

# Jason Cigan 2019 Oregon State Champion



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## NWC Staff

Editor: Jeffrey Roland,  
[editor@nwchess.com](mailto:editor@nwchess.com)  
Games Editor: Ralph Dubisch,  
[chesscoaching@gmail.com](mailto:chesscoaching@gmail.com)  
Publisher: Duane Polich,  
[publisher@nwchess.com](mailto:publisher@nwchess.com)  
Business Manager: Eric Holcomb,  
[eric@holcomb.com](mailto:eric@holcomb.com)

## Board Representatives

Chouhanik Airapetian, Eric Holcomb,  
Alex Machin, Duane Polich, Adam Porth, Jeffrey Roland,  
Josh Sinanan.

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*Business Manager, Northwest Chess*  
Eric Holcomb  
1900 NE 3rd St, STE 106 PMB 361  
Bend, OR 97701-3889  
[Eric@Holcomb.com](mailto:Eric@Holcomb.com)  
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Jason Cigan. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

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Odie and Morgan playing chess.  
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Chess cartoons drawn by local artist Brian Berger,  
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## From The Editor's Desk

Due to the unprecedented quality and quantity of material we received this month from Oregon State Champion Jason Cigan, we made the difficult editorial decision to postpone coverage of several other important events to the June issue in order to allow our readers to experience Jason's story in full, uninterrupted.

Enjoy!

— Jeffrey Roland, Editor.



### Table of Contents

<b>Jason Cigan</b>	
Andrei Botez .....	Front Cover
<b>From The Editor's Desk</b>	
Jeffrey Roland .....	3
<b>For The Record</b>	
Northwest Chess Staff .....	3
<b>Another Name On The Trophy</b>	
Jason Cigan .....	4
<b>Washington President's Cup</b>	
Travis Olson .....	21
<b>Washington Open (Full-Page Ad)</b>	
Lynnwood, WA May 25-27 .....	23
<b>The Game That Matters</b>	
Jeffrey Roland .....	24
<b>Boise Chess Club (Poem)</b>	
Glen O'Harra .....	27
<b>Northwest Chess Grand Prix Report</b>	
Murlin Varner .....	28
<b>Seattle Chess Club Tournaments</b> .....	30
<b>Upcoming Events</b> .....	31
<b>From The Business Manager</b>	
Eric Holcomb .....	31
<b>Odie and Morgan playing chess</b>	
Brian Berger .....	Back Cover

## For The Record

A Northwest Chess precursor was first published in 1947, and under its current name we have been remarkably consistent with monthly issues since 1968, aside from a couple of double issues due to editors running late. The Northwest Chess board, consisting of representatives from the member states, has officially run the magazine since 1993.

The financial situation of the non-profit NWC has always been on the tight side. But NWC doesn't have any long term debt, and its only liabilities are subscriptions owed. Our payables are current and we have no loans due. NWC operates on a cash flow basis, which ebbs and flows, with memberships from major tournaments and other events in between. We have always been able to pay our bills on time.

In 2017, the NWC board voted to approve the first subscription rate increase in almost 15 years, and this went into effect in January 2018. The increase from \$25 to \$30, which included state membership for those in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, was first discussed in 2008 (before Idaho was reintegrated into the NWC family), but took 10 years before the board felt inflation had forced the decision. No second dues increase was approved, nor is one anticipated.

Six months later, at its June 24, 2018, meeting, the NWC board voted unanimously to increase the compensation paid to the editor, games editor, and business manager. Inflation also affects these independent contractors, who put out an award-winning magazine on-time every month while earning significantly below minimum wage for their time spent. The increase was overdue and well-deserved, and was in no way controversial or inappropriate. Voting in favor were the two Oregon representatives to the NWC board, including OCF President David Yoshinaga.

Six months later, the OCF board met on December 18, 2018. Newly-elected members of the state governing board expressed "concerns and outrages" about the NWC staff compensation increase. Incorrectly claiming NWC was in a "shaky financial situation" and that all of the rate increase had gone to pay for the staff raises, this would "surely create a need for further dues increases." Instead of instructing its NWC board representatives to discuss this at the NWC level, or to request clarification or better-sourced information from NWC, the OCF board cited "concerns that the raises smacked of impropriety." They then voted to demand that NWC rescind the raises given to its staff by March 31, and they strongly encouraged NWC to move quickly to a cheaper online-only publication model. Failure to comply would lead to the OCF withdrawing from its agreements with NWC.

The NWC board was notified of the OCF decision on January 7, 2019.

Attempts to open discussions between NWC Publisher Duane Polich and members of the OCF board were unsuccessful. As of April 1, 2019, the OCF has indeed followed through on its ultimatum, and has withdrawn from NWC.

The OCF has announced its own new membership-only rate structure, and suggests that Oregon residents who wish to subscribe or renew their Northwest Chess subscription do so directly through NWC. Existing Oregon subscription-linked memberships will be honored through their current expiration date; future subscriptions, extensions, and renewals will not include OCF membership.

Please see the statement from NWC Business Manager Eric Holcomb (on page 31) for more information on changes to NWC subscription rates in non-affiliated areas.

— Northwest Chess Staff

# Another Name On The Trophy

By Jason Cigan

I dedicate my 2019 Oregon Chess Championship to anyone who started playing “too late.” Chess is a young man’s game, and today’s elite players were yesterday’s fourteen-year-old grandmasters. What hope does a player like myself, who had a US Chess rating below 1200 at the start of college, have against such bright minds? No chance at all, it turns out. But a player who develops an interest in chess as an adult absolutely stands a chance of winning the championship of a state of three and a half million people.

And I am here to tell you, I seized that chance. My score of eight points in nine rounds of the 2019 Oregon Chess Championship turned out to be the second-highest winning score in the event’s history. A bit over a decade ago, Oleg Zaikov won clear first at 8.5/9. The same year, the late, great Landon Brownell scored 8/9—the wrong year to have such an excellent showing! I was more fortunate.

Do not let my score fool you. I made countless mistakes in this event—enough that the question-mark key on my computer literally fell off while I was annotating my Round six game against Karl Cosner. Many of my wins came after back-and-forth fights, and I had lost positions in four of the nine games of the event. I suppose willpower and luck played in my favor. I strove to score the full point in all of my games—sometimes with disastrous consequences, as in my game against Karl. My opponents missed many chances to punish my play, as well. But mistakes happen, and somebody had to win this event, after all.

I will aim to explain the strategic concepts that informed my play in my notes. Variations are given when necessary, and sometimes when unnecessary.

**Steven Deeth (2052) –**  
**Jason Cigan (2196) [E46]**  
Oregon Championship (R1),  
February 9 2019  
*[Jason Cigan]*

## 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4

Few openings offer Black both the solidity and the chances to unbalance the game that the Nimzo-Indian does. Almost every line features some form of pawn structure or minor piece imbalance. Usually White has to concede something if he wants to fight for the edge—a lead in development, a spoiled White pawn structure, or control over the central squares.



*Jason Cigan. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.*

## 4.e3 0–0 5.Nge2

5.Bd3 is the main line. The popularity of 5.Ne2 has always surprised me, as White is already behind in development and is now as far away from castling as he was before this move. Furthermore, White isn’t actually going to force Black to exchange the dark-square bishop. Black has a slight plus score in databases after the traditional main line 5...d5, and an overwhelming plus score after either of the two modern favorites, 5...c6 or 5...Re8. The idea of the latter two moves is that, while White is untangling, Black is

preparing to fight in the center—either on the dark or the light squares.

## 5...Re8 6.a3 Bf8

Black’s pieces are crowded on the back rank, but there is no stopping him from undermining White in the center.

## 7.Ng3

The most sensible move. 7.g3 d5 and White cannot really get away with letting Black grab c4: 8.Bg2 (8.cxd5 exd5 9.Bg2 a5 and Black has the kind of ideal Carlsbad structure that Queen’s Gambit Declined players can only dream



of. White is neither prepared to play in the center nor on the queenside, his two traditional theaters of action in this position type.) 8...dxc4 9.Qa4 Nbd7 10.Qxc4 e5; 7.e4 d5 8.e5 Nfd7 9.cxd5 exd5 and, as often happens when one side is far behind in development, there is no time to take material: 10.Nxd5 c5; 7.d5 a5 and Black is set to freeze White on the queenside, while a knight will sit comfortably on c5; 7.Nf4 d6! 8.Be2 e5 Black has other options, but this one is good enough.

### 7...d5 8.Be2 dxc4

Previously I had tried another move against Deeth:

8...b6. This is fine, but the more direct text move, which I discovered later, appealed to me more.

### 9.Bxc4 c5

Black is fighting in the center quickly.

### 10.0-0

10.dxc5 was possible, but it is likely Black who is pressing for the advantage: 10...Qxd1+ 11.Kxd1 (11.Nxd1 Bxc5 12.b4 Bd6 13.Bb2 Nbd7) 11...Bxc5 12.Ke2 a6 13.b4 Be7 14.Bb2 Nbd7

### 10...cxd4 11.exd4



Position after 11.exd4

Now the strategic picture is dominated by the appearance of the isolated queen's pawn, or isolani. The side possessing such a pawn has to play actively and build up an initiative, as, if the game follows a dry course and pieces slowly get traded, the pawn will get weaker and weaker over time. The pawn does bolster the e5 square, but no White knight is near there—each is four moves away!

The pawn push d4-d5 is perhaps White's best hope. To take stock of how things stand in this specific isolani position, it helps to look for each side's worst-placed minor piece. For Black, it is the bishop on c8, but this piece often enters play slowly in such positions—it has multiple paths to the active h1-a8 diagonal.

For White, the knight on g3 makes a poor impression. Perhaps the best it can hope for is to be traded for the knight on f6, but this takes time, and the net result is a further piece exchange in a position where

such events favor Black. Therefore, Black is the side playing for an advantage here.

### 11...Nbd7

At the board, I considered an alternative: 11...Bd7!? 12.d5 (12.Bg5 h6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6) 12...Qc7! 13.Qd3 exd5 14.Nxd5 Nxd5 15.Bxd5 Nc6 and, though the game is roughly equal, I feel Black's position is easier to play.

### 12.Be3?!

It rarely pays to play so passively with an isolani. White now falls into real strategic danger. 12.Qf3!? This looks like the most active way to treat the position. It may be risky to offer a pawn like this, but White has taken the real risk already by entering this position! 12...Nb6 13.Bd3 Qxd4 and White has chosen a radical way to treat the isolated d-pawn, pitching it for piece activity, which will increase as White gains time against the exposed Black queen. I'd rather be Black with the extra pawn, but this is the most testing course. 14.Bb5 (14.Nge4) 14...Bd7 15.Rd1 Qc5 16.Bxd7 (16.Be3 Qe7 17.Bxd7 Nfxd7 18.Qxb7 Rec8 and the situation is reversed: Black has given the pawn back, and White is now the one with a wayward queen, misplaced after grabbing material. White has come close to equalizing, but Black's play is a bit easier.) 16...Nbxh7 17.Qxb7; 12.Bd3 is another move more active than the text.

### 12...Nb6 13.Ba2 Bd7

The light-square bishop and b6-knight are both on their way to cementing Black's control of the d5 square. The square directly in front of the isolani is often the key to the entire position—a blockade by Black can doom White's pieces to



Steven Deeth. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

passivity, while if White acquires enough force to push the pawn to the d5 square, his pieces can spring to life. It is clear which case is more likely here.

### 14.Nh5

White sensibly wants to swap his weak knight.

### 14...Bc6 15.Nf4?!

The wrong idea. At least the knight controls d5 now, but White has already lost the battle for that square, and another piece covering it doesn't tip the scales. 15.Rc1 Certainly improving a piece like this was better. 15...Nhxh5 16.Qxh5 g6 17.Qd1 h6 White is still struggling to equalize.

### 15...Nbd5

Black wants to trade pieces while clamping down on the key square d5. Other moves were also worth investigation. 15...Bd6! 16.Re1 Qc7 17.g3 Rad8 and d5 is still under Black's control, while he has improved the harmony of his pieces.

### 16.Nfxd5 Nxd5 17.Qg4?

A tactical error.

### 17...Nxc3 18.bxc3 Bxa3

Black has made a typical transaction, cashing in one type of advantage (the isolated d4-pawn) for another (winning the a3-pawn). The character of the struggle has completely changed: now there is no more isolani, and White is aiming to muster up activity to compensate for the pawn minus. Black now has "endgame odds" in the form of the strong passed a7-pawn: most simplifications are going to increase Black's advantage. When simplification is no longer available to the defender, complications are the only way forward.

### 19.c4

White is creating immediate pressure, hinting at pushing d4-d5 and creating space for his bishops to roam.

### 19...Bd6



Position after 19...Bd6

### 20.f4?

A clear strategic mistake that went unpunished. White has created a hole on e4, and has weakened his dark squares

and e3 bishop to boot. The small boost in activity an f-pawn march may promise in no way justifies such compromise.

## 20...Be4?

My worst move of the game so far. 20...g6, while by no means the only move to result in a won game, was simple and strong, stopping the f-pawn and passing the move to White, who has little to do: 21.Kh1 a5 22.Rab1 a4 23.Qe2 a3+ and Black holds every strategic trump, plus an extra passed pawn. Black will slowly organize his pieces to place pressure on the c4-d4 pawn pair, seek exchanges, and transfer his light-square bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal at an opportune moment.

## 21.Bb1

I had been under the impression I wanted to trade light-square bishops—after all, two moves ago, my bishop on c6 was immobile and facing the specter of a d4-d5 push—but nothing could be further from the truth. Now white will improve his rook after a swap, and can push f4-f5 if the bishop retreats.

## 21...Bxb1

21...Bf5 was what I wanted to play at the board, and is probably better. Somehow I underestimated how annoying a rook on b1 would be. 22.Qf3 Bb4 23.g4 Bxb1 24.Raxb1 Qc7+

## 22.Raxb1 Qc7?

A big mistake. Now White's initiative becomes serious. 22...b6 was clearly correct: 23.c5 Bc7 24.Qf3 Qd5+

## 23.c5 Bf8 24.Qf3

Now Black pushes his b-pawn from a much more passive situation than in the prior variation.

## 24...b6 25.Rfc1 bxc5 26.Rb7

White is preparing to create a strong passed c-pawn, supported by the heavy artillery.



Position after 26.Rb7

## 26...Qc8?

Too passive. The Black queen had to seek a better square to oppose the soon-to-be c-pawn. 26...Qa5! was best: 27.dxc5 Rec8 What a difference it makes to place a rook and not a queen here! 28.Qh5 Rc7.

## 27.dxc5 a5

Clearly indicated. Black's extra pawn is no longer enough, now that White has a strong passed c-pawn: Black must strive for a touchdown on the queenside. As a general note, when a clear advantage like the one Black had before converts into a situation where it's not immediately clear if Black is better, the defender has achieved a definite gain.

## 28.c6 a4

Both sides are playing their trump cards.

## 29.Bd4?

As both sides start to feel the beginnings of time pressure, White slows down too much. 29.c7! was natural and best: 29...a3 30.Qc6! a2 31.Ra1. White's pieces enjoy such an advantage in activity that Black even has to be careful now. 31...e5! Other moves will not suffice. 32.Ra7 Rxa7 33.Bxa7 Re6 34.Qc4

## 29...Rd8!

The rook angles for d5, where it would cut off White's coordination.

## 30.Ba1 Rd5 31.Qg3

White plays for tactics as time pressure hits—a wise idea for the defender.



Position after 31.Qg3

## 31...Raa5??

And it works! Or it should have. Here is a puzzle—White to move. What is best?

## 32.f5??

The final mistake of the game—White misses his chance and is lost. 32.Bxg7! A lovely and thematic blow. Black is toast: 32...Bxg7 33.f5! Rxf5 34.Rb8+; 32.c7 was the next-best move, when Black is in some trouble, but not lost: 32...Ra8 33.Bxg7 The game would be unclear after other moves, but it turns out White can still get a worse version of the same combination, too. 33...Bxg7 34.f5 Rd3 35.Qxd3 Qxb7 36.Qd8+ Bf8 37.Qg5+ Kh8 38.Qf6+ Kg8 39.fxe6+ and White's attack and passed pawn are worth more than the bishop.

