

Chess Connections

Magazine

A space for kids, by kids



Featuring an
interview with
**IM Annie
Wang**

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Meet Our Team

Editorial and Design Team

IM Justin Wang, *Editor-in-Chief*

Justin first started to learn chess at age 7 and is currently an International Master. His notable achievements include finishing in 3rd place in the World Youth U10 Championship in 2015 and winning the U.S. Cadet Championship in 2019.



Justin co-founded the non-profit organization Chess In Action with his brother Jason to promote chess especially with underprivileged communities. Justin's goal for *Chess Connections* is to connect with chess communities around the world and positively influence chess players who want to improve in the game.

WFM Ellen Wang, *Managing Editor, Designer*

Ellen is an 8th grader at Horace Mann School in New York. Since starting chess at the age of 6, she has been playing competitively at the regional, national, and international levels. In 2017, she won three international medals in one summer: Bronze at the Pan American Chess Championships G10, Gold at the North American Youth Chess Championships G14, and Bronze at the World Cadets Chess Championships G10. She was also the 2019 K-6 Co-Champion of the Greater New York Scholastic Chess Championships. Recently, she won the 2020 North American Junior Girls Chess Championship, which awarded her the conditional WIM title and a WGM norm.

Around chess, Ellen has been actively engaged in philanthropic work. Together with her 2020 USATE second-place winning team, the Unruly Queens, she has been hosting free online tournaments and camps, and has been a guest speaker at US Chess Women seminars. Beyond chess, Ellen is a strong debater, a passionate flutist, and an enthusiastic tennis player and swimmer.



NM Davis Zong, Jr., *Associate Editor*

Davis Zong is a 9th grader at Hunter College High School in New York City. He qualified for and competed at the U8, U10, and U12 world cadets chess championships and has won both the elementary and junior high NYC Championships. He became a national master in 6th grade.

Davis is a writer and editor for the school newspaper. He also wrote several articles on the USCF website. Davis loves to share the beauty of chess around the world.



Emily Yao, *Director of Design*

Emily is a 9th grader with a love for art and graphic design. Her art accomplishments include Scholastic Art and Writing Awards gold key, 1st place in the HYAC Visual Arts Contest, and an honorable mention in the national PTA Reflections program. She hopes that she will be able to help *Chess Connections* create a wholesome chess community.



Anjali Lodh, *Designer*

Anjali is an 8th grader from Coralville, Iowa. She is the current Iowa Girls Chess Champion and represented Iowa in the Ruth Haring Girls Tournament of Champions in 2019 as well as in 2020. She co-founded a non-profit chess organization called "Chess Butterflies" dedicated to inspiring young girls to become confident chess players. She is an aspiring graphic designer and loves to design things in her free time. She has also written several articles for Iowa's chess publication, "En Passant." Some of her hobbies include playing violin, trumpet, and playing basketball.



Jason C. Wang, *Advisor*



A GAME FOR ALL: Why I love Chess

By Lucia Huang

My name is Lucia. I have lots of hobbies, but the one that most appeals to me is chess. I started playing chess at the age of 4, going to many different cities for chess tournaments. At 6 years old, I earned the FIDE title of Woman Candidate Master (WCM), which made me the “World’s Youngest WCM.” Last year, at age 7, I was invited to join Team USA at the 2020 World Cadets Championship. Now, I am 8—many people have challenged me to a chess battle, but I’ve never been scared. You may be curious why I love chess so much.

I love chess because of its opportunities: everyone has a chance as long as they don’t give up. Even a little pawn can be promoted to a powerful queen if it keeps on pushing to the end. It’s just like many immigrants who came to the US to build a better life. The pursuit of the American dream is rooted in the belief that the land is full of opportunities, just like chess.



I love chess because I can play with different people. At home, I can play with my family. I can also play with my friends and make new friends at tournaments all over the world. My opponents, young and old, are from many countries such as Russia, India, Brazil, Africa, China, etc.



Last but not least, I love chess because it is one community where we can learn, challenge, encourage, and support one another. I think we can learn from chess so we can grow stronger. With my friends, we can laugh when we win and cheer each other up when we lose. We celebrate each other's breakthroughs and inspire each other to become better. I like chess for all these reasons.



Lucia Huang, an 8-year-old chess girl, lives in Fairfax, VA.

She learnt chess at 4 at the Phoenix Chess Club. At 6, she won 2nd place at the 2019 NAYCC G8 section in Canada, and won the FIDE title of WCM. At 7, she qualified for the USA team for the 2020 World Cadets Championship.

Lucia loves arts, sudoku, math puzzles & swimming. She looks forward to meeting more chess girls in future in-person tournaments!

My Unforgettable Chess Tournament Experience

By Jerry Chang

The whole competition room was silent as tension filled the air. My legs shook and my hands turned numb as I reached out and sacrificed one of my pieces for a better position. Trophies were on the stage, gleaming like breath-taking diamonds. I imagined myself standing on the stage grasping one of the golden trophies, feeling a great sense of accomplishment inside my mind. An immediate desire to win filled my veins. I wanted victory, and it was now or never. Suddenly, my clear path to success began to waver! This is the story of an unforgettable chess tournament experience!

“Clank! Clank!” The sounds of pieces moving rapidly across the board made the players anxious. Three years ago, I went to a chess tournament called the LA Open in Van Nuys. I was excited to participate, but also nervous when I saw how many competitors were there. My hands started sweating like crazy, as if I was about to ride the world's tallest roller coaster. My heart started to pound like never before. Once the game started, my heart was like a popcorn machine, popping wildly. I tried to concentrate, but suddenly the appetizing aroma of burgers from a nearby food vendor distracted me. “No Jerry, concentrate on

your game!” I said to myself. As I reached out and touched one of my pieces, I felt my back hunch over, my teeth grit, and my legs tap impatiently. I let go of the piece, and I froze. I had made a very bad blunder. My distracted mind was split between panicking over my mistake and the continuous growling of my hungry stomach.

The game got worse. My mind explored the maze of possible options available to me as I considered the tricky position I was in. Suddenly, I was caught off guard by the sound of danger. “BEEP!” The clock squeaked, warning me that I only had five minutes left. I shuddered. “What am I going to do?” I rushed and panicked. I randomly picked up my queen and placed it on a square. I gasped. I had not only panicked but made a serious mistake that could change the entire game! I had blundered a pin against my best piece: The queen. My face was set, and my eyes became watery. I knew this game was a nightmare.

Near the end of the game, I was close to being checkmated, but I refused to give up. As my opponent moved, I watched fearfully. My heart sank as I began to accept what seemed like an imminent loss. Though I wanted to keep

trying, the path to victory was steadily disappearing in my mind. I considered resigning, but the slight voice telling me there was still hope kept me from doing so. Suddenly, my opponent made an enormous mistake! He put his queen in a fork! Though I had previously almost lost all hope, I now realized that a draw was possible! I reached out and took my opponent's queen with my knight, but in an instant, a sharp pain erupted in my stomach like someone was punching me. I almost vomited but held on. "Dang it! No. I am NOT going to let a silly little stomach ache make me lose a game!" Unfortunately, my strong determination did not manage to overcome the piercing stomach pain I felt. Despite my best efforts, my opponent quickly regained his advantage and drove the game to an end.

In the end, I lost the game, but I learned a very valuable lesson: To concentrate no matter what happens around me, to use my time wisely, and to always eat before the round. This experience made me a better chess player overall. Savielly Tartakower was right: "The blunders are all there on the board, waiting to be made." I will try my best to catch every chance I have!



Hello! My name is Jerry Chang, a curious eleven year-old boy who wants to explore and learn everything! Five years ago when I started chess, these captivating pieces profoundly fascinated me, and earning a chess master title became my dream. Being a chess player made me feel like a warrior on the top of the world. I am also passionate about a variety of hobbies, such as skiing, volleyball, piano, writing, and traveling. Now my USCF rating is 1590. I will take one step at a time to pursue my goal. "Nobody ever won a chess game by resigning." - Savielly Tartakower.

My Chess Story

AN INTERVIEW WITH IM ANNIE WANG



Photo Credit:
Saint Louis Chess Club

IM Annie Wang is a high achiever that many young chess players look up to. Immersed in her hectic college life at MIT, she generously shares with us her chess stories, reflections and ambitions, all of which manifest how she became a top chess player.

