



U.S. CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP IN ST. LOUIS

CARUANA AND YIP REIGN SUPREME
READ IN "MAGNIFICENT 3" BY GM SULSKIS

AMERICAN CHESS MAGAZINE

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WHERE GREAT MINDS MEET



60
Years
Journey

THE
**BIG BOSS
TELLS ALL**

*Once Upon
a Time*

IN AMERICAN CHESS

THE
**BEST OF
2024**

- **Openings**
by GM Kapnisis
- **Middlegames**
by GM Nyzhnyk
- **Endgames**
by GM Fishbein

An Exclusive Interview
BILL GOICHBERG By Jon JACOBS

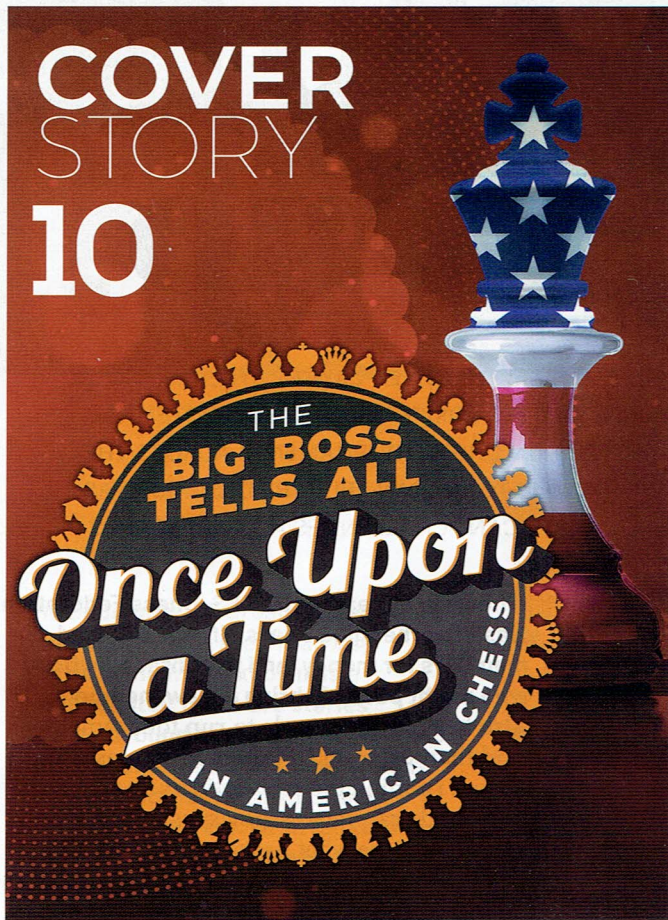
A HEAVYWEIGHT CLASH WITH HITS ON BOTH SIDES

Chess World in Exaltation
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP MATCH
DING vs. GUKESH





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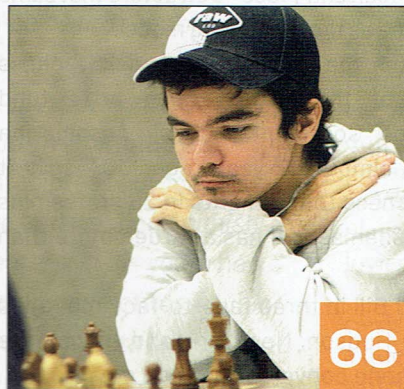
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For six decades Bill Goichberg's name has been synonymous with the successful organization of prestigious tournaments on U.S. soil

Caissa's Impresario

IN THE MID-1960S, WILLIAM (BILL) GOICHBURG WAS THE THIRD MOST ACTIVE PLAYER IN THE U.S. ONCE HE REALIZED THAT HIS ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS HAD SURPASSED HIS COMPETITIVE PLAYING POTENTIAL, HE DECIDED TO DEDICATE HIS LIFE TO INTRODUCING BETTER-RUN CHESS TOURNAMENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. HIS IMPACT ON THE U.S. CHESS SCENE AS WE KNOW IT TODAY CAN TRULY BE DESCRIBED AS PIONEERING — A JOURNEY MARKED BY BOTH SMALL AND SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES ALONG THE WAY.

Bill Goichberg
interviewed by Jon Jacobs

In 1961, amid a national mood of youthful optimism at the dawn of the Camelot era, a New York City college student entered his first chess competition. Within a few years he had begun organizing and directing chess tournaments himself. Introducing one well-received new twist after another, his events regularly shattered U.S. tournament attendance records. The school-age newcomers who flocked to Bill Goichberg's tournaments turbo-charged growth for the then-tiny U.S. Chess Federation. By the mid-1970s he was offering multi-section tournaments with large cash prizes supported by relatively high entry fees — a structure that came to be known for better or worse as the "Goichberg model."

Today Goichberg remains the nation's most visible chess organizer, running most of the largest open prize fund tournaments, including the Continental Chess Association (CCA). Since its inception almost 60 years ago, CCA says it has held more than 2,300 chess tournaments in 28 states plus Washington D.C. and the Bahamas and has awarded more than \$24 million in prize money.

Jon Jacobs interviewed Bill in three face-to-face meetings in early 2024, in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, and which have here been augmented by phone conversations and emails.

When you appeared, the U.S. Chess Federation was often begging *Chess Life* readers and members for money, and to contact anybody who might possibly bring in new members.

Also begging for people to run tournaments. And then I started running tournaments and I started running the scholastic tournaments.

Nobody ran rated scholastics. I said to myself, let's see what happens if I make this rated and with membership required. Probably no one will show up but let me just see what happens.

So what happens is loads of kids show up. We brought in a tremendous number of USCF memberships. So I started writing all these articles for *Chess Life*. Record turnout, 600 players. I wrote articles saying, "You too can run this." I'd go to the annual meetings and I'd see people there that I knew ran big tournaments, and I'd say, if you run rated scholastics, you get lots of USCF members.

And it was like a conspiracy! They all said exactly the same thing: "***It worked in New York, but it won't work in my city!***" Everybody said exactly the same!

The first Greater New York Scholastic was Easter weekend (*in 1966*). After that, they continued right before Christmas. Then after a few years I started running them in Atlanta and Los Angeles and Cleveland and all over the place. Sometimes there was an open at the same time. And when I did that, in quite a few places, the local people still didn't run rated scholastics. Eventually they got the message. But it took a long time.



Bill GOICHBERG



THE DAWN OF RATED SCHOLASTIC TOURNAMENTS

The December '66 Greater New York Scholastic was in the Broadway Central, which was known as a welfare hotel. There are stories floating around about incidents during that tournament, where bums came into contact with kids and other chess players. What led to that becoming the tournament site?

We were using the Henry Hudson Hotel. But that year the Henry Hudson Hotel was taken over by the US Championship. So I couldn't get a hotel.

I knew the Broadway Central was a dump, but I didn't think it was that bad. It was worse than I thought.

I was still learning how to run a big scholastic. I was still using this method that was used in a lot of other tournaments in those days: result cards. You tell the players to write, "Jones 1. Smith 0." Marking on the pairing sheet is incredibly superior.

Because what would happen is, we've got lots of people handing in result cards with the wrong name, wrong result, wrong color – everything wrong.

This tournament had a high school and junior high and elementary. In the high school section, we were way behind because the results that were handed in were



Jon Jacobs is writing a book about the life and career of Bill Goichberg, who Jon has known since entering his first chess tournament at age 13. A chess coach, author, and FIDE Master based in Brooklyn, NY, Jon's work has appeared in Chess Life, CHESS, and ChessBase News, winning nine awards in annual Chess Journalists of America competitions. During the decade of the 2000s he initiated a movement to press authorities to do more to detect and punish chess cheaters. In his youth he was a leading competitor in junior and scholastic events in New York City and nationwide.

substantially wrong. In order to get them corrected, we had to go find the players, but the game was always over; we couldn't find them. The game was over, and the next round wasn't for a few hours. So then when it was time for the next round, we put up the pairings, we started running around looking for the players. We find a few of them and then pretty soon the game's over, they're not there again.

There were, like, 300 players in the tournament. It was impossible to catch up. (Author's note: In a Swiss System tournament, players with equal or near-equal cumulative scores are supposed to be paired with one another in each round. Therefore, to pair players correctly, directors must know the results of all previous rounds.)

I had an assistant. I told him, "I'm going to give you a bunch of pairing cards. They'll have the players who seem to have bad scores. I'll take the people that seem to have pretty good scores. You pair the people with bad scores. I'll pair the people with good scores." So by doing that, we managed to get the pairings up on time.

We were kind of sure with the best players who had played who. But lower down, we weren't sure.

OK, I got this pile of players' cards. If there was a missing result, a question mark would be placed, which means get the result after they



start. So we would have pairings like a 1 with two question marks against a zero with three question marks. We had a lot of pairings like that.

In the last round we did a lot of catching up. We actually filled in a lot of the question marks, but not all of them.

We found some interesting things. In the last round we paired a 1 and three question marks against a 0 and four question marks. Now, that might sound like maybe hopefully not too bad a pairing. But when we filled in all the results we found the 1 and three question marks had 4, and the 0 with four question marks had zero. So we paired a 4 against a 0. The player with 0 won.

In the junior high section, before round three the next morning, the director took the pairing cards home with him. He overslept, and the pairings were nowhere to be found. Both players and parents kept complaining, "Where are the pairings?" And we kept saying we don't know where the director is.

Finally I said, everybody with 2 points raise your hand. A bunch of kids raised their hand. And I said, "OK, you play him, you play him, you play him. If I paired anyone from the same school against each other, tell me and I'll change it. Now go play. When you finish, be sure you put the name of your opponent on the pairing card."

Ha, ha! Like maybe one player in five did that. That was the famous round three of the junior high tournament. The directors spent an unbelievable amount of time trying to figure out what happened. Finally, after a lot of work, I had to take over the job after I got back home, and a lot of results were missing. And I had to call people and ask what was the result. I called them said, "Who did you play?" and they'd say, "I don't know." And I'd say "Well, it's either Smith or Jones, does either one sound familiar?" And sometimes they'd say "Yeah, I think it was Jones..."

About how many of these calls did you have to make?

I don't know, maybe 20 calls.

