

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What activities do you enjoy besides chess?

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

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

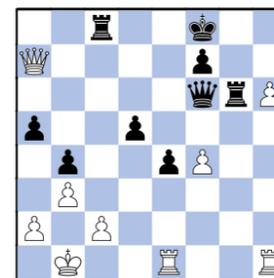
By FM Grayson Rorrer, Features Editor

FIDE WORLD JUNIOR GIRLS U20 CHAMPIONSHIP, Mexico City 2023

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

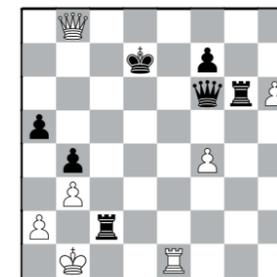
Carissa Yip	2372
Trisha Kanyamarala	2184

FIDE World Junior Girls U20 Championship, Mexico City 2023



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

51...Rxc2?? 52.Rxh6 52.Rxh6 Rxc2 would of course have been exponentially stronger. White can maintain equality after 53.Rxa6 Rxd6 54.Rb5 Qe7, but no more than that. **52.Ra8+ Qe7 53.Rxe4+!** A big shock! Black loses her central pawns, and the rook



on c2 to boot. 53.Qxc2?? Qg2+ is suddenly a mating attack. The only defensive try would be 54.Qe2 Qxe2+ 55.Qd1, when 55...Qd2+! 56.Qxd2 Rxc3+ 57.Qe2 Rf3+ gives Black a winning queen endgame. **53...dxe4 54.Qxe4+ Qe6?** The rook ending is entirely hopeless. 54...Qf8 would still have forced Carissa to play with mechanical accuracy. Would she really have found the amazing sequence 55.Ra8+! (55.Qxc2? Qxh6=) 55...Qe7 56.Rb7+ Qf8 57.Rb8+! Qe7 58.Qe1+ Qd7

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

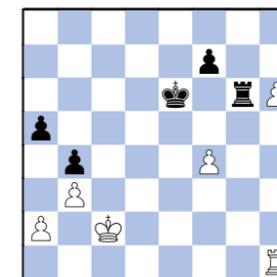
1-3. Candela FRANCISCO (ARG), Carissa YIP, Beloslava KRASTEVA (BUL) **8½**

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

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

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

59.Rb7+!! Qc7 60.Qd1+ Qd6 61.Qxd6+ Qxd6 62.Rh1 Qc8 63.h7 Qh8 64.Rb7+ Qe6 65.Qe4+ Qd7 66.Qe5 f6 67.Qxa5+-, when White picks off the queenside pawns, with an inevitable win? We'll never know, but with so many pitfalls along the way it looks like a hard task. **55.Qxe6+ Qxe6 56.Qxc2**



56...Qg8 57.h7 Qh8 58.Qd3 With Black's rook incarcerated, the endgame poses no difficulties. **White won** in 16 moves.



QATAR MASTERS, Doha 2023

The life of a professional tournament chess player can no doubt be a trying, weary one at times. With no central area where most strong events are held, the intrepid chess pro is often forced to live practically out of their suitcase, going from one unlikely place to another. Think of Albania, Morocco, Dubai... or Qatar, home to the Qatar Masters. There were two iterations of the event from 2014-15, after which it abruptly disappeared, only to be resuscitated this year. The aptly named "Qatar Masters Open" is limited to players rated 2300 FIDE and above, making it one of the very strongest Swisses. Refreshingly, a significant number of the world elite came down from their "closed circuit" to contend with the masses for overall victory. Big names like GMs Magnus Carlsen, Hikaru Nakamura, Anish Giri, etc. will be recognized by most. The eventual winner and early frontrunners, as it turned out, would be none of the above!

Magnus' poor 2½/4 start already all but knocked him out of contention for the top spots, opening the door for the underdogs. Amidst countless upsets, Indian GM S.L. Narayanan was the first to distinguish himself from the rest of the field, taking a half point lead over the chasing pack with

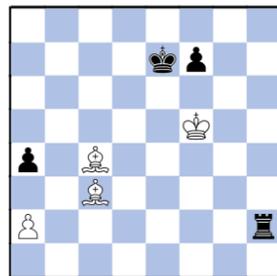
a powerful 4½/5. A quick start can be beneficial, but even so, opens are usually decided by who has the staying power to crank up the heat in the critical, penultimate games. It wasn't any different in Qatar, and heading into the last round GM Arjun Erigaisi had snuck a half point clear of the field, with six others right behind. IM Rameshbabu Vaishali was perhaps the only player with some cause for relief before the last day – she had already wrapped up her final GM-Norm!

In a dramatic twist of fate, the ninth round brawls only saw two decisive clashes at the top. Narayanan had Nakamura playing to his tune throughout, but couldn't seal the deal, while Uzbeki GM Nodirbek Yakubov – who had been keeping a fairly low profile but still managed to stay in contention – took apart GM Murali Karthikeyan's KID in brutal fashion. Erigaisi had a chance to take the title with a win, but very quickly fell under dangerous preparation with the Black pieces. A brilliant and inspired effort brought him on the brink of a draw, and with it a playoff for the crown, but tragically the tiring defense got to him, and a rook dropped off in

one move. That meant his opponent, GM Nodirbek Abdusattorov, sprung up to match his compatriot's 7/9 score, necessitating a battle of Nodirbeks to decide the final prize distribution. The tiebreaks were somewhat anticlimactic – Yakubov completely outplayed his countryman in two blitz games, eventually winning both to take home a major tournament victory.

Nodirbek Abdusattorov	2716
Arjun Erigaisi	2712

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



48...♖h4?? 49.♙f6+ **Black resigned**

While there isn't nearly enough space here to do the Qatar Masters the justice it deserves, it's safe to say the annual chess calendar is much livelier with such interesting events to look forward to!

Nodirbek Yakubov	2616
Baskaran Adhiban	2551

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



24...♖c8? Adhiban had managed to fully equalize out of a QGD Vienna, but not now! Sending the queen into passivity even looks ugly. 24...♗e7 would have been about level. With the queen on any normal square, Black has a fine position, but on c8 it can be trapped... 25.♖c2 ♗a5 26.♘xb7 ♗xb7 27.♗xd8+ ♖xd8= shouldn't take long to peter out into a draw.

25.h4!? A prevalent theme nowadays! A statistical comparison of rook pawns pushed in master games before and after AlphaZero would no doubt be very revealing.

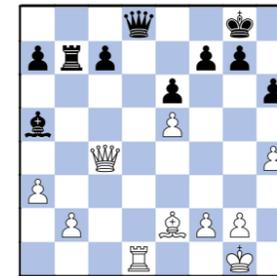


▲ Nodirbek Yakubov Photo by David Llada

25.b4! ♗g5 26.♗g4! was tactically even stronger. The e6 pawn is soft, and 26...♗d5 27.♗xd5! ♗xd5 (27...exd5?? 28.♗e2+ humiliates the queen!) 28.♗xd5 exd5 29.♗xc8 ♗xc8 30.f4 ♗e7 31.♗c1± is a very pleasant endgame for White. Choosing to keep the pieces on the board, and with them all the tension, was a fair decision nonetheless.

25...♗a5 26.♗xd8+ The most direct. Black's pieces look passive, but he should

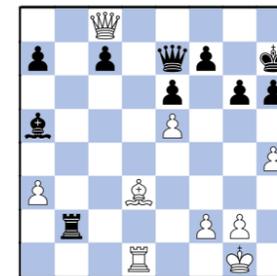
just about be able to survive the opposite-colored bishop endgame.
26...♗xd8 27.♘xb7 ♗xb7 28.♗d1



28...♗e7?? A huge tactical blunder. The back rank needed all the protection it could get. With that in mind, 28...♗f8! 29.b4 ♗b6 30.a4 c5 would have been strongest. White has a small edge in piece placement after 31.♗a6!? ♗b8 32.♗f3 ♗e7 33.a5 ♗c7 34.b5±, but it's a far cry from what came to pass in the game!

29.♗a6! ♗xb2 30.♗c8+ One win is enough. 30.♗xa5!? ♗xe2 31.♗b5! is also a beautiful finish. Everywhere it turns, Black's rook is vulnerable to tactics. 31...♗c2 (31...♗e4 32.♗b8+ ♗h7 33.♗b1! ♗xh4 34.♗d4+-) 32.♗b8+ ♗h7 (32...♗f8 33.♗d8+- is no better.) 33.♗b1 ♗c5 34.♗d2+-.