## 32...e5+

Now Black is won in a straightforward way. White's once-proud dark-square bishop is not going to land on g7 or

anywhere else useful, and Black now enjoys his material plus a killing initiative, which seemingly came out of nowhere.

## 33.f6 g6 34.Rcb1 Qxc6 35.Qh4 Rd2 36.Qg5 Qc2 37.Rb8

A good try as my clock ticked under a minute. White is creating mating threats, and dares Black to try taking a piece.

## 37...Rd1+ 38.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 39.Kf2 Qc2+

39...Qxa1 works, actually, but there is no need to play a move like this in zeitnot! In fact, leaving the piece to be captured later turns out to be just as good. 40.Qh6 Qd4+ 41.Ke2 Qe4+ 42.Kf2 Qf4+-+

## 40.Kg3

White doesn't wish to give Black a chance to take on a1 again—after move 40 this time—so he goes forward. There is no salvation there, either.

## 40...Qd3+ 41.Kh4 Qd6 42.Re8 Qb4+ 43.Qg4 Qe1+ 44.g3 Qc1 45.Qg5

This trick is all White has left, as he is losing in numerous ways.

## 45...Qxa1

Safely out of time pressure, I was able to calculate the consequences of taking the bishop accurately now.

## 46.Qh6 Qd4+ 47.g4 Qf2+ 48.Kh3 Qf3+ 49.Kh4 Qxf6+

White resigned.

0-1

I faced my good friend, and the two-time defending Oregon champion, Matt Zavortink in the second round. He and I are both fond of preparing openings, to the extent that our games regularly reach past a dozen moves before either of us has to spend any time. Each of us aimed to surprise the other this time. The result? We got a position that had been on both of our computers earlier that week.

**Jason Cigan (2196) –  
Matt Zavortink (2262) [C07]**  
Oregon Championship (R2),  
February 9, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]

## 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5

In my opinion, this strike at the center is the most principled reaction to the Tarrasch variation. After the popular 3...Nf6, the benefits of having the knight on d2 and not c3 seem clear: White is able to maintain his pawn center easily. Of course the story doesn't end there, but the text move asks difficult questions of White.

## 4.exd5 Qxd5

Taking by queen has been the fashionable choice for decades. Black avoids an



isolani, and develops quickly in a Caro-Kann structure.

### 5.Ngf3 cxd4 6.Bc4 Qd7

One of three possible squares for the queen to retreat to on its way to its ideal landing spot, c7. Each of queen to d6, d7, and d8 has been played thousands of times, and each allows both sides several independent options. I find Qd7 to be the biggest headache for White at the moment.



Position after 6...Qd7

### 7.Nb3

7.0–0. If White plays this, the most popular move by far, then one of the points of Qd7 becomes evident: 7...Nc6 If Black's queen were on d6 now, then White would have Nd2-e4 followed by Qd1–e2, Rf1–d1, and c2–c3, with a slight advantage, but now Ne4 would threaten nothing. 8.Nb3 a6 Nf6 transposes to the historical main line, but this independent move poses problems for White. 9.Nbxd4 Nxd4 10.Nxd4 Qc7 If Black had played Nf6, then White could have played the popular Rf1–e1, planning to meet Qd7–c7 by retreating the bishop to f1. But now that option is not available, and White would have to choose something else. 11.Bd3 This move is an extra possibility without Nf6 in, but Black has nothing to fear: 11...Bd6 12.h3 (12.g3 h5!?) 12...Nf6 13.Re1 0–0 and Black should have a healthy share of the chances.

### 7...Nc6 8.Nbxd4 Nxd4 9.Nxd4 a6 10.Bf4

A good way to stay independent of the lines examined above. White uses a crude tactical threat to prevent Black's planned development of his bishop to d6.

### 10...Nf6

10...Bd6?? 11.Nxe6±

### 11.0–0 b5 12.Bb3 Bc5

Black is handling the position accurately. White is not getting much time to create threats, and Black will catch up in development.

### 13.Be5 0–0 14.c3 Bb7 15.Qe2 Rae8

He offered a draw here. I didn't see much to be scared of, so I played on, and immediately erred—a common scenario after a well-timed draw offer! 15...Qe7 was perhaps more accurate for Black.

### 16.Bxf6?

A truly horrible move. I was somehow worried about Nf6–d5 followed by the f- and e-pawns rolling in the center, but that simply doesn't work. White should have played normally. 16.Rad1 Qe7 17.Rfe1± Maybe calling this a White edge is a bit too far, but he certainly is on the better side of equality with his space.

### 16...gxf6±

Black is the beneficiary of the trade on f6. Far from having weakened his king position, he has gained a valuable semi-open g-file with which to attack the White king. Furthermore, his bishop pair is going to be mighty in this wide-open position. Black stands clearly better.

### 17.Rfd1

17.a4 was perhaps a better way to justify taking on f6. 17...Kh8!? With his trumps, Black can simply pitch the b-pawn, which is rather far from the kings. 18.axb5 axb5 19.Qxb5 Rg8 20.g3 Qc7,

### 17...Kh8 18.Qh5 Qe7 19.Bc2?!

A completely aimless move. Now Black's edge takes on grand proportions. 19.g3 was more sensible: 19...Rg8 20.Qh4 Rg5 21.Kf1 f5 22.Re1±

### 19...f5 20.Nf3?

Another bad move, with which I lamely offered a draw. 20.Rd3 would transfer pieces toward the main theater of action.

### 20...Rg8±



Position after 20...Rg8

### 21.g3 Rg4??

A major oversight on Black's part. He seemed to rely on faulty tactics. Now the tables turn. 21...Qc7 was more responsible: 22.Kf1 a5± With his bishops and superior structure, Black can press on both sides of the board.

### 22.Ne5

Of course! Perhaps Black missed that taking on f2 fails:

### 22...Qc7!

An incredible find. Black uses clever tactics to prevent immediate loss. Now White must play precisely to cash in. 22...Bxf2+? 23.Kf1!+— All Black's pieces are hanging.(23.Kxf2?? Qc5+±)

### 23.Nxf7+!

The correct choice. 23.Nxg4?? leads to catastrophe: 23...Qc6 24.Kf1 Qh1+ 25.Ke2 Bf3+ 26.Kd2 Rd8+ 27.Bd3 Bxd1 28.Ne5 Bxh5 29.Rxh1 f6–+

### 23...Kg7 24.Nd6

Chess computers can teach us incredible things. It may well be that 24.Ng5! is stronger, but you need a heart of gold to be confident in your king safety here at the board: 24...Rxc3+ 25.Kf1 Bg2+ 26.Ke1 (So perilous is this line that White could lose here with 26.Ke2?? Qe5+ 27.Be4 Bf3+! 28.Nxf3 Qxe4+ 29.Kf1 Qxf3–+) 26...Qe5+ 27.Be4! Rxc3 28.Qxc3+ Kh8 29.Rd8! Qxe4+ 30.Kd2 Rxd8+ 31.Qxd8+ Kg7 32.Qc7+ Kf6 33.Qxc5+— I aspire to one day be the kind of cold-blooded calculation monster who can go for a line like this. But today is not that day, so I believe my more “human” choice was the superior practical decision.

### 24...Bxd6?

Pitching an exchange like this was imprudent. 24...Re7 holds more hope for Black, though things are still difficult: 25.Nxb7 Qxb7 26.Rd2±

### 25.Qxe8 Rg6

Black is threatening to trap the queen with ...Bc6—but this is easily thwarted.

### 26.Rxd6 Qxd6 27.Rd1



Position after 27.Rd1

White gave the exchange back, but he has done more than just win a pawn—with his advantages in structure, activity, and king safety, he is comfortably winning. My uncertain play from here up to move 40 made things unduly difficult, though.

### 27...Bd5 28.Bb3 f4 29.Bxd5 exd5 30.Qe2?

Still winning, but White is dawdling here. 30.Re1 was direct and crushing: 30...Kf6 (30...fxg3 31.Re7+ Kh6 32.Qf8+–) 31.Kf1 fxg3 32.hxg3+— and the stench of mate is in the air, as White's heavy pieces are circling the exposed Black king.

### 30...Rg5 31.h4 Rg6 32.h5

32.g4 was more consistent. White's king doesn't feel any less safe after these advances—on the contrary, White is building a menacing pawn formation and



Matt Zavortink. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

ensuring that any reduction of material results in a dead win.

### 32...Rf6 33.Rd4?!

33.g4 again was the consistent move. Why let Black soften the White king position?

### 33...Rf5?

Black misses a chance to divert the course of the game. Here Black, who was in time pressure, ought to have played the obvious 33...fxg3: 34.Qg4+ Kf7 35.fxg3 and while White is still winning, Black has increased his chances to defend by exposing the previously untouchable white king.

### 34.Qg4+ Kf6 35.gxf4?!

My bizarre play continues. Of course it was better to trade rooks, as a queen ending is what White wants: 35.Rxf4 Rxf4 36.gxf4+. Note that Black would draw the pawn ending if White took by queen, due to his active king. As it stands, White will steadily improve his position until he can either pick off more Black pawns or activate his king enough to trade into a won pawn ending.

### 35...Qe6 36.h6?!

I stray further from the correct course. My play over this stretch of the game was sub-standard—it is likely that I was overly excited at my chances of taking the tournament lead. 36.Rd3 was easily winning, as White can build up an attack at his leisure.

### 36...Qf7 37.Qg7+?

A bizarre and poor move. The rook ending is not what White wanted here. It may be winning in a higher sense, but the

game is now a concrete technical position where one wrong stroke could let Black draw. 37.a4+— would have stayed on the right track.

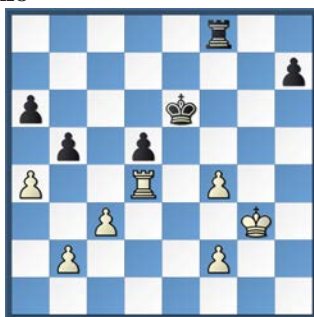
### 37...Qxg7+ 38.hxg7 Kxg7 39.Kg2 Kf6 40.Kg3 Ke6

Let's take stock of the position. White is up a pawn. That pawn is half of a set of doubled f-pawns, but do not forget—they are both passed pawns! Black has an outside passer on the h-file to counter these, which offers him counterplay. Black also has an isolani (again!) on d5, which is not particularly weak right now, but could become so. What is White to do? Best to set about creating a weakness to play against. The queenside is a good target, as White's rook is ready to support play there.

### 41.a4

A good start.

### 41...Rf8



Position after 41...Rf8

Here, though, it is not so easy to spot the best plan. How should White play to win this ending? I had several chances to play the key move—which at first looks like an antipositional one—but failed to do so.

### 42.Rb4?!

Aimless play. Of course Black is not going to let White win the b5-pawn. 42.a5! was the star move. It was available on a couple of other occasions to follow, but it is best to play it now. At first glance it seems strange to release the pressure against b5, but this pressure was not going to yield anything tangible—b5 is easy to defend. Furthermore, pawn trades will help Black's defensive chances, and Black now may take on a4. The real weakness to aim at is on a6. Here's a sample line: 42... h5 43.Rd1 Kd6 44.Rh1 Rf5 45.Kf3 Kc5 46.Re1 Rf7 47.Re6 b4 48.cxb4+ Kxb4 49.Rxa6 Rd7 50.Rh6 Kxa5 51.Rxh5 Kb4 52.f5 d4 53.Ke2+—

### 42...Rb8

42...bxa4 was good try: 43.Rxa4 Rb8 44.b4 Rb6± and Black has improved his chances of survival.

### 43.Kg4 Rg8+ 44.Kf3

I repeated moves a couple times here while thinking about what to do.

### 44...Rb8 45.axb5

45.a5 was still available, though less convincing than before.

### 45...axb5 46.Kg4 Rg8+ 47.Kf3 Rb8 48.b3

This is as good a try as any to do something, as Black seems to be holding now.

### 48...Rc8

Black needs to create play in short order.

### 49.Rxb5 Rxc3+ 50.Kg4

We are nearing the close of this ending. Play is becoming concrete—all of the pawns on the board are isolated and passed. As is usually the case when material reduces like this, Black can hold in a number of ways. However, there is ample opportunity to go wrong.

### 50...d4 51.f5+ Kf6 52.Rb6+ Kf7 53.Kf4 h5 54.Kg5 Rf3

The preceding moves have all been logical and good.

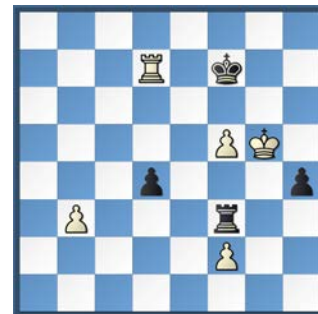
### 55.Rd6

55.Rb7+ doesn't lead to anything tangible: 55...Ke8 56.Kf6 Rxf2 57.Rb5 Rd2 58.Rb8+ Kd7 And Black's passed pawns are creating enough play to draw. Actually White can even go wrong: 59.Kf7?? h4 60.Rh8 Rh2 And White will not be able to put his rook behind both passed pawns at once: Black is won.

### 55...h4

This spoils nothing, but perhaps it was easier to reduce the material right away. (Don't listen to your engine if it says ... h4 is a losing blunder—the game is still drawn.) 55...Rxf2 56.Rxd4 Rg2+ 57.Kxh5 Kf6=; ( 55...d3 is also fine)

### 56.Rd7+



Position after 56.Rd7+

As good a try as any. 56.Rxd4 leads to a draw: 56...Rxb3! It is often tricky to evaluate rook endings with doubled pawns. One may ask, "Does a Philidor position still hold against two f-pawns?" I have seen cases where it does not, specifically when the pawns are far advanced, but these are the exception to the rule—they normally draw. 57.Rd7+ Ke8 58.Rh7 Rf3 Here White won't even



have a second f-pawn. 59.Rxh4 Kf7= This is going to be a draw—if you don't know why, the answer can be found in any book on basic endgames.

### 56...Ke8 57.Rxd4 h3 58.Rh4 Rxb3??

Black throws away half a point with this move, after a long defence. 58...Kf7!= was the only way—keeping the rook anchored behind the pawn was paramount. 59.Rh7+ Kg8 60.Rh4 Kf7 and White cannot make progress.

### 59.Kg6+—

I seize the chance. White is now going to get a different endgame that can be found in any book—the Lucena, a win.

### 59...Rf3 60.f6 Rxf2 61.Rh8+ Kd7 62.Rxh3 Ke8 63.Rh8+ Kd7 64.Kf7 Kd6 65.Re8 Kd7 66.Re7+ Kd8 67.Kg7

White could have also won using the classic “bridge building” method, but this is not the only way to win a Lucena! 67.Re3 Kd7 68.Kg7 Rf1 69.f7 Rg1+ 70.Kf8 Rg2 71.Rd3+ Kc6 (71...Ke6 72.Ke8+—) 72.Rd4 Rg3 (72...Re2 73.Rg4+—) 73.Ke7 Re3+ 74.Kf6 Rf3+ 75.Ke6 Re3+ 76.Kf5 Rf3+ 77.Rf4+—

### 67...Rf4 68.Re3 Rg4+ 69.Kf8 Kd7 70.f7 Rf4 71.Rd3+ Ke6 72.Ke8

Black resigned. ...Rxf7 loses the rook after Re3+.

### 1–0

Neither Carl nor I could have known at the time, but this game proved to decide the state championship! It was a tense struggle—Carl had been convincingly outplaying me the whole game, but things became interesting when time pressure arrived. I was impressed by Carl's performance throughout this event. He came with a fighting spirit to every game, and played strong, principled chess. This is what makes the state championship so difficult: even if you bring your best chess to the table, someone else will probably do the same! This game accounted for the margin between first and second, as we both won six and drew two of our other games.