Wow!

Finally I had it pretty much nailed down. There was one player left from round 3. I had it narrowed down to where this player seemed like he probably played either one of two opponents in Round 3. And I asked him, "Here are the names. Does either one of these names sound familiar?" He said no. I said, "Well, was he a big kid or a little kid?" And he said, "A little kid." And one of the players was a 7th grader, the other one was a 9th grader. So that settled it: he played the 7th grader.

Wow. This reminds me of the famous aphorism attributed to Bismarck: "Those who love law and sausages should never watch either being made."

You just burst one of my bubbles about chess. The very promotional and congratulatory report that you wrote about that tournament in Chess Life had a quite different tone than this!

Also in the elementary school section, funny things happened. The elementary was supposed to be 5-round Swiss, and players who score at least 3½ I think qualify for the finals the next day.

The tournament was running way behind because we're using the result cards. It was running so far behind, the parents started screaming and saying there's no way we could stay for the last round, you have to cancel the last round.

I said, well, it wouldn't be fair to players who have a so-so score and if they win the last game they qualified: it wouldn't be fair to them to cancel the round. So I said what I'll do is, the last round will be voluntary. You don't have to play the last round, but if you need the last round to qualify, you have the option of playing. That kind of shut up most of them. That was actually a good thing to do.

But the next year, we used results (pairing) sheets. No problem at all! Everything perfect!

The result card just has two players. The pairing sheet has all players. They could mark the result wrong, but it's not that likely. Because two players are looking at the results.

GOING REGIONAL, AND GOING NATIONAL

(Author's note: After his early New York area scholastic tournaments pulled in record numbers of entrants and hundreds of new USCF members, Goichberg organized an Eastern States High School Championship in 1967, targeting a wider geographic area.)

You would have made that first Eastern States high school event a National High School Championship but the USCF wouldn't allow it. Why wouldn't they?

Edmondson (*Col. Ed Edmondson, USCF Executive Director*) said, "You're only going to get New York players. And you can't use this name. You have to save that name for a tournament that's really (*national*)."

(Author's note: One hundred and seventy-one entrants representing schools from at least seven states plus the District of Columbia competed in the inaugural Eastern States High School Championship in New York in May 1967. Some entrants traveled from as far away as Louisiana. Official concerns about geographic scope laid to rest, Bill's Continental Chess Association went on to launch the first National High School Championship two years later, drawing 370 entrants from 21 states plus Puerto Rico and D.C. In 1973 a National Junior High School Championship was initiated alongside the annual high school and high school novice tournaments, making a total of 1,074 entries for the three CCA events held together in Chicago that year. The National Elementary School Championship was added three years later.)

The first National Elementary School Championship in 1976 got only 55 players. Did you have any doubts about going forward the following year?

I knew that it would be able to draw more. I had the experience with the high school and junior high, they started out slowly and ended up getting more.



I wasn't at that tournament. I don't think I've ever been to the national elementary. Those were out for bids. I put something in *Chess Life* saying bids are being accepted. That's what the USCF used to do.

I sold all the scholastics to the USCF in the early '80s. I got paid \$8,000 for giving up the three scholastics. Probably should have asked for double that.

Many years later, in 1991, CCA also originated the National Scholastic K-12 Grade Championships. This was an instant success: it brought 340 players from 10 USCF regions that first year. How did its format differ from other national scholastics that were established in the 70s, and what was the thinking that led up to it?

I was on the USCF board. I said, "Let's have a National K-12 grade championship with a separate section for each. And let's announce that it's up for bidding."

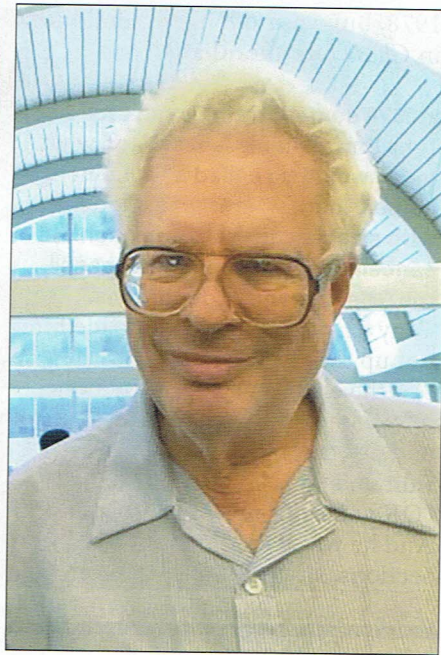
The other people on the board said, "If we put it up for bidding, there's not enough time: it won't get any bids. Why don't you run it?" So I ran it the first year. And I don't think CCA ever ran it again. The USCF put it up for bidding after that.

The idea of the format was basically just to have something different – a separate section for each grade. It turned out that made it really popular.

Eventually the USCF just took them over, stopped putting them out for bids. They haven't been for a long time. I think they're well run now.

FACING OFF WITH COMPETING ORGANIZERS

(Author's note: In the early 1960s when Goichberg got his start, rated chess tournaments were relatively rare in the U.S., even for adults. Even in New York City most tournaments were small and took place in local chess clubs. After 1965 when Goichberg began renting hotel ballrooms for his increasingly well-attended tournaments, a string of would-be copycats emerged. One, Doug Amann, seems to have actually



ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICAN CHESS

dreamed up the "Goichberg Model" of big-money class prizes before Bill did. An assist from a well-placed hotel manager and a bit of good luck helped Bill bury that rival.)

You first started holding tournaments at hotels in New York City when the number of entrants you were getting outgrew what could fit into a club's premises.

The first time I held the New York City Junior (*in 1964*) it was in the Manhattan Chess Club. The year

after, we had 92 people. So we had to use the club and some space in the Henry Hudson Hotel.

The only organizers were USCF, and then for a while a competitor, the East Coast Chess Association. They used the Henry Hudson, and they also used the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark.

I was sitting in the office of the USCF doing ratings. Doug Amann walks in and says, "I just want you to know, I'm going to be running tournaments at the Henry Hudson Hotel. And I don't want them to conflict with your tournaments. We should work out a schedule."

I had just announced my schedule, which was a tournament every month. And he said, "You got too many tournaments. We should work out where I get half of the dates."

I said, "Well, I don't know what we need your tournaments for, we have one every month. Why don't you use a different location?" I mentioned some locations including Washington, DC, which I hadn't used yet. Washington turned out to be a tremendous location.

Instead, he came back again and he said, "I want to work something out where I get half your dates. If you don't do that, I'm going to run a big tournament during the Atlantic Open." (*Author's Note: Forerunner of the World Open, Goichberg debuted the Atlantic Open in July 1967.*)

He scheduled a tournament at the same time as our Atlantic Open, in the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark. I found out that he went first to the Henry Hudson and tried to rent a ballroom that I wasn't using for the Atlantic Open.

So he was trying to hold his in the same hotel at the same time as yours?

Same hotel, *same floor*. The sales manager from the hotel told me, "Your friend Doug came here, he wanted to run a tournament July 4th weekend. And I told him it was booked, but really it's not booked. I just thought it would be unfair to you."

In those days I didn't have any money class prizes; (*rating-limited*) prizes were always trophies. And



Amann decided he would offer money and he'd wipe me out. Well, maybe he would have, but he was in Newark.

He got like 80-some entries, and we got 240. But if he had been in New York at the hotel and they'd given him that other room, he would have done a lot better.

So he scheduled another tournament at the Robert Treat Hotel in August. And in August of 1967, there were riots in Newark. Luckily, the hotel allowed him to cancel.

I had another competitor who sent a mailing out to players saying, "Don't play in CCA tournaments or you'll be investigated by the IRS!"

Ha ha ha! Who was this?

Frank LaRosa from Staten Island, also known as Hylan Chess House.

The IRS was investigating me. Somebody had made a complaint. The IRS contacted me and wanted some information. I gave it to them. That part was true.

The IRS sent letters out to all players. The letter said, "Did you play in this tournament? And if you did, how much entry fee did you pay?"

I didn't really see how I was in danger of anything, even though they were investigating. I don't think I ever heard from the IRS again.

But I filed a complaint with the USCF against LaRosa. I said this guy's certification should be revoked: he's suggesting that if you play in my tournaments you'll be investigated by the IRS. It's completely false. The USCF actually investigated that, and I don't know how that came out.

But I did, of course, make my own copies of his letter, and posted it everywhere at my tournaments, and said, "Don't play in this crook's tournaments. He sends out false letters with false information."

(Author's note: A "Notice" published in Chess Life & Review, July 1978, announced that Hylan Chess House agreed to pay Bill Goichberg and CCA \$500 for disseminating a letter that contained "gross misstatements of fact" concerning Bill and his business. Hylan Chess House continued to run and advertise tournaments through the end of

1978, but was no longer mentioned in *Chess Life* after that.)

In 1974 somebody in Ocean City, MD, Tony Christamidis, advertised what today would be called a "Goichberg model" tournament: nine sections, with sizable cash prizes in each. He cancelled the top section because the GMs demanded conditions.

Tony Christ. Edmondson made him put up the money, and then when he saw the entries were very poor, he told Edmondson he's going to cancel and he wants the money back. Edmondson said no, but then said, "OK you can cancel the top section." And he was forced to hold the other sections, so he lost a lot of money.

I HAD ANOTHER COMPETITOR WHO SENT A MAILING OUT TO PLAYERS SAYING, "DON'T PLAY IN CCA TOURNAMENTS OR YOU'LL BE INVESTIGATED BY THE IRS!"

What can you tell me about Jose Cuchi and his New York Opens?

I scheduled a fairly large tournament in Philadelphia. I got this call from USCF, "Do you know about Jose Cuchi's tournament?"

I didn't know anything about it, that Cuchi's running some enormous prize tournament. I don't want to conflict with a tournament like that. So I think I canceled my tournament.

Later on he started the New York Open with very big prizes. In 1981 I ran the World Open and he had the New York Open at the same time, and I was really mad at him.

But at some point I got some sort of invitation to come meet with him and

iron everything out. I met with him and we agreed that we wouldn't conflict. And after that everything was OK.

