

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

"THE HEART OF CONNECTICUT CHESS"

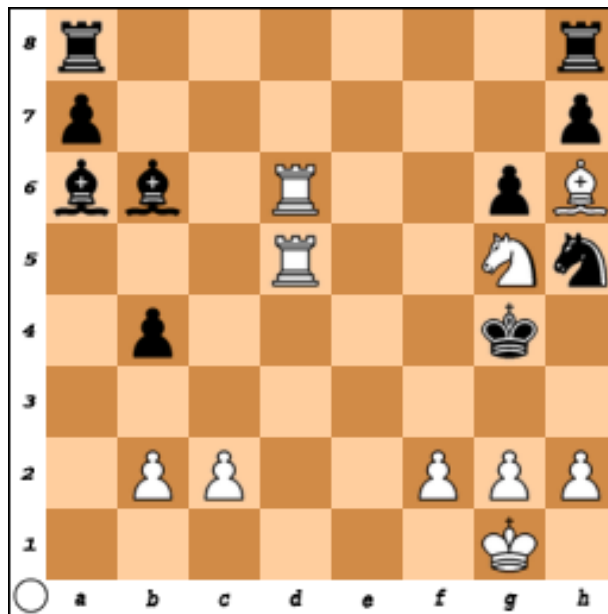
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2017 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Cyr

WHITE TO MOVE AND MATE IN THREE



Michael Adams vs. Wenjun Ju: Tradewise Gibraltar 2017

This chess puzzle was posted on www.wtharvey.com by Bill Harvey.

The solution is on page 32.

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INTRODUCTION

Season's Greetings, family and friends of the New Britain Chess Club:

Another year is rapidly coming to a close. With many of us living busy lives in today's often hectic world, it is important that we all slow things down and spend some quality time with our loved ones this holiday season. While we gather to celebrate this joyful time of the year, let us also take our annual journey down memory lane to remember the amazing events that made history at the NBCC and within our thriving chess community in 2017.

Since 2005, I have had the privilege of writing the annual club newsletters. In these reports, my objective has been to capture the heart, soul, and spirit of our historic organization. Being club historian is a job that I am very passionate about, and it has been such an honor to serve in this capacity for our club for many years.

So, without further ado, please take some time out of your schedule this holiday season and read about the exciting times at the NBCC this past year. As always, I welcome any feedback and appreciate your input and support. Enjoy!



“In chess, just like in life, there are no take-backs.
You must think before you move.”

Susan Polgar

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The first three weeks of 2017 were especially exciting for the NBCC family. At each of these meetings, USCF National Master Derek Meredith, club vice president, provided one-hour and longer endgame training classes that attracted the interest of many scholastic players throughout the area. Derek, who has an extensive knowledge of chess, is a fantastic instructor and does a great job engaging his students. Derek's lessons are so appreciative, and this is just another example of his continuous efforts to promote and enrich our organization and chess community. At the conclusion of the last training session, FIDE Master Nelson Castaneda, one of our club's resident masters, gave a simultaneous chess exhibition, which also drew interest from many students. Harold Blanchard and Bill Campbell were the only two members to claim victory against Mr. Castaneda, whom we sincerely thank for hosting this event.

Later in January, the club commenced its annual championship. The format of this heritage tournament, which dates as far back as the 1930s, underwent a few more formatting modifications from the prior year. This year, the club's administrators brought back the qualifying tournament cycle to provide our class players with an opportunity to compete in the championship section. The top four winners from this two-week, sixteen-player elimination-style event were automatically seeded in the championship section. The other eight players in the twelve-player championship section included the champions of both the championship and reserve sections of the 2016 Club Championship and the six highest-rated members to commit to this year's major event. The format of the championship section was a six-round Swiss system. The reserve section for the non-qualifiers and any members not competing in the championship section was held concurrently with the championship section.

A week before January 26, the anniversary of our club's founding, I made my first executive decision as NBCC historian, declaring that the club meeting closest to this day be reserved as an annual NBCC day of celebration. This first-time tribute to the NBCC was held on January 24, the evening of the first round of the Club Championship. Also at this meeting, veteran member John Nitz brought in his wife's famous nacho cheese platter, which was a nice touch to the club's first annual day of commemoration.

FEBRUARY

On an unseasonably mild Presidents Day weekend, a record-breaking 306 four-player teams gathered at the 2017 World/U.S. Amateur Team East Chess Championship held in Parsippany, New Jersey. Two of the teams participating in this historic event were from the NBCC.

Kramnik to Pay for the Berlin Wall was the first team from the club. On this team, we had USCF NM Ted McHugh, FM Richard Bauer, USCF NM Derek Meredith, and Doug Fiske. Fake News: Carlsen Stops Karjackin' was the second team from the club. On this team, we had Danny Pascetta, Mike Pascetta, Norman Burtness, and Bob Cyr. Right from the start, both teams had high aspirations of winning the coveted title of Top Connecticut Team, which the club has won nine times in the last decade. Throughout the three-day retreat, our eight players fought hard and played well. Derek was a trooper for his team, battling not only tough opponents but also a severe cold. Doug continued his quest for fame as he went a perfect 6-0, making this his third time achieving this feat at USATE. Ted and Rick, who played on boards one and two, respectively, faced high competition and played solidly in spite of a few losses. The most memorable moment of the event for our teams was Danny's impressive game against prominent Grandmaster Joel Benjamin in round one. This game was one of Danny's greatest in his ten-year chess career. The young man played like a master, challenging the GM for 5.5 hours and eighty moves of intense competition. In the end, the GM won the game and kindly reviewed it with Danny shortly thereafter. Mike, Norman, and Bob also had their share of interesting games. In one of Norman's game, the remarkable aspect of his win was the final position. His opponent had six pawns and no pieces! Norman's great comeback game is posted on the club website. The experience of playing a GM for Danny was the biggest highlight of the event for our club, however, one that will be etched in his and the club's history for years to come. Danny's historic game is also posted on the club website. Around 7:00 p.m. on Presidents Day, Team Kramnik got their fourth match point, edging out the Fake News team by one match point and thus achieving the title of Top Connecticut Team at USATE 2017.