**Carl Haessler (2200) –  
Jason Cigan (2196) [A30]  
Oregon Championship (R3)  
February 10, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]**

### 1.Nf3 c5 2.g3 b6

I may yet outgrow the English hedgehog. It's a difficult opening to handle as Black, the theory is well worked out, and I'd argue that White is a little better in almost every line. Why play it, then? It is easy to be enticed by some of the more famous Black wins in these lines—I have in mind games like Polugaevsky-Ftacnik—

in which the Black pieces spring to life rapidly after multiple pawn breaks, and sacrifices of material are not uncommon. However, the reality in modern chess tends to be much more dry as Black—strong White players tend to know what to do with the extra space, and Black is solid but has to play accurately to avoid giving White a pleasant positional pull.

### 3.Bg2 Bb7 4.0–0 Nf6 5.c4 e6 6.Nc3 Be7 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4

Capturing by queen on d4 is much more common, but this recapture is wrongly underestimated. Nepomniatchi won a fine rapid game with it in a high-level event recently.

### 8...Bxg2 9.Kxg2 Qc8

A standard maneuver—Black intends to control the long diagonal vacated by the bishops with his queen, with gain of tempo.

### 10.b3 d5

A standard hedgehog break, exploiting the loose knight on c3—but of course White had foreseen this and planned something.

### 11.Qd3 dxc4 12.Qf3

Of course White has no interest in acquiring a weak c4-pawn, at least not without extracting a concession in return.

### 12...Nbd7 13.Nc6

This position is known to theory, though it has not been played often.

### 13...Qb7

I had forgotten how Black should play here, but, as is often the case, it was simple enough to decide on the right move at the board, after careful consideration.

### 14.Nxe7

One of multiple options leading to an equal game.

### 14...Qxf3+ 15.Kxf3



Position after 15.Kxf3

### 15...Kxe7

15...cxb3!? is a move that would be hard to resist playing if I get this position again: 16.Nc6 Rc8 17.Nb5 Rxc6 18.axb3 a5= and chances are even, but there is plenty of life in the game.

### 16.Ba3+ Nc5 17.bxc4=

The position is balanced. White's bishop has a chance to be the strongest piece on the board in the long term; however, his singleton on c4 has every chance to be the weakest pawn.

### 17...Rhc8

Possibly the wrong rook, as this one should go on d8. However, the move does not change the evaluation much.

### 18.Rfd1 Nfd7 19.Ke3 Ne5 20.Rd4 f5 21.f3 Kf6 22.Rc1 a6?!

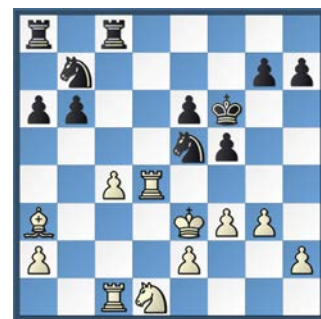
Black is the first to err. The plan was to slowly transfer the c5-knight to a5 and win a pawn, but Black should be mindful of White's ideas. 22...Nc6= was more reasonable.

### 23.Nd1

White's c4 pawn turns out to be a tougher nut to crack than Black expected. What's more, White is also hinting at threats on the kingside.

### 23...Nb7?!

Black is walking further off the beaten path. 23...Ra7 would minimize the danger.



Position after 23...Nb7

### 24.Rh4?!

The struggle is sharpening, and the best moves are becoming more difficult to assess. White misses a better continuation here. 24.Bb2! poses the vicious threat of f2-f4, followed by discovered check. 24...Kf7 25.Nf2 White is effectively a tempo up on the game, as he has omitted the unnecessary Rh4. 25...Rc7 26.Rh4 Now this move packs more punch, as it wins a pawn. 26...Nd7 27.Rxh7 and Black faces an unpleasant defense. (27.Nd3!?)

### 24...Kg6

Black is able to cover his bases and preserve the material balance now.

### 25.Bb2 Nf7?!

Again, Black flirts with disaster. 25...Nc6 was more logical, when Black is fine.

### 26.Nf2 Rc6 27.g4

27.Nd3! was more to the point. 27...h6 28.Rd4 Nc5 29.g4, and White is turning up the heat, as Black's pieces lack the coordination necessary to counter White's pressure on the king.

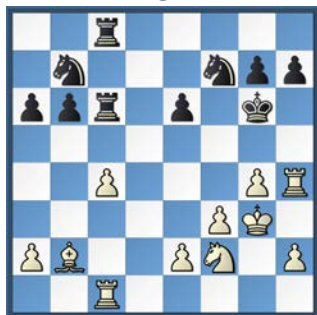


Carl Haessler. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

### 27...f4+!

A strong defensive move. Black is going to get the pawn back, while avoiding the opening of the g-file.

### 28.Kxf4 Rac8 29.Kg3



Position after 29.Kg3

### 29...Rxc4?!

A natural move, but it makes things more difficult. 29...h6 was safer—the pawn on c4 is not running away, while the king on g6, fortunately for Black, is. 30.Nd3 Nbd6±

### 30.Nd3

An easy shot to miss.

### 30...h6

Of course not 30...Rxc1?? 31.Nf4+ Kg5 32.Rh5#

### 31.Rxc4 Rxc4 32.Nf4+ Kh7 33.Nxe6 g5 34.Rh5

White is making progress, and Black has to be accurate here.

### 34...Rc2?

My sense of danger failed me here. There are still enough pieces on the board for White to hunt the king, when his sidelined rook on h5 will quickly become a monster. 34...Nc5 was most resilient, but Black is still under serious pressure: 35.Nxc5 bxc5 36.Bf6 Kg6 37.Be7 Rc2 38.Kf2 Ne5± Black remains a pawn down, but is active. The swap of knights has helped his king stay safe. Note that the rook is not so badly placed on h5, as the liberating h2-h4 push cannot be stopped forever.

### 35.Bf6

Dark clouds are gathering over Black's king. I missed some concrete tactical details before entering this position.

### 35...Kg8?!

35...Kg6 36.Bd4 was the big thing that I overlooked—White threatens not only a pawn, but also mate in one! Objectively, this is still Black's best line, but I preferred setting traps to entering a hopeless ending. 36...Nfd8 37.Nf8+ Kf7 38.Nd7 Ne6 39.e3 Nxd4 40.exd4 Kg6 41.h4+—White will win this ending with best play, as his kingside majority and passed pawn on d4 will win any race against Black's queenside. Note how poorly the Black knight stands. 41...gxh4+ 42.Rxh4 Rxa2 (42...Rd2 43.Nxb6 Rxd4 44.Rh5 Rd2 45.Re5 is one sample line: 45...Rxa2 46.Re6+ Kf7 47.Rxh6+—) 43.Nxb6 Nd6 44.Rh5+—

### 36.Nd4

Of course White will not let Black capture on e2.

### 36...Rxa2

Now White, while in time pressure, faces critical decisions. Black actually has serious counterplay to be dealt with—do you see the threat? How should White proceed?



Position after 36...Rxa2

### 37.e4??

Not like this! White misses Black's idea and loses the win. This game ultimately decided the state championship, and this move, along with the next two, dictated the outcome of this crucial game. 37.Nf5 was the most convincing win: 37...Rxe2 38.Nxh6+ Nxh6 39.Rxh6 Nc5 40.Bxg5+—Winning an ending like this one with White is simpler than winning a middlegame up by a piece. The bishop will dominate the knight as the dueling connected passed pawns race; White's



**Carl Haessler** Chess Master

503-875-7278 ■ [carl@NWchessworks.com](mailto:carl@NWchessworks.com)  
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pieces and pawns will gain time against the cornered black king; and the extra pawn, though helpful, is an afterthought. Had Carl spotted this line in the very short amount of time he had, he would have certainly entered it. 37.h4, freeing the rook and king, was also preferable to the game line: 37...gxh4+ 38.Rxh4 Nc5 39.e3 and White should be winning this.

### 37...Nc5!

Now it is Black who is on the attack! White, still in time pressure, must be careful to avert further disaster.

### 38.e5

This move spoils nothing yet, but it was better to act quickly to secure the White king. 38.h4 was still available, but now it is not enough to win: 38...Ra3! 39.Kg2 Ra2+ 40.Kg3= The game could, and should, end with a repetition.

### 38...Nd3?!

It was with great surprise that I later learned this move was a mistake! Although it is inaccurate, it is practical and it worked. White has the chance to make a tactical rescue of his king, and regain the upper hand. Normally this would be enough to call ...Nd3 a mistake, but White's resource is very difficult for a human to find at the board. 38...Ra3= would steer the game toward a draw, but knowing what I know now, why would I have wanted that?



Position after 38...Nd3

### 39.e6??

39.Bxg5! was a bolt from the blue that would have saved the day. 39...Nxg5 (39...hxg5 40.e6 Nd6 41.Rxg5+ Kf8 42.Rd5 is a good example of how careful Black has to be: White's threats and pawns are much more menacing than Black's extra knight, and only one move hangs on. 42...Rg2+! 43.Kh4 (43.Kxg2?? Nf4+-+ and without rooks, the Black knights are much more impressive) 43...Rxh2+ 44.Kg5 Ke7 45.Nc6+ Kxe6 46.Rxd3± Material is equal, but with dueling connected passed pawns, all three results are on the table. In this case, White's king supports his pawns, and the pawns are a bit farther along than Black's are. This is enough for an advantage in a lively endgame, but likely not enough for a win against

proper defense.) 40.e6! Nxe6 (40...Ra4 41.e7 Kf7 42.Nf5 Ra1 43.Nxh6+ Kxe7 44.Rxg5±. Here Black is very close to being lost. It is possible that he will find an escape route to one of several holdable endings—rook and pawn, queen and pawns after mutual promotion, or rook against rook and knight—but White is having all the fun.) 41.Nxe6 b5 42.Rxh6 b4±. Black's pawns may be fast enough to save the day, but the battle is raging on. 39.Nf5, also a difficult move to find without an i7 processor, was the next-best move. Here, a wild game with balanced chances ensues: 39...Nf4 40.Nxh6+ Kf8 41.Rxg5! Nxg5 42.Kxf4 Ne6+ 43.Kf5 Ng7+ 44.Kg6 Ne6 45.h4 a5∞

### 39...Nf4—+

Black has pulled off the swindle. There is no escaping decisive material losses now.

### 40.exf7+ Kxf7 41.Bxg5

41.Rxg5 hxg5 42.Bxg5 Ne2+ 43.Nxe2 Rxe2+ offers White no solace.

### 41...Nxh5+ 42.gxh5 hxg5 43.Kg4

This hastens the end, which was near at any rate.

### 43...Ra4

White resigned.

### 0–1

This was the final game of the first weekend. By now, I was exhausted and ready for it to end. In past years, when I struggled in this event, I often envied the leader as the first weekend wrapped up—what could be more pleasant than to sit at the top of the standings during the tournament? In truth, there is no satisfaction from the leader's standpoint—no lead feels secure with six games left to play, there will still be a whole week between games to get through, and every game still feels like a must-win with numerous players within a point!

**Jason Cigan (2196) –  
Ryan Richardson (2104) [C10]**  
Oregon Championship (R4),  
February 10, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]

### 1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bd7

As chance would have it, I had faced this same opening line a week earlier in a Tuesday Quads game. I have never seen the appeal of the Fort Knox variation for Black—the aim is to trade off the light-square French bishop for a knight, when Black's position should be fundamentally sound enough to draw with best play. This is all I can say in favor of the line. It strikes me as a poor relation of the Caro-Kann.

### 5.Nf3 Bc6 6.Bd3 Nd7 7.c3 Ngf6



Ryan Richardson. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

7...Bxe4 is certainly legal, but White gains the upper hand with normal moves: 8.Bxe4 c6 9.0–0 Ngf6 10.Bc2 Bd6± Black's opening strategy has been a failure.

### 8.Nxf6+ Nxf6 9.Bf4

In my view, the most principled line. White is not content to develop normally and claim a small edge, but is aiming to clamp down on the e5 square to cramp Black.

### 9...Bxf3

Uninspiring, but accurate. 9...Bd6 is the seemingly more active choice, but it lets White reveal his point—10.Ne5! White is offering a pawn on g2 that is too hot to touch. 10...Bxe5 (10...Bxg2? 11.Rg1 Be4 12.Rxg7 Bxe5 13.Bxe5 Bc6 14.Bc4+-) 11.Bxe5 Nd7 12.Bf4 Bxg2 13.Rg1 Bc6 14.Rxg7± (14.Qg4!?)

### 10.Qxf3 c6

Black has given up his problematic light-square bishop, and has arranged all his pawns on light squares to complement his remaining bishop. This is all true, but a bishop pair is a bishop pair, and White controls more space. Black is clearly worse, though he could probably hold the position if queens are swapped.

### 11.0–0 Be7

My opponent in the Quads game went astray unexpectedly quickly: 11...Qd5 12.Qe2± Bd6?? 13.Bc4+- and Black resigned.

### 12.a3

I don't feel this precaution was necessary. a2-a3 is commonly played in such



Back row (L-R): Steven Deeth; Jason Cigan; Matt Zavortink; Karl Cosner; Gavin Zhang; Ethan Wu.  
Front row (L-R): Ryan Richardson; Lennart Bjorksten. Missing: Carl Haessler; Michael Moore. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

positions: White wants the option of moving his a1-rook without allowing an irritating ...Qd5 from Black—a move which would both attack a loose pawn on a2 and offer an exchange of queens, which thus has to be accepted. Nonetheless, White didn't need to prioritize moving his a1-rook. Be5 or Rfe1 would be fine. 12.Be5; 12.Rfe1

12...0-0 13.Rad1 Qd5 14.Qe2 Rfd8



Position after 14...Rfd8

15.c4?!

Here I was in too much of a hurry—a fine way to create problems for oneself when facing a passive opposing position. Black gets counterplay against d4 now. 15.Be5± was simple and strong. White is preparing to march forward on the kingside, where his bishops are pointing.

15...Qh5 16.Qc2

I didn't want to swap queens, but it's not clear that keeping them on is a better

choice. I overestimated the vulnerability of Black's queen on h5.

16...Rd7

Black will double rooks against d4, which will become quite challenging to defend.

17.Rfe1

I go in for tactics here that turn out to have a subtle flaw. It's not clear that I had anything better, though, as Black is nearing dynamic equality.

17...Rad8 18.Re5

Black's queen could fall into a trap if Black is not careful. A radical idea may be called for. Can you see it?



Position after 18.Re5

18...Qg4??

A missed opportunity, and a costly error. The surprising 18...Qxd1+! tactically works, and was the only move. I missed this move during the game! White is still better, though: 19.Qxd1 Rxd4 20.g3 Rxd3

21.Qc2± Black has enough material for the queen, though White is active and Black's queenside pawns may be challenging to defend. A quick note: beware of trusting computers too much in positions where somebody has sacrificed a queen. Often an evaluation of something like +2 turns out to indicate an unclear, dynamically balanced position—it can be hard to assess the amount of compensation for such a large investment of material.

19.Be3

Now White really is set to trap Black's queen.

19...Ne8!

With his back against the wall, Black finds the best defense. Now his queen can avoid the trapping threats—it can run to h4, then to f6. It will still not be enough, though. 19...Rxd4 fails to 20.f3 Rxd3 21.Rxd3! Qg6 22.Rxd8+ Bxd8 23.Qxg6 hxd6 24.Bxa7+ with a won ending for White.

20.Bxh7+?!

A lazy move, though still strong. 20.g3+—was best, insisting on hunting the queen by taking away h4. This is hard to see at the board, though. 20...Nd6 21.Kg2 Nf5 22.Rxf5 exf5 23.Bxf5 Qh5 24.Bxd7 is one example of how play could go.

20...Kf8

White is still winning, but Black may get another chance to sacrifice his queen.



