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**Russell "Rusty" Miller**  
**1942-2020**



## Northwest Chess

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Russell "Rusty" Miller at 2012 US Open.  
Photo credit: Philip Peterson.

### On the back cover:

Kathy Miller and Russell "Rusty" Miller.  
Photo credit: Jeffrey Roland.

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Rusty was almost like the father of *Northwest Chess*. Rusty was an instrumental part of the process as the *Washington Chess Letter* became the *Northwest Chess Letter* and, finally, *Northwest Chess*.

Yes, he has been a many-time editor and promoter of the magazine.

It was because of him that I saw my first issue of *Northwest Chess* magazine circa 1971-1972 and came to know the vast world of tournament chess.

RIP Rusty!

Duane Polich  
Publisher

# Russell “Rusty” Miller

## (May 30, 1942 - December 29, 2020)

### John Donaldson

Organized chess in the Northwest dates back over a hundred and fifty years. During this time few individuals, if any, have done more to promote the game than the late Rusty Miller who died just after Christmas in Vancouver, Washington. Rusty wore many hats including those of organizer, tournament director, administrator, editor, journalist and player in a roughly sixty-year career. He is survived by his wife Kathy and daughter Jelleen.

Rusty grew up in Chelan, Washington, and learned to play chess in high school but only started competing in organized competitions while attending the University of Oregon. Rusty’s tournament debut was the 1961 Interstate Open held in Portland in early March. The same month he appeared for the first time in the pages of the *Washington Chess Letter*.

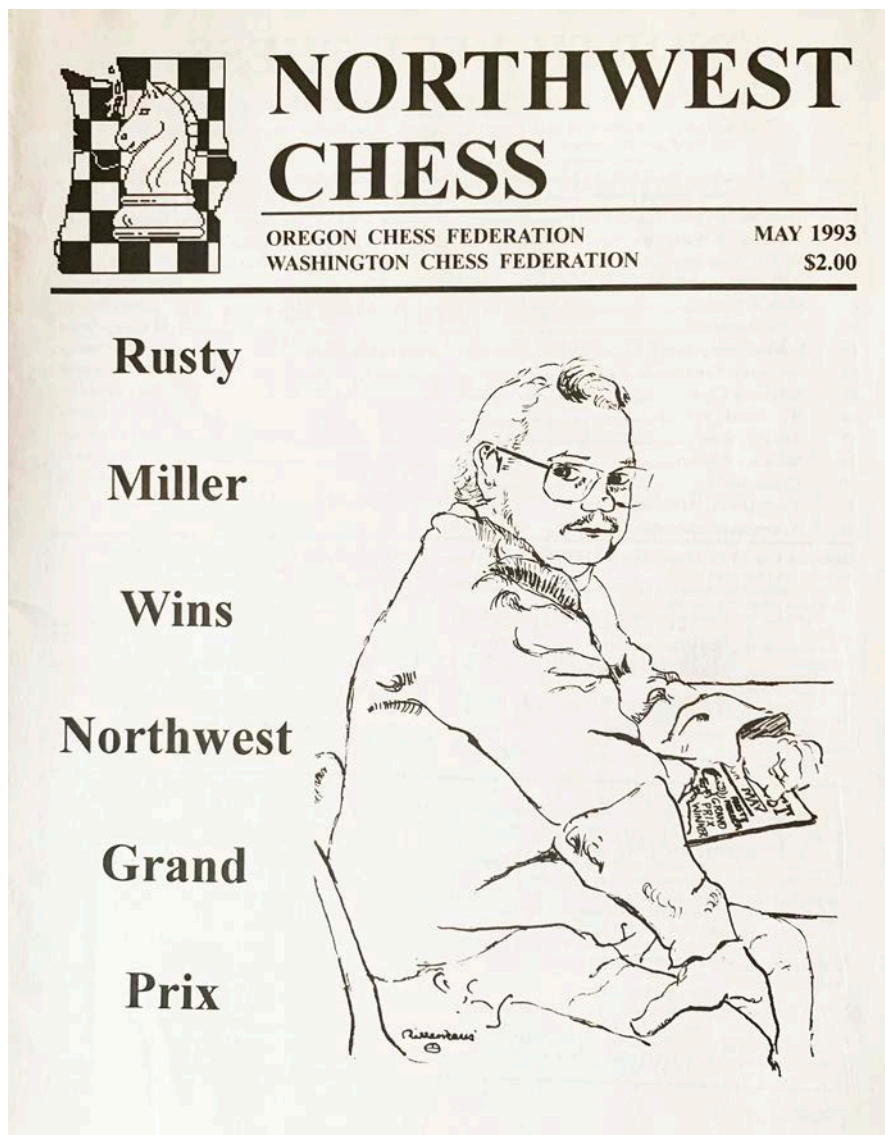
Reading the pages of the *W.C.L.* it’s apparent that although Rusty was a latecomer to the game he caught the chess bug in a big way. The magazine reports him playing Sammy Reshevsky in a simul in Eugene in 1962 alongside Jim McCormick who was also attending the University of Oregon. The following year the two travelled to Chicago to play in the U.S. Open, the first of several that Rusty would attend.

Despite his late start and intuitive style that caused him to move very quickly, Rusty made it to Class A but playing the game was never his primary interest. That was organizing. One of his first efforts was the 1966 Seattle U.S. Open where he was a member of the tournament committee while also playing.

Rusty made a name for himself in the early 1970s when he single-handedly put together Jude Acers exhibition tours around the United States. The venues included not only chess clubs, but schools, prisons and shopping malls, and scheduling them in the pre-Internet days demanded a varied skill-set including the ability to deal with a number of unforeseen situations. One of the highlights of these transcontinental tours was Jude’s setting a then world record with his 117-player simul at Portland’s Jantzen Mall in 1974.

Another example of Rusty’s organizing skill was his holding a tournament in every single county in Washington — 39 in all — in the early 1970s. This unique series exemplified Rusty’s commitment to grassroots promotion of the game. He was always thinking of new ways to get more people involved.

*Northwest Chess* was Rusty’s second love after his wife Kathy and he served several times as its editor from the mid-1960s to the late 1990s. The issues Rusty



*NWC Cover May 1993, editor Mike Neeley. Cover Art: Rob Rittenhouse.*

edited showed the influence of his great predecessor Dan Wade — the magazine was to be a journal of record for chess in the Northwest. Rusty typed up hundreds of crosstables over the years and took countless photographs.

His love for *Northwest Chess* also extended to preserving the magazine by scanning many years of back issues. These preservationist instincts and love for historical details could also be seen in his compiling lists of winners of many annual tournaments held in the Northwest. Rusty loved to research the past and just a few days before his passing sent me the details of Jim McCormick's birth (for those who are curious Jim was born in 1936 in Montesano, Washington).

Rusty organized the first tournament in the Northwest to offer I.M. norms, the West Seattle International, in 1991. The tournament was held in a bookstore he and Kathy ran while he also served as the business manager of Yasser Seirawan's *Inside Chess*.

Running a bookstore was one of the many dreams Rusty was able to realize. He loved to read and it was rare to find him without some books, particularly those by his favorite author Northwest mystery writer J.A. Jance. He and Kathy, who like Rusty was honored by the USCF when the U.S. Open was held in Vancouver in 2012, were big baseball fans. Rusty was also active in civic affairs and ran several times for city council while living in Yakima.

One of an ever-shrinking group of Northwest chess players who took up chess before the Fischer boom in 1972, Rusty will be sorely missed by his many friends.

## Murlin Varner

I met Rusty almost 50 years ago. I was a high school Junior who had just begun to learn about the world of tournament chess. After a high school team tournament in Portland the winter of 1970-71, I played in a scholastic event in Brewster, WA, organized and directed by the late John Wise. Through this event I met some members of the Allyn family of Wenatchee and was invited to go with them to an Open tournament in Yakima. That event was organized and directed by Rusty Miller.

Intrigued by the process of pairing players for a Swiss system, Rusty told me a little about the process, and over the next few months, under the tutelage of both Rusty and the late Larry Allyn, I was soon holding some tournaments of my own, including the Apple Blossom Open in May of 1971. In the meantime, I played in as many Central Washington tournaments as I could, and Rusty was always there.

When Rusty was not running events himself, he was transporting a carload of high school players to other events. (My first girlfriend was one of those students.) At the same time, he was editing, publishing and mailing the Northwest Chess magazine. Until 1971, I didn't even know there were magazines just about chess. Rusty seemed to have more energy and stamina than anyone I knew, especially when it came to chess. I was even a guest at his home a couple of weekends. He and Kathy were always warm and welcoming.

Then, late in 1971, Rusty came up with the idea of a "Chess to the People" series of tournaments. His goal was to hold a chess tournament in every county seat in the state. That would be a series of 39 tournaments, a daunting task. But he made it happen, holding tournaments in such places as Asotin, Pomeroy, Waterville, Montesano, Coupeville, Republic, and Cathlamet, where no chess tournament had been held before (nor since). While Rusty recruited help whenever and wherever possible, he still had to find locations and recruit help, and he could be found in attendance more often than not. The yearlong series



NWC Cover August 2009, editor Ralph Dubisch. Photo Credit: National Open Photo Service.

culminated in the Tournament of County Champions, held at Central Washington University. Looking back, I can't imagine finding the time and energy to do all this, especially when you realize that he was working five days a week at Valley Evap in Yakima.

Years later, Rusty suffered a stroke while working for Yasser Seirawan in Seattle, and his chess efforts slowed down after that. He told me that the stroke hadn't had too much effect, but he could no longer remember how to type. I will miss you, my friend.

## Ralph Dubisch

Here are a few things I'd like to say.

The Northwest Chess Board has officially named the 2021 Northwest Chess Memorial Grand Prix for Russell "Rusty" Miller. Rusty is the reason there is a Northwest Chess Memorial Grand Prix in the first place, as he originally proposed the R.R. Merk Memorial Grand Prix named after a gentleman who ran Northwest Postal Chess as well as serving the magazine in other capacities. The GP has since been renamed several times in memory of other chessplayers, editors, and organizers.

In addition to naming the current GP for Rusty, the Board has authorized the creation of a Northwest Chess Hall of Fame, and created a permanent Russell "Rusty" Miller cup or trophy to honor the overall winners of the GP each year. A committee has been formed to nominate initial inductees to the NWC HoF and to structure procedures and criteria for future nominations.

Rusty and I worked out the details to make the GP more a reflection of activity than merely a showcase for the tournament winners: one point for each point scored; two points for finishing the event without withdrawal; a multiplier for larger events with guaranteed prizes. A player who makes an effort every weekend is likely to outscore the Masters who play once every month or two.

During my first stint as editor of *Northwest Chess* Rusty typed in crosstables of US Chess (then USCF) events for the magazine. After interminably wrestling with trying to format these, I wrote him a little data entry program, and from then on he entered the events using "XTIN," which basically added tab marks between entries, and things got smoother. He was the Business Manager during this time, too, and he and Kathy would pick up boxes of magazines from the printer and attach the mailing labels by hand.

We would hand-deliver five or ten magazines to every bookstore and magazine stand we could reach, charging nothing to the businesses, hoping that browsers would pick them up and decide to subscribe. I'm not sure how many actual subscribers we managed to get from that, but it did lead to a major shouting match between me and the editor I had replaced in May 1989, James Blackwood, at the Seattle Chess Club that summer.

Jim was incensed that Rusty would sell individual magazines from his own bookstore, East West Books in West Seattle, and keep the money! I pointed out that it was very little money, as almost nobody actually bought the magazine that way, and it was only fair, as we gave them to other bookstores and let them keep the sales. Jim thought it was theft, and a matter of principle,

and I felt it was completely reasonable practice. We didn't find any middle ground, but at least we didn't — quite — come to blows.

Rusty and I worked together at Yasser Seirawan's *Inside Chess* (as it morphed first into International Chess Enterprises, then into Grandmaster Technologies). Of many possible anecdotes involving Rusty during these years, one of my favorites is when professional accountants came to ICE, officiously entered a bunch of numbers into a spreadsheet over a period of several days, and announced that ICE had made a profit of \$80,000. Yasser was thrilled. Rusty looked at them as if they were insane, and asked, "If we made \$80,000, where's the money?"

He was roundly shushed, as everyone wanted the business to be profitable. They had convoluted explanations involving magazine subscription future obligation and deferred revenue, all much too technical for us silly chess people to comprehend, though truthfully those all sounded like they would reduce current profit rather than increase it.

Finally it turned out that the so-called professionals had failed to include a column of the spreadsheet because it was off their visible screen space! Yes, Rusty was right.

I know no one who loved chess, and the world of chess, as much as Rusty Miller. He was constantly searching out chess mentions online or in the media and sending links to people in his address book. One of his latest finds was an online version of Bobby Fischer's monograph *I Was Tortured in the Pasadena Jailhouse*, and one of his more recent "Crazy Miller" ideas involved promoting the Harmon and Dake Memorial tournaments by annotating some of their games, or if possible, finding games between the two.

The final year of Rusty's life was pretty rough emotionally. In January his friend Bob Long was murdered in Davenport, Iowa. Kathy, his wife, was going downhill with Alzheimers, and in August Rusty had to place her in a care facility. Other chessplayers he knew, Mike Neeley and Michael Schemm, passed away. That kind of continuing trauma takes a toll.

In September Rusty compiled a list of deceased *Northwest Chess* editors. We had no way to know that just a few months later, Rusty himself would join the list.

There's much more on Rusty in this issue. Let us not soon forget.

## Mike Mulford

My first experience with organized chess beyond my high school league came at the 1970 and 1971 High School Team Tournaments, directed of course by Rusty Miller. At that point I had no idea of the role chess would play in my life or that Rusty played in *Northwest Chess*.

He was a man who wore many hats, often at the same time. By the time I graduated, Robert Karch was the driving force in Western Washington while Rusty carried the center of the state. It is hard to imagine what Washington Chess would have been like without those two men. Both served as WCF officers and/or NWC Editors for many years.

As a college junior I was elected WCF Treasurer for the first time, defeating Rusty only because he was also running for President. The day after the ballots were counted, Rusty picked me up and hauled me to new editor Dan Bailey's house so he could show him the ropes of that position. Rusty was only interested in serving the chess community, and he did that with everything he had. His wife Kathy supported him wholeheartedly in those efforts, and the chess community owes her a big vote of thanks.

Some 27 years after our first meeting, I left the Northwest for Pennsylvania, but we never lost contact. Rusty was pressed into short term service as a guest editor for *NWC* several times, and once he approached me to contribute some material, which I was delighted to supply. On several occasions his signature column 5-10-15-20-25 years ago made reference to my father, who was WCF President and Washington Chess Letter publisher for parts of the early 1950s. He would bring those snippets to my attention. Sometimes he ran across old newspaper articles mentioning him, and he would send them to me as well. He was that sort of man; always looking for ways to reach out to his friends and keep memories alive.

When my father passed away in 2014, Rusty was quick to offer his condolences and asked if I would like to have something written up in *NWC*. I thanked him and declined; not many in the *NWC* community even remember me, and only a handful would have recognized the name of Ken Mulford. Viktor's Pupols may be the only one still reading *NWC* who ever met him. Rusty hadn't either, but you wouldn't know it by his actions.

I last saw Rusty at the US Open in Vancouver. He hoped to get one more chance to play in one, but it never happened. Now it never will. But for decades Rusty left his mark on chess in the Northwest, and he was also an occasional poster on the US Chess forums. He truly loved the royal game, and we were all enriched by knowing him. Rest in peace, my friend.