--- FROM INTERVIEWERS IM JUSTIN WANG & WIM ELLEN WANG

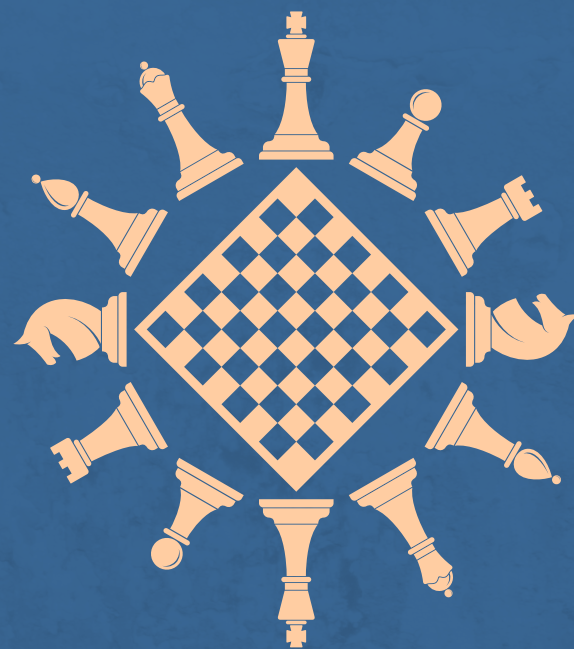


Photo Credit: Ou Wang

Annie Wang started playing chess at the age of 5, after being introduced to the game at a simultaneous exhibition in a nearby park. In 2014, at the age of 11, Annie broke Irina Krush's record for the youngest female national master in the US; later that same year, she won the North American Youth Chess Championships for girls under 18, despite being only 12 at the time. Her other major accomplishments include winning the 2017 World Youth Chess Championship Girls U-16 section with a stunning score of 10.5/11 and placing second at the 2018 U.S. Women's Championship. Annie has also been a chess advocate by running a free kids chess program at a local library and volunteering in numerous chess activities. Outside of chess, she plays piano and enjoys reading, running, and hanging out with friends.



How did you first start playing chess?

Since I started playing when I was so young, around 5 years old, I do not actually remember how I started playing, but my parents always tell me that I started playing after I saw a sign at a local park, and I apparently thought that the pieces looked interesting. I became interested in chess, and I started going to chess lessons, and I started playing there.



What do you like most about chess?

Probably just the analytical aspect about it; I think it is pretty interesting to be able to think about the positions and look through the different options there and try to find the best one. If we are talking more about the chess community instead of the chess itself, I think it is really fun to me; meeting people from different places around the world and being able to talk with them and just experience playing chess tournaments.



How do you study chess on a day-to-day basis? How many hours a day do you spend on chess?

Since I am in college now, I am not doing much studying since I am busy, but back when I was younger, I used to read books and play chess games on the internet, look at some grandmaster games, and do some tactics. This is the normal stuff; maybe one or two hours a day on weekdays and more on the weekends.



What do you think is your biggest strength as a chess player?

Usually I am pretty good at tactics but sometimes that falls through to stuff. Probably tactics still, I don't know.





Would you say that most of your games end in tactics?

I guess so. It depends on what you mean by tactics because I feel like a lot of time, even if you don't win through something like checkmate, your combination really helps you improve your position and give your position an advantage.



To clarify, what do you view a tactic as?

Probably just coming up with moves that aren't too expected in positions; this is also a broad answer, but it is not solely grinding out your opponents move by move.



your combination really helps you improve your position and give your position an advantage.



**Do you get nervous for important games?
If so, how do you calm yourself down?**

I feel like it is different now with the pandemic because I feel like everything started to detach since you don't really play in-person or if you are in-person, it is the first time you've played in such a long time. That does not really feel real. Before the pandemic, I definitely got nervous when I was preparing for an important game, but usually after I start playing, I am not really nervous because I am thinking, so basically once I start thinking about the game and not thinking about "what if I lose?" or "what if I play badly this round?", then I stop being nervous. I feel much better once the game starts, but right before the game starts, I don't feel so good.

Memories from the 2019 Pan-American Junior Under 20 Championship in Bolivia, where Annie was crowned the champion, the IM title and a GM norm



Photo Credit: Ou Wang



Photo Credit: Ou Wang



What's the secret to preventing time-trouble addiction?

I actually get into time trouble fairly often, but I was always told that a good rule of thumb is to just keep your time approximately 10 minutes more than your opponent's, but sometimes I do not stick to that rule myself, so I also get into time trouble.



What would you do if your time is not 10 minutes above your opponent's?

I would tell myself, "Oh, look! Your time is low. You should play a little faster," but sometimes even though I tell myself I should play faster I don't actually end up playing faster. I write down my time on the clock during the game.



No chess player can win every game. How do you deal with a big loss or upset, especially if you need to continue the tournament?

It is definitely hard to lose an important game where you lose badly; you do not feel that great. I think part of what I did to help is just to concentrate on the next game that you have because even if you lost the last game, you can still make a grand comeback, and do very well in the rest of the tournament. So just try not to obsess over how you lost, and then just correct what you did wrong, and concentrate on your upcoming games.



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What's your favorite game that you've ever played?

I am not sure that I have a favorite game that I've ever played, actually. If rapid games count, I think I played a pretty nice game during the online Olympiad last year, against Polina Shuvalova, because my opening preparation for that game worked really well, and after that, my position was just very comfortable, and then I just beat her, so that was a nice game.



Who is your favorite chess player?

When I was younger, I used to really like looking at Topalov's games because his games are relatively exciting; a lot of action in them, but there are a lot of really good chess players that I do not have exactly one favorite player in. They are just all good; I admire them collectively.



Do you think playing blitz helps one improve in longer time controls?

I would play blitz for fun, but I don't think I would play blitz for practice, because whenever I play blitz for practice, I feel like I'll be doing really well for a few weeks and then suddenly my rating drops 200 points in two days, and I'll be really depressed after that.



How do you stay focused for 5 hours in a typical long game?

I'm not really the kind of player that goes around and walks around during my games, so I kind of just sit at the board and look at my game, and usually there is something about my position that I could be slightly worried about or thinking about, so I just think about that, and then that's how I stay focused. Maybe I get a cup of water when I am tired, but I do not get out of the board often.



... whenever I really do something and put a lot of effort in it, it is kind of hard to not aim to improve what you're doing



What has motivated you to keep improving in chess?

What is your goal for your chess career?

As for motivation, I think whenever I really do something and put a lot of effort in it, it is kind of hard to not aim to improve what you're doing, so for me, since chess has been a big part of my life for a really long time, I spent a lot of time playing chess. I think it is really natural just for me to want to improve and not regress and get worse every time. As for my goal in chess, it would be nice to become a grandmaster one day, but since I am in college, it might take a while, so we're working towards that very slowly.



How has chess helped you with other things in your life?

This is kind of a not-so-common response for this question, but I feel like chess has really helped me meet a lot of people at school and start conversations with them because a surprising number of people I know aren't competitive chess players, but they enjoy playing chess and do it as a hobby in their free time, so just having chess has helped me connect with other people I wouldn't have met otherwise.



How has chess helped you with non-social aspects of life?

Since I have played so long and I always play chess, I am not sure if I can give an accurate answer to this, but definitely there is a big aspect of chess that revolves around critical thinking, so I wouldn't be surprised if it did help in some way or the other.



How do you find a balance between school and competitive chess playing, especially in high school?

So at school, there are obviously periods of the year where you have more tournaments than others and where you have big traveling tournaments that you have to leave school for a while, so before those tournaments I would always try really hard on school, so then I have a few percent grade buffer, so that when I come back, my grades can just drop a little bit and I won't be too concerned. During the tournament, obviously, I'll be focused mostly on chess and I won't really do much schoolwork. After I come back from the tournament, it's back to schoolwork. On a more daily basis, basically I just took it day-by-day. If I had something I would have to study for the next day, I would obviously prioritize that temporarily; same thing goes if I had a big tournament coming up, and I have to study and prepare for the tournament. I think you just have to keep track of which is more important currently, and just take care of that first.



What about other extracurriculars?

Did you do a lot of those or mainly just chess?

