

## 2017 WA State Championship Brilliancy Prizes

### Championship (judged by IM Michael Lee)

#### 1. He – Kaufman (1-0)

A clean positional victory which begins with tensions over pawn structure with Kaufman's intentional weakening 8. ... e5. Anthony aggressively extends into fixing the pawn structure with 14. a3, 15. b4 and 16. Nd5, but then consolidates and properly pressures Black with 21. f4. He then smoothly converts his positional advantage in the center, culminating in 26. c5, and navigates the complications professionally starting with 28. Rc4 and the calm 30. a4. By the time Kaufman manages to simplify with 37. Qxe3+, the position is lost. 43. Bf5! is a pretty way to end the game. A great example of converting the advantage.

#### Other games:

#### Haining – Sang (0-1)

A tense middlegame struggle in which Haining missteps with 20. Ne5 and 21. Re2, which Sang promptly punishes with 21. Rf4 and the powerful sacrifice 23. ... Bxh3!. After 24. ... Nxd4, White has no good options and his position promptly collapses in due order. A neat piece of calculation by Black.

#### Perez – Readey (1-0)

Perez turns a small development and space advantage into a win by maintaining pressure on Readey with focused middlegame/endgame play. Starting with the roughly equal position after 15. ... Be6, Perez finds ways to pressure Black with moves like 18. Bd7. When Black missteps by delaying developing his kingside pieces, Perez punishes him with 26. Bb3 and 30. h3. Allowing 34. Bxe6 is the final blow and Perez converts cleanly.

#### Perez – He (0-1)

A neat example of the vicious potential in Black's setup in the Sicilian Dragon. After neglecting development with 10. Qxd4!?, 11. Qd2, and 12. Bh6, He accurately simplifies with 12. ... b4, gaining an advantage that quickly turns into a strong mating attack after 16. 0-0-0 and 17. Rd2?. Although 23. ... bxc3 was stronger, Black's attack is too strong, and the game is over after the tactic 26. ... Rxb3.

#### Honorable mentions:

Sinanan – Haining, Feng – Sang, Raptis – He are games where the winner pressures the other player into a fatal mistake, so are notable for the importance of maneuvering and longer-term planning.

### **Premier (judged by FM Curt Collyer)**

Here are my rankings, with PGN games and notes attached.

White won every game.

1. Schill vs. Pupols (Schill wins the Brilliancy Prize)
2. Bada vs Brendan
3. Kelley vs. Lin
4. Alekhine vs. Rupel
5. Bada vs. Pupols

### **Invitational (judged by Michael Hosford)**

Extensive analysis was done on all 5 games using *Komodo 10*, *Stockfish 8*, and *Houdini 5*, as well as ChessBase13 and LiveBook. Games were chosen for aesthetic and entertainment value, accuracy, effort on the part of both players, and level of complexity. All games were very interesting and the top three games were very close.

The winning game, **Airapetian vs. Bishop**, was chosen because of the intense theoretical battle and tactical complications. However, an honorable mention goes to the 2nd Place winner, **Kuhner vs. Airapetian**, for Black's stunning sacrificial kingside attack.

#### **5th Place**

**Mary Kuhner vs. Travis Olson**

#### **Round 1**

Both sides blazed their own trails in the opening phase, resulting in White's rather innocuous *Stonewall* setup versus Black's flexible double fianchetto defense, which was more than adequate to prevent White from gaining any sort of advantage. Black's 11. ... c5! was a very accurate and well-timed pawn break in the center, followed by both sides establishing their respective Knight outposts on e4 and e5. Komodo 10 gave mostly equality the whole way until White played the passive 12. Bc2?!, which allowed Black to force a slightly better middlegame position with a bit more space. As Black began to gain a positional foothold, White expanded with the move 14. b4!?, trying to generate some queenside play. At this point Black improved the placement of his QB, followed by setting up a creative exchange sacrifice idea, unbalancing the position by shattering White's central pawn structure, which in turn gave Black a powerful King Bishop and excellent play on the dark squares.

Although the engines did not quite agree, the exchange sac 19. ... Rxc5!! really put White on tilt. The entire game went into a tailspin and it truly was a battle to the finish, with Black owning the initiative and White hanging on, desperately trying to avoid getting crushed. Unfortunately, Black missed some key winning lines, giving White additional chances to hold, and the game

ended fairly in a draw, probably due to sheer exhaustion and/or time pressure on the part of both players.

This exciting first round draw earns 5th Place.

#### **4th Place**

**David Arganian vs. Eric Zhang**

##### **Round 4**

An even more compelling example of two players going for the kill was this Round 4 game between two experts, David Arganian and Eric Zhang. The opening was a *Sicilian Wing Gambit* (declined), although obviously misplayed by Black. As the game unfolded, White did not find the optimal method of exploiting the opening errors (White missed a key idea, 11. c4! +/-) and allowed the second player enough time to set up a sturdy defense.

