



WHO ARE SUCCESSORS TO THE PRESENT AMERICAN CHESS ELITE?

U.S. Teenage Sharks

By FM Grayson Rorrer

In the process of monitoring the results of U.S juniors during 2022, we explored the January FIDE rating list for American players born 2003 and after. Some of these players and their play have been regular guests in *American Chess Magazine*. However, in this article we also wanted to bring to the forefront some new faces by summarizing their respective achievements - rating gains and newly won titles - and also presenting their playing style through fragments from their tournament games.

It was clear to me, at least, that 2022 was to be a year of great promise and potential. With many COVID-19 restrictions lifted or at least eased, and tournament chess beginning to come back in full force, young American talents would undoubtedly have many opportunities to display what they learned during the lengthy period of hiatus. With such a large time between one tournament and the next, there were sure to be many “pandemic sharks,” as GM Daniel Gormally put it - players who, through a great deal of study and hard work during lockdown, improved by massive leaps and bounds in their first chance to get back to the board.

The sharks certainly did not disappoint, and as a new year in chess begins it's the perfect time to introduce the highest-flying young stars of 2022 and showcase the full breadth of their achievements - particularly the most scintillating and instructive examples from their games. Note - all periods of improvement listed below are from January 2022 to January 2023.

HANS NIEMANN

Hans Niemann, from Connecticut, is currently in the center of a massive cheating controversy. Nevertheless, it has been a remarkable year for him on the chessboard. He gained 60 rating points to land just inside the 2700 club (from 2645 FIDE in January 2022). Victories at the Capablanca Memorial in Havana, Cuba, then TePe Sigeman in Malmo, Sweden, and Prague Chess Festival in Czech Republic (though he later lost the playoff) played a big role in his very fortunate invitation to the Sinquefeld Cup in Saint

Louis where, as is well known by now, he controversially defeated World Champion Magnus Carlsen in the third round, crossing 2700 in live ratings.

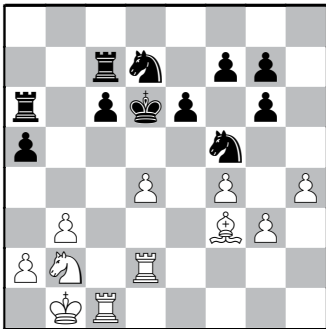
It's particularly impressive that, amidst the great furor, he managed to consolidate his gains, finishing the year off with a tie for first in the Sunway Sitges A-group. After the dust settled from a four-way playoff, he was placed second. Not many would have the strength, conviction, and self-confidence to play their game unaffected, but Hans showed clearly that he is an elite player, and here to stay.



Grayson Rorrer is a 16-year-old FM from Texas. Apart from being an avid player and chess lover, Grayson is a great fan of chess books, with a collection of 350 volumes and counting. A versatile young man, he also runs his own website grandmaster2b.com where he writes a variety of articles, sharing his experiences on his quest to become a grandmaster.

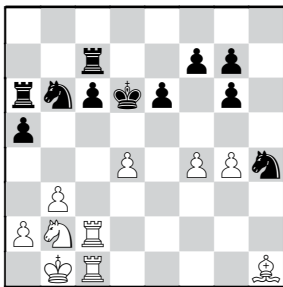
Hans Niemann 2637
Arjun Erigaisi 2675

Sigeman & Co, Malmo 2022



39.g4! Hans has had a dangerous plus in the endgame for some time now, but this was the move that really sealed the deal.

39...♖e3 **39...♖xh4** is met by **40.♗h1**. As simple as that. Black's knight is stranded on the edge of the board, meaning he will have to give back the pawn in any event. After this eventuality it will become clear that White's operation has simply opened more files and made Black's kingside easily accessible. **40...♖b6** **41.♙dc2!**



Forcing the knight to occupy the d5 outpost, which I for one would not have anticipated! However, the concrete idea is that now Black doesn't have time for ...a5-a4 schenanigans. **41...♖d5** **42.♙h2** **g5** **43.fxg5** **♖g6** **44.♙h7+-**.

40.♙e1 **♖d5** **41.f5** Opening lines and creating weaknesses. White has made huge strides since the starting position.

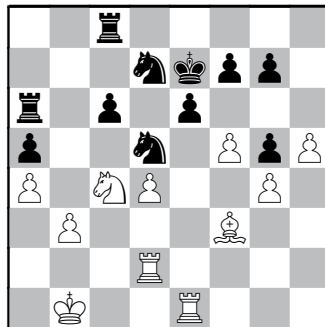
41...♙c8?! In many ways a wasted move. Perhaps a better try was **41...♖f8?!**, keeping the structure sound, though after **42.♖c4+** **♖d7** **43.fxg6** **♖xg6** **44.h5** **♖gf4** **45.g5±**, Black is in very hot water.

42.♖c4+ **♙e7** **43.h5!** **g5** **44.a4** Hans'



HANS NIEMANN
 Year of birth: **2003**
 FIDE Title: **GM**
 FIDE rating: **2706** (January 2023)


play is very surgical. Black is practically lost already, without a meaningful move.