Much later, GM Maurice Ashley - I don't think that he wanted to damage you, but his tournaments' structure was such that people aren't going to do both the World Open and his tournaments. After 2005's HB Global Chess Challenge - not the Millionaire Opens, but 10 years earlier, the one in Minneapolis - your World Open bumped up the prize funds that year. That's true. But then they went down again.

And they went down again because the big competitor was gone: that HB Foundation bankrupted itself from running that tournament.

Actually they went down because the enormous prizes didn't do that well.

Which I guess is pretty much the story with the Millionaire Opens as well.

The Millionaire Opens didn't work. I couldn't understand why Millionaire Chess repeated the first tournament, the second year. Because it just lost the same amount of money again.

GOICHBERG'S RIVALS TURN TO POLITICKING

(Author's note: At the 1974 USCF Delegates annual meeting (held in conjunction with the U.S. Open in New York City), Leroy Dubeck and Richard Verber introduced a motion "to empower a majority of the state's Delegates to prevent a tournament sponsored by an out-of-state affiliate from being publicized or rated by the USCF." They aimed to curtail Goichberg's CCA, which had begun scheduling monthly tournaments in New Jersey and was rapidly expanding in other states, competing with local tournament organizers. The motion was voted down after hours of debate. But both the ideas and the specific individuals behind that proposal continued to weigh against Goichberg's influence for decades to come.)

I didn't get attacked for running the scholastics. But when I ran the open



▲ Kim Commons, Larry Evans, Robert Byrne, Lubomir Kavalek, Bill Goichberg (non-playing team captain), and William Lombardy at the Haifa, Israel, Chess Olympiad 1976. Collection of the World Chess Hall of Fame

tournaments (*beyond the NYC area*), I got attacked because I was stepping on a lot of peoples' toes. "How dare you run a tournament in my city? I'm the only one that can run the tournament."

I interviewed some of your critics about that. Some other organizers who said, he's this interloper.

Carpetbagger. I knew that I'd get attacked for going into new areas, so I would always contact the people in those areas. Now and then I couldn't contact them because I didn't know that they existed, and I'd get into trouble.

The criticism that CCA is like Walmart coming to town and leaving all the local mom and pop stores in the dust - how do you address that? What does CCA do to contribute back to local chess communities? And can you give some examples from past and present?

CCA brings in more USCF members than any other organizer by far. That's always been the case, not just today, but all the way back. The local chess community is helped by all the (*additional*) USCF members.

So you're expanding the market for them. You're expanding the local market.

Yeah. And giving them the possibility of advertising, or at the least with

TLA's (*Author's note: Chess Life "Tournament Life" classified ads*), to all these people that they wouldn't know about otherwise.

Around 1991 I was expanding my schedule all over the place. So I wanted to expand it into Chicago. So of course, same as happened in New Jersey, they have this "emergency meeting," to decide what to do about the "emergency."

In this case it was among the Chicago people: there was a meeting with locals to discuss tournament scheduling. They invited me because they wanted to stop me from moving forward.

People in Chicago told me, if the Chicago Open entry fee is like \$300, and chess players in the Chicago area have a budget for all their chess entry fees of let's say \$600 for the whole year... then this one CCA tournament sucks up half of everything players could spend for the local tournaments in a whole year. That's aside from any issue of conflicting schedule dates.

I would say that the local organizers are free to run whatever they want. They can run big money tournaments, too. If they don't want to run big money tournaments... that seems to be what the players want.

The critics' argument really is based on, "It would be OK if I did

it in New York, but if I do it in a lot of places it's not OK because I don't live there." And I would say, what difference does it make where I live?

A CONTROVERSIAL CAREER IN USCF GOVERNANCE

(*Author's note: During the time Goichberg ran CCA, he also held leadership positions in the USCF for 40+ years. First elected a USCF regional vice president in 1968 at age 25, between 1975 and 2012 he was elected to several separate stints on the federation's national governing board, known today as the Executive Board (EB). Following a year as interim Office Manager and Executive Director in 2004 on the heels of a financial crisis that brought the federation to its knees, he was again elected to the EB and served as its president from 2005-2009.*)

You've doubtless heard people say it's a conflict of interest and unacceptable for the owner of the biggest chess tournament organization to also hold the major policy making role in the chess federation. How do you rebut that?

Well, when I was running for the board, I say when I'm running, that I run the CCA and that we're the biggest tournament (*organizer*), and so forth. And if people don't like it, they don't have to vote for me.

And the thing is, most of the voters did like that. Most chess players think there should be more tournaments. Most chess players think someone who runs big tournaments, that's good for chess.

Leroy Dubeck became your most durable political enemy. How did you and him first come to butt heads?

He was part of the New Jersey group, and he and his allies all started attacking me in '74. Dubeck was president of the USCF. Before he started attacking me, I really didn't like him because in '74 we made a bid to hold the US Open in New York. The bid was accepted.



I was the organizer; at least that was the idea. But then at some point I learned the chief director was going to be Koltanowski. And I said, "Look, I'm gunning for this, I want to be the chief director."

I think I was referred to Dubeck, and Dubeck said that George is always the chief director, he comes with the tournament. And he said, "Why don't you speak to George? Maybe you can work something out, maybe you'll be co-directors." So I contacted Koltanowski.

Koltanowski had a lot of problems with pairings. Mainly, he would give in to GMs when they wanted better pairings. It was pretty well known.

I told Koltanowski, "Here's what I suggest. We'll be co-directors. I'll be in charge of the pairings and you'll be in charge of everything else, like disputes and so forth." And he said OK.

Many months went by, then Edmondson said, "I thought you're going to be co-director with Koltanowski... Koltanowski doesn't seem to know that." I contacted Koltanowski again. And this time, he said, "I will be the director of everything." He denied ever having the previous conversation.

In the last round, Hort was playing Bohm on board one, and then on boards 2 and 3 was Benko, Lombardy, Bisguier and Kopec. The correct pairings are obviously Benko-Bisguier and Lombardy-Kopec. Koltanowski makes those pairings and puts them up.

At some point with the round still with many hours to go, Benko walks into the room and he sees the pairings. He goes to Koltanowski and he said, "This is not fair..."

Oh, Benko ended up playing Kopec! I remember!

He says, "I played all these strong players, I played X and Y and Z, all these strong players. I should get Kopec!"

And Koltanowski says, "Okay." He changed the pairings!

(*Author's note:* Danny Kopec, a future IM, was rated 2203 at that time. For what it's worth, in the next-to-last round GM Benko had faced

yours truly, whose pre-tournament rating was 2260.)

Wow.

Nobody else seemed to be aware of what happened. The round starts at 7; at about ten after 7 Lombardy walks in, takes a glance at the pairings: "OK I'm playing Bisguier." He plays Bisguier, he draws, Benko beats Kopec...

Ties for first with Hort.

And at some point, someone went up to Lombardy and said, "You know, these pairings? They're not the right pairings. Here's what the pairings were. And Benko complained and so Koltanowski changed the pairings."

And of course, Lombardy was furious. He said, "If I had known that, I would have forfeited my game in protest." And he would have, too.

Anyway, that was the result of Dubeck telling me that George comes with the tournament. And you know, at that point I had run a lot of big tournaments already.

Over the years, whenever I ran for the board Dubeck attacked me. So I attacked him back.

IN 1964 I WAS THE 3RD MOST ACTIVE PLAYER IN THE COUNTRY. LIFETIME I PLAYED IN ABOUT 150 TOURNAMENTS AND 1,000 GAMES.

BILL AT THE CHESSBOARD

How old were you when you learned to play chess, and who introduced you to it? Who did you mostly play with at first? How did you get good?

My father taught me when I was less than two years old. My father was a pretty good player: never played in a tournament

but probably about 1600-1800 strength. He used to watch the famous hustler and Master George Treysman play in the park.

When I was about 12, my father bought me a subscription to *Chess Review*. I played over the games but must have lost interest at some point because the sub was not renewed.

When I was about 14, our math teacher brought a chess set to school one day and challenged the kids. I watched as he easily beat them all, but I could see they were very weak. Then I said I would like to try, and I think he was astonished, our game ended in a draw.

In 1961 I got out my old *Chess Reviews* and suddenly wanted to play and become good. The library here had about 30 chess books and I read every one from cover to cover including every variation in MCO9.

In the summer of 1961 (*at age 18*) I was ready to explore how to get into club/tournament play. My old *Chess Reviews* made it look like the center of U.S. chess was the Manhattan and Marshall chess clubs, so I called the Manhattan and asked what I needed to do to become a member. I imagined that only strong players could be members, so was surprised to hear that all I had to do was pay my dues.

Who was your opponent in your first rated game?

Katzenstein. My first tournament was a Manhattan Chess Club prelims, starting in September 1961. I think his rating was 1920 or something like that.

(*Author's note:* From an initial USCF rating of 1940 published in 1961, Bill surpassed 2000 in a year and surpassed 2200 within two years thereafter.)

Can you give a rough idea of how many tournaments you had played in before the first one you organized? And how many rated games, and how many rated tournaments, did you play in your life?

In 1964 I was the 3rd most active player in the country. The first I organized was July 1964. Lifetime



I played in about 150 tournaments and 1,000 games.

At what point in time did your playing activity tail off?

After 1978, when I needed a last-round draw in Gausdal for an IM norm but lost badly. I still played until 1983... but after that just filler games. My last filler game was in 2003. My peak USCF rating was 2339, my current rating.

Which GMs (if any) did you beat in tournaments?

Ivan Farago.

ADVOCATE FOR U.S. PLAYERS WITHIN FIDE

(Author's note: Between 1976 and 1978, FIDE delayed or miscalculated international ratings earned by more than a dozen Americans for a period of several months to a year. A feud between Goichberg and rating-calculation pioneer Dr. Arpad Elo was a prime cause of the delays.

In the summer of 1976, Goichberg both played in and directed a FIDE-rated "Futurity" tournament at New York's Manhattan Chess Club and finished in 1st place. His performance eventually earned him an initial FIDE rating of 2530.