When I was younger, I did a lot of them. I used to play piano too. I started when I was 5 and I played until around 11th grade, but then I started getting really busy, so then I stopped playing as much. But then I also ran track and cross-country and it fits into your schedule somehow; you just see where it goes.



Which major are you claiming in college?

Do you plan on continuing to play chess even after graduating?

So right now I am a computer science major and I think I'll probably continue playing chess for a while. I mean, it is such a big part of life that it is kind of strange to stop playing, so I think I definitely will continue playing, at least for a while later.



Moments at the Board



Photo Credit: Ou Wang



Photo Credit: Ou Wang



As a female player in a predominantly male world of chess, what obstacles have you faced? The TV Series “The Queen’s Gambit” recently came out, and if you have watched it, do you think your experiences relate to Beth’s?

I haven’t watched “The Queen’s Gambit” yet, so I can’t really relate to that, but I think especially when I was younger, one of the big things about being a girl, playing in a tournament full of mostly guys, is that sometimes I felt a little left out because I was the only girl there and all the guys had their friend groups. But as I got older, especially since I play in more invitational tournaments now, I met some really nice people, and then we have a good time.



What do you think the chess community or the USCF can do to help promote chess among female players?

I know that US Chess has had a really big drive to help promote girls playing chess with their grants and support for various programs to increase female participation in chess events, so I think that’s a really good start in that regard, but I am not sure how much, precisely, they can do, because I think a big part of it is just making more girls interested in playing chess. I think what they have done so far with their grants and support is definitely a step in the right direction.



What is your favorite place you have been to for a chess tournament?

My favorite place is probably Greece; I went to Greece twice, both for World Youths. It has always been really nice. We were right by the ocean and that was pretty. They also had good food. These are very shallow reasons, not something very special .



Have you made friends from other countries through chess? If so, how do you keep in touch with them?

I'm probably not as good at keeping touch as some other chess players are, but I definitely met some people from other countries just by seeing them at tournaments, year after year. Sometimes I see them on Facebook, but I don't really like initiating conversations; I mostly just see what they have.



If I am doing badly in this tournament, there is always a next tournament.



What is the most valuable piece of advice your parents or coaches gave you? Any suggestions for chess parents?

This is also kind of cliché, but I think the biggest piece of advice your parents should give you is to not give up, because even if you are going through a bad stretch of chess playing, you'll probably get over it eventually, as long as you keep on practicing and playing for a while. If you look at chess through that light, don't concentrate on the details like, "Oh, one game I have to win" or "This game, I must do very well." It becomes less stressful because then you could just look at, when you lose a game, "This is not the end of the world. I am doing well before that, and I am still doing relatively well now. If I am doing badly in this tournament, there is always a next tournament." So that is something that is really important for me. As for chess parents, my advice would probably be to not get too stressed over one game, it is okay if you lose one. It is not a big deal, we all lose something. Just be supportive, and if you lose a game, there is no need to be too upset.

WELCOME BACK TO OTB CHESS: IMPROVEMENT DURING THE LOCKDOWN

by Roger Shi



Hello everyone! My name is Roger and I am currently 12 years old. I live in California and I'm in 7th grade. I enjoy playing sports such as basketball and soccer. My current OTB USCF Rating is 1572 although I haven't played OTB in about a year. My current online USCF Rating is 2007. I blog on Chess.com, so I'd appreciate it if you'd visit my blog here: <https://www.chess.com/blog/Roger436> Thanks for reading, and adios!

As we all know, the over-the-board chess world took a pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic for more than a year after 2020. Many fellow chess players were no longer able to attend local or national chess tournaments face-to-face. Some of them chose to play online; however, online chess is never the same as over-the-board chess, due to a shorter time control, the lack of human interactions, and suspicion of cheating using chess engines.

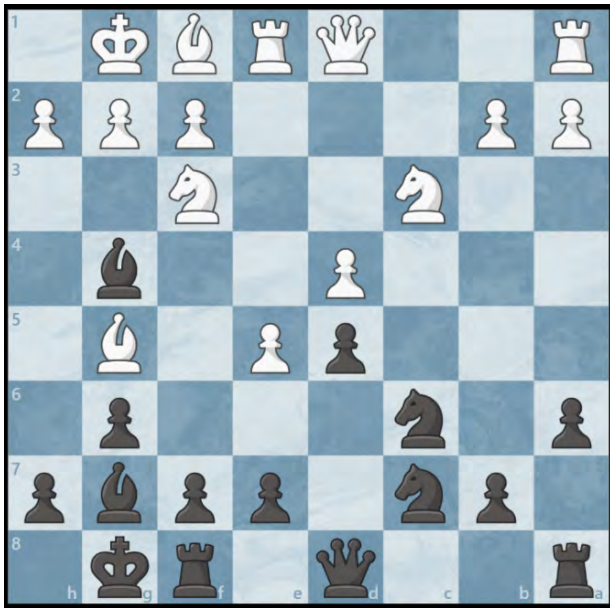
Some chess players might have given up chess or chess learning during this period. However, this “pause” also created opportunities for determined players for chess improvement: access to remote coaching beyond where one lives, attending online chess camps without leaving their home, daily practice of chess puzzles and blitz games, competing online at different tournaments with different time controls, and watching YouTube/Twitch channels with growing popularity.

After a year or so of study and practice online comes an emerging group of improved young players, who have had a huge jump in regular rating recently, including me. Some people have gained ~200, ~500, and up to 900 points within less than half a year of renewed over-the-board competitions! This article will be about the five games of mine that launched my regular USCF rating from 1572 to 2007!

However, behind these wins, there are far more online games played (USCF online rated: > 300 and > 2000 non-USCF rated) with many heartbreaking losses during and after the shutdown.



GAME 1: A GAME VS. 1858-RATED PLAYER AS BLACK, RESULTING IN MY FIRST BREAKTHROUGH OF PRE-SHUTDOWN



13. h3? The first mistake by my opponent, since the d-pawn is defended by the queen and knight. If I take his knight they cannot take back with the queen.

(13. Be2 would've been better.) 13... Bxf3 14. gxf3 Ne6 15. Be3 f6 16. f4 g5 An interesting move I played, which may not exactly be the best but certainly can cause some action. (16... Kh8 is what the engine suggests.) 17. f5 fxe5 18. fxe6 exd4 19. Bxg5 dxc3 20. Qg4 Kh8 21. Qh5 Such a natural move, but it actually loses the game for my opponent. (21. Bd3 likely would've been more intimidating.) 21... Qe8 22. Qh4 Qg6 23. Rad1 Ne5 Threatens a royal fork with Nf3. 24. Rxe5? Another mistake, an unnecessary sacrifice.

(24. Bg2 is simple and better than Rxe5.) 24... Bxe5 25. Bd3 I know, I know, I could've played c2, which would've ended the game right away but I didn't see it, although I did see a flashy move that also gets the job done. 25... Qxg5+ (25... c2 If the rook moves I'll take the bishop although if it moves to d2 I'll promote. 26. Bxg6 cxd1=Q+ 27. Kg2 Qf3+ 28. Kg1 Qxf2+ 29. Qxf2 Rxf2 30. Kxf2 hxg6) 26. Qxg5 Rg8 Nice. 27. h4 cxb2 28. Kh1 Rxg5 29. hxg5 And this is a simple conversion. 29... Rf8 30. Kg2 Rg8 31. Rh1 Rxg5+ 32. Kf3 h5 33. Ke3 Kg7 34. f4 Rg3+ 35. Ke2 Bxf4 36. Rxh5 Rxd3 0-1 While I was still adjusting to the face-to-face games during this early tournament, even though lost three games to three players with >2000 ratings and only beat an 1850 rated player, I managed to break my pre-COVID-19 peak of 1611 by going from 1593 to 1612. But these 19 points were not good enough, I wanted more.

GAME 2: A GAME AS WHITE VS. MY CHESS BUDDY RATED 1933.



8. f4 Here's a position where I'm clearly pushing for an attack on the kingside and my opponent is probably going to go for ideas on the queenside. (8. Qg4 I considered this although I thought h6 was the hook so I want to bring the pawn to g4 and not the queen.) 8... a6 9. Nf3 c5 10. g4 I was unsure of the theory but after later checking the database, Ivan Saric has played this line. 10... Nc6 11. Qd2 b5 12. f5? I was trying to open up the position since I'm one move away from castling, and if I'm able to open the e-file, his king will be in jeopardy and it would be dangerous for him to castle due to g5 ideas.