44...♖f4 **45.♙a2** **♙b8** **46.♙a3** **♙d8** **47.fxg6** **fxg6** **48.♙c2** The endgame can hardly be tenable, and eventually, **White won.**

AWONDER LIANG

Awonder Liang, from Wisconsin, is not necessarily a name one would expect to see on this list. He is attending college, and naturally one would assume that, with the extra workload and time constraints, it would not always be easy to make further progress, especially at an already quite strong level. In the few opportunities he did have to play he impressed, for the most part, gaining a total of over 40 points this year (from 2597 FIDE in January 2022). This was aided by a shared victory at the 2021 North American Open, starting



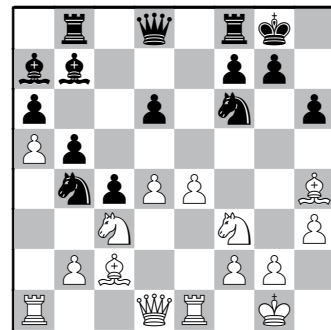
AWONDER LIANG
 Year of birth: **2003**
 FIDE Title: **GM**
 FIDE rating: **2640** (January 2023)

the year with a bang, and a particularly inspired performance at the 2022 U.S. Championship, where he scored 7½/13 and shared third place.

Awonder finished 2022 with a powerful tie for first and 12-point rating gain in the SPICE Cup Open.

Awonder Liang 2613
Arman Mikaelyan 2502

Chicago Open 2022



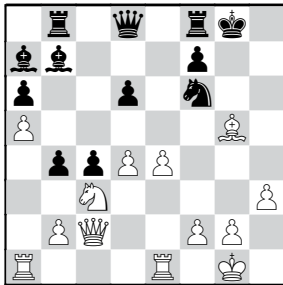
18...g5? Too provocative. In all four games to reach this position Black challenged White to calculate the consequences of this sacrifice, and in three White succeeded, emerging victorious! Even so, the task is far from simple, as was demonstrated in the one game where Black was able to scrape out a draw.

Even after the correct move, accuracy is needed – **18...♖xc2!** **19.♙xc2** **b4** **20.♖d5** **♗xd5** **21.exd5** **g5!** Now is the time!



22. ♖xg5 hxg5 23. ♗xg5 ♗xd4 24. ♖xc4 ♗xb2 25. ♖h4 ♖e8!= Simplifying the position, after which White doesn't have enough firepower to win.

19. ♖xg5 hxg5 20. ♗xg5 ♗xd4? A further inaccuracy. The only worthy try at this point was 20... ♖xc2!. Then, after 21. ♖xc2 b4, White went wrong in D.Jakovenko 2681 - G.Jones 2688, Khanty-Mansiysk 2019, and got no more than equality.



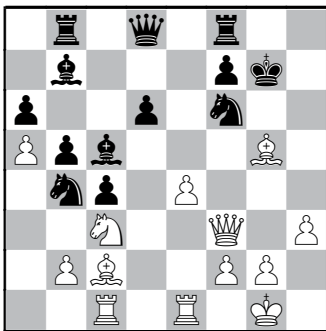
Best was 22.e5! dxe5 23. ♖f5, after which White has enduring pressure in the endgame following 23... ♖xd4 24. ♗xf6 ♖f4! 25. ♖xe5 ♖xf5 26. ♖xf5 ♖h7 27. ♖e2!±.

21. ♖c1! A typical mysterious rook move which has the point of freeing up White's queen from the burden of defending c2.

21. ♗b1? would be too slow for such a dynamic position. After 21... ♗c5 22. ♖f3 ♖g7 23. ♖g3 ♖h5! 24. ♖g4 ♗c8 25. ♖xh5 ♖h8 26. ♗xd8 ♖xh5, Black barely managed to survive in A.Daghli 2427 - K. Sychev 2555, Yerevan 2021.

21... ♗c5 This certainly makes White's life the most difficult. 21... ♖d3 22. ♗xd3 cxd3 23. ♖xd3+-.

22. ♖f3 ♖g7



23. ♖d5! A key move, opening up lines for White's pieces.

23... ♗xd5 24. exd5 ♖h8 25. ♖e4! Once again, the only winning move. Now that it is included, however, White's advantage is uncontested.

25... ♖bxd5 26. ♖g4 ♖f8 27. ♗e4!? Good enough. **White won** without any further problems, as Black is forced to return his extra material, with no end to the raging attack on his king in sight.

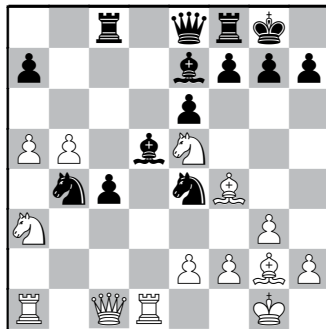
CHRISTOPHER YOO

Christopher Yoo, from California, began 2022 in the best possible way, gaining his final GM norm and reaching the required rating one week before his 15th birthday. After that was over with, he has continued playing at every possible chance, with an overall rating gain of about 80 points (from 2500 FIDE in January 2022).

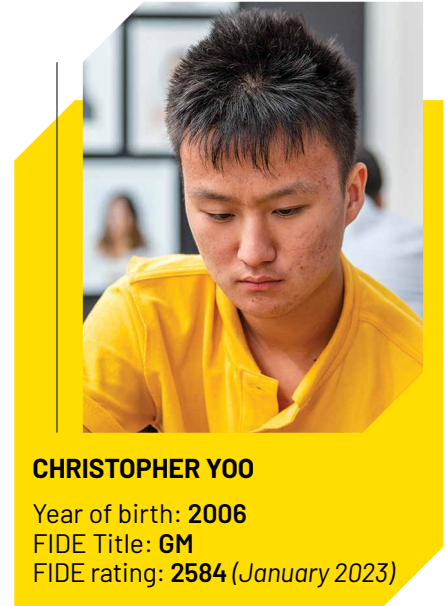
His best results include a tie for second in the American Continental Championship – qualifying him for the 2023 World Cup – a tiebreak win at the recent U.S. Masters (see page 68-Ed.), and victory in the U.S. Junior Championship with an emphatic 7/9 (as reported on in ACM #28, pages 62-69). The latter enabled him to play in the U.S. Championship, surely an amazing experience, where he ended up taking the scalp of reigning champ GM Wesley So, eventually finishing on a respectable -2.

