

BATTLE OF THE STATES – 2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

Arthur Guo wins Denker with perfect score

By WIM Zoey Tang

Similarly to Ruiyang Yan, after finishing on a shared second at the U.S. Junior Championship, GM-elect Arthur Guo cruised to his victory at the Barber Tournament by winning all his games.

Arthur's impressive 6/6 score belied the sharp games it took to get there. The race wasn't finished even at the very last round, with Arthur leading by only a half-point over the eventual third-place finisher IM-elect Gus Huston.

E11

Gus Huston	2439
Arthur Guo	2517

Grand Rapids 2023
Notes by Arthur Guo

This final round had taken an unusual importance as not only would I clinch the Denker for the second year in a row, it would be a nice way to finish off a very productive summer for me. Before the Invitationals, I had achieved the most out of six back-to-back tournaments across Europe and the USA, earning my Grandmaster title and placing a close second at the Junior Closed in the process. I was determined to end my remarkable journey on a high note. In the way was newly minted IM Gus Huston, whom I've had trouble playing against several times at Nationals. However, the tournament situation played in my favor. Entering this game, I had the sole lead with 5/5 with my opponent half a point behind. If anything, I knew that my opponent was thinking of snatching the first place prize, so I would use that to my advantage.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5 4.g3 The first surprise. My opponent has, as of recently, leaned toward d4 more often than not, but has never deployed the Catalan.
4...♗b4+ 5.♗d2 ♗e7 6.♗g2 c6 7.♖c2 0-0



2023 U.S. NATIONALS INVITATIONALS

Final Standings – 2023 Denker 6 rounds (50 players)

1 Arthur GUO	.....6
2 Maximilian LU	.....5
3-5 Gus HUSTON, Sharvesh DEVIPRASATH, Terry LUO	.....4½
6-13 Vishnu VANAPALLI, Levon HE, Evan PARK, Nicolas DE LA COLINA, Rohit GUHA, Luke YE, Jason WANG, Hersh SINGH	.....4

Final Standings – 2023 Barber 6 rounds (49 players)

1-3 Erick ZHAO, Brewington HARDAWAY, Jasmine SU	.....5
4-7 Eric FENG, Ronen WILSON, Henry DENG, Sihan TAO	.....4½
8-12 Yiding LU, Andrew JIANG, Anjaneya RAO, Austin TANG, Vaibhav KALPAKA	.....4

Final Standings – 2023 Rockefeller 6 rounds (51 players)

1-3 John ABRAHAM, Andrew JING, Harshin JAGIRAPU	.....5
4-8 Aiden LIU, Harvey HANKE, Vijay ANANDH, Mason LI, Anmay CHAUDHURY	.....4½
9-10 Bryan LIN, Glenn ZHANG	.....4

8.h4!?! Another interesting decision by my opponent, but I wasn't startled. As of three years ago, the computer has showed us that moving the rook pawn forward is often very useful in a myriad of positions. Frequently, in these closed Catalans, h4 is the top move of the engine. I must say, however, I was a bit surprised my opponent played it so early. 8.0-0 ♖bd7 9.♗d1 is the topical mainline.

8...♖bd7 9.♗c3!?! The traditional Catalan way of spicing things up.

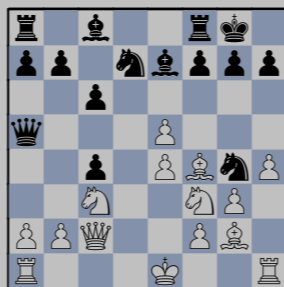
9...dxc4 Only natural. During the game, I felt certain this was the logical continuation, especially when many positions come to mind where White has already achieved a comfortable position from the opening before committing the knight to c3.

10.e4? A sign of lack of understanding of the opening. Often Black has the theme of ...e6-e5 in response to White's central advancement. In this case, it works perfectly, with the white king still in the center. 10.♗d1 was best and it's a game.

10...e5! 11.dxe5 ♗g4 12.♗f4 ♖a5?

Impulsive. As natural as regaining the pawn is, this move gives way most of Black's advantage.