(12. Ne2 Probably a better move to protect d4.) 12... cxd4 13. Nxd4 Ndx5 14. O-O-O Bd7 15. Nxc6 Nxc6?! A strange move by my opponent. Bxc6 would've been better since now I have Nxd5. 16. Nxd5 exd5 17. Re1 Be6 (17... Ne5 18. Qxd5) 18. fxe6 fxe6 19. Bg2 Threatening to take on d5. 19... O-O? The losing move by my opponent. 20. Rxe6 Qxe6 21. Bxd5 Nd8 22. Bxe6+ Nxe6 23. Qd5 Rae8 24. Re1 Rf6 25. g5 Rg6? The nail in the coffin. 26. Qf5 Nc7 27. Rxe8+ Nxe8 28. Qxg6 Black resigns. 1-0

With this win, two boring draws vs. two players rated above 2100 and a loss to a 2000 rated player, I went from 1612 to 1703. Not only did I for the first time break the 1700 OTB rating but also put myself back into the USCF Top 100 list for my age group.



GAME 3: A CLEAN WIN AS BLACK VS. A 1749-RATED PLAYER



16... Qg6 This game will be more like a tactical puzzle since after one of my opponent's moves, everything goes downhill quickly for him. 17. exf5 Nxf5 18. dxe5 dxe5 19. Bxf4 (19. Nxf4 gxf4 20. Bc5 Nh4 21. Kh1 Re8 (21... Rf5)) 19... gxf4 20. Bd5+ Notice how the bishop on d5 protects the crucial g2 square. 20... Kh8 21. Bxc4?? Now this is quite easy to win; before it was hard because the bishop does a good job of protecting the king, but now it is too late. 21... Nh4 22. g3 Bxh3 23. Rfd1 fxg3 24. fxg3 Bh6 25. Qd3 Rad8 26. Bd5 Qxd3 (26... Rxd5 27. Qxd5 Be3+ 28. Kh1 Bg2+ 29. Qxg2 Nxg2 30. Kxg2 Rf2+ 31. Kh1 Qe4+

Alright, maybe this would've been cleaner.) 27. Rxd3 Rxd5 Well, I'm threatening to take on d3. So the most natural move is probably Rad1, right? Well that's what my opponent thought. 28. Rad1 (28. Rxd5 Be3+ 29. Kh1 Bg2#) 28... Be3+ Simple tactics. The rook is pinned. and must take on e3, or else mate will come. 29. Rxe3 (29. Kh1 Bg2#) 29... Rxd1+ 30. Nf1 Rxf1+ 31. Kh2 Rh1# 0-1

A lesson you can learn from my opponent's mistake is that you should not be too greedy. The light-squared bishop protected the crucial g2 pawn. If my opponent had kept the bishop on f3, it would've made his job much easier. Make sure to have a sense of danger so you won't make the same mistake that my opponent did.

GAME 4: A GAME WITH INACCURACIES ENDED UP WITH A WIN FOR ME AS WHITE VS. A 2083-RATED PLAYER



17... Rfd8 18. Bf4 Qe4 19. Qg3 Here I threaten Bxh6 19... Kf8 20. f3 Qf5 21. Qh2 Prepares to play g4 and launch a kingside attack, hopefully opening some lines. 21... Nd5 22. Bd2 (22. Bc1 Deserves much consideration as the rook on d1's view is blocked by the bishop when it is on d2. 22... Nb4 is what I was scared of after Bc1, although there is nothing to fear since I have a queen on h2 and can play g4. 23. g4 Attacks the queen and protects c2 at the same time.) 22... Bg5 23. g4 Qf6 24. Rhf1? Do I really need to prepare f4? (24. f4 Bxf4 (24... Nxf4 25. c3 Silent but deadly, the threat of the position is to play Rhf1, which would win the piece as it pins the knight. This move protects d4 so if I play Rhf1 immediately they would have Rxd4. 25... Nd3 26. Rhf1) 25. Bxf4 Qxf4 26. Qxf4 Nxf4 27. Rhf1) 24... Bxd2 25. Qxd2 Qf4 26. Rfe1 Qxd2 27. Rxd2 c5 28. c3 Rac8 29. Re4 Ke7 30. Kc2 cxd4 31. Rxd4 Kf6 32. f4 Ke7 33. R2d3 a5 34. Kd2 b5 35. b3?!

The engine says this move is fine, although from a human's point of view this move weakens the c3 square which can be a problem later on in the game. 35... f6 36. Ng6+ Ke8 37. f5 Nc7 38. Rxd8+ Rxd8 39. Rxd8+ Kxd8 40. fxe6 (40. Nf4 This does not work due to 40... e5) 40... Nxe6 41. Ke3 Kd7 42. Nf4 Nc5 43. Kd4 Kd6 44. c4 bxc4 45. bxc4 If you'd want to choose between white or black, you'd likely prefer to choose white as I have the passed pawn which later helped me win the game. 45... Na6 46. Nd3 Nc7 47. c5+ Kc6 48. Kc4 Ne6 49. A3 Ng5 50. Nf4 Ne4 51. Ne6 Nf2 52. Nd4+ Kc7 53. Ne6+ Kc6 54. Nd4+ Kd7 55. Kd5 Nxc4 56. c6+ Kc8 57. Nf5 Kc7 58. Nxc7 Ne3+ 59. Kc5 f5 60. Ne6+ Kc8 61. a4 Ng2 62. Kd4 Nh4 63. Ke5 Kb8 64. Kf4 Ng2+ 65. Kxf5 Just taking this pawn for good measure so if I do something stupid later on it likely won't be losing. 65... Ne3+ 66. Kg6 Ng4 I went on to win this game. Sadly I stopped notating the rest of the moves. 1-0

This game was very interesting. With quite a few missed opportunities this game could've been much cleaner. Instead of 24. Rhf1, I could've played 24. f4 immediately. When I calculated 24. f4, I missed 25. c3, a simpler but more deadly move. Instead of looking for a tactic there, I could've noticed the simple move. Later in the game, I could've had an easier conversion without 35. b3.

GAME 5: MY FIRST OTB WIN AS WHITE VS. A NATIONAL MASTER

1. e4 g6 I have not had much experience against this line so I just pushed d4 and f4 to grab the center and attack, since he is an NM. 2. d4 Bg7 3. f4 (3.Nf3 d6 4.Be2 is more prudent) d5 4. e5 Nh6 5. Nf3 O-O 6. Bd3 c5 7. c3 b6 8. O-O (8.Qe2 Bf5 9.Bxf5 Nxf5 10.g4 Nh6 11.h3) Ba6 I didn't think this was much of a problem because my dark-squared bishop can be very useful in the future and his dark-squared bishop would be facing my chain of 4 pawns on white squares. 9. Na3 Qc8 I was thinking maybe this move was planning to play f6 since if I play e6 they can play Qxe6. 10. h3 (10. Nb5?! c4) 10... Nf5 11. g4 (11.Kh2!? Nc6 12.Nc2 e6 13.g4 Nfe7 14.Be3 with more solid preparation before my attack) Ng3 12. Re1 Bxd3 13. Qxd3 c4 14. Qe3 Ne4 15. Nc2 a5 16. a4 I had less time so I just wanted to try and stop my opponent's counterplay. (16.Nd2!? f5 (16...Nxd2 17.Bxd2) 17.exf6) 16... Qd7 17. Qe2 f5 18. g5 I was unsure what to do but since I was spending a lot of time on this move I should just avoid complications (18. exf6 exf6 19. Ne3). 18... Na6 19. Ne3 Nc7 20. Nd2 Ne6 21. Ng2 Rf7 22. Kh2 Bf8 23. h4 Ng7 24. Nf3 e6 25. Nd2 Be7 26. Rf1 Bd8 27. Nxe4 fxe4 28. Ne3 h5?? (A big blunder by my opponent. Not extremely sure what he was doing. I had under 5 minutes, so he could've just played some simple chess and tried not to make any complications.



