

# Florida CHESS

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In this Issue:

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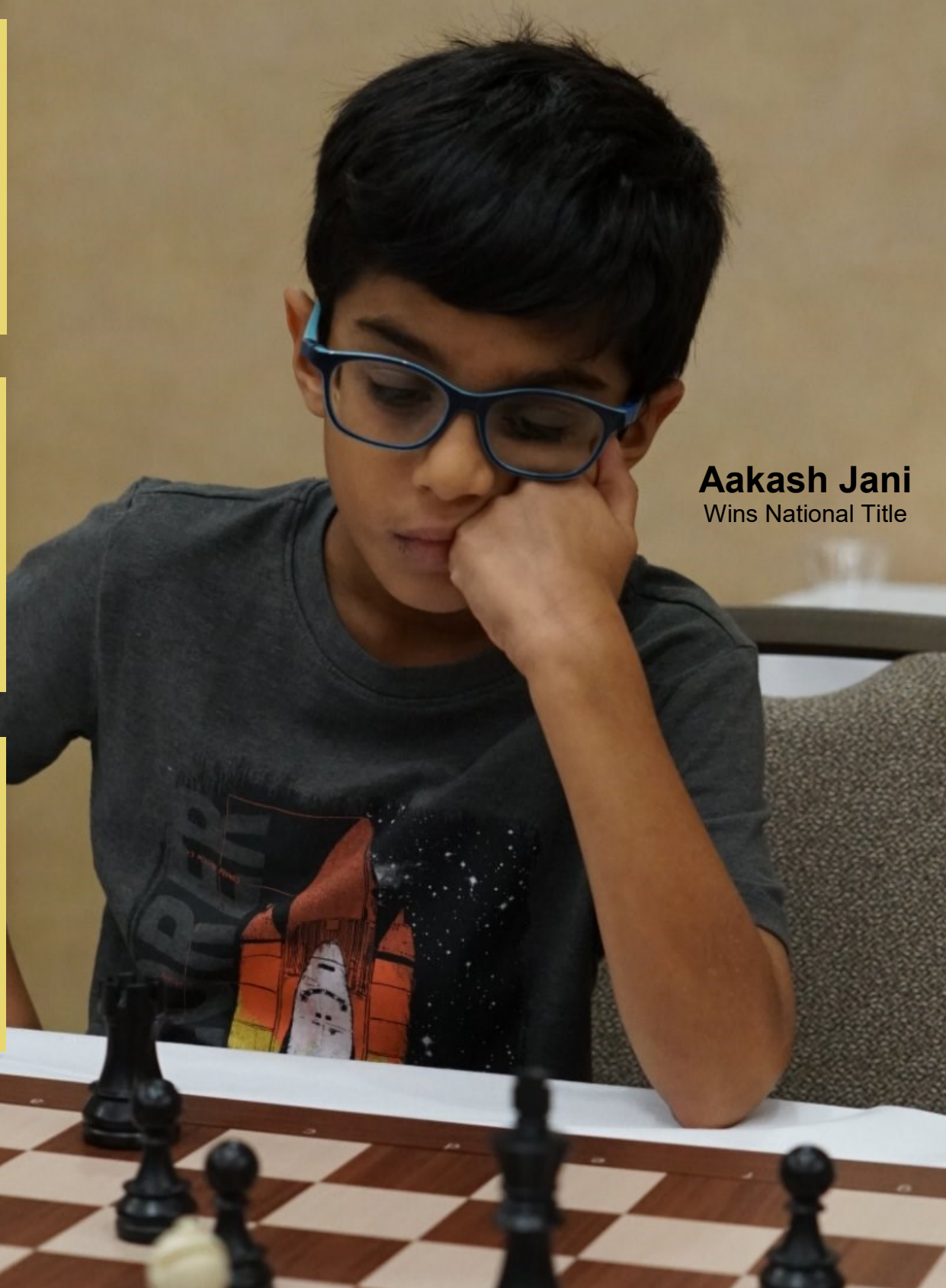
Daaim Shabazz receives  
Special Services Award  
from the USCF



2022 Space Coast Open  
Tournament Report



2022 Queen's Cup Challenge  
Champion - Grace Yang



**Aakash Jani**  
Wins National Title

## Interview with Daaim Shabazz



Congratulations to FCA Board Member and Internationally recognized Chess Journalist Daaim Shabazz, for outstanding work on *The Chess Drum*, an online chess magazine and journal that chronicles the chess activities within the African Diaspora, serves as a vehicle for fostering a greater sense of community within the chess world, facilitates the sharing of ideas and knowledge and demonstrates the true universality of chess. The USCF recognized these efforts and contributions to the US Chess community with a Special Services award. Daaim received his award at a ceremony held during the recent US Open Championship in Rancho Mirage, California. We are very appreciative that Daaim spent some time with us to talk further about one of his favorite topics, Chess.