## Jude Acers

From Jude Acers, New Orleans, Louisiana: Rusty once told me, "I am not a genius. Quit calling me a genius. I do not want my name in print." But make no mistake—that is exactly what Russell W. Miller was. Forty million copies of the Guinness Book of World Records reported his two monster 117-board Lloyd Center, Portland, Oregon (1973) and 179-board world chess simultaneous at Mid Isle Plaza (Broadway Plaza) July 2-3, 1976, Long Island, New York. He arranged hundreds of American prison, school, and television chess appearances with the ideal time being Saturday and Sunday at 1:00 PM sharp.

In his kitchen he hand-drew a crude "how to set up a chess exhibition" flyer; left room on the flyer for the local mall

manager to get some free advertising just by plugging in the mall logo! Mr. Miller thought little of himself, but I was fully aware of his staggering off-the-chart promotional ability.

My favorite Miller story? On the phone with a St. Louis organizer, he assured... "Even if it rains in the open air don't worry...we are in touch with God... it never rains on a Jude Acers chess exhibition!"

## Philip Peterson

In about 1.5 million years from now a star called Gliese 710 will pass through our solar system, altering our little section of the stellar neighborhood. I imagine Russell Miller's beneficial effect on the microcosm of chess in the Northwest will be at least as influential as that future star.

I don't think there is an aspect of chess in the Northwest that did not feel Rusty's benign influence in some way or another. I've worked at the same office has him. I've played him in tournament games. And I don't think I've ever had a role with *Northwest Chess* magazine where Rusty wasn't an integral part of the behind the scenes work to put out a magazine every month.

I'm not sure if there is any office or job that he did not occupy at one time or another in the half century we were fortunate enough to have the benefit of his tireless efforts. When he wasn't doing that, he was directing tournaments, and helping out in the myriad of details that have made the Northwest one of the hotbeds of US chess.

Rusty passed through our chess system too quickly, but he left a wake that will be long remembered.



(L) Jeffrey Roland and Russell "Rusty" Miller as part of the staff that directed one of the side-events at the 2012 U.S. Open. Photo credit: Frank Niro.

# 2020 Washington Scholastic Mini Teams Championship

By Siva Sankrithi and Josh Sinanan

Saturday November 7, we ran the Washington Scholastic Mini Teams Chess Championship for over 150 young players, grades K-12. Scholastic chess players participated from throughout the West Coast, including parts of Washington, Oregon, and California. The event was hosted by the Washington Chess Federation, organized by Siva Sankrithi, and directed by WCF Scholastic Coordinator Jacob Mayer.

A total of 151 players competed in three-player "mini" teams across three sections separated by grade level: K-3, 4-6, and 7-12. We have received so much positive feedback, and I'm truly thankful for everyone who participated and contributed to the success of the event.

Reflecting on the experience, both as an organizer of a major online tournament for the first time, and as a

Chess Dad witnessing his child playing in a competitive team event for the first time, here are four takeaways I'll carry forward:

1. Children crave challenge, collaboration, competition, and community, and we can provide that for them even in the middle of a pandemic.
2. Children play more for their teammates than themselves and are committed to being their best for the good of the team.
3. Chess is truly transcendent. The critical thinking applies to all aspects of life and the sport brings together people of all ages, from all walks of life, spanning the continuum of life experiences.
4. Organizing, facilitating, and running a team event in the online space, with hundreds involved in hundreds of different physical locations is hard to do well but so worth it, and having the right team of people makes all the difference.

Congratulations to all of the amazing chess gladiators who competed in this historic team tournament. Our vibrant scholastic chess community continues to thrive despite these uncertain times!

# 2020 Northwest Chess Winter Open

By Josh Sinanan

The 2020 Northwest Chess Winter Open was held online via Chess.com on December 13, 2020 under the direction of WCF Adult Chess Director Rekha Sagar and WCF Member-at-Large Aniruddha Barua. The tournament was a fundraising event for *Northwest Chess* magazine and attracted 27 players from throughout the Pacific Northwest, who competed in one big Open section. Players were represented in the five-round Swiss tournament from cities including Seattle, Sammamish, Auburn, Shoreline, Vancouver (BC), Corvallis, Issaquah, Springfield, Bothell, Mercer Island, and Milton. After the dust settled, the event raised over \$500 for *Northwest Chess* magazine, the longest-running monthly printed State chess publication in the United States!

Valentin Razmov from Seattle was victorious in all five of his games, scoring a key third-round win against Sammamish's Mudit Johar, his nearest rival. For his efforts, Valentin was awarded a three-year NWC subscription

## WASHINGTON PRESIDENT'S CUP

### A NORTHWEST CHESS GRAND PRIX EVENT

FEBRUARY 6-7<sup>TH</sup>, 2021

Site: Online via 

Format: A 5-Round Swiss in two sections: Open and Reserve (U1600).

Entry Fee: \$50 by 2/3, \$60 after. Free entry for GMs, IMs, WGMs, or US Chess 2400+. \$40 play-up fee if rated under 1600 playing in Open Section.

Time Control: G/70;+10. Late default: 10 min.

Rounds: Sat 10 AM, 1 PM, 4 PM. Sun 10 AM, 1 PM.

Prize Fund: \$1,200 (based on 40 paid entries).

Open: 1<sup>st</sup> \$200, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$150, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$100  
1<sup>st</sup> U2000/U1800: \$70 Biggest Upset: \$25

Reserve: 1<sup>st</sup> \$175, 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100, 3<sup>rd</sup> \$75  
1<sup>st</sup> U1400/U1200: \$70, 1<sup>st</sup> U1000/unrated: \$70 Biggest Upset: \$25

Byes: Two half-point byes available, request before end of round 2.

*Highest finishing Washington State resident in the Open Section seeded into the 2022 Washington Invitational.*

**Memberships:** Current US Chess and WCF membership/Northwest Chess subscription required. Memberships must be paid at time of registration. A Chess.com and Zoom account are required.

**Rating:** US Chess Online Rated and NWSRS Rated. US Chess February 2021 rating supplement will be used to determine pairings and prizes. Highest of US Chess, US Chess Online, or foreign ratings used at TD discretion.

**Procedure:** Pairings will be released prior to the start of each round. Games will be started automatically by the TD in the [Live Chess](#) area. Players must report their result to the TD upon completion of the game.

**Fair Play Policy:** All players and parents (if U18) are required to sign the [WCF Fair Play Agreement](#) prior to the start of the tournament. All players will be monitored by Zoom during the games. WCF's Fair Play Committee will review any suspicious games on a case-by-case basis. Fair play standards will be strictly enforced.



#### Info/Entries:

Contact: Josh Sinanan, WCF President

Phone: 206-769-3757

Email: [WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com](mailto:WashingtonChessFederation@gmail.com)

Registration: Online at [nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration](http://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration). Registration deadline Fri. 2/5 @ 5pm. \$15 Late Fee for payments accepted after the deadline. Unpaid players will receive a zero-point bye for round 1.



extension, and received an additional two more years by virtue of winning the Brilliancy Prize Competition for his annotated game against Edward Cheng. Mudit Johar, an up-and-coming High School player, finished in clear second place with 4.0/5 points and earned a two-year *NWC* subscription extension. Richard Ingram from Vancouver, B.C. rounded out the overall prize winners on tiebreaks with 3.5/5 points and won a one-year *NWC* subscription extension. Young Bourne Zhou from Issaquah won a one-year *NWC* subscription extension by scoring the biggest upset in the tournament (994 points!). One-year *NWC* subscription extensions were awarded to the following players as class prizes:

First U1900:	Sridhar Seshadri
First U1700:	James Hamlett
First U1500:	Nicholas Liotta
First U1300:	Wade Suess
First U1100:	Evan Takayoshi
First U900:	Shuyi Han
First U700:	Leo Saloranta
First Unrated:	Tomasz Krzykawski

Congratulations to the winners! *Northwest Chess* and WCF would like to thank all participants in this tournament for being active contributors to our local chess community!

**Valentin Razmov (1986) –  
Edward Cheng (1738) [E94]**  
2020 Northwest Chess Winter Open  
Chess.com (R4), December 13, 2020  
*[Valentin Razmov]*

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6  
5.Nf3 0–0 6.Be2 e5 7.0–0 exd4 8.Nxd4  
Re8 9.f3 c6 10.Bg5**

A rare line of the King's Indian; more common are 10.Kh1 and 10.Nc2, in both cases avoiding Black's pressure on the d4-knight.

**10...h6 11.Bh4 Nbd7 12.Kh1**

White has to play this prophylactic move sooner or later in order to untie their hands from the potential pin (or queen check) along the g1–a7 diagonal.

**12...Nc5 13.Re1?**

With an abundance of normal options — Qc2, Nb3, Rc1, etc. — White goes astray, overlooking a tactic against the overloaded bishop on h4. White's idea with the rook move was to free the

f1-square for the bishop, thus fortifying the king's defense while activating the rook along the e-file simultaneously.



*Position after 13.Re1*

**13...g5?**

Black doesn't notice the tactical opportunity. 13...Nfxe4! 14.Bxd8 Nf2+ 15.Kg1 Nxd1 16.Raxd1 Rxd8 after which Black would be a healthy pawn up.

**14.Bf2 Ne6?!**

Giving the White knight what it has been hoping for: easy access to the newly weakened f5-square. 14...Nh7 was a better move, opening up the bishops, while keeping an eye on the f5-square.

**15.Nf5 d5?**

Black loses the thread of play and loses a pawn as a result. Required was 15...Bf8 to keep things together.

**16.Nxg7 Kxg7 17.cxd5 cxd5 18.Nxd5**

White seeks to open up the position for its two bishops, especially because the black king is unsafe.

**18...Nxd5 19.exd5**

Preserving queens on the board, as the White queen can be useful in the upcoming attack.

**19...Nf4 20.Bc4 Rxe1+**

Necessary, since White was threatening Rxe8, Qd4+, and Re1, activating all pieces while Black remains partly undeveloped.

**21.Bxe1**

With the idea to build a battery on the long diagonal via Bc3 and Qd4.

**21...Bf5 22.Bc3+ f6 23.Qd4**

Natural and strong. White must remain alert to Black's counterplay options, for example: 23.d6 Rc8 24.Qd4 Rc6 25.Rd1 Bd3!? an interference that could cause problems if unforeseen 26.Rxd3 Nxd3 27.Qxd3 Rxd6 28.Qe2 Rd1+ 29.Be1 Rd7 30.Qf2 and White will be able to consolidate soon.

**23...Rc8**

23...Qb6 was worth considering — to

relieve the building pressure of White's attack.

**24.Re1?**

An obvious developing move, played automatically — but also a tactical mistake! White's queen is surprisingly short of squares near the center of the board, yet it is responsible for defending the bishop on c4! Curiously, the previous tactical mistake by White was also a Re1 move, on move 13.

**24...Qd6?**

Missing the tactical chance that had just opened up, and in turn falling into a trap. 24...Ne6! This surprising tactic could have offered Black some relief, for example: 25.Qxa7 Rxc4 26.dxe6 Qe7 27.a3 Rc6 28.Bb4 Rxe6! 29.Rxe6 Qxe6 30.Qxb7+ and, after securing the back rank next, White should still be able to win this technical opposite-colored endgame.



*Position after 24...Qd6*

**25.Re6!!**

With few minutes left on the clock, White was able to convince himself that this interference sacrifice is indeed a winner and a brilliancy candidate. Ironically, the white rook lands with great effect on the very square where the black knight could have jumped to complicate matters on the previous move.

**25...Nxe6**

25...Qd8 26.Rxf6+-

**26.Qxf6+ Kh7??**

This leads to immediate checkmate. The alternative was also losing for Black, though with considerably more technique required from White: 26...Kg8 27.Qh8+ Kf7 28.Qxc8 Ng7 29.Qxb7+ Qd7 and White's advantage is sufficient to easily win even by simply exchanging down into a bishop endgame with extra pawns. (29...Bd7 30.Bb4!)

**27.Qf7+ Ng7 28.Qxg7#**

**1–0**

# 2020 SCC Extravaganza

By Josh Sinanan

The 12th Annual SCC Extravaganza was held online November 14-15 via Chess.com. Chess players from throughout the world were represented in the 17-player field, including parts of Washington, Oregon, Ontario, Armenia, Ukraine, and Belarus! The event was co-hosted by the Seattle Chess Club and the Washington Chess Federation. WCF Adult Chess Director Rekha Sagar directed the tournament with assistance from SCC Webmaster Austin Cluff and WCF President Josh Sinanan. The six-round Swiss tournament featured 11 players in the Open section and only six in the Reserve U1800 section.

GM Vitaliy Bernadskiy, a strong Ukrainian Grandmaster who regularly plays in Northwest online tournaments, won clear first place in the Open section with five points from six games, allowing only two draws along the way to IM Shahinyan and GM Aleksandrov. ChessMood star IM David Shahinyan finished in clear second place with 4.5 points. Junior chess wizards, Gaurang Pendharkar from Bellevue and Saarthak Malakar from Portland, dominated the six-player reserve section, each with 5.5 points from six games. Young Ted Wang from Medina captured clear second place

honors with 2.5 points. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all who contributed to this event! Our fantastic chess community continues to thrive despite these difficult and uncertain times.

**Vitaliy Bernadskiy (2689) – Rohan Talukdar (2410) [B23]**

SCC Extravaganza  
Chess.com (R2), November 14, 2020

[Ralph Dubisch]

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 d6 3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bc4 Nc6 6.0-0 e6 7.d4!?



Position after 7.d4

A new move, at least for me. It appears to introduce some complications, a few ways for Black to overreach, and suggests the d6-pawn is a weakness. 7.d3 is the normal move here, though I've also seen 7.f5 occasionally and even more rarely 7.Qe1. After 7.d3, play might continue 7...Nge7 8.Qe1 0-0 9.f5, getting in all three of those moves, though I personally

feel 9...gxf5 is fine for Black.

7...cxd4 8.Nb5 Nge7

Very sensible development. Obviously Black can't attempt to hold the pawn: 8...e5?? 9.fxex5 dxe5 10.Ng5+-, and f7 is overwhelmed.

9.Nbxd4 0-0

Black could get a little frisky in the center now: 9...d5 10.exd5 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 0-0!, which must be at least equal.

10.Bb3 Na5 11.c3 Nxb3 12.axb3

12.Qxb3!?

12...e5! 13.Ne2



Position after 13.Ne2

13...d5!?

Black complicates. Instead, Black could consider 13...f5. Both sides have weaknesses, but the bishop-pair looks like a reliable small advantage for Black, and the central tension is not at all uncomfortable. It could prove difficult for

## Official Standings: 12th SCC Extravaganza (Open)

#	Place	Name	ID	Rating	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Total
1	1	Vitaliy Bernadskiy	17345230	2689	W5	W4	D3	D2	W11	W6	5
2	2	David Shahinyan	17351144	2518	W7	H---	W11	D1	W4	D3	4.5
3	3-4	Aleksej Aleksandrov	12710284	2635	W6	W10	D1	L4	W5	D2	4
4		Rohan Talukdar	14529666	2410	W9	L1	W5	W3	L2	W11	4
5	5	Sophie Tien	15248711	1965	L1	W9	L4	W8	L3	B---	3
6	6-10	Daniel Qian	15551091	1872	L3	D7	W10	D11	H---	L1	2.5
7		Edward Li	16292831	1733	L2	D6	L8	B---	D9	D10	2.5
8		Austin Cluff	16472200	1726	H---	L11	W7	L5	D10	D9	2.5
9		Varin Nallabothula	17058893	1675	L4	L5	B---	D10	D7	D8	2.5
10		Chad Boey	17072388	1662	B---	L3	L6	D9	D8	D7	2.5
11	11	Isaac Vega	14490451	1912	H---	W8	L2	D6	L1	L4	2

## Official Standings: 12th SCC Extravaganza (Reserve)

#	Place	Name	ID	Rating	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Total
1	1-2	Gaurang Pendharkar	17355200	1574	W4	W5	D2	W3	W4	W6	5.5
2		Saarthak Malakar	17062417	1270	W6	W3	D1	W4	W5	W4	5.5
3	3	Ted Wang	17187840	1181	L5	L2	W6	L1	H---	W5	2.5
4	4-5	Aadi Hetamsaria	16401058	1160	L1	W6	W5	L2	L1	L2	2
5		Daniel McBride	30040690	unr.	W3	L1	L4	W6	L2	L3	2
6	6	Vineesh Nallabothula	17058934	1025	L2	L4	L3	L5	B---	L1	1

White to effectively utilize the e2–knight.