Christopher Yoo	2563
Elshan Moradiabadi	2534

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022



22... ♖c5? It seems that Moradiabadi underestimated the coming complications. 22...c3! was fairly obvious once you see it, retaining the passed pawn. 23. ♖d4 f5 24. ♖d3 ♖xd3 25. ♖xd3 c2+-.



CHRISTOPHER YOO

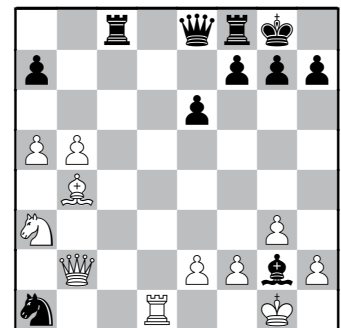
Year of birth: 2006
FIDE Title: GM
FIDE rating: 2584 (January 2023)

23. ♖exd4! After crunching the numbers, Yoo found that White can indeed safely grab Black's greatest asset. An important decision that changes the course of the game.

23... ♗xg2?! Somewhat unnecessary. 23... ♖b3 would initiate a complex sequence of forcing moves. 24. ♖b2! ♖xa1 25. ♖d6 ♗xd6 26. ♗xd6 ♖ac2 27. ♖xc2 ♖xc2 28. ♗xf8 ♖xf8 29. ♖c1= The knight has nowhere to go, and will soon be exchanged for the queenside pawns. Even so, this was preferable for Black to what happened in the game.

24. ♖d6 ♗xd6 25. ♗xd6 ♖b3? Practically speaking, the decisive error. Black will soon lose material. 25... ♖e4! The powerful bishop on d6 needed to be eliminated. 26. ♖b2 ♖xd6 27. ♖xb4 ♖xb5! 28. ♖xb5 ♖b8=.

26. ♖b2 ♖xa1 27. ♗xb4





It's hard to say exactly what Moradiabadi missed. White will inevitably emerge with an extra pawn.

27... ♖a8 28. ♜xa1 ♔d7 29. ♜xf8 ♜xf8 30. ♜c1 a6?! Speeding up the inevitable. After 30... ♗d5 31. f3 e5 32. e4 ♗d3 33. ♗c3±, White still has some work to do, but should win in the end.

31. b6! ♗d5 32. f3 ♗xa5 33. ♘c4 The b6 passer will decide matters. **White won** shortly.

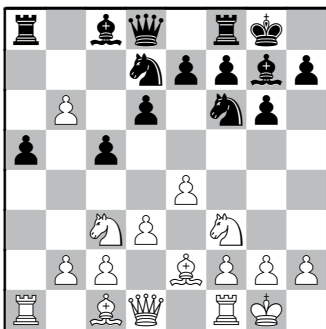
ABHIMANYU MISHRA

Abhimanyu Mishra, from New Jersey, is best known for his breathtaking run of success in almost non-stop Hungarian tournaments over the course of three months, thus granting him the title of youngest ever Grandmaster, breaking Sergey Karjakin's 20-year-old record. After such an extended period of activity – playing on average three events a month during his stay – it is natural that he needed time to recover, and his results took a brief downturn.

Nevertheless, Abhi clearly showed that he came out of it the better in 2022. His victory at the St. Louis Spring Classic B Group – with a full-point margin – was certainly a highlight, and subsequent strong performances culminated in a tie for first at the SPICE Cup Open with an undefeated 7/9. He's gained nearly 50 rating points (from 2510 FIDE in January 2022) and seems to be on the cusp of another big breakthrough.

Abhimanyu Mishra	2505
Harshit Raja	2482

Spring GM-B, St Louis 2022



11. e5!?N An interesting and fresh idea.



ABHIMANYU MISHRA
 Year of birth: 2009
 FIDE Title: GM
 FIDE rating: 2559 (January 2023)

White gives up a pawn temporarily but ruins Black's structure, and aims for positional compensation.

Another recent high-level encounter saw the intriguing 11. ♗d2!?. In W. So 2773 - S.Vokhidov 2552, Internet rapid 2022, White followed up with the interesting idea of ♗f4-h4. I suggest it be met in the following way – 11... ♗xb6! 12. ♗f4 The consistent follow-up. 12... ♖b7 13. ♗h4 ♖c6! Black now threatened ...a4, fixing the queenside structure, and carried out this idea successfully in M.Sebag 2447 - K.Newrkla 2265, Chennai 2022, despite losing her way later against a higher rated and more experienced opponent.

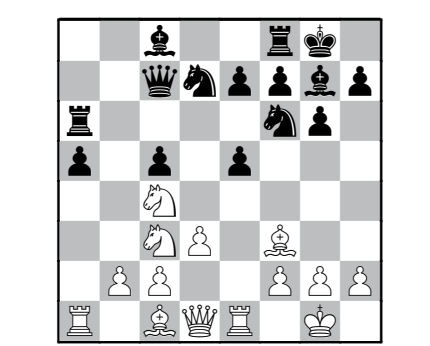
11... dxe5 12. ♘d2 ♗xb6 This way of recapturing on b6 seems best. 12... ♘xb6?! would leave Black with problems to solve, similar to what occurred in the game. 13. ♖f3 ♜a6 14. ♘b3 ♘bd7 15. ♗e2± Here too, Black is cramped and will have some trouble untangling.