Mr. E. Steven Doyle and his professional crew always do a fabulous job with all aspects of this exciting event. They made the weekend a most memorable one for us. Many memories have been made at USATE by our teams over the last decade, and I hope that you will be a part of history at this holy grail of chess event in 2018. I look forward to seeing you there!

The day after USATE back at the club, the administrators hosted the first member tournament of 2017 in honor of Joseph "Joe" Bihlmeyer. This was the club's thirtieth special membership event since 2010. With the exception of a hiatus between 2006 and 2010, Joe has been a continuous member since 2002. Joe is an extremely active chess player and is widely known for his competitive style at the chess board. Those of you who have had the pleasure of playing Joe are well aware of his in-depth knowledge of all aspects of the game, especially opening theory. Joe is a studious chess trainer and prepares hard before any chess event, which he has competed in 450 since learning the game in 1993. In addition, Joe's confident attitude at this game has excelled him to near master level, which he came within a mere forty points of achieving in 2016. Joe often participates in a variety of club activities and is one of the most active members in the last six years. One of Joe's most memorable club achievements was tying for first place in the 2005 New Britain City Chess Championship, although he has come close to clinching other major tournaments. Even after difficult games or events, Joe is resilient, often returning to the chess board without dwelling too much on his losses. He frequently encourages his friends to emulate his approach to dealing with poor performances, motivating them to become better chess players. Joe's tournament, a four-round Swiss system in two sections, drew twenty-one members. The competition was strong in both sections, and there were a few upsets. After an evening of spirited competition, three players tied for first place in the open section: FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Dennis Prawira, and Immad Sadiq. Alexander Ruth, who continues to climb the club rankings in overall quick chess tournament wins, took first place in the reserve section.

MARCH

We take a shift from club to state news to report on the happenings at the 2017 Connecticut State Chess Championship. The venue for this year's grandest state chess tournament was Hall High School in West Hartford. The Connecticut State Chess Association Board of Directors voted to have the NBCC host the annual championship event for the fourth consecutive year. Norman Burtness, a physics instructor at the school, directed the event with Doug Fiske. In a field of sixteen players, many of them experts and masters from the club, USCF NM Ted McHugh won the 2017 Connecticut State Chess Championship. This was Master McHugh's second state chess title. FM Nelson Castaneda took second place over USCF NM Gary Shure, who earned third. Incidentally, Mr. Castaneda and Mr. Shure have each won prior state championships. Manav Ramprasad, one of our club's rising scholastic superstars, claimed first place in the candidates section and will be automatically seeded into the championship section in 2018.

Forty-one players from the region competed in this big event, including four prior champions. Also held that day at Hall High School was the 2017 CSCA Scholastic Team Tournament. Twenty-five four-player teams participated in this historic event organized by Gert Hilhorst and Alexander Lumelsky. International Master Jan van de Mortel directed the scholastics, with assistance from long-time member Bob McDaniel. The following teams earned bragging rights for achieving the gold at this event: High school (Simsbury High Team 1), Middle school (King Philip Cuirassier), and Elementary (Bugbee Black). A huge token of appreciation to the NBCC staff, Alexander, and Jan for making both events a tremendous success for the benefit of the NBCC and for the continued growth and advancement of chess throughout Connecticut.

We switch back to club news to recap the 2017 NBCC Championship. This heritage event, which began in January and ended a few weeks later than schedule due to incessant winter weather, drew almost forty members. Representing the two-section event (championship and candidates) were players of all levels and ages. It was a delight to see so many youths (some as young as eight!) competing in their first club championship. The stakes were high for the participants. No doubt, this annual tournament put everyone to the test to play his or her best. In the quest for success, two players emerged victorious after two months of competition. USCF NM Dennis Prawira won the top prize in the open section, marking his third consecutive club championship win outright. Only three other members have achieved this amazing feat (Edmund Roman, Arkadijs Strazdins, and FM Richard Bauer). John Nitz, who blazed the competition in the candidates section, will be playing in next year's championship section for taking home the gold in the reserves. Incidentally, Nitz's stellar performance has propelled his rating closer to expert level. I have high aspirations that he will attain this goal by year-end.

APRIL

On April 11, the club commenced the second quarter of 2017 with a one-night event held in tribute to veteran member Martin Garcia. Born in New York City and raised in Puerto Rico, Martin began his chess training in Switzerland. While living in this country, Martin attended the same high school where prominent FM Sunil Weremantry studied, and both were members of the International School Chess Club and the Geneva Chess Club. After attending college in Boston, Martin came to the Hartford area to work and joined the Hartford Chess Club soon thereafter. He also became a regular at Paul's Chess Store. During his membership in the HCC, Martin played on many of their team matches with the NBCC. When the HCC disbanded after losing the leadership of Nick Stevens, Martin joined our family.

Because of numerous job relocations, Martin's membership has not been as continuous as many of the other members who the club has honored. Still, Mr. Garcia has many vivid memories about his wonderful experiences with the club through the years. He knew the legendary Arkadijs Strazdins and relished competing in the tournaments that he directed. Martin particularly has enjoyed participating on team events with the club. A lifetime expert, Martin currently ranks in the United States Chess Federation's Top 100 list for blitz chess players. This, according to FM Richard Bauer, "despite having earned the less complimentary nickname of 'seven-minute' Garcia for his tendency to get flagged in five-minute games!" In addition, Martin has earned the nickname "Endgame" Garcia for his incredible ability to prevail in difficult games. And when Martin attains an advantage on the chess board, watch out for a brilliant sacrifice! His gentle good nature, lively spirit, and genuine companionship are qualities that make Martin truly one of the nicest people in our family. Mr. Garcia recently rejoined the club, and he will be staying in Connecticut even though he had plans to move to California this summer. Twenty-two players of all ages and skills competed in Martin's special event. The open section had a strong field of masters and experts. The U1800 section consisted of many scholastic players. After an evening of spirited play, FMs Nelson Castaneda and Richard Bauer tied for first place in the open section. Nelson won on tie-breaks to receive the lovely trophy. Robert Wooster, who just joined the club a month ago, finished in first place in the U1400 section. Many thanks to USCF NM David Herscovici for assisting Norman Burtneess with directing.