## 21.Be4 Bf6 22.Bf3 Qxf3



Position after 22...Qxf3

And here it is! In an analytical sense, this move may not be strongest, but it certainly changes the course of the game and poses new problems for White to solve—often a good idea when losing. 22...Qg6 is a more passive way to conduct matters—23. Qxg6 fxc6 24.Rxe6 Bxd4 25.Re1 Bxe3 26.R6xe3±

## 23.gxf3 Bxe5 24.Qe4

24.d5 may have been more efficient: 24... exd5 (24...cxd5 25.Bc5+ Kg8 26.Bxa7+— with the weak d4 pawn swapped off, White has few problems left on his way to victory.) 25.Qh7

## 24...Bf6 25.b4

White controls the position, and Black's counterplay against the central pawns is not going to do enough.

## 25...Kxg8 26.Qg4 Nd6



Position after 26...Nd6

## 27.d5!

This break is key. Without it, things would be less clear.

## 27...cxd5 28.cxd5 Nb5 29.d6 b6 30.Bg5 Bxg5 31.Qxg5 Nxa3

31...Nxd6 32.h4+—

## 32.Rd4 a6 33.Rg4 g6 34.Qf6 Rxd6 35.Rh4 Rd1+ 36.Kg2 R8d5 37.Rh8# 1-0

No game weighed more heavily on my mind at the start of the tournament than my fifth-round game against Gavin Zhang. Besides being one of Oregon's top juniors, Gavin is also my student! He has made tremendous strides in his chess during the last year and a half, and

ultimately took clear fourth place in this event. While it is challenging to play a game against one's own student, there is a silver lining: it is also difficult for a student to play their coach. Surprising results are not uncommon in such matchups. For example, Gavin beat me in the last Oregon Closed (this qualified as a major upset at the time, but wouldn't raise many eyebrows now), and the Northern California national master Michael Aigner recently defeated one of his strongest former students in a tournament—GM Daniel Naroditsky!

**Gavin Zhang (2054) –  
Jason Cigan (2196) [D77]**  
Oregon Closed 2019 (R5),  
February 16, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]

## 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3

4...c6 is the theoretician's move of choice—White struggles to get even a hint of an edge against this Slav-Grunfeld setup, as the g2 bishop is blunted by Black's light-square pawn rampart. However, the more dynamic Grunfeld treatment with 4...d5 has stood the test of time as well. Some Grunfeld players—myself included—are wary about capturing with a knight on d5 when there is no knight to capture on c3. Indeed, this circumstance does allow White real chances of an edge, but play is complex.

## 4...d5 5.Bg2 dxc4

When White declines to capture d5, breaking the central tension in this way is the consistent follow-up.

## 6.Na3 c3

This is the traditional main line—even though all four knights remain on the board, Black is going to get the same c3-d4 pawn structure to chip away at that he faces in many Grunfeld lines after 3. Nc3. But White has numerous ways to press with his center and space when all four minor pieces are still on the board. 6...c5 has become rather fashionable at high levels, though it looks to me like Black is groveling passively for equality in a way that suggests he should have just played ...c6 before ...d5: 7.0-0 0-0 8.dxc5 c3 9.Nb5 Na6 10.Nxc3 Nxc5 11.Be3 Nfe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Bd4 Bxd4 14.Qxd4 Qxd4 15.Nxd4 Nd6 16.Rac1± and Black is holding on, but technically inclined White players will be happy to try to press here.

## 7.bxc3 0-0 8.0-0 c5 9.Re1

The latest fashion: White forgoes the traditional e2-e3 in favor of a more ambitious treatment, aiming for e2-e4 in one go. This is not the only new option in this line, though: I faced 9.Ne5 at an event in New York this year: 9...Nd5 (9...Nc6 is also sensible, when White may



Gavin Zhang. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

plan 10.Nac4 with good chances of an edge) 10.Bd2!? The bishop eschews its traditional home on b2. 10...Nc6 11.Nac4 and now, for lack of appealing alternatives, I grabbed a hot pawn: 11...cxd4 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.cxd4 Bxd4 14.Rc1± when White had tremendous compensation, and Black's difficulty untangling his pieces was the prevailing feature of the position.

## 9...Nc6 10.e4

One of two possible tries here. Early fashion inclined toward the alternative Bb2, but rising Russian star Vladislav Artemiev won a fine game with the direct e2-e4 recently. 10.Bb2 Nd5 11.e4 Nb6 and this sharp position is currently being subjected to many high-level tests.



Position after 10.e4

## 10...Bg4

Naturally, Black takes the most active approach to fighting back against the center. 10...cxd4 was Black's choice in a recent high-level game, but I am unconvinced that inserting this capture is wise, as the release of the tension reduces Black's options and makes White's play in the center more straightforward: 11.cxd4 Bg4 12.Bb2 Nd7 13.Rb1 Nb6 14.d5

Bxb2 15.Rxb2 Ne5 16.Qb3 Bxf3 17.Bxf3 Na4!? 18.Rc2± White was comfortably better and went on to win in Artemiev-Esipenko, Skopje 2019.

### 11.Nc2 Nd7

The same maneuver used by Esipenko.

### 12.Be3?!

One trend that played in my favor this event: many of my opponents played passively once they ran out of book moves. The transition from the theoretical to the practical part of the game is always important, and a misstep there can dictate the course of the entire middlegame in some cases.

Here, White is supporting his center in the wrong way. If he were going to develop his bishop, it was better to defend c3 as well as d4. However, perhaps focusing on normal development is the wrong plan altogether: 12.Bb2 was also sensible: 12...Nb6 with a long strategic struggle ahead. 12.Rb1, in similar fashion to the Artemiev game, may be best: 12...Qa5 13.Bd2. This offer of the a2-pawn reminds one of the popular gambit in the Exchange Variation of the Grunfeld with Rb1. 13...Qxa2 14.e5±

### 12...Qa5

Black cranks up the pressure on the White center, in standard Grunfeld fashion.

### 13.Rb1

White offers complications to fight Black's pressure.

### 13...Rfd8

Black avoids murky waters and calmly improves his pieces. 13...Qxc3 14.Bd2 Qc4 looked like a mess to me. 15.d5 Nce5 16.Ne3±

### 14.Qc1 Bxf3 15.Bxf3



Position after 15.Bxf3

### 15...Qxc3±

Black picks an appropriate time to cash in. This win of a pawn is much cleaner than the prior chance was.

### 16.Rb3

16.Rxb7?? cxd4 17.Rb3 Qa5 18.Ra3 Qc5 19.Bd2 a5-+

### 16...Qa5 17.d5

White gets nebulous compensation for the pawn, as he kicks around the Black knights while keeping the bishop pair in his pocket. But it is not really enough.

### 17...Nd4

17...Nce5 was also good.

### 18.Bxd4?

From bad to worse. The bishop pair was a long-term trump that White should have held onto. 18.Nxd4 was natural and better: 18...Bxd4 19.Rd1 Bxe3 20.Qxe3 Qc7± Black is still a long way from converting his extra pawn.

### 18...cxd4

Now Black not only is up material—he also has a clear-cut edge in piece activity. A rook is landing on the c-file, the knight can hop to e5, and the d-pawn could spell trouble later.

### 19.Rd1 Rac8

Simply 19...Qxa2 was superior. 20.Rxb7 Rac8±

### 20.Qb1 Qc5 21.Ne1 b6 22.Nd3 Qd6 23.Be2 Rc3 24.f4

White wants to confuse matters by getting his long-neglected center rolling.

### 24...f5?!

My first misstep of the game. Luckily I still stand better. 24...g5! was strongest, undermining the White pawns. 25.fxg5 Qg6+ White's position is collapsing.

### 25.Rxc3?!

25.Nf2 was a tougher nut to crack. 25...Kh8 26.e5 It is easy to do as I did, and miss that the queen cannot take d5! 26...Qc7±

### 25...dxc3



Position after 25...dxc3

### 26.Nb4??

A losing move in time pressure. White had to roll onward, even at the cost of material: 26.e5! Qxd5 Now the pawn can be taken, but things are not clear-cut yet: 27.Nb4 Qc5+ 28.Kg2 a5 29.Qb3+ Kh8 30.Nc2 Qc7± White is still kicking.

### 26...a5 27.Nc6

27.Nd3 was safer, but Black is going to devour the center and win in due time.

### 27...Qc5+ 28.Kg2 c2

Black is winning the house.

### 29.Qb3 cxd1Q 30.Bxd1 Re8 31.Be2 fxe4 32.Nxe7+ Rxe7 33.d6+ Rf7 34.Bc4 Qf5 35.Be6 Nc5 36.d7 Nxe6

White resigned.

### 0-1

"There are two kinds of sacrifices: sound ones, and [Karl's]." -Mikhail Tal I will be generous with the question marks in this game, as there were plenty of head-scratchers all around. It may be tempting to dismiss certain moves in this game which are objectively weak as "practical," "in tune with one's style," or "understandable in such a sharp position." I am not going to let myself or my opponent off so easy! A clear head and objectivity can go a long way toward helping one make the right decisions in crazy positions. Here, I believe we both acted on intuition and impulse too often.

Jason Cigan (2197) –

Karl Cosner (2060) [B01]

Oregon Closed 2019 (R6),

February 16, 2019

[Jason Cigan]

### 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 c6?

Black is determined to lose a pawn. There is not much compensation for it, though Black is at least assured that play will become sharp and unbalanced, and that White is out of his opening preparation.

### 3.dxc6 Nxc6

I once had the privilege to face the dreadful 3...e5? against a B player in a tournament, when Black has astoundingly managed to blunder twice in the first three moves. 4.cxb7 Bxb7 5.Bb5++ and I won in a few more moves.

### 4.Nf3 e5 5.Nc3

Sensible development. Black has a bit of central space for the pawn, but White is not in any way hindered from consolidating and achieving a classical piece setup.

### 5...Nf6 6.Bc4 Bc5 7.0-0 Bg4 8.h3

The previous moves have all been logical, but both players soon abandon logic for much of the game.

### 8...h5??

And why not sacrifice a piece? Black has come this far, after all. However, two things tell against this move: one is that White retains a large advantage by not taking the piece, and the other is that White gains a winning advantage by taking the piece.

Furthermore, on positional grounds, Black has deprived the bishop of its





Karl Cosner. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

obvious retreat square on h5. 8...Bh5± was the responsible move.



Position after 8...h5

### 9.Re1?

This is far too conservative from White. My logic was, "It looks difficult to calculate if I can take on g4. He should probably just take on f3 if I don't take the bishop. But why would he do that now, having already announced his intention to give up the piece?" However, not only is this logic un-ambitious and misguided, it is also incorrect!

There are three flaws with my thinking: taking the bishop was completely winning for White, Black has a better move than taking with the bishop, and the text move is not even the strongest way to decline the piece. 9.hxg4 This move is too obvious to deserve any punctuation. Unless one is in dire time pressure, there is no excuse for being too lazy or too trusting of an opponent who is offering material.

If you have a move available that wins a piece, use restraint and calculate thoroughly, using as much time as

you need—you may be able to win immediately, which is always fun. 9...hxg4 10.Ng5 This is the key move, though it is quite easy to find. 10...g3 This is the move I got hung up on, but everything wins for White. 11.d4 is strongest, but even a simple move like Qe2 or Qf3 does it—White should be more than happy to let Black "win an exchange" on f2, when the attack ends. 11...gxf2+ 12.Kxf2 Nxd4 13.Be3+—

### 9...Qe7?

Black is too nonchalant. If he wanted to continue pursuing an initiative, he had a better way to go about it. 9...Qb6! is a shot I should have never allowed. Black develops with tempo and adds to his initiative, while even saving his piece, if he wants to.

Take note of how hefty a price White could have already paid for not taking Black's piece last turn. 10.Qe2 0-0-0 And now White actually loses if he takes g4. 11.Na4± is fortunately there, but the game is not done.

### 10.hxg4

I did not need to be given a third chance to take the bishop.

### 10...Bxf2+

I have no criticism to offer for this move. Black is busted regardless, so why not complicate things further? After all, this cannot be much worse than the alternatives. 10...hxg4 11.d4!+— was my point.

### 11.Kxf2 hxg4 12.Ng5

White is winning, but I made a common mistake—counting my chickens too early. White is only one blunder away from giving Black chances to steal the game. It turned out I had more than one blunder in me that day. 12.Nxe5 also wins.

### 12...g3+

12...Qc5+ 13.d4 is another winning line for White.

### 13.Kg1 Qc5+ 14.d4 Qxc4 15.dxe5 Ng4

Black is playing the hand he has been dealt, setting traps connected with the open h-file and exposed White king.



Position after 15...Ng4

### 16.Nce4??

Even if the position is still won for White, this was a costly error. At this moment in the game, I felt my excitement level rising: I was on the verge of winning my sixth game in a row to open the tournament, and a crowd had started to gather around our board.

Swings in emotion such as this are very dangerous for a chess player. It would have been best to take a couple of deep breaths and get to calculating. Here I give Black some real ammunition against my king. 16.e6+— is the cleanest win available. 16...0-0 (16...fxe6 17.Rxe6+ Ne7 18.Rxe7+ Kxe7 19.Nd5+- is a brutal sample line) 17.exf7+— And now the game is wrapping up.

### 16...Nf2!

Suddenly White is going to have to make compromises to protect his king.

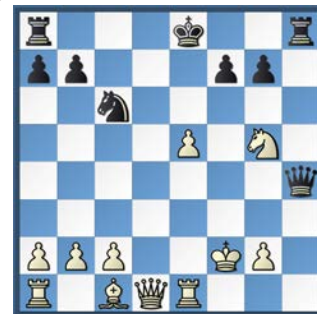
### 17.Nxf2??

Bad moves, like most aspects of fairy tales, tend to come in threes. Players often overreact after realizing they have made mistakes, and compound the damage by losing their focus and erring again. Here, things are spiraling out of control rapidly. White only has a draw now. 17.Nd6+! would have maintained the win for White.

The part of this I find most troubling is how plainly obvious this move is—a royal fork staring me right in the face. Truth be told, I was disturbed by the course of events and this move barely registered with me. Of course Black still has a mate in one to be dealt with, but this is not so hard to do. 17...Kf8 18.Nh3 Of course White can block the threats this way. 18...Qc5 (18...Nxb3+ 19.gxh3+-) 19.Be3 Qxe5 20.Nc4+—.

Note that the variations here are not trivial to see, whereas White had the game comfortably in hand a few moves earlier. This is another case study in the importance of nipping counterplay in the bud.

### 17...gxf2+ 18.Kxf2



Position after 18...Qh4+

### 18...Qh4+!

Suddenly Black has a perpetual check. However, I had other—much worse—ideas than agreeing to this.

### 19.g3 Qh2+ 20.Ke3??

After all the mistakes Black has made, he is now presented with the chance to win a miniature. White is now venturing his king into the middle of the board with far too few developed pieces to support it, and far too much heavy artillery left on the board. White needed to repeat moves.

### 20...Qxg3+ 21.Nf3



Position after 21.Nf3

### 21...Rh4??

White catches a break. Both of us missed that Black was won here: 21...Nxe5 22.Rh1 Ng4+- and at this point, Black will be able to have his pick of many ways to win.; 21...Rh5 also wins. 22.Ke2 Rf5 23.Rf1 Rd8 24.Qe1 Nd4+-.

### 22.Rg1

All it took was one move for White to protect his king properly. Now White's extra piece should tell, though he still needs to untangle.

22...Qf4+ 23.Kf2 Rh2+ 24.Rg2 Rxc2+ 25.Kxg2 Qg4+ 26.Kf2 Rd8 27.Qg1 Qe4 28.Qxg7 Qxc2+ 29.Kg3 Ne7

The previous moves have all been straightforward. Now, White has to step carefully. Black is threatening a nasty fork, and two White pieces are still in bed.

### 30.Qh8+

The right start. White avoids the fork with gain of time.

### 30...Kd7 31.e6+?!

Not best, though White is still winning. 31.Qh5! was best. It can be difficult to bring oneself to allow the opponent so many checks, but White can defend against them and develop at the same time. 31...Nf5+ (31...Rg8+ 32.Bg5+-) 32.Kf4! Ne7 33.Bd2+-

### 31...fxe6 32.Qd4+ Ke8 33.Qf2??

The battle of attrition continues. White blows the game once again as the players' clocks run low. 33.Qh8+ Kd7 34.Qc3+- was appropriate. Once again, White need not fear the checks.

