



Issue #14 | Summer 2024

Featuring an
Interview with
GM Arthur Guo



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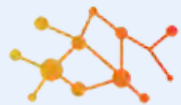
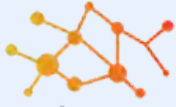


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Meet Our Team



WIM Ellen Wang, *Co-Editor-In-Chief & Designer*

WIM Ellen Wang is a rising senior 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. Her most recent accomplishments are 2023 National Girls' Champion (U16), Gold Medal at 2022 World Schools Chess Championships (U17 Girls), Team Champion at 2023 National Invitationals of State Champions, and Gold Medals at both 2020 and 2021 North American Junior Girls Chess Championships (from which she earned the WIM title and two WGM norms). She also achieved the US National Master title in 2021.

Ellen was named one of the five National Scholar-Chess Players by the US Chess Trust in 2024. Off the board, she is an avid robotics programmer, a passionate flutist, a tennis enthusiast and enjoys reading with her dog on her lap.



FM Davis Zong, Jr., *Co-Editor-In-Chief*

Davis Zong is a 12th 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 and a FIDE master in 11th grade.

Outside of the board, Davis loves to write articles; he is the Co-Editor-in-Chief of his school newspaper and he also wrote several articles on the USCF website on events including the World Cup and the U.S. Junior Championships. Davis loves to share the beauty of chess around the world.



Lulu Huang, *Head of Social Media & Designer*

Lulu Huang is a 10th grader at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia. She has been playing chess since she was four. At six years old, she tied for second place at the All Girls National Chess Championship (U8 section). She qualified for the 2021 FIDE World Women Fast Chess Championship USA national team, and she also received Top 10 in the 2021 US Junior Chess Congress U12 section. She is a coach for Phoenix Chess Club, as well as an Intermediate Chess teacher at Hope Chinese School.

Outside of chess, Lulu is an avid Future Problem Solving competitor, having placed first in States and qualifying for Internationals twice in a row. She enjoys both digital art and math competitions in her free time.



Jerry Chang, *Editor*

Jerry Chang, an eighth-grader at Medea Creek Middle School in Oak Park, California, excels in both chess and extracurricular activities. Starting his chess journey early, Jerry has been mentored by renowned masters from Southern California and Kentucky, earning an impressive chess rating of 1970, placing him among the top 100 players in his age group.

Jerry achieved a Top 10 place at the 33rd annual North American Open in the under 2100 section and a Top 5 placement at the 43rd annual Lina Grumette Memorial in the under 2000 section in 2023. Additionally, he clinched the first-place title in the under 1800 section at the 42nd annual Memorial Day Classic Chess Tournament in 2022. He actively leads the chess club at his school, serving as a senior instructor at YDRC Chess Club and Amy Chess Club. In addition to his involvement in chess, Jerry holds the position of vice president at the Amy Chess Club and co-founded The Future King Chess Club.



Celina Zhou, *Associate Editor*

A St. Louis native, Celina Zhou is a sophomore at Ladue Horton Watkins High School. She started playing chess at age five but took a couple years to grow into her love of the game.

Currently ranked in the top 10 for girls in her age group, she teaches at local schools and hosts camps for young beginners in an effort to create a safe space where anyone can play. Away from the board, Celina's an occasional flutist, amateur baker, and aspiring writer. You can usually find her struggling with her manuscripts, making a mess of her kitchen, or napping with her kitten, Mallow.



FM Henry Deng, *Associate Editor*

Henry Deng is in 8th grade and lives in Northern California. He is a FM with FIDE rating of 2300 and the Champion of the 2021 National Rockefeller Championship.



Olivia Coward, *Managing Designer*

Olivia Coward is a junior attending Horace Mann school in New York City. She is interested in English and visual arts.



Emma Wang, *Designer*

Emma Wang is currently twelve years old and is a seventh grader at Horace Mann School in NY. She enjoys swimming and has been on a team for two years. In addition, she likes playing flute and creating art. She has loved drawing and painting ever since she was little, making a mess in her room with paints and random crafting items. Over the years, she has determined that painting is her favorite medium in art, specifically, acrylic paint. Emma hopes that many younger children will find an interest in art and find it a fun and exciting hobby.



Sabrina Sang, *Designer*

Sabrina Sang is 12 years old and is a 7th grader in Great Neck South Middle School. When Sabrina is not in school, she is taking a nap, hanging out with friends, reading, or watching Marvel movies. Sabrina also loves to draw! Her favorite form of art is charcoal. She hopes that other people can also appreciate still life pieces and learn to use value in art.



Anjali Lodh, *Designer*

Anjali Lodh is a 11th grader at West High School in Iowa. She is the current Iowa Girls Chess Champion and represented Iowa in the Ruth Haring Girls Tournament of Champions in 2019, 2020, and 2022 as well as representing Iowa in the Barber Tournament of Champions in 2021. She co-founded and runs 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, playing tennis, and competing for her school's Science Olympiad team.



NM Jack Levine, *Staff Writer*

Jack Levine lives in New York City and is a rising 11th grader at Hunter College High School. He started playing chess at the age of 5, and became a National Master in 2019 at the age of 13. He won 1st place at the US Grade Nationals while in 4th grade and again in 6th grade, and was Junior High co-champion at the New York State Scholastic Tournament in 2019. Jack also plays soccer, enjoys studying classical piano, and is currently developing Chess Rescue, an organization that will be dedicated to raising urgently needed funds for causes around the world.



Roger Shi, *Staff Writer*

Roger Shi is a 14-year-old Southern Californian with a USCF rating of 2122. He is a “Top Blogger” for chess.com and has posted many blogs on chess.com including one that has won “chess.com’s Blog of The Month.” Roger is a USCF Expert and was the team captain of the “San Diego Sorcerers”, who won the 2021 K-8 USATN Tournament. He is a competitive soccer player, and a Manchester United and Golden State Warriors fan. You can check out his blogs on Chess.com at <https://www.chess.com/blog/RodgyReports>.



NM Roger Zhang, *Staff Writer*

Roger Zhang is a rising sophomore in Livingston, NJ. He recently became a national master and still continues to actively play in tournaments. He and his friends led his high school to win the NJ High School Team Championship in March 2023. Besides chess, he also enjoys math, science, track, cross country, and has a liking for speedrunning the game 2048.



Alice Chovanec, *Staff Writer*

Alice Chovanec is a rising 5th grader at The Anderson School in New York City. She started learning chess at age 5 and aspires to become a National Master one day. In the past year, she helped her school team win the 1st place team award for K-6 section at the Elementary Nationals. She also competed as part of the US Team at the 2022 World Cadets Chess Championship in Batumi, Georgia. Besides chess, she enjoys reading, writing, playing the violin, and traveling with her family.



Dazhen Lu, *Staff Writer*

Dazhen Lu is a 9th grader from Hunter College High School who currently lives in New York City. He started playing chess at the age of six, and got third place (shared) in the 17th Manhattan Open Under 1100 section in 2018. Dazhen is currently on the Hunter 9th grade chess team and got third place in team standings in the 2022 US Grade Nationals and third place as well in team standings in the 2023 High School Nationals with an individual performance rating of 1922 with a rating of 1391. Dazhen also loves music and history, and performed at Carnegie Hall three times as a classical pianist.



Skyler El-Hamri, *Staff Writer*

Skyler is 16 years old and currently taking 1st of bachillerato (which would be equivalent of 11th grade in the US). He lives in Ceuta, a very small city in Spain. Even though he started playing chess just a few years ago, he is currently teaching chess with a small team. he has played a few FIDE rated tournaments, one of them being the Spanish youth championship. Skyler looks forward to raising the recognition of many Spanish players, and more importantly, hopefully creating strong Ceuta players for the future!



Ruoxiao Xia, *Staff Writer*

Ruoxiao Xia is a 14 year old in 8th grade at Northside Middle School in Columbus, Indiana. He has a USCF rating of 2175, and started playing chess at the age of 4. He enjoys hanging out with his friends, playing the piano, and practicing taekwondo in his spare time. Currently placed 32nd at his age in the US, he is also ranked 11th in the state of Indiana. When not competing in tournaments, he also teaches chess as community service.

Thank You to Our Contributors:

In random order: GM Andrew Tang, IM Alice Lee, FM Zoey Tang, Kevin Wang, Dylan Zhang, WIM Lisa Lan Yao, Jason C. Wang, WIM Ellen Wang, FM Davis Zong Jr., WGM Jennifer Yu, Jerry Xie, FM Andy Huang, Daiwen Guo, Eric Wu, IM Annie Wang, WCM Lucia Huang, Lulu Huang, Jerry Chang, NM Erick Zhao, GM Joshua Sheng, IM Evan Park, Oliver Torgersen, Justin Li, Lucas Liu, David Li, GM Darwin Yang, IM-Elect Eddy Tan, Roger Luo, IM Andy Woodward, WIM Evelyn Zhu, GM Awonder Liang, Henry Burton, NM Roger Zhang, NM Jack Levine, Kent Slate, WGM Thalia Cervantes Landeiro, Hans Xu, Megan Paragua, Dazhen Lu, Madison Brown, Laurel Aronian, Alice Chovanec, IM Nico Chasin, WFM Sophie Morris-Suzuki, Roger Shi, Chenxuan Ling, Dazhen Lu, Celina Zhou, Skylar el Hamri, Ruoxiao Xia, FM Henry Deng, GM Andrew Hong, Audrey Zhou, IM Carissa Yip, Tianhao Xue, Alice Shen, Arabella Fang, Joanna Hou, WGM Lan (Lisa) Yao, Eden You, Jay Li, WIM Kelsey Liu, Aman Patil, GM Arthur Guo

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IM Justin Wang & Jason Wang



An Interview with GM Arthur Guo

By WIM Ellen Wang & FM Davis Zong



How did you start to play chess and what part of chess is attractive to you initially?