Later in the month, the club hosted its first class championships. Created by Norman Burtneess, this double round-robin tournament placed twenty-seven players into various classes based on rating. The winners of this unique event received cash prizes and beautiful NBCC t-shirts embroidered with our awesome new logo. Thanks to Norman for implementing the design for the logo and to FM Richard Bauer and Bob Cyr for formulating the initial ideas for it. We really anticipate that this event will become an annual club tradition. Without any further ado, the 1st NBCC Class Championship winners, many of them new members, were:

- Master: USCF NM Dennis Prawira and FM Nelson Castaneda (tie)
- Expert: Suhas Kodali
- Class A: Immad Sadiq
- Class B/C: Roger Bessette
- Class D: Robert Wooster
- Class E: Shriniket Sivakumar

MAY

After a relatively casual schedule of activities during April, the club transitioned to a more formal schedule in May with its second major tournament of the year - the annual Arkadijs Strazdins Cup - Andris Strazdins Stein. On May 9, NBCC Historian Bob Cyr declared a day of remembrance for both Strazdins to honor them for their significant contributions to the club. The biographies of these legendary men and further highlights about their honorary event are published later in this newsletter.

In between rounds one and two of the Strazdins event on Tuesdays, the club hosted the Planet Earth Chess Championship on the second Saturday of the month at the club's weekly meeting place at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection. Even though attendance at Planet Earth 2017 was not out of this world, literally and figuratively, nearly twenty humans of all ages and skills came destined and determined to display their abilities on the sixty-four squares in this four-round galactic event. Organized by Norman Burtness and directed by Mark Bourque and Laurent Lafosse, the two-section tournament attracted one prior Planet Earth chess champion, FM Richard Bauer. While Mr. Bauer and his five opponents were vying for the ultimate prize in the open section, the remaining participants competed in the U1600 section. Bauer made a note of interest that every player in the open section had the same first initial "B" in his last name. Maybe this historic event was written in the stars! With the exception of a short break for lunch, tournament play lasted until the early part of the evening. Before the sunset on that unseasonably cool day, Expert Joe Bihlmeyer etched his name in chess history for earning the coveted title of Planet Earth Chess Champion of Year 2017. Laxmi Dendi, one of many chess parents in our community, claimed victory in the U1600 section. Both winners were presented with stunning trophies for their worldly achievements.

In addition to the Strazdins and Planet Earth events, FM Nelson Castaneda gave training classes prior to club meetings throughout late April and May. A lifetime master, Mr. Castaneda has always been willing to devote his time and energy to teach others to improve their chess game. Nelson used projectors and software to aid in his lessons, which focused on opening theory and pawn structure. These classes were free to members and \$10 for non-members. We greatly appreciate Professor Castaneda for offering these classes and for his continual efforts to be an inspiring force to everyone in our chess community.

JUNE

The annual Arkadijs Strazdins Cup - Andris Strazdins Stein concluded in early June. Like recent club events, there were many participants representing various skills levels and ages. In the final round, Danny Hoffman, a scholastic player who is rapidly climbing the rating ladder, had a one-point lead over the second-placed competitor in the Andris Strazdins section, and USCF NM Dennis Prawira had a one-half point lead over his final opponent, Immad Sadiq, in the Arkadijs Strazdins section. The results are in, and both Hoffman and Prawira won their final games. The fact that both section winners attained perfect scores is also quite an achievement, something that rarely occurs in club history. Prawira's win was even more impressive because he joins Edmund Roman and Arkadijs Strazdins for being only the third member in club history to win the same tournament for four consecutive years solo.

The 2017 NBCC business meeting took place on the second week of June. The first part of the meeting was the reading of various reports from the club officers and the historian. Gert Hilhorst said that the club's finances have rebounded nicely, attributing this to increased membership and healthy profits from the recent state championships. Norman Burtness spoke about many positive changes in club operations in his presidential address to the membership, specifically mentioning the major improvement of the club website. The second part of the meeting was the election of the officers. Norman and Gert were unanimously elected to the positions of club president and treasurer, respectively. The membership voted Mark Bourque to serve as club vice president, replacing USCF NM Derek Meredith. Derek has contributed tremendously to the club for many years, and we sincerely appreciate everything that he has done for the betterment of our organization. There were two nominations for club secretary. After holding a secret ballot, Luis Delgado won by a narrow plurality (13-12) over Laurent Lafosse. Despite losing, Laurent has expressed a willingness to assist Luis on various club projects. Because of the club's strong financial condition, the four officers are now exempt from dues again. The last part of the meeting was devoted to open discussion on general club business. Much of the dialogue focused on dealing with repeated forfeitures and modifying tournament formats to increase scholastic participation. Overall, it was one of the most productive, and one of the longest, business meetings in recent club history.

JULY

During the summer, the club has historically held more multi-week tournaments and casual activities. In spite of the fact that there are smaller turnouts for club events during these typically slower months, the heart of our organization still keeps on beating strong.

The club devoted the entire month of July to its annual knockout tournament. FM Nelson Castaneda drafted the format for this two-part event that he directed. Similar to last year, all players were initially assigned numbers based on rating and were grouped into one section for pairing purposes. The first and all subsequent winners in each round of the knockout event would advance until there was one champion. The losers in each round of the knockout event would be placed into an open Swiss system section. In case of a draw, a two-game blitz match would have to be played to determine the winner of the match. If the draw persisted after the blitz match, then the person who played with black in the classical game would advance. Sixteen players registered for this event. After three rounds, veteran member Joe Bihlmeyer and newcomer Mario Guevara-Rodriguez were vying for the title of NBCC Knockout Champion 2017. The battle on the sixty-four squares between these expert-ranked players was one for the history books, but with the game ending up a draw, we went into overtime to break the tie. Because Joe played as Black against Mario, he had the advantage in the blitz chess playoff. All Bihlmeyer had to do was win one of two games in the playoff to clinch first place. The first tie-break game was intense, with both players in serious time scrambles. Bihlmeyer lost on time in a very difficult endgame. The final G/5 playoff, which seemed to last longer than ten minutes, was another complex match. In the end, Joe, who is on his way to becoming a master very soon and belonging to a very exclusive group in our club for winning three or more major events in one year, took home the gold!