### 33...Qg6+?

Black fails to find the cleanest way back in the game. 33...Nf5+ Although this position looks similar to a couple of

prior lines I gave as won for White, the difference is clear: White can no longer run to f4 with a loose queen on f2. 34.Kg2 Qe4 35.Bg5 Qg4+ 36.Kh2 Rd3 37.Rf1 Qh5+ 38.Kg2 Qg4+ 39.Kh2 Qh5+ 40.Kg1 Rxf3 41.Qxf3 Qxg5+ 42.Kf2 Qd2+= and the draw is clear.

### 34.Bg5 Rd3??

Black's last is tempting, but incorrect. For a moment, I admit, I feared I was now losing. It takes a cool head to find the right path with such an unsafe king, but a win was once again to be had. 34...Rd5 was the move I expected, when White's advantage has shrunk greatly. 35.Re1 Rxc5+ 36.Nxc5 Qxg5+ 37.Kh3 Kd7± and Black has real chances to hold this game.



Position after...34...Rd3

### 35.Kh2??

Another grave error. The sharpness of the struggle is taking a toll on both players' judgment. 35.Qc5! and all Black's threats go up in smoke: 35...Nf5+ 36.Kg2 Rxf3 37.Qc8+ Kf7 38.Qxb7+ Suddenly White is the one attacking! 38...Kf8 39.Qa8+ Kf7 40.Qxa7+ Kf8 41.Qc5+ Kf7 42.Qc7+ Kf8 43.Qd8+ Kg7 44.Kxf3+-

### 35...Qh5+

Black again has enough play to hold.

### 36.Kg2 Nf5

The more exciting path to equality. 36...Rxf3 straightaway led to a draw, but who can blame Black for wanting to make an extra threat or two before shaking hands? 37.Qxf3 Qxg5+ 38.Kf2 Nf5 39.Rd1 Qh4+ 40.Kf1 Nd4= Black's attack is going to result in perpetual.

### 37.Rf1 Qg4+ 38.Kh2 Rd7?

Wildly overoptimistic. Black should have taken the draw. 38...Qh5+ 39.Kg2 Qg4+=

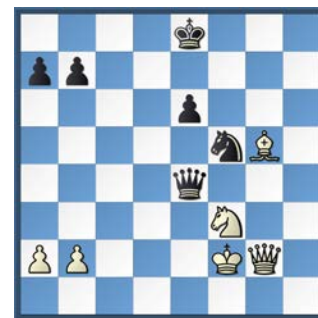
### 39.Qg2 Rh7+ 40.Kg1

White seems to be consolidated, but the reduced material offers Black some defensive chances.

### 40...Ng3 41.Re1 Rh1+

A clever practical try. Black is dreaming of saddling White with the rook pawn and the wrong-colored bishop.

### 42.Kf2 Rxe1 43.Kxe1 Qe4+ 44.Kf2 Nf5



Position after 44...Nf5

### 45.Qf1?

Much too compliant. Now it is difficult to avoid a draw. 45.Bd2 was indicated, clearing the way for the queen to invade. Is White winning? Yes, though it requires more care than one would expect when up a piece. Let's see how Stockfish would finish it off: 45...Kd7 46.Qg8 Qd5 47.Qb8 Qc5+ 48.Ke2 Nd6 49.Qh8 Qc4+ 50.Kf2 Qc5+ 51.Kg2 Qd5 52.Qg7+ Kc6 53.Qc3+ Kd7 54.Bf4 Qe4 55.Qd2 Qc6 56.Qxd6+-

### 45...Nd4

It looks to me as though the win has vanished. Black's defensive strategy has paid off. There may be some deep winning idea hidden in this position, but White's best opportunities are behind him.

### 46.Qd1

46.Qh1 Nxf3 47.Qh5+ Kd7 48.Qf7+ Kc8 and White hasn't made progress.

### 46...Nxf3 47.Qd8+ Kf7 48.Qf6+ Kg8 49.Qxf3 Qc2+ 50.Kg3 Qxb2 51.Bf6 Qb4

Black defends accurately.

### 52.Bc3 Qd6+ 53.Kh3 Qd5 54.Qg3+ Kf7 55.Qc7+ Ke8 56.Qe5 Qxe5 57.Bxe5 Kd7 58.Kg4 Kc6 59.Kg5 Kc5 60.Kf6 Kd5 61.Bb8 a5 62.a4

62.Bc7 Engines may briefly get excited about this position, but they eventually remember that this is the wrong color bishop for this rook's pawn. 62...b5 63.Bxa5 b4 64.Bxb4 e5 65.Bd2 Kc6 66.Kxe5 Kb7=

### 62...Kc4 63.Bc7 Kb4 64.Kxe6 Kxa4 65.Kd5 Kb3 66.Bxa5 b5 67.Kd4 b4 68.Ke3 Ka4 69.Bxb4 1/2-1/2

By now, it was a two-man race for the championship: I had 5.5/6, and Carl Haessler at 4.5/6. Though I tried to focus on the game at hand and avoid obsessing about the standings, I was slightly annoyed to think that, even if I won both games on this day, Carl might still have a shot at catching me!

The stress of needing to get a result on the final day of the event to cement my standing was something I had hoped to avoid.



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

This position appears on my board for the third time this tournament.

## **3...Nf6**

The most recognizably “French” response to the Tarrasch. As I said in a prior game, I believe White’s whole concept with 3. Nd2 is to invite this move. Black will get in both of his pawn breaks, on c5 and f6, but the end result will be White trading dark-square bishops and playing against a backward e-pawn. Rather like lines with ...e5 against the Samisch King’s Indian, I believe 3... Nf6 is played here more because play is thematic for the opening than because of its merits. You will occasionally see strong players using it, but the 2600+ crowd seems less keen.

## **4.e5 Nfd7 5.Bd3 c5 6.c3 Nc6 7.Ne2**

7.Ngf3 is also played, but implies a sacrifice of the d4-pawn after ...Qb6. However, both 7... g6 and 7... Qb6—planning to grab the pawn—strike me as tough nuts to crack.

## **7...cxd4**

It is wise to insert this capture, as 7... f6?! needlessly allows 8.Nf4! when the complications are very strategically dangerous for Black.

## **8.cxd4 f6 9.exf6 Nxf6 10.Nf3 Bd6 11.0–0**

The major tabiya for 3...Nf6.

## **11...0–0**

11...Qc7 is also played, not letting White exchange the dark-square bishops without a fight. Here, 12.h3!? is simple and seems to lead to easier play for White: 12...0–0 13.Be3 Bd7 14.Re1 White is clamping down on possible Black breaks and retains a pleasant positional pull. 14... Rae8 15.Rc1 Qb8 16.Nc3 a6 17.Na4±

## **12.Bf4**

White achieves one of his strategic goals for this line: the swap of dark-square bishops. Ideally for White, all the minor pieces would be swapped except for the Black light-square bishop and a White knight, which can be plunked on e5. Provided enough major pieces stay on the board, the situation can then become very strategically dangerous for Black. Black is left to choose between passive defense—which sometimes suffices—and energetic play, perhaps involving an exchange sacrifice on f3.

## **12...Ng4**

This certainly is more along the lines of a passive treatment of the position. But

there’s a catch! White shouldn’t be in a hurry to exchange bishops, even though it’s on his agenda.



*Position after 12...Ng4*

## **13.Bg3!**

An accurate move. After 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Ng3 e5! matters are much less clear. The ...e5 break has to be weighed carefully for Black in these structures, as it creates an isolani—a frequent guest in this tournament—on d5. However, the activity it provides is often worth it, especially when justified by some concession from White. The inactive knight on g3 qualifies as such a concession: 15.dxe5 Ngxe5 16.Nxe5 Nxe5 17.Bc2 Be6± I would still rather be White, but Black’s pieces are free to roam, and White’s edge in space and piece placement has been downgraded to just a slightly weak pawn to grind against. Such is the life of a French player. (17... d4!?)

## **13...Bxg3 14.hxg3**

14.Nxg3 is probably more accurate: 14... Bd7 15.Rc1 Rc8 16.Re1± Here White didn’t even have to weaken his structure to get an edge.

## **14...Rb8?**

A nonconstructive move, something Black can’t afford in this position. 14... Qf6 at least tries to do something, as ...e5 and ...Qh6 are ideas.

## **15.Nf4?!**

Lazy play on my part. 15.Qb1! pursues the same aims without allowing counterplay: 15...Nf6 16.Nf4 Nb4 17.Re1. Remember White’s positional goals—trading his own light-square bishop for a Black knight is favorable! 17...Qb6 18.a4±

## **15...Re8**

15...g5! was Black’s chance for activity: 16.Nh3 h6 17.Bc2 Nf6 18.Qd3 Qc7 19.Ne5± Unquestionably White is in the driver’s seat, but Black is still kicking.

## **16.Re1**

Black is on the verge of being positionally lost.

## **16...Kh8 17.Bb1 e5**

Desperation, but there is not much better.



*Ethan Wu. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.*

## **18.dxe5 Ncxe5 19.Nxe5 Nxe5 20.Bxh7**

A small combination.

## **20...Bg4**

20...Kxh7 21.Qh5+ Kg8 22.Rxe5+ is the point.

## **21.Qd4 Nc6 22.Qd3**

White has several ways to increase the advantage further. Ng6+ was also valid.

## **22...Qf6 23.Rxe8+ Rxe8**



*Position after 23...Rxe8*

## **24.f3??**

Absolutely careless—White needlessly gives Black saving resources. 24.Qg6 Was a tidy way to keep things under control: 24...Qxg6 25.Bxg6 Re5 26.f3 Be6 27.Kf2+—

## **24...Qxb2??**

Black returns the favor. 24...Ne5! and suddenly Black is right back in the game—25.Qc2 (or 25.Qxd5 Kxh7) 25... Qb6+ and White’s advantage has evaporated.

## **25.Rb1+—**

Now White has the game back in hand, as a winning ending is forced.

**25...Qd4+ 26.Qxd4 Nxd4 27.Bg6 Bf5**

If this move hadn't been there, Black could have resigned.

**28.Rxb7 Bxg6 29.Nxg6+ Kh7 30.Nf4?!**

Slightly inaccurate, but sufficient. 30.Ne7 would have denied Black's rook the c-file.

**30...a5 31.Kf2 Rc8 32.Nxd5**

The patient 32.g4 was to be preferred, even if White is still winning: 32...a4 33.Rb4 Rc4 34.Nxd5+.

**32...Rc2+ 33.Ke3 Ne2 34.a4?!**

Yet another inaccuracy. White is complicating matters. 34.g4 would have made things more clear-cut: 34...Rxa2 of course can be played, but after 35.f4 White is going on a king hunt straightaway, as Karpov so often did with this little material on the board: 35...Ng3 (35...a4 allows us to show just how quickly White's attack can develop: 36.Nf6+ Kh6 37.Ne4 a3 38.Rb6+ g6 (38...Kh7 39.Ng5+ Kg8 40.Rb8#) 39.f5+ 36.f5!+ And with White's crushing threats on the kingside, Black can stop the clocks.

**34...Nxg3 35.Rb5+—**

This ending still is lost for Black, as far as I can tell. White is going to create a passed a-pawn, and there is not enough counterplay available to save Black.

**35...Rxb2 36.Rxa5 Ra2**

36...Nf5+ offers no salvation, either: 37.Kd3 Rf2 38.f4 Rf1 39.Kc4 Nd6+ 40.Kb4 Rb1+ 41.Kc3 Rf1 42.Ra6 Nb7 43.Kd4 Rd1+ 44.Kc4 Rc1+ 45.Nc3+— These moves have not been forced, but the passed a-pawn is always going to have the final say.

36...g5! is a radical try, advancing on the kingside while trying to fix a weakness on f3, and looks like the best chance. Let's look deeper: 37.Nc3 (37.Rc5 Nf1+ 38.Kd3 Rf2 39.Ke4 Ng3+ 40.Ke3 Re2+ 41.Kd4 Rf2 42.Ke5 Rxf3 43.Rc3 g4 is an example of what Black wants.) 37...Nf1+ 38.Kd3 Nh2 39.Rd5! Nxf3 40.a5. Material is equal, but the a-pawn is the hero. 40...Rg1 41.Ke4 Nh4 42.Rd1 Rg3 43.Rc1 Rg4+ 44.Kd5 Ng6 45.Kc5+—

**37.Kf4 Ne2+ 38.Ke5 Ra3**

38...Kg6 doesn't hold out much longer: 39.f4 Ng3 40.Ra6+ Kh5 41.a5+—

**39.f4 Nc3**

The rook ending is lost, but there was no hope left.

**40.Nxc3 Rxc3 41.Rb5 Ra3 42.a5 Ra4**

42...g6 43.f5+—

**43.f5 Ra1 44.Kd6 Kg8 45.Kc7 Kf7 46.Kb7 g6 47.fxg6+ Kxg6 48.a6 Re1 49.a7 Re7+ 50.Ka6**

Black resigned. 1–0

As my good fortune would have it, Matt had held Carl to a draw in the previous round. I was a point away from clinching clear first place with two rounds to go—but even now, I didn't feel comfortable yet. What if I lost tonight? What if I overslept tomorrow? These unpleasant thoughts faded away quickly, though—above all, I was excited for the moment, with a chance to win my first Oregon Championship at hand.

**Michael Moore (1934) –  
Jason Cigan (2196) [E11]  
Oregon Closed 2019 (R8),  
February 17, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]**

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4**

Given the stakes, I wanted to play a long, strategic game rather than hazard the forest of opening theory that is the Grunfeld. Besides, my opponent is a Grunfeld player himself.

**4.Bd2**

This modest move is, in my view, underrated. White is not trying to refute the Nimzo, but is aiming to develop flexibly without letting his pawn structure be damaged. Almost any response is playable for Black, but this line often leads to complex and original play.

**4...0–0**

There is nothing remotely wrong with a simple move like 4...d5. However, many Nimzo-Indian players rebel against the idea of an early ...d7-d5, considering entering a rock-solid Queen's Gambit Declined structure to be a waste of the dynamism the Nimzo offers.

**5.Nf3 c5**

Here I was following a recommendation by GM Michael Roiz from his recent repertoire book, "Grandmaster Repertoire: the Nimzo-Indian." As will be seen, this game helped advance the theory of his lines!

**6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 b6 8.Bd3**



*Position after 8.Bd3*

**8...Ba6**

Black is playing ambitiously, targeting the White central pawns. Roiz assesses all roads from here as advantageous for Black, but he missed an important detail.

**9.0–0?!**

It may seem harsh to evaluate a normal move like this negatively, but White missed a chance to radically alter the course of the game and question Black's entire concept. 9.a3 White starts by kicking away the bishop, as capturing on c3 would be a massive concession. 9...Be7 10.g4!N



*(Diagram-analysis after 10.g4)*

This shocking move is typical of modern-day opening play. At the time of writing, at least two games have been played at the Shamkir Chess 2019 super-tournament with an early g4 like this in a queen's pawn game. What makes this case unusual is that the center is still open and unresolved, meaning White's aggression has to withstand all of Black's possible central stances in order to be sound. It seems that it does. 10...Nxg4 is clearly most principled. This line requires practical tests and deep computer analysis, but I believe White's attack provides adequate compensation for the pawn, and is very dangerous in a practical game: (10...d5 is met by 11.g5 Nh5 12.Ne5, when it will take intense silicon scrutiny to judge whether or not Black is holding on.; 10...Bb7 11.g5 Nh5 12.h4, and I am a believer in White's chances. Note that it is still safe for him to castle short if needed.) 11.Qe2 f5 12.0–0–0 Nc6 13.Kb1, and I would never want to play as Black here against a well-prepared opponent.

**9...d5**

Now Black is the one fighting for the advantage already. His pressure against the center is clear, while White doesn't have many active ideas.

**10.b3 Nc6 11.a3 Be7 12.Be3**

This move is a bit passive. 12.Bg5 tries a bit harder to change the course of the game: 12...dxc4 13.bxc4 Na5 Black remains better.

