

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB



“CONNECTICUT’S PREMIER CHESS CLUB”



**IN CARE OF THE NEW BRITAIN QUARTETTE CLUB
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2006 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Kozlowski

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INTRODUCTION

Season's Greetings, fellow chess players:

The end of the year is approaching fast. Signs of the holiday season are present everywhere. Sadly, another year at the New Britain Chess Club is coming to a close. Two-thousand-and-six will definitely be remembered as one of the greatest years in club history.

Please join me on a journey back through the last twelve months at the club and let us begin our trip down memory lane with the 2006 NBCC newsletter.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

Before the annual New Britain New Year's Blitz Chess Tournament held on January 10 (the January 3 meeting was cancelled due to a snowstorm), a special business meeting was called by the officers to address the problem of repeated forfeitures and withdrawals from club tournaments. The meeting drew mixed reactions, and numerous solutions were proposed. After a one-half hour discussion, those present agreed to have a graduated penalty system implemented effective January 1 to address the problem. The details of the solutions were to be drafted and discussed at a future time. Thankfully, over the next few months, that problem vanished. And there has not been any reason to enforce a penalty system since then. After the meeting, member and FIDE Master Nelson Castaneda proposed a new format for the blitz chess tournament, which became the standard for all future blitz chess competitions. Nelson's idea was to divide players into two or more qualifying sections, with each section consisting of players of varying rating levels. The highest two or three scorers from each preliminary section would advance to the finals, and the remaining players would compete in a reserves section. Prizes would be awarded based on performance in the finals or reserves only. In essence, this allows a player who performs poorly in the preliminary section to have his or her slate wiped clean as well as have a greater opportunity to win a prize in the finals.

Overall, the format received favorable reaction from the membership since it can accommodate more players and prevents games from lasting past midnight. Incidentally, the winner of the 1st NBCC Blitz Chess Tournament using the new format was member Derek Meredith, who went undefeated with a score of 7.5 in a field of nine very strong players in the finals.

On January 17, member and FM Richard Bauer hosted a simultaneous chess exhibition at the club. Ten players challenged the master. And, after a few hours of play, member Yogesh Raghunathan was the only player to defeat Rick. Yogesh was awarded a chess book for his accomplishment. Members Andres Castaneda and Karl Kochman earned draws against the master.

Eight members participated in the 2006 Northeast Chess Winter Getaway tournament held in Marlborough, MA, on the last weekend in January. Our team was led by Captain Derek Meredith. An outstanding overall performance resulted in our club winning the second-place prize by just a half-point ahead of the Boylston Chess Club. The only club to earn more points than ours was the MetroWest Chess Club, the largest club in New England, serving Boston and the surrounding communities. Besides Derek and his son, Nicholas, the following members paved the way for the club's second place title and \$300 check: Doug Fiske, Martin Garcia, Danny Rozovsky, Yuval Shemesh, John Chapman, and Abraham Shemesh. All winnings were applied to the participants' club dues for the 2006-2007 year.

FEBRUARY

Members John Nitz and his son, James, won the 2006 New Britain City Chess Championship Open Reserve Tournament. After searching extensively through the historical documents maintained by Mr. Strazdins on all tournaments since he joined the club in 1951 for a possible first-place tie in any NBCC tournament between two members of the same family, my initial search came up with nothing. However, it was just a few weeks after researching that record when Treasurer Andris Strazdins remembered that he and his father played in the 1973 Jan P. Cendrowski Memorial Chess Tournament, an annual event held for a number of years in the memory of the club president from 1962 to 1969. Nearly forgotten by Mr. Strazdins, the father-son duo won the event. However, because trophies were awarded, tie-break methods were required to be used. After application of the tie-breaks, Mr. Strazdins was the clear winner, and Andris took home the second-place trophy.

Therefore, on February 28, John and James Nitz became the first family members to tie for first place in a NBCC tournament, not including blitz chess tournaments or weekly quads. Even though the Strazdins won separate place prizes, I told Mr. Strazdins and Andris that I would gladly mention their noteworthy accomplishment because it might be another twenty-three years until two family members, like the Nitzs, tie for first place in a tournament at the club.

