first place in fourth grade U1100 section—US National K-12 Championship 2023 at Orlando, Florida.
- third place in 4-6 Open section—SPFNO 2023.
- Joint second place in U1100 section—2023 Oregon Open.
- four-point finish in Washington State Elementary Championship 2023.
- Winner of second-third U800 section—Washington Junior Open and Reserve 2022.

## Krishang Gupta



Hi, I am Krishang Gupta and I am an avid chess player. I am a sixth grader in Everett School District. I am about 1500 NWSRS rated, but I am always learning and improving. If I am not playing chess, I am doing math or reading.

In the Washington State Championship, I was playing in the Prodigies section. My best game was against Pranav Kokati, when I sacrificed a knight with the black pieces while playing a King's Indian Defense. We reached the following position on move 19.



Here, my opponent had just played 19. Rd6, when I played a brilliant knight sacrifice 19...Nxc5! If White plays 20.Qxc5, then we play 20...Bf8 21.Rfd1 with all efforts to save the rook but we can play 21...Rd8. If my opponent takes my rook on d8, then I just take his queen on c5, otherwise he just loses a rook. This turned out to be a very good game for me.

## Albert Eksarevskiy

Albert is currently a freshman at Lakeside High School who absolutely loves the game of chess, along with all of the lessons it has to teach. He enjoys being a regular tournament player at many Washington events throughout the year and appreciates all of the amazing people he has met through the game. He hopes to continue improving in the near future and is excited to play as much as he can throughout high school!



# Washington Girls Championship



MAY 18-19, 2024

ORLOV CHESS ACADEMY - SEATTLE  
7212 WOODLAWN AVE NE, SEATTLE, WA 98115

*Highest finishing Washington resident in the Championship section receives the title of Washington State Girls Champion and a \$750 travel stipend from the WCF to attend the 2024 [Haring National Girls Tournament of Champions](#), held concurrently with the US Open in early August.*

**Format:** A 5-round Swiss in two sections: Championship and Challengers. Maximum of 30 players total & maximum of 20 players in a section - please register early to secure your spot. Great training for upcoming National events!

- **Championship:** A 2-day, 5-round G/90; +10 Swiss tournament. Open to all girls desiring to play for the title of WA State Girls Champion. Dual US Chess and NWSRS rated. US Chess membership required. Rounds: Sat. 9am, 1:30pm, 6pm. Sun. 10am, 2:30pm. A tie for first place in the Championship section will be resolved later in the year by two G/90 playoff games.
- **Challengers U1400:** A 1-day, 5-round, G/25; +5 Swiss tournament. NWSRS rated, US Chess Unrated. US Chess membership not required. Rounds: Sat. 9am, 10:15am, 11:30am, Lunch Time, 1:30pm, 2:45pm.

**Eligibility:** Open to all girls in grades K-12 as of the 2023-24 school year. Out-of-state players welcome! Players must be under the age of 19 as of Sept 1, 2024.

**Rating:** Highest of current NWSRS, or US Chess May supplement rating will be used to determine section, pairings, and prizes.

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

**Entry Fees:** Championship: \$50 by May 11, \$60 after. Challengers: \$25 by May 11, \$30 after. Free entry for WGMs, WIMs, WFM, or US Chess 2000+.

**Registration:** Online registration available at [nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration](https://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration) Pay by Credit/Debit/PayPal/SettleKing. **Registration + payment deadline is Wednesday, May 15 by 5pm.** No registrations or payments will be accepted after the deadline. Unpaid players will be removed from the roster, and spots will be offered to players on the waitlist.

**Prizes:** Amazon Gift Cards prizes awarded in each section (based on 30 paid entries).

**Championship:** 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>: \$100, \$80, \$60, 4<sup>th</sup> - Chess book.

**Challengers:** 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>: \$50, \$40, \$30, 4<sup>th</sup> - Chess book.

**Special Prizes** (per section): Best Upset Win - Medal, Best Dressed - \$10 gift card, Kindness + Spreading Joy - \$10 gift card.