(28...Nf5 29.Ng4 h5 (29...Nxf4 30.Nh6+ Kg7 31.Nxf7 Qxf7) 30.Nf6+ Bxf6 31.gxf6 Nxf4 32.Kh3 Nf5 33.Rg1 Kh7 34.Qg2 Rg8 35.Qe2)

29. gxh6 Nf5 30. Nxf5 exf5 31. Qg2 Kh7 32. Rg1 Qe6 33. h5 gxh5 34. Qg8+ Kxh6 35. Qh8+ Rh7 36. Qf8+ 1-0

My first OTB win vs. an NM! During this game, facing a higher-rated player and an unfamiliar opening, I just followed chess opening principles and played aggressively. In the end, the opportunity presented itself. Hope you could learn from this.

North American Youth Chess Championship Diary

By: Erick Zhao

On 8/16/21, the **North American Youth Chess Championship** (August 16 – 21, 2021) started in Chicago, Illinois. More than 400 chess players from all over the US, Canada, and Mexico were going to this tournament to battle it out... There were 46 people in my section (U16), and this was my first time participating in such an event.

Day 1: This was my first time riding on a plane since the pandemic, and I also had to wear two layers of face masks. We headed off to Chicago, and when we arrived, we rode the train to the hotel. After we checked in and rested for a while, we rented a bike and rode it for about 45 mins to admire the view.

Day 2: We had to wake up really early since the tournament started at 10 am. When we arrived at the tournament hall, only the players were allowed to be in it. The playing hall was very cold, which was the reason I got a jacket soon after. The organizer put some distance between each board so we can maintain proper social distancing. I played my first opponent of the 9-round tournament, a 1500 FIDE-rated player from Mexico. It was not as easy as I thought it was going to be, and it took more than two hours with a lot of chances for both sides. Eventually, I got him down to time pressure and won. In the second round, I was playing a 1900 FIDE opponent (although he was 2100 USCF). This was one of my toughest games in the tourney, and we were the last to finish in our section! Although I still won, I couldn't say it was one of my best games....

Day 3: I was playing the highest seed of our section, a player from Canada. Fortunately, I prepped against him a lot, and I knew exactly what to play and exactly what to do. He however did not...

I got an advantage in the opening, then a pawn, and then he blundered a rook, so I won. After a quick lunch and nap, I prepped against my next round opponent, a player rated about the same as me, and it paid off!

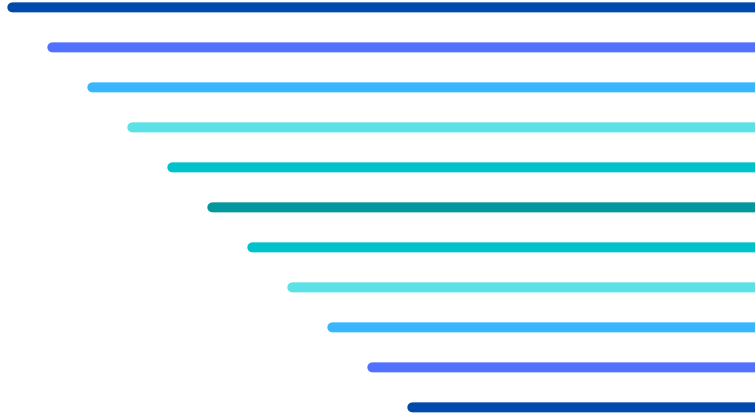
Day 4: My opponent surprised me in the opening, and I did not know what to do at all. I played slowly, and just as I was about to be in time pressure, I complicated the position, and even though he had a move that gave him the advantage, my opponent made an inaccuracy into a worse endgame. After this round, I was the only player with 5/5, but I reminded myself that there were still 4 more rounds to go. For the 6th round, I played another player from Canada. He also surprised me with a line that I did not know what to play. However, I still got a pretty good position, until I made a few inaccuracies and he got the initiative. In time trouble, (for both of us) he had an easier position to play and I lost eventually. I was unhappy about this loss, but I was still tied for first, and I calmed myself down and prepped for the next game.

Day 5: I started my winning streak again, mainly due to prep. Against my 7th round and 8th round opponent, my prep was mostly the reason why I got the result I did. After the games, I found out that I was 1 point ahead of everyone else, which guaranteed my FM title and IM norm. When I found this out, I was very excited already, but I kept reminding myself that there was still one more round to go.

Day 6: The previous night I prepped against my last round opponent. Although I didn't sleep very well, I reviewed my preparation the morning before the game. Even though I was already guaranteed 1st, I wanted a good finish. However, when I played him, he did not play what I expected him to, and he played another line that I'm not that familiar with. I still got a pretty good position, but when my opponent was in time trouble, I made a few inaccuracies. However, he blundered later as well, giving me the win.

Overall, it was a really nice experience, having done well in an international event. I hope to be able to travel to Chicago again soon!

Overall, it was a really nice experience, having done well in an international event. I hope to be able to travel to Chicago again soon!



About the Author

Hi Everyone! I'm Erick Zhao, and currently a 7th grade chess player who is rated 2247 FIDE, with one IM norm. I'm always finding ways to improve and get better! I like to play tennis, ping-pong, and, of course, chess!



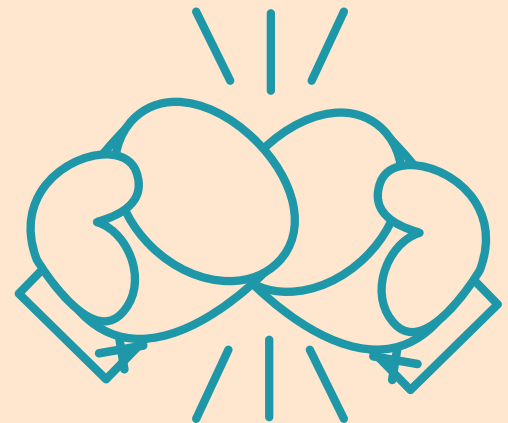
COUNTERATTACK!

Roger Zhang

In chess, attacking is one of the most important parts of the game, but so is defending. As a principle, the best defense is a counterattack. If you're defending a position, try to defend with as few pieces as possible, and counterattack with the rest. If you're boxing, and your opponent's trying to punch your stomach, punch them back in the head! Below, I'm sharing three examples with you about counterattacking.



This is a basic example in showing how you should always watch out for your opponent's counterplay. White has already broken into the king's castle, and dominates the h-file. There are many winning options, but 1.Rh8+ Ng8 2.R3h7 Rf6 3.Rxg7 Kxg7 4.Qh4 is easiest, winning the queen. However, in the game, White thought that there was an easier way. White played 1.Rh7?! and didn't see 1...Rf6!. Then White really made the blunder by playing 2.Qc7?!, expecting an immediate win. But then Black played 2...Rc8!, and the tables have turned. White can't stop the back rank mate, and can only play 3.Rh8+ Qg8! 4.Rxg8+ Kxg8 5.Qxc8+ Nxc8=, and the game should be a draw.





In this example, Black is clearly much worse. The bishop on a7 is miserable, and White has a protected passed pawn. If White's knight can get to e4, Black would be strategically lost, and playing this position would be torture. So, Black has to make the position complicated before White shuts it down.



Black played 1...e4!, a very good attempt to create a counterattack. After 2.Re3 (2.Re1 was better, but not many people would want to calculate the ending after 2...exf3 3.Rxe7 Rxe7) 2...f5, White still didn't anticipate my counterplay coming with Bb8 and Qe5. White played 3.Qg6, and I was preparing to create the battery with 3...Qe5 (this wasn't the best move, but a good try). White was too greedy, and played 4.Qxa6 (4.Nf3 Qf4 5.g3 was better, with an advantage to White) Now, after 4...Bb8, Black's position dramatically improved at the cost of a pawn. Black's queen, bishop, e and f pawns were all contributing in the attack, and White had to worry about the king. A quick lift with Rd6-g6 was possible if necessary. On top of that, the queen is misplaced on a6. Thanks to the kingside attack, Black almost won the game, which was hard to imagine during the initial position!