MARCH

Because the annual New Britain City Chess Championship Reserve Tournament has always ended about a month before the City Chess Championship Finals Tournament, Marcus Komons and I agreed to hold a second reserve tournament this year. We also plan to hold two or more reserve tournaments concurrently with the finals in subsequent years. The second reserve event began on March 14.

APRIL

The club held the 1st New Britain Spring Open Quick Chess Tournament. Two separate tournaments were held. The first tournament held on April 11 was won by member Andres Castaneda. The other event held on April 18 was won by member and USCF National Master Ted McHugh, Doug Fiske, and Derek Meredith.

MAY

The officers held weekend meetings to discuss plans for the 2006 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship scheduled outside under the Quartette Club pavilion on a weekend in July or August. It took weeks of preparation to organize this event. Many details had to be discussed, such as renting the facility, deciding on a suitable tournament format, ordering trophies, promotion and advertising, and arranging for food and beverages. The club extends its appreciation to Derek Meredith for assisting the officers and tournament directors in coordinating that major event, especially for his efforts involved in contacting the United States Chess Federation to have the advertisement published in the August issue of *Chess Life*.

At the end of the month, FM Nelson Castaneda clinched first place in the annual NBCC Championship. The master continues to climb up the rankings in the club.

JUNE

Member Brian Kosnoff became the new club webmaster. The club thanks member Bill Grzesiak for establishing the club's first presence on the internet six years ago. Our new site on the internet has many interesting features, from membership information to results of recent events to current event details to games of players. More games will be posted in the coming months. If you have not already visited the cool site designed by Brian, the address is www.newbritainchessclub.com.

The annual business meeting held on June 13 was one of the longest in club history, lasting eighty-two minutes. The major topic of discussion was the reformatting of the yearly club schedule. Numerous ideas were proposed, and the following changes were ratified by the membership after much spirited discussion:

1. Introduction of two new tournaments: An annual Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship (a four or five-round Swiss-system event scheduled for October) and an annual quick chess championship scheduled for early July.
2. The top six-rated members, including New Britain residents who were non-members as of the October rating supplement and who registered for the 2007 New Britain City Chess Championship Qualifying Tournament, were automatically seeded for the 2007 City Finals, providing they made a commitment. Consequently, the City Qualifying Tournament was shorted from the historic ten to twelve weeks to seven due to the insertion of the Oktoberfest Tournament.
3. Changing the name of the annual NBCC Championship to the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup to honor Mr. Strazdins for his fifty-plus years of club service.

After nearly an hour discussing new business, the election of officers followed. Tournament Director Marcus Komons was nominated and elected to his first term as secretary, replacing Carl Heineman. The club extends its appreciation to Carl for his years of service as secretary and TD.

JULY

Member Randy Shane filed the necessary paperwork with the USCF to become our club's next tournament director. Randy assisted Marcus Komons in directing the 1st NBCC Quick Chess Championship on July 11 and 18.

FM Nelson Castaneda and his son Andres tied for first place in the 1st NBCC Quick Chess Championship. As mentioned in the USCF rules, when two or players tie for a place prize, all money in the pool is generally distributed evenly among all tied winners, and they would share the title as co-champions. However, to make it exciting, there was a blitz playoff to determine the true first place winner in this event. So, after an intense five-minute playoff, Nelson claimed victory and became the 2006 NBCC Quick Chess Champion.

AUGUST

For winning the 2006 New Britain Summer Open Quick Chess Tournament, FM Nelson Castaneda became the first member in seven years to win three club tournaments in one year. As many of you probably remember, Nelson also won the 2006 Club and Quick Chess Championships. After hours of searching in the archives, I found out that the last members to hold that distinguished accomplishment were FM Richard Bauer, USCF NM James Bolton, and Mr. Strazdins, when they won the 1999, 1996, and 1973 New Britain City, Club, and Summer Open Chess Championships, respectively. Again, as in the case of the record set by the Nitzs in February, the record for winning three tournaments in one year does not include blitz chess tournaments or weekly quads.