Dr. Elo in his capacity as FIDE's de facto ratings chief (his formal title was Secretary of the Qualification Commission) at first refused to award initial FIDE ratings from that tournament to Goichberg and to Eric Moskow. Elo also lowered FIDE ratings earned by several other U.S. players in that tournament and in other Futurities held in New York. According to USCF and FIDE correspondence from the period, affected players included future GMs John Fedorowicz, Joel Benjamin, Yasser Seirawan, and Michael Wilder, and future IMs Kenneth Regan, Jay Bonin, Calvin Blocker, Tim Taylor, Bruce Rind, Danny Kopec, Larry D. Evans, Robert Gruchacz, Vitaly Zaltsman, Mikhail Zlotnikov, and Larry Remlinger, among others.)

I want to talk about your fights with Arpad Elo over FIDE ratings and the early Futurity tournaments you and others ran in the US. Somebody told me that you and Elo had argued over rating calculations even long before 1976. When did your conflict with him start?

It started long before this FIDE thing.

There was a lot of rating deflation, and there were tremendous complaints about it. When I became USCF Rating Statistician (*in 1964*)... I probably shouldn't have done this, but I went to Reinhardt (*Author's note: Joe Reinhardt, who doubled as USCF Business Manager and Chess Life editor*) and said, I got a good idea for getting rid of all this. He said it looks like a good idea, let's do it. I was doing it for about a year when Elo noticed and threw a fit: "I didn't authorize this. This is totally against ..." whatever.

Elo made sure that my bonus method was removed, and he put in a bonus based on if you gain a lot of points in a tournament, you get more points. I didn't think too much of that; I thought getting more points should be based on making a new high rating.

That was the beginning of my fight with Elo. But it was minor until we had this FIDE thing. I played in a Futurity that I ran and I won the tournament. And then the new FIDE list came out and I was anxious to see my rating, which I thought would be about 2500 because FIDE had you get your performance rating as your first rating.

Well, I wasn't on the list at all! I complained to Edmondson, who complained to Elo and said, "What's going on?" And Elo said, "His USCF rating's only 2300. He can't possibly be 2500 strength." Edmondson said, "Well, you've seen players play 200 points above their rating before, it's not so unusual." Elo was just real stubborn about it.

Then I ran some other tournaments where I got FIDE ratings for other players. A few tournaments he just refused to rate. Most of them he rated, but he gave the player the lower of their USCF

rating or their FIDE rating. But that's not the way that the FIDE system works.

So one federation was getting penalized by this lower of the two ratings, and all the other countries' federations were getting their performance rating. That was when I made a big fuss. And the idiots on the USCF board said, "Elo is great, he invented the rating system, how can you attack him?" And I kept saying, "But look, here's what the FIDE rules say, and here's the rating; it's wrong."

And I got nowhere! It's incredible how hard it was! Edmondson was the only one that would listen to me. And when Edmondson went to the FIDE meeting and showed everybody, they understood.

I read about a FIDE meeting in Venezuela, I think in '77. The USCF position was, FIDE has written rules for rating; follow them! Basically the FIDE delegates voted for that. They issued corrections, they gave you your rating, they corrected upward other Americans' ratings.

But Elo didn't. They told Elo to do it. And when the next list came out, it wasn't on. So then Edmondson complained to Euwe, who was the president of FIDE. And Euwe made an appointment to meet with Edmondson and Elo in Milwaukee.

It's amazing how this guy Elo had such a reputation. Euwe kept saying, well, Elo has done so much for chess, "we'll give him a few."

Whose ratings did Elo still end up depressing?

I'm not sure. (*In the end*) Elo got very little, he got one or two players, I think 10 or 20 points.

I heard and read that the reason Elo started monkeying with the rating reports of all your tournaments is that he didn't trust you, because you won that tournament and he didn't believe it could be statistically valid.

Yeah, I think if I hadn't done so well in that tournament... If I had only done 2300 or even 2400, he probably would've let it go. But that it was 2500... he just convinced himself that it was a fake.

**Everybody I interviewed agreed that you did nothing wrong.**

There was a tournament where Peter Winston was in the tournament. He was on drugs and... strength had gone way down. (*Author's note:* Former child star Peter Winston's final tournament was a Goichberg-run Futurity in New York City in December 1977. Weeks later he disappeared during a blizzard and was presumed dead; he was never seen or heard from again either within or beyond the chess community.)

His FIDE rating was 22-something. And he scored 0. So Elo said, I'm not rating this tournament for the following reasons. One, "there is the question of whether the player who is listed as having lost all his games actually played them." Then he said two, "No affiliate specified." Three, "No director specified."

I had sent it in to the USCF and the USCF sent Elo the rating report and they forgot to list the director and the affiliate. So instead of Elo telling USCF "I need a director, and affiliate," he just said this is just a good excuse to not rate this.

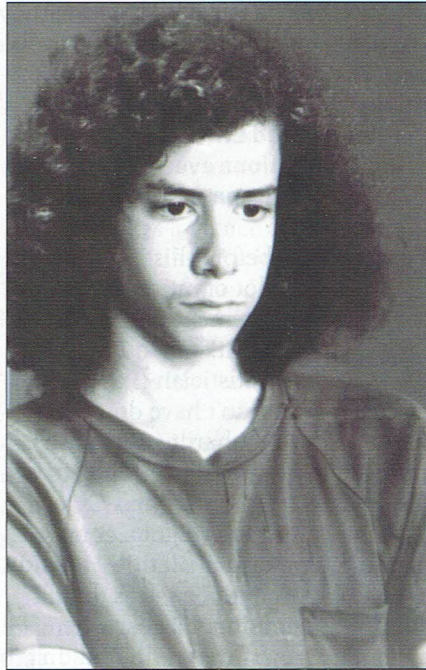
Did Elo's obstinacy end up delaying norms and/or titles for any rising American star? I interviewed a bunch of them and basically, none recall being affected by it.

Most of the players probably didn't understand how the rating system worked. And so when Elo cheated them out of 20 points, they probably didn't even know it. It was a lot of 10 and 20 points, I think.

But as far as you know, nobody's norm or title was interfered with?

I don't think anyone was interfered with, but some players might have lost invitations. There's no way to tell.

(*Author's note:* In the past, Goichberg has noted that incorrect FIDE ratings could have damaged norm chances of affected players' opponents in later events. For example, in a 1979 newsletter article he pointed out that had FIDE President Euwe not ordered



▲ Peter Winston

one American's rating corrected upward by 80 points in line with FIDE rating policy, Ken Rogoff would have been deprived of the GM norm he earned at Lone Pine a month later, because his opponent's artificially low rating would have pulled Rogoff's performance rating below the GM norm threshold.)

BEGINNINGS IN MOUNT VERNON

(*Author's note:* Bill's parents, Sol Goichberg and the former Fannie Lieberman, were immigrants from Russia who met in the US. Sol was a noted mandolin virtuoso who also co-owned and operated a Manhattan leather goods manufacturing company during Bill's childhood and teen years. Both Sol and Fannie assisted Bill in running chess tournaments in the 1960s and 1970s.

The family initially lived in Manhattan but moved to Mount Vernon, a nearby suburb north of New York City, when Bill was a toddler. His early years were filled with rooting for his favorite baseball teams, interacting with pet cats, playing piano, and inventing games that he and his younger sister played together.)

Your sister said you designed games with model train tracks, marbles, and moldings that came off walls of the house. She said you built a structure that ran along the exterior of the house that would transport marbles between attic windows — an impressive feat of engineering for a child.

I remember that. I had trains. The trains were long gone but we still had the tracks. And marbles could go on the tracks. I had something that went out one window and in another window, and somehow ended up downstairs.

Were you a good student, academically?

I was a good student through 6th grade or something like that. Then at some point, I just started doing whatever was enough to barely get by because I hated school. When I was in 6th grade, I skipped into 7th grade. So I must have been a good student up till then. Suddenly, I became just an average student. My school work kept going down from there, and when I got into college it was even worse.

(*Author's note:* Goichberg graduated from NYU in 1963, majoring in political science. He remains an avid consumer of news about politics, and owns and lives in the house he grew up in.

Soon after college he landed a job as Rating Statistician in USCF's small business office that was then located in Manhattan. His name first appears in that role on Chess Life's masthead in May 1964.)

How did you happen to go to work in the USCF office?

I loved ratings. I went to the business manager of the USCF (*Joe Reinhardt*) and said, if you ever have a vacancy in the rating department, I'd be interested. I knew Joe Reinhardt because I'd played in tournaments that he directed.

There was no vacancy at the time. But after six months or so, he said, we're going to have a vacancy now. And I was so interested in ratings, so I think they were really glad to have me.



How much were you paid at the beginning? Do you remember?

Fifty dollars a week. Later raised to 65.

In 1967 you gave up the job when the USCF office moved upstate to Newburgh, N.Y., in Orange County.

I couldn't really commute to Newburgh, even leaving aside all the tournaments I was running in New York City.

Did you ever get any friction from either of your parents when you moved toward directing chess tournaments for your livelihood? An educated Jewish boy from a nice suburb, with exceptional intellectual gifts, to give up a steady job just a few years out of college – it seems they must have been very open-minded to accept your choice without protest.

They were probably happy that I was going into business, because before that my marks just kept going down and down in school. I don't remember them complaining about that (*the grades*), but I'm sure they were not happy.

ROOTING FOR THE BROOKLYN DODGERS AND NEW YORK METS

(Author's note: Asked about his happiest moments from before chess, Bill spoke of his childhood passion for Major League Baseball and the Brooklyn Dodgers. Of course, being a Dodgers fan and later a Mets fan also brought its share of disappointing moments. In 1952 watching his second live game, at the Polo Grounds, Bill endured seeing his hero Jackie Robinson ground into a triple play against the Dodgers' hated rival, the New York Giants.)

When his father finally took him to the Brooklyn team's home stadium, Ebbetts Field, he was fortunate to see Dodgers' star pitcher Carl Erskine hurl a no-hitter.

Decades later when phoning reporters to promote the National Chess League, Bill had a brief conversation with retired Mets star Ron Swoboda, who was then

working for a news outlet. He remembered Swoboda's famous game-saving catch in Game 4 of the 1969 World Series. But in his surprise at finding himself speaking with the ex-Met, Bill didn't think to relay the compliment...

