



Playing & Learning

The St. Louis Summer Chess Classic and KCF Training Camp

BY **IM BREWINGTON HARDAWAY**



THE SEASONAL CLASSIC tournaments in St. Louis bring together some of the most talented players from all over the world, so I was honored to be invited to the 2024 Summer Chess Classic. The Saint Louis Chess Club was closed for renovations, so the tournament was held May 28-June 5 in the Chase Park Plaza.

The Classics comprise an A Group, mainly of players rated 2600 and above, and a B Group with many GMs and a few young players who are trying to gain experience against such strong

competition. This summer's B Group included some members of the United States Women's Olympiad Team.

In the A Group, GM Ray Robson scored an undefeated 6/9 to take clear first and secure \$5,500 in prize money and a spot back in the 2700 FIDE club. Ray was a half-point behind GM Andrew Hong going into the last round, but Hong lost to GM Nikolas Theodorou, allowing Ray to leapfrog into clear first by defeating second-seeded GM Grigoriy Oparin:

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED, EXCHANGE VARIATION (D35)

GM Ray Robson (2774)

GM Grigoriy Oparin (2731)

Summer Chess Classic A (9), St. Louis, 05.28.2024

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 Bb4 6. e3 h6 7. Bh4 g5 8. Bg3 Ne4 9. Rc1 h5 10. Bd3 h4 11. Be5 f6



We already have a very sharp and complex position, which makes sense since both players had to win for a chance at first place.

12. Bxe4 dxe4 13. d5 Kf7 14. a3 Be7 15. Qb3 Kg6 16. Bd4 c5 17. dxc6 e.p. Nxc6 18. Nge2 h3 19. gxh3 Rh4 20. Rd1 Qe8 21. Rg1 Kh7 22. Nd5 Be6 23. Nec3 Rd8 24. Bxf6



24. ... Bxd5?

Black needed to play 24. ... Qf7. White is still better after 25. Bxe7 Nxe7 26. Qxb7

Nxd5 27. Qxf7+ Bxf7 28. Rxd5 Kh6 29. Re5 Rh5 30. Rxd5+ Kxh5 31. Rd4 with four pawns for the piece, but after the move in the game White's advantage is nearly decisive.

25. Nxd5 Rxd5 26. Rxd5 Bxf6 27. Qxb7+ Kg6 28. Qb5

Black's king is in a lot of trouble and Oparin's pieces don't coordinate.

28. ... Qe6 29. Rdxg5+! Kf7 30. Rf5 a6 31. Qd5?!

White decides to trade the queens despite having the attack. 31. Qc5 keeps more pressure on.

31. ... Qxd5 32. Rxd5 Bxb2 33. a4 Ne5 34. Kd1



34. ... Nd3?

This is a big mistake. Now the g4-square is open for the White rook, which makes the e4-pawn a big weakness.

35. Ke2! Bc3 36. Rg4! Ke6 37. Rd8 Rxd4 38. hxg4

White wins with the connected passed pawns.

38. ... Nc5 39. Rc8 Bb4 40. h4 a5 41. h5 Kf6 42. h6, Black resigned.

In the B Group, GM Steven Zierk and GM-Elect Andy Woodward tied for first with 6½/9, with Steven winning the blitz tie-breaker despite having lost to Andy in the second round. Steven had many complicated games, but I was most impressed with his effort against 2023 U.S. Senior Champion GM Melikset Khachiyan.

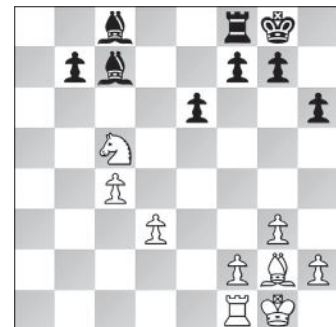
RETI OPENING (A05)

GM Melikset Khachiyan (2529)

GM Steven Zierk (2579)

Summer Chess Classic B (8), St. Louis, 05.28.2024

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nf6 3. Bg2 e6 4. 0-0 c5 5. c4 d4 6. e3 Nc6 7. exd4 cxd4 8. d3 Bd6 9. Bg5 h6 10. Bxf6 Qxf6 11. Nbd2 Qe7 12. a3 a5 13. Ne4 Bc7 14. b4 axb4 15. axb4 Rxa1 16. Qxa1 Qxb4 17. Nxd4 Nxd4 18. Qxd4 0-0 19. Qc5 Qxc5 20. Nxc5



When I saw this position, I thought a draw was coming soon. But Steven knew there



Robson considers his move against Oparin

was not much risk for Black, and a win would put him in clear first, so he decided to play on.