12...♗c5! was by far the best continuation. A decisive advantage as Black's queenside majority is lethal and the future knight jump to d3 will restrict every White's piece. 13.0-0 b5 14.♗ad1 ♖b6-+.



13.e6? Missing a resource, my opponent returns the favor. After 13.0-0 ♖dxe5 14.♗xe5 ♗xe5 15.♗d5!, White equalizes.

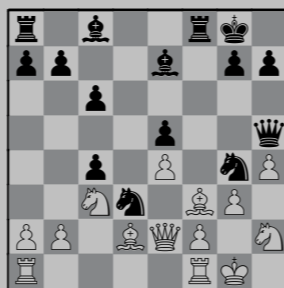
13...fxe6?! Not precise. 13...♗c5 was best. 14.exf7+ ♗xf7 15.0-0 ♖d3-+ and White's position is a mess.

14.♖e2 ♗c5?! Most natural, but not the most accurate. 14...b5! In hindsight, this is the move that would have squashed any complications.

The point is that ...e5 is unstoppable and Black can unravel all his pieces to the most optimal squares. 15.0-0 e5 16.♗d2 ♖b6-+ with ...♗c5 and ...♗df6 coming.

15.0-0 ♖d3 16.♗d2 ♖c7? Another indecisive choice. My opponent thought a lot before his last move but I couldn't fully grapple with the best plan to execute my advantage. Looking a bit further would have led me to a swifter conversion.

16...♖h5! is an unnatural move, walking straight into a pin. However, after 17.♗h2 e5 18.♗f3



18...♗xf3! is the point, although not easy to see from afar. 19.♖xf3 ♗e6-+ and Black's attack is beyond devastating.

17.e5 A good practical choice to muddy the waters.

17...♗gxe5 18.♗g5 h6 19.♗ge4 b5 20.f4 ♗f7 21.b3 b4 22.♗a4 ♗a6 Very natural, but a bit concerning during the

game, as I am moving a crucial defender of my king to the other side of the board. 23.♖g4



23...♖d7?? Looks natural, but is a huge blunder.

23...♖d6! was the cleanest and what I was considering for a long time, but didn't have the guts to play. 24.♖xe6+ The pawn is nothing as the king sidesteps and Black's pieces are no longer hindered by the e6 pawn. 24...♗h8 25.♖g6 ♗ad8-+ Finally, all Black's pieces have come to life.

24.♗e3 c3 25.♗h2?? During the game I thought this was very natural: the king sidesteps from any possible checks and forces Black to make a move. Thankfully, I had foreseen a very elegant way to end the game.

25.♗fd1! was the only saving move, although difficult to commit to as the rook willingly let's Black's passed c-pawn move to the second rank.

25...♖e8 (25...c2?! simply loses the pawn after 26.♗d2±) 26.♗ec5 White's only hope is to trade off the monster knight on d3. 26...♗xc5 27.♗xc5 ♗c8 28.♗e4 ♗d6 29.♗g6 ♖f7



30.♗xe6 (30.♖f3 probably would have put more pressure on a human in a real game. It seems as though Black holds on after 30...e5 31.♗f2 exf4 32.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 33.♖xc6 fxg3 34.♗xg3 ♖b7) 30...♗f8 31.♗xd6 ♗xd6 32.f5 ♖e7 33.♗xf7+ ♖xf7 34.♗d1 ♗f8 35.♗d8 ♗b7 36.♗xa8 ♗xa8= and the dust settles to equality.

25...♗de5! Once on the board, I took a

deep breath as the final outcome was never in doubt from here on.

26.fxe5 ♗xf1



27.♗xf1 27.♗f6+ doesn't work, because of 27...♗xf6 28.exf6 ♗e5-+.

27.♗ac5 looks as though White crashes through, but Black has a cheeky intermediate move. 27...♗xe5-+.

27...♗xe5 28.♗xf8+ ♗xf8 29.♖h5 ♖f5 30.♖e2 ♖d3 31.♖xd3 ♗xd3 32.♗axc3 bxc3 33.♗xc3 ♗c5 34.♗d2 ♗b4 35.♗g1 ♖f2 36.a3 ♗c5

White resigned

And with this win I achieved a perfect 6/6 score in the Denker, capping off an exhausting but undoubtedly unforgettable summer for me!