Twenty past or present members participated in the annual Bradley Open Chess Championship held at the Hartford/Windsor Marriott in Windsor from August 11 to 13. That was probably the largest representation at any outside tournament in NBCC history. The following past or present members who participated in that annual tournament were:

Open section: Andres Castaneda and Yogesh Raghunathan

U2100 section: Martin Garcia, Derek Meredith, and Mark Bourque

U1900 section: Joseph Mansigian, Danny Rozovsky, and David Aldi

U1700 section: Jacob LaPlant, Yuval Shemesh, Kevin Zimmerman,
Bob Kozlowski, and Richard Chang

U1500 section: Julio Echevarria, Owen Gomez, and Andres Montiel

U1300 section: Mike Cebrik, Miki Yasuoka, Sofia Leja, and Max Krall

The 2006 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship was held outside under the Quartette Club pavilion on the last weekend in August, the first time since 1992. The event attracted twenty-eight players from Connecticut and Rhode Island. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. Therefore, most of the games were played inside. Of significant note, Yogesh Raghunathan earned his first win in a major tournament at the NBCC for his first-place victory in this event.

The membership reached its highest point of the 2005-2006 year at ninety-two on the last Tuesday of this month, breaking the prior two years' totals by twelve. Although ninety-two members was not a club record, it was undoubtedly an impressive number. Incidentally, the record for the most members occurred in the 1970s during the Fischer era, when membership reached one-hundred and nineteen.

SEPTEMBER

USCF NM Ted McHugh gave a simultaneous chess exhibition on September 12. The first player to defeat the master was Danny Rozovsky. He was awarded a chess book that was donated to the club. The other winners were Marcus Komons and members Dennis Himes and Keith Little.

On September 26, the club started the first round of the 1st Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. Twenty-three players registered for this event. On October 24, two of our youngest members, James Nitz and Danny Rozovsky, got their names engraved in the club history books to become co-champions of the 1st Oktoberfest Open. That was Danny's first win in a major tournament at the club. At age ten, Danny became the youngest player to tie for any event in club history.

OCTOBER

Members celebrated the marriage of Yuval "UV" Shemesh and Miki Yasuoka with an ice cream cake and a card signing one Tuesday evening. The club wished the newlyweds the best of health and happiness.

To celebrate the 1st Oktoberfest Tournament, a special dinner party, organized by club President Joseph Mansigian, was held at the authentic German restaurant, the East Side in New Britain, on October 26. Nine members attended that festive social gathering, along with Quartette Club bartender Kim Rochette and David Aldi's wife. Everyone had a festive time with fine food and German beer.

And we cannot forget musical entertainment provided by Andris Strazdins, who played German songs on his harmonica. FM Richard Bauer took digital photos of the event to capture the excitement of the celebration.

NOVEMBER

Of the twenty-nine members who registered for the 2007 New Britain City Chess Championship Qualifying Tournament, the highest-rated six as of the October supplement - FM Nelson Castaneda, FM Richard Bauer, Derek Meredith, Andres Castaneda, Doug Fiske, and member Mark Wilkin - were automatically seeded in the City Finals to be held from January through March of 2007. Generally, the new format of the City Championship has been welcomed.

Some discussion between Marcus Komons, Randy Shane, and me began in regard to purchasing computerized pairing software to be utilized in all NBCC tournaments starting in 2007.

DECEMBER

The club continued the year-end tradition started last year with an annual Christmas party. In conjunction with the party and our club's annual Christmas blitz chess event, the officers organized a raffle of a few chess sets and a silent auction of chess books donated by Carl Heineman and other members throughout the year. All proceeds from the raffle and auction were donated to the club. The winners of the 2006 NBCC raffle were members Don Conners and Mike Pascetta. Making contributions to the silent auction were Scott Cameron ("The Milford Morphy"), Jimi Wilkin, Andres Castaneda, John Nitz, and member John Baclawski. As in 2005, Quartette Club bartender Kim Rochette purchased Christmas decorations and prepared a few side dishes for our ultimate holiday party. All of these festivities occurred on December 26, the last Tuesday of the year, ending one of the best years in club history.