Besides weekly action at the club in July, many of our members represented at local and regional tournaments during the weekends. Two of those events were Rob Roy's 2017 Summer Picnic Chess Tournament and the 2017 Bradley Open Chess Championship.

Last year, Rob built a beautiful chess center in the basement of his home in Coventry, which has ample space to hold tournaments. Sixteen players, including eight members from “The Heart of Connecticut Chess,” participated in Mr. Roy’s 2017 summer event held on July 15. Between the first and second rounds, the gracious host treated the competitors to a grand summertime lunch. Everyone had a fabulous time, and our chess community cannot thank Rob enough for his untiring commitment to the advancement of chess. When it comes to representation, though, NBCC history was resoundingly made the following weekend at the 2017 Bradley Open. An astounding thirty-two people from our family competed in the event, shattering the record set back in 2012 at the same tournament for the most past or present members competing in an event beyond the club. Friends, I am taking this opportunity to acknowledge the players from our family for etching their name in club history on the weekend of July 21 to 23 at the Sheraton Hotel at Bradley International Airport. They were:

Yoon-Young Kim, Immad Sadiq, Suhas Kodali, Ian Lomeli, Joe Bihlmeyer, Norman Burtness, Manav Ramprasad, Kevin Berry, Andrew Colwell, Jacob Laplant, Laxma Dendi, Martin Garcia, Jithu Sajeevan, Ryan Wantroba, Dhanush Kalangi, Allan Vega, Sydney Faria, Niteesh Kalangi, William Adamson, Shriniket Sivakumar, John Twombly, Richard Zhu, Ann Song, Jonathan Needham, Ken Desrosiers, Suma Dendi, Judy Simonds, Carter Clayton, Jack Clayton, Heeja Needham, Thomas Pasim, and Geoffrey Yu.

Before we leave the memories of July behind, the club deeply appreciates FM Nelson Castaneda and his assistant Expert Suhas Kodali for conducting training classes prior to each meeting in the month. Their engaging sessions, which attracted many students, were devoted to specific endgame situations like bishops vs. knights, pawns and rooks, and bishops of opposite color.

AUGUST

The club continued its honorary membership tournaments on August 8 with a quick chess event for one of its most talented scholastic chess players, Daniel “Danny” Pascetta. Danny has been a part of the NBCC family since 2007. At age eighteen, he is currently the youngest member to be recognized for his longevity in our organization. Like some of our members, Danny had the benefit to learn chess at a very young age. His early and persistent commitment to excel at this game has clearly contributed to his many successes. In 2009, Danny earned the prestigious title of New England Elementary School Chess Champion. Just three years later, he rose to the level of expert, marking one of the fastest rating increases by a member in club history. Even more impressive, Danny has consistently ranked in the USCF’s Top 100 list by age category since 2008.

As many of you know, Danny is a serious chess competitor. In the last decade, he has participated in over 150 local, regional, national, and world tournaments. One of his most favorite events is USATE, where he has played on board one for his team for many years. Danny's passion and enthusiasm for the game has also encouraged and energized some of his friends to become members of his high school chess team in Glastonbury, which has done exceptionally well under his leadership. Like his father, Mike, who the club will be honoring later this year, we are all proud of Danny, and we will greatly miss him these next four years while he attends Indiana University. Danny has a very bright future. He is an academic scholar, an athletic superstar, and one of the most highly respected people in our community. Danny's friendly disposition, positive attitude, and commitment to excellence in all areas of his life are the bedrocks of what truly makes him an inspiration to us all. Keep up the outstanding work, dude! Thirty-one players of all ages and skills competed in Danny's special event, a six-round open Swiss system. Danny had a perfect score going into the fifth round. Even though he lost to FM Nelson Castaneda in round five, he won his final game against USCF NM Derek Meredith and tied with Joe Bihlmeyer and Nelson for first place. Overall, it was a delight to see so many people present that evening to honor this amazing young man.

A week after Danny's event, Bob Cyr was scheduled to host a party and tournament at the club to celebrate his thirty years as a member. Sadly, Bob's father, Reginald "Reggie" Cyr, passed away on the morning of August 15. That evening, the club hosted a memorial tournament for Reggie in lieu of Bob's celebration. That was such a thoughtful and touching gesture by the club. Bob probably would never have had the opportunity to be a member of the NBCC family if it were not for his father teaching him chess and bringing him to the club for many years. Bob directed that all of the donations collected for his father be returned to the club. A special thanks to Mark Bourque, Suhas Kodali, and Gert Hilhorst for directing. Lastly, congratulations to the winners of the Reggie Cyr Memorial Tournament: FM Richard Bauer and Joe Bihlmeyer (open section) and Jithu Sajeevan (reserve section). Bob's special event was rescheduled to August 29.

The NBCC kicked off its annual blockbuster summer outing at the lovely Wickham Park in Manchester on the last Sunday of the month. With brilliant sunshine and pleasantly cool temperatures, the weather could not have been more ideal for our family and friends at the club's largest social gathering of 2017.

This heritage event drew a respectable turnout. Fifty-six players, including thirty-two junior players ages eighteen or younger, competed. Incidentally, both totals were a mere one player shy of last year's attendances. As has historically been with the New Britain Summer Open, many volunteers worked behind the scenes and at the event to ensure its success. Mark Bourque spent many hours coordinating and promoting the tournament. Norman Burtness created the online registration. IM Jan van de Mortel was the chief tournament director. Gert Hilhorst purchased the trophies, assisted Jan with late registrations, and performed other administrative tasks. Historically, this open-air event has featured a barbeque lunch. This year, the club was fortunate to have Mario Guevara-Rodriguez to handle all of the food details and cook the BBQ lunch. Collectively, our volunteers did an exceptionally professional job with all aspects of this event. It ran efficiently and was one of the top ten most successful events in NBCC history. Much appreciation also to Rob Roy, a loyal NBCC supporter, for advertising the event, taking photos, and assisting our staff with anything they needed. One of the wonderful things about this social event is the opportunity to reconnect with family and friends. It was wonderful to see many new chess enthusiasts, some of whom traveled from beyond Connecticut to play. Before we say a fond farewell to Summer Open 2017, I do want to state for the record that this was the first time that all section winners of this tournament were non-members. We hope that all of our newest friends will join our thriving organization, and we look forward to seeing everyone next year at Wickham Park for Summer Open LIII.