### **1. Can you share your "Chess Story" with us? (How you learned the game, your early influences, and so on)**

I grew up on the south side of Chicago, and at about age 13, I learned chess after seeing two boys in my neighborhood playing under a street lamp at night. I was amazed at how transfixed they were. The next day or so, I looked up "chess" in one of the sets of encyclopedias we had at the house, took out a cheap checker/chess set I had, and learned the moves. I joined the chess club in the middle of my sophomore year at Chicago Vocational High School (CVS) after beating a club member. The chess club had 100 members, and the school was considered a scholastic chess powerhouse in Chicago. I rose quickly through the ranks, and the summer before my senior, I studied 6-8 hours a day and played every chance I could get. Upon returning to school for my senior year, I quickly earned first board. That next spring, we won the city championship. My initial influences were Chicago master Marvin Dandridge, a dangerous tactical player. As far as studying, Anatoly Karpov was the first player I studied intensely. I loved the way his pieces were always coordinated and optimally placed. I also admired Judit Polgar during her playing days and Viswanathan Anand as one of the most distinguished world champions and ambassadors in chess history.



Daaim posing with the 1980 City Championship plaque in Chicago.

### **2. When did you come up with the concept of "The Chess Drum" and what challenges did you face when starting it?**

The concept evolved from the idea of building a network of Black players around the globe. During graduate school, I wrote a marketing plan for the idea of a network with a quarterly magazine. Years later, I finished grad school and took a post at Florida A&M. After Maurice Ashley became a Grandmaster in 1999, I brushed off the plan I had written nine years earlier and began creating a website. The challenge was developing a structure and creating consistency in terms of fresh content. Starting off, it amounts to a full-time effort. It remains a massive effort, and there are always technical issues you must face constantly.

**3. You have created a vast repository of chess information over the years, what are some of your favorite topics/coverages?**



Interviewing GM Levon Aronian in front of the St. Louis Chess Club (2017). Photo by Peter Doggers

I enjoy covering the Olympiad tournaments. I have covered them since 2002 and have attended six of them in various countries. I also enjoy writing stories about players who would not usually receive any media attention. These stories are fascinating and show that chess can be found under unique circumstances. The Wilbert Paige Memorial was of the most important in my 21 years. As far as international tournaments, Turin, Italy (2006) and Tromso, Norway (2014) were the most memorable. The Olympiad tournament has such an eclectic mix of cultures and nationalities. The passion for chess is genuinely global and no one country or region has a monopoly on its appreciation. I have visited the chess community in many countries. I particularly like doing stories where scholastic chess has contributed to the success of a player's career. I'm a product of scholastic chess, and I would like to believe it has helped me tremendously in my life.

**4. What has motivated you to write about chess all these years?**

I have said many times, that if The Chess Drum did not exist, it would need to be created. There is an unfortunate scenario in U.S. Chess where many underserved and underrepresented communities exist. I sought to highlight the accomplishments of the African Diaspora and provide a platform. While this segment is generally disengaged, there is a passion for chess, just as you have in other countries with long chess traditions. It all boils down to how chess is utilized.

In most cases, it is a non-professional activity because there is not enough financial incentive to justify the time and funds spent being a professional chess player. Unfortunately, much of the talent in underrepresented communities goes unrealized.



For almost twenty years now, The Chess Drum has been focusing on Black chess players and highlighting chess activities within the worldwide African Diaspora. An apt moment for the website's editor and driving force **DAAIM SHABAZZ** to look back as well as ahead.

**I**n the late 1980s, I was having a trouble that I never could figure out. A chess player named Mike Klein, who had just moved into Black chess players' homes. The conversation from the three women worldwide.

As Featured in *New in Chess* magazine. Jan. 2020

**5. Do you have any other chess thoughts or topics you would like to share with our readers?**



Journalists Row (L-R) Cathy Rogers, Daaim Shabazz, Mike Klein, Janis Nisii, Sabrina Chevannes. Photo by Dan Lucas

Chess is a wonderful activity, and there are many ways we can serve the community. You don't have to be a Grandmaster to have accomplished great things in chess. Most start as players but become tournament directors, policymakers, organizers, coaches, trainers, authors, and journalists. Some are chess parents who take on one of the roles mentioned above. Whatever your role in chess, stay involved. It will benefit you and your family in many ways and provide great entertainment, lifelong friends, and a sense of fulfillment.

Follow Daaim's continuing work at -

[WWW.THECHESSDRUM.NET](http://WWW.THECHESSDRUM.NET)