I was so shocked, I didn't say, "That was the greatest play I ever saw!" And I really kicked myself for not saying that.

I remember the Dodgers winning the World Series in 1955. I missed part of some of the games because of school.

MY PARENTS WERE PROBABLY HAPPY THAT I WAS GOING INTO BUSINESS, BECAUSE BEFORE THAT MY MARKS JUST KEPT GOING DOWN AND DOWN IN SCHOOL.

I also was in school with the infamous Bobby Thompson game. *(Author's note: Long before the major leagues split up into divisions with playoffs, the team that finished first in the National League and in the American League regular season would go straight to the World Series. The 1951 season ended with the Giants and Dodgers tied for 1st in the NL. A three-game playoff followed to decide the league championship; a home run by the Giants' Bobby Thompson in the bottom of the ninth decided the third and final game, ending the Dodgers' hopes.)*

I got out of school with the Dodgers leading 2-to-1. When I got home, the score was 3 to 1. And then I think pretty soon it was 4 to 1.

There was this basketball outside. I had the radio on and I

was outside, tossing the basketball up on the roof and it would come rolling down and I'd catch it, and I'd toss it up and it would come down. And then at some point I tossed it up and it didn't come down. It got stuck, and that was exactly when Thompson hit his home run. I started crying at that point.

Was it even more painful when the Dodgers deserted and left town in '58? Or you had outgrown being a Dodgers superfan by that point?

That was even worse. Still, I rooted for the Dodgers against the White Sox in '59 (*World Series*). How could I not root for them? – They had my players on it.

Eventually, the Dodgers became just like any other team to me. I was a Mets fan from the start.

MEETING BOBBY FISCHER

(Author's note: A site of many early Goichberg tournaments, the former Hotel McAlpin in Manhattan's Herald Square, today is a rental building whose entrance bears a prominent metal plaque stating that Jackie Robinson lived there in 1947 when he received his historic call from the Brooklyn Dodgers and changed America. During our first face-to-face interview for my book, I showed Bill a photo I took of the former McAlpin entrance and plaque. He was duly surprised by my discovery.)

A year or two ago when I walked past the building that used to be the McAlpin, this plaque was on the outside. I nearly fainted when I saw that. All my teenage weekends when I should have been out on dates or trying to get dates, I spent playing chess there. And it was Jackie Robinson's home!

Bobby Fischer lived there, too.

Did you ever meet Bobby Fischer?

Yes, quite a few times. Fischer adjudicated games in the US Amateur Championship, which was run by USCF, and I was working for the USCF at the time. I spoke



to him many times. When I was working for the federation as Rating Statistician, he would come into the office. I remember telling him once, "You're the only GM that doesn't ask me what his rating is." Every other GM who came into the office would say, "What's my latest rating?" And he (Fischer) was sort of like, "What do I care what my rating is, I'm the best player around."

And once, he came in and went to the office near me. Reinhardt, the editor of *Chess Life*, was in that office. I could hear everything that was going on. Fischer was dictating a column to Reinhardt. At some point, Fischer said, "Knight here, rook here," or something. Reinhardt said, "You know Bobby, I'm only an A player, but... What about knight here? It looks pretty strong." Fischer said, "I don't want anyone to know about that."

And then there was the time the National High School was held at the McAlpin... First, this expert from South Carolina, Charles Walter, was giving a blindfold simul against two of his teammates. Fischer walked into the room and said, "Can I play?" They don't recognize him. So Walter says, "Sure you can play."

The game goes about nine moves and Walter starts wondering, why am I getting totally crushed by this unknown player? Then Walter says, "Hey, I know who you are!"

The next thing was, in a late round on Sunday morning, Fischer suddenly walks into the room where they're playing and starts looking at the top boards. Fischer was always very interested in junior chess.

After a while somebody notices him. And the word starts spreading: "That's Fischer! That's Fischer! That's Fischer!"

Fischer didn't like that, so he left. He headed for his room at the McAlpin because he was living there. And some of the kids followed him. Fischer got into his room and closed the door, and the kids knocked on the door and said, "Mr. Fischer, Mr. Fischer, we just wanted to ask for your autograph!"

And they said Fischer opened the door and signed autographs and he was very friendly.

Another thing about Fischer and the McAlpin. The McAlpin had this rule that you have to allow the maid to clean your room at least once every week or something. Fischer refused. He said, "I can't do that because the maid might sell my opening secrets to the Russians." The McAlpin kicked Fischer out at some point for violating the rules.

My mother told me about the kids chasing him, at the time. She herself was among a bunch of people that followed him into the elevator. For many years I didn't know whether to believe her or not. While playing my game on the dais I had noticed a commotion in the ballroom and a rush toward the exit doors. But I remained focused on my game, so I didn't know it was Fischer.

Do you see any moral lesson in Fischer's life story that we chess people ought to learn from?
That somebody could be a genius in one field and an idiot in another field. I heard that somebody once told Fischer, "Why do you hate Jews? Zuckerman is your friend and he's Jewish." And Fischer said, "He's an exception."

Who is your favorite historic chess champion or player?

Well, if you don't count his life away from chess, Fischer.

One guy who's very famous in the non-chess world who reportedly directed CCA tournaments is George R.R. Martin, the author of *Game of Thrones*.

Yes, he did direct for me. He is a good tournament director.

Do you have one or two favorite chess books?

I like *Pawn Power in Chess*.



▲ Robert Fischer, New York City 1971 Photo by David Attie

FROM CHESSBOARD COMPETITOR TO MASTER ORGANIZER

In the past ten years, have you played any online chess or other chess just for fun?

I probably played two or three online games. Hardly at all.

What drove you to shift your focus from playing chess competitively to organizing tournaments? At some point you were doing a lot of both, and you were very promising as a player early on.

Well, I was much better at running tournaments than I was at playing.

How and when did you decide that? What convinced you?

When I needed a draw in the last round at Gausdal 1978 to get an IM norm, and I lost. If I had won or drawn that game, I certainly would have kept playing to try to get my title.

At that point, my plan was to run great tournaments, and become an IM. About becoming an



IM, I never really thought, “OK, I’ll forget about this.” It just sort of happened at some point.

Even after the Gausdal tournament where I missed the norm, I still thought, well, I’ll get the norm next time. But then it just turned out next time never came. I gradually realized, it’s a lot of work; do I feel like putting the work in?

“THE OFFICE”, CCA-STYLE

(Author’s note: While most CCA tournament players viewed Bill as nerdy and hyper-focused on his directing work, he often socialized with his team in ways that reflected his creativity and humor. They went bowling, played bridge, poker, Strat-o-Matic Baseball, and a special variant of Monopoly that Bill invented.)

A former CCA staffer told me that you improved on Monopoly by changing the Community Chest cards into a dice roll.

The main feature was, instead of just rolling just one die, you got the choice of rolling one, two or three dice. You had to declare in advance how many you were going to roll. And three dice cost you an extra \$100. One or two were free.

That game was really great. Half the Community Chest cards had weird things like, you had the option of agreeing to roll one die for the rest of the game. If you agree you’d collect \$5,000. The things were calibrated so that on the average it was worth about \$5,000.

How did you get the statistics to calibrate that?

I just ran a lot of tests, with all the dice.

AN EARLY GLIMPSE OF COMPUTER CHEATING IN A WORLD OPEN

(Author’s note: In July 1993 an unrated and previously unknown player entered CCA’s big-money World Open using the name of the deceased World War II-era nuclear

scientist and computing pioneer John von Neumann. He achieved a second-round draw with Icelandic GM Helgi Olafsson and later – among other suspicious behavior – lost a game by letting his time run out on move 9. After Goichberg refused to pay him the \$850 prize money that his results would have qualified for, “von Neumann” left and was never again seen at a chess tournament. Observers have speculated ever since that he was communicating with an outside accomplice possibly aided by a computer, and that extended pauses in at least two of his games were caused by errors in transmitting moves. He is often called chess’s first serious computer cheater.)

I WAS MUCH BETTER AT RUNNING TOURNAMENTS THAN I WAS AT PLAYING.

What’s your single most memorable experience or anecdote from a CCA tournament?

Most memorable was the World Open with Neumann. You must have heard of that.

For some reason, no other directors had told me what was happening. He had these weird games. One game where his opponent had a bishop on b4, and he had a knight on c3, that was a Nimzo I think. His opponent played bishop takes knight. So there are only two legal moves: pawn takes bishop, or Qd2. He thought for an hour.

(Author’s note: Accounts of that game’s conclusion conflict. Bill recalls “von Neumann” failing to move and losing on time. But other accounts, including by GM Hans Ree in New in Chess and another by Frederic Friedel published in ChessBase News, assert that von Neumann actually won that game, even after waiting 40 minutes before making the forced recapture.)

In spite of the fact that he lost games like that, there were other games where he drew with GMs. At the end, I told him, “I don’t think you know how to play chess at all. In order to get your prize, you have to convince me you know how to play chess.” I set up this position where you win by playing Qd8+, Rxd8, Rxd8#. Back-rank mate: Queen checks, Rook takes, Rook takes. He just looked at it and didn’t know what to do. He looked for a long time and said, “I don’t have to solve these stupid puzzles,” and then he stormed out.

REFLECTIONS ON 60 YEARS RUNNING CHESS TOURNAMENTS

Did you ever have any second thoughts or regrets about choosing this career?

No.

Why do you think you’ve had so much staying power? In the long run, what is it that allowed CCA to always be the last man standing among tournament organizations?

Because I was stubborn. I had some tournaments that lost a lot of money. Sometimes you think it’s going to do well, but it does horribly. So you’re not going to use that site anymore.

If you’re stubborn, you stick with it. You decide that it has to be a good location, and even though it lost money, you keep up with it.

I had the Chicago Open, and Kings Island Open. The first year I held them, they did very badly. But I was convinced that they were good locations. So I kept up with them and now they do well.

What was the greatest mistake or the most damaging mistake you can remember making in all your time running your business?

I ran the Continental Open in Los Angeles. I thought Los Angeles was such a big city, and I can have big prize money. So I had like \$100,000 in prizes.

The tournament lost about \$27,000. I think it’s the most I ever lost in a tournament. I guess the



lesson was, even though a city may have a big population, you have to be a little careful about huge prizes. Population alone just isn't enough.