**12...dxc4?!**

I was too hasty here. It was more principled to retain the tension. 12...Rc8 The capture on c4 will always be available later. Black improves his pieces in the meantime. 13.Rc1 Na5

**13.bxc4 Rc8 14.Qe2**

Now that Black has revealed his plan of





Michael Moore. Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

creating hanging pawns to target, White has more time to properly defend them.

#### 14...Na5

Black had a surprising try in 14...Bxc4!? 15.Bxc4 Na5 I looked at this a bit, but was unconvinced it was better than the game line: 16.Bxe6 fxe6 17.Bd2 Qd7 I would rather be Black here.

#### 15.Nb5 Bxb5

The correct decision. Black, in true Nimzo fashion, judges that a ruined pawn structure is worth ceding the bishop pair for.

#### 16.cxb5 Qd5

An amusing situation: White has the only light-square bishop, yet Black controls the light squares.

#### 17.Ne5 Ne4 18.Qg4 f5 19.Bxe4 fxe4

All captures available were about equally good, but I prioritized keeping my well-placed queen on the board.

#### 20.Rac1 Bf6 21.Bf4?!

White allows a tactic, though it is difficult to spot.



Position after 21.Bf4

#### 21...Nb3?!

It is only easy to see a tactic like this in hindsight: 21...Rxc1! 22.Rxc1 Nb3

23.Rd1 h5! The point. Black drives the queen away from its attack on e6, and will collect the vital d4 pawn. 24.Qxh5 (24.Qh3? g5 25.Be3 Bxe5-+) 24...Nxd4

#### 22.Rcd1 Rfe8 23.Nc6 Nxd4

Black has achieved one of the primary goals in isolani positions: the capture of the sickly pawn. White gains some vague compensation, as the extra pawn is not impressive, but Black is calling the shots.

#### 24.Be3?!

24.Nxd4 Bxd4 25.Bh6 Rc7 26.Be3+ was a better way to fight back.

#### 24...e5?!

24...Qf5! was preferable.

#### 25.a4 Rc7 26.Bg5?!

White exchanges a set of pieces that was better left standing. Furthermore, Black gets another chance to improve his structure. 26.Rfe1, preserving the status quo, would have limited Black's advantage.

#### 26...Bxg5 27.Qxg5 Qc5

Now Black is prepared to scoop up another pawn on c6. White has no interest in improving Black's structure by taking on d4, but his desire for an alternative led him to be overly optimistic.

#### 28.Nxe5?!

On no level is this a tactic. Black simply wins a piece.

#### 28...Ne2+

The quickest way to show White that he has blundered. Other moves won as well, such as ...Nc2 or ...Qxe5 (followed by ...Ne2+).

#### 29.Kh1 Qxe5 0-1

Woody Allen once said, "80% of success in life is showing up." On this day, showing up was 100% of success: by shaking hands with Lennart and allowing him to start my clock, I officially clinched the state championship! I do not know what procedure would have been invoked if I had somehow forfeited my final game, but I wanted no part of it. Free from any obligation to solidify my standing, I set out to play a standard game of chess. No quick draw, no reckless experimentation. Lennart, as it happens, had an excellent tournament, taking clear third place.

Jason Cigan (2196) –  
Lennart Bjorksten (2170) [E33]  
Oregon Closed 2019 (R9),  
February 18, 2019  
[Jason Cigan]

#### 1.d4

1.e4 was on vacation today.

#### 1...Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3

As I've noted before—play becomes strategically unbalanced at an early stage in the Nimzo-Indian. Entering it is not only a good way to strive for the full point with Black, but with White as well—and for this reason, I had prepared it for this game, anticipating that the title race could come down to the wire.

#### 3...Bb4 4.Qc2

One of five different moves I've played here in my tournament career. Since the Nimzo holds up for Black against every try, White might as well play whatever line he likes best.

#### 4...Nc6

This line is not considered critical, but it is solid and has the right to exist. Black is taking a dark-square approach to the position, aiming to exchange his bishop on c3 when asked to, then arrange his central pawns on d6 and e5. We have seen an analogous strategy from Black in my game from the fourth round—as before, the two bishops are the most telling feature in the resulting position.

#### 5.Nf3 d6 6.Bd2 0-0 7.a3 Bxc3 8.Bxc3 Qe7 9.e3 a5 10.Nd2

10.Be2 would be more standard: 10...e5 11.dxe5 dxe5 12.h3 a4 13.0-0 Re8 14.Rad1± when White's bishops tip the scales slightly in his favor.

#### 10...e5 11.d5 Nb8

11...Nd4! would have asked difficult questions: 12.Qb1 Bd7 13.Bd3 b5!∞ is one example of how Black finds active play.

#### 12.Bd3

White can often ignore Black's queenside plans in such lines, focusing his attention on a quick f-pawn rush to open lines toward the Black king.

#### 12...Nbd7 13.b4

In hindsight, I see some wisdom to the more restrained 13.b3!?: 13...Nc5 14.0-0 Nxd3 15.Qxd3 Nd7 16.Qc2 c6 17.e4± when Black has a rather passive King's Indian structure.

#### 13...axb4 14.axb4 Rxa1+ 15.Bxa1 b5!

This type of undermining of the White light squares and pawn structure should be in every player's positional toolbox. It occurs rather often in the Bogó-Indian, Nimzo-Indian, or Catalan, often as a positional pawn sacrifice.

#### 16.e4

White does well to stay solid in the center. 16.cxb5 Nxd5 17.Bxh7+ Kh8∞ and Black has succeeded in creating a mess.

#### 16...Nh5?!

A clever approach. Rather than take on c4 and passively bolster the weak c7-pawn,

Black offers a pawn.

### 17.cxb5?!

In hindsight, I am not so keen on this. The b5-pawn is not so important, and White should even welcome Black to take on c4. 17.g3! is more promising, although play remains sharp: 17...f5! 18.exf5 Nb6 19.c5!? Nxd5 20.Bxb5 Bxf5 21.Qb3± and White seems to be doing better amid the complications.



Position after 17.cxb5

### 17...Nf4?

Black menaces d3 and g2. What could be more natural? Yet this move is a mistake. 17...Nb6! was called for: 18.g3 (A point is that after 18.0-0? Nf4! arrives with much greater force: 19.Kh1 f5 20.f3 h5± and White's extra pawn and bishop pair both look trivial, as Black is hunting bigger game on the kingside.) 18...Bh3 (18...f5!?) 19.Be2 (19.Nf1 f5!∞) 19...g6±

### 18.Bf1

The bishop is quite well-placed on its original square, it transpires. Black is now not ready for ...f5.

### 18...Nb6 19.g3 Nh3 20.Bg2?!

Once again, ...f5 is not available to Black. But that is all White's last move has to recommend it. 20.Bb2!, a silicon suggestion, was much stronger: 20...Qg5 (20...h6 21.f3 h5 22.Bc1± and White has consolidated his pluses.) 21.Bxh3 Bxh3 22.Qxc7±

### 20...g5?!

A reckless move. Black is drifting. 20...Qe8! and Black is hitting White where it hurts: on the light squares. 21.Qc6 Bd7 22.Qxc7 Qa8∞.

### 21.Nf1

White is now going to put the clamps on f5.

### 21...h5?!

Doubling down on a faulty plan. 21...Qe8 is now met by 22.Qe2 Bd7 23.Ne3 Qa8 (23...Bxb5 24.Qc2±) 24.Bc3±, but this is the way Black should play.

### 22.Ne3 g4 23.Bxh3 gxh3

It is easy to be casual about this transaction on h3—"White castles safely"—but a crucial imbalance has arisen: the opposite-colored bishops. Play is set to become sharp, and if I had paid proper attention to the new key feature of the game, perhaps I would have fared better.

### 24.0-0 f5!?

A last resort. However, it bears fruit, as my ensuing play justifies this break.



Position after 24...f5

### 25.exf5?!

An initial misstep. 25.f4! leads to a won position. There are many possible variations, but the principles underlying the move are most salient: White is striving for the initiative on the dark squares, where Black is playing down a piece. 25...fxe4, for instance, could lead to (25...exf4 allows White to whip up a vicious attack: 26.Rxf4 fxe4 27.Rxe4 Qh7 28.Re7!!)

We are heading far off the main game, but I could not resist including this beautiful shot. 28...Rf1+ (28...Qxc2 29.Rg7+ Kh8 30.Nxc2+-) 29.Kxf1 Qxe7 30.Qg6+ Kf8 31.Bf6 Qf7 32.Qh6+ Ke8 33.Qh8+ Qf8 34.Qxh5+ Qf7 35.Qh8+ Qf8 36.Qxf8+ Kxf8 37.Bd4+-) 26.Qxe4 Qh7 27.Qxh7+

Kxh7 28.Rc1+-

### 25...Qf7?

Black gives White another chance to achieve a won game. 25...Qh7 was the consistent continuation: 26.Rc1 Bxf5 27.Nxf5 Qxf5 28.Qxf5 Rxf5 29.Rxc7 e4±

### 26.Rc1??

White entirely misses the mark, misjudging a drawn ending as somehow favorable. 26.f6+- is a clean kill, as White's f-pawn not only lives on, but is driving a wedge in the Black army.

### 26...Nxd5 27.Nxd5 Qxd5 28.Qc4 Qxc4 29.Rxc4 Bd7

White has nothing. Black, if anyone, holds the initiative.

### 30.Rxc7 Bxb5

Drawn by agreement, on Black's proposal.

1/2-1/2



Lennart Bjorksten.  
Photo credit: Andrei Botez.

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# Washington President's Cup

By Travis Olson

The Washington President's Cup was held February 16-17 at the Seattle Chess Club. It was originally supposed to be held a week earlier, but had to be postponed due to heavy snow. I was happy to become the Tournament Director (TD) for this prestigious event, making sure the event ran smoothly and without a hitch, and working behind the scenes to resolve issues and print out pairings. So here is my first-hand report:

The five-round Swiss attracted a moderately large field of players, with 19 playing in the Open section, and another 18 playing in the Reserve (U1600) section. A few hoped to win the coveted seed into the 2020 Washington Invitational, or at least scoop up a hefty (or modest) cash prize. Others vied to have a good time and perhaps get some interesting games. Some players, many of whom were very young and rapidly-improving, came for the experience of stronger competition. As a result, 13 of the 19 players in the Open section chose to play up a section! This despite their ratings being below the reserve section cutoff of 1600.

There were also some brand-new US Chess players who attended. Young adult David Omofonma played in the Open Section, winning his first ever US Chess rated game against Lavindu Devadithya. In the Reserve section was Sarah Lawrence, another young adult with some previous scholastic experience. She managed to play her first four US Chess games without a loss!

In the Reserve section, the hopeful Aaron (*not Bobby*) Fischer showed great promise, as he went 3-0 after the first three rounds, gaining the clear lead going into round four. Unfortunately, however, he was bested by the young and up-and-coming Michael Shapiro, sitting at 3.5-0.5 after round four. With one round to go, Sarah Lawrence (mentioned earlier) had drawn her first two games, and had

won her last two, putting her at 3-1. As an unrated player, her performance was better than any other player in her section at this point, except for one... So it was only fitting that she face Michael Shapiro, the section leader, in the final round.

In the final game of the Reserve section, Michael Shapiro (with the black pieces) found himself up a bishop in the late middle-game. But Sarah Lawrence (with the white pieces) had two pawns for the piece, and had Michael staring at a wall of pawns. Both sides had a queen and rook, but in the end, Michael Shapiro broke through, winning clear first in the Reserve and handing Sarah her first loss in US Chess play. Congratulations to both players for their astounding efforts!

But the big story came from the Open section. Going into the final round, only four players were able to qualify for first place, and with it, the seed into the 2020 Invitational. They were, in tiebreak order, Teddy Roberts (3.5), Brian Lee (3.5), Daniel Qian (3.0), and Silas Lainson (3.0).

Now with myself being a playoff enthusiast, and not being a fan of tiebreaks to decide the ultimate winner as in some previous years (tiebreaks should be used to seed the playoffs in my opinion, like in the NFL), I had figured out playoff formats for every scenario that could happen. In round five on board one, Brian Lee (with White) appeared to have a massive kingside attack against Teddy Roberts (Black). Many spectators thought that the tournament would be decided then and there. On board two, Daniel Qian used his tactical abilities to win material, and then again to liquidate into an easily winning endgame, getting the win as Black against Austin Liu. A little later, Silas Lainson on board three was not deterred by the still-pending result on board one. Having traveled all the way from Bellingham, Silas was determined not to go back empty-handed. Also with the black pieces, he pressed and got the win against Pranav Kurungod Anoop!

That left one game remaining. On board one, Brian Lee's attack seemed to



Round five, the top boards.  
Photo credit: Travis Olson.

fizzle out, due to some handy resources found by Teddy Roberts, and the players traded off into a minor piece endgame, with both sides having passed pawns. As time passed, many games finished, and both Daniel and Silas eagerly waited to learn their fate. With only two games remaining in the tournament, Brian and Teddy agreed to a draw.

Now with the regular tournament ending in a four-way tie, Teddy, Brian, Daniel, and Silas would be seeded into a knockout bracket. Solkoff, Cumulative, and Cumulative of Opposition tiebreaks would determine who would get the one, two, three, and four seeds. Then one would play four and two would play three. The winners of those matches would face off in the finals, and the winner of that match would get the seed. Each match would consist of two blitz games of G/5; d3, switching colors in-between. In the event of a tied match, an Armageddon game, with White having five minutes and Black bidding on their starting time, would decide who moved on. The player with the black pieces would move on if that game was drawn, justifying starting with less time for the game.

So as the tiebreaks yielded, Brian played Daniel and Silas played Teddy

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in the first round. Brian quickly took down Daniel in the first two blitz games. Daniel, despite being the highest-rated player of the four, said afterward that blitz was not his strong suit. Teddy took a more conservative approach than Brian, drawing the first blitz game against Silas. Silas, despite being the lowest regular-rated player, is a strong blitz and rapid player. In a tough second game fraught with distractions, Teddy beat Silas in a back-and-forth scramble.

Now the finals were set. Brian Lee and Teddy Roberts battling for the seed. Besides the families of Brian and Teddy, I was relieved that Ralph Anthony, an impartial player, was there to witness. In the first game, Teddy and Brian agreed to a draw in a queen and pawn endgame. It all came down to this final game. The winner would get the seed. If the game were a draw, we would go to Armageddon. In a tense battle, Teddy found himself up a rook, and later converted the game, declining mate in one to instead claim a win on time.

Congratulations to Teddy Roberts, for being seeded into the 2020 Washington Invitational, and also to Brian, Silas, and Daniel for participating in the playoff! In the Open section, these four players split the first, second, third, and U1800 prizes (4.0/5), each walking away with \$195. The U1600 prize in the Open section was split between Felicity Wang and Kyle Zhang (3.0), each getting \$50.

In the Reserve section Michael Shapiro (4.5/5) took first prize, worth \$220. Second place went to Aaron Fischer (4.0), who got \$180. Third place was another clear finisher; Miles Hamilton-Sommer (3.5) got \$128 for his efforts. The U1400 and U1200/Unrated prizes were split between five players, each with 3.0/5, and each receiving \$38.40. In no particular order, they were Angela Chen, Sarah Lawrence, Meera Shanmugam, Aditya Ramkumar, and Shelton Clemons.

Overall, it was a very satisfying tournament. Hopefully (but not likely) next year's President's Cup will be even more exciting!



*Playoff semifinal: Teddy vs Silas. Photo credit: Travis Olson.*

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**Registration:** Saturday 8:30-9:30 AM for 3-day schedule. Sunday 8:00-8:30 AM for 2-day schedule. Three half-point byes available at registration or before end of round 2. Play any two days, if taking three half-point byes. Late registrations after 9:30 AM Saturday or 8:30 AM Sunday may receive half-point byes for first round.