### 14.exd5

14.fxe5 dxe4 15.Qxd8 Rxd8 16.Ng5 Bf5 17.Ng3 Bxe5 18.N5xe4∞

### 14...e4 15.Ng5 Nxd5 16.Nxe4 Bg4

16...Qb6+ 17.Kh1 Rd8 gives Black plenty of compensation for the pawn, with the bishop-pair and activity.

### 17.h3 Qb6+

17...Re8 18.hxg4 (18.N4g3? Nxc3! 19.bxc3 (19.Qxd8 Nxe2+ 20.Nxe2 Raxd8 21.hxg4 Rxe2) 19...Qxd1 20.Rxd1 Bxe2.) 18...Rxe4 19.Ng3 is another possibility.

### 18.Kh2 Bxe2

18...Rae8!? 19.hxg4 (19.Qxd5 Bxe2 20.Re1 Qb5 21.Qxb5 Bxb5 22.Bd2, with maybe a slim edge to White.) 19...Rxe4 20.Qxd5 (20.Ng3 Ne3 21.Bxe3 Rxe3∞) 20...Rxe2 21.Ra4±

### 19.Qxe2 Qxb3??

19...Rfe8 20.Qc4

### 20.Nc5 Nxc3

20...Qb6 is no better: 21.Nd7 Qc7 22.Nxf8+-

### 21.bxc3 Qxc3 22.Ba3 Rfe8 23.Qb5 b6



Position after 23...b6

### 24.Nd7

White accurately threads the needle. 24.Na4 seems safe and sane.

### 24...Rad8

Black can head for a difficult, likely just lost, endgame here, trying to claim those two passed pawns are worth a piece: 24...Rac8 25.Ra2 Qc6.

### 25.Bd6!

White aims the bishop at the e5–square.

### 25...a6

Perhaps the most interesting try for Black here is 25...Qxa1 26.Rxa1 Bxa1 27.Qa4 Bg7, giving up the queenside pawns to try to defend the kingside with an equal piece count, albeit a clear quality deficit.

### 26.Rxa6 Qd2 27.Rxb6 Re2 28.Qc6

Now Rb8 is coming, and White's extra piece will rule.

### 28...Rxd7? 29.Qa8+

1–0

**David Shahinyan (2518) – Rohan Talukdar (2410) [B23]**

SCC Extravaganza

Chess.com (R5), November 15, 2020

[Ralph Dubisch]

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 d6 3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5. Bc4 Nc6 6.0–0 e6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nb5 Nge7 9.Bb3 0–0 10.Nbxd4 Na5



Position after 10...Na5

Here we are again, a line I've never seen before, initiated by White, with the same captain of the Black forces. Either this is the new popular line, or they've been watching each other's games.

### 11.Be3

I definitely prefer this bishop development to the 11.c3 chosen by the Grandmaster in the other game.

### 11...Bd7 12.Qe1 Bc6?!

12...e5 13.fxe5 dxe5 14.Ne2 Nxb3 15. axb3 Bc6. Black is not worse.



Position after 12...Bc6

### 13.f5

White starts evolutionary work on the white squares, but there are some more revolutionary approaches to consider: 13.Nxe6!? fxe6 14.Bxe6+ Kh8 15.b4 Bxe4 16.bxa5 Nf5∞; Or 13.Bxe6! Bxe4 (13...fxe6?? 14.Nxe6 Qd7 15.Nxf8 Rxf8 16.Qxa5+-) 14.Ng5 with complications. One extended possibility: 14...Nac6

15.Bxf7+ (15.f5!?) 15...Rxf7 16.Nde6 Qd7 17.Nxg7 Bxg2! 18.Nxf7 Bxf1 19.Nh6+! Kxg7 20.Qc3+ Kxh6 21.f5+ g5 22.Qf6+ Ng6 23.Qxg5+ Kg7 24.Rxf1∞

### 13...Nxb3 14.axb3 exf5 15.exf5 Nd5

15...Bxf3 16.Rxf3 Nd5

### 16.Nxc6 bxc6 17.Bd4

17.fxg6 hxg6 (17...fxg6 18.Bd4±) 18.Ng5 might be met with 18...Bd4! 19.Bxd4 Qxg5∞.

### 17...Bxd4+ 18.Nxd4 Qb6 19.Qf2 Rae8 20.Rae1 Ne3?!

20...Rxe1 21.Rxe1 c5

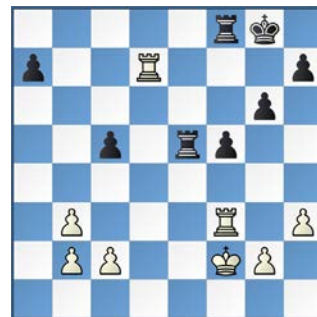
### 21.Rxe3 Qxd4 22.Rc3

White can force Black into a fairly passive rook ending: 22.Rxe8 Qxf2+ 23.Kxf2 Rxe8 24.Ra1 Re7 25.Ra6 Rc7 26.f6±.

### 22...Qxf2+ 23.Kxf2 c5

23...Re5 first, perhaps: 24.Rxc6 Rxf5+ 25.Kg1 Rd5.

### 24.Rd1! Re5 25.Rxd6 Rxf5+ 26.Rf3± Rh5 27.h3 Re5 28.Rd7 f5?



Position after 28...f5

### 29.Rxa7

Opportunity: 29.Re3! Rxe3 30.Kxe3 Rf7 31.Rd8+ Kg7 (31...Rf8 32.Rxf8+ Kxf8 33.Kf4 looks winning for White.) 32.Rc8±.

### 29...Rfe8

29...Rd8! activates Black's rooks, and makes it very hard for White to convert the pawn. 30.Rd3 Rxd3 31.cxd3 f4±.

### 30.Rd3! Re2+ 31.Kg3 Rxc2 32.Rdd7 Rxb2 33.Rg7+ Kh8 34.Rxh7+ Kg8 35.Rag7+ Kf8 36.Rb7 Kg8 37.Rhg7+ Kh8 38.Rxg6?!

38.Rgc7±

### 38...c4 39.b4 Rg8

39...Rc8! Rooks belong behind passed pawns, and both of Black's rooks are doing their job.

### 40.Rxg8+ Kxg8 41.Rb5 c3

41...f4+ 42.Kf3+-

### 42.Rxf5 Rxb4 43.Rc5 Rb3 44.Rc7 Kf8

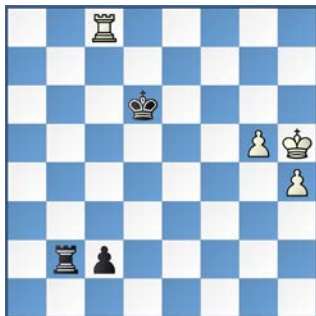
45.Kh4 Ke8 46.g4 Kd8 47.Rc4 Ke7 48.Kh5

48.g5!+- Advancing the pawn now, while the king still has cover from checks and the black pawn is two moves away from promotion, earns White the point.

48...c2! 49.h4?

49.Rc7+! forces the black king to an unfavorable square for the rook versus rook and pawn ending.; 49.Rxc2 also works: 49...Rxb3+ 50.Kg6 Rg3 51.g5, and now 51...Kf8 52.Rc8+ Ke7 53.Rg8 Rg1 54.Kh7 Rh1+ 55.Kg7 Rg1 56.g6 is a very well-known win.

49...Rb2 50.g5 Kd6 51.Rc8



Position after 51.Rc8

51...Kd7??

The king was in exactly the right place! So 51...Ra2!! Now how does White try to make progress? 52.—

a) 52.Rc3 Kd5! 53.Kh6 (53.Rc7 Kd6 54.Rc8 Rb2! Notice the black king keeping to d6 and d5, depending on the distance to the black rook.) 53...Ra6+ 54.g6 Rc6 55.Rxc2 Rxc2 56.g7 Rg2 57.Kh7 Ke6 58.g8Q+ (58.h5 Kf7 59.h6 Rg6 60.g8Q+ Rxc8) 58...Rxc8 59.Kxc8 Kf5 60.h5 Kg5;

b) 52.Kg4 Ra4+ 53.Kh5 Ra2 repeats.;

c) 52.Rc4 Rb2 53.Rc3 Kd5 54.Rc8 (54.g6 Kd4 55.Rxc2 Rxc2 56.Kh6 Ke5 57.g7 Rg2 58.Kh7 Kf6 59.g8Q Rxc8 60.Kxc8 Kg6) 54...Kd6. As soon as the white king is exposed, Black can check to swing the rook to the c-file, then defend rook versus pawns accurately. For example 55.Kh6 Kd7 56.Rc3 Rb6+ 57.g6 Rc6 58.Rxc2 Rxc2 59.g7 Rg2 60.Kh7 Ke6 61.g8Q+ Rxc8 62.Kxc8 Kf6 63.Kh7 Kf7.;

d) 52.Kh6 Kd7 53.Rc5 Ra6+ 54.g6 Rc6 55.Rxc2 Rxc2 56.g7 Rg2 57.Kh7 Rh2 or any of the other methods outlined above.;

52.Rc3+- Kd6 53.Kh6 Kd5 54.g6 Kd4 55.Rc8 Kd3 56.g7 Rb6+ 57.Kh7 Rb4 58.h5 Rb7 59.h6 Kd2 60.Rxc2+ Kxc2 61.Kh8

1-0

Edward Li (1733) – Austin Cluff (1726) [B02] SCC Extravaganza Chess.com (R3), November 14, 2020 [Ralph Dubisch]

1.e4 Nf6 2.Nc3

White scores quite well in the main lines, such as 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.Nf3 Bg4 5.Be2 e6 6.0-0 Be7 7.c4 Nb6 8.Nc3 0-0 9.Be3, but 2.Nc3 is certainly sound, and contains ample room for transpositions.

2...d5

Black could choose to head into symmetric king pawn openings — the Vienna Game, in this case. 2...e5

3.exd5

3.e5 gives Black three choices: 3...Nfd7 (3...d4; 3...Ne4)

3...Nxd5 4.Bc4 c6 5.Qf3 e6 6.Nge2 Nd7 7.d4 Qf6

7...N7f6 is also solid.

8.Qxf6

I would tend to avoid this queen exchange with 8.Qg3.

8...N7xf6 9.Bd2 Bd6 10.Nxd5 exd5 11.Bd3 Ne4 12.Bf4 Bxf4 13.Nxf4



Position after 13.Nxf4

13...g5!?

It's not easy to justify this kingside lunge. Instead, 13...Nd6 14.0-0-0 Bf5 15.Rhe1+ Kd7 looks completely equal.

14.Ne2

14.f3! Nf6 (14...gxf4? 15.fxe4±; 14...Nd6 15.Nh5 and...Bf5 is no longer an option.) 15.Ne2± avoids Black's kingside expansion lines involving...f5 as well as the...Bf5 development.

14...f5?!

14...Bf5. If White has an edge here it's very small.

15.f3! Nd6

15...h6 16.h4 Rg8 17.hxg5 hxg5 18.Rh6 Kf7 19.fxe4 fxe4 20.Bxe4 dxe4 21.Ng3±

16.0-0-0

16.h4 is a key idea, undermining the black pawn duo and opening lines for White's quickly-developed rooks. 16...g4 17.fxg4 fxg4 18.0-0±

16...Bd7 17.Ng3 0-0-0 18.Rhe1 h5 19.Ne2 g4?!

19...h4

20.Nf4 Rdg8 21.Rg1 h4 22.h3

22.Rde1

22...gxf3

22...Rg7 maintains the tension until a favorable moment.

23.gxf3 Rg3 24.Ng6?

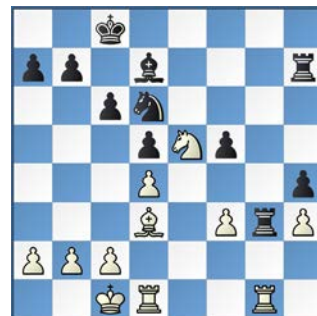
It's actually fine to take the rook: 24.Rxg3 hxg3 25.Kd2 Rh4 26.Ke3±

24...Rh6 25.Ne5

Now 25.Rxg3 hxg3 26.Nf4 Rh4. and the white king is too far away to anchor the knight.

25...Rh7.

25...f4+



Position after 25...Rh7

26.Nxd7?

Exchanging White's best piece for Black's worst without specific reason can't be a good idea. Better, and essentially equal, is 26.Kd2 Rhg7 27.Rxg3 Rxc3 28.Ke3 Ne4 (28...Rxb3? 29.Kf4 Rh2 30.Rg1± White's pieces are very active.) 29.Rh1∞

26...Kxd7 27.Rxc3? hxg3

We now get an object lesson on how a good knight with an advanced outpost utterly dominates a bad bishop.

28.Bf1 f4+

Outpost e3.

29.Bg2 Nf5 30.Rd2 Ne3 31.Re2 Nxc2 32.Rxc2 Rxb3

Extra protected passed pawns are good, too.

33.Kd1 Rh2 34.Rg1 Rf2 35.a3 Rxf3 36.Rg2 Re3

0-1



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# WA Spring Mini-Teams Championship



March 13, 2021

Online via  Chess.com



**Format:** A 5-round, *Team* (3-person team) Swiss-Paired Tournament in four sections: K-3, 4-6, 7-12, and Parents/Friends. K-12 players may play up into higher grade sections and the Parents/Friends section is for post-high school players only. See “Scoring” and “Procedure” below for more information.

**Eligibility:** Open to all students registered in grades K-12 and their parents/friends. A Chess.com and Zoom account are required. Players are allowed to form their own 3-player teams, or individual players will be added to form additional teams by TD.

**Schedule:** Zoom Welcome 8:45am. Rounds at 9:15am, 10:30am, 11:45am, lunch break, 1:15pm, 2:30pm.

**Entry fee:** \$30 (per player)

**Time Control:** Game in 25 minutes with a 5 sec. increment per move.

**Prizes:** K-3, 4-6, 7-12 Sections: 1<sup>st</sup> Place Team Members will each receive \$50 Amazon Gift Cards. 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Team Members will each receive \$30 Amazon Gift Cards. K-3 and 4-6 Sections will award an additional prize to the top finishing team under 900 average rating. 7-12 will award an additional prize to highest finishing team with all members from the same school. Best Parents/Friends and associated Scholastic Team (K-3, 4-6, or 7-12) combined score will earn a prize.

**Rating:** NWSRS Rated. Northwest ratings will be used to determine section and pairings. Board order will be determined by NWSRS rating.