Anything more abstract or philosophical, other than a concrete mistake about an event? Or a human decision involving people or anything like that, that was a big mistake?

I hired some tournament directors I shouldn't have. One of these directors it turned out was selling drugs on the side. Every now and then I'd see him and he gave me the money he'd collected for the next tournament that was coming up. At some point I saw him and I said, "Where are the entry fees?" and he said, "I don't have them... I'm sorry, I had to pay this or they would have killed me."

Of course, he was fired. But I never could collect the money that he owed me. He said he wants to still play in tournaments. I said, OK, but every time you play, you have to pay me \$50, until your debt is paid off. I think he paid it once and then he never paid it.

What was the best decision you ever made in your chess business?

The tournaments I was running in the 70s, early 80s, most of the tournaments I was running were fairly low entry fees, small prizes. They weren't making any money. At some point, I said, I'm going to have tournaments with much larger prizes, higher entry fees. That turned out to be much better.

I was afraid to do that because when I did, a lot of people complained. But I decided it doesn't matter if people complain. The only thing that mattered is, how many entries do you get? And I decided that the tournaments with the high entry fee and prizes, you get a lot of complaints – maybe I don't anymore, I don't think I get complaints about the World Open – but what matters is how it does. How many people complain is irrelevant.

Did playing in tournaments over the years yourself bring you any lessons that aided your organizing and directing?

It helped me decide on tournament time controls. When I thought about

which time control to use, I would always figure, how would I feel if I was playing in this tournament? And how was the time control? Would it feel too fast?

If you were starting over again, is there anything you would do differently?

Well, the main thing I would do differently is I wouldn't run tournaments with small entry fees and prizes. I'd run what I'm running now.

TOURNAMENTS WITH LOW ENTRY FEES AND SMALL PRIZES WEREN'T MAKING ANY MONEY.

A HOTEL MANAGER PULLED A FAST ONE

Can you think of any early challenges that came up when negotiating with hotels, and how you dealt with them?

I ran a tournament in Atlanta. An open tournament, plus two high school sections.

The hotel contract said, "We have reserved the ballroom for your use."

The hotel manager calls me up about a week before and says, I just want to go over the setup with you. We have so many tables in Ballroom C, and we have so many in some other room.

And I said, "Ballroom C? We have the whole ballroom. Here in the contract it says, 'We have reserved the ballroom for your use.'" And he said, "Yes, it says they reserved the ballroom, but it doesn't say *the whole ballroom.*" (Author's note: It is more than fitting that the hotel manager's name was Mr. Fox. In George Orwell's classic allegory *Animal Farm*, a commandment that originally read, "Animals shall not sleep in a bed" was adulterated by adding the words, "... with sheets.")

I had to have this big argument with them that the space wasn't

nearly sufficient. He said, we'll give you some other room; I said the space is still not sufficient. And he said, "Just come here when you see the space, you'll be happy, you'll be satisfied. Let's play it by ear." I just kept saying, "I don't want to play it by ear, I want a guarantee that we have space. And if this other group needs ballrooms A and B, give us something else instead with equal space."

So I show up at the hotel. And I see this other room that he's going to give me is much too small; it's even smaller than he said. And I say, "This is ridiculous. We reserved the whole ballroom and we don't have any space." And he just kept saying, "Well, there's nothing I can do. You didn't reserve the whole ballroom."

So the tournament isn't going well: everybody's very crowded, there's no skittles. And this Ballroom C that we have is adjacent to B, and B has a noisy group – another problem.

On the last day of the tournament, somebody comes from the hotel to the director's room with a bill. I said, "I'm not going to pay this. I was entitled to the whole ballroom, I didn't get the whole ballroom. I shouldn't have to pay anything."

Pretty soon Mr. Fox, the general manager, shows up and says, "You'd better pay or else." After the trophies were shipped to the hotel, the front desk tells us, "I'm sorry, I have instructions from Mr. Fox not to give you your packages until you pay."

At this point, a lot of players could see me arguing and see what was going on. One of the players said, "My father is the former president of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. And he has connections with a lot of people. I'll ask him if he could call the manager and complain."

So he did. Boy, that really had a great effect. Suddenly Mr. Fox showed up carrying the box of trophies and saying, "You see, I'm really a nice guy. And here's your trophies."

So we got our trophies, but I still refused to pay the extra money.

How many events does CCA run in New York City now?

There are none now.



Aren't events like the Greater New York Open, the Empire City Open, the Manhattan Open... aren't those CCA events?

Yeah, but they're not held anymore, because of the lack of hotels. Something happened in the pandemic; the hotels didn't close, but they're no longer available for meetings. I don't know why that is.

Now if I was going to run anything (*in Manhattan*) it would be in the Crowne Plaza. The rent there is \$25,000. The last time I asked about it, they were just not booking rooms at all. Rent of \$25,000 is kind of risky; you really need a great turnout.

MARRIAGE, WIDOWHOOD, AND HEALTH CHALLENGES

(Author's note: Bill met his future wife, Brenda Tersine, in 1983 after being introduced by a friend of his sister. For their first date, Bill – who enjoyed watching and betting on horse races – took her to a harness racetrack in Saratoga, N.Y. Brenda had no previous involvement in chess but soon wound up assisting at CCA events. That fulfilled an informal prediction by Bill's mother Fannie, who had remarked decades earlier that her son would have to marry a woman physically strong enough to carry around boxes of chess equipment to help at his tournaments. Bill and Brenda married in 1993 before a small group of family members. Despite their relatively advanced ages (Brenda was 42 and Bill, 50), it was a first marriage for both, so neither ever had children. Brenda Goichberg passed away in 2022 after a years-long struggle with MAC – mycobacterium avium complex, a chronic bacterial infection of the lungs.)

I stopped going to tournaments (*during Brenda's final years*)... It's true that the tournaments stopped because of the pandemic. But the tournaments came back in May of '21 and I didn't go because of Brenda. Then in August of '21 I got back pain. So both of us were sick.

I hardly go to tournaments now because I'm not too well.

Aside from the NY State Championship in Albany around Labor Day, 2023, what was the last CCA tournament that you were present at?

I went to Albany the year before. I didn't really direct, but I was there and I didn't feel horrible.

THOUGHTS ON CURRENT CHESS TOPICS

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing the US chess community today?

Might be USCF should pay more attention to affiliates.

Edmondson had a lot to do with the rapid growth in the 1960s. Edmondson was like, some new organizer appeared and ran a tournament in an area that didn't have tournaments before. He would call that organizer up and say, "Great work!" There wasn't much of that in the USCF, except for Edmondson.

Today that attitude is completely gone. The Executive Director Carol is no longer there, but her successor is probably going to also have the same attitude, which is pretty much "The hell with organizers. We don't care whether we have them or not. All that matters is raising money."

What concrete signs of that are you seeing?

I used to send out postal mailings. Those wouldn't be very valuable anymore these days. But at a time when I still wanted to do them and I still thought they were valuable, the USCF's attitude was, who cares?

I remember at some point I sent in an order for mailing labels for the North American Open. I got an answer saying something like, "These are not available now. I'll let you know when they're available." And then I heard nothing.

And time went by, until at some point, I need this now and they haven't answered me. So I sent an email saying, "Whatever happened to these?" And the answer was, "Didn't

you see, it was on our website, it said mailing labels are no longer available to affiliates."

Now you might think that after all I've done, they'd tell me that they're not available. Instead, *I have to notice that it's on their website? I don't read their website every day.* I mean, even then. Now I don't read it at all, but even then I would read it occasionally.

There were other things like that, too. The federation is doing a better job of raising money. But that doesn't mean the old ways of promoting should be thrown away.

You shouldn't neglect the constituency.

Yeah, you just keep doing what you've been doing, and if there's something new that's better, you do that also.

What do you think about the role of coaching and teaching chess to kids? This is something that CCA did not get into. Fifty years ago, all it seemed kids needed to improve at chess was to be in organized competition, and maybe do a bit of self-training like by reading chess books. Nowadays, it seems most kids get some kind of coaching, either one-on-one or in groups. Has your view of the value of chess coaching for kids evolved or changed over the years?

It seemed to me that the more promising kids didn't seem to need coaching. I remember the American Chess Foundation (which morphed into Chess in the Schools) at some point had a lot of coaching programs. They had these kids that were so heavily into coaching that they didn't have any time to play in tournaments. I thought that was a big mistake: the idea that coaching is more important than playing.

I think it's important that they have the desire to improve by playing over games also. As well as playing in tournaments.

Do over-the-board tournaments and matches have a future? What do you think is the likelihood that online will eventually run face-to-face competition out of the market?

There doesn't seem to be any sign of that now. There are a lot of online



tournaments. And most players don't like online. We used to run more online tournaments. During the pandemic we ran loads of them. But there is a tremendous amount of imaginary and real cheating.

THE TREND IN TOURNAMENT TIME CONTROLS

Time controls have been speeding up in FIDE in the past decade or so, and I think time controls have generally been speeding up in many US rated events, too. Has CCA been a part of that trend? Where do you see it headed: should time controls get even faster, and if so, how fast? We've been speeding up, too. Everybody has been speeding up. I keep thinking when we get to a certain time control, that's it, we're never going to get any faster. Then eventually we get faster. Right now we have two-day, three-day tournaments, 40 in 80.

We started having time controls with increment. I didn't believe in increment. The only reason we started using it is it's easier for the director, because the director doesn't have to count moves, at least not as much.

I like delay much better. With increment, games can go on tremendously long, and it can delay the start of the next round. (Author's note: In 2024 most CCA tournaments other than the World Open have first time control 40 moves in 80 minutes, second time control 30 minutes for the rest of the game, plus 30-second delay per move.)

What have CCA's players or customers been saying about the time controls and the trend of speeding them up?

There are always a few players that complain it's too fast, but basically most players like when it's speeded up. You wouldn't speed them up if the players didn't like it.

We have slower tournaments than most organizers. A lot of organizers are using this Game-90 sudden-

death with 30-second increment. Which is very fast. It did very poorly in my surveys.

BANNING TOBACCO SMOKE

What would you most like to be remembered for?