**Questions?** Contact Josh Sinanan, WCF President, [washingtonchessfederation@gmail.com](mailto:washingtonchessfederation@gmail.com)



# SEATTLE SUMMER KICKOFF

SATURDAY, JUNE 15, 2024

LAKESIDE UPPER SCHOOL: 14050 1ST AVE NE, SEATTLE, WA 98125

CO-HOSTED BY WCF + CHESS MATES FOUNDATION

## *FORMAT:*

A 5-Round G/25;  
+5 Swiss  
tournament in  
four sections:

**K-3 U800**

**K-3 Open**

**4-12 U1000**

**4-12 Open**

## *SCHEDULE:*

Rd. 1 - 9:00am

Rd. 2 - 10:30am

Rd. 3 - 11:45am

Lunch Time

Rd. 4 - 1:15pm

Rd. 5 - 2:30pm

Awards ~ 3:45pm

## *ENTRY FEE:* \$45 before 6/8,

\$55 after. Maximum of 100  
players. Scholarships available for  
Chess Mates students.

## *AWARDS:* Amazon Gift Card

Prizes awarded in each section:  
1<sup>st</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>: \$70-65-60-55-50. Medals  
for first-timers, biggest upset win,  
and best female player (by TPR).

*RATING:* NWSRS rated. Open  
sections also US Chess rated, with  
US Chess membership required.  
Higher of current NWSRS and US  
Chess Regular rating used to  
determine section and pairings.

*ELIGIBILITY:* Open to all  
students in grades K-12 as of the  
2023-24 school year. Out-of-state  
players welcome!

## *REGISTRATION:*

Register online at  
[NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/](http://NWchess.com/OnlineRegistration/)  
Pay by Credit/Debit/PayPal/SettleKing.  
100% preregistered, no on-site entries or  
payments. Entry + payment **deadline**  
**June 14 @ 5pm**. No registrations  
accepted or refunds offered after the  
deadline.

## *CLOCKS:*

Chess clocks will be used from the  
beginning in the Open sections. Clocks  
not required for the U800 and U1000  
sections, until a judge places one into  
unfinished games after 35 minutes of  
play.

## *QUESTIONS?*

Contact: Rekha Sagar,  
WCF Chief Tournament Director,  
[rekha4chess@gmail.com](mailto:rekha4chess@gmail.com)

# Tournaments



Venue  
 7212 Woodlawn Ave NE  
 Seattle WA 98115  
Info  
[www.seattlechess.club](http://www.seattlechess.club)  
Addresses for Entries  
 SCC Tournament Director  
 same address as above  
 —or—  
 contact@seattlechess.club

**May 5 New date!** **Sunday Tornado**  
**Format:** 4-SS. **TC:** Game/50 + 10sec. inc. **EF:** \$18 (+\$7 day membership for non-SCC). **Prize fund:** sum of \$10/entry. **Prizes:** 1st (35% of prize fund), 2nd (27%), bottom half (by rating) 1st (22%), 2nd (16%). **Registration:** 10:30-11:15am. **Rounds:** 11:30am, 1:50, 4:10, 6:30pm. **Byes:** 1 half-pt., commit at reg. USCF membership req'd.

**May 12 New date!** **Adult Quads (new event!)**  
**Format:** 3-RR. Open to players 18 years and older. **TC:** Game/60 + 30sec. inc. **EF:** \$16 (+\$7 day membership for non-SCC). **Prize fund:** \$48 per quad (4 entries). **Prizes:** \$48 (1st) per quad. **Registration:** 9-9:45am. **Rounds:** 10am, 2 & 6pm. **Byes:** 0. USCF membership req'd.

**May 26-27 2nd Annual Carol Kleist Memorial Adult Swiss @ Washington Open**  
 A 4-rd Swiss open to players 18 y.o. + at the Redmond Marriott. See <https://nwchess.com/calendar/WA%20Open%20May%202024.pdf> (2nd page, right side) for details and to register. Prize fund \$1,000 guaranteed!

*Wednesdays are  
 for casual play  
 Come anytime  
 7-11pm*

## SCC Annual Meeting

- *Friday, May 10, 7pm at the club*
- *come and hear about the club's past year accomplishments & future plans*
- *mix with other members and friends before the 8pm Friday game*
- *members vote on the club's Board of Directors for 2024-25*
- *light food and drink provided*

**SCC Fridays**  
 One USCF-rated round per night (free to SCC members, \$5 per night for others) normally played at a rate of 40/90 followed by 30/60. Drop in for any round!

**May Flowers:** 5/3, 10, 17, 31.  
**Closed, Go to WA Open:** 5/24.  
**It's Summertime! (close ratings):** 6/7, 14, 21, 28.

# Northwest Chess

September 2010



\$3.95