13. ♘c4 ♗c7 14. ♖f3 ♜a6?! Surprising though it may seem, I consider this to be a critical error. When you are saddled with a weakness inhibiting your pieces, it is often most expedient to simply give material so as to allow for maximum freedom. Thus – 14... e4! 15. ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16. ♖xe4 ♜a6± and Black stands no worse.

15. ♜e1



JASON LIANG
 Year of birth: 2007
 FIDE Title: IM
 FIDE rating: 2514 (January 2023)



By now White's concept has clarified itself. Black will have a hard time getting his pieces out, and I think the position is slightly more pleasant for the first player.

15... e6 16. ♖d2 ♖b7 Deciding to give up the pawn so as to free his pieces. It's hard to offer any better advice.

17. ♖xb7 ♗xb7 18. ♘xa5 ♗c7 19. ♘c4 White has clearly won the opening battle, and went on to increase his advantage in methodical fashion. **White won.**

JASON LIANG

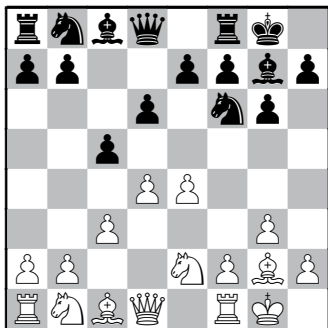
Jason Liang, from New York, is an impressive example of remarkable consistency. He's gained more than 100 rating points (from 2403 in January 2022) and two GM norms. Also worthy of note is the fact that he won the New York State Championship quite effortlessly and shared



top honors in the Washington International. He is an extremely active player, competing nearly every month – oftentimes in more than one event – and only very rarely unsuccessfully. Jason is certainly on the rise and can be expected to earn the highest title in chess sooner rather than later.

Jason Liang	2492
Isan Ortiz Suarez	2520

Waterloo Maplewood 2022

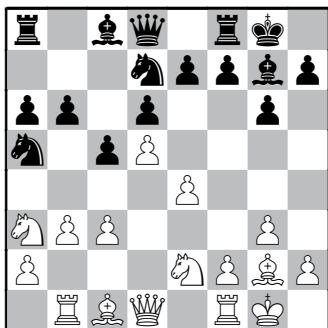


7...♘c6? Out of a Closed Sicilian Black had gone slightly wrong, but he needed to recognize that White can't be allowed to run rampant. Central parity needed to be maintained with 7...e5!±.

8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘a3! A great example of prophylaxis! White stops Black's knight on a5 from coming into the game on c4, prepares b2-b3 to overprotect the square, and subsequently aims to bring in the cavalry with ♘c2-e3. We will see this plan executed to perfection.

9...♗d7?! A bit passive, though the alternative was not much of an improvement. 9...b6!? 10.b3 e5 11.♗d2 a6 12.c4±.

10.♞b1 b6 11.b3 a6



12.f4! Seizing the maximum amount of space. Black is being squeezed badly on both sides of the board.

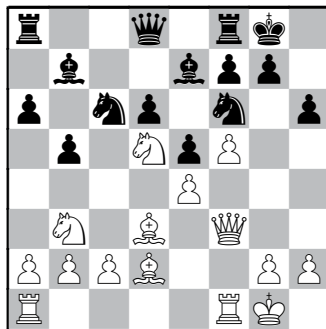
12...♙c7 13.♘c2 b5 14.♘e3 Jason has achieved a positionally winning game, and indeed, he soon smashed through on the kingside. A critical victory that propelled him to his second GM Norm. **White won.**

BALAJI DAGGUPATI

Balaji Daggupati, from California, had a somewhat more explosive start to the year. He gained his final GM norms very quickly and achieved a live rating of 2500 soon thereafter, granting him the title, with an overall increase of 40 points (from 2467 in January 2022).

Balaji Daggupati	2486
David Brodsky	2484

Saint Louis Congress GM2022



13...♞e8? Black has escaped a somewhat dubious opening with a decent position, but this is a bit too slow. It was imperative to generate immediate counter chances with 13...a5!±. White has a serious initiative, but nothing decisive just yet. The play might follow 14.♞ae1 (but not 14.♞xb5? a4 15.♞xc6 ♞xc6 16.♘xf6+ ♞xf6 17.♘c1 ♙b6+) 14...a4 15.♘c1 ♘a5, etc.

14.♙g3 ♖h8?! A bit careless. 14...♗h7! Better to avoid sacrifices on h6, as in the game. 15.a4!± Switching to the other side! As it happens, White has an advantage on both wings, and a comfortable position.

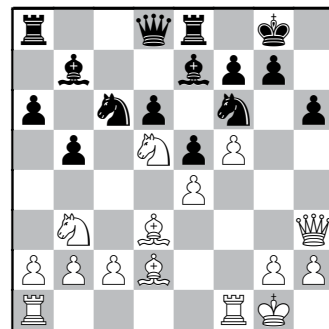
15.♙h3! ♔g8? Quite a provocation! Black should be 110% certain when allowing the capture on h6, and even then he may be



BALAJI DAGGUPATI

Year of birth: 2005
FIDE Title: GM
FIDE rating: 2507 (January 2023)

better off defending the pawn. It is certainly not pleasant to give away a tempo with 15...♗h7, and even in this case White is comfortably ahead. 16.a4 bxa4 17.♞xa4±.



16.♞xh6! An attractive sacrifice that turns out to end quite simply in White's favor.

16...gxf6 17.♙xh6 ♘xd5 Black is helpless after 17...♘h7 18.f6 ♞f8 19.♙h4+.