**Rounds:** 3-day schedule: Sat 10:00 AM, 12:30 PM and 6:00 PM, Sun 11:00 AM and 6:00 PM, Mon 9:30 AM and 3:30 PM. 2-day schedule: Sun 9:00 AM, 10:45 AM, 1:00 PM, 2:45 PM, then join 3-day schedule with round 5 at 6:00 PM. WCF annual meeting and elections at 2:00 PM Monday, May 27, 2019.

**Time Controls:** 3-day schedule: G/40 with 10-second delay (round 1), rounds 2-7 40/120 and SD/30 with 10-second delay. 2-day schedule: G/40 with 10-second delay (rounds 1-4), rounds 5-7 same as 3-day schedule. Please bring tournament chess set, board, and digital clock.

**Miscellaneous:** Current US Chess membership and WCF/OCF/ICA membership required in all sections. Other States Accepted. Memberships may be paid at time of registration. NW Grand Prix event. US Chess Grand Prix Points: 60. US Chess Junior Grand Prix. No Smoking. No Computers. Wheelchair accessible.

**Hotel Info/Rates:** \$144 King, \$154 Queen, single or double occupancy. Call (425) 775-2500, request the Washington Chess Federation block. Group ID: 404873. Cut-off date for reservations at the discount is May 10, 2019 at 5:00 PM PDT.

**Washington Open Blitz Championship:** Sun 05/26 at 9:00 PM. Format: 5 round Double Swiss in one section. Registration: 8:00-8:45 PM. Rounds: 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30 and 11:00 PM. TC: G/5 d0. EF: \$25. Prize Fund: \$400/b20. 1st \$130, 2nd \$90, 1st U2000 \$60, 1st U1700/Unrated \$60, 1st U1400 \$60. US Chess Blitz rated. Current US Chess and WCF/OCF/ICA memberships required.

**Washington Open G/45 Championship:** Mon 05/27 at 11:30 AM. Format: 4 round Swiss in one section. Registration: 10:30-11:15 AM. Rounds: 11:30, 1:30, 3:30, and 5:30 PM. TC: G/45 d0. EF: \$20. Prize Fund: \$240/b15. 1st \$80, 2nd \$55, 1st U2000 \$35, 1st U1700/Unrated \$35, 1st U1400 \$35. US Chess Dual rated. Current US Chess and WCF/OCF/ICA memberships required.

# The Game That Matters

By Jeffrey Roland

Boise, Idaho—April 8, 2019

Per an email to BCC President Jamie Lang dated January 10, 2019 (and this is an exact copy and paste):

Hello Jamie,

Hi, my name is Jarrod Tavares. I am in a play-all-50 states traveling quest and I am wondering if it might be possible to set up a rated game or match at your club on the date in the subject line. My current rating is 1955, my potential opponent's strength is not relevant to me, and I can cover any expenses incurred such as USCF renewal for my opponent and rating fees. I am also a Club TD myself and can be the TD present for the match myself if (if you are the sponsoring affiliate) none other are available. Please let me know.

Thanks,

Jarrod

The above email might have gone unnoticed by some—possibly even most people. But Jamie Lang and I wanted to move forward and make this happen. For all who don't know, Jamie Lang is President and Secretary, and I am Vice President and Treasurer of the Boise Chess Club (BCC). Since we reformed and reinvented the BCC back in 2014, there have been 20 BCC Tournaments, one simultaneous exhibition by David Lucky (each event covered in *Northwest Chess*), and now this rated game!

We actually didn't waste any time working out the details of the game, and we sent out an email to our email list to see who was interested in playing. The first person to respond to the email was at that time the Idaho State Chess Champion Alex Machin, and there were several others who answered the call as well... but there could be only one! At some point about a month before the game was set to happen, we finally decided to award the honor of playing Jarrod to Alex.

ICA volunteered the use and manning of the DGT Board that has become so popular with ICA people lately. Alise Pemsler and Jef Leifeste are to be commended for handling this! Our own games editor Ralph Dubisch was even following the game live at one point from a Dollar Store in California!! Some people actually watched the game from their homes and told us how much they enjoyed watching.

Well, we were a bit nervous about



Jarrod Tavares. Photo credit: Jeffrey Roland.

meeting this player from New York... what would he be like? We had only our imagination... we had not seen his picture (didn't even know how old he was; now we know he was 34 years old at the time of play) or knew anything about him. Well, Monday, April 8 finally came, and he walked into All About Games and instantly charmed us all with his great sense of humor, attitude, and demeanor. I liked hearing his accent and a bit of his

story, and it was very exciting that we were having this rated game in our club after a drought of eight months since our last event. Jarrod mentioned he had taken second place at the Montana Open about a week prior. Alex Machin (who was 26 years old at the time of play) arrived soon after Jarrod did.

Speaking about accents, at one point, I asked him if he wanted a pen, and he couldn't understand what I was saying...





(L) Jarrod Tavares and Alex Machin. Photo credit: Jeffrey Roland.

finally, he understood... “Oh, pen! You have an accent!” Well, that just goes to show you... we all think we don’t have an accent until someone from a different part of the country comes and then you realize it’s all relative... we thought *he* had the accent, when all along, maybe it was us (or me!)

I was the chief tournament director. The game was to be rated by US Chess, and the time control was to be game/90 plus 30 seconds increment per move. The game was to start at 5 PM and All About Games closes at 10 PM so the evening was definitely “All About THIS Game” in a way. Still we held a regular club meeting along side in a different part of the room; players were very interested in the progress of the game as the evening wore on.

To spell out how the colors the players would play were chosen, we flipped a quarter. Jarrod won the coin toss, it was heads, and he wasted no time choosing the white pieces!

I wish to thank the players for putting on a great game, to All About Games for hosting the event, to the ICA, specifically Alise Pemsler and Jef Leifeste, for the use of the DGT Board to broadcast the game

live as it was happening over the Internet. And also to the BCC spectators who were very respectful and interested in the game, but mostly to Jamie Lang, who did a fantastic job coordinating every aspect of this event.

I felt this event was given the time and attention one could and should expect from even a much larger grand prix event... Yet there was no money for prizes, no entry fees, no membership requirements (other than US Chess for rating), it was just a game with no stakes...other than to checkmate the opponent’s king! So in all ways that matter, this game captured the true spirit of the game of chess. Jarrod Tavares came all the way from Long Island, New York to play a rated game in our club. He loved it, and we loved it!

I guess to paraphrase something I learned as a child from Horton Hears A Who by Dr. Suess, “Chess is chess, no matter how small...” well, I think you get the idea.

Oh, by the way, I believe Idaho makes state number 24 for Jarrod! So he’s about half-way to his goal. We wish him all the best and hope he liked Idaho and that we see him again in the future!

**Jarrod Tavares (1929) – Alex Machin (1866) [C11]**  
Boise Chess Club Rated G90+30  
Boise, ID (R1), April 8, 2019  
[Ralph Dubisch]

**1.e4 e6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6**

White is certainly trying to make the position diverge from normal French lines. Here I would be quite tempted to take him up on the offer with 3...d4 4.Ne2 c5 5.d3 Nc6.

**4.exd5 Nxd5**



Position after 4...Nxd5

The beginning of a reasonable, but in this case unfortunate, opening plan to recapture on d5 with pieces and hope for play on the long diagonal. 4...exd5 leads to an Exchange French and equality.

#### 5.d4 Be7

5...Nxc3

#### 6.Bd3 0-0 7.Bd2?!

7.Nxd5 exd5± The exchange of queen knight for king knight is somewhat in White's favor in Exchange French positions.

#### 7...b6

Black could try to push the d3-bishop from its aggressive post: 7...Nb4 8.Be2

#### 8.Nxd5

White takes advantage of Black's apparent intent to develop the bishop to b7.



Position after 8.Nxd5

#### 8...Qxd5

Black is understandably reluctant to block the diagonal. 8...exd5 9.0-0 Ba6 has the advantage of removing the dangerous attacking piece on d3, though White must still have some edge. 10.Bxa6 Nxa6 11.Qe2 Nb4 12.Rae1 Re8 13.c3 Nc6 14.Qd3±, for example.

#### 9.c4 Qd8

9...Qd6!?, which allows Black to interpose with a knight on c6 if necessary: 10.Be4 Nc6!?, with a slightly surprising tactical justification if White tries 11.c5 Qd7 12.Ne5? Qxd4!

#### 10.Qc2

10.Be4 c6 11.0-0 also clearly favors White, with more space, better development, and excellent central control.

#### 10...g6

Creates an obvious target, but 10...f5 and 10...h6 also fail to inspire confidence.

#### 11.0-0-0 Bb7



Position after 11...Bb7

#### 12.h4

White doesn't really need to be in such a rush. Watching the game live on-line, I expected 12.Be4 Bxe4 (12...c6 13.Bh6±; 12...Nc6 13.d5 exd5 14.Bxd5±; 12...Qc8 13.h4 with a huge attack at no cost.) 13.Qxc4 Nd7 with very pleasant prospects for White.

#### 12...Nd7??

There's no time for this. Black must snatch whatever concessions he can get away with, then hang on for dear life by his fingernails. Necessary: 12...Bxf3! 13.gxf3 Nc6! (13...Bxh4? 14.Be4 c6 15.Rh2 and 13...Qxd4? 14.h5 just open too many attacking lines toward the black king with both white bishops strafing the target zone.) 14.Bc3 Nxd4!? (An exchange sac to dampen White's attacking chances. Also possible is 14...Nb4!?) 15.Bxd4 Qxd4 16.Be4 Qf6 17.Bxa8 Rxa8 18.Qe4±

#### 13.h5 f5

Black apparently pinned his hopes on putting this extra blocker on the b1-h7 diagonal, but it simply doesn't work. Nothing does here.

#### 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.Rde1

Stockfish points out 15.d5! exd5 16.Rh6! is crushing.

#### 15...e5 16.Nxe5

Here the engine finds the fancy 16.e5!+-

#### 16...Nxe5 17.dxe5 Qd7



Position after 17...Qd7

#### 18.Bc3

18.e6! Qd6 19.Bc3 Bf6 20.e7 Rfe8 21.c5! bxc5 22.Bc4+ Kg7 23.Re6 Qf4+ 24.Bd2 Qd4 25.Bh6+. Crushing and beautiful. A good illustration of opening lines for the attack.

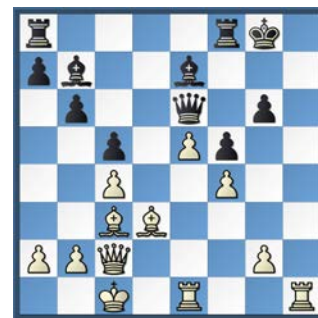
#### 18...Qe6 19.f4 c5

19...Kg7 is objectively "better," but still, of course, completely losing.

[Diagram top of next column]

#### 20.Rh6

20.g4! Bxh1 21.Rxh1 Kg7 (21...fxg4 22.Qh2 Kf7 23.f5!, since 23...gxf5 24.Qh5+ Qg6 25.e6+) 22.gxf5 Rxf5 (22...gxf5 23.Qg2+ Qg6 (23...Kf7 24.Rh7+ (Or 24.Bxf5!, Stockfish.) 24...Ke8 25.Qxa8+



Position after 19...c5

Bd8 26.Be2+-) 24.e6+ Bf6 25.Qb7+ Kg8 26.Bxf6) 23.Bxf5 Qxf5 (23...gxf5 24.Qg2+) 24.e6+ Bf6 25.Qxf5 gxf5 26.Rg1+-

#### 20...Kg7 21.Reh1 Rh8 22.Rxh8 Rxh8 23.Rxh8 Kxh8 24.g4! Bc8

24...Kg8 25.gxf5 gxf5 26.Bxf5 Qxc4 27.Qh2 Qf1+ 28.Kc2 Qg2+ Yay! Black can reach a totally lost ending!

#### 25.gxf5 gxf5 26.Bxf5! Qxf5 27.e6+

A nice and rather unusual discovered check interference to wrap things up.

1-0



The final position of the game as viewed on an iPhone.



# Boise Chess Club by Glen O'Harra

At All About Games, in a small alcove,  
People gather, play game they love.

To this stage, they will shuffle,  
To engage their mental muscle.

Old men with grizzled faces,  
Pull out chairs, take their places.

Boards rolled out like pie shell dough,  
Chess skills will shrewdly show.

With flare display opening theory,  
If leers stare, they grow weary.

Sturdy castles shoved with finger,  
Pensive looks on positions linger.

All hope to win, all well-wishers,  
There aren't any Bobby Fischers.

Pawns pushed in gentle manner,  
Contestants play with friendly banter.

Old farts mutter under breath,  
Battle's serious, it's life or death!

Pins, skewers, bishops sack,  
There's no taking dumb moves back!

Others choke, lose their nerve,  
Around skulk, games observe.

Dumb blunders elicit groans,  
Kings asunder torn from thrones!

Hank hauls in a huge chess set,  
Walking Wikipedia with mate threat.

Then there's Bill of lottery fame,  
Kibitzes yours and his own game.

Tyler comes with special treat,  
Thrashing him, is victory sweet!

Jesse nervous, wrings his shirt,  
To vanquish him, stay alert.

Michael wears a boyish grin,  
Don't be fooled, underestimate him.

There's friendly G.M. Tom,  
Pushes wood with cool aplomb.

Brian plays without expression,  
I.T.'s his profession.

If across from Glen you sit,  
Please excuse his dry wit.

Whiskers grow in wild profusion,  
Winning chess, a mild delusion!

Chelsea wears a hat of yarn,  
Skillfully moves with feminine charm.

Alex is the one to beat,  
Strolls in, beard trimmed neat.

He is not one to mock,  
With careless play, cleans your clock!

Corey plays with careful grace,  
Putting players in their place.

Store is closing, time for bragging,  
Heads held high, some shoulders sagging.

Some outfoxed, o'er brilliancies gloat.  
Games are boxes, they reach for coat.

Time to go, grab some grub,  
Another night at Boise Chess Club!

# The 2019 Glen Buckendorf/Buz Eddy Memorial Northwest Grand Prix

**Murlin Varner, Administrator**

mevj54@outlook.com

Turmoil. A part of life. A part of everything, especially when a variety of humans are involved. Lately, we have been dealing with turmoil in Northwest Chess. And it includes the Grand Prix.

You may notice the standings look different. You may notice you have fewer points than you expected, or none at all. This is due to the fact that as of April 1st, the Oregon Chess Federation has withdrawn from the Northwest Chess compact. We are back down to two states, just as we were through the 1980s and 1990s. But for the first time in the fifty years I have been involved in this association, Oregon is not one of those states. As a result, the Grand Prix funds contributed by the Portland Chess Club have been refunded, and Oregon events no longer count in our standings. For me personally, this means I lost the points I earned at the Neil Dale Memorial in January. It means a loss for Portland, as I have cancelled two trips there as a result, but a gain for Spokane, where I will be traveling soon for the second time this year. Perhaps Boise this summer.

I retired from teaching last June and decided that this year I was going to make an effort to compete in the Grand Prix again. To that end, I have set a goal of playing at least twice a month in Grand Prix events. This is a pace of play that I have been unable to meet over the past decade or so, but now is the time to get back to what I did as a teenager. Without the acne and angst.

When I first started playing chess, I was totally unaware of the tournament scene. It was just a game I did well and could play every day at lunch. About 1969, my horizons broadened, first with team competitions at my high school and then with trips to scholastic and open chess tournaments. I owe my introduction to this world to people like Rusty Miller, John Wise and Larry Allyn and his family. Back then, finding a tournament in Central Washington wasn't hard, and I played in Wenatchee, Yakima, Ellensburg, Waterville, Ephrata, Moses Lake, Brewster, Cashmere and Peshastin. (We need new organizers in that area so this can happen again.)

I also started subscribing to a magazine, Northwest Chess. At the time, there were four entities in the group, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and British Columbia. It was great to read about all these people playing serious chess all over the place. When I finally broke out of my Central Washington shell, it was to attend the Oregon Open in Portland, enticed by the advertisement in NWC. I had a great time and even won a few games. I think the most fun I had reading the magazine was following the antics of those crazy Canadians. They seemed to have a lot of fun, especially at each others' expense.

