

# 2025 Menlo Park CC Championship



Round 6 Bulletin • Dec. 11, 2025

## Prizewinners

### 1

- |      |             |     |
|------|-------------|-----|
| 1.   | B. Loyalka  | 4.5 |
| 2-3. | Verma       | 4   |
|      | Del Rosario |     |
| 4-5. | Brongersma  | 3.5 |
|      | Wright      |     |

### 2

- |      |       |   |
|------|-------|---|
| 1-3. | Drury | 3 |
|      | Kalra |   |
|      | Lin   |   |

### 3

- |      |          |     |
|------|----------|-----|
| 1.   | Yu       | 3.5 |
| 2-4. | Sherrard | 2.5 |
|      | Leong    |     |
|      | Vikram   |     |

### 4

- |      |        |     |
|------|--------|-----|
| 1.   | Swick  | 2.5 |
| 2-3. | Turkar | 2   |
|      | Jain   |     |

White: Sherrard

Black: Drury

King's Gambit

## 1. e4

You might look at the opening in two ways. One, White begins with a slight initiative, and should try to make something of it before it's neutralized. Black oughtn't play to equalize first, but should strive for the initiative from move one. Two, let's put those discussions off until the middlegame. If you're back at tactics, no matter which of those approaches you think you're taking, you're just a poser (which is why books like *Be a Positional Chess Genius* or *Attack Like a Monster* are jokes — players who are weak at tactics don't have styles).

## 1... e5 2. f4!

No other opening offers as much scope for creative play, said Bronstein. The King's Gambit is not for players who won't mind postponing the fight until both sides are in *tabiya*.

## 2... exf4

Part of the risk entailed with 2. f4 is that, at least for one turn, it doesn't do anything — since 3. fxe5?? loses, Black is free to do whatever he wants, like 2...d5!. The other risk White takes is that 2. f4 could lose a pawn, so Black has a choice — most players would rather gain a pawn with 2...exf4 than lose a pawn with 2...d5.

## 3. Nf3

White's positional aim after 2...exf4 is to play d2-d4 plus Bc1xf4, after which White has a desirable center structure and an open f-file. The tactical difficulty is that after 2...exf4, Black threatens 3...Qd8-h4+. 3. Nf3 is most common, because it prevents ...Qh4+, but it's the least interesting. Fischer and Polgar played 3. Bc4 Qh4+ 4. Kf1. Keres, Spassky, and Bronstein were more daring than that with 3. Nc3 Qh4+ 4. Ke2.

## 3... Nc6

Purdy said that general principles don't help you make good moves, they help you avoid bad ones. 3...Nc6 isn't a bad move, developing a piece, hitting the center, yawn, but it doesn't pertain to the demands of the position. The positional logic suggests 3...g5, restraining the c1-bishop and both white rooks (the queen rook is stuck behind the c1-bishop, and the castled king rook is blocked directly). At move 3, 3. Nc3 and 3. Bc4 were both directed against 3...d5, another good choice after 3. Nf3.

## 4. d4 d5

3...d5 was good, because 4. exd5 Nf6 aims to regain the pawn without loss of time. 3...Nc6 plus 4...d5 is a bad recipe, because 5. exd5 compels 5...Qxd5 6. Nc3 Bb4 with advantage.

## 5. Nc3?

5. Nc3 threatens a pawn. 5. exd5 threatens a knight, and then 5...Qxd5 6. Nc3 threatens a queen.

## 5... dxe4 6. Nxe4 Nf6?

6... Qe7 7. Qe2 Bf5 plus 8...Nb4 -+.

## 7. Nc3?

7. Bd3 and there's nothing to fear from 7... Qe7? (instead 7... Bf5 =+) 8. O-O!.

## 7... Bb4?

One reason 3...d5 evolved as a reasonable line for Black was it facilitates ...Bf8-d6 to hold the f4-pawn. For instance, 1. e4 e5 2. f4 exf4 3. Nf3 d5 4. exd5 Nf6 5. Bb5+ c6 6. dxc6 bxc6 7. Bc4 Bd6 8. Qe2+ Qe7 9. Nc3 Qxe2+ 10. Nxe2 O-O 11. d4 Bf5 12. c3 Nbd7 13. O-O Nb6 1/2-1/2 Westeren-Lauk, 1994 Finnish ch.