18.♞f3! ♞g5 19.♞g3 f6 20.exd5 White can win in the manner of his choice from here, and he duly converted. **White won.**

ANTHONY HE

Anthony He, from Washington, had a strong year rating wise, gaining nearly 70 points and crossing the 2500 mark (from 2436 FIDE in January 2022). This fact should be taken with a grain of salt, since the majority of these gains were from



ANTHONY HE

Year of birth: **2005**
 FIDE Title: **IM**
 FIDE rating: **2501** (January 2023)



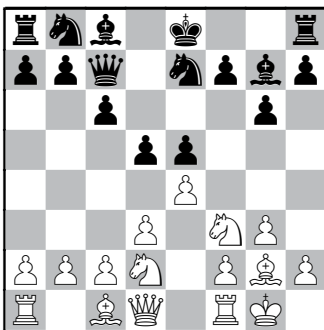
KIRK GHAZARIAN

Year of birth: **2006**
 FIDE Title: **IM**
 FIDE rating: **2466** (January 2023)

very controversial hybrid competitions – standard games played online at a venue with arbiters. Even so, his undefeated 6/9 performance at the PNWCC 6-day Norm Invitational proved that he is a genuinely strong player. Anthony has yet to earn a GM norm but will surely be looking to start his collection!

Austin Mei	2304
Anthony He	2437

PNWCC President Day, Redmond 2022



8.b3? Squandering any chance White had to play for the advantage. 8.♖e1 0-0 9.c3 ♘d7 10.♗c2± is a standard way to continue in this structure. White has a small edge, and went on to win in A.Bodnaruk 2432 - D. Belenkaya 2346, Sochi 2017.

8...0-0 9.♗b2 d4 10.c3? A further inaccuracy. Better was 10.a4!? c5

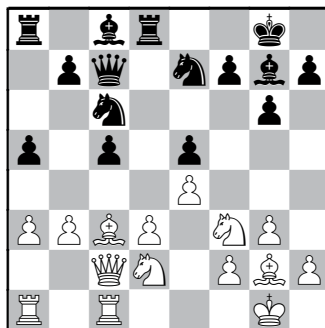
11.♘c4 ♖bc6, when White went wrong in E.Sutovsky 2265 - V.Burmakin 2375, Ajka 1992, though managed to win later on anyway. The correct way to play is 12.♘h4! ♗e6 13.♗c1!∞, preparing the f2-f4 break, with a messy position.

10...dxc3 11.♗xc3 c5 12.♗c2 ♖bc6 Allowing some tricks based on the b3-b4 push, but not giving away the positional advantage just yet. Even so, 12...a5 would have been a cleaner execution of the same idea. 13.a3 ♖bc6 14.♗fc1 ♗e6∞.

13.♗fc1 13.b4!? cxb4 14.♗xb4 ♗e6∞ still leads to an uphill battle for White.

13...♗d8?! Missing a tactical point that could have changed the nature of the game. After 13...a5∞ Black's position is again much easier to play.

14.a3 a5



15.♘c4? White proves to not be up to the task, and makes the final error of the early middlegame scuffle. 15.b4! would once again have held the balance. 15...axb4 16.axb4 ♗xa1 17.♗xa1 cxb4 18.♗xb4 ♗d7 19.♗c5! ♗xd3 20.♗b2∞ For the moment Black is unable to make use of his extra pawn, though it isn't pleasant to play resolutely while behind in material. Still, it was a necessary evil.

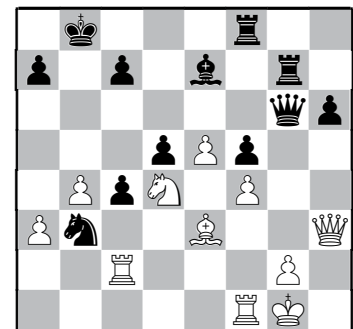
15...♗e6 Black was clearly better, and went on to win material and convert his advantage in a prolonged endgame. **Black won.**

KIRK GHAZARIAN

Kirk Ghazarian, from California, has had a year not of massive outbreak, but of consistency resulting in inexorable progress. He was already able to achieve the IM title in April, gaining his final norm “in his own backyard” – at the Mission 360/Bay Area Chess GM Norm Invitational – which is always a nice feeling. Subsequently, strong performances abroad have led to an overall gain of nearly 90 rating points (from 2379 FIDE in January 2022). Kirk seems poised to compete for the GM title in the year ahead.

Konstantin Kavutskiy	2395
Kirk Ghazarian	2381

Mission 360/Bay Area Chess IM Norm #3, San Jose 2022



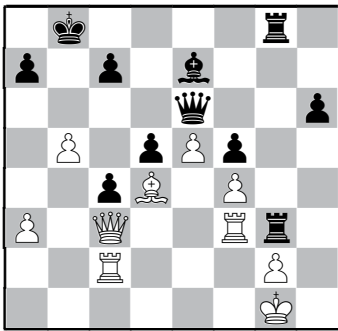
31.♗f3? Kirk had misplayed a much more advantageous position earlier in the game, but in the end his opponent was unable to cope with the pressure. 31.♘xb3 cxb3 32.♗c3 Simple as that!



White has sufficient play in most cases. 32...♔h4! The only way to keep pressing, and a hard idea to spot at the board. Black prepares ...♖fg8 while preventing ♗f2.

31...♘xd4 32.♙xd4 ♖e6 33.b5? White would have been hard pressed to defend in any case, but charging forward on the queenside is simply too ineffective. 33.♗d1! ♗fg8 34.♙f2 An incredibly unnatural defensive setup, though after 34...c6 35.♕f1! a6 36.g3, Black will find it difficult to break through if White sits tight.