Yeah, so I started around like six years old, and I stumbled upon it at a local library. And I saw some kids playing chess in the corner. Actually, my first coach, who was an expert level or master level, taught me how to play some chess. And I think at a young age, when I was first starting out, it was definitely something really exciting because honestly, doing anything at a young age and spending and investing so much time into it was definitely something I've never done before. When I was a year in, I was already super

invested in chess. Definitely seeing a super rapid ascension and growth in terms of strength levels was very promising. I think my family saw that, and I saw that, too. Definitely, trying to improve the most was the most exciting aspect of that.

After playing competitive chess for many years, what is your favorite thing about chess now? And has changed from when you started? And what aspects of chess are the most enjoyable?

I think as I've gotten better at chess and have spent more time in chess, I've definitely come to appreciate more of the smaller things and less of the bigger things. And I think at a young age, I was always, like many people, obsessed with the results and obsessed with — I need to get this norm, or I need to get this placement, or I need to qualify for this — kind of thing. And I think spending almost ten, twelve, I think close to a dozen years at this thing has really shown me that when I do look back, a lot of those results and a lot of those accomplishments morph into the same old thing. Those have become less important to me. The things that have come and grown in importance for me are just the memories with my dad, and traveling, and the few small moments where I didn't really feel like chess was my thing but still pushed through and still worked towards my goals.

What is your greatest strength as a chess player and what do you think makes you unique?

Oh, that's a good question. I think my greatest strength is definitely intuition. I think that comes more naturally for me, and I'm more than most other players at my level leaning on intuition and not more so on other aspects of the game, like calculation, theory, that kind of stuff. So definitely intuition.

Is that something that you trained or do you think it just naturally came to you?

I don't know. I don't think it was through training. I think it was just some players are more prone to calculate more than others, and some players are more lazy than others like me. But I think definitely intuition is really helpful, especially in terms of getting a natural feel for any position. I think a lot of that has to do with looking at top players' games, being really sure that you know the ins and outs of your openings, that kind of stuff.

What do you think is the best way to train intuition? Is there a specific routine that is good for that?

I think for me, the biggest thing was just training with engines and learning how engines thought. As an extension of that, looking at a ton of top players' games. What I've done for the past three, four years when I got to a level of IM, I hung around that for a long time. I think the biggest component for me in terms of making that jump from IM to solid grandmaster is definitely covering up the holes in my openings so that going into every game, I feel prepared. And I think there's also a psychological aspect of that, that when you come to a game prepared and then you come to a game knowing that out of the first 15, 20 moves, which are probably the most important of a game because they decide a lot of that kind of positions and a lot of the ability for you to push and not push or be conservative or be more ambitious. I think having that mindset of starting the games off well was always helpful. And I think that was the biggest thing in terms of opening prep, in terms of making me get better results consistently.



You've played in a ton of international and national tournaments, like the World Youth and Juniors as well. Do you have any specific preparation methods that you think are special? Also, how do you approach playing the game against super strong opponents?

The first part of the question: I think the biggest difference, at least between when I was really young and preparing and studying versus now, this is more generic, but when you get more experienced at something like chess, you know, not even consciously, but you know subconsciously what to work on and what you don't want to work on. And definitely maximizing the productivity in terms of what you study and what you get as your output in terms of every hour that you study chess. And so for me, I said this before, but for me, definitely the biggest pivot in terms of me being able to get Grandmaster was focusing down and hunkering down on my openings. And I think that has inroads, at least for me, inroads to the rest of my game in terms of getting positions that I liked, getting positions that felt most comfortable for me and less comfortable for my opponent. And so that's not something that you can gather from reading a book or gather from your coach telling you, per se. But I think a lot of that experience in studying just goes into the fact that you spend a lot of years mentoring yourself, and you have to figure things out on your own.

You've played in a lot of strong tournaments, and there may be high pressure situations. During the middle of a game in the tournament, how do you not think about the result and just focus on the position?



I think it's pretty easy, actually. It's hard to explain, but I guess as chess players, it's like when you're so immersed into this activity for two, three, four, five hours, it's hard not to think about anything else. I think what you touched on, Davis, about another aspect of chess that I had a ton of trouble when I was trying to get Grandmaster, was just the emotional side of things. The way chess tournaments and formats go, you often have, if you're playing an invitational round robin, you often have two games in one day or possibly three games at nationals. Especially when you're not happy with your play and the results also correlate to that, it's very easy to get carried away with your emotions and not be able to divorce that from your actual practical thinking during the game. I think this is besides the point, but I think the biggest area which a lot of players neglect in terms of their training or their preparation before for a tournament or a game is getting to that right mindset in terms of preparing and forgetting any past results, good or bad.

What part of the game, opening, middlegame or endgame, is your favorite?



Definitely opening because I feel like I have a lot of control over it. And I think a lot of chess players including myself, there's a lot of time that has to go into studying middle games and end games, and a lot of people don't have that time. I think a lot of the knack that I've been able to incorporate into my game every time I look at a position from the middle game and endgame, haven't come from any particular book or haven't come from training from coaches and stuff or US chess schools. It's just been from playing a ton and a ton and a ton more. I think definitely openings is really something that a lot of players from all sorts of levels, whether you're an expert or a master or

you're an international master or something below that, can improve drastically very fast just because computers tell you all the answers. I think a very easy way for people to improve is just to follow all the top players, top games, and make sure you're up to date or are familiar with all their developments in terms of what you play and in your repertoire.

And once you do that a lot; I did that for a couple of years. And then before I actually improved, I started adding more stuff to my repertoire. And I think a lot of that has a big component to do with the fact that I improved so much, so drastically. And it's because a lot of players don't want to spend the time looking at a computer for many hours at a time and invest that commitment. And that's what I did. And I think that's the biggest difference in terms of improvement levels.

Are there any specific websites or books you would recommend to study openings, or is it just using the engine and maybe the meta database to study?

Yeah, I just use the latter. I just use Chessbase engines and then copied all the top games. And I still do that now.





Do you like Chessable or have you never really done that?

I've never really done that. Yeah. Mostly, some Chess players are more dependent on other external resources, coaching or indirect external resources, like Chessable, that kind of stuff in courses. I've more just looked at top games, analyze them, made sure I made a file out of them, and then put it into Chessbase and play.

Do you think games at a high level are too concentrated on openings?

I think they are to a certain extent, but I think a lot of what I've realized in terms of following and making sure that I was incorporating all the stuff that I could incorporate in terms of openings from top-level games into my repertoire is that a lot of the substance is right there when Grandmasters, top-level grandmasters, play a novelty or play this certain line for, let's say, a tournament, the candidates. They've obviously looked into the line. Most times that line is off the beaten path because main lines are already figured out and stuff. Obviously, finding novelties and finding new lines not only works on the elite grandmaster level, but also on more or less beginner levels. If you're a grandmaster, you don't want people to prepare or cook up something against you. You want to be more flexible and more diverse in terms of what you can actually deploy in a tournament game. To answer your question, I think it doesn't really matter too much because the game itself shows you that their trainers and their seconds and their entire team of this grandmaster who played it believes in this line and if it's black, believes in the ability for a top player to equalize pretty easily against very stiff competition. So if that holds true, if I can do the same thing against less stiff competition, I think that should be a win for me.



How would you suggest studying openings, middle games, and endgames? Do you have any particular methods for that?

I think the better you get at chess, the need for it to get more simple increases exponentially. When I started in sixth grade, I was 2330. And then I didn't improve for the entirety of middle school. I think the reason why is because I just focused on the wrong things. I thought really convolutedly. I wasn't able to mesh a lot of my mistakes in tournament games and also in Blitz games online into a certain set of rules and principles that I should always follow no matter what. I think counterintuitively, the best way for me, at least, and I think this applies to a lot of people, was that you should think about chess if you want to improve at a very simple level. The same way that you thought of chess when you first started as a beginner, which basically just bogs down to the principles, which is the simplest stuff: king safety, not sacrificing stuff stupidly, controlling the center, piece activity, and that's pretty much it. When you divide a chess game down into those principles, you think from the opening, from the middle game, from the endgame, from the start, from the opening, you always think, Okay, how can I develop my pieces the fastest, how can I not waste tempos, that stuff. That always pretty much guarantees consistent success because if you follow all those rules, no matter what opening or novelty you want to do or some special stuff, if you always follow those principles, you're always going to get an equal game no matter what. If we're just thinking about what if you're a norm seeker, the least you can do is draw. And that's always a W because the only way you cannot get a norm is by losing pretty much in these tournaments. And so in terms of getting and sustaining consistent success, I found that always trying to remember those principles before each move and double-checking and triple-checking that this move aligns with those principles makes the tendency for mistakes go down drastically.

You've played tournaments for 12 years now, and you've definitely played many different types of tournaments. What tournament do you enjoy playing the most?

I think I would definitely say the Junior Closed, but I only played it once, so it doesn't really matter too much for me, just because the environment is really nice and that it seems super professional, and I haven't played that many professional tournaments in my life. I think also another enjoyable but not so enjoyable one, is just the world youth and the world cadets. I've done terribly in them but getting away from school for two weeks just to pursue chess is always nice.



As you've gone into more professional chess, what are the biggest changes that you've made to adapt your game to that as well?