## 8. Bxf4

White isn't out of the woods yet. The farting about with the queen knight left Black with a lead in development.

## 8... O-O 9. Bb5?

Black still has a slight pull with the pressure on the d4-pawn following 9. Be2 Bg4, but if he cashes in too early, the advantage fizzles: 10. O-O Bxf3 (10... Re8 =+) 11. Bxf3 Qxd4+ 12. Qxd4 Nxd4 13. Bxb7 Rab8 =.

## 9... Re8+ 10. Ne5 Bd7

10... Nd5 forks f4 and c3, while threatening 11...f6. 11. O-O Bxc3 12. Bxc6 bxc6 13. bxc3 Nxc3 14. Qf3 Qxd4+ is nearly winning for Black, but experienced King's Gambiteers have come back from worse. They feel life from the pressure on the f-file plus Black's backward development (so Black must address that immediately with 15. Kh1 Ba6.

## 11. O-O Bxc3 12. bxc3??

12. Bxc6 prevents the following tactic.

## 12... Nxe5!

I know a chess teacher who calls this tactic the "elastic knight", capturing with a discovered threat to b5, while it can also recapture on d7.

## 13. dxe5 Bxb5 14. exf6 Bxf1 15. Qxf1 Qxf6 16. Qc4 c6

16... Qb6+ 17. Kh1 Qe6 is a clever counter.

## 17. Rf1 Qe6 18. Qc5 b6 19. Qf2 Rad8

One of those weird cases where capturing on a2, then advancing the a7-pawn improves the a8-rook without moving it.

## 20. Bc7 Rd7 21. Bg3 Qe3 0-1

White: Yu

Black: Leong

Tarrasch French

## 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2

When it came to the opening, Tarrasch deserved more credit than he received from chickenshit players, but even I'm not sold on 3. Nd2 against the French. Sure, White sidestepped the Winawer and MacCutcheon variations, but for blocking his queen's sight of d4, Black gets a free hit with 3...c5, and the d2-knight has to move again to free the c1-bishop.

## 3... Nf6

Master practice is about 50-50 for 3...Nf6 and 3...c5, but 3...Nf6 gives White what he wants, which can't be a masterly way of thinking.

## 4. e5 Nfd7 5. c3 c5

I'd play 5...b6 plus ...Bc8-a6 to try swapping bad bishop for good bishop, unless I knew White would volunteer to give up his king bishop.

## 6. Ndf3

White's idea was Nb1-d2-f3 plus Ng1-e2, when both knights support d4, but he's mucked up the move order by not developing 6. Bd3 ahead of Ne2.

## 6... Nc6 7. Bb5? Qb6 8. Bxc6 bxc6 9. Ng5? cxd4 10. Qh5?

10...Nxe5 in reply is near resignable for White.

## 10... g6? 11. Qf3 Nxe5 12. Qf6 Nd3+ 13. Kd2 dxc3+?

13... Nxc1 14. Qxf7+ (14. Qxh8?? Qxb2+ leads to mate) 14... Kd8 15. Qf6+ Kd7 -+.

## 14. Kxd3 = Ba6+?

14... cxb2 15. Bxb2 Qb5+ 16. Kc2 Qa4+ =.

## 15. Kc2 d4??

The computer thinks White is ahead on 15... Be7 16. Qxh8+ Kd7 17. Qxc3 (17. Qxa8?? Qxf2+ 18. Kb3 Bc4+ 19. Ka4 Qb6 -+) 17...d4, but players have conditioned themselves to believe computer evaluations without considering the simplest things like four undeveloped white pieces.

## 16. Qxf7+ Kd8 17. Nxe6+ Kc8 18. Qe8+ Kb7 19. Qd7+ Kb8 20. Bf4+ Bd6 21. Bxd6+ Qc7 22. Qxc7# 1-0