30...♗h7 31.♗d3+ g6

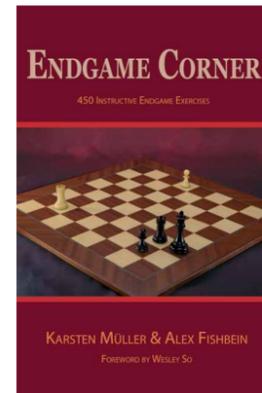


32.♗xg6+! Pins and skewers ravage Black's position.

32...♗xg6 32...fxg6 33.♗d7+-; or 32...♗g7 33.♗xf7! ♗xf7 34.♗d7+-, making use of the same idea.

33.♗g8+ ♗f5 34.♗h7+ ♗xe5 35.♗g7+ Black is at least losing the rook on b2, if not just getting outright mated, all of which forced Adhiban to put an end to the struggle. **White won**

GM Gregory Kaidanov was arguably the most successful of the American contingent in Qatar. Finishing on a superb 6/9, he even sprung up to the top board with a pairing against Magnus Carlsen in the second-to-last round. They eventually finished on the same score, despite a tough loss for Kaidanov. Winning against Van Foreest, an unquestionable member of the world's elite, was the springboard for it all.



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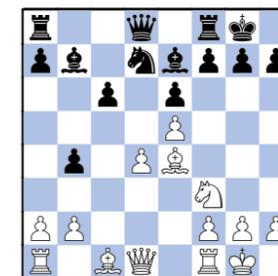
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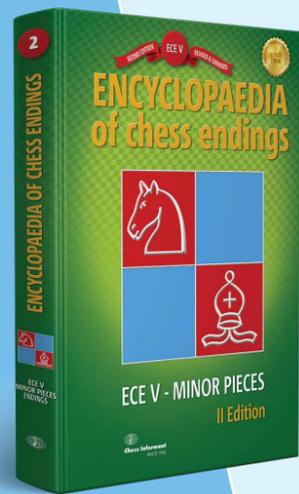
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Gregory Kaidanov	2554
Jorden Van Foreest	2707

Qatar Masters, Doha 2023



14...♗b6? Though uncommon, the position was still more or less a theoretical



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one, coming from the Slav. 14...♖b8 has been by far the main line. Black aims for ...c5 soon, which should just about equalize.

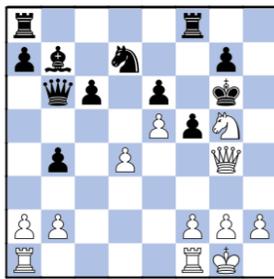
15.♗g5 ♗xg5? Jorden had no idea what was in store, it seems... I can't imagine a 2700-GM miscalculating the sacrifice, more likely he missed the candidate altogether. It's hard to think creatively right after the conclusion of prep.

15...♗fe8 is a grim concession, but absolutely necessary. 16.♗xe7 ♗xe7 17.♗c1 ♗c8 18.♗d2 was I.Zugic 2465 - I.Novikov 2610, Montreal 2004, which ended peacefully, but White just has a much better position. An important detail can be seen after Novikov's 18...♗a6?!, when White should keep the light-squared bishops on. 19.♗fd1 ♗f8 20.♗e3±.

16.♗xh7+! Already seen twice before, this thematic sacrifice must have come as a shocker, and something of an embarrassment.

16...♗xh7 17.♗g5+ ♗g6 18.♗g4! The unanimous choice in practice. There was more than one path to eternal Greek Gift glory, but this is the clearest.

18...f5



19.♗g3!? As before, the unequivocal favorite of humans. 19.♗h4! ♗h8 20.♗g3+- actually worsens Black's defensive prospects, but with his king so poorly placed it doesn't have a major impact.

19...♗xd4? Going down without a fight. 19...♗ae8?! 20.♗ad1 ♗c8 21.♗fe1+- also leaves White with an overwhelming position. Black's pieces are missing in action, and everyone knows the queen and knight work well together!

19...♗h8?! 20.♗xe6+ ♗f7 was K.Grigorian 2475 - H.Dobosz 2385, Yerevan 1980, when the simplest conclusion is 21.♗f4+-.

19...c5!? was the best attempt, but not enough to put up serious resistance. 20.dxc5 ♗c6 21.♗xe6+ ♗f7 22.♗d4! ♗xc5 23.♗xf5 ♗xe5 (23...♗xe5?! 24.♗ac1+- strips Black's king of any illusions regarding survival. A. Williams -



▲ Gregory Kaidanov Photo by David Llada

J.Cooper 2330, Wales 1982 oddly ended in a repetition of moves... when White had a mate in nine! Perhaps intimidation from the unrated player against his far stronger opponent?) 24.♗d6+ ♗g8 25.♗xb7+- wins slowly but surely. Two pawns is two too many.

20.♗e4+ ♗h7 21.♗h4+ ♗g6 21...♗g8

TSAGHKADZOR, ARMENIA

September 20-27, 2023
Tsaghkadzor Open
(9 rounds)

- 1-4 Abhimanyu PURANIK (IND), Tigran PETROSIAN (ARM), Krishnan SASIKIRIAN (IND), M. PRANESH (IND) **7**
- 5-8 Valentin DRAGNEV (AUT), Subramaniyam BHARATH (IND), Manuel PETROSIAN (ARM), Arman HAKEMI (IRI) **6½**
- 9-15 Sina MOVAHED (IRI), Aleks SAHAKYAN (ARM), P. INIYAN (IND), Krishna GOUTHAM (IND), Maksim TSARUK (FID), Vahe BAGHDASARYAN (ARM), S.P. SETHURAMAN (IND) **6**

YEREVAN, ARMENIA

September 29 - October 7, 2023
5th Yerevan Open
(9 rounds)

- 1 Karen GRIGORYAN (ARM).. **7½**
- 2-4 Baskaran ADHIBAN (IND), Abhimanyu PURANIK (IND), Sergei LOBANOV (FID) **7**
- 5-10 Mahdi GHOLAMI (IRI), M. PRANESH (IND), Venkataraman KARTHIK (IND),

- Vitaly SIVUK (SWE), Subramaniyam BHARATH (IND), Nikita MATINIAN (FID) **6½**

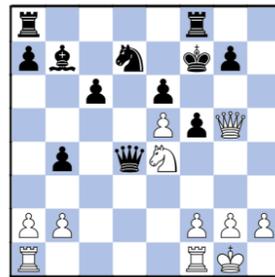
CANCUN, MEXICO
October 11-15, 2023
11th Chamber and Associates Master Chess Cup
(9 rounds)

- 1 Jorge CORI (PER) **7½**
- 2-7 Jose MARTINEZ (PER), Carlos ALBORNOZ (CUB), Dylan BERDAYES (CUB), Sandro MARECO (ARG), Gabriel FLOM (FAR), Luis QUESADA (CUB) **6½**
- 8-12 Sion GALAVIZ (MEX), Juan GONZALEZ (MEX), Maties PEREZ (CHI), Sergio DURAN (CRC), Michel DIAZ (CUB) **6**

DOHA, QATAR

- October 11-20, 2023
Qatar Masters Open
(9 rounds, 158 players)
- 1-2 Nodirbek YAKKUBOEV (UZB), Nodirbek ABDUSATTOROV (UZB) **7**
- 3-8 S.L. NARAYANAN (IND),

22.♗f6+ ♗xf6 23.♗xd4+- snatches the queen. 22.♗g5+ ♗f7



23.♗ad1! A nice detail. White will emerge with an extra piece.

23...♗xe5 Forced, as 23...♗xe4? 24.♗xd7+ is mate on the spot.

24.♗xd7+ ♗g8 25.♗xb7 Tactics prevent Black from capturing on e4, and Kaidanov converted with a steady hand. **White won** in six moves.