As previously mentioned, the Bob Cyr thirty-year membership celebration was rescheduled to August 29. On this special evening, Bob treated the membership to pizza, beverages, and cookies and hosted a quick chess tournament. The generosity that Bob has extended to the club for many years is incredible. Bob loves his chess family and is deeply grateful to this organization for its positive and enriching influences on his life. Thirty of Bob's friends partook in his 30-year club anniversary event. It was a fabulous night of spirited competition and social interaction. After about two-and-a-half hours of friendly play, USCF NM Dennis Prawira and Kevin Zimmerman proudly won their respective sections, and they were presented with their beautiful trophies. Speaking now in the first person, I sincerely thank the club for allowing me to host this party. I also extend thanks to Mark Bourque for directing my tournament. A biography about my history with the club, including photos, is published later in this newsletter.

Before we say adios to the memories of a very energetic August, it is my distinct pleasure to report that the club's membership peaked at 104 for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. This was the highest level of membership since 1973, when the club's membership soared to a record 119 during the Fischer boom. The unprecedented increase in the number of young men and women memberships in the last year has propelled the NBCC to the 100-member total for the first time since 2010. This near-historic membership achievement is a testament to the amazing work that our club leaders have been passionately pursuing over the last few years in regard to membership growth and the expansion of the club's programs.

SEPTEMBER

After quite a busy summer schedule, the club settled into its 2017-2018 fiscal year by hosting its final major tournament of the year - the annual Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. One of currently six major annual events, this club tradition started in 2006 as a way to preserve the German heritage of the many members who were instrumental in shaping the NBCC's history between the 1930s through the 1990s, especially during the club's time at the New Britain Quartette Club. Forty enthusiast players of all ages and skills registered for the exciting five-round tournament, which commenced on September 19. It was also nice to see a few players who have not been recently active in the club compete in this event.

Due to the high interest generated from the training classes that the club has been organizing, our dedicated leaders decided to offer them again. The next in the series of classes started on September 26 prior to the scheduled round of the Oktoberfest Open. Expert Joe Bihlmeyer taught these lessons, which were free of charge to all members, and his topics were specific on how to checkmate with one bishop vs. one queen, one knight vs. one queen, one knight vs. one rook, and other positions. Joe will continue to host these classes weekly through the end of the Oktoberfest event. The NBCC sincerely thanks Mr. Bihlmeyer for sharing his wealth of knowledge about chess through these classes, which again have tremendously benefitted the club. These classes are just one of the newest benefits of being a NBCC member. I am proud to state that with each passing week, our diverse family continues to grow stronger and richer, thanks to the awesome work of our elected officials and contributors.

OCTOBER

The annual Oktoberfest event, which saw the highest turnout since 2008, concluded in the middle of October. As previously mentioned, we were delighted to see the return of old friends and the arrival of new ones - all together participating in the last major club event of the year. For the second time this year, USCF NM Dennis Prawira earned a place on the prestigious NBCC Hall of Fame. His recent solo win in the 2017 Oktoberfest Open, along with his solo wins in the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup and the NBCC Championship, places Master Prawira in an elite group for being only the fifth person in club history to have won or tied for first place in three or more classical time-controlled events in the same year.

On the Sunday evening after the conclusion of Oktoberfest 2017, the club held its annual Oktoberfest dinner party at the Corner Pug in Elmwood. This festive social gathering has been part of the club's Oktoberfest tradition since 2006, the ideas of which were created by former President Joseph Mansigian. Due to the club's improved financial health, the officers decided to recognize certain members this year for their enormous contributions to our organization by treating them to this dinner. In addition to the club officers, we sincerely thank USCF NM Derek Meredith, FM Nelson Castaneda, Suhas Kodali, Laurent Lafosse, Joseph Mansigian, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, and Bob Cyr for volunteering (as trainers, tournament directors, website administrators, chef, etc.) to support club operations. They all were instrumental in moving our club forward in many positive directions, and the club is grateful for their service.

For several years now, the club officers have been organizing thematic tournaments in between the historically multi-week competitions. On October 24, NBCC's own treasurer, Gert Hilhorst, presented a lesson on the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, one of his most favorite chess openings. Utilizing the club's website and our new projector that was purchased with funds recently received from an anonymous donor, Gert first gave a brief history of this gambit and then reviewed some of his games that he has played against our members with it, many of them with success. The Blackmar-Diemer Gambit, according to Wikipedia, is where "White obtains a move and a half-open f-file in return for a pawn and, as with most gambits, aims to achieve rapid development and active posting of his pieces in order to rapidly build up an attack at the cost of the gambit pawn." This gambit is also "... one of few available to White after 1. d4."

After an hour of training, many of our players were grouped into quads to try their luck on this opening. As with other thematic events that the club has held, all games were required to be played with the main-line moves of the thematic opening of the evening. Despite being a riskier gambit, those unfamiliar with the Blackmar-Diemer were intrigued by its sharpness and uniqueness. I imagine that a few of our daring members will have the courage to play this exhilarating, fast-paced gambit against Gert in their next encounter!

Before we conclude with the highlights of October, here is another late-breaking NBCC news flash! On the final Saturday of October, the NBCC team consisting of FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Suhas Kodali, and Ybelka Granger clinched first place at the 2017 Fairfield County Chess Club Fall Team Chess Championship. All of our players had strong performances and were virtually unstoppable on their way to victory, with Derek earning a perfect score, Ybelka upsetting two 1700-ranked players, and Nelson and Suhas playing solidly on boards one and three, respectively. Many of our team's games were broadcasted live on the internet, and pictures from this exciting event are archived on the FCCC website. Congratulations to Team NBCC!