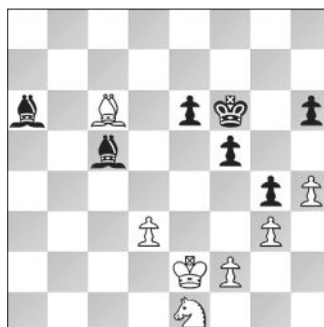
20. ... Rd8 21. Ra1 b6 22. Ra7 Be5 23. Na4 Bd4 24. Ra8 Rf8 25. c5 Bd7 26. Nxb6 Rxa8 27. Bxa8 Bb5 28. Nc4 Bxc5 29. Kf1 g5 30. Ke2 Kg7 31. Ne5 f6 32. Bc6 Ba6 33. Nf3 f5 34. h4 g4 35. Ne1 Kf6

(see diagram top of next column)

36. Ng2?

White may have underestimated how difficult the position would be after Black's next move. White should still be OK after 36. f3 gxf3+ 37. Bxf3.

36. ... e5!



POSITION AFTER 35. ... Kf6

Now White can no longer play f2-f3, and things are already looking tough.

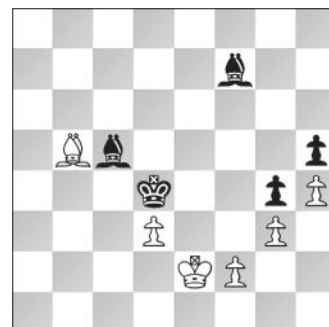
37. Ne3

If 37. f3 gxf3+ 38. Bxf3 e4.

37. ... e4 38. Nxc4+

The best practical chance — which is a sign that things are getting out of control.

38. ... fxc4 39. Bxe4 h5 40. Bc6 Ke7 41. Be4 Bb5 42. Bg6 Be8 43. Be4 Kf6 44. Bd5 Bf7 45. Bc6 Ke5 46. Be4 Kd4 47. Bf5 Ke5 48. Be4 Kf6 49. Bc6 Ke6 50. Bb7 Be8 51. Bc8+ Bd7 52. Bb7 Ke5 53. Be4 Be8 54. Bb7 Bg6 55. Ba6 Bf7 56. Bb5 Kd4



Now the king will infiltrate White's kingside.

57. Bd7 Bd5!

Preventing f2-f3.

58. Bf5 Bf3+ 59. Ke1 Bb4+ 60. Kf1 Kc3 61. Bg6 Kd2 62. Bxh5 Be2+ 63. Kg2 Ke1

A mating attack in the endgame!

64. Bxg4 Bxg4 65. f3 Bf5 66. g4 Bxd3 67. h5 Bd6 68. g5 Bf1+ 69. Kg1 Bc5+, White resigned.

It's mate in four. A very nice endgame win by Steven.

The conditions were amazing, and playing one game a day was a nice experience — one I hadn't been very familiar with. I started slowly with two draws and a loss, but I fought back to finish with 5½/9, tying for third place. I was happy with my result, because I did not play my best chess in this tournament overall. I did manage to win over eight-time U.S. women's champion GM Irina Krush in the last round:

SICILIAN DEFENSE, SVESH-INKOV VARIATION (B33)

IM Brewington Hardaway (2537)

GM Irina Krush (2494)

Summer Chess Classic B (9), St. Louis, 06.05.2024

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Nd5 Nxd5 8. exd5 Nb8 9. a4 Be7 10. Bd2

10. Be2 is much more common, but I like this move order.



Krush takes on Hardaway in their final round matchup



The players and staff from the 2024 Summer Classic

10. ... 0-0 11. Be2 a6 12. Na3 a5 13. Bb5 f5



14. 0-0?

I forgot the idea in this position was for White to castle long with 14. Qe2 Nd7 15. O-O-O.