FIRST SATURDAY OCTOBER GM NORM INVITATIONAL, Budapest 2023

Budapest, and Hungary in general, is a place with a long standing chess heritage. I was fortunate enough to visit the city

- Javokhir SINDAROV (UZB), Hikaru NAKAMURA, Arjun ERIGAISSI (IND), Parham MAGHSOODLOO (IRI), D. GUKESH (IND) **6½**
- 9-15 David PARAVYAN (FID), Murali KARTHIKEYAN (IND), Anish GIRI (NED), Aleksandr SHIMANOV (FID), Saleh SALEM (UAE), Rinat JUMABAYEV (KAZ), Magnus CARLSEN (NOR) **6**

PAVLODAR, KAZAKHSTAN
October 22-31, 2023
Pavlodar Open
(10 rounds)

- 1 Aditya MITTAL (IND) **8**
- 2-3 Mihail NIKITENKO (BLR), Dmitry BOCHAROV (RUS) ... **7½**
- 4-7 Anton DEMCHENKO (SLO), Daniil LINTCHEVSKI (RUS), Denis MAKHNEV (KAZ), Zhamsaran TSYDYPOV (RUS) **7**
- 8-12 Ramil FAIZRAKHMANOV (RUS), Alisher SULEYMENOV (KAZ), Zhandos AGMANOV (KAZ), Evgeny ALEKSEEV (ISR), Steven ZIERK **6½**

and participate in two events - First Saturday and Vezerkepzo - that together make up easily one of the longest running continuous series of Norm Invitationals. It's enough to say that in Budapest one could play chess non-stop just about indefinitely given the chance, which presents an invaluable opportunity to gain experience. I was expecting to participate in the IM section, and steered myself for the battle ahead to reach a monstrously high 7/9, but was instead pleasantly surprised to find there would be space in the GM group - a much tougher crowd, but the necessary score was lowered exponentially to 5½/9.

The First Saturday GM Norm Invitational was a dream come true - after a good start I took off, unexpectedly making it through the "murderer's row" of three GMs back-to-back with a strong 2/3. Needing a +1 score in the final three rounds, I was very generously gifted a full point from a formidable adversary who, up to that point, had seemed on track for a GM-Norm. After that stroke of luck, two draws were enough to suffice for my second IM-Norm!

Next up was Vezerkepzo's GM Norm section, where I also managed to start off with a bang, taking a high-profile scalp in GM Baadur Jobava, and with Black pieces!

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

October 7-17, 2023
First Saturday October GM Norm Invitational
(10-player round-robin)

- 1-2 Valeriy AVESKULOV (UKR), Dmitry KUSHKO (UKR) **6**
- 3-5 Milovan RATKOVIC (SRB), Grayson RORRER, Andrei KOVALEV (BLR) **5½**
- 6-7 Gellert KARACSONYI (HUN), Bence PRIBELSZKY (HUN) **4½**
- 8 Valeriy NEVEROV (UKR) **3½**
- 9-10 Maksym DUBNEVYCH (UKR), Dmitriy VOLKOV **2**

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

October 19-27, 2023
Vezerkepzo Autumn GM Norm Invitational
(10-player round-robin)

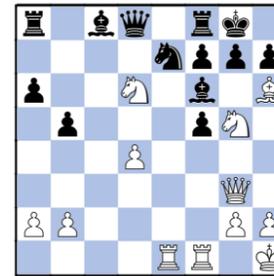
- 1-2 Valeriy AVESKULOV (UKR), Arseniy NESTEROV (FID) **7½**
- 3 Baadur JOBAVA (GEO) **6½**
- 4-5 Grayson RORRER, Dmitriy KUSHKO (UKR) **4½**
- 6-7 Matyas PALCZERT (HUN), Aryan GUTLA **3½**
- 8 Endre CSIKI (HUN) **3**
- 9 Leonardo VINCENTI (ITA) **2½**
- 10 Daniel OCHS (GER) **2**

Climbing to +2 after four rounds, it seemed I would have every chance of finishing well and, perhaps, even bagging a superfluous third norm - FIDE rules require at least one from a Swiss, too. While the fact of having already achieved a major goal takes some pressure off, perhaps a bit more stress would have helped me stay alert and focused. As it happened, I completely ran out of energy and dropped back to an even score in the final tally. Good beginnings and a plethora of missed opportunities in my final games was certainly frustrating at the time, but in the same vein a clear sign of potential for future improvement!

All in all, my performance in Budapest was a great success - I gained 70 rating points and an IM-Norm was exactly what I was hoping for after a lengthy period spent dormant at around the same level. I hope to build on this major breakthrough back in the States, and edge ever closer to the IM title and the deepening mastery that feat entails.

Andrei Kovalev	2435
Grayson Rorrer	2288

First Saturday GM Norm Invitational, Budapest 2023



22...♗g6? I recall spending much of my remaining time on this move, eventually deciding on it in the hopes of getting some clarity. Instead, I brought on the exact opposite...

22...♗a7, giving f7 additional support and intending ...♗g6 next, leaves Black with a clear extra pawn and a decisive advantage. 23.♗gxf7 ♗xf7 24.♗e8+! Somehow I had been more focused on 24.♗xf7? ♗xf7 25.♗b3+ ♗f8, worried about my king position, but as I eventually concluded - it can get away scot free after 26.♗d2 a5! 27.♗xb5 ♗e7+-.

24...♗xe8 25.♗xe8 gxf6 26.♗f3 Nothing quite works for White. He can only try to seek compensation through active play with the queen.

26.♗d6!? ♗f8 27.♗b3+ ♗h8 28.♗c1 ♗d7 29.♗c7 ♗e8 30.♗e6 ♗g7+ also leaves



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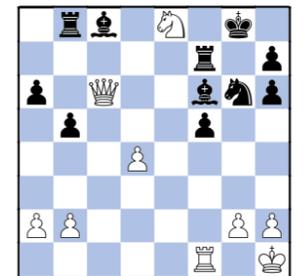
www.alexcolovic.com

Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

GM Colovic is the author of *The Sinquefeld Chess Generation*, a book that analyzes and explores in great depth the styles and preferences of America's top young talent.

White struggling to prove compensation, though it definitely exists.

26...♗b8 27.♗c6?! A basic oversight, shared by both players as we will see! Time shortage does strange things to the mind. 27.♗d6 ♗f8! 28.♗c6 ♗e6+ is great for Black, but not over just yet.



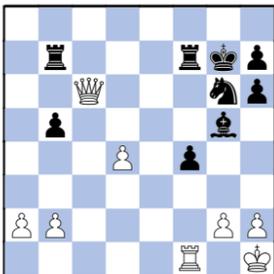
27...♗g5? Missing the chance! 27...♗xd4! 28.♗d6 ♗b7+- uses the same idea from the game... but with a pawn to the good! That stipulation leaves White fighting a hopeless battle.

28.♗d6 ♗b7 29.♗xb7 ♗bxb7 30.♗xa6?



Grabbing a pawn is always a great feeling, but White's position suffers. 30.g3! leaves the game in a state of flux – it's always nice to have the pieces, but at the same time White has serious compensation in his passer and active queen.

30...f4 31.♖c6 ♘g7



32.g3?! Getting the king out of his tomb, but at a cost! Probably it was better to rush ahead with the pawn – 32.d5 ♖fc7 33.♖e6 ♖e7 34.♖c6 ♘e5 35.♖c5 ♖bd7, which is clearly nice for Black, but it's harder to activate his pieces, meaning the play is less one-sided than in the game.

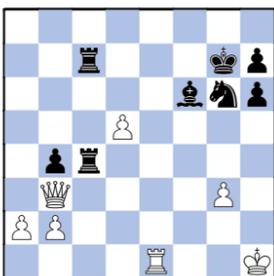
32...♖fc7 33.♖g2?! Rather passive. Now Black takes full control. The queen should keep pestering Black's pieces, though the situation is already grim after 33.♖a6 h5! 34.h4 ♘h6.

33...fxg3 34.hxg3 ♙f6 35.♖d1 ♖b6 36.♖d5 b4 37.♖e1 37.♖d2 ♖bb7 38.♖b3 was more resistant, though 38...♙g5! 39.♖f2 h5 leaves Black dictating the game.

37...♖bc6 38.♖b3 38.♖f1 h5! 39.♖xh5 ♙xd4+ wouldn't have been much better. Long term White is helpless against the power of the pieces.

38...♖c4 38...♙xd4 39.♖xb4 ♙f2+ was even easier.

39.d5



39...♖d4?? Giving away the lion's share of my advantage just when I had the game clinched! 39...♙e5 40.♖d1 ♙d6+ is as bad for White as ever.

40.d6? A typical last move before the time control, trying to liquidate the position. But not in the right way!

40.♖d1!, taking off a pair of rooks, was the way to go. Then, after 40...♖xd1+ 41.♖xd1



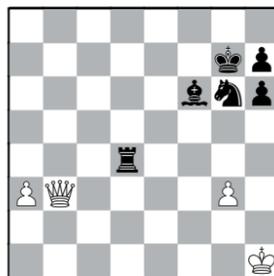
▲ Grayson Rorrer

♙xb2 42.♖g4! ♖, Black can't favorably keep the b-pawn. There still remain some winning chances, but they would be slight indeed compared to earlier in the game.