33...♗fg8 34.♖c3 ♗g3 35.♗f3



35...♗g6! The key move. Black is winning.

36.♗xg3 ♗xg3 37.♖a5 ♖xa3 38.♙xa7+ ♕b7 39.♖xa3 ♙xa3 The endgame did not take much effort to finish off. **Black won.**

Kirk commented: "My plan was to create a complex fight early on because I wanted a memorable game (to look back on) after I secured the (IM) title."

He certainly succeeded! This memorable victory locked in his final IM norm, thus granting him the title.

JOSEPH LEVINE

Joseph Levine, from Washington, had an absolutely outstanding year. Thanks to a series of impressive performances, over the span of three months he was able to increase his FIDE rating by nearly 350 points (from 2127 FIDE in January 2022) and gain his first IM norm at the Hollywood Norm Classic. Such a jump is no small feat!



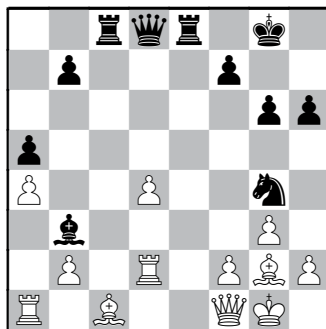
JOSEPH LEVINE

Year of birth: 2007
FIDE Title: FM
FIDE rating: 2451 (January 2023)

Roberto Martin Del Campo 2245

Joseph Levine 2294

CCCSA Summer IM-D, Charlotte 2022



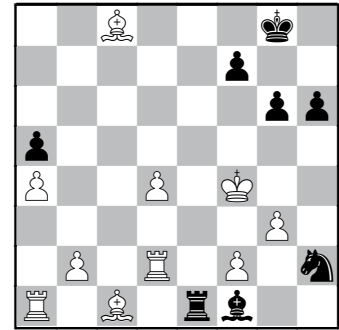
22.♙xb7?? After missing some opportunities in the opening Black had emerged down a fairly clear pawn, only to have the favor returned with this egregious blunder. After 22.h3! ♘f6 23.♗e2!± there is no compensation.

22...♙c4 23.♖d1 ♖e7! The key double attack that Del Campo must have overlooked.

24.♙xc8 Otherwise the bishop is lost.

24...♖e1+ 25.♖xe1 ♗xe1+ 26.♕g2 ♙f1+ Forcing the king out into the wild, from which it will not return.

27.♕f3 ♘xh2+ 28.♕f4



28...g5+ 29.♕f5 ♙h3+ 30.♕f6 ♙xc8 White's king is stuck in a mating net, and to save the monarch massive amounts of material will have to be given. **Black won.**

ANDY WOODWARD

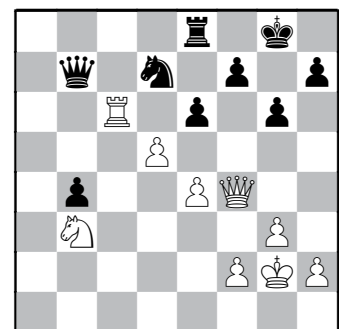
Andy Woodward, from Texas, is further evidence, if we need it, that titleholders continue to get younger and younger... Throughout the year he's gained more than 120 rating points (from 2320 FIDE in January 2022), five(!) IM norms, the IM title, and his maiden GM norm. There is no doubt he has a bright future ahead of him in chess, if that is indeed the path he chooses.

Andy fell half a point short of a norm here, and on several other occasions around this time period, but in the end these struggles proved to be merely a small speed bump on his chess highway.

Andy Woodward 2454

Zurab Javakhadze 2479

1000GM Hollywood Masters 2022



33...exd5? Black was already struggling, but this is the losing move. After 33...e5!? 34.♖c1 ♗b5±, Black is not down and out just yet.



ANDY WOODWARD

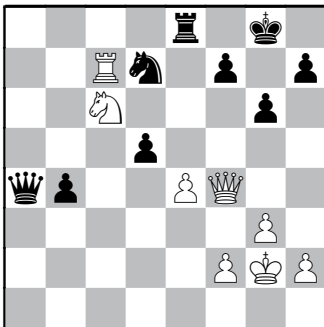
Year of birth: 2010
 FIDE Title: IM
 FIDE rating: 2446 (January 2023)



DIMITAR MARDOV

Year of birth: 2008
 FIDE Title: IM
 FIDE rating: 2435 (January 2023)

34. ♖c7 ♜b5 35. ♘d4 ♚a4 36. ♘c6!
 The key.



Black loses the knight and the game, though he could have prolonged the struggle a bit longer.

36... ♗xe4? After 36...b3 37. ♗xd7 ♜xe4+ 38. ♜xe4 dxe4 White should win, but only after many moves.

37. ♜d6 ♗e6 38. ♜xd7 **Black resigned**
 This final victory gave Andy his first GM Norm.

DIMITAR MARDOV

Dimitar Mardov had arguably his biggest success so far in 2021 when, due to his triumph in the U-18 North American Youth Championship, he was granted the IM title. In the past year, despite no big wins, he proved this designation to be

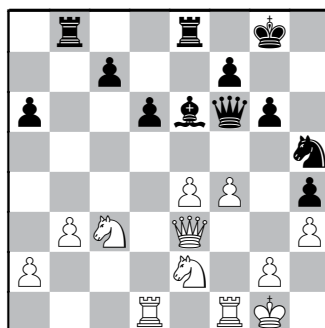
very worthy indeed. 1000GM's third GM Norm Invitational was a narrow miss, as with 6½/9 he was lacking a mere half point for a norm-worthy performance. This and other strong results propelled him to an overall 40-point rating gain (from 2394 FIDE in January 2022). He will surely be hungry to improve further in the year to come.