Yeah, definitely the stuff I talked about earlier, openings and making the game simpler. But I think of another one that I forgot to mention. Well, let's actually circle back a little. The difference between a 2000, a 2200, a 2400, a 2600 and Magnus Carlson, is just the quantity and severity of their mistakes. The biggest part of that is the severity of their mistakes. If you're a beginner, you're going to drop a piece, and that's a normal mistake for you. If you're a 2400, a mistake for you is probably a positional mistake. For a 2700 or 2800, the best players in the world, their definition of mistake is something that's probably dubious for a computer or a move that leads to a position that is hard to just play for them and increases the level and risk of a mistake. I think when you're thinking about as a chess player, how do I improve? The biggest thing, at least for me, was to not make super dumb mistakes. Just like if you're on a test or you're taking an assessment, you don't want to make dumb, stupid math errors.



That's the same thing for chess. If you think about it, if you're trying to get six and a half out of nine at a norm tournament, you don't really want to lose because then there's no way you can, I don't know, get plus five or plus six in the rest of your games. Being able to be consistent all comes down to being able to not lose, being able to save draws out of losing positions, or going to a game perfectly okay with the fact that you're going to eat up your pride. If you're going to go for a position that only you can win but probably is going to be a draw, it is totally fine. I think for me, the biggest thing in terms of making that jump from international master to grandmaster level is being okay with being conservative and being fine with drawing. I think for a lot of players, especially if they really want to improve, I think the mature aspect of chess is that it's okay to draw, but it's definitely not okay with losing. And so if you knock out that aspect of chess, your results will automatically go higher.

What's your chess routine and how often do you compete in tournaments?

Yeah. So over the summer when I got my Grandmaster title and got three, four norms in a row or something, I didn't really do too much because it was junior year and it was hard and tons of AP stuff. But I did set up this training camp with Sam Shankland for five, six days, and that was probably helpful. We did a lot of puzzles, training positions, training games, that kind of stuff, working on certain aspects of my game. Obviously, I know a lot of people are not that much invested into chess as I was and don't have the resources and the money to pay a lot to a person like Sam Shankland to have that private camp. But for me, that summer, I think the biggest thing in terms of studying that changed was I got rid of all my distractions. I didn't think of anything. I became a hobo that did chess for two and a half months, and it worked out. But that was definitely the biggest thing.

I think I didn't really do that for sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth, 10th grade, all those grades, all those years. I was half baked on chess and half baked on other things. I wasn't really 120% committed. I think when you ask chess players about how they study and how they approach chess, they're always going to say, yeah, I work hard on chess. But most times they don't, if you're actually being honest. I'm sure you all had the experience about chess being so boring, you don't even want to stare at it, or you don't even want to look at it. That's me right now because I'm done with everything. But I think the biggest thing for me that summer and for anybody that wants to improve is just to cut out the noise, cut out the clutter in terms of chess, and really be conscious about what you're studying and what you're spending your time on in terms of chess, and making sure every ounce of that and every second of that goes and counts towards actual meaningful improvement. That's what I would say. In terms of today, I'm not studying chess at all, but I'll do that later.



There are always these different parts of chess that are talked about. The technical side, the psychological side, tactical side, positional side. How much do you think each of these factors contribute overall to chess? Which parts do you think are the most important?

Yeah, that's a great question. So I would think if I divided chess into those components, like you said, Ellen, definitely technical side, the calculation stuff, the very hard things, like theory, both on openings and endgames. I think there would also be something like the more abstract, more feely. It's more vague and ambiguous. I don't think the calculation level between a 2600 versus Magnus Carlson is all that different. But I think the big difference that there's a 200 massive point rating gap and if you had a match between them in 10 games, Magnus would beat the other person eight times out of 10 in classical, is not due to the technical side, but more of the feely, intuitive side of things. I think those are the two big ones in terms of the actual one-to-one correlation between what you're thinking during a game versus what you're actually going to play for a move. But there's also a definitely big aspect of this, the psychological side, which I think gets way more important when you get better at chess. And when you're playing a lot of the same competition where most of those levels of technical plus intuitive sides of chess are the same, it all comes down to who has the better nerves or who has the more, I wouldn't say mature, but more patience. That's not the word either — the better decision-making skills. Obviously, that depends game to game. But a lot of people focus on those technical and intuitive sides and forget the last thing about your decision making and playing smart chess, not just playing good chess, but playing smart chess. I think this goes back to the part I said about reducing your losses to at most once every two tournaments in terms of getting sustainable improvement. And so definitely the side of playing smart chess and very committed to that.

Chess playing can be very nerve-wracking, especially in time trouble. How do you stay calm and find a balance between keeping a high intensity of thinking but not getting too nervous?

Oh. First of all, you shouldn't get into time trouble. That's the first thing. The second thing is that even for the best players, they won't admit it to you, but they get really, really nervous in time trouble. You can practice Blitz and you can practice other things, but that's so much different than an actual game just because there's a lot on the line and you can't just lose and just play another three-minute game again. And so I think the biggest thing is just realizing those types of aspects of the game are unpredictable, and it's very unpredictable for you, and that's bad. And so you shouldn't get into that.



How do you not get into time pressure? Do you just play faster?

I think it's a confluence of factors. The biggest thing is openings and the familiarity with positions out of those openings, because if you do good opening preparation, you can map out a game to a certain extent, and you can have positions from your file that say you already know as black, you can play this game comfortably. You know where the pieces are going to go. It's very simple for you. Finding those positions that are simple for you and comfortable for you. Perhaps if you're white, if you're wanting to push uncomfortable for your opponent, I think a lot of that is very doable beforehand, before a tournament. And so that level of confidence, both tangible and intangible, goes a long way in terms of making your decisions and your moves very fast and very accurate.

So I think it's inevitable. If you have a game 90 plus 30, obviously, if the game goes on, both people are going to get into time trouble. And that's just a question of nerves. And I think the more work, the more conscious, smart preparation that you do as a chess player; and not even as a chess player, for academics, you don't go into a test and don't prepare. Then, yeah, you're going to get into time trouble because you're going to do shit. It's the same thing with chess. If you study and you actually study it smartly and you do prioritize the things that are important for your game in terms of improving, I think you'll automatically realize that. It's not as easy as it sounds, but it's good enough.



Do you have a favorite chess player?

Yeah. I think actually there's this quote by Wesley So a few years ago that said that his advice for players that were weaker was just to look at Magnus' games. And obviously, that's a very reductionist way of thinking in terms of actually trying to prepare for stuff. But I think there's a lot of truth in that statement. Magnus does play chess at the highest level, and that's because he follows the principles at the highest level. If you look at any of his positions, the reasons why he gets those favorable positions is because his king is safe, or he has a better pawn structure, or he has less weaknesses, or he has more active pieces. I think at its most simplest level, chess can be reduced to those very few finite things that at its highest level. Magnus does the best to control.

And I think a lot of people get bogged down in chess by doing so many different kinds of things without any focus on anything in particular. I think a lot of this preparation and time before a tournament that goes onto those things is very unfocused and is usually not helpful for the actual 90 minutes that you play and spend in a classical game. And so thinking of chess on simpler terms is more manageable for most people, including myself.

Now that you're a grandmaster, do you have a specific further goal that you're aiming for in your chess career?

That's a great question. I've been thinking about that a lot. Definitely US Championship or the World Cup. But other than that, I don't really know. I started chess when I was five, six years old for the sole purpose of being a grandmaster. And I don't want to become anything more than that because that's a terrible life. And so there's a lot more stuff to do than chess.



Have you ever considered playing chess full-time, or how do you see chess playing into your life in the future?



Yeah, that's another great question. So my parents, along with a ton of other parents, view chess as something that is great in terms of improving not only your critical thinking skills, but it also helps with college stuff, obviously. Obviously, I didn't do chess or try to improve chess for college or even anything else. I selfishly, like most people, wanted to improve just because I wanted to improve and be a better chess player. But the thing with chess is that the difference between 2500 and 2600, or don't even start thinking about 2700, is massive. And there's a lot of very amorphous components in terms of making that jump, which I think applies to making the jump between international grandmaster and grandmaster, which I think a lot of people and players are capable of doing these days but just lack the drive to. But I don't think that applies to higher levels. I think for me, chess grandmaster is nice. I'm chill here and focus on other things. But chess is definitely one of those things that I mean, even after 12 years, I still really enjoy doing and still enjoy playing and meeting the people that share the same passion as I do for chess. Yeah, it's great. I'll definitely keep playing a few times every year, but I don't think anything more than that.

Outside of the board, you're also a nationally ranked policy debater. You qualified for tournaments such as the 2023 Tournament of Champions. What are the biggest things from chess that helped you become such a successful debater as well?

I think chess and debate are both one of the few very, very rigorous and time-intensive extracurricular activities that any high school student can do. I think a lot in the same vein as chess, debate requires so much work. It's a ton of research and a ton of making files the same way, very akin to what is in Chessbase and Chessbase opening files. There's a lot of similarities in that aspect. I think the biggest thing is time. The level of commitment that I think any reasonably good and competent chess player spends on chess in terms of being able to sit down and being able to actually study also carries over in debate as well. I think a lot of the best debaters, that's not on myself, but the best debaters have the same characteristics as chess players insofar as the fact that they can actually study and focus and get things done. And I think chess has taught me a lot about that.

Do you think you're going to keep doing it in college?

Debate? College policy debate is actually a very, very big thing, especially since a lot of debaters go into law and do all that kind of stuff. College policy debate is, I wouldn't say renowned, but the same way with holding a title in chess. If you apply for a job or apply for college, it helps; that's the same with debate. Policy debate on the college level is 10 times more serious than high school debate, but I don't think Yale has a policy debate team. Actually, I know one of the other top national debaters that's going to Yale, but we don't really have the resources, and it's way too much time and there's so much work. But definitely, there's a lot of other forms of debate at Yale. Off the top of my head, the Yale Political Union is very similar. So I think any exposure to communication stuff or being able to very succinctly and persuasively deploy arguments the same way you deploy openings in chess is very helpful. And so, yeah, I might do something. We'll see.