40...♖d7? The same comment can be appended here! 40...♖xd6 41.♖xb4 ♖cd7+, with ...h5-h4 to follow, is back to hopeless for White.

41.♖e8? Played quickly after returning from the usual post time control stroll, and the final error, after which my execution was crisp and clean.

41.♖d1, as before, takes off a pair of rooks and greatly reduces Black's winning chances. 41...♖7xd6 42.♖xd4 ♖xd4 43.a4 bxa3 44.bxa3



44...h5 45.a4 h4 46.a5 hxg3 47.♖xg3 ♖ is a logical way the game could go, when I find it hard to believe Black has any legitimate winning chances left.

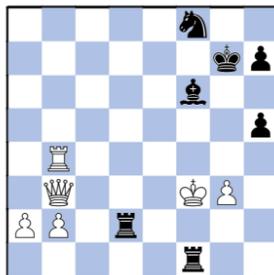
41...♙f8 No more chances to trade rooks! Now White really is running against the wind.

42.♖b8 42.a4 bxa3 43.bxa3 ♖4xd6+ fails to have much of an effect with both rooks still on the board!

42...♖7xd6 43.♖xb4?! Giving me a forced, straightforward win to calculate out. It took some time, but I was able to handle the task in exemplary fashion.

43.♖b7+ ♘d7 44.♖f3 h5! 45.♖xh5 ♖6d5 46.♖f3 ♘g6+ also gives Black a decisive mating attack.

43...♖d1+ 44.♘g2 ♖6d2+ 45.♘h3 ♖h1+ 46.♘g4 h5+ 47.♘f3 ♖f1+ 47...♘g6+ was simple too.



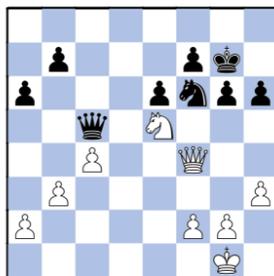
48.♘e4 48.♘e3 ♙g5+ 49.♘e4 ♖e1+ 50.♘f3 ♘g6+ was the other line I calculated, when White can delay but not indefinitely prevent the inevitable.

48...♖e1+ 49.♘f3 ♘g6?! 49...♘e6+ would have saved us some time!

50.♖b5 ♘e5+ 51.♖xe5 ♖xe5 With such a surplus in material, the position is winning, slowly but surely. **Black won** in 12 moves.

Grayson Rorrer	2288
Dmitriy Kushko	2426

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27...♖d6?? I just couldn't believe my eyes... I was all ready for 27...♖a5 28.♘g4 ♘xg4 29.hxg4 ♖xa2 30.♖d4+, when Black can't reasonably avoid a repetition of moves.

28.♖xh6+ ♘g8 29.♖h8+

Black resigned

Just as in the beginner textbooks. A thoroughly undeserved, but most welcome victory. My opponent was on a sterling 4/5 and, naturally, his norm chances (the GM-Norm score was set to at least 7/9) would have benefitted from a win against the lowest-rated player. It wasn't to be, though, as White was quite alright throughout the entire game, meaning his ambitions weren't based on reality. But sometimes we try to conjure up what

doesn't exist if it suits our needs/desires... 29...♘xh8 30.♘xf7+ ♘g7 31.♘xd6 is a pointless fight to carry on.

Baador Jobava	2581
Grayson Rorrer	2288

Vezerkepzo Autumn GM Norm Invitational, Budapest 2023



After an odd exchange sacrifice I've managed to completely outplay Georgian GM Jobava, a former member of the world elite having topped out at 2734. Now was the right time to ramp up the pressure and clinch a well deserved victory. Instead...

31...♖c3?! The introduction to a strange plan. Black is, of course, still better, but somehow my pieces get a bit sidetracked over the next few moves.

31...♖xe2! 32.♙xe2 ♖d2 was an endgame the players summarily failed to properly evaluate. For concrete reasons Black is just much better, rather than the rough equality we both thought reigned supreme. 33.♘f3! (33.♙b5? looks like a nice setup, but Black breaks up the construction most simply by 33...♖a2 34.a4 a6!+. The bishop can never go to c4, as was Jobava's intention, on account of the basic shot 35.♙c4 ♘xa4) 33...♖cd7 34.a4 ♖c2 35.♖f1 ♖dd2 36.♙b5 (36.♙c4? ♘xc4 37.♘xc4 ♖d3+ also doesn't help.) 36...♘c8! 37.♘c4 ♖d8 ♖ White's pieces aren't working well together. I wouldn't expect the game to have lasted very long, if only I had noticed just how powerful Black's rooks will be in the ending...

32.♖b5 Already a modicum of activity I needn't have allowed. 32...♖d2?! My idea behind the last move – but with White's queen activated I don't have the leisure to play so carelessly.

32...♖d3!? 33.♖xd3 ♖xd3 34.♖c1 ♖d2 35.a4 is a worse version of the previous endgame, and certainly not something I ever considered after declining to liquidate just on the last move! Black is better, but much less so that what could have been, e.g. 35...h5!? 36.♘f1 ♘h6 37.♙c6! ♖, and with c5 dropping Black's winning chances

look just about non-existent, in practice. There's still a game to be played, but White has definitely managed to get away more or less scot free.

32...♖c2!? was probably a better version of what I did in the game, keeping an eye on the kingside via ...♖f5. Still, White has good chances of defending after 33.♘c4! ♘xc4 34.bxc4 ♖d2 35.♖f1 ♖f5!? 36.♖g1 ♖.

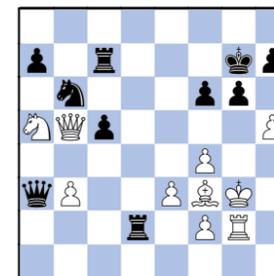
33.♘g3 ♖b2? Black's advantage, if any remained, was already very much in question, but now the game spirals completely out of control. My king will miss his royal defender while it's out lounging on the queenside, grabbing pawns.

33...♖b2! was the best try to maintain some pressure, with the idea of keeping the queen closer to home while still maintaining some seventh rank pressure. 34.h5 (34.a4 ♘f8! 35.♖d1 ♖c2 36.♖f1 g5! 37.hxg5 fxg5 38.fxg5 ♖f5 ♖ is also more comfortable for Black.) 34...♘f8! The only move, and one that can be understood but looks hard to find. 35.♖d1 ♖c2 36.♖d8+ ♘g7 37.♖f1 gxh5! 38.♙xh5 h6 ♖ looks to dangerously weaken Black's kingside, but it's hard to exploit.

34.♖g2 By now practically anything works. Black's pieces have strayed too far from home.

34.♖e8!? ♖xf2 35.♖h1 already seems to have Black fighting for a draw. 35...♖xf3+!? (35...h5 is also fine. 36.f5 ♖d2 37.♘h3 ♖e5 38.♖xg6+ ♘f8 39.♖xh5 ♖g7 40.♖h8+ ♖g8 41.♖h6+ ♖g7=) 36.♘xf3 ♖d2 37.h5 ♖d5+ Black's queen is just in time. White either needs to acquiesce to a trade into an even endgame, or endless checks. 38.e4 (38.♖e4 ♖xe4+ 39.♘xe4 c4=) 38...♖d3+ 39.♘f2 ♖d2+ 40.♘f3 ♖d3+=.

34...♖xa3 35.h5



35...♖d8 35...♖b4?? 36.♖e8+– would be a complete disaster. The eighth rank needs defense as 36...♖xa5 runs into 37.h6+ ♘xh6 38.♖f8+ ♖g7 39.♖h2 mate. However, 35...♖dd7 36.♘c6∞ also gives White fine play.

36.♘c6 ♖d2 A strange move, but ironically



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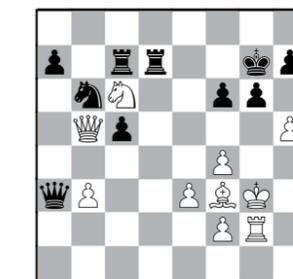
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one that provoked the decisive blunder. Chess can be odd like that sometimes, you think your opponent is a fool and in turn lose that little bit of concentration. It didn't help that Jobava was down to minutes by now. In all seriousness, I realized quite acutely what I had done and wouldn't have minded a draw in the slightest by now.

36...♖dd7 37.♘b8 ♖e7 38.♘c6 ♖ed7 would have been a better way to covertly slip in a draw offer.