Dimitar Mardov	2414
Justus Williams	2392

1000GM Invitational #3, St Louis 2022
 Notes by Dimitar Mardov

(Dimitar takes the reins with annotations from his first victory in a series of four straight wins to close out the tournament -Rorrer.)

Before this round, I knew that I didn't have any chances for the norm anymore, so I just focused on playing good chess.

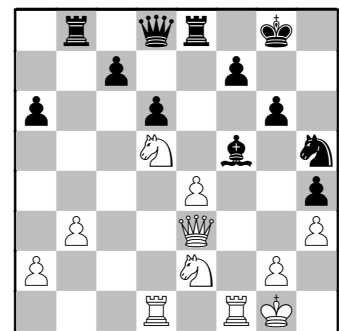


22... ♕d7?? The crucial mistake, and I correctly take advantage of it. 22... ♜g7± was a hard move to find, but one that was necessary to stay in the game. (Black is preparing ...f5 next, with some chances to fight back -Rorrer.)

23. ♘d5 ♜d8 If 23... ♜e6, then 24. ♘ec3+-.

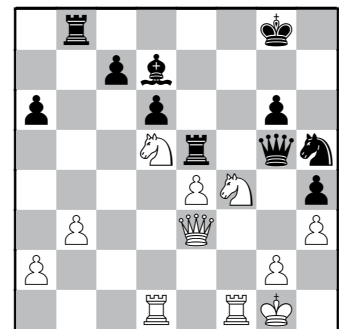
24.f5! The ultimate move that I had to find for a completely winning position.

24... ♗e5 24... ♕xf5



25. ♗xf5!! gxf5 26. ♜h6 c6 27. ♘ef4!+- It took me a while to see this beautiful idea after which Black can resign.

25.fxg6 fxg6 26. ♘ef4 ♜g5



27. ♜a7! A great resource to get my queen out of the pin with a tempo, and the only move that is completely winning.

27... ♘xf4 28. ♗xf4 It's never too late to throw away your whole advantage, as 28. ♜xb8+?? runs into 28... ♗e8. (Speaking objectively, White does have an edge even still, but his task in conversion will not be easy. And besides, why complicate matters needlessly? -Rorrer.)



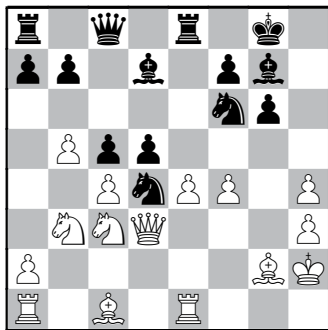
28...♖c8 29.♜f2! Another very important move, bringing the queen back and threatening both ♗f6+ and to take the h4 pawn. White is completely winning, and brought the point home. **White won**

NICO CHASIN

Nico Chasin, from New York, convinced me of his chess mastery first-hand. His first IM norm – in March – came on the heels of a long endgame win against your author. He’s gained nearly 200 points over the last year (from 2243 FIDE in January 2022), and four(!) IM norms to go along with it. Something clicked at the end of the year as he scored two norms in a row, peaking at 2441 FIDE in December, thus making him an IM-elect. Winning the U.S. Cadet (Under 16) Championship with a resounding 6/7 was also an impressive result!

Nico Chasin	2260
Alexander Matros	2357

CCCSA Spring IM-E, Charlotte 2022



Matros has just gone for an incorrect combination in an otherwise superior position.

19.cxd5 ♗xe4? 19...♗f5! was the correct way to achieve compensation, though there was still no reason to enter this labyrinth in the first place. 20.♜f1! ♗xe4! 21.♗xe4 c4 22.♖b1 cxb3 23.♖xb3 ♗xh4∞.

20.♗xe4 ♗xb3 The point of Black’s combination. He picks up the rook on a1, and seems to be content with a clear extra exchange. However, all is not as it seems!

21.♜xb3 ♗xa1 22.♗b2! ♗xb2 23.♜xb2 The monster knight on e4 is now ready to have its say. Black will end up a pawn behind, with no good pieces to speak of.

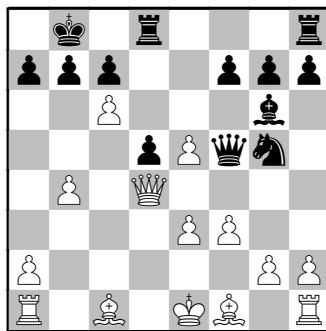
23...♖xe4 24.♖xe4 ♜f8 25.h5! Correctly aiming to open up the enemy king.

25...♖e8?! 25...♗f5 was the only way to keep resisting, though Black’s prospects are bleak. 26.♖e5 ♜h6 27.♜f2! ♜xh5 28.♜xc5±.

26.♖xe8 ♜xe8 27.hxg6 fxg6 28.a4 The d5 passer leaves White with a dominating position. **White won**, and later achieved his first IM norm by winning the final round against... yours truly! Quite fortunately, I might add, but strong players don’t wait for opportunities to come around. They make their own luck! In particular his strong endgame play was a deciding factor in this event.

Ming Lu	2382
Nico Chasin	2285

U-16 U.S. Championship, Schaumburg 2022



17.♗b2? Nico had played a bit too adventurously out of the opening, but this slow move allows him to jump back into the game. 17.cxb7 There was no time to waste. Black will still follow up with ...d5-d4, but in this version it isn’t quite enough. An example is 17...♗e6 18.♜b2 d4 19.♗c4 ♜xe5 20.0-0+-.