How do you balance chess playing as well as school work at the same time?

I think this applies to debate but more so in chess I guess that a lot of the best juniors in the US, they're pretty good students as well. That's not causal because there's definitely something to that. They all are insanely smart and go to great colleges. I think maybe not linearly, but if you're quite good at chess and quite good at studying chess, even if you're an expert or something, I think that translates if you're a student or if you're able to use your time wisely or focus on some things more than others and be able to discern what's more important than what's not. I think if you're a good chess player, even though a lot of hours have to go into improving at chess, I think the way to balance out that is that the skill level issue translates as a student, so you can get things done faster and prioritize better and organize better. For me, I don't think balancing was all that of an issue for me, at least. I think the biggest issue was when I went to tournaments, I would have to miss classes and make up everything. But other than that, I thought it was pretty straightforward.

What do you think are the differences between studying chess and studying other things?

I think at least for me, chess is very straightforward, so to speak. I think if you're very intentional about what you do, it's very hard to get bad results. And if you're very not intentional about what you do, it's easier to fall off. And quite literally, I think it applies more to chess, what I just said, more than to other things. Because I feel like in debate, you both have to do a ton of research, which equates to doing a ton of opening prep or reading a ton of books. But then you also have to be able to do the non-tangible stuff about speaking and being persuasive and all that ethos-y stuff that makes you clear to the judge that you know what you're doing and also makes you win a debate round. But that's not really with chess because chess is more one-dimensional. It's more controllable, since there's only two players playing, and most times, 99% of the time, the reason why you lose is because of yourself. And so, I think the difference between studying chess and, let's say, studying debate is accountability. Actually it makes me think about if you're studying for a test, it's actually quite similar to chess. It's just being able to be accountable: if you study well for a test, I don't think anything can go wrong.



What important skills do you think you've developed from chess that have helped you in other places in life?

I think definitely the biggest one is being independent in terms of what you want to focus on. I know this is getting really repetitive, but definitely, I think the hours and the years that I've spent in terms of studying chess has taught me that I should be able to really depend on myself in terms of what standards I hold myself to and whether I should hold myself accountable to that if we don't meet those standards. Another big thing is chess has taught me what's important. I think I said this the first thing in this meeting or in this interview about how 12 years of chess has made me realize that results and titles are nice accomplishments for your pride; they're not that really important at the end of the day. I think a lot of the trips and a lot of the time I spent with my dad, not particularly but all of those times have made me who I was. I don't think any opening file or title or rating can encapsulate that.

From Wiki

Arthur Guo is an American chess grandmaster from Atlanta, Georgia. He is a nine-time National Chess Champion and also a three-time International Gold Medalist/Champion. Guo earned the FIDE title of Grandmaster (GM) in July 2023 soon after he turned 17. As of January 1, 2024, he is the highest-rated 17-year-old in the country and is ranked No. 29 among juniors (under 21) in the world.

Photo Credit: St. Louis Chess Club



My Experience at the 2024 SoCal SuperStates

By Roger Shi

The SoCal SuperStates chess tournament is a highly anticipated annual tournament that decides Southern California's representatives for the Rockefeller, Barber, Denker, and Haring tournament of champions. This year would be my first experience in the K-12 section, the most challenging section. The tournament schedule was especially demanding, a six round tournament over the course of two days meant that there were three rounds a day with little break between rounds.

As the 11th seed, I had decent expectations for the tournament.

Last year I tied for first in the K-8 section, although I finished fourth on tiebreaks. My plan this time was to be accurate and beat the lower rated players, and then attempt to pull off an upset in the final rounds. The previous year, I had nearly lost a game against a 1760 but narrowly escaped with a stalemate motif.

Day 1 of the 2024 SoCal SuperStates

In the first round, I was paired against a 1650 and I was able to quickly win after closing the position and launching a kingside



attack. Unfortunately, the second round was not as smooth, I was paired against a 1900 and I made a few inaccuracies in the opening. What followed was a trade of the major pieces, which led to an endgame where I was able to activate my king and reach the following position.

As the last game in the playing hall, we were both extremely low on time. My opponent had gotten greedy and took my pawn on h3, but I punished that by using my knight to trap her light-squared bishop. The simple 47. Ke4 would've won, with the idea of playing Bd4 followed by bringing the King to g3, trapping the bishop.

Instead, I chose the wrong square for the bishop, playing 47. **Bd6+?**, This allowed my opponent to play 47. **Kb6** attacking the pawn and stopping my progress. I responded by defending the pawn with 48. **Kc4**. She then tried to create her own passed pawn with 48. **h5**, and then I panicked and played 49. **gxh5 g4** 50. **Kd4 Kxb4** 51. **Ke4**. Here, I certainly had no winning chances. I had lost my crucial b-pawn and now was left with an h-pawn that would be difficult to make any progress with. The game continued with 51. **Bh6** 52. **Be7 Kc6** 53. **Bh4** when suddenly my opponent started to think, it was difficult to make progress and was certainly a draw. With just one second on the clock and a 10 second delay, she froze.



Suddenly, her clock hit zero and I had won on time. Such a lucky result in a dead draw position was definitely a wake up call, I knew that I had to be more accurate, otherwise I would stand no chance against higher rated players.

In the third round, I had gotten quite a fortunate pairing; rather than facing a 2200 or 2300, I was paired against a 2050 with a score of 1.5/2. The entire game was equal, and we reached a drawn endgame with same colored bishops and queens.





I had just played **37. f4**, an inaccurate move. Practically, I thought it could give some winning chances with future plans of f3 and trying to open up the king. Though a move like **37. Qb6** would likely force a queen trade, with a likely draw. Fortunately, under time pressure, my opponent made a massive blunder with **38. Kf1??** The game quickly ended with **Qa1+ 39. Qe1 Bxg2+! 40. Kf2. Qxe1+ 41. Kxe1 Bxh3** and my opponent resigned. This meant that I had finished the first day with a perfect 3/3 score, despite my lucky wins in round two and three.

Day 2 of the 2024 SoCal SuperStates

In the fourth round, I was paired against a 2260 who had a score of 2.5/3. I was unable to replicate the ending where I had blundered, since I

had gone under 5 minutes and stopped notating. However, I had learned an important lesson from this loss, manytimes in the game, I had spent too much time in simple positions when I could've made a move instantly.



In this position for example, I thought for 10 minutes, before playing the simple **18. Rfe1**. In a tournament with a time control of 80 minutes, there was no reason for me to spend $\frac{1}{8}$ of my time on such a simple move that doesn't alter the position much. Even if I had played a move like **18. h3** the evaluation of the position would not change. I had tried to be a perfectionist, trying to make the best move in each position, when in reality, I was burning the time that would be needed later on in a more crucial position that actually required concrete thinking.



In the fifth round, I played against a 2320 FM as black, after an extremely open fight, my opponent finally decided to castle on 27th move. Here the game quickly ended after **32. Bf8 33. Rd5 Nxf4 34. Rxf5 Rh7+**. After I had played Bf8, I thought there would be no way for him to respond to the threat of taking on f4 and then swinging the rook over. However, he had a resource that could've saved the game. The move is **33. g3!**, despite it being often regarded that pushing pawns in front of the king is weakening, in this scenario, it gives the king breathing room and also helps support the bishop on f4. It is difficult to attack the king as it can always hide on g2, and Nd4 will come next. Fortunately, my opponent did not find this resource, and this game is one of my biggest upset wins.

If I wanted a draw, I could've easily repeated the position with Nb4 and Nd5, to which my opponent would obviously respond with R6c7 and Rc6. I did not play this, as I felt my position was slightly better, but if my opponent did not want to draw, he may have saced the exchange. Obviously, this example is quite extreme as there would be no way for my opponent to gain compensation for the exchange.

Another way to use a perpetual to your advantage is repeating the moves twice before playing a different move that would continue the game. If your opponent sees that you have repeated the position a second time, they may begin to think if they should escape the perpetual with a risky move.



Even if they were to repeat, it would burn time off their clock and allow you to think of how to continue the game.

I finished the 2024 SoCal SuperStates with a score of 4.5, one of my best tournament

performances in recent times. Along with the tournament, I also learned the importance of time usage, opponent's resources, and use of the perpetual.




About the Author:



Roger Shi is a 14-year-old Southern Californian with a USCF rating of 2122. He is a "Top Blogger" for chess.com and has posted many blogs on chess.com including one that has won "chess.com's Blog of The Month." Roger is a USCF Expert and was the team captain of the "San Diego Sorcerers", who won the 2021 K-8 USATN Tournament. He is a competitive soccer player, and a Manchester United and Golden State Warriors fan. You can check out his blogs on Chess.com at <https://www.chess.com/blog/RodgyReports>.