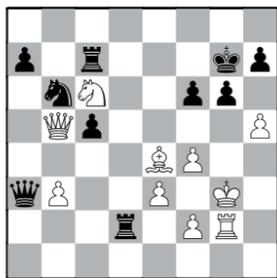


- A) 39.hxg6 hxg6 40.♖h2!? (40.♗e4? ♖c1 41.♗h2 ♗f8! is suddenly dangerous for White again.) 40...♗c8!∞ again needs to be found.
- B) 39.♗e4!? The idea we agreed was best after the game. Black can defend, but it's only easy to inhuman minds. I would have been under great pressure to survive, especially with eight minutes on the clock. 39...♗c8! (39...♖c1!? is possible, but frightening indeed.) 40.hxg6 h6 41.♗f3 ♖b7 42.♖e2 ♗d6 43.♗g4 ♖xb3 44.♗a5 ♖b6 45.♗xb7 ♖xb7∞, and with scarily precise play Black has managed to escape the worst of it.

37.♗xa7?? An unbelievable oversight! It's easy to go with the flow, which had clearly been on White's side, but a sober disposition under pressure would show there isn't any reason White should be better yet.

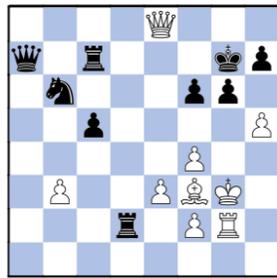
37.♗e5!? ♖d8 (37...fxe5 works too, but 38.♖e8 exf4+ 39.♗h4!∞ is some kind of mess I would have no desire to get into right before the time control.) 38.♗c6 ♖d2= is the simplest with low time.

Just about everything could be tried – as mentioned, we both thought 37.♗e4!? was the most dangerous idea after the fact. Black has a narrow path to equality consisting of two difficult to spot moves/ideas.



- A) 37...♖d6! Dangerous, but it looks to be working fine.
- A1) 38.♗e5 ♖d8 39.hxg6 fxe5 40.gxh7 ♗h8 41.♗h2 ♖f7 42.♖g8+ ♖xg8 43.hxg8 ♖+ ♗xg8 44.♖e8+ ♗g7 45.♖xe5+ ♗f8 46.♖d6+=.
- A2) 38.hxg6 hxg6 39.♗d4!? gives White some dangerous ideas, but nothing that seems to pan out. 39...cxd4!? 40.♖e8 ♖xb3! 41.♗h4! f5 42.♖e5+ ♗g8 43.♖xd6 ♖h7+ 44.♗g3 fxe4 45.♖b8+ ♗g7 46.♖e5+ ♗g8 47.♖b8+ ♗g7=.
- B) 37...♖c1! also seems to be okay, but who would have the bravado to throw their queen even further out into the wild with their king trembling? 38.hxg6 h5! 39.♗f3 ♖h1 40.♖xc5 h4+ 41.♗g4

♗d5! 42.♖g3 ♖h2 43.♖g2 ♖h1=, with a typical engine draw that nobody would ever be able to work their way through. 37...♖xa7 38.♖e8 Threatening the same h6+, ♖f8+ and ♖h2 mating sequence.



38...♖c8! If it were not for this move, White's plan might have worked. All of a sudden, the door slams shut on White's attacking ambitions, and just like that the game is completely over. A rook is a rook! Just to illustrate the potential of White's attack, note these couple of lines: 38...f5 39.♖e5+ ♗g8 40.hxg6 hxg6 (40...♖d8 41.♖e6+ ♗g7 42.♖h2 ♖h8 43.♖xf5 ♖a1 44.gxh7+-) 41.♖e8+ ♗g7 42.♖h2+-.

Or 38...h6 39.♗h3! g5 40.♖g6+ ♗f8 41.♖xf6+ ♖f7 42.♖xh6+ ♗e8 43.♖xg5+- Looks terrifying indeed.

39.♖e6 39.h6+?! ♗xh6 40.♖f7?? was my opponent's intention when deciding to sacrifice on a7, but the wayward queen has managed to return with powerful effect. 40...♖xf7 Not that easy to see from afar after all the previous calculations both players had to undergo.

39...♖f8! Consolidating the position. White has no hope whatsoever.

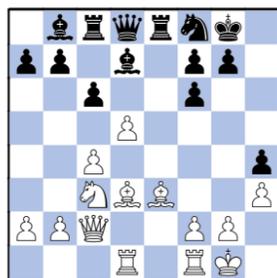
40.hxg6 hxg6 41.♖h2 41.♗e4 f5! 42.♖e5+ ♖f6 is lights out.

41...♖dd8 The final finesse. White's h-file aspirations lead nowhere, so...

White resigned

Grayson Rorrer	2288
Dmitriy Kushko	2426

Vezerkepzo Autumn GM Norm Invitational, Budapest 2023



16...♗xh3?? The decisive mistake, played

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

October 25 - November 5, 2023

FIDE Grand Swiss

(11 rounds, 114 players)

- 1 Vidit GUJRATHI (IND) 8½
 2 Hikaru NAKAMURA 8
 3-7 Andrey ESIPENKO (FID), Arjun ERIGAISI (IND), Vincent KEYMER (GER), Parham MAGHSOODLOO (IRI), Anish GIRI (NED) 7½
 8-13 Javokhir SINDAROV (UZB), Alexandr PREDKE (SRB), Fabiano CARUANA, Jan-Krzysztof DUDA (POL), Nodirbek ABDUSATTOROV (UZB), Praggnanandhaa RAMESHBABU (IND) 7

after five minutes of thought. I couldn't have hoped for better! Perhaps he thought I underestimated the idea and expected to mate glamorously, but actually it was next to the only option I analyzed.

16...cxd5 17.♗xd5 ♗e6, on the other hand, is already very comfortable for Black. 18.♗f4! is forced. (18.♗e4? was my idea after a cursory examination, but naturally White runs into trouble after the simple 18...♗xd5 19.♗xd5 ♖c7 20.♖fe1 ♖h2+ 21.♗f1 ♗e6!±) 18...♗xf4 19.♗xf4 ♖c7 20.♗xe6 ♗xe6= leads to a simple position where I would already rather take Black.

17.gxh3 ♖d6 18.♗g2! The only move, but it's good enough! 18.♖fe1?? ♖h2+ 19.♗f1 ♖xh3+ 20.♗e2 ♖xe3+! 21.fxe3 (21.♗d2 is, of course, hopeless.) 21...♖g2 mate, with a sparkling finale, at first made me want to abandon the idea of my previous moves 15.♗c3 and d4-d5, but fortunately I took a step back and reviewed the situation with fresh eyes.

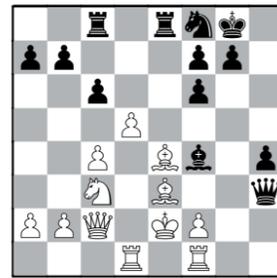
18...♖h2+ After thirty minutes of thought! Not a very practical time management when, as here, the move is more or less just forced. At least he could have made it quickly, with the full realization that something had gone wrong, and been able to see clearer the positions ahead.

19.♗f3 ♗d7 Another twenty minutes gone!

19...♖xh3+ 20.♗e2 ♗f4!? was mainly what I was looking at during the near-hour

I had to wait at the board. Now I can sympathize with MVL, who, still in prep against Alekseenko, wished for board games. (20...♖xe3+? 21.fxe3 ♖g2+ 22.♖f2+- is, of course, the crucial difference – the rook remained on f1 rather than entombing White's king

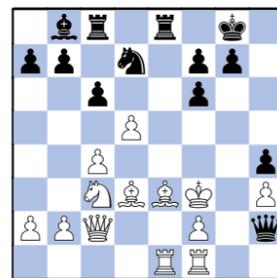
and leaving it without defenders.) 21.♗e4! The only winning move, and one I had spotted. White keeps the position under control.



A) 21...f5 22.♖h1 ♖g4+ 23.♗f3 ♖g5 24.♖d1! ♖f6 25.♖d2+-.

B) 21...♗xe3 22.fxe3 cxd5 23.cxd5 seemed the end of the line. Black is running out of play, but still has one last firecracker to set off. 23...♖c4!? White still needs to be careful. I hope I would have managed to bob and weave through the complexities of 24.♖h1 ♖g3 25.♖d1 ♖e5 26.♖xh4! f5 27.♖h5! ♖xe4 28.♗xe4 ♖xc2+ 29.♗d3 ♖xe4 30.♗xc2+-.

20.♖de1!? The simplest solution – White just wants to run with his king to e2-d1, getting away from the crime scene. 20.♖h1! also works, but unnecessarily complicates the play. Or so I thought at the time! 20...♖xe3+! 21.♗xe3 ♖e8+ 22.♗e4 ♖f4+ 23.♗e2 f5 24.♖d2! was what I had missed, when White wins clearly after 24...♖e5 25.dxc6 ♗f6 26.♖d4 ♖c7 27.♗f1!? fxe4 28.♗d5+-.