**Procedure:** Pairings will be released and updated prior to the start of each round on a shared spreadsheet. Players will be paired automatically by the TD in the [Live Chess](#) area. Each Round a Team vs Team pairing will be announced, each Team’s Board 1, 2, and 3 will play the other respective team’s Board 1, 2, 3. Please contact Organizer Siva Sankrithi ([sivas108@gmail.com](mailto:sivas108@gmail.com)) for any pre-determined teams. Team information will be kept on Spreadsheet [HERE](#).

**Scoring:** Standings based on Team Score. Winning team will receive 1 point for win each round (2.0 points or more across 3-player team). If match is a draw (each team scores 1.5 points), each team receives 0.5 Team Points. Board Points will be used as first tiebreak (combined score of individual team members).

**Fair Play Policy:** All players and parents are required to sign the [WCF Fair Play Agreement](#) prior to start of the tournament. WCF’s Fair Play Committee will review any suspicious games on a case-by-case basis. Playing fairly is strongly encouraged and cheating of any kind is strictly prohibited.

**Online Registration:** <https://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration/> – pay by Credit/Debit/PayPal. **Registration, payment, and fair play agreement deadline Friday March 12<sup>th</sup> @ 5:00pm.** To register your team, please fill out the [Team Registration Form](#). No registrations will be accepted after the deadline. **Any team member requests must be received by Siva (either via the above form or email) by 5:00pm Wednesday March 10<sup>th</sup>, no exceptions.** Players who register in the final 48 hours, along with those who have not registered a team, will be placed on a composed team. \$15 Late Fee applied to payments received after the deadline. Unpaid players will receive a zero-point bye for round 1.

**Questions?** TD: Jacob Mayer | 206.697.5625 | [jacob.mayerchess@gmail.com](mailto:jacob.mayerchess@gmail.com)  
Organizer: Siva Sankrithi | [sivas108@gmail.com](mailto:sivas108@gmail.com)

**Apropos Adult Swiss #7**  
**March 20th-21st, 2021**  
**via Chess.com**  
**USChess ONLINE RATED!!!**



**Open to players age 18+ with established USChess membership.**

**Format:** 5-round Swiss System online tournament. Pairings will be made offline by the TD, game launches automatic.

**Entry Fee:** There is no entry fee for the tournament. USChess membership required.

**Rounds:** Sat. 10am, 2pm, 6pm Sun. 10&2  
**Time Control:** G/90 +5

**Prize Fund:** \$750 Guaranteed. **20% added** if 20 or more players, +30% added for 30 or more players with all prizes bumped proportionally. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> \$225-\$100-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U2000 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1800 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1600 \$75-\$50. Prizes without players will be split among other rating classes.

**Ratings – USChess Online Rated!** USChess regular online rating used.

**Byes:** Two half-point bye available by end of day March 19<sup>th</sup>, 6pm. NO EXCEPTIONS.

**Zoom:** All players will be required to use Zoom throughout the tournament, no exceptions.

**Memberships and Accounts:** Current USChess membership required. WCF membership required for WA residents. All must be paid 3/19. Renew USChess at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org). Working chess.com account and Zoom capability required.

**Registration:** Register online at <https://nwchess.com/OnlineRegistration> OR email USCF ID# and chess.com username to [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com) by Friday March 19th 6pm

**Apropos Chess Events** is hosting this tournament and a series for no-entry free online events to promote online chess, and adult chess. Apropos Chess Events is a not-for-profit, private organization.

**TD:** Kenton McNall, 206-853-8624, [kentmcnallchess@gmail.com](mailto:kentmcnallchess@gmail.com)

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**Apropos Adult Swiss #8  
“Tournament of Champions”  
April 24th-25th, 2021  
via Chess.com**



**Open to players age 18+ with established USChess membership. New players welcome, need not have previously competed.**

**Format:** 5-round Swiss System online tournament. Pairings will be made offline by the TD, game launches automatic.

**Entry Fee:** There is no entry fee for the tournament. USChess membership required.

**Rounds:** Sat. 10am, 2pm, 6pm Sun. 10&2  
**Time Control:** G/90 +5

**Prize Fund:** \$750 Guaranteed. **20% added** if 20 or more players, +30% added for 30 or more players with all prizes bumped proportionally. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> \$225-\$100-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U2000 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1800 \$75-\$50, 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> U1600 \$75-\$50. Prizes without players will be split among other rating classes. **PRIOR SECTION PRIZE WINNERS RECEIVE 50% BONUS ON ALL PRIZES!**

**Ratings – USChess Online Rated!** USChess regular online rating used.

**Byes:** Two half-point bye available by end of day April 23rd, 6pm. NO EXCEPTIONS.

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**Memberships and Accounts:** Current USChess membership required. WCF membership required for WA residents. All must be paid 4/16. Renew USChess at [uschess.org](http://uschess.org). Working chess.com account and Zoom capability required.

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# 2020 Washington Class Championships

By Josh Sinanan

The Washington Class Championships, traditionally the largest annual class-section tournament in the Pacific Northwest, was held over Thanksgiving weekend, November 27-29, 2020. The event, which is usually hosted in a hotel in the Greater Seattle area, was moved online via Chess.com due to the ongoing pandemic. Despite the increased accessibility and non-existent travel costs of an online tournament, this year's attendance of 82 players was a far cry from the usual 150+ players who typically compete in the three-day long chess festival. Nevertheless, chess players from throughout the world including parts of Washington, Oregon, Indiana, British Columbia, Belarus, Armenia, and India were represented in the six-round Swiss tournament. Due to small turnouts in the Master, Class A, and Class C sections, the traditional seven sections were reduced to just four sections: Master/Expert, Class A/B, Class C/D, and Class E. The largest section, Class E, featured 28 players and a plethora of highly underrated juniors. During this period of online chess activity, many of the junior players have been honing their skills online and improved significantly, playing much stronger than their published US Chess ratings! The event was hosted by Washington Chess Federation and directed by WCF Adult Chess Director Rekha Sagar with assistance from WCF Historian Gary Dorfner and President Josh Sinanan. A nine-round blitz tournament featuring 33 players, including three GMs, three IMs, and two FMs, rounded out the chess festivities on Sunday evening!

IM Mitrabha (4.5/6, 2514 → 2512), playing all the way from India, won the combined 12-player Master/Expert section with an undefeated 4.5/6, half-a-point ahead of his nearest rivals GM

Aleksandrov (4.0/6, 2616 → 2612) and Nicholas Whale (4.0/6, 2065 → 2090). Armenian IM David Shahinyan (3.5/6, 2550 → 2538), ChessMood star, was clearly in good spirits after capturing the third place 2200+ prize. Yili Wen (3.5/6, 2089 → 2101) from Indiana and Thanh Tien Nguyen (3.5/6, 2027 → 2053) from Redmond split the second/third U2200 prize with a "plus one" score. Three fast-improving juniors tied for the first place U2300/U2100 prize with 2.5/6 points apiece: Vignesh Anand (2.5/6, 2080 → 2085) from Redmond, Advait Vijayakumar (2.5/6, 1973 → 1973) from Bothell, and Daniel Qian (2.5/6, 1882 → 1885) from Bellevue. The Master/Expert upset prizes were awarded to Vignesh Anand (first place, 314 point draw) and Daniel Qian (second place, 140 points).

The combined 23-player Class A/B section ended in a three-way tie for first between Redmond's Nikash Vemparala (4.5/6, 1618 → 1641), Queen Anne's Sophie Szeto (4.5/6, 1565 → 1622), and Bellevue's Rishi Lakshminarayanan (4.5/6, 1427 → 1597). This was an especially tight section with many close games, with eight of the top ten finishing players drawing their games in the final round. Valentin Razmov (4.0/6, 1957 → 1935) from Seattle won the first place Class A prize and was the only player in the section rated above 1900, since many other ambitious Class A players opted to "play up" into the combined Expert/Master section. Marvin Hayami (2.5/6, 1806 → 1740) from Auburn captured the second place Class A prize with 2.5/6 points. Former WCF President and Apropos Chess Founder Kent McNall (2.0/6, 1867 → 1802) from Edmonds won the third place Class A prize. Rounding out the Class A/B prize winners with a share of the first place U1900/U1700 prize were Tim Campbell (4.0/6, 1767 → 1754) of Issaquah, Victor Zhang (4.0/6, 1554 → 1661) of Mukilteo, and Leonardo Zhou (4.0/6, 1468 → 1545) of Issaquah. The best upsets in the Class A/B section were

achieved by Rishi Lakshminarayanan (first place, 379 points) and Leonard Zhou (second place, 312 points).

In the 19-player combined Class C/D section, Johan Karukayil (5.0/6, 1320 → 1352) from Redmond was victorious with fove points from six games, half-a-point ahead of second-place finishers Wade "The Doctor" Sues (4.5/6, 1171 → 1210) from Seattle and Harishkumar Karthikeyan (4.5/6, 1237 → 1296) from Redmond. Gregory Berry (3.5/6, 1555 → 1494), playing all the way from Bellingham, won the Class C first place prize, despite dropping a handful of online rating points. Gig Harbor's William Elliott (3.0/6, 1469 → 1415) captured the second place Class C prize by virtue of being the only other player rated above the 1400 threshold in the section. Two chess princesses, Sayali Gijare (4.0/6, 1235 → 1266) of Bothell and Shuyi Han (4.0/6, 812 → 944) of Bellevue, split the combined U1500/U1300 prize with four points each. The Class C/D upset prizes were awarded to Arjun Yadav (first place, 826 points!) and Shuyi Han (second place, 783 points).

In Class E section, the tournament's largest at 28 players packed with many underrated juniors, Lixing Shen (5.0/6, 1131 → 1168) from Sammamish and newcomer David Linder (5.0/6, 1049 → 1168) from Tigard, Oregon emerged victorious, each scoring 5.0/6. Young rising Seattle chess stars Edward Cheng (4.5/6, 1063 → 1095) and Gabriel Razmov (4.5/6, 1166 → 1154) tied for second place half-a-point back with 4.5/6 points apiece. Selina Cheng (first place, 624 points) from Det. Cookie's Chess Club and Varun Prabhu (second place, 333 points) scored the best upsets in the Class E section.

GM Alex Lenderman (8.0/9, 2537 → 2540), a well-know speed chess specialist from New York, convincingly won the 33-player Washington Class Blitz Championships on Sunday evening with

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eight points from nine games. Lenderman finished a full point ahead of his nearest rivals, IM David Shahinyan (7.0/6, 2541 → 2529) from Armenia and IM Mitrabha Guha (7.0/9, 2700 → 2589) from India, who shared second place honors. Benjamin Yin (5.5/6, 1706 → 1696) from Massachusetts took home the U200 Prize with a very solid “plus two” score. Bellevue Blitz wizard Yiding Lu (5.0/6, 1443 → 1523) used his speed chess magic to capture the U1700 Prize. Redmond super-talent Vihaan Jammalamadaka (5.0/6, 1736 → 1713) won the U1400 Prize, also with five points. Edward Cheng (5.0/6, 1627 → 1624), brother of Selina and member of Det. Cookie’s Chess School in Seattle, rounded out the prize winners by taking down the U1100 Prize. Congratulations to the winners!

IM Mitrabha Guha, Nicholas Whale, and Valentin Razmov have kindly submitted annotated games as part of the brilliancy prize contest. Please enjoy their annotated games below! WCF is committed to running high quality tournaments year-round. It is our goal to enable players from throughout the chess community to continue competing and honing their chess skills during these tumultuous times. We hope to see you at more upcoming tournaments in 2021, both online and hopefully in-person when it is safe to return to over-the-board play!

**Valentin Razmov (1986) –  
Sophie Szeto (1755) [D35]**  
Washington Class Championships  
Chess.com (R6), November 29, 2020  
*[Valentin Razmov]*

This was a last round game in the Class A/B section, where both players were in contention for first place. White needed a win, whereas for Black even a draw would suffice.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 h6**

The Exchange variation of Queen’s

Gambit Declined has been a common guest at tournaments on all levels in recent years.

**7.Bh4 0-0 8.Bd3 b6 9.Nge2**

The so-called Botvinnik Variation, in which White forgoes the option to land a knight on e5 in return for an attempt to organize a push through the center via f3 and e4, in the proper moment. Instead, 9.Nf3 is quite playable and also normal in this position.

**9...Bb7 10.0-0 Nbd7 11.f3**



*Position after 11.f3*

11.Rc1 has been a more frequent choice in recent years among master-level players, with White scoring well.

**11...c5**

Black’s plan is to organize queen-side pressure led by their three-vs-two pawn-majority, where the c-pawn goes c7-c5-c4, unless White exchanges on c5 allowing hanging pawns on c5-d5. White’s plan in this line is to press in the center and on the king-side.

**12.Rc1 Re8 13.Bf2 a6 14.Ng3**

The last move in this game known to the opening databases. White’s idea is to prepare e3-e4, while not dismissing the possibility to organize an attack starting with Ng3-Nf5.

**14...Bd6**

A logical novelty. The position is balanced.

**15.Nf5**

The knight felt invited and also curious where the bishop will go next.

**15...Bc7**

15...Bf8 is more natural. Black likely chose the alternative 15...Bc7 with an idea to create counter-pressure along the h2-b8 diagonal, perhaps even causing White to weaken their king-side pawn structure.

**16.Re1**

Taking over the support of the e3-pawn from the bishop, so that the latter can meet the anticipated black battery along the h2-b8 diagonal.

16.Bb1 was another valid idea, stepping back from being chased by c5-c4. Alternatively, there is also 16. b3, preventing c5-c4 for the time being.

**16...Qb8**



*Position after 16...Qb8*

**17.Bg3**

Both 17.h3 and 17.g3 felt like they might be too (unnecessarily) weakening or limiting for White’s position. However, the downside of 17.Bg3 is that it is more reactive, letting Black dictate the agenda and relieving some of the pressure (via the bishop exchange) from Black’s relatively limited space.

**17...Bxg3 18.Nxg3 Qc7 19.Qd2 Rad8 20.Qf2 c4 21.Bb1 b5 22.a3**

Both sides are carefully maneuvering, awaiting the right moment to step up the action.



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## 22...Nb8

Reassigning the knight to c6, from where it will press on the d4-pawn and help against White's ideas for e3–e4. Hence, White felt the need to act now with the center push, rather than to continue preparing it with 23.Rcd1 Nc6 24.h3.

## 23.e4 dxe4 24.fxe4?!

Perhaps not the best recapture, as the central pawns can be attacked and blockaded. But White never really questioned the idea of having two connected central pawns as a prelude to a desired king-side attack. This is also where the calm positional game ends, and the open clash begins.



Position after 24.fxe4

## 24...Ng4?

In general, the central pawn thrust succeeds if Black cannot meet it with a challenge to the center via c7–c5 and/or Nf6–Ng4, attacking White's weak areas such as the e3-square and the h2-pawn. Yet the immediate 24...Ng4 does not accomplish anything useful for Black. Instead 24...Qb6! was promising Black a better game: 25.d5 (25.Rcd1 Ng4 26.Qd2 Nc6 and White's central pawns are experiencing considerable pressure) 25... Qxf2+ 26.Kxf2 Ng4+ 27.Kg1 Nd7.

## 25.Qf3 Nf6

Admitting the loss of two tempi.

## 26.Nf5

White senses a moment to start an attack.

## 26...Nbd7?!

Paradoxically at a glance, giving up a king-side pawn (temporarily) would have been a better option for Black: 26... g6 27.Nxh6+ Kg7 28.Qe3 Rh8 29.e5 Nh5 30.Ng4 — after 30...Qd7 the pawn is regained, while the position remains highly complicated.