LIFE vs. CHESS

By Aman Patil



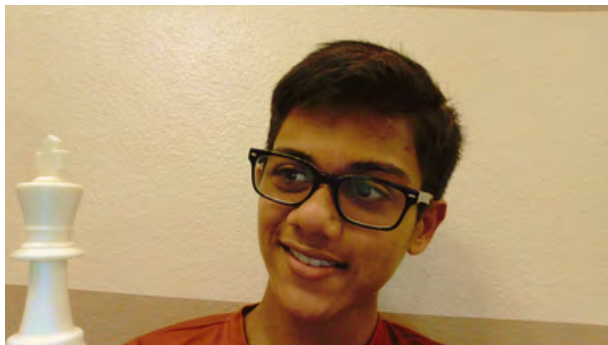
Chess, at its core, is very similar to the structure of life. Now think about it. What is chess? You are faced with an unknown opponent, each side having 16 different pieces at their disposal, waiting to be used. This is life, waiting to throw who knows what at you. But how do you play? You maneuver each piece to create a desirable position, use different tactics for your advantage, and make a particular strategy or plan to improve your advantage. Using these plans, you might have had a very stable or positional game with life that lasted 40 - 50, maybe 60 moves. Or your foolproof plan might have been broken through, and you fell for Scholar's Mate on the 4th move. One may feel like these are all the resemblances of life to chess, but these aren't the only ones. With a bit more digging, you might wonder if you're playing a game of chess or a game of life. At the start of the game, you either sit in the driver's seat and command your life with the white pieces or have to defend your position. But the starting color isn't that important, but your approach to life, your opening in chess is. You could be with the black pieces but still play a combative opening/ approach to life such as the Sicilian, or a defensive opening as white like the Grunfeld, and the list goes on and on. Remember, the reason why there are almost infinite possibilities is because of the many ways people can approach the game of life and chess.





At the start of the game, you get eight pawns. These can be valued as eight attributes such as fitness, logic, speaking, science, and the list goes on. If you decide to culminate and master these skills (promote them), these skills will help you throughout your game of life. You can use these skills to create different structures fortifying yourself. Your bishops and knights can be viewed as your parents, guiding you and protecting your pawns while also setting you up for success against the opposition. Your rooks can be viewed as your teachers, friends, and pretty much everyone who supports you. Your queen is the highest value piece, and for a good reason. The queen is the symbol of choice. Your choice is the most powerful thing in your arsenal. Your choice overrides almost any piece in your arsenal. Your choice and where you put your queen will almost certainly depict your outcome. If your queen lands in enemy territory, you're improving the outcome of your life. If your queen gets taken, you're going to have a hard time taking control of your life after you lose your choice. Your king, the most important piece above the queen, is the key to chess. Never let it get trapped as that is the soul. Once the soul is trapped, you can't move, it's game over. It can't be protected and now it's at the mercy of life. No matter what pieces you have on the outside protecting you, even if you have almost all their pieces, if life traps the soul, everything else is meaningless. The next time when you go play chess or have a few minutes to yourself, see if you can think of more resemblances. It's fun to see new connections and requires a good think!

About the Author:



Aman Patil is a 7th grader at Medea Creek Middle School in Oak Park, California. He learned chess at the age of six and was interested, but started to play in tournaments early 2024. Apart from chess, he enjoys running, learning about math, playing piano, and likes to play with his friends.



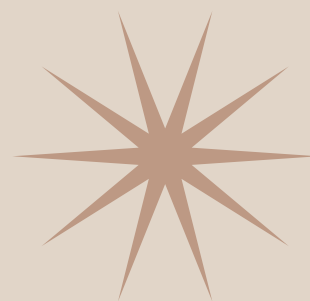
LIVING LEGEND:

A SIMUL GAME VS.
NONA GAPRINDASHVILI



By
Celina Zhou

One of the most significant figures in chess in the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first is GM Nona Gaprindashvili, the first woman to become a FIDE Grandmaster. A trailblazer in her field, her influence is impossible to understate. This June, I had the incredible opportunity to play GM Gaprindashvili in a simultaneous exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis, alongside seven other girls from the local area.



**GAPRINDASHVILI, NONA VS.
ZHOU, CELINA,
SIMULTANEOUS EXHIBITION,
11 JUNE 2024**

1.d4 d5

As it was a clock simul, I played black.

2.c4 e6

3.Nc3 Nf6

4.Bg5 c6

5.e3 Nbd7

6.Nf3 Be7

7.Bd3 O-O

8.O-O dxc4

9.Bxc4 b5

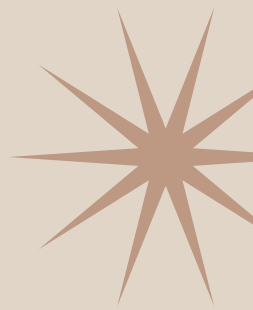


So far, this is a pretty standard structure for a modern QGD: Semi-Slav. Because e3 was played before dxc4, plans in this structure for black usually constitute working for b5 and c5 on the queenside, while white plays in the center.



10. Bd3 a6
11. Qc2 h6
12. Bh4 Bb7
13. a3
Trying for b4, which shuts down the queenside.

13. ... c5
14. Be2 Rc8
15. Rfd1



An inaccuracy which allows black to open the c-file. 15. Qb1 or 15. Qd2 would have been better, moving white's queen out of the line of fire.



15. ... b4

16. Na4

A mistake. In this position, white's only chance to remain equal is 16. Bxf6. If 16... Nxf6 17. dxc5, and after 16. ... Bxf6, Ne4 equalizes.

16. ... cxd4

17. Qd3 dxe3

18. Qxe3 Nd5

19. Qd4 Bxh4

19. ...g5! would have been much stronger. After 20. Bg3 bxa3, black is much better. After 19... Bxh4, white has chances for counterplay.

20. Qxh4 Qxh4

21. Nxh4 bxa3



An inaccuracy; 21. ...b3 would have retained control over the queenside and forced white on the defensive, instead of allowing for the rook development that occurred in the game.



- 1.Rxa3 Ne5
- 2.Nf3 Nf4
- 3.Nxe5 Nxe2+
- 4.Kf1 Nf4
- 5.g3 Nd5
- 6.Nd7

A mistake: the knight is weak and isolated on black's seventh rank, and its position leaves many tactical holes in white's position.

- 27. ... Rfd8
- 7.Ndc5

- 28. ... Ne3
- 29. Rxd3 Rxd1
- 30. Ke2 Rcd8

A blunder: better was 30. ...Ra1 or 30. ...Rd4, which would have won the exchange. Instead, after 30. ...Rcd8, white equalizes.

- 31. Nxb7 R8d2+
- 32. Kf3 Rd4
- 33. Nc3 R1d2
- 34. Na4

White drops a piece. A few moves later, she resigned.

- 34. ...Rxa4
- 35. b3 Raa2
- 36. Rc3 Rxf2
- 0-1.



This game was played in a casual setting, but facing GM Gaprindashvili was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had in chess which the St. Louis Chess Club and World Chess Hall of Fame have offered me. As someone I've looked up to for years and someone who sets an example for young chess players everywhere, GM Gaprindashvili is a living legend whose legacy has left an impact on chess permanently.



A St. Louis native, Celina Zhou is a sophomore at Ladue Horton Watkins High School. She started playing chess at age five but took a couple years to grow into her love of the game.

Currently ranked in the top 10 for girls in her age group, she teaches at local schools and hosts camps for young beginners in an effort to create a safe space where anyone can play. Away from the board, Celina's an occasional flutist, amateur baker, and aspiring writer. You can usually find her struggling with her manuscripts, making a mess of her kitchen, or napping with her kitten, Mallow.



Photo Credit: World Chess Hall of Fame

2024 Unruly Queens Boston Chess Festival:

A day of learning, fun, and chess!

By WIM Kelsey Liu

On June 9th, kids and parents streamed through the door of the Boylston Chess Club, just as the Unruly Queen's 4th Chess Festival commenced. Following the successful conclusion of UQ's Indiana Chess Festival last week, the Unruly Queens brought another one to the Boston chess community. The building bustled with chess moves, laughter, and playful rivalry. Outside, rain pattered down the window and umbrellas were being unleashed. That didn't stop the enthusiasm for chess in the clamoring room lit with warm orange lights. With over 40 signups, the event was a lively success, bringing together chess players of all ages and genders for a day full of learning, fun, and all kinds of chess.



Highlights:

GM Nadya Kosintseva's lecture



*Photo credits:
Camille Gómez-Laberge*

Our local female grandmaster and coach Nadya Kosintseva delivered an instructive lecture featuring positions in recent top level games, tactical skirmishes, and strategic maneuvering. It was an honor to have her as a mentor for the young girls as an inspirational role model. There are only 42 female players in the world who hold the prestigious grandmaster title, with both Zhu Jiner and Vaishali Rameshbabu achieving it in the recent year.

The deep calculation and creative thinking process was broken down step by step when GM Kosintseva dissected these complicated concepts for players of all skill levels to easily grasp, understand, and digest.

The Blitz Tournament (Time control G/3; +2)

Even before the festivities started, attendees were automatically playing between themselves, with the club's posh boards and pieces. The blitz tournament was a whirlwind of excitement, testing sharp instinct and quick reflexes.

We hope that everyone learned something new, formed new friends, and made a memorable experience.



Marking scores!



Prize ceremony!

In the words of one of the players, "I may have lost, but I'm here to learn!"





Hmm...What to play?

Congratulations to the winners! Final Standings and Prize Winners:

1. Christine Nguyen (5/5)

Prize: Judit Polgar - How I Beat Fischer's Record

2. Nana Chan (4/5)

Prize: Travel Chess Set

3. Yanyee Li (4/5)

Prize: Golden chess queen keychain



The Puzzle Competition



Hard at work solving puzzles



One memorable puzzle involved a tricky pin that slipped the minds of over half the participants who attempted it:

Can you find the mate in 3 for Black?



1..g4+ 2.Kh5, Qh3+!! 3.Qh4, Qxh4# was the most fashionable answer.

Of course, 2..Qh3+ is illegal as there is a pin to the king along the h7-b8 diagonal.

