

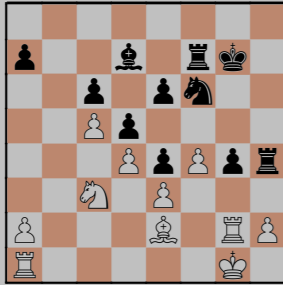


♞xd7 26.♞ac1 ♞c8 Black is no worse by any means.

24.bxc6 bxc6?! 24...♙xc6 would prevent White from utilizing the b-file.

25.gxh4 Correctly assessing that the h2 weakness can easily be protected.

25...♞h8 26.♞f2 ♞xh4 27.♞g2



27...♗f8 27...e5! is the engine-backed idea to open the light-squared bishop, even at the cost of a pawn. This just shows how sad my position is... 28.fxe5 (28.dxe5 ♖h5 29.♖d1 d4) 28...♖h7 29.h3 ♞xh3 30.♙xg4 ♙xg4 31.♞xg4+ ♗f8±. 28.♖d1 ♞g7 29.♖f2 After the prophylaxis is finished, all that is left is to invade the b-file.

29...♙e8 30.♞b1 ♙h5 31.♞b8+ ♙e8 32.♙d1 ♞hh7 33.♖xg4 ♖xg4 34.♙xg4 ♞b7 35.♞b2 ♞bg7 36.h3 ♞xh3 I saw the follow-up tactic, but what other option did I have?



37.♞xe8+ ♗xe8 38.♞b8+ ♗f7 39.♞b7+ ♗f6 40.♞xg7 ♞xe3 41.♗f2 ♞a3 42.♞c7 ♞xa2+ 43.♗g3 ♞a3+ 44.♗h4 ♞a6 45.♙h5 e5 46.♞f7+ Black resigned

After mishandling my feisty opening choice, I got into a worse position where my key attackers got traded off. Alice chose to go into an endgame where only she was pushing, and showcased very nice (annoying to me during the game) technique and prophylaxis to capitalize on my inaccuracies. A painful game, but definitely one from which I learned a lot.

# INTERVIEW WITH ALICE LEE



## ACCUMULATED EXPERIENCE AT THE AGE OF 13!

By WIM Zoey Tang

During the 2023 U.S. Open in Grand Rapids, MI, I had the fortunate opportunity to talk with Alice about her recent accomplishments, routines, and more.

**Hi Alice, great to have you here! First of all, congratulations on achieving the IM title! How does it feel to have achieved such a prestigious title, especially since you broke the record for the youngest American-born female to do so?**

Yeah, it feels really good. It was something that I'd been working on for the past one and a half years, so being able to achieve it is really nice, and I'm really

happy that throughout the process I was able to improve.

**How do you feel about breaking the record?**

It feels great, especially since Carissa [previous record-holder -ZT] is one of the best players and I've looked up to her for so long. But for me, I wasn't thinking too much about the record, because if you give yourself a certain timeframe that might put too much pressure on you. I'm happy that I was able to break the record, but overall it wasn't my main focus.

**You had many successes in a row recently. Congrats on**

**winning the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship right after getting your IM title, with even a round to spare!**

**You've attended this event previously; how has your experience been, and was this time around any different?**

I think I got last place three years ago. And then two years ago, I got 3½/9. Last year I didn't do too badly, I got 5½/9, but this year I think it was very different because I had the experience. I played in the event two times in-person previously, and once online. Of course, the players at the U.S. Girls' Junior Championship are all pretty strong, but it helps to have prior experience. I was actually one of the more experienced players this year, which was really nice. I definitely wasn't expecting to win with a round to spare, I thought it'd probably go to tiebreaks if I won it at all.

**So, you talked about experience. One unique aspect of the Juniors is the one-round-per-day format. How does this impact your tournament routine?**

For a lot of the two-rounds-per-day tournaments, especially norm tournaments, you have to do a lot of preparation beforehand. Before the Junior Girls' I actually didn't have much time to prepare because I played in a tournament that ended a few days before this one started. So, playing one round per day was really good for me. I was able to do preparation between rounds, since there was so much free time. Sometimes two rounds a day is just too much!

**Moving on to general questions, what does a**

**typical non-tournament day look like for you?**

I guess it depends on the day, but I try to spend time on chess each day, around 2-3 hours. It also depends, for example, on recent tournaments. After I got back from the Junior Girls' I had two weeks of online school classes to catch up on, so recently I've been trying to catch up and finish the homework. But normally, I try to spend some time on chess and it's generally about keeping up the consistency.

**You'll be going to high school soon, right?**

Yes, I'll be starting high school in September.