## 27.Rcd1 Kh8?

The first, and thankfully for Black, only serious mistake in this game. 27...g6! was again an excellent continuation for Black, capitalizing on the instability of White's center in contrast with Black's active

pieces, e.g., 28.Nxh6+ Kg7 29.Ng4 Nxg4 30.Qxg4 Qb6 with the idea to pressure both central pawns, as Black threatens both Nd7–Nf6 and Nd7–Ne5–Nd3.



Position after 27...Kh8

## 28.Qh3

The maneuver Qf3–Qf2–Qh4 is even stronger for White, coupled with the threat of sacrificing a knight on h6 and opening the bishop's diagonal via e4–e5. One difference between 28.Qf2 and 28.Qh3, showing up deep in some lines, is that with a queen on f2, the white king is covered, so there are no intermediate checks by the black queen when the d4-pawn starts rolling. 28.Qf2 Re6 29.e5 Ne8 and after Nf5–Ne3–Ng4 White's e5-pawn is well defended, so d4–d5 is possible and strong, winning the exchange.

## 28...Re6 29.e5 Ne8 30.Ne4?!

With the well-known idea to “bring more pieces to the party,” while counting on Black not to touch the knight since Black's bishop looks so well on the long diagonal. 30.Rf1 was stronger — improving the position of the rook, while pressing on f7.



Position after 30.Ne4

## 30...Rg6?!

But what if Black eliminates that knight? 30...Bxe4 31.Bxe4 Nxe5! The idea of Black giving up a piece for these central pawns while retaining pressure on the remaining pieces and pawns somehow did not occur to White during the game. Around this point (after move 30), the clock time starts to affect decisions — in this complex position, White had 17 minutes left, while Black had around

27. 32.dxe5 Qc5+! The order of moves matters a lot, since the queen wants to step on e5 while still threatening b2, i.e., without a white piece on d4 covering the main diagonal (32...Rxd1?! 33.Rxd1 Qc5+ (33...Qxe5 34.Nd4 Qxe4 35.Nxe6 Qe2 36.Rf1 fxe6 37.Qc3 ±) 34.Rd4 Rxe5 35.Qe3 ±) 33.Qe3 Rxd1 34.Rxd1 Qxe5 35.Rd8! Qxb2 36.Nd6 Qa1+ 37.Kf2 Qf6+ and Black has good drawing chances with three pawns for the piece and an exposed white king.

## 31.Nh4 Rb6 32.Ng5

Black's pieces look visually disorganized, but in practice it's not easy to see how to break through the defenses, especially in a low time situation. White spent five minutes looking for a decisive continuation and in finding none decided to just keep bringing pieces to the party. :-) 32.Qf5 Nf8 was another way to play, still with Black holding the defense on the edge.

## 32...Nf8

Obviously not falling for the obvious (and pretty) checkmate trap: 32... hxg6?? 33. Ng6+ Kg8 34. Qh8#.

## 33.Rf1 Bd5

Black keeps finding the best defensive moves! The bishop blockades the d4-pawn and defends the f7-square, all while staying on its active main diagonal.

## 34.Nf5 Kg8 35.Ne4 Ng6 36.Nfd6?

With just seven minutes left (versus 17 for the opponent) and no decisive attack in sight, White decides to try a different approach — landing one of the knights on the outpost square d6, hoping the cut Black's defensive resources in two disjoint units, while still pressing on f7. However, this move leads to simplifications, which favor Black. 36.Ne3 would have instead kept the position complex and White's attack ongoing.

## 36...Nxd6 37.Nxd6 Ne7

Remaining flexible, while preparing to trade White's knight via Ne7–Nc8. 37... Rbx6 38.exd6 Rxd6 would have been a fine way to keep the defense strong, yet it would have felt like a small concession — and a psychological boost for White — to give up the exchange. Objectively, the resulting position is close to equal.

## 38.Bf5?!

Attempting to prevent Ne7–Nc8 in order to maintain the strong knight outpost. But this move gives up all of White's small remaining advantage, as Black continues to simplify effectively.

## 38...Nxf5 39.Qxf5 Rf8

If Black were to play more ambitiously, they could try 39...b4 instead, since White's king-side attack is going nowhere and there are fewer pieces (and little time left) to organize a good defense on the queen-side. But at this point it was clear that a draw would suffice for Black to share first place in the tournament, and having survived White's attack Black may have felt uneasy about asking for more.

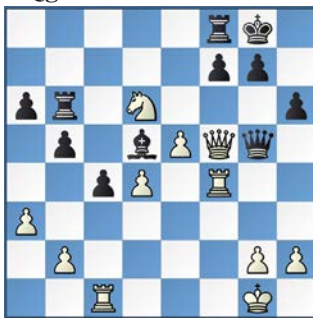
#### 40.Rf4

Mindful not to "burn bridges" back to safety, White tries one last chance.

#### 40...Qd8

Black maintains a cool-headed approach and goes for further simplifications. 40... b4!? 41.axb4 Rxb4 42.Ne4 Bxe4 43.Qxe4 Rxb2 44.e6 f6 45.d5 c3 46.e7 Re8 47.d6 Qc5+ 48.Kh1 c2 49.Qe6+! Kh7! 50.Rc1 Rb1 51.Rff1 Rxc1 52.Rxc1 Qd4! 53.h3 Qd2 54.Rxc2 Qxc2 55.d7 Qb1+ 56.Kh2 Qb8+ would have been a sharp, nearly all forced, and still peaceful ending - by perpetual check — to this exciting game!

#### 41.Rc1 Qg5



Position after 41...Qg5

Game drawn by agreement. Effectively forcing queen exchanges and offering a draw that White could not refuse with 2:30 left on the clock. White's enterprising attacking effort met an equally resourceful and solid defense by Black — the main claim to brilliancy of this game — and the resulting draw was well deserved.

After 41...Qg5 42.Rc2 Rxd6! 43.exd6 Qxf5 44.Rxf5 Be4 45.Rc5! Bxc2 46.d7 Bf5 47.Rxf5 Rd8 48.Rd5 Kf8 49.Rd6 Ke7 50.Rxa6 Rxd7 51.Rb6 Rd5 52.Kf2 the rook endgame is almost certainly drawn.

1/2-1/2

**Nicholas Whale (2065) –  
Vignesh Anand (2080) [E08]**

Washington Class Championships  
Chess.com (R6), November 29, 2020  
[Nicholas Whale]

I had gotten remarkably lucky thus far

in the tournament, winning two games very quickly due to some unfortunate opponent mouse slips. As nice as that is when it happens, this game was much more satisfying.

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.d4 Be7  
5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 c6**

The Closed Catalan.

**7.Qc2 b6 8.b3 Bb7 9.Ba3!?**



Position after 9.Ba3

This maneuver to trade off the dark-squared bishops is more usually seen against the Stonewall setup, since with a pawn up on f5 Black's dark squares are more vulnerable. Here, objectively speaking it's probably not the best, but at least we get a different sort of position than usual, which is mostly what I was hoping for.

**9...Bxa3 10.Nxa3 Qe7 11.Qb2**

Kind of awkward-looking, but if Black ever takes on c4 my knight can re-emerge with a vengeance.

**11...Nbd7 12.Rac1 Ne4 13.Rfd1 f5**

We end up with a kind of Stonewall-like structure after all.

**14.e3 g5**

Black goes for the direct kingside attack but doesn't quite have enough pieces to support it.

**15.Ne5**

I didn't find 15.cxd5 exd5 all that appealing, since now my knight is pretty useless on a3.

**15...Nxe5 16.dxe5 Qg7?!**

Natural, but apparently inaccurate. Stockfish claims 16...g4 is a slight edge for Black.

**17.f4?!**

I thought locking up the pawns basically shut down all of Black's attacking chances, but this isn't quite true... 17.f3! is better to eject the strong knight.

**17...Rfd8?!**

This is the wrong rook to use, as now



the one on a8 has trouble contributing anything.

**18.Bxe4**

18.cxd5 is also good, i.e. 18...Rxd5 (or 18...cxd5 19.Nb5) 19.Nc4

**18...fxe4**



Position after 18...fxe4

Vignesh offered a draw here. I thought about it for a bit, but decided to keep trying, since a win would clinch me the sole first U2200 prize... The text avoids 18...dxe4?! 19.c5! and Black really starts suffering from his dark square problems.

**19.Qe2?**

...and immediately made a mistake. I thought I was cleverly switching gears to try and exploit Black's overextended kingside, but there are multiple good ways to meet this.

**19...gxf4**

The simplest. After a careless move like 19...Rac8? I play 20.Qg4! and Black's position becomes quite difficult.; 19...d4!? is also interesting: 20.exd4 gxf4 21.Qxe4 Rf8 It seems easier for Black to play than White.

**20.exf4 Qg6**

20...Rf8! is pretty good, since my intended 21.Qe3?! runs into 21...c5! 22.cxd5 exd5 with a nasty-looking pawn center.

**21.c5**

I thought this was forced, or else Black will play it and get a similar position to the above line.

**21...d4!?**

Very bold, weakening both the d- and e-pawns, as well as finally letting my

knight into c4. If he can get the pawns far enough there would be plenty of compensation, but I was skeptical.

### 22.Qb2

The pawns are tough to defend, so I tried to pile up on them. I didn't like the look of 22.Nc4 Ba6 23.Qf2 e3.

### 22...d3?

A major step in the wrong direction, as now I can erect a solid blockade. Instead, Stockfish finds 22...bxc5 23.Rxc5 Qh5! We both probably underestimated this move 24.Qd2 (24.Rxd4?? e3! And apparently Black is completely winning! There are just too many threats involving my weak king and various promotion tactics, like 25.Kg2 Ba6! 26.Nc4 Rxd4! 27.Qxd4 Qe2+ 28.Kh3 Qf1+ 29.Kh4 e2) 24...e3 25.Qd3 Ba6! 26.Nc4 Rac8 It's very hard to find a move here.

### 23.Qf2

Now, on the other hand, I can easily deal with the threats.

### 23...Rd5 24.Qe3 Rxc5?!

24...Rad8 is a better try but still insufficient.

### 25.Rxc5 bxc5 26.Nc4!

Much better than retaking the pawn.



Position after 26.Nc4

### 26...Ba6 27.Nd6

With the knight invading in such a dominating fashion, I was very confident of victory. Vignesh gamely tries for counterplay, but it's probably too late now.

### 27...Rd8 28.Nxe4 c4 29.Nf6+

An even better square for the knight, covering all the squares the black queen can use to invade. Black sorely misses his other bishop...

### 29...Kh8 30.bxc4 Bxc4 31.Rd2

31.Qc5 is even better.

### 31...Qf7 32.Qe4?!

This gives him one last chance. 32.Qc5 again.

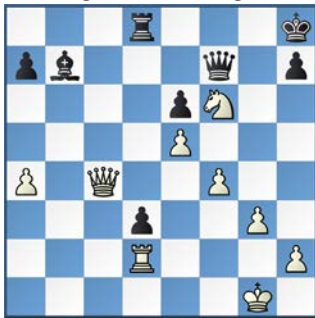
### 32...Bb5?

32...Bxa2! 33.Qxc6 (33.Rxd3 Bd5! Black's bishop holds things together. 34.Qb4 Qc7 White is still better, but there's more work to do.; 33.Rxa2? d2 34.Rxd2 Rxd2 35.Qxc6 is only a draw.) 33...Bd5 34.Qc3 Qb7 35.Qxd3 Qb6+ and at least Black has some threats.

### 33.a4!

Driving the bishop away from the c6-pawn, after which things are much clearer.

### 33...Ba6 34.Qxc6 Bb7 35.Qc4



Position after 35.Qc4

### 35...Qg6??

This loses at once, but otherwise I just take the d-pawn as well and Black suffers a slow death.

### 36.Qc7 Rc8 37.Qxb7 Rc2

Now there are a few ways to win, but I just went with the simplest one.

### 38.Qb8+

38.Rxd3! Qxd3 39.Qb8+ Kg7 40.Qg8+ Kh6 41.Qg5#

### 38...Kg7 39.Qg8+

39.Rxd3! leads to the same line as above.

### 39...Kh6 40.Qxg6+ hxg6 41.Rxd3

The endgame is completely hopeless for Black, down a piece and two pawns; so Vignesh resigned here and I won the first U2200 prize!

1-0

Mitrabha Guha (2445) –

Nicholas Whale (2065) [E68]

Washington Class Championships  
Chess.com (R2), November 27, 2020

[Mitrabha Guha]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 0-0  
5.Nc3 d6 6.Nf3 Nbd7 7.0-0 e5 8.h3 Re8  
9.e4 exd4 10.Nxd4 Nc5 11.Re1 a5 12.b3  
Nfd7 13.Be3 Ne5 14.Qc2 b6

A slight positional mistake as it weakens the c6 square and also the bishop is better placed on c8-h3 diagonal. 14...Ned3 15.Red1 Nb4 16.Qe2

### 15.Rad1 Bb7 16.Nd5 Nc6

16...c6 17.Nc3 Qc7 18.f4 Ned7 19.Bf2

### 17.Nb5 Nb4 18.Qb1 Nxd5 19.cxd5

White is already better.

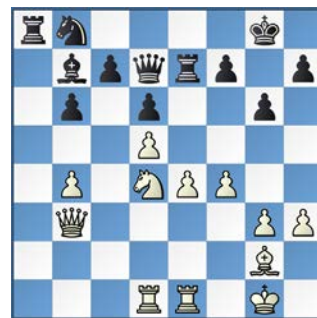
### 19...Re7 20.Bd4

The black bishop is too strong.

### 20...Bxd4 21.Nxd4 Qd7 22.a3 Rae8 23.b4 axb4 24.axb4 Na6

Both the minor pieces are out of play right now.

### 25.Qb3 Ra8 26.f4 Nb8



Position after 26...Nb8

### 27.Qc3

27.e5 was a direct and a very strong attempt at converting the advantage. 27...dxe5 28.fxe5 Qa4 29.Qc3 Qa3 30.Nb3±

### 27...Ra4 28.Ra1

28.e5 dxe5 29.fxe5 Ra2 30.Nc2±

### 28...Rxa1 29.Rxa1 Ba6?

29...c5 Active play was needed as a last try to save for Black. 30.bxc5 bxc5 31.Nc2

### 30.Kh2 Qe8 31.Qc2 Qd7 32.h4

This brings the last white piece into the game. 32.b5 Bxb5 33.Ra8 Re8 34.Nxb5 Qxb5 35.Qxc7 Qc5 36.Qb7 Qc8 37.Qxb6+–

### 32...Qe8

32...Qd8 33.Bh3+–

### 33.b5

This wins on the spot.

### 33...Bb7

33...Bc8 34.Ra8 Bd7 (34...Bg4 35.Nc6 Nxc6 36.Rxe8+) 35.Qxc7; 33...Bxb5 34.Ra8 Bd7 35.Qxc7 Bc6 36.Qxe7 Qxe7 37.Nxc6 Qc7 38.Rxb8+

### 34.Ra7 Qc8 35.Bh3 Nd7 36.Nc6 Bxc6

36...Re8 37.Bxd7

37.bxc6+– f5 38.cxd7 Qxd7 39.Ra8+ Kg7 40.Qb2+ Kh6 41.Bxf5

1-0

# Washington Winter Classic

By Josh Sinanan

The 2020 Washington Winter Classic was held online via Chess.com December 26-27. Chess players from throughout the globe, including parts of Washington, Oregon, California, New Jersey, Georgia, Missouri, British Columbia, Ontario, and Armenia and were represented in the 71-player field! The event was hosted by the Washington Chess Federation under the direction of WCF Adult Chess Director Rekha Sagar, with assistance from WCF President Josh Sinanan. The field was split between the modest 18-player Open section and the massive 53-player Reserve U1700 section. Several ambitious chess warriors opted to “play-up” into the super strong Open section, which featured recent US Championship qualifier GM Aleksandr Lenderman, three IMs, and one FM!