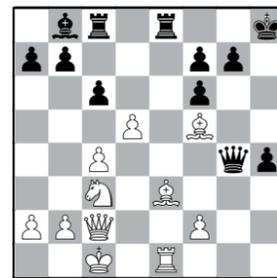
20...♖xh3+ Letting me make a clean escape. 20...♗f4!? would have at least forced me to find the fairly self evident 21.♗f5! ♗e5+ 22.♗e2 ♗xc4 23.♗d1 ♖cd8 24.♖h1 ♗xe3+ 25.fxe3 ♖xc2+ 26.♗xc2 ♗xe3 27.dxc6 bxc6 28.♖d1+-, when, despite temporary material equality, White will win with the

pieces. Black's immobile kingside majority, taken on as early as move 4, is an important factor!

21.♗e2 ♖g4+ 21...♗e5 22.♗h7+! ♗h8 23.♖f5+- trades queens without shedding even a pawn more than necessary. White wins easily.

22.♗d2 ♗e5 23.♗c1 The safest and surest.

23.♗h7+! ♗h8 (23...♗f8 24.♗c5+- is not an improvement.) 24.♗f5 was the most straightforward conclusion, based off 24...♗f3+ 25.♗c1 ♗xe1 26.♖xe1



A) The difference from 23.♗f5 immediately can be seen in 26...♖xc4?! 27.♗xc8 ♖xc8 28.♖f5+-, when, with a king on g8, Black would have serious counter chances! But now White's attack (♖h1-xh4) will prove decisive.

B) 26...♖f3 27.♗xc8 ♖xc8 28.♖d1+- The endgame conversion shouldn't pose too many difficulties.

23...cxd5 24.cxd5 ♗xd3+ 25.♖xd3



25...♗e5 Nothing else had much of an impact either. 25...h3 26.♖h1 ♖h4 27.♖d1 h2 28.♗b1+- shows the futility of Black's h-pawn march – without support, it's just a lone foot soldier, and doesn't have any effect whatsoever.

26.♗b1 Just about everything worked fine. Getting out of the c-file pin restores mobility to White's knight. White won without any further difficulties after 21 moves.

SOLUTIONS TO THREATS EXERCISES FROM PAGE 29

1. Black has created a threat to which White fails to respond. White's last move was 45.h4?!, when, instead, 45.♖e4! was the proper defense against the threat. After 45...♖xe2+ 46.♖xe2 ♗f6 White is very slightly better, but Black has 45...♖c4! with equality. 45...♖e1!! A phenomenal threat that totally changes the evaluation of the position. 46.♖xf7+ 46.♖xc2 ♖xe8+-, 46...♗xf7 47.♖xc2 and Black won.

2. Here Black had attempted to defend actively by 23...♖d3!?, threatening the white queen. However, he should have defended with 23...♖c8!±. 24.♖a8!! A powerful counterthreat! Black's back rank is extremely weak. 24...♖xf3 25.♖xe8+ ♗f8 26.♖xf8+ ♗g7 27.♖b8 ♗h6 Also 27...♖c7 doesn't solve Black's problems after 28.♗f8+ ♗g8 29.♖d6+ ♖xb8 30.♗xb8+-.

3. 25.♗f5! ♖c7 26.f4!! ♖g3?! 26...g6 27.♖h1 ♖xh1! (27...♖g3 28.♖h3+-) 28.♖xh1 gxh5±. 27.♖h1! ♗g6 28.♖h3 ♖xh3 29.♗xh3 ♗xb1 30.♗xb1 and White won.

4. Black created a threat with his previous move ...♖fe8, to which White wrongly responded with 18.♗f2?. The correct plan was the counterthreat 18.g5!, when after 18...♗xd4 19.♗xd4 ♗xd4 20.♗xd4 ♗xf5 21.♗xd5 ♗e6 22.c3 White is only slightly worse. 18...♗xd4! 19.♗xd4 ♗b5! An excellent move after which Black wins the exchange. 20.♗xf6 Or 20.♖f2 ♗xd4 21.♗xd4 ♖e1+-+. 20...♗xf1 21.♖xf1 gxf6 and Black won.

5. 40.♗f6+ White combines threats against the black king with winning material. 40...♗h6 41.♖b8 ♗g5? 41...♗xf2!! was the only proper defense against the threats. After another spectacular move 42.♗d5!!, Black has nothing better than 42...♗h7 43.♗xf2±. 42.♗xe4+!! Beautiful geometry which allows White to win material and the game. 42...♗g4 42...fxe4 43.♖d8+ ♗f5 (43...♗h6 44.♖h8+ ♗g5 45.♖xh3+-; 43...♗g4 44.♖c8+ ♗h5 45.♖xh3+-) 44.♖d7+-+. 43.f3+! ♗xf3 43...♗h5 44.♖h8 mate. 44.♗g5+ Black resigned.

6. Black has just played 37...♖e6, which serves as the best defense against threats on the f-file. 38.e4!! Ivanchuk combines threats with the hand of an artist. 38...dxe4 38...♗xe4 39.♖xf8+-; Or 38...♖xe4 39.♗c2 ♖xd4 40.♖d6+ ♗xh5 41.♗d1+ ♗g4 42.♖xe7+- Threatening the rook on f8 and also checkmate on h7. 39.♗b3 ♖d7 40.♖xf5 ♖xf5 41.♖xf5 ♖xd4+ 41...♖xf5 42.♖d6+ ♗xh5 43.♗d1+! 42.♗h1 ♖d2 43.♖f6+ ♗h7 44.♖f2 Black resigned.

FIDE GRAND SWISS, Douglas 2023

The road to the World Championship has historically been a lengthy, challenging one. Recently the reigning Champion's challenger has most often been decided by a single Candidates tournament, with various paths of qualification ranging from knockout lotteries to rating and everything in between. In the days of old even true legends of the game were forced to fight their way through first a Zonal qualifier (usually a National Championship), then a stacked Interzonal among other winners to get a shot in that cycle's Candidates tournament/matches. The FIDE Grand Swiss (formerly dubbed the "FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss"), held this year on the Isle of Man, brings back memories of those Interzonals from days gone by, if in a somewhat abridged form. Players were indeed fighting for a cherished spot in the Candidates, which went to the top two finishers. The 100 highest-rated active players in FIDE's June rating list were eligible to participate, going further down the list in case of refusals, and spots were also offered for Continental picks and nominations of the FIDE President. There would also be a Women's Grand Swiss held alongside the main action, with similar stakes. All said, the event looked set to live up to its name of a truly Grand Swiss, and the players did not disappoint!

In a field rated on average in the 2630's, there would be no easy matchups right from the get go. While there weren't many major upsets in the early stages, some top seeds did find it a bit hard to get going, having been forced to succumb to early draws. It's just the nature of chess nowadays – winning games is not becoming any easier as the general strength of opposition constantly goes up. An early shocker was Kazakh IM (you got that right!) Ramazan Zhalmakhanov, who started with two wins against mid-to-high 2600's, before drawing four games in a row against 2700+ adversary. He fell off a bit around the end, but still had an outstanding breakthrough performance, smashing through the requirements of a second GM-Norm.

Dark horse stories aside, GM Andrey Esipenko was the first to take a small step further than the rest, jumping ahead to 3½/4. It wouldn't last long, though, as GM Hikaru Nakamura bounced back from a sluggish start to win three in a row, thereby catching up. After a one-time sole



▲ Hikaru Nakamura, Grand Swiss 2023 Photo by Maria Emelianova

leader, every passing round only served to make the fight at the top more and more intense, as those playing catch up closed in, increasing the number of players vying for and sharing the lead. The tournament's schedule was somewhat brutal – eleven rounds with only one rest day halfway through. After the – surely much needed – break, India's GM Vidit Gujrathi was the next to separate himself, completing an impressive comeback, having roared to 5½/6 after a first-round loss. I would call it an effective use of the "Swiss Gambit," but actually the level of his opponents never went down, only progressively upwards!