By this point the opening had morphed into a *French Wing Gambit* structure, minus the “gambit,” since White ended up not sacrificing a pawn. This fact possibly lulled White into a false sense of security, since Black had no pressure on d4 and the White pieces looked ready to pounce on the kingside (Bxh7+ was a possible idea in some lines). However, after Black had played 14. ... f6!, White should have played more conservatively with 15. exf6 to achieve a slight advantage with pressure down the e-file. Instead, White underestimated Black's pressure on e5 and played for a more direct kingside attack with 15. h4?!, at which point Black, on principle, counter-attacked in the center by opening the f-file, followed by the powerful exchange sacrifice 16. ... Rxf3!!, stealing the show. This was without question the correct decision, as White's position became immediately disjointed with weaknesses on both wings, compelling the first player to sacrifice back the exchange to stabilize the endgame and create some targets. With aggressive play, White clawed his way back into the game, but unfortunately missed a winning tactic (39. g4! +/-).

This intense, back-and-forth game eventually ended in a draw, and earns 4th Place.

#### **3rd Place**

**Tim Moroney vs. David Arganian**

##### **Round 1**

This game was not flashy, but rather a technically accurate positional masterpiece. White plays incredibly solid and without risk, patiently waiting for the optimum moment to strike. Inaccuracies by both players were minimized, making this game more enjoyable to replay. Although White seemed to have a slight initiative, Black fought hard, making for a very interesting positional struggle.

Maneuvers were made, and pieces were exchanged, but the brilliant moment for White came in the endgame with 45. h5!!, an interesting pawn sacrifice to play for the win. If Black declined the sac, his King would have been forced back to the 7th to guard h6. If Black accepted, then his

King would be trapped in a box. Black played correctly and accepted the pawn sacrifice and maintained drawing chances. However, Black eventually cracked and blundered with 47. ... g4??, giving White the chance for a picturesque finale.

This positional gem earns the Bronze Medal brilliancy award for the Invitational.

## **2nd Place**

**Mary Kuhner vs. Chouchanik Airapetian**

### **Round 6**

This game was a tactical blowout. White played an opening setup known to give Black instant equality. The fireworks came after White weakened the dark squares with 9. d5, creating a passed pawn, which according to the engines was not a mistake, and analysis showed that Black did not have a forced win. White could have defended more accurately with 13. Na3, pressuring the c4 pawn. Instead, White weakened with 13. h3? basically sending Black an invitation to invade on the kingside. Black's moment of brilliance was the beautiful 15. ... N6g4!!, a pure piece sac to expose the White King to a vicious and nearly unstoppable attack. The final Rook sacrifice on h3 at the end was simple combinative play to force checkmate.

This “art of attack” brilliancy earns 2nd Place and the Silver Medal.

## **1st Place**

**Chouchanik Airapetian vs. Alan Bishop**

### **Round 9**

In light of the previous game, this was a tough decision. But a brilliancy is more than simply a quick crush. In this game we see masterful opening preparation, tactical accuracy, two strong tacticians battling on opposite wings, an intense struggle for the initiative, and a much longer game where both players give it 100 percent, but one player comes out on top.

What I appreciate about this game is how Black carefully studied an earlier game in the event where White used the same opening variation and simply improved on the analysis. There were several key moments in this game worth noting.

1) The brave decision to deviate from the main line with the less popular 9. Bxf6, instead of the more principled and far more common 9. Bh4. It seems as if the price Black pays for the bishop pair (slight lag in development) is not high enough.

2) White missed 12. Nd2!, and Black would have been on the defensive.

3) Black's accurate handling of White's imposing kingside pawn storm by counter-attacking on the opposite wing with the key move 18. ... b4!, grabbing the initiative.

4) Move 20. ... g4!, trying to keep lines closed on the kingside with tempo on the Bishop.

5) Interesting was how Black's sham sacrifice 27. ... Nxb2!? only wins a pawn with best play.

There is much more to this game, but there is neither the time nor space to include it here. But suffice to say, this game was amazing and worthy of 1st Place, and the Gold Medal.

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I have done extensive analysis on all 5 games, so there is much more to these stories. Anyway, congrats to **Alan Bishop** (1st Place), **Chouchanik Airapetian** (2nd Place), and **Tim Moroney** (3rd Place) for excellent games.

### **Challengers (judged by Eric Tohni)**

Here are my results and rankings.

1. Vijayakumar - Alhuwalia, 1-0
2. Deng - Xuan, 1-0
3. Xuan - Vijayakumar, 0-1
4. Anand - Deng, 0-1
5. Seshadri - Majahan, 0-1

I'd say the games are less impressive than last year's. This year's group is a much more positional bunch. There was not a clear standout like Naomi Bashkansky (whom I nicknamed N-Bash). After finishing, I checked against the results. I guess it's not surprising that Deng won the tournament, but I was surprised Vijayakumar only finished mid-pack. Maybe he needs more time to develop, but it seems he has potential.