GM Aleksandr Lenderman from New York, IM Mitrabha Guha from India, and FM Rohan Talukdar from Ontario, Canada tied for first place in the Open section, each with 6.5/8! Lenderman won against both Guha and Talukdar in rounds three and four, but he dropped a point to IM David Shahinyan from Armenia in round seven, allowing them to catch up. Three local young guns — Nicholas Whale from Mountlake Terrace, Eddie Chang from Clyde Hill, and Mudit Johar from Sammamish finished on a “plus one” score with 4.5/8 points apiece. Mudit started off the tournament with a bang by taking down IM Salkalp Gupta from India, a 756-point upset!

Interlake High School student Thiruvassagam Thirunavukkarasu from Bellevue swept the Reserve U1700 section with an undefeated 7.0/8, winning six games in a row after starting with two half-point byes! Four players tied for second place with six points from eight games: Derek Heath from Camas, Harry Hu from Atlanta, Brian Wei from Portland, and newcomer Parker Betz from Mill Creek! Three local juniors tied for the U1400 prize with 5.5/8 points each: Emma Li from Redmond, Atharva Joshi from Sammamish, and Meera Shanmugan from Bothell. Young Ted Wang, a first grader from Medina, captured the U1200 prize with 5.5/8 points and won the best upset in the Reserve section (764 points!). Congratulations to the winners!

Unfortunately, the Washington Winter Classic was plagued by a fair

play violation in the Reserve section. WCF takes fair play very seriously in our tournaments and we strive to maintain the highest possible standards of ethics and fair play during this period of online chess. In this tournament, a player was removed for violating fair play based on the following reasons: 1) Reluctance to cooperate with the TD on several occasions when asked to turn on his/her webcam. Zoom monitoring with webcam on is required per the fair-play agreement signed pre-tournament by all players. 2) Not having his/her webcam on in some games, and even when it was on in others, his/her face was not showing as per the TD's requests. When the TD tried to contact the player in question about this, he/she was not responsive to her requests. 3) Several complaints/tips that we received about the player from several other players in the tournament, who felt that he/she was not playing fairly. 4) Thorough human and computer analysis of his/her games, which suggested that he/she was receiving external help on a regular basis throughout the event. As a result, WCF removed the player in question from the tournament and forfeited all of his/her games. Additionally, the player was banned from all WCF events, both online and in-person, for one year. WCF looks forward to returning to playing chess over-the-board when it is safe to do so, so that we can put these incidences of fair play violations behind us. With any luck, OTB chess could start returning as early as Spring or Summer of 2021, as local guidelines allow!

**Harry Bell (2000) –  
Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) [A88]**  
Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R1), December 26, 2020  
*[Aleksandr Lenderman]*

## 1.Nf3

In round one I am playing an experienced player, Harry Bell, rated 2000. I've played him before twice where I did not have easy games. Therefore, I decided to spice it up this time, playing a more dynamic Dutch Defense.

**1...f5 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6**

3...e6 is also logical, transposing into the Stonewall Dutch, where the knight on c3 isn't always well placed. 4.g3 d5 5.d4 c6.

**4.d4 Bg7 5.g3**

One of the main lines against the Leningrad Dutch.

**5...0-0 6.Bg2 d6 7.0-0 c6**

The new main line.

7...Qe8 is the old main line. 7...Nc6 is also an interesting move which Hikaru Nakamura used to beat Jeffrey Xiong to become the US Champion in 2019.

**8.d5 e5 9.dxe6 Bxe6**



*Position after 9...Bxe6*

**10.Bf4?!**

10.b3 is the main line here. The point is that White should not be afraid of Ne4 because of 10...Ne4 11.Nxe4 Bxa1 (11...fxe4 12.Nd4±) 12.Nxd6 and White has huge compensation for the exchange as Black's pieces are loose and uncoordinated.

**10...Bxc4 11.Qxd6 Qxd6 12.Bxd6 Re8**

Here I have a comfortable position.

**13.Rfe1?!**

13.Ne5 is the move I expected, after which the position is still around equal.

**13...Ne4**

Now I am seizing the initiative.



*Position after 13...Ne4*

**14.Nxe4 fxe4 15.Ng5**

15.Nd2 Bd5 16.Red1 was perhaps the lesser evil.

**15...Bd5 16.Rac1?**

I wasn't sure what was the purpose of this move. Besides, it just loses a pawn. White should probably try to create immediate counterplay with 16.f3 exf3 17.exf3 creating counterplay along the e-file.

**16...h6 17.Nh3 Bxa2 18.b4 a6?**

A knee-jerk reaction since I already relaxed a bit too early up a pawn with a better game. I wanted to stop b5 and keep

lines closed. However, now White can surprisingly make my life hard.

Completing development and attacking the b4-pawn with 18...Na6 was the best course of action here. 19.b5 cxb5.



Position after 18...a6

### 19.Red1?!

Missing the best practical chance. 19.Nf4! Bf7 20.Bh3! And now, it is hard for me to actually complete my development. Black should still be winning but it's not nearly as convincing as it could've been.

19...Nd7 20.Bc7 Nf6 21.f3 Nd5 22.Bd6 exf3 23.Bxf3 Bb2

And this wins the exchange.

24.Rc2 Bb3 25.Rxd5 Bxc2 26.Rd2 Rad8

The tactics work out for me.

27.Rxc2 Bd4+ 28.Kg2 Rxd6

The rest is a matter of technique as they say. :)

29.Nf4 Re3 30.Nd3 Kg7 31.Nf4 Rb3 32.Rc4 Kf7 33.Be4 Rc3

I saw he can play Bxg6+ but I wasn't worried about it since I saw that I force a rook trade, win the b-pawn and will just promote the pawns on the queenside.

34.Bxg6+ Ke7 35.Bd3 b5 36.Rxc3 Bxc3

A good start for me.

0-1

**Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) – Daniel Shubin (2161) [D36]**

Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R2), December 26, 2020  
[Aleksandr Lenderman]

In the second round I am playing a promising young player, Daniel Shubin, who came very close to drawing me in a July event. I was also beaten by his coach, Georgi Orlov, in a May event. Therefore, I took this game seriously and wasn't going to be messing around. :)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.Qc2 Be7 7.e3 0-0 8.Bd3 Nbd7 9.Nf3 Re8 10.h3 Nf8 11.0-0

I saw he was playing this line all the time on chess.com so I was able to prepare a bit here.

### 11...Ng6

11...g6 is probably slightly more common.

### 12.Ne5



Position after 12.Ne5

I knew that this is probably a slight advantage for me, but this was the extent of my preparation. However, here my opponent helped me out by blundering a relatively simple tactic immediately.

### 12...Qc7??

That was a bit unexpected. :)

13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Nxd5 Qd6 15.Nxf6+ Qxf6 16.f4

Now I'm up a pawn (central pawn) with a much better position. It's hard for him to even complete the development.



Position after 16.f4

### 16...Nxe5

He decided to sac the second pawn.

17.Bxh7+ Kh8 18.dxe5 Qe7 19.Bd3 Be6 20.Qe2 Qh4 21.Qf2

I thought going into the endgame is the simplest here.

### 21...Qxf2+

It's also hard for him to resist the endgame. For example, 21...Qe7 22.f5 Bd5 23.f6 Qxe5 24.Qh4+ is a quick mating attack.

22.Kxf2 Rad8 23.Rfd1 Rd7 24.Be2 Red8 25.b3 Kg8 26.Rxd7 Rxd7 27.Rd1

Two pawns up, of course I just force trades. Black is just lost.

27...Rxd1 28.Bxd1 Kf8 29.e4 f5 30.exf5 Bxf5 31.b4 Be6 32.a3 b6 33.Ke3 c5 34.bxc5 bxc5 35.g4 Ke7 36.h4 a5 37.f5 Bd5 38.g5 Kf7 39.h5 Ke7 40.h6 gxh6 41.gxh6 Bg8 42.Bh5 Bh7 43.Bg6 Bxg6 44.fxg6 Kf8 45.e6 c4 46.Kd4 c3 47.Kxc3 a4 48.h7 Kg7 49.e7 Kxg6 50.h8Q Kg5 51.e8Q Kg4 52.Qe4+ Kg3 53.Qhh4#

1-0

**Mitrabha Guha (2445) – Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) [D27]**  
Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R3), December 26, 2020  
[Aleksandr Lenderman]

### 1.d4

In round three I was playing a young strong IM from India, Guha Mitrabha. It turned out he was in a peaceful mood, since he offered me a draw on move three. However, I wanted to play a fighting game with some content so I wanted to play the position out even though it was equal. I was happy to create some chances in an equal position, though I think it helped me that he was playing the game during his nighttime. :)

### 1...d5 2.c4 dxc4

The solid Queens Gambit Accepted. I was also in a relatively peaceful mood and wasn't going to go crazy this early in the tournament.

### 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 c5 6.0-0 a6

The main line of the QGA. 6...Nc6 is also one of the important lines. I decided not to play it, since I was worried that he would prepare for it, since I played it twice recently in important games.

### 7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8 9.Rd1+ Ke7 10.Be2

Here my theoretical knowledge sort of ended, so I was improvising.

### 10...Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Rd8 12.Nb3 Bd6



Position after 12...Bd6

### 13.Nbd4?!

My opponent was playing quickly but seemed to lack depth to his play. I decided



to spend my time since I knew that I could catch him on a deep idea if I do so. Nd4 was the right idea but he should have kept the knight on a good b3-square since it pressures my queenside there. 13.Nfd4 would give White chances for an advantage. This move has an idea of at some point playing Bf3 or f3 and e4. Also, if Nc5, now ...Na5 can be annoying. I still have to figure out how to complete my development in the best way. 13...Nc5 14.Na5!±

### 13...Nc5

Now I just get e5 in, and only I can be slightly better now.

### 14.Bd2 e5 15.Nb3



Position after 15.Nb3

### 15...Nxb3

Here I sort of lucked into the right move since I didn't see why my alternative candidate move ...Na4 was bad and rejected it for a wrong reason actually. I was actually calculating 15...Na4? Thankfully I did not go for it. I didn't play it since I didn't see anything special after Bc1. However, in fact, White is much better after 16.Na5! indirectly defending b2 and also heading towards c4. (16.Bc1, however, allows b6 with a clear advantage for Black.) 16...Nxb2 17.Rdb1 Na4 18.Nxb7±

### 16.axb3 Be6 17.Ba5 Rdc8 18.Nd2 b5

I think only I can be better here because of a better pawn structure and central control.

### 19.Bf3 Rab8 20.Rac1

Apparently after the strong move 20.g4! it is equal, but it is not an easy move for a human to find.

### 20...Bf5 21.Rxc8 Rxc8 22.Bb7 Rb8

Also possible was 22...Rc2 23.Bxa6 Bd7 24.Bc3 b4 25.Bd3 bxc3 26.Bxc2 cxd2 27.Rxd2 e4 with an interesting unbalanced endgame.

### 23.Bc6 Bd7?!

Not the most ambitious move. Apparently, I had better options. It is hard for him to find moves after 23...g6 24.h3 Bd3.

### 24.Bxd7 Kxd7 25.Nf3

Honestly speaking, I missed this move.

### 25...Ke7

Now this is the only move to keep the balance.

### 26.Rc1?!

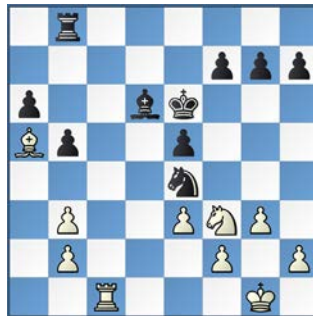
Natural but not best. After 26.Bc3 Nd7 27.b4 White can create counterplay against the weak a6-pawn via Ra1. I am not better here.

### 26...Ne4 27.g3

27.Nd2 I think this was better.

### 27...Kd7 28.Rd1 Ke6 29.Rc1

29.Nd2



Position after 29.Rc1

### 29...f6?

This is a serious mistake where I missed a big chance. 29...b4! stops his main defensive idea, Nd2, and almost traps the bishop. Now it is very difficult for him to find moves. For example, 30.Rc6 Kd5 31.Rxa6 Rc8 I don't win the bishop but my pieces are super active, especially my knight on e4. Now I play Rc1 and Rc2 and crush the kingside while his pieces are off-side.

### 30.Rc6?

Again, 30.Nd2 was a must. He was probably afraid of ...Nc5. However, 30...Nc5 31.b4 Nd3 (31...Nb7 32.Ne4) 32.Rc6 nets him enough counterplay.

### 30...Ra8

The problem for him is that the rook on c6 is actually misplaced.

### 31.Rb6 Ra7?!

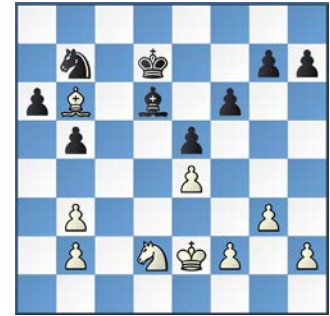
Again, I missed a chance to play for domination. 31...Kd5! 32.Rb7 Rc8 33.Rxg7 b4 34.Rxh7 Rc1+ 35.Kg2 Rc2+ Amazing position. Currently I'm down two pawns, but I'm completely winning since White's whole position just totally collapses.

### 32.Rc6 Kd7 33.Rc2 Ra8 34.Kf1 Nc5 35.Nd2 Nb7 36.Bb6 Rc8

This transposes into an endgame which I

thought was winning or at least with good winning chances.

### 37.Rxc8 Kxc8 38.Ke2 Kd7 39.e4



Position after 39.e4

### 39...Kc6!

This is a precise move. I was thinking of playing ...Bc5 right away. However, then I thought he can defend with 39...Bc5 40.Bxc5 Nxc5 41.Kd1! Nd3 (41...Ke6 42.Kc2) 42.Ke2! Black is still better but he's definitely holding here. I don't think I can risk taking the b2 pawn. 42...Nxb2 43.Nb1 Kc6 44.Kd2 Kc5 45.Nc3 Maybe I don't lose the knight but during the game this looks risky.

### 40.Be3 Bc5! 41.Kd3 Bxe3 42.fxe3

42.Kxe3 Kc5. Here I should also be winning with Kb4 followed by Nc5.

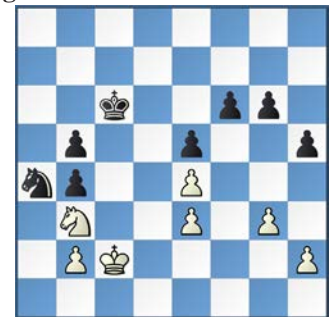
### 42...Nc5+

42...Kc5 43.Kc3 b4+ 44.Kc2 Kc6 45.Kd3 Kb5 46.Kc2 Nc5 47.Kd1 Nd3 48.Kc2 Nf2 49.Kc1 Ng4 50.Nf1 a5 was apparently also winning in the long run.