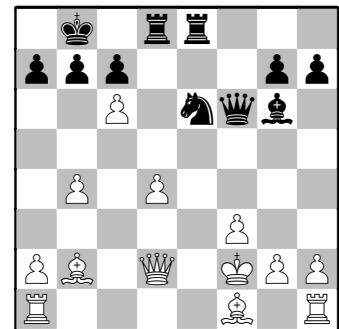
17...♗e6 18.♜b2 18.♜d2 d4 Otherwise Black will be smothered. The point behind this natural line-opening sacrifice is quite surprising.



NICO CHASIN

Year of birth: 2006
FIDE Title: FM
FIDE rating: 2430 (January 2023)

19.exd4 f6! 20.exf6 ♖he8 21.♗f2 ♜xf6



Through enterprising play Black has achieved full dynamic compensation for his two missing pawns. With such an open king the position seems more difficult to play for White, and indeed, he soon fell to defeat.

22.♖d1 ♗g5 23.♗d3?? One mistake is enough in such a precarious position. 23.♗g1! ♗h5 24.h4 ♗xf3+ 25.gxf3 ♗xf3 26.♖h2 ♗xd1 27.♜xd1 ♜xc6∞ With material balance suddenly restored, the position remains unclear and playable for both sides, though I still tend to prefer Black due to his safer king and open files for the two rooks to operate on.

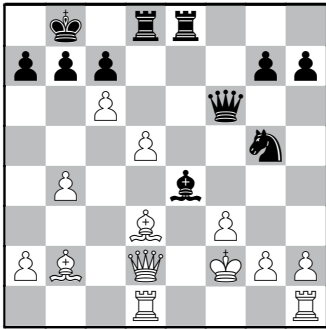
23...♗e4 Just like that, the game is over.

24.d5 Otherwise ...♗xf3 would decide.



JOSEPH ZELTSAN

Year of birth: **2002**
 FIDE Title: **None**
 FIDE rating: **2427** (January 2023)



24...♖h3+!! The magnificent point.

25.♔g3 25.♕f1 ♗xd3+ 26.♖xd3 ♖xb2 27.gxh3 bxc6!-+.

25...♖g6+ 26.♕xh3 ♗xd5 27.g4 ♗xd3 With his position thoroughly in shambles, **White resigned.**

We close our overview with an exception to the age criteria – a player born in 2002 – but one who had a more than fruitful 2022 in terms of his overall progress.

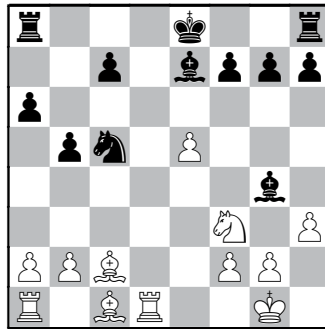
JOSEPH ZELTSAN

Joseph Zeltsan, from New York, competed in a relatively small number of events this year. Nevertheless, when he showed up, he was able to make it count, scoring two IM norms – one by winning the strong Continental Open –

and gaining over 100 rating points (from 2325 in January 2022), crossing the 2400 barrier in the process. He has never been closer to the title and will surely complete his final norm in the year ahead.

Joseph Zeltsan	2337
Qibiao Wang	2365

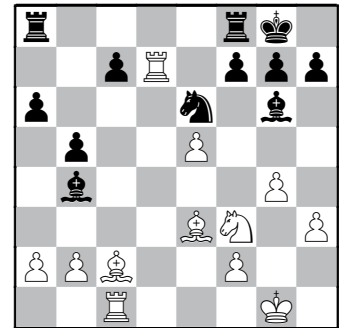
Summer GM-B, New York 2022



16...♗h5? Black had already gone a

bit wrong in the opening, but it was necessary to keep the bishop in the game. 16...♗d7 would allow Black to put up stubborn resistance, though White's position is admittedly easy to play. 17.♗e3 ♖e6 18.♗ac1±.

17.♗e3	0-0	18.♗ac1	♖e6
19.g4	♗g6	20.♗d7	♗b4



21.♗f5 A picture of total domination. Several irrelevant moves later, **White won.**

Last but not least, there are four young players who are worthy of mention, even if their results haven't been spectacular. Despite playing frequently enough, **Brandon Jacobson** (born 2003, 2546 FIDE) has had a forgettable year, apart from tying for first in the Philadelphia International and finishing a half point off the mark in the World Open soon after. Even so, he remains one of the top players in the U.S. and certainly has the potential to break out of his "mini slump" at any time.

Andrew Hong (born 2004, 2517 FIDE), on the other hand, has had the opposite problem – his results were good, and included a tie for first at the Denker High School Championship along with a clear second place finish at the U.S. Junior. However, he simply hasn't been able to participate in any other tournaments, whether it be for academic or other personal reasons. I, for one, hope to see Andrew back at the board more regularly in 2023!

Justin Wang (born 2005, 2481 FIDE) had a similar dilemma. Attending college naturally takes a significant amount of his time and energy away from chess, and he couldn't make it to many tournaments. Even so, an impressive 6½/9 at the SPICE Cup – despite three early draws – showed clearly that he is still working hard and capable of breaking through to GM and beyond.

Finally, **Arthur Guo** (born 2006, 2445 FIDE) surely had high expectations after winning the 2021 National Open. Though he was especially successful in the CCC Spring GM Norm Invitational (see ACM #27, p.74-77) – clear first with 6/9 – and that same National Open, he wasn't able to add any norms or significant titles to his resume. Nevertheless, I am sure Arthur is happy with a 33-point rating gain and will be eager to continue his journey to Grandmaster in the year ahead.