Now to the final position, which is no doubt the hardest one. This position is from an online game, but it's very interesting. White is obviously in trouble because the bishop is pinned. There is no way to save it, and Black is threatening Rxd4 to take the bishop. The question is, does White have a way to save the piece with a playable position, and if not, what is White's best try? (think as long as you wish, as this is not easy at all)



Solution: Unfortunately, White is worse in all variations, but he/she can still try, and it makes the play very complicated. Black's king hasn't castled and White can exploit it immediately. A move like 1.Qe2, which is very natural, trying to pin the e-pawn, fails to 1...Rxd4 2.Rxd4 Qxd4 3.Nf5 (trying to take on e5 and create a pin) Qf4 (if 3...Qd7 trying to keep the queen then 4.Qxe5 Nd5 5.Nxg7+ Kd8 makes things really complicated. White can grab an exchange or keep the tension.) 4.Qxe5 Qxe5 5.Rxe5



5...Ng8!! (if 5...Nd5? then 6.c4 g6 7.cxd5 gxf5 8.d6, and White wins back the piece; 5...g6 is better, but White can still take the bishop, take the queenside pawns, and Black will need some time and effort to win.) Now Black goes Kd7, Bd6, Nf6, and keeps the bishop.

White's best try is 1.c3. The reason for this is because White wants to force Black to use the pawn to take the bishop, thus exposing the king. White is threatening Qe2 on the next move, or even Rxe5. Almost all players would choose to go 1...exd4.



Now White is hoping that the e-file can bring an attack. But 2...Qb4 fails to 2...Rd7 3.Rxd4 Qxf2, and Black wins. After 2.Qe2, the best move is 2...0-0 (other moves win too) 3.Qxe7 Rde8 4.Qxb7 Rxe1 5.Rxe1 Qxf2, and Black forks the rook and knight, winning back a piece.

White has the only other try, 2.Rxe7+! Now White really makes a good counterattack. After Kxe7 3.Qb4+ (3.Re1+ Kf8 should allow Black to hide the king on g8), Black has one move. 3...Kd7 fails to 4.Rxd4+, 3...Ke8 4.Re1+ wins the queen or gives mate after Kd7 5.Re7+, 3...Ke6 makes no difference, and 3...Qd6 4.Nf5+. So Black plays 3...Rd6 4.Rxd4, and the key idea is 4...Nd5! (4...Qe5 5.Qxd6+ Qxd6 6.Nf5+=), attacking the queen, so White only has 5.Rxf4 (if 5.Qxb7+ Rd7 and White will grab a couple of pawns, but Black is still a rook up and should win) 5...Nxb4, and since 6.Rxb4 leaves White an exchange down in the endgame, White plays the other obvious move, 6.Nf5+. 6...Ke6 7.Nxd6 Nd5!



This is a crucial intermediate move. Now the real outcome starts to appear. White can play 8.Rxf7 Kxd6 9.Rxb7 Rf8 10.Rxa7 Nc7! And White should lose, but Black needs to spend a lot of effort to convert the small advantage. Another idea is to play 8.Nxf7, but after 8...Rg8 (not 8...Rf8?? 9.Ng5+ Ke7, and after White trades the rooks, White remains a pawn up) 9.Nf3 Nf6, the knight is trapped.

Even though at the end Black should still win, what a complicated struggle this was! I don't expect the reader to be able to see all of this, but if you saw that 4.Qb4+ after the rook sac gave White very good chances, you did very well.

The moral of these three positions: When you're winning, always watch out for a counterattack. If you're in trouble, try to find every chance to make one!



Roger Zhang is an avid chess player and 8th grader from Livingston, New Jersey. He learned to play chess during 2016, and recently he became an expert. Outside of chess, he also likes to do math, talk with friends, and go running.

Endgames in Time

Trouble

BY DAVIS ZONG

What's harder than playing a long chess game? Playing a long chess game with a mask. The North American Youth Chess Championship (NAYCC) was held in Chicago, Illinois from 8/17-8/21. Despite COVID-19, the sections were highly competitive. Over 300 people from all across North America met

|| The 90+30 time control meant that we sometimes had to wear masks for more than four hours straight!

for the five day, nine round tournament. The 90+30 time control meant that we sometimes had to wear masks for more than four hours straight!

In endgames, not only did we have to wear a mask, we were also under time pressure! The following game had been a calm equal position for most of the opening and middle-game, but after creating some play in an otherwise dead drawn rook ending, the game veered towards a sharp pawn race, which I eventually managed to win.



Position after 44.gxf5, Black to move.

A jolt of fear struck me as I wondered whether the position was lost already, but here black was actually hanging on – albeit by a single thread.

I needed to play quite accurately to keep the balance, as white's connected passers are quite intimidating. For example, the natural: 44...Rb4?? loses to the forcing: 45. Rxb4+ Kxb4 46. f6 b2 47. f7 b1Q 48. f8Q+ Kc4 49. Qf4+ Kd5 50. Qd4+ Kc6/e6 51. Qe4+ +-, trading into a won king pawn ending. Going behind the pawns with 44...Ra1?? also fails because white's pawns are too fast

after 45. e4 Kc3 46. e5 b2 47. e6 b1Q
48. Rxb1 Rxb1 49. e7 +-.

It turns out that there are not many drawing lines here. The one I opted for was: 44... Ra5!, forcing white to make a concession. Either he goes 45. Ke4, or he plays some other move, which allows Rb5!. After Ke4, I initially prepared Rb5 too, but was brought back to reality when I saw that he had Kd3! +- at the end, stopping my passed pawn. I felt really frustrated because Ra5 seemed to have given his king a free tempo for nothing. What if that was the difference between drawing and losing? But there was a silver lining: Ke4 blocks the e-pawn, which may delay his advance for a while.

“Black was actually hanging on – albeit by a single thread.”

I reasoned that since his e-pawn was already blocked, why not also stop the other one with the rook? This led me to the only move, Ra6!, a paradoxical looking retreat. Interestingly, it's quite hard for white to make progress. If Ke5, I could check his king from the side and nauseam starting with Ra5+. Here's another position from the game a few moves later:

His king has taken refuge from the side checks on f4 and he has put the connected passers in motion. If



Position after b2, White to Move.

both sides play "naturally": White pushing the pawns and the king, Black promoting the pawn and then running back with the king, white wins in many of the lines. Instead, he "blundered" with 1. e5??. I was almost in disbelief when I saw it. With the minutes ticking down, I quickly played Ra4+. Seeing my opponent freeze in astonishment, I knew that both of us had realized that black was forcing promotion.

After this, the game flashed in front of my eyes like a dream and in just five moves, black's new queen had white's pawns firmly under control. The rest of the game went: 1. e5 Ra4+ 2. Kg5 Rb4 3. Rxb4 Kxb4 4. e6 b1Q 5. e7 Qe4 -+. During the chaos of the game, both of us were convinced that white was dead lost after the promotion. But was it really all over after black's queen emerged? After all, black's king is quite far away

from the passers and one of them is even a bishop pawn, which means stalemate tricks. Indeed, a much more tenacious try was 4. f6! b1Q 5. f7 =, which happens to be just enough for a draw!



Position after f7, Black to Move

If black's king were on c4, he would win easily with 1...Qb4 2. Kf6 Qf8 3. e6 Kd5 4. E7 Qh6+ 5. Kf5 Qe6+ - +. Now, with the black king blocking the only winning try, a drawn bishop pawn vs queen ending emerges, where there is nothing better than perpetual check or repetition.

After the game, we talked about the endgame and concluded that white may have been able to win with 1. f6 instead of e5. Here is a sample line: 1. f6 b1Q? 2. Rxb1 Rxb1 3. e5 Kd4 4. e6 + -, and the two connected passers on the sixth seal the deal. However, it transpires that

“Endgames almost always occur during time trouble, so it is easy to blitz through them and ignore the seemingly minor details.”

even 1. f6 was only enough for a draw. Instead of the naive 1...b1Q?, black can nudge the white king in front of his own pawns to acquire a few extra tempi: 1...Rf1+! 2. Kg5 (2. Ke5 b1Q 3. Rxb1 Rxb1 4. f7 Rf1 5. Ke6 Kd4 =) Rg1+ 3. Kh6 Rh1+ 4. Kg7 Rg1+ 5. Kf7 b1Q 6. Rxb1 Rxb1 7. e5 Kd4 8. e6 Ke5 9. e7 Rb8, drawing. That's a lot of complications for an endgame with only seven pieces!