NOVEMBER

Since 2011, the NBCC has held annual tournaments to recognize leaders who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Connecticut chess. This year, the club memorialized the late Julius Fuster. This gentleman played a pivotal role in Connecticut chess history for many years, most notably serving as CSCA president and on the board of directors during the 1990s. In addition, Mr. Fuster was a tournament organizer and a mentor to many chess players, working passionately in these pursuits with many leaders, like Rob Roy, to promote and enrich this game to players all of ages and levels. While striving to expand state chess programs, Julius devoted time with his home club, the Waterbury Chess Club, as an officer and director. Besides being a strong advocate for chess, Julius enjoyed competing in many local tournaments. One of his most memorable tournament victories was clinching first place in a three-way tie in the 1976 New Britain Summer Open alongside legends Arkadijs Strazdins and Mary Conlon. Julius was a highly respected member of our chess community and an inspirational force in the lives of many rising chess players - a dear friend to every chess player. This year, we honored Julius with this event to preserve his legacy to Connecticut chess and to recognize him for his years of steadfast service in this incredible cause.

The NBCC has reached many new milestones this year. Another one of these memorable moments occurred on Friday, November 17, when our organization held its first-ever movie night. The featured film was “Queen of Katwe,” which is about a Uganda girl who takes up chess. The movie was intended for both adult and scholastic members. Prior to the movie, our viewers were treated to pizza, popcorn, refreshments, and desserts. A very special thanks to Luis Delgado and Norman Burtness for arranging the details for this historic evening for our family.

On the last meeting of November, the club hosted its final honorary member event of 2017 in tribute to one of its long-time friends, Michael "Mike" Pascetta. Like many of our adult members, Mike started his chess career during his academic years, playing on his high school team in his home state of Massachusetts. Mike, however, was unable to remain competitive at the game while starting his professional career and raising his family. It would not be until many years later, around the time when Mike started coaching his son, Danny, when he made his return to the chess scene. It was also around that time, in 2007, when Mike joined the NBCC and was further introduced to our family through his friendship with USCF NM Derek Meredith. Being a member of this club has provided Mike with many opportunities to compete against stronger players, which he has earned many victories against, ultimately advancing his rankings in the club from class player to expert. In 2010, Mike took on his most significant role in the club as our president. His presidency came at a crucial time in NBCC history, with the recent relocation from the New Britain Quartette Club to the New Britain Assyrian Community Center. Over the next year, Mike and his fellow team of officers and tournament directors devoted their time and efforts continuing the club traditions established by prior administrations while incorporating new activities for the benefit and enjoyment of all. Because of increased responsibilities with his employer, Mike regrettably decided not to run for re-election as club president in 2011. Nevertheless, in 2013, Mike made his shining moment in NBCC history when he clinched the coveted title of Planet Earth Chess Champion. Unfortunately, Mike could not defend his title the following year! Even though Mike has not been able to commit to many club events in recent years, he has expressed a deep desire to be a regular tournament player once again. Like many people in our family, I have been fortunate to know Mike on a very personal level. Mike, who also is a lifetime USCF member, is truly one of the people in our social community with a big heart. We sincerely thank Mr. Pascetta for his service to the club and look forward to seeing him participate in our events in the decades to come. In the twenty-four player event, Jithu Sajeevan tied for first place with Joe Bihlmeyer and Mark Bourque in the open section, and Robert Wooster won the U1600 section. Jithu and Robert each received trophies.

DECEMBER

December is certainly one of the most wonderful times of the year at the club. On the first Tuesday meeting, the club directors held a rated blitz chess event, which was a perfect way for our members to prepare for the annual state blitz chess event the following week.

The night of the 2017 CSCA Blitz Chess Championship was full of spirited competition. Hosted again by the club, this state-sanctioned event attracted twenty-six players from across Connecticut. The playing field was comprised of novice, amateur, and expert and master-level players. As tournament director, Mark Bourque ensured that everything ran smoothly. Gert Hilhorst assisted Mark with on-site registrations. We thank both of them for their fine work. The competition in the nine-round Swiss system event lasted nearly four hours, and there were a few big upsets along the way. At around 10:30 that evening, IM Jan van de Mortel was crowned the new state blitz chess champion. Of note, this was the IM's first state blitz chess title. Congratulations, Master Mortel!

On the third Tuesday of the month, members and friends of our extended family gathered for the NBCC's 13th annual Christmas party. It was a beautiful evening. Our officers and volunteers did a remarkable job with the planning for this blockbuster year-end celebration. Hall's Market in West Hartford catered the party, and we thank Norman Burtness for arranging the food details again. Our family was served meat and vegetarian lasagna, salad, vegetables, macaroni and cheese, and refreshments. In addition, a few members made dessert contributions, which were nice additions to this grand menu. After dinner, the club held its annual Bullet Chess Championship, another club tradition at the party. Throughout the evening, Bob Cyr put everyone in a festive mood by entertaining our family with his amazing performance of Christmas carols on his keyboard. Bob followed in the footsteps of the late Andris Strazdins, who used to brighten the atmosphere at these festive events with his awesome harmonic playing. In addition to the food, the tournament, and the music, the club also held a silent auction of a chess set that belonged to Jan Cendrowski, our president during the 1960s. This lovely set went to Doug Fiske, the highest bidder, and his \$100 donation went to the club. FM Nelson Castaneda won the tournament and reclaimed his title as NBCC Bullet Chess Champion. Overall, everyone had a glorious time at the final club social event of 2017. It was a pleasure to reconnect and socialize with friends and to celebrate a year of significant progress for the NBCC and our growing family.

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Our members earned the following major achievements in the USCF in 2017.

NBCC MEMBERS RANKING IN THE TOP 100 LISTS IN THE USCF AS OF THE DECEMBER (ANNUAL) 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.