Starting USCF rated scholastics. Starting no-smoking tournaments. Just having tournaments all over the place.

Legal prohibitions against indoor smoking, even in the most progressive jurisdictions like New York City, didn't start to appear until 1990 or later. You started non-smoking tournaments in the 1970s. So CCA was really ahead of the curve. What was the genesis of that idea?

It came up through the 1973 US Open in Chicago. I was playing. My game had gone about 10 moves when suddenly I realized I couldn't sit there anymore because of the smoke – I had to go out in the hall for awhile. After that game, I said I'm never allowing this in my tournaments again.

The first tournament where we had non-smoking, most of the players seemed to like it, but we had a few players saying "This is horrible. How can you do this? I didn't know this would be your rule..." And of course I had people who assured me, "Your attendance will suffer."

By '76, there were some other non-smoking tournaments in the country. And there was a motion on the floor at the US Open that the US Open in future years would become a no-smoking tournament. If that motion lost that year, it was approved the year after.

I feel really good about the no-smoking rule.

That's a great influence that you guys had by being a leader.

When I was playing around 1970, some older players would weaponize their cigarette. They knew that their teenage opponents and younger were bothered by it, so they would blow smoke in people's faces intentionally.

Did CCA offer both smoking-allowed and no-smoking events side by side? Or did you go to all no-smoking right away?

As an experiment, I had a quad where there was a no-smoking section and a smoking section, just to see what would happen. The non-smoking sections had maybe twice as many players, or something like that.

By about '77 or '78 no-smoking was pretty standard, although some organizers still allowed smoking. The USCF never made a no-smoking rule (*applicable to every rated tournament*). That was just for the US Open, but eventually I think it was for all national tournaments.

CONCLUSION

While Bill Goichberg has been sidelined in recent years by health issues and advanced age (turned 82 on November 11), Continental Chess Association which he founded in 1968 remains a juggernaut on the U.S. tournament scene. Announcements and display ads for CCA events filled approximately one-third of the 15 pages of tournament advertising space in a recent issue of *Chess Life*, contributing an important source of revenue for the U.S. Chess Federation.

Although he is not the father of scholastic chess competition in the U.S., Goichberg is the undisputed father of USCF rated scholastic chess. Through initiatives such as the National High School, Junior High, and Elementary School championships, he opened an essential pathway for school-age players who were serious about progressing to the wider chess tournament world and competing against adults, including IMs and GMs. Along the way he introduced a string of innovations that improved the tournament experience for thousands of people throughout the U.S., greatly expanding the footprint of organized chess in this country.

Few of today's scholastic chess organizers acknowledge Goichberg's pioneering contributions. We hope this article will help change that.



All notes are by FM Jon Jacobs, unless otherwise stated.

D46

Bill Goichberg
Samuel Greenberg

Manhattan CC Preliminaries, New York 1962

A brilliant finish, played in one of Goichberg's first tournaments.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♘f6 4.♗f3 c6 5.e3 ♗bd7 6.♙d3 ♙d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 dxe4 9.♗xe4 ♗xe4 10.♙xe4 ♗f6 11.♙c2 g6?! 12.♙g5 ♙e7 13.♙e2 ♙c7 14.♙ad1 ♙d7 15.a3 ♗h5 This likelier reflects an erroneous game score rather than both players overlooking a loose bishop on e7. The moves ...♗h5, ♙h6 ♗g7, probably happened a move earlier, when Black's other bishop was still on c8. 16.♙h6 ♗g7 17.♙fe1 ♙f6 18.♗e5 ♙fe8 19.♙f3 ♙xe5?! 19...♗f5 would hold out longer, although Black is lost in any case. 20.dxe5 ♗f5 21.♙g5 c5 22.g4 ♗g7?! Better but still hopeless is 22...♗d4. 23.♙f6 h6 24.♙h3 ♗h7 25.♙e3 ♙h8



26.♙xh6+!! ♗xh6 27.♙h3+ ♗h5 28.♙xh5+ gxh5 29.g5 Mate.

B09

Bill Goichberg
Walter Browne

Columbus Day Open, Poughkeepsie 1964

Although his future GM title was still several years off, at this point Browne was a fast-rising 15-year-old and the reigning NY State Junior Champion.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♗f6 3.♗c3 g6 4.f4 ♙g7 5.♗f3 0-0 6.♙d3 ♙g4 7.h3 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3 ♗fd7!? 9.♙e3 c5 10.dxc5 ♗xc5 11.0-0 ♗bd7 12.♙c4 ♙c8 13.a3 ♗a4 14.♙xf7+ ♙xf7 15.♗xa4 ♙xc2 16.♙ac1

♙c7 17.♙f2!? ♙xc1 18.♙xc1 ♙a5 19.♙c2 ♙f8 20.b4 ♙d8 21.♙c7 b5 22.♙xd8 ♙xd8 23.♗c3 ♙xc3 24.♙xc3

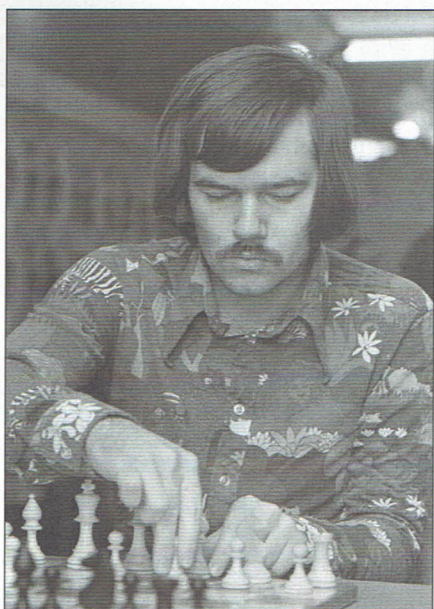


Although optically White seems to enjoy a big edge, Stockfish sees this endgame as dead-equal.

24...♗f6 25.♙c7 ♙d7 25...♗f7=; 25...♗f8=. 26.♙xd7 ♗xd7 27.♙xa7 ♗f6 28.e5 dxe5 29.fxe5 ♗e4 Even here, with White having ♙ vs. ♗, a pawn up, and a potential passed queenside pawn, Stockfish still claims Black has full equality. 30.♗f1 ♗f7 31.♗e2 ♗c3+? Targeting the a3 pawn proves suicidal. After the accurate 31...♗e6! 32.♙d4 ♗d5

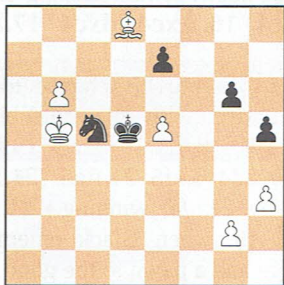


33.♗d3 (No better is 33.♙b2 ♗g5 34.♗e3 ♗f7 35.♗f4 ♗d8 36.♗g5 ♗f7+) 33...♗d2 (Black is also fine after 33...♗g5.) 34.♙c5 ♗c4 35.♙xe7 ♗xe5, White would lack any plausible way to avoid splitting the point. 32.♗d3 ♗b1?? 32...♗a4, controlling the c5 square, was forced, although Black would still have problems to solve.



▲ Walter Browne

33.a4! White has a winning advantage. Also winning is 33.♙e3 since the white king will penetrate to c5 and take the b5 pawn: 33...♗xa3 34.♙g5 ♗c4 35.♗d4 ♗e6 36.♗c5 ♗xe5 37.♗xb5+- 33...bxa4 34.b5 a3 35.♗c2 a2 36.♗b2 ♗c3 37.b6 ♗a4+ 38.♗xa2 ♗c5 39.♗a3 ♗e6 40.♗b4 ♗d5 40...♗b7 wouldn't save Black either. 41.♗b5 h5 42.♙b8 ♗b7 43.♙c7 ♗c5 44.♙d8



44...♗b7 Or 44...e6 45.♙e7 ♗b7 46.♗a6 ♗c6 47.h4 and Black is in zugzwang. 45.♙xe7 ♗xe5 46.♗a6
Black resigned

C11

Bill Goichberg
David Strauss

Lone Pine 1974

A brutal win over David Strauss, the reigning California State Champion and future IM. 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♗c3 ♗f6 4.e5



♭f7 5.f4 c5 6.♭f3 ♖c6 7.♙e3 ♖b6
8.♙d2 8.a3!

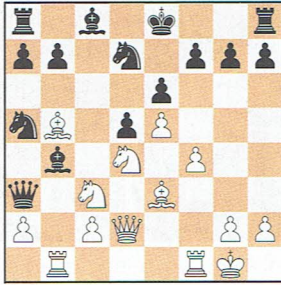
8...cxd4 8...♙xb2

9.♭xd4 ♙xb2 10.♙b1 ♖a3 11.♙b5!

The only path to advantage.

11...♭a5? Best is 11...♭xd4 12.♙xd4
a6 13.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 14.♙b3 ♖e7. Many
top-level contemporary games reached
this position, from which White has
scored well.

12.0-0 ♙b4



13.♙xb4! ♖xb4 14.f5 Decisive
enough... but the computer line 14.a3!
is even more forcing, i.e., 14...♖e7 (If
14...♖xa3, then 15.♭b1! ♖a2 16.f5.)
15.f5 0-0 16.f6 gxf6 17.exf6 with a
winning attack.

14...0-0 14...a6? 15.fxe6 axb5 16.exf7+
leads to forced checkmate.

15.♙f4? Here White must play 15.a3! to
keep his attack going. Then, after either
15...♖xa3 16.♭b1! ♖e7 17.f6, or 15...♖e7
16.f6, the attack comes crashing through.
15...♭c4 16.♙xc4 dxc4 17.♙g4?!
17.f6∞.

17...g6? Missing his chance to seize
the initiative with the cold-blooded
17...exf5! 18.♭xf5 ♭xe5 19.♙xg7+
♙h8 20.♙d4 ♙xf5 21.♙g5 (21.♙xe5?
is met by 21...f6, winning.) 21...♙ae8
22.♙xf5 f6, when Black emerges an
exchange and a pawn to the good.

18.f6 ♭xe5 19.♙h4 ♭d7? After 19...♙d8
20.♙f2 ♖f8, it would still be a game.