Over time, British Columbia went away, followed a few years later by Idaho. I was very happy when Idaho rejoined us in 2012. It was just like old times (although without Nigel Fishbrook). Through all the years in between, it was always Washington and Oregon, the solid foundation of two sister states operating for their joint benefit. We formed agreements that our tournaments wouldn't step on each other, even after the demise of the US Chess schedule clearing houses. It is my hope that we can still treat each other's traditional dates with respect, but for lesser events, it is going to be hard to manage, since Oregon will no longer be advertising in NWC or appearing on the web site. It will take more work to attend Oregon events, even for Oregonians. The schedule for Oregon will no longer appear in your mailbox every month. For someone like me, who usually only attends Grand Prix events, there is no longer any motivation to go to Portland. I find this sad. But, history is not important to everyone, and an affiliation which had lasted over a half century is now over, at least for the present. The Oregon Chess Federation, of which I once was a member, has their annual meeting at the Oregon Open over Labor Day weekend, and that meeting could be interesting. Time will tell.

The stats below represent all WA and ID GP events through March 29.

## 2019 Memorial Northwest Grand Prix Standings

Idaho			Washington			Other Places					
last	first	pts.	last	first	pts.	last	first	state	pts.		
			Masters								
			1	Pupols	Viktors	35.5	1	Raptis	Nick	OR	19.5
			2	Schill	William J	11.5	2	Donaldson	W John	CA	18.0
M/X/Class A			Experts								
			1	Cambareri	Michael E	19.5	1	Erickson	Mark J		
			2	Bodie	Brad	15.0	2	Fisette	Robert		
			3	Maki	James J	9.0	2	Leslie	Cameron D		
			4	Xu	Kevin	7.0	4	Arganian	David G		
			4	Nathan	Jacob A	7.0	5	Frantz	Joseph K		



Idaho			Washington			Other Places						
last	first	pts.	last	first	pts.	last	first	state	pts.			
Class B			Class A									
1	Geyman	Jonathan P	18.0	1	Roberts	Theodore (Teddy)	18.0	1	Strickland	Wilton	MT	18.0
2	Herr	Griffin G	15.0	1	Casey	Garrett W	18.0	2	Holloran	William T, III	OR	16.5
3	Martonick	Nick	15.0	1	Qian	Daniel	18.0	2	Yeo	Austin S	OR	16.5
4	Daigle	Adrian P	12.0	4	Kaelin	Alex	17.0	4	Vogel	Benjamin	MD	15.0
5	Three tied at		6.0	4	O'Gorman	Peter J	17.0	4	Carpenter	Romie G	MT	15.0
Class C			Class B									
1	Booth	Tom R	6.0	1	Buck	Stephen J	44.0	1	Stacey	Darren	MT	15.0
2	Porth	Desmond	5.5	2	Lainson	Silas	43.0	1	McCourt	Daniel J	MT	15.0
2	Leifeste	Bryce	5.5	3	Anthony	Ralph J	34.5	1	Muller	Michael	MT	15.0
4	Zeng	Forrest	5.0	4	Lee	Brian	30.0	4	Caldwell	Scott	MT	13.5
5	Ang	Ching-E N	3.5	5	Goktepe	Derin	26.0					
Class D			Class C									
1	Porth	Adam	17.5	1	Wang	Felicity	29.0	1	Strong	Murray	MT	13.5
2	Glass	Evan M	12.0	1	Varner	Murlin E	29.0					
3	Merry	William A F	10.5	3	Singh	Saket	27.0					
3	Bodie	Arlene	10.5	4	Johnson	Cleveland R	25.5					
5	Zaklan	David A	5.0	5	Li	Edward	22.5					
Class E and Below			Class D And Below									
1	Porth	Darwin A	14.5	1	Louie	Henry S	32.0	1	Carlino	Daniel	MT	10.5
2	Daigle	Micah J	12.0	2	Ruff	Lois A	25.5	2	Miller	Frank E	MT	9.0
2	Sherwood	Jax L	12.0	3	Solt	Ian	23.5					
4	Callen	Gregory D	9.0	4	Clemons	Shelton	21.0					
5	Geyman	Josiah B	7.5	5	Two Tied at		19.5					
Overall Leaders, by State												
1	Cambareri	Michael E	19.5	1	Buck	Stephen J	44.0	There are no prizes for players residing outside of the Northwest Chess area. This information is presented here so our readers can see that we do draw from other states and those players are contributing to our Grand Prix prize fund.				
2	Geyman	Jonathan P	18.0	2	Lainson	Silas	43.0					
3	Porth	Adam	17.5	3	Pupols	Viktors	35.5					
4	Bodie	Brad	15.0	4	Anthony	Ralph J	34.5					
4	Herr	Griffin G	15.0	5	Louie	Henry S	32.0					
4	Martonick	Nick	15.0	6	Lee	Brian	30.0					
7	Porth	Darwin A	14.5	7	Wang	Felicity	29.0					
8	Daigle	Adrian P	12.0	7	Varner	Murlin E	29.0					
8	Glass	Evan M	12.0	9	Singh	Saket	27.0					
8	Daigle	Micah J	12.0	10	Goktepe	Derin	26.0					
8	Sherwood	Jax L	12.0	11	Johnson	Cleveland R	25.5					
12	Merry	William A F	10.5	11	Ruff	Lois A	25.5					
12	Bodie	Arlene	10.5	13	Solt	Ian	23.5					

**Invite Murlin Varner to your next NW Grand Prix event!**

# Seattle Chess Club Tournaments

→ Address ↖  
2150 N 107 St, B85  
Seattle WA 98133 ↙

↗ Infoline ↖  
206-417-5405  
seattlechess.club  
kleistcf@aol.com

Address for Entries  
SCC Tnmt Dir  
2420 S 137 St  
Seattle WA 98168



The SCC online registration system may now be open at [www.seattlechess.club](http://www.seattlechess.club).

## SCC Annual Mtg, Fri. May 3

*Come elect the SCC Board of Directors for the next twelve months!!*

## How to Find the SCC

Look for the Northway Square East Building, just across I-5 from Northgate Mall, with a large sign proclaiming "Northwest Kidney Centers." The main entrance is reached by turning east on N. 107th Street from Meridian Ave. N. The club is on the lower level.

## SCC Fridays

Typical Friday fare is one round of an ongoing tournament (free to SCC members, \$5 per night for others; no prizes) played at a rate of 40/90 followed by 30/60. Drop in for any round!

*Close Ratings II:* 5/3, 10, 17, 24, 31.  
*It's Summertime!:* 6/7, 14, 21, 28.  
*Hot as Hades:* 7/5, 12, 19, 26.

## May 12, June 9

**Format:** 4-SS. **TC:** G/60; d5. **EF:** \$18 (+\$7 fee for non-SCC). **Prizes:** 1st 35%, 2nd 27%, Bottom Half 1st 22%, 2nd 16% (\$10 per EF goes to prize fund). **Reg:** 10:30-11:15 a.m. **Rds:** 11:30-1:50-4:10-6:30. **Byes:** 1 (Rd 3/4-commit at reg.). **Misc:** US Chess, WCF memb. req'd, OSA, NS, NC.

## May 18, June 29

**Format:** 3-RR, 4-plyr sections by rating. **TC:** G/120; d5. **EF:** \$9 (+\$7 fee for non-SCC). **Prizes:** Free entry for future quad. **Reg:** 9:00-9:45 a.m. **Rds:** 10:00-2:15-6:30. **Misc:** US Chess, WCF memb. req'd, OSA, NS, NC.

## June 15

**Format:** 3-SS, 8-plyr sections by rating. **TC:** G/75; +30. **EF:** \$50 (+\$7 fee for non-SCC). **Prize Fund:** \$300 b/8. **Prizes:** \$200-100. **Reg:** 9:00-9:45 a.m. **Rds:** 10-2-6. **Misc:** US Chess, WCF memb. req'd, OSA, NS, NC.

## Jun 30

**Format:** 4-SS. Open to U1200 and UNR. **TC:** G/75; d5. **EF:** \$11 by 6/26, \$16 at site. (-\$2 SCC mem., -\$1 mem. other WA dues-req'd CCs). **Prizes:** SCC membership. **Reg:** 9-9:45a.m. **Rds:** 10-12:45-3:30-6. **Byes:** 1 (Rd 3/4-commit at reg.). **Misc:** US Chess memb. req'd. NS, NC.

## Sunday Tornado

## Saturday Quads

## SCC Hi-Roller Octagonals

## SCC Novice

Wednesdays are  
for free, casual play, from 7:00 pm to  
11:00 pm

## Emerald City Open

June 21-23 or 22-23

A two-section, five-round Swiss with a time control of 40/120 & SD/60;d5 (Rd 1 of 2-day schedule – G/60;d5). The prize fund of \$700 is based on thirty-five entries.

## a Grand Prix event

Open		Reserve (U1700)	
<b>First</b>	<b>\$180</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>\$130</b>
<b>Second</b>	<b>\$120</b>	<b>Second</b>	<b>\$90</b>
<b>U1900</b>	<b>\$75</b>	<b>U1400</b>	<b>\$50</b>
		<b>Unr</b>	<b>\$15</b>

**Upset (rds 1-4) \$10**

**Entry Fees:** \$40 if rec'd by 6/19, \$50 at site. **SCC members**—subtract \$10. Members of other dues-required CCs in BC and WA—subtract \$5. **Unr**—free with purchase (at SCC) of 1-year US Chess and WCF. **Add \$1 to any EF for 2-day schedule.**

**Registration:** Fri. 7-7:45 p.m., Sat. 9-9:45 a.m.

**Rounds:** Fri. 8, Sat. (10 @ G/60;d5)-12:30-6:45, Sun. 11-5.

**Byes:** 2 (for Sunday rounds, commit at registration).

**Miscellaneous:** US Chess & WCF membership req'd. No smoking. No computers.



# Upcoming Events

♣ denotes 2019 Northwest Grand Prix event.  
Seattle Chess Club events see page 30

**May 11** Portland CC Game in 60, **Portland, OR**. Site: Portland Chess Club, 8205 SW 24th Ave., Portland, OR. Two sections-Open and U1650, 4-round Swiss, G/60;inc5, one half point bye is available if requested before round one, US Chess rated. On-site reg: 9-9:45 am. Rds: 10am, 12:30pm, 2:45pm, 5pm. Players who have a game go around the full time can request extra time off before the next round. EF: \$20, \$15 for PCC members (Add \$5 play-up fee if play up. Pay by cash or check payable to Portland Chess Club.). US Chess membership is required and can be purchased during registration. Prizes (\$300 b/30; any play-up fees are added to the prize fund). Open section: 1st-\$60, 2nd-\$40, 1st U1850/unrated-\$35; U1650 section: 1st-\$60, 2nd-\$40, 1st U1450/unrated-\$35, 1st U1250/unrated-\$30. OSCF State qualifier. More info at pdxchess.org. Phone: (503) 246-2978.

**May 19** Portland CC Sunday Quads, **Portland, OR**. Site: Portland Chess Club, 8205 SW 24th Ave., Portland, OR - Map. 3-round quads. Some or all the sections may run as a 3-round Swiss with more than four players. The "live" US Chess regular ratings are usually used for section placement and pairings. G/50;inc15, US Chess and NWSRS rated. On-site reg: 9-9:45am, Rds: 10am, 12:30pm, 3pm. Rounds 2 and 3 can be started earlier if both players agree. Players who have a game go long can request extra time off before the next round. EF: \$15, PCC members \$10, \$5 discount for each additional family member who lives in the same household (pay by cash or check payable to Portland Chess Club), free entry for players who are playing in their first US Chess rated tournament. US Chess membership is required and can be purchased during registration. Winner of each section receives \$10 discount on the entry fee to one of the next three PCC Sunday or Tuesday Quads. If there is a six or seven player Swiss, the runner-up receives \$5 discount. Bonus scholastic awards: trophy for winning section with 3 points; smaller trophy for winning or tying for first with 2.5; medal for winning or tying for first with 2 or 1.5. OSCF State qualifier. More info. at pdxchess.org. Phone: (503) 246-2978.

**May 4-5** Penguin Extravaganza, **Portland, OR**. Site: Portland Chess Club, 8205 SW 24th Ave, Portland, OR 97219. 6-round Swiss in two sections, 1700+ (Premier) and U1700 (Reserve). Playing up is not allowed. The most current ("live") US Chess regular ratings are usually used for section eligibility, pairings, and prize eligibility. TC: G/60;inc30. Up to two half point byes are available if requested before round one. US Chess and NWSRS rated. On-site reg: 9-9:45am. Rds: 10am, 1:30pm, and 5pm each day. The second and third rounds each day can be started earlier if both players agree. Players who have a game go long can request extra time off before the next round. EF: \$40, \$30 for PCC members (pay by with cash or check payable to Portland Chess Club). US Chess and OCF/WCF memberships are required and can be purchased during registration (OSA). Prizes (\$1000 b/40): Premier: 1st-\$200, 2nd-\$150, 1st U2100, 1st U1900-\$125 each; Reserve: 1st-\$150, 2nd-\$100, 1st U1500, 1st U1300/unrated-\$75 each. Qualifier for the Challengers section of the Oregon Closed and qualifier for the OSCF State Championship. More info. at pdxchess.org, (503) 246-2978.

♣ **May 18-19** Inland Empire Open, **Spokane, WA**. Site: Gonzaga University (Jepson Center) Room 109. Format: Five Round Swiss System. Registration: Sat. 8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m. Rounds: Sat. 10:00-2:30-7:00, Sun: 9:00-1:30 or ASAP. Time Control: G/120 (with 5 second delay). E.F. \$23 if received by 5/17, \$28 at the door; 18 and under \$5 less. Telephone entries accepted. \$630 prize fund; Class prizes based on at least five per section. Only one prize per person (excluding biggest upset). NS, NC, W. One ½ point bye if requested before proceeding round. Sunday byes must be requested before the end of round 3. Director reserves the right to use class pairings in the final round. Prizes: 1st Overall: \$140, 2nd Overall: \$100; Class Prizes: 1st (A; B; C; D/E/unrated) \$60, 2nd (A; B; C; D/E/unrated) \$25, Biggest Upset: \$50 (non-provisional ratings). Entries: Spokane CC, c/o Kevin Korsmo, 9923 N. Moore, Spokane, WA 99208. Information: cell (509) 270-1772, website www.spokanechessclub.org.

**May 18-20** 44th Annual Keres Memorial, **Richmond, BC (Canada)**. <http://www.nwchess.com/calendar/TA.htm>

♣ **May 25-27** Washington Open, **Lynnwood, WA**. (see Full-Page Ad page 23)

## From The Business Manager

Please see "For The Record" on page three for an explanation of what has happened regarding the relationship between NWC and the OCF. NWC subscriptions and state memberships are now separate for residents of Oregon and Idaho. Idaho residents can purchase a "premium" membership with a subscription on the ICA website.

Those of us at NWC feel that we offer a quality award-winning magazine, and we would like to make it as easy as possible for you to continue to subscribe. The NWC board approved a promotional annual subscription rate of \$25 without a state membership, which is available on the magazine webpage (<http://nwchess.com/nwcmag/index.htm>). You can choose either the mail-in form or online payment via PayPal. This rate is available until June 30, 2019; and can be used for both new subscriptions and renewals. A three-year rate of \$65 is also available. However, Washington residents should continue to select the options for just a few dollars more (for adults) which include a WCF membership. Washington residents also need to add the correct sales tax.

Although we hope that all of you really enjoy the varied magazine content (stories, photos, games, etc.) each month, if for some reason you want to "opt out" of receiving the magazine, which would save NWC a small amount of postage (typically about \$0.30 per copy mailed), please notify the business manager via email to [info@nwchess.com](mailto:info@nwchess.com), or via phone (541-647-1021).

Thank you for your support of NWC and chess in the Pacific Northwest!

Northwest Chess  
c/o Orlov Chess Academy  
4174 148th Ave NE, Building I, Suite M  
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