NBCC MEMBER	USCF TOP PLAYER LIST	USCF RATING	USCF RANKING
FM Nelson Castaneda	Age 50 or Older	2333	43 rd
	Quick Age 50 or Older	2219	29 th tie
	Blitz Overall	2367	80 th tie
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2367	11 th tie
USCF NM Ted McHugh	Age 50 or Older	2364	36 th
USCF NM Dennis Prawira	Blitz Overall	2318	78 th tie
FM Richard Bauer	Quick Age 50 or Older	2102	96 th tie
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2253	23 rd
USCF NM Derek Meredith	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2161	54 th
USCF NM David Herscovici	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2122	62 nd
Danny Pascetta	Age 18	2052	51 st
Gary Caruso	Blitz Age 65 or Older	1761	59 th

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ USCF NM Ted McHugh, as previously mentioned, won the 2017 CSCA Championship.
- ❖ USCF NM Derek Meredith won \$1,400 for clinching the U2300 prize (actually, he tied for third place overall alongside GMs!) at the 2017 Continental Open Chess Championship held in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, from August 10 - 13.

CHESS TRIVIA

Chess is one of the oldest board games in history. Since its earliest originations in India or China nearly 1,500 years ago, this gentlemen's game has greatly evolved. Over the centuries, many nations have played vital roles in enriching and advancing this game. Because of these collective global efforts, the interest in chess continues to grow. Today, chess is played by millions around the world and is an internationally popular pastime.

This year's trivia challenge tests your knowledge of where significant events in chess history first occurred. As always, I wish you the best of luck! You can find the answers on page 32.

1. The World Chess Federation (FIDE) was founded in 1924 in what country?

- a) China
- b) Canada
- c) France
- d) Germany

2. The first official world chess championship was held in what country?

- a) Portugal
- b) Russia
- c) Italy
- d) United States

3. What country was the first to issue a stamp that featured a chess theme?

- a) Bulgaria
- b) Greece
- c) Denmark
- d) Iceland

4. In what country was the first international chess tournament held?

- a) England
- b) Germany
- c) Spain
- d) Austria

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by Richard Bauer, Rob Roy, Gert Hilhorst, Doug Fiske, and Bob Cyr.

NELSON CASTANEDA'S SIMULTANEOUS CHESS EXHIBITION



Grand view of the event



Students and Tom Sullivan take on the master!

FINAL ROUND OF THE 2017 CONNECTICUT STATE CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



Left photo: Ted McHugh and Gary Shure, both prior state chess champions.



Right photo (front to back): Richard Bauer and Dennis Fan Li, Nelson Castaneda and Mark Bourque.
Bauer and Castaneda are also prior state chess champions.

ANOTHER HISTORIC MOMENT IN NBCC HISTORY



WINNERS OF THE 1ST – 2017 NBCC CLASS CHAMPIONSHIPS

**THE WINNERS AND PRESIDENT NORMAN BURTNES (IN THE YELLOW T-SHIRT)
DISPLAYING THEIR NEW CLUB T-SHIRTS WITH THE NEW NBCC LOGO!**

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Dennis Prawira, Nelson Castaneda, Suhas Kodali, Immad Sadiq,
Roger Bessette, Robert Wooster, and Shriniket Sivakumar

PLAYERS IN DEEP THOUGHT AT PLANET EARTH 2017



OPEN SECTION

Back row: Mark Bourque and Gaetano Bompastore
Front row: Joe Bihlmeyer and Roger Bessette



UNDER 1600 SECTION

Back row: Shriniket Sivakumar and Charles Koenig
Front row: Laxma Dendi and Niteesh Kalangi

LAST ROUND OF STRAZDINS CUP – STEIN 2017



Back row: Ryan Wantroba and Bob Cyr
Front row: Dennis Prawira and Immad Sadiq

MEMORABLE MOMENTS FROM NEW BRITAIN SUMMER OPEN 2017



Master Chef Mario Guevara-Rodriguez



Directors Gert Hilhorst and Jan van de Mortel



Friends Martin Garcia and Nelson Castaneda



The growing NBCC family!

REMEMBERING ARKADIJS STRAZDINS

The New Britain Chess Club has been blessed to have great leaders throughout its history. By far, the greatest was the legendary Arkadijs Strazdins (“Straz”).

Mr. Strazdins was born in Latvia, and he achieved chess master strength as a young man. Early in his career, he drew a game with Efim Bogoljubov, the challenger in the 1929 and 1934 World Chess Championship matches. “Straz” served in the Latvian Army during WWII and moved to the United States in 1951.



Soon after becoming a New Britain resident, “Straz” joined the city’s chess club. In the first few decades, he gave many simultaneous chess exhibitions and served as club treasurer, secretary, and team captain. In 1970, “Straz” was elected NBCC president, a position that he passionately served for thirty-one years. In addition to this major role, “Straz” was instrumental in establishing a relationship with the newspapers to cover club-sponsored events and local chess news. Under his leadership, the club became the largest chess organization in Connecticut by the mid-1980s. In addition to his work as president and chief tournament director, he

meticulously kept and preserved the club records dating back to his joining. Beyond the club, “Straz” was a staunch ambassador of Connecticut chess, having served on the Connecticut State Chess Association Board of Directors and competed in many state championships. For his decades of service to chess in our community, the CSCA honored “Straz” with a special banquet in 1997. He also received a lifetime NBCC membership in 2001.

Mr. Strazdins is etched numerous times in the NBCC archives. His biggest achievement, as noted in the NBCC Hall of Fame, was earning the most wins or ties for first place in classical time-controlled tournaments - an astounding seventy-one spanning nearly fifty years, more than double of anyone before or since.

Generations of chess players have been inspired by Mr. Strazdins’ devotion and zeal for the club. For five decades, his tireless efforts in this cause enriched the NBCC and chess throughout the region. In 2007, the club held the 1st Arkadijs Strazdins Cup, an annual tournament that is still held today to remember this amazing man.

No matter who you were, Mr. Strazdins would always welcome everyone with his charm, warmth, and old-world gentility. He was truly a compassionate and altruistic man and a staunch member advocate. On behalf of everyone whose lives were touched by “Straz,” let us take a moment to reflect on the life of this special person. His spirit lives on!