Endgames almost always occur during time trouble, so it is easy to blitz through them and ignore the seemingly minor details. Sometimes what could have happened can be more interesting than what actually happened!

About the Author:



Davis Zong is a 9th grader at Hunter College High School in New York City. He qualified for and competed at the U8, U10, and U12 world cadets chess championships and has won both the elementary and junior high NYC Championships. He became a national master in 6th grade. Davis is a writer and editor for the school newspaper. He also wrote several articles on the USCF website. Davis loves to share the beauty of chess around the world.

BARBER TOURNAMENT OF K-8 CHAMPIONS

Andy Huang

I was ecstatic coming into the Barber tournament. After four failed attempts at winning the K-8 VA Scholastic Championship, I had finally won the elusive first place title. As you may know, the first place winner from each state's K-8 Scholastic Chess Tournament gets an opportunity to play in the Barber Tournament of Champions. The Barber Tournament of Champions was a tournament I had wanted to play in since I started playing in the K-8 Scholastic Championship. Finally, I would have a chance to fulfill my dream.

I came into the Barber event as the 4th seed in a field of 50. The top 7 boards were over 2200, so lots of people had a shot of winning. In these tournaments with only 6 rounds, it is key to squeeze the maximum amount of points out of weaker opponents. Rounds 1 and 2 were smooth easy games allowing me to fall into my rhythm. I was still nervous, but I knew I could perform as well as anyone else. Already, the field was beginning to thin out. Arthur Guo, the third seed, had drawn, allowing me to move up a board. In the third round, I was playing Nastassja Matus, rated 2100.

The game was a French Tarrasch with 3. Nd2. After I misplayed the opening, she was able to gain a significant advantage. Unfortunately for her, she misplayed the position and then blundered in time pressure, allowing me to reach 3/3. This game was the first bump in the road for me. Already I had gotten lucky, avoiding a potential disaster, one that could have ended my tournament before it even started. Going into the fourth round, I was in clear first place with 3/3. I was faced off against the top seed, Shunkai Peng, from Oregon. I had played him before once in the World Youth U12 Chess Championship in 2015. In that game, I was White and had lost a tough game in the Najdorf. Now I was playing him again as Black. I was extremely worried going into this game. Would I win? Would I lose? If I lost would I still have chances of winning first place?



SHUNKAI PENG - ANDY HUANG

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3

Here Shunkai opts for 3. Nc3, avoiding the mainlines. I was expecting him to play 3. Bb5 and enter the Rossolimo variation.

3... Nf6 4. e5

I knew that this line with 4. e5 was bad during the game, but I forgot what the refutation was.

4... Ng4 5. Qe2 Qc7

This is already a mistake. Better was 5... f6, with the idea of destroying White's center.

6. d4 cxd4 7. Nb5 Qb8

7... Qb6 is much better. For example after 8. Qe4 a6 9. Qxg4 (9. Nbxg4 is met with 9... d6! 10. exd6 e5! with some slight complications but Black should soon recapture the d6 pawn and stand better.) 9... axb5

8. Bf4 f6 9. Bg3 Ngxe5 10. 0-0-0

Here the position is roughly equal, but it is extremely complicated. Black needs to solidify by playing d6 and e6 and then develop his dark squared bishop and castle. White needs to play Nfxd4 and play f4. The next few moves see the execution of our respective plans.

10... d6 11. Nfxd4 a6

This forces 12. Nc3 because 12. Nxc6 allows Black to build his center and open up the b-file.

13. Nc3 e6 13. Ne4



Here 13. f4 was also an option. After 13... Nxd4 14. Rxd4 Nc6 15. Rd1 Kf7 (15... f5 is the idea here to blunt the bishop but 16. Nd5! is very strong.) 16. Qf3 f5 =/+

1. 14... Be7 15. Qh5 g6 16. Qh6 Kf7

2. Preventing Qg7. I can castle by hand later on so the loss of castling rights is not too important.

3. 16. Qe3?

4. Pulling back the Queen unnecessarily. Better was to play 16. Be2 and prepare 17. f4

5. 16... h6?!

The idea behind h6 was to cover the g5 square so when I play f5 or d5, Ng5 will not be an option. Of course I have more pressing matters to attend to and h6 creates a new weakness. Better was 16...Nxd4 17. Qxd4 (17. Rxd4 d5 (17...Kg7 is also good.) 18. Ng5+ Kg7 19. Nf3 Bd6 =/+) 17... d5 18. Ng5+ Kg7 =/+.

During the game I calculated that after 19.f4 fxg5 20. fxe5, White is slightly better.

17.f4 Ng4 18. Qc3 Nxd4 19. Qxd4 19. Rxd4 was also an option 19... d5 20. h3 Qa7!



21. hxg4 Qxd4 22. Rxd4 dxe4 23. Rxe4 b5

Without this move preventing Bc4, Black is worse, as is b5 prevents Bc4 and allows the Black bishop to take up a powerful post on b7, giving Black a slight edge.

24. Bd3 Bb7 25. Re2 Bd6?

This move allows 26. Bxg6! Kxg6 27. f5+ exf5 28. gxf5+ Kxf5 29. Bxd6 with equality.

26. Rhe1?

Entering a needless period of suffering.

26... Rhe8 27. Rh1 Rh8 28. Rh3

This was played quickly by Shunkai. This move is definitely not a good move as he cannot double on the h-file.

28... f5!

This looks like it is just undoubling his pawns at first, but he does not want to take on f5, as it will open up the g-file for my rooks. Either way, his g and f-pawns are being uncomfortably attacked by my bishops.

29. Kd2 Rag8

I also could have taken on g4 here. After 29...fxg4 30. Rh4 Bd5 31. Rxc4 Rag8 followed by h5 =/+.

30. Rh1 fxg4 31. Rhe1 Bd5

From here on out, it is clean up for the Black forces.

32. Rf1 Rc8 33. a3 Rhd8 34. Bh4 Rd7 35. Kd1 Bc5 36. Ke1 Bd4 37. c3 Bg7?

This is a mistake, although not one that costs me my winning edge. The bishop belongs on the g1-a7 diagonal and so 37... Ba7.

38. Rd2 Rcc7 39. f5??

I think that he missed that after 39... gxf5 40. Bxf5 exf5 41. Rxf5+, I had 41...Ke6 defending my bishop.

39...gxf5 40. Bg3 Rb7 41. Rff2 Bf6 42. Be2 Bg5 43. Bf4 Kg6 44. g3 Bxf4 45. Rxf4 e5 46. Rf2 Be4 47. Bf1 Kg5 48. a4 bxa4 49. Bxa6 Rxd2 50. Rxd2 Rb6 51. Be2 f4 52. gxf4+ exf4 53. Rd4 Bb7 54. Rxa4 Rxb2 55. Bd1 f3 56. Rb4 Rxb4 57. cxb4 Kf4 58. Kf1 Ba6+ 59. Kg1 g3

0-1



The next round was psychologically the most difficult for me. I had always had a hard time playing Arthur, so I decided to bail out for a quick draw. I think it was a good strategic decision as it gave me a good night's rest for the final round. Also, I had a worse position and was at a significant time disadvantage during the game.



Andy Huang is a senior attending Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology. He has been playing chess since he was five years old and has become a two time state and national champion. He has represented the U.S in multiple international events. In his free time he reads, plays tennis, and hangs out with friends.

ALEX COSTELLO - ANDY HUANG

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nge2

Another sideline. Already I was out of book. I had expected him to play into the main line Sveshnikov, which had occurred in our last game. I knew how to play against 3. Nf3, transposing to the previously mentioned game against Shunkai Peng. But I wasn't sure about Nge2. The idea of this move is to avoid the Sveshnikov. If Black plays 3...Nf6 then White plays 4. g3 and Bg2 and gets a good version of the Closed Sicilian. This is what I thought during the game and this would be true except for the fact that Black can play 4...d5 immediately after 4. g3 with an equal position.

3... e5

Stopping d4 at all costs. Definitely not a good move. As previously mentioned, 3... Nf6 4. g3 d5 leads to equality.

4.Nd5 g6 5. g3

Better here was 5.Nec3 followed by Bc4, d3, and f4. Although it may not give an edge, it is certainly an easier position to play for White.