It was only after the penultimate tenth round that there could finally be talk of clarity in terms of the Candidates hunters: by steamrolling GM Fabiano Caruana – who at that point had temporarily crossed 2800 and was on track to repeat his 2021 qualification – Nakamura joined the leading pack before the final round, accompanied by Esipenko and Vidit on 7½/10. The event's fate rested in their hands. Theoretically it would have been possible for any of three right behind on 7/9 to catch up, qualify and even win it all, but the chances were next to none. And so it went – Esipenko took a hard loss, paired "down" against GM Anish Giri (6½), while Nakamura defended the somewhat questionable Kalashnikov in exemplary fashion, drawing from a position of strength, in the process securing a Candidates berth. That left it up to board two, where Vidit didn't let up and pressed a small endgame advantage to a full point, smooth as butter, claiming overall victory and a place in the Candidates!

Hikaru Nakamura	2780
Alexey Sarana	2682

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



18...d4?! White had achieved less than nothing with his Catalan, and should have been fighting for equality, but by pressing ahead too early with the hanging pawns Sarana forgave his opponent in full.

18...c4! was the right square to give up – the d5 pawn is well protected, and won't come under any serious pressure soon. Black has comfortable play after 19.d4 h6 20.xf6 (The lesser evil, as 20.d2 c5 21.e3 d4?! 22.c1 xd4 23.exd4 c6³ looks rather unpleasant. The bishop pair definitely aren't operating at full capacity!) 20...xf6 21.e3 g6!?, and though White should be okay his position isn't much fun to play.

19.xb7 xb7 20.c4 With Black's pawns firmly blockaded and a permanent weakness on c5, now was the time to find a way of getting rid of the c5 pawn in return for active play. Hanging on to the pawn will only lead to suffering.

20...d5? Bad tactically. If not for one detail Black would have been in time with ...b6, ...fd8-d5, etc. But it's an important one!

20...fe8!? 21.xf6 xf6 22.c2 e7 23.c1 g6 should be okay for Black, but the details are far from simple to work out. From a distance, both c5 and d4 look set to drop off.

20...g4!? 21.xe7 xe7 also amounts to a pawn sacrifice, but would have been a far better way to execute a similar idea to the game! 22.c1! remains the only challenge, but far from devastating this time. (22.c2 e5! 23.xc5 d3 24.c3 xc5 25.dxc5 dx2 26.e1 should clearly be decent in more than one way. Simplest seems 26...e8!? 27.g2 g4=) 22...e5!? The most consistent with Black's earlier strategy. (However, 22...xe2 23.dxd4 e4 24.b3 e2 25.c2 xc2 26.xc2 c4 27.d2 e5= also appears to be a holdable endgame.) 23.xc5 c8 Black's compensation is obscure but definitely exists. The position wouldn't have been easy for either side to navigate.

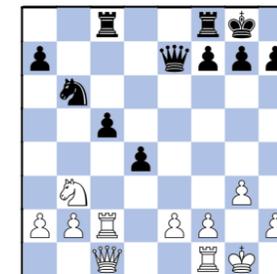
21.xe7 xe7 22.c1! Absolutely necessary, otherwise Black has fine play. But now the hanging pawns have advanced too far, with the more than likely outcome of both falling, with little to no active play to compensate.

22...b6 Definitely not a bad try. 22...xe2?! 23.dxd4! is the big idea. Again, the c5 pawn is weak, and White suddenly develops a threatening kingside initiative after 23...e7 24.e1 c7 25.f5! g6 26.h6+ g7 27.g4±.

22...fe8!? 23.xc5 c3 was also playable, bringing the game to a major piece endgame. (23...xc5 24.xc5 xc5 25.dxc5 xe2 26.d1!±, thanks to the back rank considerations, should

just about win for White.) 24.bxc3 xc5 25.dxc5 xc5 26.cxd4 xd4 27.d1 b6 28.d2 g6 29.e3± brings about a difficult type of position not seen too often in practice. White is, naturally, pressing hard for an advantage, but the position still needs to be won. It isn't a completely simple task.

23.c2! Another important point – with e2 covered, White is ready to pick up c5 in the most favorable manner. There isn't a reasonable defense.



23...fe8 Not the most resistant. Sarana hit on the right idea, it seems, but there was no reason to delay. That said, 23...h5 24.dxc5 h4 25.d1 fd8 26.b3± is a solid extra pawn for White.

23...e6 24.dxc5 xa2 25.d1 fd8 26.b4 d5 27.a1± isn't a big help either – at least one of Black's weak pawns will be lost in the very near future.

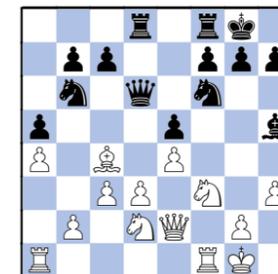
24.dxc5 h5 There isn't anything left to lose. 24...d7 25.dxd7? xd7 26.d1 h5 27.c4 promises Black a miserable defense down a pawn with no counter chances. 27...b7! (27...e6 28.dxd4 xc4 29.xc4 xe2 30.h4± would give Black even fewer prospects of salvation – with a mobile queenside majority, the rook

endings should be lost.) 28.dxd4 xc4 29.xc4 xb2 30.e3±.

25.d1 e5 26.dd2! The final precaution. With d3 coming next, White is more or less just a pawn up. To Sarana's credit, he did manage to complicate the game nicely and even had chances to survive, but after the dust settled his play had run out. **White won** in 44 moves.

Javokhir Sindarov	2658
Vidit Gujrathi	2716

FIDE Grand Swiss, Douglas 2023



A slow Italian has led to a typically quiet position. Perhaps the players will chop wood, with a quick draw in the offing?

18.g4?! Not so much – Sindarov is ambitious, but without objective substantiation it's just a questionable gamble. The kingside weaknesses will come back to haunt him. 18.e3 fe8! 19.b5 fd7 20.c4 dxc4 21.xc4 b6 22.ae1 xf3 23.xf3 xe3+ 24.xe3 e7= is an example of the trading route after which the position is dead drawn.

18...g6 19.f1 d7! The knight on c5 will put pressure on d3 and also angle for f4 via e6.

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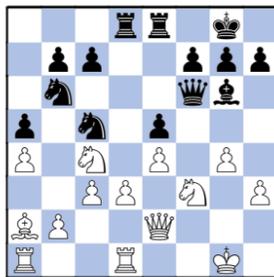


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UNDO BUTTON: PRACTICING OPTION
ZOOM BUTTON: IN & OUT
MENU BUTTON WITH 7 OPTIONS
SMALL BOMBS: POISON CAPTURES & ATOM KILLS
BIG BOMBS: BIOLOGICAL CAPTURES & HYDROGEN KILLS
GRID MOVEMENT: TRACKING PIECES (NO TIES, DRAWS OR STALEMATES)

20.♔b3 White's pieces make a sorry sight at present – now at least the knight on d2 will be able to come out on c4.
20...♗c5 21.♖c4 ♖f6!? Refusing to trade keeps more tension in the position. It isn't clear whether this is favorable for Black, though. 21...♗xc4 22.♗xc4 h6!? 23.♖e3 ♗h7 24.♗h4 ♗e6 is more pleasant for Black, though a breakthrough isn't apparent just yet.
22.♗a2 ♖fe8



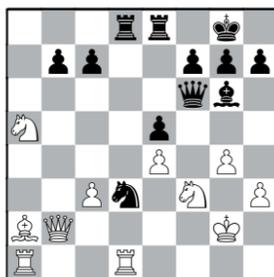
An important moment. White should be just about able to keep the balance in more than one way, but instead...

23.♗g2? Perhaps forgetting that Black's last move actually did have an idea – by protecting e5 it's now possible to just take the pawn on offer!

23.h4!? would have been a good way to make use of the kingside advances. The position is unclear and messy. 23...h5!? (23...♖f4 24.♗xc5 ♖xe5 25.♗xe5 ♖xe5 26.h5 leaves Black needing to force a draw with 26...♖g3+ 27.♖g2 ♖e3+ 28.♗h2 ♗xd3 29.hxg6 ♖h6+ 30.♗g1 ♖e3+=) 24.g5 ♖f4 25.♗xb6 Possible with Black's queen deflected from the knight's defense. White is okay after 25...cxb6 26.♗c4 ♖d6 27.♗f2! =.

23...♗bxa4 Naturally! White has next to no compensation.

24.h4?! Before the h-pawn's advance was almost a necessity to create counterplay, but now the idea fails to have any impact. 24.♗xa5? ♗xb2! 25.♖xb2 ♗xd3



A) 26.♗xd3 ♗xd3 27.♖e2 ♗xc3++ leaves White's position devastated.