20.♭b3! The only way to win!

20...♭xf6? On 20...b6 21.♙h6 comes
21...♭xf6 22.♭e4 ♖e7 23.♖g5 ♭d5



▲ Bill Goichberg

24.♖xe7, followed by ♭f6+ and ♙xf8.

21.♙c5 ♖xc5+ 22.♭xc5 e5 23.♖g5

Black resigned

B90

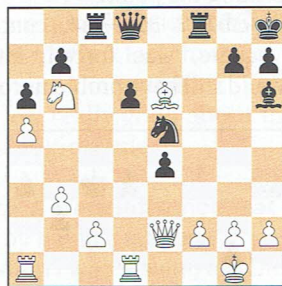
Bill Goichberg 2525

Richard Britton 2300

Aaronson Masters, London 1978

A loss from an international tournament
in London, featuring highly enterprising
if not entirely sound chess by
Goichberg's opponent, English FIDE
Master Richard Britton.

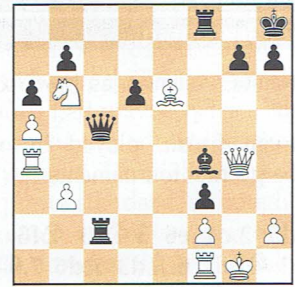
1.e4 c5 2.♭f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♭xd4
♭f6 5.♭c3 a6 6.a4 e5 7.♭f3 ♙e7
8.♙g5 ♙e6 9.♙xf6 ♙xf6 10.♭d5
♭d7 11.♙c4 ♙c8 12.b3 ♙g5 13.0-0
♙h6 14.a5 0-0 15.♖e2 ♙h8 16.♙fd1
f5 17.♭b6 fxe4 18.♭xe5 ♭xe5
19.♙xe6



Black meets the attack on his rook by...
tossing a knight into the fire!

19...♭f3+?! 20.gxf3 exf3 21.♖f1
♙xc2 22.♙a4 ♙f4 23.♖h3 ♖g5+

24.♖g4?? 24.♙g4 retains winning
chances. It's certainly understandable
that White wishes to trade queens. But...
24...♖c5 25.♙f1



25...♖xf2+!!

White resigned

It's forced checkmate after 26.♙xf2
♙c1+ 27.♙f1 ♙e3+ 28.♙h1 ♙xf1+
29.♖g1 ♙xg1 mate.

B25

Roland Ekstrom 2360

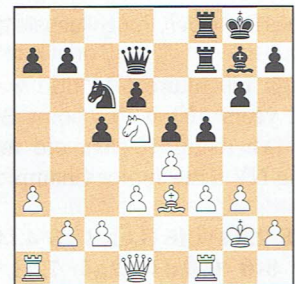
Bill Goichberg 2525

Gausdal International 1978

Notes by Bill Goichberg and Jon Jacobs

A key win from the event that played
a pivotal role in Goichberg's playing
career, when he fell just shy of an IM
norm. Roland Ekstrom went on to
attain an IM title in 1982 and won the
championship of Switzerland four times
between 1988 and 2008. Notes include
comments by Goichberg from his report
in *Chess Life*.

1.e4 c5 2.♭f3 d6 3.d3 g6 4.g3 ♙g7
5.♙g2 ♭c6 6.0-0 e5 7.♭c3 ♭ge7
8.♭d2 "The start of a maneuver which
concentrates on d5, but neglects the rest
of his position." – Goichberg
8...0-0 9.♭c4 ♙e6 10.♭e3 ♖d7
11.♭ed5 ♙h3 12.♙e3 ♙xg2 13.♙xg2
f5 14.f3 ♭xd5 15.♭xd5 ♙f7 16.a3
♙af8

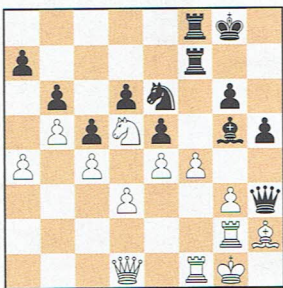


17.c4 Goichberg questions this move,
saying "the bishop should move, so



White can answer ...f5-f4 with g3-g4, keeping the position closed.”

17...f4 18.♔g1 fxg3 19.hxg3 ♔h6
20.b4 b6 21.b5 ♖d8 22.♞a2 ♜e6
23.♞af2 ♜g5 24.♔h2 ♞h3+ 25.♔g1
♜e6 26.♞g2?! Black's already
significant advantage increases further
after this move, according to Stockfish.
Its choice is 26.f4 ♜d4 27.♞d2.
26...♔g5 27.a4 h5 28.f4



28...♔g7?! Enterprising, but not best. Making all the captures on f4, even at the cost of allowing ♞xg6+ at the end, leads to a won position for Black.

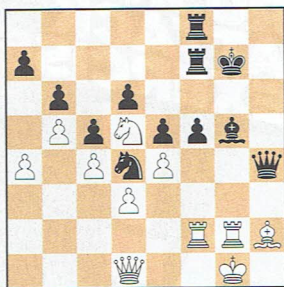
28...exf4 29.gxf4 ♜xf4 30.♔xf4 ♔xf4
31.♞xf4 ♞xf4 32.♜xf4 ♞xf4 33.♞xg6+
♔f7 forces simplification to a won pawn
ending: 34.♞g2 ♞g4, or 34.♞c1 ♔xg6
35.♞xf4 ♞g4+.

29.♞gf2? White's only chance was
29.♞f3! ♜d4 30.♞ff2.

29...h4 30.gxh4 ♞xh4 30...♔xf4 was
objectively stronger. But Black has a trap
in mind...

31.f5 ♜d4 32.♞g2 gxf5! “Walking into
the pin.” – Goichberg

33.♞ff2? 33.♔g3 was the best chance to
continue the fight, although Black's still
winning after 33...♞h6!.



33...fxe4!! 34.♞xg5+ “Wins” the black
queen at the cost of losing his own king.
34...♞xg5+ 35.♞g2 ♞xg2+ 36.♔xg2
♞f2+ 37.♔h3 If 37.♔g1, then 37...♜e2+
38.♔h1 ♞h8.

37...♞f3+ 38.♔g4 ♞g2+

White resigned

TOP 10 OPEN

RANK	NAME	FED	RTG	B-Year	VS.OCT 24	+/-	IN PTS
1	Magnus Carlsen	NOR	2831	1990	1 → 1	⊖	0
2	Fabiano Caruana	USA	2805	1992	4 → 2	↑	9
3	Hikaru Nakamura	USA	2802	1987	2 → 3	↓	0
4	Arjun Erigaisi	IND	2801	2003	3 → 4	↓	3
5	Gukesh D	IND	2783	2006	5 → 5	↑	-11
6	Nodirbek Abdusattorov	UZB	2777	2004	6 → 6	⊖	-6
7	Alireza Firouzja	FRA	2763	2003	7 → 7	⊖	-4
8	Ian Nepomniachtchi	FID	2755	1990	9 → 8	↑	0
9	Wei Yi	CHN	2753	1999	8 → 9	↓	-10
10	Viswanathan Anand	IND	2750	1969	11 → 10	↑	-1

TOP 10 Women

RANK	NAME	FED	RTG	B-Year	VS.OCT 24	+/-	IN PTS
1	Hou Yifan	CHN	2633	1994	1 → 1	⊖	0
2	Ju Wenjun	CHN	2563	1991	2 → 2	⊖	0
3	Tan Zhongyi	CHN	2561	1991	3 → 3	⊖	10
4	Lei Tingjie	CHN	2549	1997	4 → 4	⊖	0
5	Aleksandra Goryachkina	FID	2546	1998	5 → 5	⊖	13
6	Humpi Koneru	IND	2523	1987	6 → 6	⊖	-7
7	Nana Dzagnidze	GEO	2518	1987	9 → 7	↑	5
8	Kateryna Lagno	FID	2515	1989	7 → 8	↓	-12
9	Anna Muzychuk	UKR	2515	1990	8 → 9	↓	-9
10	Zhu Jiner	CHN	2514	2002	12 → 10	↑	15

★ TOP 10 USA OPEN ★

RANK	NAME	RTG	B-Year	VS.OCT 24	+/-	IN PTS
1	Fabiano Caruana	2805	1992	2 → 1	↑	9
2	Hikaru Nakamura	2802	1992	2 → 2	↓	0
3	Levon Aronian	2747	1982	5 → 3	↑	9
4	Wesley So	2747	1993	3 → 4	↓	-4
5	Leinier Dominguez	2741	1983	4 → 5	↓	0
6	Hans Niemann	2734	2003	6 → 6	⊖	1
7	Ray Robson	2700	1994	7 → 7	⊖	7
8	Samuel Sevian	2696	2000	8 → 8	⊖	7
9	Awonder Liang	2687	2003	9 → 9	⊖	10
10	Sam Shankland	2672	1991	10 → 10	⊖	-5

★ TOP 10 USA Women ★

RANK	NAME	RTG	B-Year	VS.OCT 24	+/-	IN PTS
1	Carissa Yip	2432	2003	1 → 1	⊖	14
2	Alice Lee	2398	2009	2 → 2	⊖	3
3	Gulrukhbegim Tohirjonova	2385	1999	4 → 3	↑	11
4	Irina Krush	2378	1983	3 → 4	↓	-10
5	Annie Wang	2365	2002	5 → 5	⊖	0
6	Thalia Cervantes Landeiro	2307	2002	9 → 6	↑	5
7	Zoey Tang	2306	2008	12 → 7	↑	45
8	Tatev Abrahamyan	2304	1988	6 → 8	↓	-23
9	Megan Lee	2294	1996	13 → 9	↑	41
10	Nazi Paikidze	2294	1993	7 → 10	↓	-20

GLOSSARY

RANK	The player's position in the FIDE rating standings.
NAME	The name of the player.
FED	The federation the player represents, indicated by a country code.
RTG	The player's chess ELO rating.
B-YEAR	The birth year of the player.
VS. OCT 24	The player's performance or score against opponents as of October 2024.
+/-	An arrow indicating whether the player's ranking has moved up or down since October 2024.
in PTS	The change in points the player has experienced since October 2024.