Interview with Arthur Guo

ON TOP OF A SERIES OF SUMMER ADVENTURES – DAD ORGANIZED, SON DELIVERED!

Arthur shared his impressions on his busy, but very specific summer, as he played seven back-to-back tournaments(!) – crossing the 2500 Elo mark, completing requirements for his GM title, coming second at the U.S. Junior Championship and winning the Denker tournament of High School champions. He also revealed his future plans, and more...

■ **Congrats on achieving the GM title! How does it feel to achieve what I assume was one of your lifelong goals?**

It feels good. It was definitely a relief when I finally got it. I started chess when I was like six and a half years old and I've always wanted to be a grandmaster. And honestly, before this summer it didn't really look like I would get it because I was only around 2450. I still had to make a big jump. And this summer, it kind of just came together. The first tournament I played in Europe was good, and then the second one was also good, and then so on. So, yeah, it's definitely a relief. I'm very happy.

■ **Did you change anything in your training routine in order to achieve this jump?**

Honestly, I was so busy with school junior year. I put off chess for a whole year because I had other extracurriculars, and then the

month leading up to summer I had tons of exams. I'm actually really surprised; I spent a lot of time in my sophomore year on chess, and the results weren't that great, but junior year was basically the opposite. So I didn't really do anything special per se, but I guess I handled the games and preparation more maturely. I think that contributed to my rapid growth this summer.

■ **Your summer was filled with achievements. Besides achieving GM, congratulations on winning the Denker [National Tournament of High School Champions] for the second year in a row! How has your experience been at this tournament over the years?**

It's been good. The Denker Invitational is always kind of nice because there are a few strong players that you know really well and who also are your friends, so to come out on top is always a good thing for your confidence.

■ **The format of the Denker is pretty unique because the champion of every state gets to go to the invitational. What do you think of it?**

I think it's like a great tradition, especially for high schoolers. I remember going to the Barber in middle school and also enjoying it as well. It's great to have a closed invitational for not just the strong players, but also the other players that represent the best of their state.

■ **What are your goals now that you've reached GM?**
I don't really have any (laughs). I mean, I played four tournaments



in Europe. The fourth tournament was in Germany and I finally crossed 2500 there. And since then, it just feels like senior spring to me. Sure, I had motivation for the Junior Closed and for the Denker, which was my last tournament of the summer. But also, I mean, I'm not planning to become a chess professional. Who knows? Maybe I'll try to get to 2600, but my main focus right now is just school, academics, and other things. So I'm putting chess on hold for now, but hopefully, I'll get the motivation and drive to get to 2600 and pursue chess further.

You actually answered my next question, which was "do you plan to pursue chess professionally?". In that case, what role do you see chess playing in your future life?

I plan to do some academic career when I grow up. So, like, become a professor or whatnot. I guess in those kinds of fields being a chess grandmaster certainly adds credibility to your name in terms of publishing papers and doing research. For the past three tournaments, including Denker, I just wanted to have fun. That's why every time I had a bad tournament over the past decade or so, I reminded myself that chess is ultimately supposed to be fun. While it's always nice to have a feeling of winning, just as importantly, you have to deal with it when you lose, when you encounter setbacks, when you don't reach your goals or don't perform as well as you expect to. And if you play chess for that long, you certainly have a passion for it. That's probably what's going to make me go to tournaments like the World Open when I'm in college or something, or try to qualify for the World Cup. So yeah, that's probably what chess is going to be like, more of a hobby and less of something I have to prove myself in because I already accomplished the Grandmaster title. I'll probably play a few tournaments here and there, see what happens.

Could you elaborate more on what you do after a really bad game or a really bad tournament?