My friends, we are back to the present. Our trip down memory lane, however, does not end here.

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2006.

NBCC MEMBERS RANKING IN THE TOP 100 LISTS IN THE USCF AS OF THE DECEMBER 2006 (ANNUAL) USCF RATING SUPPLEMENT

Please note that only ratings of USCF members who have been active within the last year were used in compiling the Top 100 listings.

<u>NBCC MEMBER</u>	<u>USCF TOP PLAYER LIST</u>	<u>USCF RATING</u>	<u>USCF RANKING</u>
GM Gildardo Garcia	Overall	2520	59 th
FM Richard Bauer	Overall Quick	2295	65 th
USCF NM Ted McHugh	Overall Quick	2270	79 th
James Nitz	Age 16	1929	40 th
Danny Rozovsky	Age 10	1900	2 nd

NBCC MEMBERS ATTAINING THE LEVEL OF USCF EXPERT

- Yogesh Raghunathan (Current rating of 2045) – Became a USCF expert in August
- Andres Castaneda (Current rating of 2034) – Became a USCF expert in October

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

- James Nitz won a \$2,000 renewable four-year scholarship from the University of Connecticut School of Engineering for tying for first place at the UConn School of Engineering \$14,000 Scholarship Chess Tournament held on September 23 and 24.
- Expert Derek Meredith defeated Grandmaster Sergey Kudrin in the third round of the 2006 Greater New Haven Fall Open Chess Championship held on November 4. The club congratulated Derek on his brilliant victory against one of the top twenty-five players in the United States. Derek ended up winning his fourth and final game and the tournament with a perfect score. If you want to see the Kudrin-Meredith game, Brian Kosnoff posted it on the club website. Derek also drew GM Kudrin at the 2006 Connecticut State Open Chess Championship held in Orange from May 6 to 7.
- James Nitz and Danny Rozovsky tied for third place in their respective sections (Nitz – 10th grade, Rozovsky – 5th grade) at the 2006 National Scholastic K-12/Collegiate Chess Championship held in Buena Vista, Florida from December 8 through December 10.



THE PASSING OF KARL KOCHMAN

Sadly, on October 10, veteran member Karl Kochman passed away after a short illness. Karl was a very strong player in his career, having obtained expert level in the 1970s. Karl was very devoted to the club, not missing an opportunity to participate in any activity from major tournaments to simultaneous chess exhibitions to quads. Karl was a very generous, caring person and gentleman, and he will deeply be missed by all of his chess friends. There was a card signing on the week after his death, and the club donated one-hundred dollars to a scholarship fund that Karl established in memory of his grandson.



THE PASSING OF USCF MASTER JAMES BOLTON



In 2006, the NBCC lost another one of its veteran members besides Karl Kochman, the very talented chess player and lifetime USCF NM, James “Jim” Bolton. In Master Bolton’s chess career, which spanned an incredible six decades, he earned many distinguished titles, most notably two-time New England chess champion and three-time Connecticut chess champion. Besides the regional and state events, he won many tournaments at the NBCC, becoming only the second member, behind Mr. Strazdins, to win three major tournaments in one year at the club.

It was always a pleasure and a privilege to play against Master Bolton. The influence that the master had on the game was significant, and it was always a thrill to observe him in action while calculating his moves and strategic battle plan over the chess board. No matter what your rating was, this legendary chess master inspired everyone to improve his game. This was a true testament of his untiring determination to ensure that everyone strived for success in the game. Master Bolton was highly respected by his fellow members, and he was a dear friend. His passing was a loss for the NBCC and the New England chess community.