Instead, the solution involves a nifty work-around: 2..Qg6+
3.Qxg6, fxg6#

Final Standings and Prize Winners

1. Christine Nguyen (28/28)

Prize: Travel Chess Set

2. Yanyee Li (19/28)

Prize: Queen for a Day: The Girl's Guide to Chess Mastery

3. Nana Chan (9.5/28)

Prize: Chess Queens by Jennifer Shahade

A Bughouse Tournament

Produced a variety of goofy team names. The lineup:

- Potato Club
- Queens
- Amy and Emmet
- Burgers
- Blah blah blah
- Dragons
- Swifties
- The Chens



Featuring the photographer himself: Camille Gómez-Laberge

For those who stayed at the very end after some tough puzzles, the Bughouse tournament was a fun and engaging experience with amusing team names and the most supportive atmosphere between kids. It was fierce competition neck-and-neck until the very end between the Potato Club and Queens, both with 4/5.



The critical matchup:
The Queens (Yanyee Li and
Nana Chan) vs The Potato
Club (Tom and Ben)

Champion:

1. Potato Club

Prize: Pair of Chess Queen ornaments



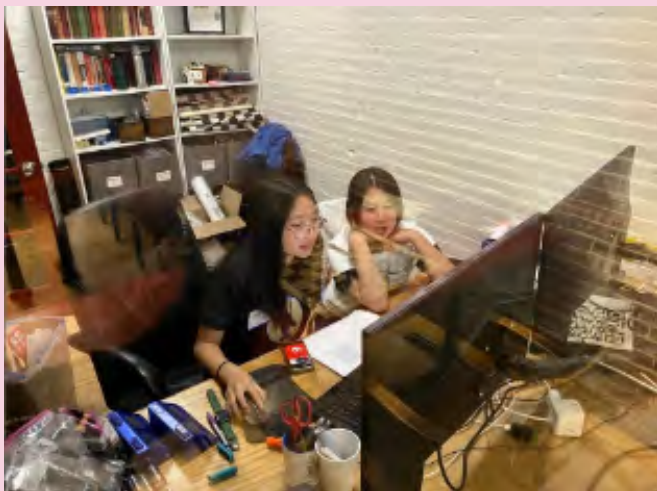
Bughouse teams



Acknowledgments:

We thank everyone who attended the 2024 UQ Boston Chess Festival; the overwhelming interest and support for chess were beyond our expectations, and we were thrilled to see such a vibrant community come together.

In the summer of 2023, under the Unruly Queens initiative, we applied for another US Chess Women grant, which UQ had been successfully awarded in previous years, a \$2780 grant in 2020 and \$1500 in 2022. So Special thanks to US Chess Women for their generous grant that made this festival possible to have generous prizes for each and every girl who attended. What started as an online platform offering free chess lessons has expanded into large in-person events and festivals



Behind the scenes in the TD room,
processing pairings.

Featured left to right: Christine,
Kelsey, and Amy.

We couldn't have done it without all
of our zealous volunteers!





Thank you everyone and all of the work done to make this event possible!

Organizer and Host: (your author) Kelsey Liu, lead instructor
at Unruly Queens online lesson series.

Ellen Wang as the Co-Founder of UQ.

And our wonderful volunteers who went above and beyond:

Photographer: Camille Gómez-Laberge

Game announcements: Ritse Adefolalu

Operating Pairings Assistants: Amy and Christine Nguyen

Lunch pick-up: Jiayun Liu and Jiaqi Gu

And a special thanks for Arthur and Julie Balas, who have been
long lasting supporters of female chess in Massachusetts, for
their support in donating books to beginner chess players:

Beginning Chess Play by Bill Robertie.

And especially to the Boylston Chess Club (BCC) for the venue
location, chess materials, and welcoming atmosphere.

With anticipation, the Boston Chess Festival inspired a new
generation of chess kids and talents to play more chess, for fun
and competitively. The festival's impact was profound,
particularly in empowering young girls to play chess and
boosting the chess culture in the Boston community.



Kelsey Liu is an instructor and organizer at Unruly Queens. She has been playing chess for 8 years, and has since achieved the titles of Woman International Master and National Master (achieved at 13 years of age). She is the 5-time Massachusetts girls state champion, gold medalist at the Pan America Youth Chess Championship (G18), and represented the US team in multiple World Youth Chess Championships. Kelsey hopes to share the game's beauty and see aspiring talents emerge as a result of the team's efforts. Outside of chess, Kelsey enjoys drawing, coding, and playing soccer.



Photo Credit: St. Louis Chess Club



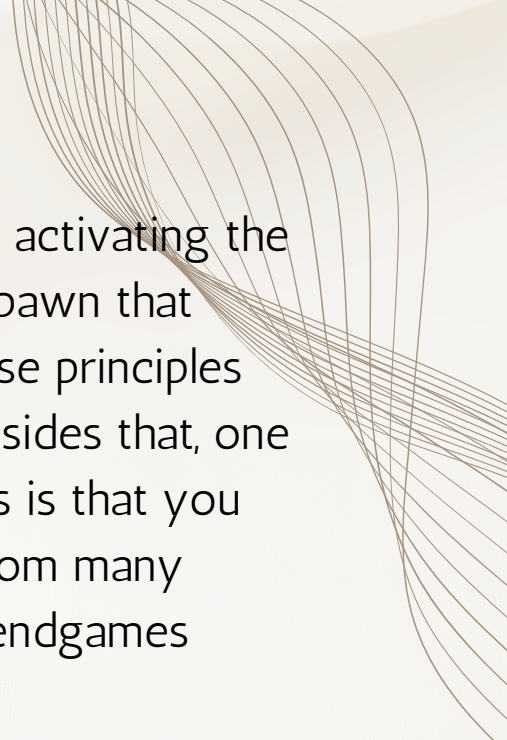
Endgames *Henry Deng* In Practice

In theory, endgames should be simple and straightforward because there are less pieces on the board, which means there are less options for each side, which should make play easier than the middlegame. However, looks can be deceiving.



While some endgames are rather simple, some are much more complex, requiring a good feel for the position. For example, finding where the pieces should be, how to get them there, finding a good plan, etc, can be difficult, and endgames can also be very concrete, requiring brute force calculation. In addition, players need to know a good amount of theoretical endgames, probably from Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual, so that in the game they can know whether a transition to the pawn endgame will be winning, or whether a rook endgame is a theoretical draw, and so on. Theoretical endgames are really important because sometimes it is necessary to know the correct continuation or else it is highly improbable that it will be found in the game.





There are also general endgame principles like activating the king and keeping the rook behind the passed pawn that could help guide play in the endgame, and these principles can be very useful and necessary to know. Besides that, one of the biggest challenges of playing endgames is that you will almost always be low on time and tired from many hours of playing the game, which just makes endgames harder to play.

A lot of weaker players struggle in the endgame, botching winning positions and losing drawn ones. This is usually because they do not know the theoretical ending and how to play it, have a wrong idea/plan that they are playing for, or because they do not really have a sense of direction in the endgame, with no idea what they should be playing for, and end up playing aimless moves. Reading books like the aforementioned Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual and also Endgame Strategy by Mikhail Shereshevsky will help immensely, as well as gaining experience in them by playing them over the board. Stronger players are usually also stronger in the endgame, which can help when playing lower rated opponents, because they do not always hang a piece and/or get checkmated in the middlegame. They might try to exchange all the pieces and make a draw. However, just because the position is more simplified does not mean it is a draw; there are still chances, and the endgame is a chance to show the difference in playing level.



Next, I will show some actual games from practice:



This is a position taken from a game where I was playing as white against a lower rated opponent. The last move was move 41, although there is no real significance to that because we did not get extra time, but it is safe to say we both did not have too much time, in fact my opponent had less than a minute here.

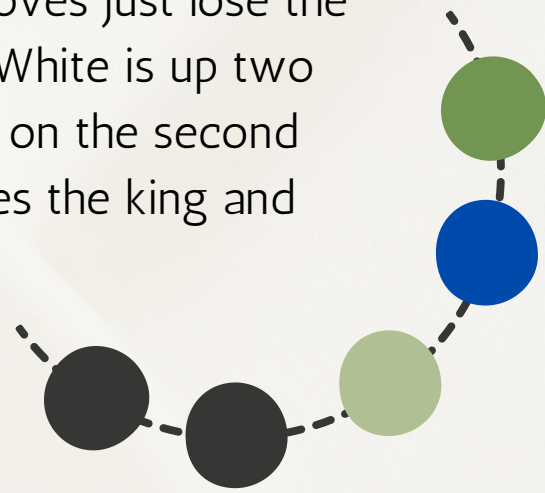
Here I took the free pawn **42.Nxg5** and my opponent quickly played **42...Rg7**, which I did not see. I expected him to play **42...Rxe5** and after **43.Rxe5 Kxe5** and something like **44.Nf3+**, I was going to push for a while, and White does have some chances. However, his move does look good (and is good!). It attacks the knight, and if the knight moves, then the g2 pawn will fall, and if his rook gets to g2, then it also attacks the c2 pawn. I played **43.Nh3**, which prevents **43...Rxe5** because then after **44.Nxf4+**, the king and the rook are forked, and White wins. My opponent played **43...Bxh3** **44.gxh3 f3**, threatening f2, so I played **45.Kd2 Rg2+**



Here it was probably better to be more objective about my position, and play 46.Kd3 Rg3 47.Kd2, where Black's best option would probably be to repeat, since after 47...Rxh3 48.e6 f2 49.Rf1 Kxe6 50.Rxf2 would lead to a position similar to the game. However, I still

wanted to win and played a terrible move, **46.Kd1??**.