It's actually interesting, because I think that's a big part of why I improved so quickly this summer was because I could handle losses a bit more maturely, so to speak. A lot of times before, when I lost, I could quickly forget the result, but I still let it affect my play. And this summer, after I scored my last norm in Hungary, I did terrible in the tournament afterward. And I was super angry, but I managed to pick myself up in the last two games and beat some strong players. So I think the biggest thing is just recuperating in between rounds. Doing non-chess things is always important and finding that balance always helps because at the end of the day, chess is just a game and losses are a natural part of winning, and a natural part of the process it takes to improve.

I found your non-profit Eagle Chess School after some research online. Are you still hosting events/camps there?

Yeah, so that's actually fun because during the pandemic, my sister and I wanted to do something for the community. And a lot of the nurses at the time were being overworked by their long hours and influx of patients. We did a fundraiser a few times from Chick-fil-A and a GoFundMe for the nurses at five hospitals in our local area. And then after my sister went to college, I connected with some of the local clubs and local chess organizations to host chess events for the community such as simul. So hopefully I get some more time to do that. I think it's important not to get too caught up in the chess elite world, if you know what I mean. It's better not to be too obsessed with things like rating points or titles or results, and instead actually give back to the community. Because at the end of the day, Grandmaster is nice or any other title is nice. And being able to have that is always a bonus, but also being able to share your passion, which you've had for so long, is the plus side of all those things.

Now some more general questions. How do you handle stress during important tournaments?

Like I said before, there were a lot of times over this summer when I looked at chess for hours on end and it just got kind of boring, so to speak. I listen to music or any other non-chess thing. Always helps, at least for me. Because I felt like it was always important to not take things too seriously. And that's a lot of the reason why when I lose a game, I don't have the mentality of okay, this effed up my tournament, it's hopeless now. That mentality has changed into something like okay, you know, I don't really care too much anymore. The only thing I care about is whether I play good chess or not. And that's the baseline for me, focusing on the things that should be focused on, prioritizing, making my mindset before a game a little more healthy, and a little less focus on the things I can't control.

What does a typical school day look like for you? You mentioned a lot of homework earlier, so I'm guessing there's not much time for chess.

I go to a private school called Westminster. And naturally the people there are pretty smart. So, yeah, balancing chess and school is hard. It's hard for a lot of people who go through the same thing. But also at the same time, I think chess and my drive to be really good at chess over the years has naturally made me more able to handle school subjects than my peers. Being able to study for three hours straight without looking at my phone, that kind of thing. That always helps, but taking tons of AP classes and tons of tests every week and

having to make up classes, like two or three days of school from chess tournaments or other kinds of extracurriculars, is a lot of work. Bottom line, it's busy, but I've handled it hopefully pretty well.

Who have been some of the influential people along your chess journey, and what was their particular contribution?

Well, it's basically one person, because my dad has been taking me to practically every single tournament since I was like six. And so when people congratulate me for this summer, I tell them it didn't all have to do with me. My dad literally planned the summer like five months ahead at the start of the year. And it was funny because when I look back, he asked sometime close to New Year's about my resolution and whether I wanted to pursue chess and pursue the Grandmaster title before college and really cash in everything. I played seven back-to-back chess tournaments this summer and it's been tiring yet fruitful. A lot of that planning and the convenience for me to focus only on chess during those two months had to do with my dad prepping out everything and fleshing out all the scheduling. He's been a lot of the reason for all my successes in chess and successes outside of chess also. I guess outside of my family, the support from all my friends and teachers is always nice. Actually it's kind of funny because the people writing my recs are interested in chess and also play on chess.com. So it's always a benefit to have that kind of support from school. In terms of coaches, I haven't had that many. Like I haven't had a coach since I was a master. But a lot of the people, David West, who was my first coach, and also a local Grandmaster, Alonso Zapata, from Georgia, also helped me to get to where I am, and basically started my interest in chess.

What activities do you enjoy besides chess?

I like to play golf, and I also do cross-country and track. Also, a lot of the reason why I couldn't spend time on chess was because I was doing a lot of policy debate. My school is really good at that. I also love watching "The Office" because it's always on at chess tournaments; the hotels always have the Comedy Central channel. Honestly, I try to keep it simple, especially this summer. I didn't want to have too many distractions. At the end of the day, I didn't want to let all this hard work go to waste. I want to think I have a balanced life, but when I get bored of chess, when I hate it after games, I always try to have time to relax and think about different things.