### 43.Kc3 a5 44.b4

44.Kc2 Kb7 (44...b4 45.Nc4 Nxe4 46.Nxa5+ Kd5 was winning for me.) 45.Kc3 Kb6 46.Kc2

### 44...Na4+ 45.Kc2 axb4 46.Nb3 h5 47. Kc1 g6 48.Kc2



Position after 48.Kc2

### 48...Kb6

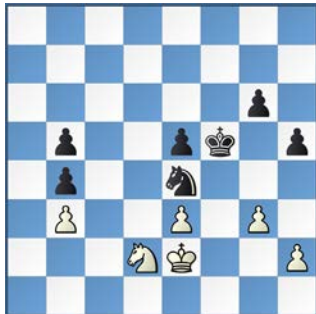
48...Nc5?? For a long time, I was calculating this pawn endgame. Thankfully, I didn't go for it. I was just not sure it was winning, and I thought I had other ways to play for a win. Indeed,

it turns out it's a draw. 49.Nxc5 Kxc5 50.Kb3 f5 51.Kc2! He simply can give up the e4 pawn! Amazing! It is just a fortress. (51.exf5 gxf5 52.Kc2 is also a draw.)

**49.Kc1 Kc7 50.Kc2 Kd6 51.Nd2**

51.Kc1 Nb6 Here I finally saw the winning plan to play Nb6-c4.

**51...Nc5 52.b3 Ke6 53.Kd1 f5 54.exf5+ Kxf5 55.Ke2 55...Ne4!**



Position after 55...Ne4

Here I calculated correctly that the pawn endgame is winning. 55...Kg4 56.Kf2 Kh3 57.Kg1 e4 58.Kh1 wasn't as clear for me whether it was winning.

**56.Nf3**

56.Nxe4 Kxe4 57.h4 (57.h3 g5 58.g4 h4+) 57...g5! The only winning move which I saw. (57...Kf5?? would only be a draw. 58.Kf3 e4+ 59.Kf2 g5 60.hxg5 Kxg5 61.Kf1 h4 62.Kg2!=) 58.hxg5 (58.g4 gxh4 59.gxh5 Kf5 60.Kf3 Kg5 61.h6 Kxh6 62.Kg4 Kg6 63.e4 h3 64.Kxh3 Kh5 65.Kg3 Kg5 66.Kf3 Kh4+) 58...Kf5 59.Kf3 Kxg5 60.e4 (60.Kf2 Kg4 61.Kg2 (61.e4 h4) 61...e4) 60...h4+

**56...g5**

Now I just win because of zugzwang. He either allows Kg4-h3, or he has to lose the b3 pawn.

**57.Kf1**

57.Ke1 Kg4 58.Nxe5+ Kh3 59.Nf3 g4 60.Nd2 Nxd2 61.Kxd2 Kxh2 62.e4 h4 would win routinely.

**57...g4 58.Ne1 Nd2+ 59.Ke2 Nxb3 60.Nd3 Ke4 61.Nxb4 Nc5**

From here it's relatively simple with a passed pawn and a more active king. Now I just have to be careful not to fall for tricks.

**62.Na2 Kd5 63.Nb4+ Kc4 64.Nc6 Kc3**

The simplest.

**65.Nxe5 b4 66.Kd1 b3 67.Kc1 b2+ 68.Kb1 Ne4**

There were a few mistakes as expected for such a rich game. However, overall, I was quite happy with the game, especially

with the technique. Very instructive endgame.

**0-1**

**Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) –**

**Rohan Talukdar (2402) [A01]**

Washington Winter Classic

Chess.com (R4), December 26, 2020

[Aleksandr Lenderman]

In round four I am playing a talented young player, Rohan Talukdar. I've already had many battles with him in the WCF events. I know that he is quite knowledgeable in openings, so I decided to play my new blitz weapon, 1.b3, which I also sometimes use in longer games if I am not sure what to play or if I want to get my opponent out of heavy theory.

**1.b3 e5 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.e3 Nf6 4.Nf3**

My opponent started thinking here, so he probably wasn't expecting this as much. However, I believe Nf3 to be no less venomous than the more common main move, 4.Bb5.

**4...e4 5.Nd4 Nxd4 6.Bxd4 Be7 7.c4**

So far, we are following my prep, but now my opponent played a new move to me.

**7...b6**

7...0-0 8.Nc3 c5 9.Be5 d6 10.Bg3 Bf5 would be more traditional. Position is equal, but it's unbalanced.

**8.Be2**

I stopped for about five minutes here trying to figure out the best plan, and most likely I did not manage. I should've probably tried to be more aggressive trying to win the e4-pawn.

8.Nc3 Bb7 9.Qc2 c5 (9...0-0 10.Rd1. The engine likes this setup. 10...c5 11.Be5 d6 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.Nxe4) 10.Be5 d6 11.Bg3 0-0 12.Rd1 Qd7 and here for some reason, don't ask me why, the engine really prefers 13.a3 over a developing move, claiming a slight advantage. :)

**8...Bb7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f3?!**

I was really unsure about this, and the engine definitely disapproves of this plan.

**10...c5 11.Bb2 d5! 12.cxd5 Qxd5!?**

A very ambitious move, which I didn't expect. However, I don't think this was necessary. Black is at the very least fine with the natural 12...exf3 13.Bxf3 Bxd5. Here I wasn't actually sure what to do since 14.Nc3 Bxf3 15.Qxf3 (15.Rxf3 Qd3) 15...Qxd2 hangs the pawn on d2 while after ...Rxf3 he plays Qd3, and is probably better since I have no threats and he pressures my weak d2-pawn.

**13.Nc3 Qd7 14.Bb5!?**

Nothing special, but at least this gives him something to think about.

**14...Qd6 15.fxe4 Nxe4**

15...Rad8!?! also deserves attention. 16.Qf3 a6 17.Be2 Qxd2 18.Rab1 c4 19.Rfd1 Qc2 20.Rdc1 Qd2 with a funny repetition. The inclusion of 15...a6 here was interesting. 16.Be2 (16.Bc4 b5) 16...Nxe4.

**16.Nxe4 Bxe4 17.Rf4?!**

The engine doesn't love this either. However, I thought this is the only way to try to create chances.

17.Qg4 Qg6=; 17.d3 Bg6=

**17...Bg6?!**

Now, at least I have some initiative and it might be easier for me to play. 17...f5! looks risky since it makes my bishop open, but this is a mirage. In fact, he wants to quickly play ...Rad8, then ...Bf6, and his pieces are just better than mine, as well as his pawn structure.; 17...Bd3 would also be solid. 18.Qg4 g6 (18...f6).

**18.h4 h6 19.Bc4 Rad8**

19...Kh8 was more accurate.

**20.Bc3 Bd3?!**

Now, Black is really drifting. Black could've played this move several moves ago, when it would make more sense, without losing a tempo.

**21.Qg4 Qg6?!**

Now came a big blunder. I thought I was already better after Qg4, but I couldn't quite see how I win after ...g6. In fact, I am only slightly better after g6, which was at this point the only move. 21...g6.

**22.Qxg6 Bxg6 23.Rg4!**



Position after 23.Rg4

Now it is totally over. Black cannot stop my two threats, Rxg6 and h5. However, Black's position was bad even after Raf1. Therefore, Black's play the last few moves was definitely strange, and can probably be due to tiredness after three tough games.

### 23...Kh8 24.h5 Bxh5 25.Rxg7

The cleanest of course. 25.Bxg7+ Kh7 26.Bxf8 Bxf8 would still keep the game going.

### 25...Rd4 26.Rg3 Bd6 27.Rh3 Bg4 28.Rxh6+ Kg7 29.Rxd6

A nice way to end a good day for me. However, what's interesting is that chess.com gave me 99.3% accuracy for this game. In fact, in this game, I've made at least a few serious inaccuracies, and Black could've been better several times in this game. So, it was far from a flawless game for me, and it just goes to show that this chess.com evaluation bar shouldn't always be trusted.

1-0

**Eshan Guha (2129) – Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) [A04]**  
Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R5), December 27, 2020  
*[Aleksandr Lenderman]*

### 1.Nf3

After having an excellent day one when everything that can go well went well for me, I went into today very confident and felt like today would be cruise control. Boy, was I wrong! Today's humbling day just went to show how one should never let his guard down and how chess is very humbling and can be a very frustrating game. I thought this will be my first time to win clear first in a WCF classical event, but once again, the win escaped me. :) It all started with the game against my student, Eshan Guha, who after a tough first round loss to a lower rated, came back very strong, winning his next three games and was gaining confidence. Against me, he chose to play a new opening, and very quickly we reached uncharted territory in the opening. That set for a very interesting battle, where my student never failed to impress! :) I felt like I was just totally outplayed this game.

### 1...d6

I was hoping this would surprise him, and it did.

### 2.b3!? e5 3.d3

Now this is very unusual. I have never seen this setup with b3 and d3 before. I think he was improvising here.

### 3...f5 4.e4 Nf6 5.Nbd2 Nc6 6.Bb2 Be7 7.g3 0-0 8.Bg2 Qe8

Typical idea in Grand Prix attack style. I thought I was already much better here, but I probably overestimated my position.

9.0-0

Here was probably the first critical moment. The moves I considered here were ...fxe4, ...f4, and ...Qh5. I probably didn't choose the right plan here.

### 9...fxe4?!

I was thinking of playing 9...f4, but I wasn't sure what to do against d4. However, I am probably better here with 10.d4 exd4 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 12.Bxd4 Ng4.; 9...Qh5 immediately was another idea, but I didn't like him playing 10.Nh4 here.

### 10.dxe4 Qh5

Here I thought I was comfortably better, but now he started playing phenomenal chess.

### 11.Ne1!

I only expected 11.Nh4 Ng4. Here I would be better. 12.h3 Bxh4 13.hxg4 Bxg4 14.f3 Bxg3 is the point.

### 11...Qh6

11...Bg4 12.f3 Be6 13.Nd3 felt solid for him.

### 12.Nc4 Be6 13.Ne3 Rae8 14.Bc1 Qg6 15.f3 Bd8 16.c3 Bc8 17.Nd3 h5 18.Kh1 Qh7?!

This was probably a mistake, since I allowed h4, a move I underestimated. Then, he gets control of the g5-square, and I am not in time in getting in ...g5. 18...h4 19.g4 Here I wanted the queen to h7 and to play ...h3. I couldn't find how to continue here, however. 19...Nh7 20.Nf5 h3!? 21.Bxh3 Ng5. I guess it deserved attention to sac the pawn to get control of the dark squares.

### 19.h4 Kh8 20.Nf2!

The knight is heading to g5.

### 20...Ng8 21.Nh3 Qg6 22.Kh2 Nh6 23.Nd5 Ne7 24.Nxe7 Bxe7 25.Be3 a6 26.Qd2 Nf7 27.Rh1 Rg8 28.Raf1 Ref8 29.Ng5



Position after 29.Ng5

White is all of a sudden much better here. My bishop on e7 isn't great.

### 29...Nh6 30.Bh3 Bxh3 31.Kxh3 Rf6 32.Kg2 Rg8

Here my opponent started to play solidly for a draw. However, he can try to make progress on the queenside with a plan like c4 and b4.

### 33.Rf2

33.c4±

### 33...Bd8 34.Kf1 c6 35.Kg2 Be7 36.Rff1?!

36.c4



Position after 36.Rff1

### 36...Bd8?!

Missing my best chance in the game. 36...d5 37.exd5 Rd8 38.Ne4 Nf5! 39.Qe1 Rxd5!? 40.Nxf6 Rd3±; 36...Rd8 37.Rf2 d5 38.Qc2 Kg8 is still fine for White but would definitely improve my position compared to before.

### 37.Rf2 Kg8 38.Rff1 Nf7 39.Rf2 Nxe5

39...d5

### 40.Bxg5 R6f7 41.Rd1 Rd7 42.c4 Bb6 43.Be3 Bxe3 44.Qxe3 Rf6 45.Rfd2 Rdf7? 46.Rf2?!

46.Qg5! Qxg5 47.hxg5 Rxf3 48.g6 R7f6 49.Rxd6 gave White good winning chances unexpectedly.

### 46...Rf8 47.Rd3 Kh7 48.Rd1 Qf7 49.Rd3 Qg6 50.Rd1 Qf7

Game drawn by agreement. At this point I didn't see how I can try to make progress here without over pressing, and given the tournament standings I didn't want to go crazy. Little did I know that some bad news awaited me later in the event. :(

1/2-1/2

**Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) – Eddie Chang (1887) [D20]**  
Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R6), December 27, 2020  
*[Aleksandr Lenderman]*

### 1.d4

In this game I am playing against a talented and creative young player, Eddie Chang, who is coming off a big win in a PNWCC U2200 event. I have seen him do well against higher-rateds before, so I knew he would be dangerous. Thankfully

I played well against him.

**1...d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e4 e5 4.Nf3 exd4 5.Bxc4 Nc6 6.0-0 Be6**

My opponent surprised me with a sharp line in the Queens Gambit Accepted.

**7.Bxe6**

7.Bb5 is also a main line.

**7...fxe6 8.Qb3 Qd7 9.Qxb7 Rb8 10.Qa6 Bd6 11.Nbd2 e5 12.a3 Nf6**

I didn't know this line well, so I probably played inaccurately here.

**13.Qd3**

13.b4 0-0 14.Ne1. It is better for the knight to be on d3 rather than the queen (rule 101). :)

**13...0-0 14.b4 Nd8**

I thought 14...Ne7 15.Nc4 Ng6 was more natural.

**15.Nc4 Qe6?!**

This was inaccurate, however. Too creative, the simple 15...Nf7 was better.

**16.Ng5 Qe7**



Position after 16...Qe7

**17.Bd2?!**

I calculated 17.f4, but today was just not my day, I wasn't seeing things great today, unlike yesterday. 17...exf4 18.e5 Bxe5 19.Re1 Nc6. I sort of stopped here, but of course 20.Bxf4+- just wins here.

**17...Ne6 18.Rac1 Nh5 19.Nxe6?!**

19.Nxd6 cxd6 20.Qb3 was better.

**19...Qxe6 20.Nxd6 Qxd6?**

This was a mistake. 20...cxd6 was more natural. 21.Qc4. My idea was to go for this endgame, but it's probably close to a draw after 21...Nf4 22.Bxf4 Qxc4 23.Rxc4 Rxf4 24.f3 g5.

**21.Rc5 Rf7 22.Rfc1 Qf6 23.f3 Nf4 24.Bxf4 Qxf4 25.Rxc7 Rd8 26.R1c5?**

Inaccurate. 26.Qb3 Rdf8 27.R1c5+- was total domination.

**26...Qe3+?**

This just transposes into a lost endgame.

26...Rxc7 27.Rxc7 h5. Amazingly enough, here it is very hard for White to actually make progress. For example, 28.g3 Qg5 29.Rxa7 Rc8±.

**27.Qxe3 dxe3 28.Kf1**

Of course not 28.Rxf7?? Rd1#.

**28...Rxc7 29.Rxc7 a5 30.bxa5 Rd3 31.a6 Rxa3 32.a7**

Black resigned because of Rc8+ coming. I was happy to win here and still maintain a full-point lead over my two nearest competitors. But then came the nightmare round seven. :(

**1-0**

**Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) – David Shahinyan (2580) [E90]**

Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R7), December 27, 2020  
[Aleksandr Lenderman]

**1.d4**

In this game I am playing IM David Shahinyan who after a tough first day, where he lost two games, was making a comeback today with two wins. I knew that most likely just a draw would be good enough for me to win the event. Therefore, I played the most theoretical line. However, my opponent to his credit played a rare sideline where he guaranteed a sharp fight.

**1...Nf6 2.c4 e5 3.d5 g6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.e4 d6 6.h3 0-0 7.Nf3 e6 8.Bd3**



Position after 8.Bd3

This was all expected. However, now he put in a wrinkle, something I have never seen before. My Armenian friend then told me that Aronian has played this before. Not a surprise that my opponent knew about this.