Black now has a great shot to win the game with 46...d3!. The point is that after 47.cxd3 Rxb2, black will play f2 next, when White is forced to go Rf1, and then take the e5 pawn, slowly gobble up the h-pawn, then the d-pawn, and at some point in time play Ra2. Black can try to go for the a-pawn as well, but it is likely that his king cannot reach it in time because when the d- and h-pawns go, White can only try to push the a-pawn, and Black will take it with the b-pawn. Black does not even have time to bring his king in and finish White off because White's position will self-destruct before that. After the a-pawn is taken, the only legal moves just lose the rook. This goes to show that even though White is up two pawns after d3, the domination of the rook on the second rank and the monstrous f2 pawn immobilizes the king and rook, and puts him in zugzwang.



However, as mentioned earlier, my opponent was in serious time trouble and played **46...f2??** which misses the win, but does not lose Black the game. My opponent likely thought that after **47.Rf1 Kxe5 48.Ke2 Rh2**

49.Rxf2 Rxh3, Black has two pawns versus three pawns,

which should be an easy draw, right? I played **50.Rf3**

50...Rh1? 51.Kd3? Two mistakes in a row, which showed lack of understanding the position from both of us. Here, my opponent could have played 51...Rb1 (not 51...b5 immediately because after 52.c3 dxc3 53.Kxc3 the king comes to b4 and the b5 pawn is likely to be lost.) 52.b3 b5! Stopping a4 for good and leaving the a3 pawn a little vulnerable. Here Black should be close to being fine, but White still does have practical chances. It's still not an easy endgame to hold. Now, we can also see why 51.Kd3 was a mistake, as this was the chance to go 51.a4!, making sure b5 never comes, and now White is winning.

Instead of 50...Rh1, Rh5 was the move, after 51.a4, then 51...b5 52.axb5 Ke4 Black still has decent chances to hold.



But my opponent made the last mistake by playing 51...Rd1 +?? It is fair to call it a blunder as White is now completely winning. Although it does not lose material immediately or anything like that, now White's king will become active and can attack the isolated Black pawns. King activity is pretty important in endgames, so much so that it made an equal position into a +5 position after Black's last move: the equivalent of a rook advantage!

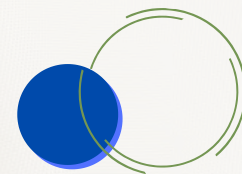
52.Kc4 Rd2



53.Kb3!

I think my opponent missed or underestimated this move, which is the only way to defend the c2 pawn. **53.. Re2 54.Rf8 Kd5 55.Rc8** After defending the c2 pawn from the front, I now have a very clear plan to win the game: a4, Ka3, b3,

Kb4 (could do so earlier but d3 might be an issue), Kb5, and either win the b6 pawn or create a passed pawn with b4-a5. The Black king is cut off along the c-file and Black can really do nothing but wait while White wins, which was what happened in the game, and I eventually won by achieving the Lucena position.



In that game, we see a rook endgame, which is the most common type of endgame encountered in practice. A pretty shot $46...d3!$ would have won my opponent the game. Even though it feels like White has a lot of pawns, in reality White is completely helpless as Black scoops up all the pawns. However, after missing that,

Black was still okay, but had to find the idea of $Rb1$ then $b5$ to prevent White from fixing his pawn structure. After allowing that, I had a clear plan to win the game. Usually two pawns against three is a draw, however Black's pawns are split and vulnerable, which changes the evaluation.



Henry Deng is in 8th grade and lives in Northern California. He is a FM with FIDE rating of 2300 and the Champion of the 2021 National Rockefeller Championship.

My Albania Adventure

Lucia Huang



Several months ago, I traveled to Albania to compete in the **2024 FIDE World Cadet Blitz Chess Championships**. I was invited to attend the tournament as a backup for the US chess team under 12 girls age group. The tournament was divided into two subtournaments, the rapid and the blitz events. Since I had skipped a week of school to play in the tournament, my original goals were to simply **relax, have fun, and enjoy playing!**

However, I ended up performing **much better** than I had anticipated. I started out as **28th** in rapid and **46th** in blitz, but I managed to end both tournaments scoring higher than my initial ranks—**20th** and **22nd** for rapid and blitz respectively. I was especially proud of my performance in blitz because I went from a low ranking (**46/54**) to above average!

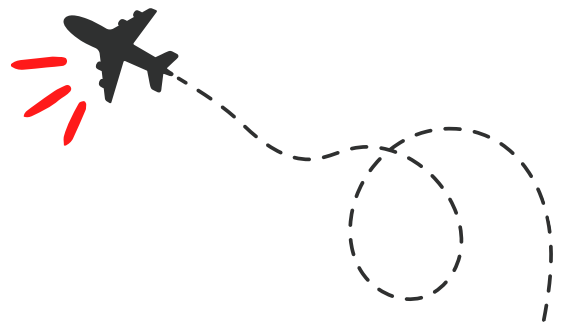
Since the blitz time controls were so short (**5 minutes!**), we were advised to not take any notation, so I only reviewed my games that got streamed on chess.com. My **favorite** game was the one I played in the 7th round as white against **Michalina Popczynska**, an 1800 FIDE-rated player from Poland! Here's a short analysis of the game we played:



**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 g6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Bg7 5. Nc3 Nc6
6. Be3 Nf6 7. f3 O-O**

O-O was the last book move. This was the transition from the opening, the Sicilian Defense, to the middlegame.

**8. Be2 d5 9. exd5 Nxd5 10. Nxd5 Qxd5 11. Nxc6 Qxc6
12. c3 Bf5 13. O-O Rfd8 14. Qe1 a6 15. Qf2 Rd6
16. Rfd1 Rad8**



17. Rac1

Rac1 was an inaccuracy because it was a useless move. I moved there because I originally wanted to make a stall move, but I didn't know what to do either way.

...Be6 18. Rxd6 Rxd6 19. a3 Bb3 20. Qe1 b5 21. Bd1 Bxd1
22. Rxd1 e6 ½-½

At this point, I didn't have much time left. Both my opponent and I had dark-squared bishops, but her pawns were all on light squares, giving her the advantage. I was sure she'd decline when I mustered the courage to offer a draw... but to my surprise, she accepted! I was really relieved.



However, when I was reviewing the game, I realized that the position was actually equal! It'd been equal throughout the entire game, with **0 mistakes, 0 blunders**, and just **1 inaccuracy**. Though it wasn't a very wild game, I was still excited to clutch a draw against a higher-rated opponent.

In the end, I got **6 out of 11 points** for both blitz and rapid, so my ratings grew a lot for both. I went from **1570** rapid to **1620** and **1452** blitz to **1610**. I'm really proud of the progress I made at both tournaments, and had lots of fun!



Lucia Huang is an 11 year-old chess enthusiast from Virginia. She has previously represented both Virginia and the USA in multiple international events and is currently a WCM candidate. She hopes to spread her love of chess through teaching chess-playing youth in her area, and works as a coach at her local chess club. Outside of chess, she enjoys drawing, robotics, and baking.



IRON GOTHAM PETROSIAN



(first picture of Petrosian's family)

GM Tigran Petrosian was a world chess champion with a slow, maneuvering, play style who valued safety above all else. He was born to Armenian parents in present-day Georgia. His tough childhood began with the 2nd world war, and as a result, he became an orphan and started sweeping floors to make a living. He learned how to play chess at 8 years old and bought various chess books with the little he managed to save.

Throughout his childhood, Petrosian attended various chess clubs, earning his Candidate Master title at the age of 17. He obtained his GM title by coming in second place in the Stockholm Interzonal tournament in 1952, therefore qualifying for the 1953 Candidates Tournament, his first of eight candidate qualifications. He went on to become the ninth World Chess Champion from 1963 to 1969.

Petrosian had innumerable great games through the years.

Let's analyze some of them!

Tigran petrosian - Viktor Korchnoi. URS-ch U18(Leningrad 1946)

1.d4 e6 2.Nf3 f5 The Dutch defense! This is normally not one of the main openings of a chess player's repertoire, but definitely makes for some interesting games **3.g3** Preparing to fianchetto his bishop **3...Nf6** **4.Bg2 d5** Entering the Dutch Stonewall variation **5.O-O Bd6 6.c4 c6 7.b3**



Defending the c4 pawn, and preparing 8.Ba3 to trade his bad bishop for Korchnoi's good bishop 7...O-O 7...Qe7 preventing 8.Ba3 may have been a better move. Black probably thought that trading his dark-squared bishop would cause no harm since his light-squared bishop would then later help in his attack. 8.Ba3 Bxa3 9.Nxa3 Qe8 preparing his king-side attack 10.Nc2 Qh5 11.Qc1 preventing the start of an attack with 11...g5, since it is now controlled by both the knight and the queen 11...Ne4 12.Nce1 g5 13.Nd3 Nd7 14.Nfe5! White doesn't fear 14...Qxe2, since white would eventually win a piece with 15.f3 attacking the knight, 15...Nxe5 16.Nxe5 Qd2 17.Qxe2 Nxe2 18. Rfd1 and the black knight is trapped. 14...Kh8 15.f3 Nd6



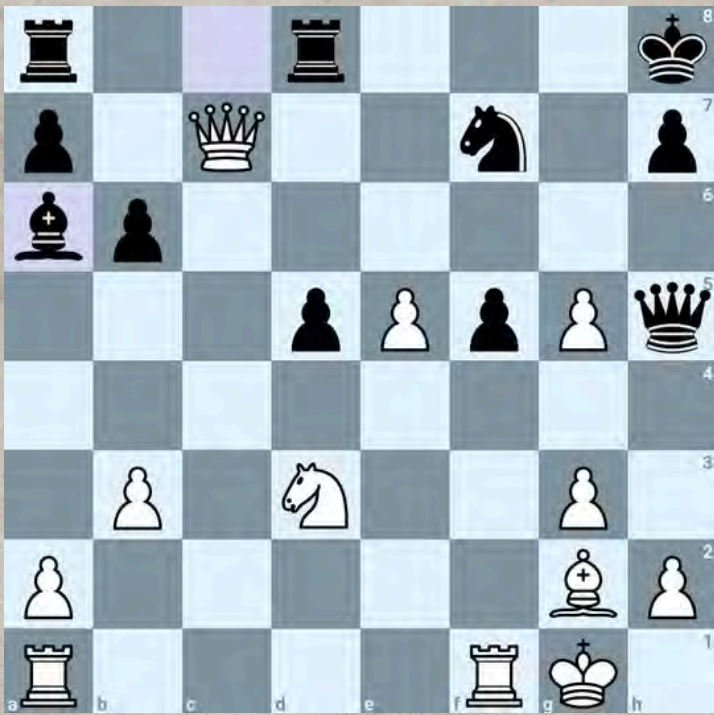
Defending the c4 pawn, and preparing 8.Ba3 16.e4 a great logical move, striking the center and starting an attack of his own. Now 16.Qa3 was also a very interesting move! White tries to make the most of the pinned knight to the rook.