UPDATE ON MR. STRAZDINS

Mr. Strazdins is feeling “50/50” as he often says. There are days where his gout and pain in his muscles and joints flare up, limiting his mobility. Recently, Mr. Strazdins’ physician reported that Mr. Strazdins has severe arthritis in his left ankle, and this will require the use of a brace. If the brace does not relieve his excruciating pain, surgery will be inevitable. The past six years have been quite a stress for Mr. Strazdins, who underwent a few major operations on his knees and feet. On the bright side, however, the doctor reports that Mr. Strazdins’ heart and lungs are in good condition, and his blood pressure is excellent. Perhaps consuming red wine has been attributed to his great 120/80 readings.

I visit Mr. Strazdins about twice a month and keep him abreast of what is happening at the club. He is elated to know that the club is running very smoothly.

It is unimaginable that nearly three years have passed since Mr. Strazdins has been to the club. Mr. Strazdins is quite eager to compete again. And how wonderful would it be if he could be well enough to participate in the first tournament held in his honor, the Strazdins Cup, for his fifty-plus years of dedication to the NBCC and steadfast promotion of chess throughout Connecticut. Let us hope Mr. Strazdins gets well soon.

Finally, Mr. Strazdins wanted me to extend a merry Christmas and a happy new year to all of his chess friends and their families.



BOB KOZLOWSKI'S COMMENTARY

Well, it almost goes without saying that 2006 was a very successful year at the club. This year's business meeting was the focal point for a much serious discussion on the future of our club. Traditionally, the club has held the same events, the Club and City Championships, the Summer Open, and, of course, the simultaneous chess exhibitions and quads. The officers, in late April and most of May, spent hours brainstorming on how these yearly activities could be modified to keep the regular players interested and simultaneously incorporate new events in the schedule to attract players who normally do not participate in club events. Apparently, the changes are working out for the benefit of all members. The membership is constantly growing, more players are participating in events, especially the popular seasonal quick chess tournaments, and new ideas and suggestions on event formats are continually brought forth by members. It is with this kind of feedback and support that the membership will eventually surpass one-hundred. I anticipate that to become reality in the next few years.

Next year marks the end of my twentieth year as a member. I have indeed seen some changes in the club in two decades, but what has remained the same is the social network that embraces our club. Many of our members are very close friends. For those of you who are newcomers, our club social network extends well beyond weekly Tuesday meetings. Groups of our members are regularly involved in social activities outside the club. The activities are not always chess related though chess is usually the common attraction. Some of these activities include a group of players meeting on Friday and Saturday evenings to play blitz chess at the Farmington Borders, Derek Meredith occasionally inviting players over his house for pizza and chess competitions or analysis on the weekends, and the holding of parties on special occasions similar to our Oktoberfest and Christmas parties. The club's social network is further evidenced by the presence of groups of our members at outside tournaments such as the Bradley Open Chess Championship and the Northeast Chess Winter Getaway.

My fellow chess players, it is a pleasure to be of service to the club. I truly enjoy chess but have a much greater passion for the club. I personally take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my fellow officers and tournament directors, Joseph Mansigian, Andris Strazdins, Marcus Komons, Randy Shane, and Brian Kosnoff for their assistance and dedication.

Wow, can you believe it? Our journey is over. I am delighted that I was able to share the wonderful memories of the past year at the club with you. As always, it is with your continued support that we can keep the NBCC Connecticut's largest and strongest club. And remember, as Mr. Strazdins has always said, "Your support for the NBCC shows your support for U.S. chess."

My fellow officers and tournament directors wish you and your family a merry Christmas and a happy new year.



President: Joseph Mansigian
President Emeritus: Arkadijs Strazdins
Vice President: Robert Kozlowski
Treasurer: Major Andris Strazdins
Secretary: Marcus Komons
Webmaster: Brian Kosnoff
Tournament Directors: Marcus Komons, Robert Kozlowski, and
Randy Shane

If you have not already renewed your membership, I hope you will in 2007. I look forward to seeing you soon. Take care.

The membership currently stands at sixty-four.

Yours in chess,
Bob Kozlowski