**8...Nbd7**

I was hoping for this main line in the Benoni, 8...exd5 9.cxd5 b5 10.Bxb5 Nxe4 11.Nxe4 Qa5+ 12.Nfd2 Qxb5 13.Nxd6 Qa6 14.N2c4 Nd7 15.0-0 Ne5 16.Nxc8 Raxc8 17.Nxe5 Bxe5 18.Re1 where White practically has no risk of losing.

**9.0-0**

I was considering 9.dxe6, but I thought if I don't win d6 quickly, in the long run, I abandon dark squares. 9...fxe6 10.0-0 Ne8 11.Bg5±

**9...e5**

Now he keeps pieces on the board and the game becomes sharp.

**10.Bg5**

The idea of this is to induce h6 and so that f5 will potentially weaken g6. However, my opponent used this to his advantage by playing with Nh7, which I never saw before.

**10...h6 11.Be3 Nh7**

11...Nh5 12.g3.

**12.Qd2 f5**

Here he was still playing very quickly, which told me he's probably still in prep.



Position after 12...f5

**13.Bxh6?!**

I thought this is the safe way to play, given that I thought I can lock up the game and not risk losing too much. However, I should've just tried to forget about the result and play what I think is the most principled even if I wasn't sure. 13.exf5! gxf5 14.Bxh6 e4 15.Nxe4 fxe4 16.Bxe4 Ndf6 17.Bg6± and here White is better with three pawns for a piece because White's pieces are active and Black has a bad king.

**13...f4 14.Bxg7 Kxg7 15.Be2 Rh8 16.Qd1 Ndf6 17.a3 Bd7?!**

17...g5! was best. We both assumed Nh2 is fine here, but in fact ...g4 just crashes through. I really misjudged this position somehow. 18.Nh2 g4 19.Nxg4 Ng5 20.Nxf6 Qxf6 21.Bg4 f3.

**18.b4 b6 19.bxc5 bxc5 20.Rb1 Qc8 21.Re1 Bxh3!?**

Objectively maybe not sound, but the only way to cause a mess.

**22.gxh3 Qxh3 23.Bf1 Qh5 24.Rb7+ Kg8 25.Bg2**

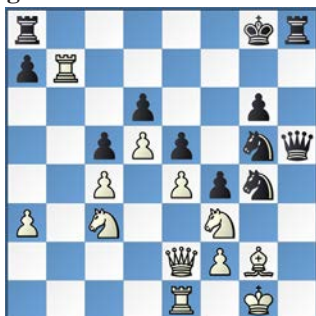
Here I really thought I was out of danger

and thought I'll win the game. However, somehow, I misjudged some dynamics and missed some tricky lines from my opponent, and the game became messy.

**25...Ng4 26.Qe2?!**

I thought this was the most natural, but I could've already moved towards decisive actions with 26.Nb5 Ng5 27.Nc7 Rc8 28.Nxg5 Qxg5 29.Ne6.

**26...Ng5**



Position after 26...Ng5

**27.Reb1?**

And this is a mistake based on a miscalculation. 27.Nxg5 Qxg5 28.Rd1 (28.Nb1 is also winning bringing the knight to f3.) 28...Nh2 29.Rd3 was winning for me. (29.f3 Rh3 30.Rd3).

**27...Nh2!**

Only here I suddenly, to my horror, realized that 28.Nxg5 Qxg5 29.f3 (29.Rb8+ Kg7 30.R1b7+? is even worse because of 30...Kf6 31.Rxa8 f3!) 29...Rh3!! And suddenly it is very tricky for me.

**28.Nxh2 Qxh2+ 29.Kf1 f3!**

And now Black is fully back in the game.

**30.Bxf3 Rf8 31.Rb8 Qh3+ 32.Bg2 Qxc3 33.R8b3 Qa5**

I thought I was sort of out of danger here. However, he managed to create problems to me here and played the rest of the game incredibly well.

**34.Qe3 Rh5 35.Rb8 Qa6 36.Rxf8+ Kxf8 37.Qb3**

Objectively this was ok, but Bf3 probably forced the desired draw. 37.Bf3 Qxc4+ (37...Nxf3 38.Qxf3+ Kg7 39.Rb8 Qxc4+ 40.Kg2 Rg5+ 41.Kh2 Black has to repeat here.) 38.Be2

**37...Nf7!**

As it's well known, backward knight moves are often missed, and I definitely missed this move. I thought queens are definitely coming off the board.

However, after ...Nf7 I was starting to really worry about this game for the first

time in this game. Position was equal but harder for me to play. :(

**38.Qc3?!**

38.Bh3 Kg7 39.Kg2 I should've stopped the queen from going to c8. 39...Qa5 40.Qe3 I'm able to keep his queen at bay here.

**38...Kg7 39.Rb5 Rh4 40.Kg1 Qc8! 41.Qe3 Kf6!!**



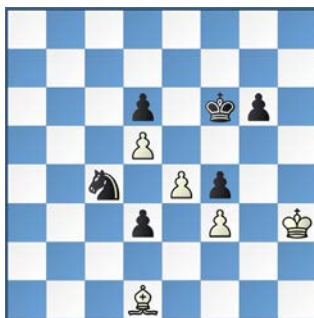
Position after 41...Kf6

Ng5 is now coming and I cannot stop it.

**42.Qf3+ Rf4 43.Qg3 Ng5 44.f3 Qa6 45.Qh2 Kg7 46.Qg3 Nf7 47.Qe1 Qxa3**

Now it is just lost for me.

**48.Ra5 Qd3 49.Rxa7 Qxc4 50.Qe3 Qb4 51.Bf1 Kf6 52.Ra8 Qb1 53.Kg2 Qb2+ 54.Kg1 Qb7 55.Rg8 Qb1 56.Kf2 Qb2+ 57.Be2 Ng5 58.Rf8+ Ke7 59.Rxf4 exf4 60.Qd3 Qd4+ 61.Qxd4 cxd4 62.Kg2 Nf7 63.Kh3 Ne5 64.Kh4 Kf6 65.Kh3 d3 66.Bd1 Nc4**



Position after 66...Nc4

Perfect technique for him. Ever since 27...Nh2 he played very well, and took maximum advantages of all his chances. Painful and frustrating game for me. What to do though. :(

**0-1**

**Ethan Luo (1469) – Aleksandr Lenderman (2704) [B07]**  
Washington Winter Classic  
Chess.com (R8), December 27, 2020  
[Aleksandr Lenderman]

In the last round I was playing a player about 1500 but very under-rated as I saw he beat some higher-rated players in this

tournament. I just wanted to finish the tournament on a good note and at least salvage a share first.

**1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Nf3 Bd6 7.Bc4 Ke7 8.Bg5 c6**

8...Nbd7 9.Nd5+ Kf8 might be more accurate.

**9.0-0-0 Bc7 10.h3**

10.Nh4 was probably better to create some problems for me.

**10...Nbd7 11.Be3 b5 12.Bb3 a5**

I was thinking about 12...b4 here but I was worried that the e4-pawn was poisoned. 13.Na4 Nxe4 14.Rhe1 Re8 15.Ng5 Nxg5 16.Bxg5+ f6 17.Bd2 a5 18.Be3 with good compensation.

**13.a4**

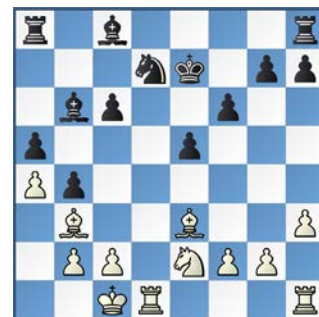
13.a3 was safer.

**13...b4 14.Ne2 Nxe4 15.Ng5 Nxg5 16.Bxg5+ f6**

16...Nf6 was more accurate.

**17.Be3 Bb6??**

As soon as I played it, my heart almost stopped. :) What a blunder! Reminded me of the game I lost to the 1500 Shapiro in July due to a huge blunder. Thankfully, my opponent played fast and missed the simple tactic.



Position after 17...Bb6

**18.Bxb6??**

18.Rxd7+ Bxd7 19.Bxb6 Be6 I would play this and hope for the best. Of course, I should be lost. :(

**18...Nxb6 19.Ng3 c5 20.Bd5 Ra7 21.b3 Rc7 22.f4 Nxd5 23.Rxd5 Be6 24.Rd2 exf4 25.Nh5 g5 26.Re1 Kf7 27.Rd6 Re8 28.Ng7 Kxg7 29.Rxe6 Rxe6 30.Rxe6 c4 31.Kb2 c3+ 32.Kc1 Rc5 33.Kd1 Rd5+ 34.Ke1 Re5+ 35.Rxe5 fxe5 36.Ke2 e4**

A good result in the last game but some ugly games for me on the last day. At least I salvaged a share of first-third, which wasn't terrible.

**0-1**

# The 2020 Mike Neeley Memorial Northwest Grand Prix Final

Murlin Varner, Administrator

Lois Ruff has won the overall competition in the 2020 Northwest Chess Grand Prix. As such, she will win a prize for leading her class plus an equal amount for the overall win. Since a first place share in this year of Covid-19 is \$66.08, Lois will be receiving a total of \$132.16. All other class winners will receive \$66.08 and those taking second place will receive \$33.04. In Class D, there was a tie for second place, so the prize will be split. These prizes are lower than in recent years, because of the many events that did not happen. However, because of the online format for most of our events, the attendance per event was a new record of 48 players per event, surpassing the 2017 record of 36. The 464 people who joined in to one or more Grand Prix events had an average of 2.5 entries each.

Over 25 years ago, Russell “Rusty” Miller suggested we start the Grand Prix completion and name it in honor of people who have had significant impact on chess in the Northwest. Over the years, we have honored numerous people from Washington, Oregon and Idaho for one, two or three years. Late last December, Rusty himself passed away. For this year, and perhaps longer, we will be naming this event in honor of Rusty, perhaps the most impactful and important member ever. I fully believe that without Rusty’s efforts, this magazine might have ceased decades ago. He got it through some lean times, doing the jobs of editor, publisher, reporter, and mail clerk, at times keeping it afloat with infusions of his own money.

This year, we operated under a two-contest format of Washington and “The Others”. Above I discussed the prizes for the Washington players. For those from other places, the top two in each class will receive subscriptions and subscription extensions of Northwest Chess magazine. For most, these will be online subscriptions, although those who already receive hard copies will get extensions of those subscriptions. First place will get a 12-month subscription and second will get six months. This set of winners has an international tint, as there are four Canadians and an Armenian as prize winners. Of the others, four are from Oregon and one each from New York, New Jersey and California.

At this time, 2021 looks as if it will follow the same format. It will still be months before we can get back to normal OTB play, and at this time, only Washington is hosting any Grand Prix events. This may change if organizers in Idaho and Oregon decide to opt back into the Grand Prix program.

I have been keeping the records for the Northwest Grand Prix since 2003. That means 2021 will be my 19th year at the helm. I believe that I shall be looking to retire from this position at the end of my twentieth year, in December of 2022. That gives us two years to find my successor. If you have an affinity for compiling statistics, a tolerance of somewhat tedious tasks (monthly ratings checks being the most tedious part), and a burning desire to work at something that pays about \$0.25 per hour, I may have just the job for you.

2020 Memorial Northwest Grand Prix Standings								
Washington				Other Places				
	last	first	pts.		last	first	place	pts.
<b>Masters</b>				<b>Masters</b>				
1	Mahajan	Rushaan	52.0	1	Shahinyan	David	ARM	133.5
2	Levine	David	25.0	2	Lenderman	Aleksander	NY	119.0
3	Pupols	Viktors	24.5	3	Talukdar	Rohan	CAN	94.5
4	Orlov	Georgi	22.5	4	Raptis	Nick	OR	84.0
5	Kaufman	Ray	19.5	5	Bernadskiy	Vitaliy	UKR	58.5
<b>Experts</b>				<b>Experts</b>				
1	Vijayakumar	Advaith	115.5	1	Vega	Isaac	OR	67.0
2	Whale	Nicholas	110.5	2	Sairam	Pranav	CA	51.0
3	Bell	Harry	73.0	3	Huang	Patrick M	CAN	47.5
4	Shubin	Daniel	66.5	4	Guha	Eshan	NJ	44.0
5	Jiang	Brandon	42.5	5	McConnell	Griffin	CO	25.5
<b>Class A</b>				<b>Class A</b>				
1	Tien	Sophie	129.0	1	Moore	Michael	OR	74.0
2	Razmov	Valentin N	104.0	2	Ingram	Richard	CAN	54.0

Washington				Other Places				
	last	first	pts.		last	first	place	pts.
3	Qian	Daniel	93.0	3	Bagchi	Sounak	NJ	28.0
4	Chang	Eddie	72.0	4	Pang	Ashley	CA	19.5
5	Chen	Minda	54.5	5	Two tied at			19.0
Class B				Class B				
1	Li	Edward	91.5	1	Fowler	James F	OR	31.0
2	Wang	Felicity	90.5	2	Guo	Yu Han (Veronica)	CAN	30.0
3	Gottumukkala	Ananth	88.5	3	Pai	Kushal	OR	21.0
4	Vemparala	Nikash	87.0	3	Zhao	Maxwell Z	IL	21.0
5	Johar	Mudit	79.5	5	Herr	Griffin G	ID	16.5
Class C				Class C				
1	Li	Emma	141.0	1	Martin	Andrew	CAN	41.0
2	Brown	Northern	107.5	2	Zhu	Florina	NJ	31.5
3	Ramkumar	Aditya	92.0	3	He	Justin	ID	19.5
4	Singh	Saket	81.5	4	Gabunia	Davit	OR	18.0
5	Devadithya	Lavindu	77.5	5	Two Tied at			16.0
Class D and Below				Class D And Below				
1	Ruff`	Lois	150.5	1	Malakar	Saarthak	OR	56.5
2	Kona	Vidip	118.5	2	Hack	Don	CAN	54.5
2	Devadithya	Hiruna	118.5	3	Arul	Sharvesh	AZ	54.0
4	Zhang	Michael	110.0	4	Morris	Brian L	OH	40.0
5	Wong-Godfrey	Emerson P	107.0	4	Li	David	IL	40.0
Overall Standings								
1	Ruff`	Lois	150.5	1	Shahinyan	David	ARM	133.5
2	Li	Emma	141.0	2	Lenderman	Aleksander	NY	119.0
3	Tien	Sophie	129.0	3	Talukdar	Rohan	CAN	94.5
4	Kona	Vidip	118.5	4	Raptis	Nick	OR	84.0
4	Devadithya	Hiruna	118.5	5	Moore	Michael	OR	74.0
6	Vijayakumar	Advaith	115.5	6	Vega	Isaac	OR	67.0
7	Whale	Nicholas	110.5	7	Bernadskiy	Vitaliy	UKR	58.5
8	Zhang	Michael	110.0	8	Tarjan	James	OR	58.0
9	Brown	Northern	107.5	9	Malakar	Saarthak	OR	56.5
10	Wong-Godfrey	Emerson P	107.0	10	Hack	Don	CAN	54.5
11	Razmov	Valentin N	104.0	11	Ingram	Richard	CAN	54.0
12	Qian	Daniel	93.0	12	Arul	Sharvesh	AZ	54.0
13	Ramkumar	Aditya	92.0	13	Sairam	Pranav	CA	51.0
14	Li	Edward	91.5	14	Huang	Patrick M	CAN	47.5
14	Zhang	Michelle	91.5	15	Aleksandrov	Aleksej	BLR	46.0

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**Kathy Miller and Russell "Rusty" Miller  
honored by United States Chess Federation  
at 2012 US Open**