Play may continue 16...Nf7 17. Qe7 Nfxe5 18. Nxe5 Qe8 19. Qxg5! Winning a pawn with the initiative in the attack 16...Nf7 17.cxd5 Ndx5 18.dxe5 cxd5 19.exd5 exd5



20.f4 We can see how, after all the exchanges, white stands objectively better, with his protected passed pawn on f4, whereas black has a weak pawn on d5. White pieces are also better played, with the white queen having much more room to play than the black queen. The same goes for the knight and the bishop. 20...Rd8 21.Qc7 b6 22.fxg5 Black can't take the pawn without leaving either the rook or knight hanging. 22...Ba6 attacking the pinned knight.

23.Nf4! With this move, white brings the knight to the attack and attacks the queen. This left Korchnoi with no other choice than to throw in the towel. 1-0



Petrosian moved to Moscow in 1949. He placed second in the 1951 Soviet Championship, thereby earning the title of international master. It was in this tournament that Petrosian faced world champion Botvinnik for the first time. Petrosian continued his run on the world stage, placing fifth in the 1953 Candidates Tournament. For a long time, Petrosian seemed content with endlessly drawing games. After winning the 1962 Candidates Tournament, he faced Botvinnik once more in the World Chess Championship Match of 1963. Let's see one of his most memorable and intense games in this match..

Tigran Petrosian - Mikhail Botvinnik. World Chess Championship (Curaçao, 1963)

1. c4 g6 2. d4 Nf6 3. Nc3 d5 The Grünfeld defense, a very popular opening nowadays, employing the modern style of giving white the center but preparing to undermine it

afterwards. 4. Nf3 Bg7 5. e3 Keeping a solid position and preparing the light-squared bishop to recapture in c4 in case dxc4 happens 5...O-O 6. Be2 dxc4 Forcing Petrosian to lose a tempo with the bishop by recapturing on c4 7. Bxc4 c5 8. d5 advancing his pawn into the opponents position. 8...e6



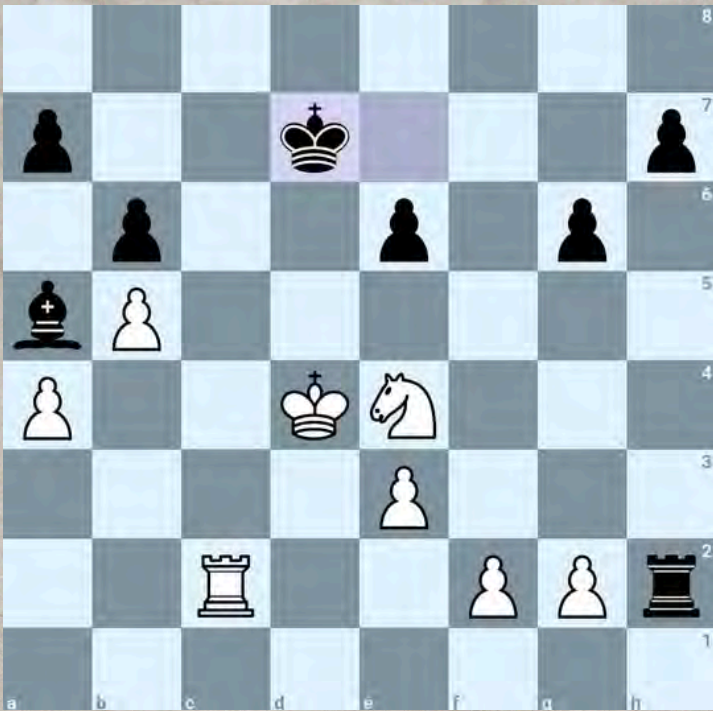
Attacking the center immediately, since Botvinnik does not want to allow Petrosian to play e4 and solidify his center 9. dxe6 Qxd1+ 10. Kxd1 Petrosian doesn't mind losing castling rights, since queens are off the board and an endgame is arising. 10... Bxe6 11. Bxe6 fxe6 12. Ke2 Nc6 13. Rd1 Rad8 14. Rxd8 Rxd8 15. Ng5 Re8 16. Nge4 Nxe4 17. Nxe4 b6 Protecting his pawn. This is a completely equal position objectively, but the pawn majorities on both sides ensure a double-edged fight.



18. Rb1! Awkward but smart move. Since the black bishop is pinning the pawn to the rook, White must find an idea. He is now threatening to play 19.b4 **18...Nb4** **19. Bd2 Nd5** 19...Nxa2 is not possible, since after 20.Ra1 Nb4 21.Bxb4 cxb4 22.Rxa7 Bxb2 23.Rb7 white would have a much more active rook. He will take the b6 pawn, apply pressure on the b4 pawn, and leave black with many weaknesses. **20. a4 Rc8** **21. b3 Bf8** **22. Rc1 Be7** **23. b4 c4** **24. b5** Blockading the pawn chain, leaving black with a somewhat weak pawn. **24... Kf7**



25. Bc3 Blockading the pawn **25...Ba3** **26. Rc2 Nxc3+** **27. Rxc3 Bb4** winning a tempo by attacking the rook and protecting the d2 square from the knight **28. Rc2 Ke7** **29. Nd2 c3** 29... Bxd2? is not possible since after 30. Kxd2 Kd6 31. Kc3 Kc5 32. Rd2, white would eventually win the c4 pawn, with a big advantage **30. Ne4** putting his knight back in the center **30...Ba5** **31. Kd3 Rd8+** **32. Kc4 Rd1** **33. Nxc3 Rh1** Trying to get his pawn back **34. Ne4 Rxh2** **35. Kd4 Kd7**



36. g3 Bb4 37. Ke5 Rh5+ 38. Kf6 Be7+ 39. Kg7 The white king has successfully infiltrated in black's position. But he must be careful, he could get checkmated. 39...e5 40. Rc6 Cutting off the black king 40...Rh1 41. Kf7 Ra1 42. Re6 Bd8 43. Rd6+ Kc8 if 43...Kc7 after 44.Ke8 the dark-squared bishop is trapped.

(He could try 44...Ra4 but after 45.Rd7+ he is able to capture the dark-squared bishop with check) 44. Ke8 Bc7 45. Rc6 Rd1 46. Ng5 Rd8+ 47. Kf7 Rd7+ 48. Kg8 Botvinnik resigned here since he realized that his king-side will eventually fall. 1-0

As I said before, he went on to win the world chess championship. He defended his title in 1966 against Boris Spassky before Spassky regained it in 1969.

This wonderful positional master sadly passed away in 1984. He taught us that chess should not be played impatiently, but calmly, and to not be afraid of drawing games, as long as we defend roughly and give as few chances to our opponents as we can.

FUN FACTS

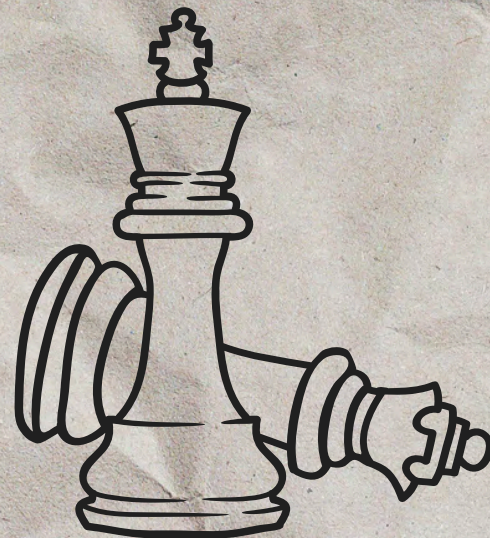
1- Tigran Petrosian is the second chess player to appear in a banknote commissioned in his honour.(the first being Paul Keres). He specifically appears in the Armenian 2000 dram bill(5ish Dollars)

2- In addition to practicing his chess, Petrosian also prepared for the match against Botvinnik by **skiing** for several hours each day. He believed that in such a long match, physical fitness and endurance could become a factor in the later games.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Skyler is 16 years old and currently taking 1st of bachillerato (which would be equivalent of 11th grade in the US). He lives in Ceuta, a very small city in Spain. Even though he started playing chess just a few years ago, he is currently teaching chess with a small team. he has played a few FIDE rated tournaments, one of them being the Spanish youth championship. Skyler looks forward to raising the recognition of many Spanish players, and more importantly, hopefully creating strong Ceuta players for the future!





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