Those were all the questions I had. Thank you for your advice, and thank you for your time, Arthur!

Thank you, Zoey.

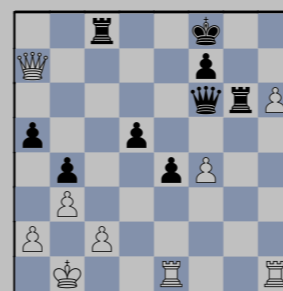
By FM Grayson Rorrer, Features Editor

FIDE WORLD JUNIOR GIRLS U20 CHAMPIONSHIP, Mexico City 2023

IM Carissa Yip has been on a great run as of late - in one month she tied for first in the World Junior Girls U20 Championship (winning the silver medal on tiebreaks) and, upon her return home, picked up a second U.S. Women's Championship title! First, we'll examine an important moment from Carissa's World Junior Girls title bid. In a tumultuous up and down struggle, where both sides missed serious chances, she managed to hold on and make the next to last mistake.

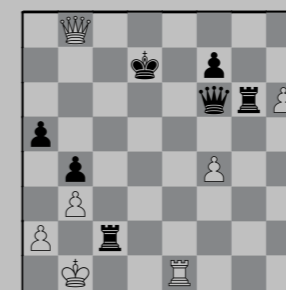
Carissa Yip	2372
Trisha Kanyamarala	2184

FIDE World Junior Girls U20 Championship, Mexico City 2023



51...Rxc2?? Natural enough - Black grabs a pawn, while menacing a deadly attack. Tactics prevent White from taking the rook, and otherwise what could go wrong?

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on c2 to boot. **53.♗xc2?? ♖g2+** is suddenly a mating attack. The only defensive try would be **54.♗e2 ♗xe2+ 55.♗d1**, when **55...♗d2+!** **56.♗xd2 ♖c3+** **57.♗e2 ♗f3+** gives Black a winning queen endgame. **53...dxe4 54.♗xe4+ ♖e6?** The rook ending is entirely hopeless. **54...♗f8** would still have forced Carissa to play with mechanical accuracy. Would she really have found the amazing sequence **55.♗a8+!** (**55.♗xc2? ♗xh6=**) **55...♗e7 56.♗b7+ ♗f8 57.♗b8+!** **♗e7 58.♗e1+ ♗d7**

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO
September 21 - October 1, 2023
World Junior Girls' Championship
(11 rounds, 77 players)

1-3. Candela FRANCISCO (ARG), Carissa YIP, Beloslava KRASTEVA (BUL) **8½**

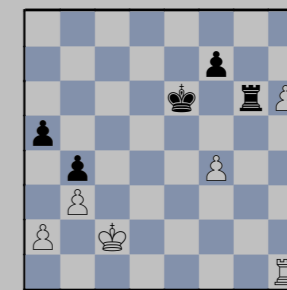
4-6. Mariam MKRTCHYAN (ARM), Ema WALTER (SVK), Galina MIKHEEVA (FID) **8**

7-8. Trisha KANYAMARALA (IRL), Lhia Itzayana CASTELLANOS HERNANDEZ (MEX) **7½**

9-14. Miaoyi LU (CHN), Mounika Akshaya BOMMINI (IND), Barbara GORAJ (POL), Ineymig HERNANDEZ GIL (CUB), Zeinep SULTANBEK (KAZ), Roxangel OBREGON GARCIA (CUB) **7**



59.♗b7+!! ♗c7 60.♗d1+ ♗d6 61.♗xd6+ ♗xd6 62.♗h1 ♗c8 63.h7 ♗h8 64.♗b7+ ♗e6 65.♗e4+ ♗d7 66.♗e5 f6 67.♗xa5+-, when White picks off the queenside pawns, with an inevitable win? We'll never know, but with so many pitfalls along the way it looks like a hard task. **55.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 56.♗xc2**



56...♗g8 57.h7 ♗h8 58.♗d3 With Black's rook incarcerated, the endgame poses no difficulties. **White won** in 16 moves.