B) 26.♖xb7 ♖f4 would be another spectacular way to lose, e.g. 27.♗d5

DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

October 25 – November 5, 2023

FIDE Women's Grand Swiss

(11 rounds, 50 players)

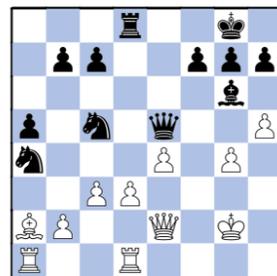
1 Vaishali RAMESHBABU (IND)	8½
2 Anna MUZYCHUK (UKR)	8
3-4 Tan ZHONGYI (CHN), Batkhuyag MUNGUNTUUL (MGL)	7½
5-8 Leya GARIFULLINA (FID), Antoaneta STEFANOVA (BUL), Pia CRAMLING (SWE), Mariya MUZYCHUK (UKR)	7

♗xd5! 28.♖xd5 (28.exd5 e4++) 28...♗xe4 29.♗xd3 ♗xd5 30.♗xd5 h5! 31.gxh5 e4++, when, despite the small material advantage, Black's passed pawn combined with a good attack will prove decisive.

24.♗d2 ♗e6 25.♖e3 ♗ac5-- was "best," but White is down a pawn for zero compensation anyway.

24...♖f4 25.♗cx5 With the kingside falling apart, there really isn't any other try. 25.♗g5?! h6 26.♗h3 ♗xd3!-- is a nice tactical finish.

25...♗xe5 26.♗xe5 ♖xe5 27.h5?! Allowing the tactical fireworks, but this was the entire idea. 27.d4 ♖xe4+ 28.♖xe4 ♗xe4+ 29.♗g1 ♗d3!-- is more or less game over in any case.



27...♗xd3! A nice idea, but not too difficult to see. Due punishment for White's overambitious kingside play!

28.♗xf7+ 28.♗xd3 ♗xd3 29.hxg6 ♗f4+ wins the queen and the game. However, also 28.hxg6 ♖g3+ 29.♗h1 (29.♗f1 ♖f3++) 29...♖h3+ 30.♖h2 ♖f3++ is too much to handle.

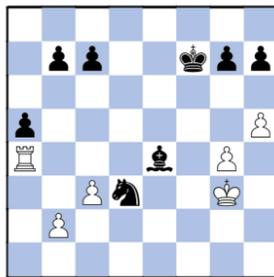
28...♗f8! The most precise. White's position is falling apart.

29.♗xd3 29.hxg6 ♖g3+ 30.♗h1 ♖h3+ 31.♖h2 ♖f3++ is no different than before.

29...♗xd3 30.♖e3 ♖xe4+ More than good enough. 30...♗xe4+!? 31.♗g1 ♗xc3 32.bxc3 ♗xf7-- would win in the middlegame, but why allow White even a small glimmer of counterchances?

31.♖xe4 ♗xe4+ 32.♗g3 ♗xf7

32...♗dx2 33.♗b3 ♗c5 picks up another pawn with no repercussions, but perhaps Vidit was worried about taking his knight away from the main scene of battle. 34.♗xa5 ♗xb3 35.♖b5 ♗c2!-- is an important point. 33.♗xa4



33...♗c6 34.♗xa5 ♗xb2 Black won in 23 moves. The endgame is a hopeless prospect for the first player, with a rook for two pieces and a pawn.

It was a great day for Indian chess fans, as in the Women's Grand Swiss IM Vaishali Rameshbabu clinched victory with a tumultuous draw. To wrap up her GM title she needed to win, and certainly had good chances, but considering the tournament situation a split point was more than satisfactory. Former Women's World Champion GM Tan Zhongyi took the second Candidates spot on offer.

ZAGREB, CROATIA

November 22–30, 2023

TOURNAMENT OF PEACE

(10-player round-robin)

1 Hans NIEMANN	8
2-4 Ante BRKIC (CRO), Anton KOROBV (UKR), Vasyl IVANCHUK (UKR)	5
5-6 Alexander MOTYLEV (ROU), Ivan SOKO LOV (NED)	4½
7 Hrvoje STEVIC (CRO)	4
8 Zdenko KOZUL (CRO)	3½
9 Robert ZELCIC (CRO)	3
10 Ivan CHEPARINOV (BUL)	2½

American GM Hans Niemann won with an outstanding +7=2-0 score and a TPR of 2946! Here's how he celebrated this victory on his X (former Twitter) page, posting photos of the closing ceremonies in 1970 (when Fischer won) and 2023:

"Two lone Americans up against the world, facing immeasurable odds. Victorious 53 years apart at the legendary Tournament of Peace.

8/9: 2946 performance rating I know of no better life purpose than to perish in attempting the great and the impossible."

CHICAGO RESIDENT LAWRENCE COHEN HAS PLAYED CHESS TOURNAMENTS IN ALL TEN CANADIAN PROVINCES!
My Canadian Conquest

Apart from competing, chess may bring wonderful joys of travelling. With this in mind, your goals may get set to breaking records that are not exclusively related to the chessboard! The following personal story provides first hand evidence of this at its best.

By Lawrence Cohen

You likely have heard of the British invasion (musicians from England coming

to the United States in the 1960s), well I am here to tell you about the American invasion – which phrase I use to describe U.S. chess players traveling up to Canada to play chess. Other than Seattle and Detroit, most of the areas in the United States near the Canadian border do not have a lot of chess tournaments. So it has become common to see U.S. players playing in Canadian events. What is not common is a U.S. player who has played (CFC) rated chess in all ten Canadian provinces.

As of June 25, 2023 I think I can make the claim that I am the first and only U.S. player, who has never lived or worked in Canada, to have played rated chess in all ten Canadian provinces. I would be surprised if I was the first ever to have done so, as I would expect there must be at least one Canadian who has done it before me. (Does anyone know the number of Canadian players to have accomplished this feat?) So, I have completed my conquest to play in all of the Canadian provinces.

The shirt in the picture is, of course, the national flag of Canada. Surrounding that are the provincial flags. They are (starting top right of my shirt): British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, (down from the green SK flag) Manitoba, Ontario (similar flags, but

MN has a buffalo on the small shield, while Ontario has three flowers), Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, (back up) Quebec, and New Brunswick.

I have played in



week-long tournaments in the States, Canada, and abroad, including places like Gibraltar, London, Iceland and Malta. I have always thought of such week-long events as a chess vacation, with, of course, tourist visits in many of the areas I have been to throughout the years. A chess vacation requires planning and research, just as you need to plan and study for chess itself. The further ahead you can successfully plan, the better your results. Know what weather you can expect to deal with, and learn what sites there are to see in the area you are visiting. Contact the tournament organizer as they are a good source of

Lawrence Cohen is a tournament organizer, a FIDE arbiter, but most of all a chess player. Lawrence works full time as a credit manager for a manufacturing firm in Chicago, occasionally taking days off in order to play in chess tournaments. His involvement with chess has lasted for nearly 50 years.

information on local attractions, eateries, and places to stay. They also can give you good information on the tournament itself, any

restrictions, and hopefully will prevent you from encountering any surprises. I once failed to do this and ended up at an event that used "Degraded Accelerated Pairings" for the first five rounds. The name should give you some idea of how crazy/bad a system it is in my opinion, especially in a 9-round event with a total of only 100 players.

As a U.S. chess player, I must say that the people, players, organizers, and arbiters (TDs) are very friendly. The last two on that listing can sometimes be the same person. I would highly recommend to anyone who has not done so, to try playing in the Grand Pacific Open

in Victoria (also known as Vancouver Island), British Columbia. It is a very nice site in a very nice town. This event is typically run over Easter Weekend, with the final game on the morning of Easter Monday (a holiday in BC) and the first game played the evening of Good Friday. I have been fortunate in that I have been based in the Chicago area, and this made my travels a little easier than a player from the east or west coast of the United States. That is not to say that there have never been any travel problems, and I have at least once been stuck overnight in Montreal. For those U.S. players that think the announcements before a round starts are too long, I would strongly advise against playing in Montreal. Any chess tournament in the province of Quebec will do the announcements in both English and French, and of course take more time.

The most recent tournament I played was the New Brunswick Open held June 23–25, 2023. Due to my travel arrangements I had to take a bye in the first round. A bye in the first or last round due to travel considerations is something you may find you need. That is another reason to contact the organizer ahead of time, as last-round byes are not allowed at many tournaments.

I am among the few players who are attempting to eventually have played rated chess in all 50 states. Yet, back in 2015 (Calgary Qualifier tournament) I realized I had just played in my fourth province and decided that I would also try to play in all ten of the Canadian provinces along with the 50 states. Although there are still some states to go for the goal of all 50 (HI, AK, ND, RI, PA and GA), I have successfully achieved the goal of playing in all ten Canadian provinces.