5...Bg7 6. Bg2 Nge7 7. O-O O-O 8. d3 Nxd5 9. exd5 Ne7

9... Nd4 10. Nxd4 exd4 was completely dry so I played Ne7 to keep some play alive.

10. b3?

This move makes little to no sense. The bishop is much better placed on the c1-h6 diagonal.

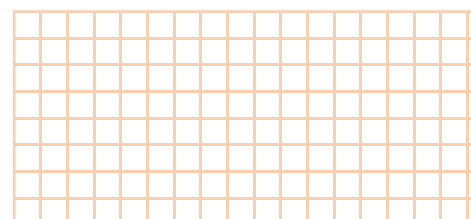
10... d6 11. Bb2 Bd7

11... h5 was also an option, introducing the idea of h4.

12. Qd2 Nf5 13. c4 Re8?! 13... Re8 is an unnecessary move. It is unlikely that the e8 rook will ever open up as White does not want to play f4. 13... h5 with ideas of Bh6 and h4 was much better.

14. Rfe1

A wasted move. This move does not go along with White's plan which is to expand on the Queenside with b4.



14... b6

Also an unnecessary move. 14... b6 is not needed yet, 14... h5 continuing with Black's plans is a large improvement.

15. Be4

More wasted time.

15... h5

Finally.

16. Qc2 b5

Although 16... b5 is the computer's second choice, the concept behind this move is not good, as it plays on the side of the board where White basically has an extra pawn on d3. 16... h4 was better.

17. cxb5?

This move takes away any edge White had on the queenside and creates a weakness on d5.

17... Bxb5 18. Bxf5 gxf5 19. f4 Rc8 20. Rad1 Bd7

20... Ba6 was also an option with the same idea of avoiding Nc3.

21. Qd2 h4 22. Kg2 a5 23. Ng1 hxg3

Here I decided to release the tension between the g- and h-pawns because I wanted to be free with my Queen. Also I didn't want him to play Nf3.

24. hxg3 Qb6 25. Ne2 Qb7

Tying him down to the defense of the weak d5 pawn, created by 17.cxb5?



26. Nc3 Be6

I was not sure about the evaluation of this move during the game but I was low on time and decided to be greedy. 26... Re6 with the idea of Rg6 was also an interesting option.

27. Kg1 Bxd5 28. Nxd5 Qxd5 29. fxe5 Qf3?

A poor move. Instinctively I thought this was a bad move, but I convinced myself that Qf3 was good. I had calculated Qf3 when I had played Qb6 and I completely missed Qf4.

30. Qf4 Qh5?

I wanted to keep the queens on the board as his king was weaker than mine, but I missed that after 31. exd6 Rxe1+ 32. Rxe1 Bxb2 33. d7 Rf8, White has Qd6 which wins.

31. Rb1 Re6

Again White has 32. exd6 here.

32. Kg2 dxe5 33. Qf3 Qxf3+
Now it is easily winning.

34. Kxf3 Rd8 35. Ke2 Red6 36. Red1 e4 37. Bxg7 Kxg7 38. Rbc1 exd3+ 39. Kd2 Rd5 40. Rc3

From move 34 to here has been smooth.

40... Re8??

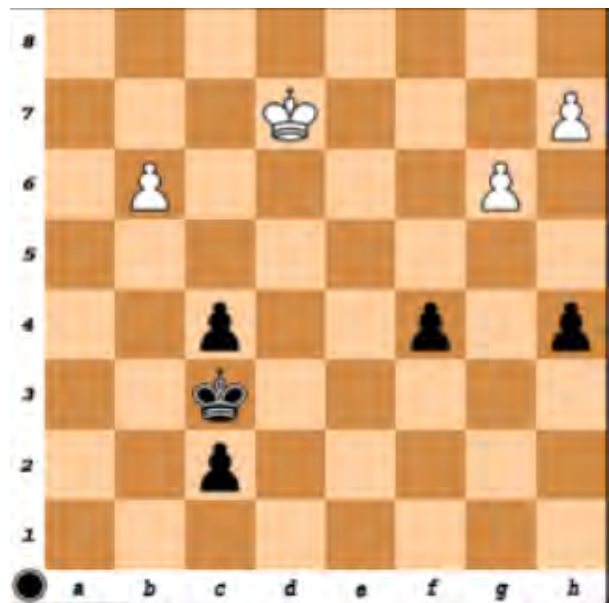
I completely miscalculated the king and pawn endgame that arises after 41. Kxd3 Rd8+ and Rxd1. Obviously I should have played Kf6.

41. Rxd3 Rxd3+ 42. Kxd3 Rd8+ 43. Ke2 Rxd1 44. Kxd1 Kf6

About here I realize that this position is a draw and I am not fast enough with my pawn.

45. Ke2 Ke5 46. Ke3 Kf6 47. Kf4 Kg6 48. Ke3 Kg5 49. Kf3 Kf6 50. Kf4 Ke6 51. Kf3

If he had played Ke3 here instead of playing Kf4, I wouldn't even be able to go into the queen endgame up a pawn and it would be a dead draw. For example, 51.Ke3 c4 52.



51...Kd4 52.Kf4 Kd4 53. Kxf5 Kc3
54. Kf6 Kb2 55. Kxf7 Kxa2 56. g4
Kxb3 57. g5 a4 58. g6 a3 59. g7 a2
60. g8=Q a1=Q 61. Qb8+ Kc4 62.
Qf4+ Qd4 63. Qf1+ Qd3 64. Qc1+
Kd4 65. Qf4+ Kd5 66. Qg5+ Kc4
67. Qf4+ Kb3 68. Qb8+ Kc2 69.
Qh2+ Qd2 70. Qh7+ 71. Qg7+ Kb4
72. Ke6 c4 73. Qb7+ Kc3 74. Qg7+
Kc2 75. Qh7+ Kc1 76. Qh1+ Qd1
77. Qh6+ Kb2 78. Qh2+ Kc3 79.
Qe5+ Kc2 80. Qf5+ Qd3 81. Qf2+
Qd2 82. Qf5+ Kb3 83. Qf3+ c3 84.
Qb7+ Kc2 85. Qe4+ Kc1 86. Qh1+
Kc2 87. Qe4+ Kd1 88. Qb1+ Ke2
89. Qb5+ Qd3 90. Qh5+ Kd2 91.
Qa5 Qg6+ 92. Ke7 Qc6 93. Kf8 Kd1
94. Qh5+ Kc2 95. Qh2+ Kc1 96.
Qf4+ Kb1 97. Qb8+ Ka2 98. Qa7+
Kb3 99. Qb8+ Ka3 100. Qa7+ Qa4
101. Qe3 Qb3 102. Qa7+ Kb2 103.
Qd4 Ka2 104. Ke8 c2 105. Qf2 Ka3
106. Qc5+ Kb2 107. Qf2 Kb1 108.
Qf5 Qb2 109. Qd3 Qb6 110. Qe4
Kb2 111. Qe2 Kb3 112. Qd3+ Kb2
113. Qe2 Qc7 114. Qd2 Qc8+ 115.
Ke7 Qc7+ 116. Ke8 Qc6+ 117. Ke7
Kb3 118. Qe3+ Qc3 119. Qe6+ Qc4
120. Qe3+ Ka2 121. Qf2 Kb3 122.
Qe3+ Qc3 123. Qe6+ Kb2 124. Qe2
Qc5+ 125. Ke8 Qd5 126. Qf2 Qe6+
127. Kf8 Kb1 0-1

Immediately after this game I still didn't know if I had won the tournament. Anthony Wang (4.5/5) had finished playing against Arthur Guo (4.0/5) but I didn't know what the result of the game was. If Anthony beat Arthur, then he would also have 5.5/6 and it would be up to tiebreaks to decide the champion. As I walked outside of the empty playing hall, I felt a rush of nerves. Had I won the championship? I walked over to the pairings sheet to check the result of Anthony's game. When I saw the result, I exploded with joy. Wow. Wow. Wow.

I never would have been able to get close to winning the Barber Tournament without the help of Adam Chrisney at the Arlington Chess Club for helping me find a player to practice with. Thank you, Andrew Samuelson for being that practice partner. Finally, thanks to my friends and family for helping support me to improve my chess. Seeing the fruits of my hard work is the best feeling ever and it is thanks to all of you that I was able to experience this feeling.



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