14. ... f4 15. f3 Bh4 16. Be1 Bxe1 17. Qxe1 Nd7 18. Nc4 Nf6 19. Rd1 Bf5 20. Qf2 Rb8

I was expecting 20. ... Rc8 21. c3 Rc5 22. b4 axb4 23. cxb4 Rxd5 24. Rxd5 Nxd5 25. Rd1, which is likely equal.

21. c3 b6 22. Bc6



22. ... Nh5?!

I was a bit confused about the point of this move. I would not have been pleased with my position after 22. ... g5.

23. Rfe1 Qc7 24. Qh4 Nf6 25. Na3 Kh8 26. Nb5 Qd8 27. Rd2 h6 28. b4 Kh7 29. bxa5 bxa5 30. c4 Rf7?

At this point, 30. ... g5 had to be played. After 31. Qf2 g4 32. Qa7+ Kg8 33. Qf2 it's roughly equal.

31. c5

(see diagram top of next column)

31. ... dxc5?

I was very surprised that Krush never played ... g7-g5; it seemed so natural and she had so many opportunities. After 31. ... g5 32. Qf2 e4 33. Nxd6 e3 34. Qe2 exd2 35. Qxd2 Re7 36. Nxf5 Rxe1+ 37. Qxe1 I have an advantage, but



POSITION AFTER 31. c5

this is better for Black than what happened in the game.

32. Rxe5 Nd7 33. Qxd8 Rxd8 34. Bxd7 Rxd7 35. d6 c4 36. Rd4 Bd3 37. h4

Preventing ... g7-g5, which would have protected the f4-pawn and given the king an escape square.

37. ... Rf6 38. Kf2 Kg6 39. Re7 Rf7?

Losing material by force.

40. h5+, Black resigned.

If 40. ... Kf6 41. Rxf4+. On any other king move, White takes on f7 and then pushes the d-pawn.

After the tournament, I took part in the KCF Training Camp with GM Christopher Yoo, Woodward, and IM Alice Lee, while GM Abhimanyu Mishra and IM Ryo Chen participated virtually. We each showed six of our games to former world champion Garry Kasparov, and on the final day we were faced with three hours of complicated studies to improve our calculation, such as:

H. Aloni
Central Chess Club Bulletin, 1964



WHITE TO MOVE AND WIN

Note that four pieces win against a queen.

1. Nc7!

This is the only winning move. Black wins a piece and draws after 1. Nc5 Qg1 and 1. Nb4 Qd1+ 2. Kc3 Qe2.

1. ... Qd1+ 2. Kc3 Qe2

Black still wins a piece, but in studies like these there's usually a fork or a pin, and that's how I found ...

3. Be4!! Qxe4 4. Ne8+! Kf8 5. Nd7+! Ke7

It's all forced. If 5. ... Kxe8 6. Nf6+ wins.

6. Bg5+ Ke6 7. Nc5+

White wins.

The camp is always fun, and I'm sure we will all benefit from the invaluable guidance we got from working with Kasparov. The Summer Classic and the KCF Camp were great experiences and I am thankful to have been invited. ♠

2024 SUMMER CLASSIC AT A GLANCE

MAY 28-JUNE 5, 2024 | ST. LOUIS, MO

A GROUP

1ST: GM Ray Robson, 6/9. 2ND-3RD: GMs Andrew Hong and Awonder Liang, 5½. 4TH-6TH: GMs Grigoriy Oparin, Nikolas Theodorou, and Christopher Yoo, 5. 7TH: GM Ante Brkic, 4. 8TH: GM Mikhail Antipov, 3½. 9TH: GM Benjamin Bok, 3. 10TH: GM Temur Kuybokarov, 2½.

B GROUP

1ST-2ND: GM Steven Zierk, IM Andy Woodward, 6½/9. Zierk wins blitz playoff. 3RD-5TH: GM Harshit Raja, IMs Brewington Hardaway and Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, 5½. 6TH: GM Akshat Chandra, 5. 7TH-8TH: GM Irina Krush, IM Alice Lee, 3. 9TH: IM Josiah Stearman, 2½. 10TH: GM Melikset Khachiyan, 2.

For complete results and additional photos, visit uschesschamps.com.