

2018 WA State Championship Brilliancy Prizes

Championship (judged by Josh Sinanan)

1st Place

Perez – Truelson (1-0)

A classic attacking game by the Cuban chess wizard! The feisty Truelson grabbed a pawn out of a Slav opening and tried to hang on to it with the queenside pawn lattice c6-b5-c4. This is like waving the flag in front of the bull when playing an attacking player like Ignacio, who cares little for material. White's 17th move h4 should have been a warning sign that something was about to happen on the kingside. Instead, black ignored it and allowed a classic Greek Gift sacrifice, which led to a decisive attack on the exposed black king. To cap it all off, white sacrificed the exchange and then his queen, allowing his king, knights, and pawns to land the knockout blow!

Other games:

Lee, Me. – Lee, Mi. (1-0)

Megan's knights outplay Michael's bishops in the battle of the IM Lee siblings.

Perez – Feng (0-1)

Trying to attack the State Champ's king is easier said than done, especially when he is up a piece!

Sang – Pupols (1-0)

General Pupols' French army was no match for Commander Sang's forces, who crashed through in style on the kingside!

Schill – Perez (1-0)

Who said pigs need to be on the 7th rank? Schill's were even better on the 8th!

Honorable mentions:

Lee, Mi. – Pupols (1-0)

A smooth positional game from the talented IM, who skillfully pushes his passed d-pawn to victory.

Feng – Haining (1-0)

Haining's adventurous bride circles the board on her honeymoon, only to miss her return flight home!

Premier (judged by FM Curt Collyer)

Kelley - Zhang (1-0)

For the Premier, the Brilliancy Prize goes to Dereque Kelley for his win over Brendan Zhang in Round 8. Dereque, as White, sac'd the exchange for pressure and then finished off with precise tactics.

Invitational (judged by Jacob Mayer)

Levine - Frantz (0-1)

Jacob awarded Joseph Frantz the prize for his win over Joseph Levine. According to Jacob, Frantz made use of an incredible exchange sac and fearless king play!

Challengers (judged by Mark Trevor Smith)

1 Chen – Mathews (0-1)

Black held on doggedly in an inferior position, took chances by playing aggressively, and eventually broke through. Of course the Dutch defense is exactly the suitably asymmetrical defense for that kind of game. Black's punch 9...g5 (not in my database) and subsequent pawn storm on the kingside proclaimed a bold gamble. Perhaps Dan was channeling many of today's top GMs who seem to have fallen in love with surprising g-pawn attacks from both Black and White. After Dan's g-pawn kept running with 10 ...g4, Minda retreated the attacked knight instead of choosing the better move 11 Ne5, but she still retained an objective edge.

White bolstered her advantage by planting a powerful bishop on d6 supported by a pawn on c5. Soon a white rook replaced that bishop on d6 and then sacrificed itself for a knight to obtain a powerful passed pawn on d6. To keep the advantage, White could have played 36 Qe5 but instead snatched a pawn with 36 Qxa7 and allowed Black to infiltrate. I don't know if White had been watching Yasser Seirawan comment on top-level tournaments, but one must be careful not to be too much of a "pawn grubber," as Yasser proudly calls himself.

Even after Black broke through with a queen and g-pawn attack (rook and bishop faithfully in the rearguard), the position still stood objectively equal. Probably in time trouble, both players missed the blunder 40 Bf2, after which, in the long endgame, White had two pawns for the exchange. Black's active rook soon reduced that to one pawn. Eventually Dan found a way to trade rook for bishop and pawn and thereby achieved a won single-pawn endgame.

#2 Whale – Sophie Velea (1-0) Whale annotated [see NWC magazine]

Whale admitted that his 16 e5 thrust was a mistake, but as so often, when fortune favors the bold, the mistake aggressively forced Black into errors. Black's defense, including 17...Ng8 and 21...Nh6, showed inventive resistance. White's 26 g4 would have been even more powerful on some earlier opportunities, but still exploited a powerful advantage. In her successful attempt to fend off mate, Sophie unfortunately entered a losing endgame.

3 Mathews – Sophie Velea (0-1)

After some equal sparring, Sophie's Dragon established a protected passed pawn with 24 ...e4. Heavy piece maneuvering by two queens and four rooks helped create a pretty triangle of black pawns on g6, f5, e4, d5, which, after the trade of queens, was converted into an even more impressive wedge: g5, f4, e3. After move 40, Black's passed f and e pawns promised better prospects than White's a and b pawns confronting Black's a pawn. By the time Black's dynamic duo reached the second rank, White's hopes of defense were gone.

#4 Chen – Stephanie Velea (1-0)

A deftly-won game. The players followed GM QGD (with Bf4) practice (which for some strange reason we chess players call theory instead of practice) for ten moves and then maneuvered pretty equally for another ten moves. You might think that White's bishop on g3 was getting trapped by Black's storm of f-pawn and g-pawn and h-pawn, but the slippery bishop planted itself in a dominating spot on e5. It wasn't hard for Black to trade off the e5-bishop, but White's resulting connected passed pawn on e5 was just as powerful. White exploited the overextended f,g,h pawns and actually won the f-pawn while allowing a harmless temporary pin of the bishop on f5. White's superior pieces found a neat way to clinch the win by pinning Black's queen.

#5 Harwood – Anne-Marie Velea (1-0)

White boldly set up a closed Sicilian with both knights on the rim (6 Nh3 and 9 Na3) and an aggressive pawn on f4. White's thrust 14 e5 paid off in an advantage after Black captured 14...dxe5, allowing 15 Bxc5 (one of the typical patterns in the closed Sicilian). White did not play the complicated 16 Bd6, which would have either won the exchange after Bxb8 or anchored the bishop after fxe5, but instead solidified with 16 a3, and the game entered a dynamically equal maneuvering stage. White tempted Black to snatch a pawn on d3 while White was setting up a clever sac (27 Rxg6), which succeeded when Black did not find the best defense. After 26...f4? Instead of the more solid 26...Qf7, White had several winning lines. The bishop who had been proudly stationed on c5 helped deliver the final mate.