**Do you anticipate having to change your schedule to accommodate more homework? High school's traditionally more busy.**

I feel like in the past few years, in middle school, the teachers were really nice about letting me make up the work afterward, if I had a lot of tournaments. I think for high school, I'd have to do all the work ahead of time, which might impact how I play during the tournament if I'm worrying about schoolwork. Overall I'll still try to maintain being able to do chess and also school.

**Could you elaborate on that? When you're working at home, how will you balance school and chess when there's more homework? Will you cut back on chess or will you cut back on sleep?**

That's a good question. Usually in the summer I get a lot more sleep than I do during the school year, probably 30-60 minutes more. I'll try not to cut back on sleep because sleep is important! So I'll probably have to cut back more on chess, though I'll try to maintain a consistent schedule.

**What activities do you enjoy besides chess?**

I enjoy doing contest math, although now that I'm doing so much chess it's a bit harder. But I've done that since 6<sup>th</sup>

grade and it's just something that I really enjoy. I also enjoy reading and writing. I actually got two cats a few months ago, so I like just spending time with my cats. And that can also be more like doing work, so that's a plus. But mainly I spend a lot of time on chess.

**I've heard that you run a mile a day.**

Yeah, I still do that. I try to do that especially during tournaments, actually. Like, the hotel we stayed at during the Junior Girls' had a really nice gym, so I went there every day. But, yeah, I think it's just a healthy habit, especially for chess players. Physical shape is pretty important as well.

**What do you think of the current environment for female chess players?**

For me, growing up as a female chess player, I feel like the environment has been pretty nice to me. However, I know the ratio of females to males playing chess is like 1:8 or something similar. So, obviously it's harder to go to some chess tournaments and be one of the few females playing, but I think overall, I'm hoping that, especially as the popularity of chess increases, the amount of females playing chess will also increase.

### DON'T PUSH YOUR KID TOO HARD

**What specific advice do you have for parents of young female chess players?**

For young female chess players, I'd probably say just to enjoy the game and keep going and don't be discouraged. For parents, I would probably say, don't push your kid too hard to do the game. Just like, let them genuinely enjoy it and just support them throughout their chess journey.

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

There were definitely a lot of people who helped me so far with my chess journey, including my coaches. I started with GM Dmitry Gurevich. He helped me from when I was seven to when I was ten. And that really helped me with my improvement. And also my current coaches, who I won't name exactly, but they've been really helpful, really supportive throughout my entire journey. My parents and my family, and many female role models - Judit Polgar, Hou Yifan, and just strong players in general. I look at their games and I go, "oh I should try to do as well as them," but of course it's very hard. And, in general, I have a lot of people to thank for my chess journey and also just the people I play in really tough tournaments have been really helpful for me.

**What role do your parents play in your chess right now?**

My mom is usually the one who travels with me, so I'm really grateful for her, because she takes time off of work just to go to chess games with me. So, I think that's one really supporting role. And also during chess games, she gets food and covers the basic things so I won't be too exhausted before the game. And also, I study chess sometimes with my mom watching over, and I think that's pretty helpful because you don't always study with your coach and also you don't always study by yourself. So having somebody to study with you is pretty good to have. Even if their level is much lower, it's still really great to have somebody to just keep you on task. I think the main role that my parents have is traveling with me to chess tournaments. I think that that's like a really big role on their part, to have to cut off time from work and put in a lot of work while I go to play in chess tournaments.

**You mentioned the importance of having a coach or at least some sort of mentor figure when studying**

**chess. What should parents look for in choosing a coach if it's clear that their child will want a coach?**

I'm not really sure. For my coaches, I just contacted some people who are pretty strong and asked them whether they'd be willing to coach me, and they accepted. So I think there's a lot of great chess coaches out there, and mainly you can look at what they play in general and how their style would suit you, in order to be able to get a good coach who suits your style in general. But there are so many great coaches out there that even if you just ask a really strong player to be your coach, they might just accept you and you can improve from there.

**One last question. You said in an interview that your advice for girls starting to play chess was to enjoy the game and not worry about losses, which is very good advice. What are other ways for girls to enjoy the game?**

I would say instead of just being in tournaments in general, there's actually a lot of really good all-girls events that I went to and I had a lot of fun just being surrounded by a super supportive female environment. For example, I think the All-Girls Nationals has been a tournament that I played in multiple times. Starting when I was seven, I played it for a few years. And that was a really fun tournament; I think it's usually in April in Chicago. And also, there's the Susan Polgar Foundation Girls' Invitational event, that's also really great. It's a really strong tournament and in general a super fun one to play in. I think there's also some all girls camps and there's also chess camps for kids in general. Making sure that you have fun with chess is really important as well. Instead of just playing in tournaments and studying, having fun is really good for any chess player.

**Thank you for all your insightful advice, Alice! You're welcome. Thanks.**

