

CHESS LIFE

Kids



The 2022 INVITATIONALS



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PLEASE NOTE

For the first time since June 21, 2021, US Chess is adjusting the opt-in fee charged to receive either of our print magazines due to volatility in the paper market and significantly higher mailing fees. Effective January 1, 2023, *Chess Life's* opt-in fee will be \$12 (for 12 monthly issues) and *Chess Life Kid's* fee will be \$6 (for 6 bi-monthly issues). For more information, visit new.uschess.org/news/opt-fee-print-copies-chess-life-and-chess-life-kids-changes-january-1-2023.

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ON THE COVER

JJ Lang reports on all the action-packed moments from our five prestigious Invitationals, while Laurel Aronian writes about her personal experiences in Rancho Mirage. Two-time Haring winner FM Ruiyang Yan takes over In Session and Chess Adventures this month to stress the importance of never giving up. And Al Lawrence introduces you to two more upset winners from the Invitationals in Chess Stories. PHOTO: NATASHA ROBERTS

My Star-Spangled Haring

BY LAUREL ARONIAN

THIS PAST SUMMER, my passions intersected when I played in the WIM Ruth Haring National Tournament of Girls State Champions in Rancho Mirage, California, and sang the national anthem at the concurrent U.S. Open. After I received the phenomenal news that I would sing at the opening ceremony, I spent time readying my voice for the Star-Spangled Banner while most of my opponents were heads-down in chess tactics.

When we arrived in the hot California desert, it was clear that both the Haring and U.S. Open were going to present a challenging physical and cognitive see-saw of performance demands. One minute I was at registration picking up my state flag, Haring medal, and chess queen souvenir; the next, I was on stage rehearsing the anthem. Though I'm used to toggling between schoolwork and extracurriculars, this particular music and chess balancing act was on another level.

The opening ceremony for the U.S. Open was packed with chess enthusiasts and it was thrilling to sing the anthem for them. Following my performance, I quickly changed my clothes and mindset to prepare for round one of the Haring.

A fun Haring tradition is to exchange "souvenirs" from our respective states. I brought mini grow gardens containing Connecticut's state flower seeds: the Mountain Laurel (seriously).

Aside from kind gestures and camaraderie among the girls, a palpable competitive spirit hung in the air. I felt it from the moment I met my first opponent, Kelsey Liu, a national master from Massachusetts.

I finished the tourney with three wins and three losses. Generally, I would consider 3/6 to be a "par-level" tournament, but the experience of competing with the best scholastic female players in the country was inspiring. Even more extraordinary was the opportunity to befriend these girls through several "Meet & Greets" organized by US Chess.

Quite a few invitational players — me included! — folded into the 400+ U.S. Open after the tournament ended. My brother, Jack Aronian, joined me as my mixed doubles partner. We had a blast and, aside from chess, took in some bowling and swimming at the host resort. Jack also tied for fourth in Class C and won some prize money!

At my school, I am the only

competitive female chess player on the team, which I captain. Events like the Haring incentivize girls like me to continue and stoke friendships with other female chess players. I am so grateful to US Chess, the U.S. Chess Trust, Dewain Barber, John D. Rockefeller V, the Connecticut State Chess Association, and everyone else who worked hard to make a memorable nine days in the desert!

MEET LAUREL

Laurel Aronian is the Teen Ambassador for the US Chess Women's Girls Club and was recently featured on WGM Jennifer Shahade's "Ladies Knight" podcast. She loves teaching chess and is the founder of [Chessin1day.com](https://chessin1day.com).



PHOTOS: TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT, KAREN ARONIAN; BOTTOM RIGHT, MARK CIESLIKOWSKI