REMEMBERING ANDRIS STRAZDINS

Andris “Andy” Strazdins was another great contributor in the annals of the New Britain Chess Club. Like his father, his passionate efforts in this respect tremendously benefited our organization.

Born in Germany, Andy was only a year old when he moved with his family to New Britain, where he resided since 1951. During high school and college, Andy competed on the school chess team, which did quite well under Andy’s leadership. Of course, he could not have had a better mentor than his father!

Andy’s history with the club was one of the longest of any member. He joined the club as a teenager in the 1960s and competed on many team matches and tournaments in his early years. In 1973, he earned second place behind his father in the annual Jan Cendrowski event. Later that year, Andy was elected to the position of club treasurer. At that time, he was the youngest officer in club history. For forty-two years, a club record, Andy worked besides his fellow officers to ensure that the club ran efficiently. Besides his normal treasurer duties, Andy carried out many other unpaid volunteer tasks. No matter the job, Andy performed it with sheer spirit and enthusiasm, always putting the best interests of the membership first. Because of the enormous amount of time and effort that Andy dedicated to the club, the membership honored him with a lifetime membership in 2011.



During the club's social gatherings, Andy would display his comical side by playing songs on his harmonica and regaling his friends with tales and stories about the good old days. It was such a delight to see his boyish charm and to hear his infectious sense of humor enliven the atmosphere at those events. He truly loved the club in every way possible. Andy's compassionate and selfless attitude and approach to life was also evident beyond the club, as much of his free time, especially during retirement, was devoted to providing financial support and spiritual comfort to the less fortunate.

Beyond chess, Andy was immensely active in community programs like the boy scouts, the church, and political and environmental causes. He was a busy man who lived life to the fullest, constantly devoting his time to the greater good.

Starting in 2016, the lower section of the Strazdins Cup was held in memory of Andy. The lower section was called the Andy Strazdins Stein.

Andy treated everyone with dignity and respect and had a big heart like his father. On behalf of everyone whose lives were touched by Andy, let us take a moment to reflect on the life of this special person. His spirit lives on!

BOB CYR'S 30-YEAR HISTORY WITH THE NBCC

Robert "Bob" Cyr (formerly known as Robert Kozlowski) joined the New Britain Chess Club family on July 28, 1987, at the age of nine. His father, Reginald Cyr, taught him the game and brought him to the club for many years. As the club's youngest member, Bob literally grew up with his chess family, and he soon adopted a mentor, Arkadijs Strazdins, to emulate and learn from.

By the mid-1990s, Bob was so inspired and impressed by Mr. Strazdins' labor of love for the club that he decided to begin volunteering. Bob's early roles included setting up equipment and tables prior to meetings and providing support to the tournament directing staff. After learning from Mr. Strazdins about how to direct tournaments, Bob took on his first major role in the club as a USCF certified tournament director in 1998. To date, he has successfully directed over one-hundred events. In 1999, Bob became club librarian. His responsibility was to maintain a huge collection of chess books that were donated by a former member. At the turn the century, Bob created the club's first e-mail distribution list and worked with Mr. Strazdins to convert all records to electronic format.

After many years of loyal service to the organization, Bob eagerly took on his next major role as vice president in 2003. While most people ask themselves what absolutely needs to be done to fulfill the roles that they have taken on, Bob asks how that role can be expanded to provide its maximum benefit. As club vice president, this meant taking on many of the tasks formerly assigned to the president. During this time, Bob also devoted his efforts to the preservation of the club archives, a job that Mr. Strazdins passionately performed for decades. In 2005, Bob pursued his own historic work for the club by writing the first newsletter, which he still publishes annually.

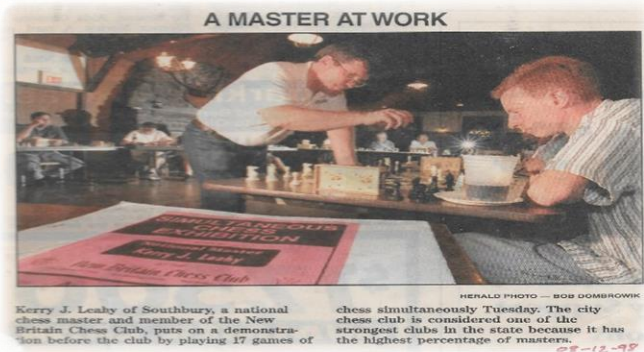
The years between 2007 and 2010 were a critical time for the club. Having to deal with both the loss of its strongest and longest leader and the need for a new location, the club's future was hardly guaranteed. Bob's experience in working with Mr. Strazdins proved key to ushering in new leadership and re-establishing a solid foundation for the future.

In 2010, after deciding not to continue as vice president, Bob created the new position of club historian. In 2011, Bob received a lifetime membership achievement award for his many years of service and loyalty to the club. In 2015, Bob created the book "NBCC Highlights and History: 1900-2004" and wrote the NBCC story, both of which were published, along with most of the club's history, on the internet in 2016.

Even though Bob is not as active in club management today because of his massive responsibilities as historian, he continues to be one of the club's most staunch advocates and contributors. In 2017, Bob submitted a story to the USCF for their contest on what chess means to people. Bob's story focused on how the people of NBCC have been his guiding forces on and off the chess board and how this warm and welcoming community has truly enriched his life. Also that year, Bob hosted a party and tournament for the membership to celebrate his thirty years as a member of the NBCC, "The Heart of Connecticut Chess."



SOME OF BOB CYR'S FRIENDS OF THE NBCC FAMILY THROUGH THE YEARS (1987 - 2017)



NBCC BEST GAME OF 2017

Since 2013, FM Richard Bauer has been the sponsor and judge of the annual NBCC Best Game contest. The club is most thankful for the excellent job that Mr. Bauer continues to do with his analysis of the games and the awarding of prizes to the winners with his own funds. He is simply the best!

In selecting the best game of the year, Mr. Bauer used a simple standard for judging: "Which game was the most fun to play through?" In the best game that follows, Mr. Bauer states, "I can just see White scratching his head and wondering, 'How did things get so bad so fast?' Black utilized the rarely understood advantage of the second move, knowing once White had castled where the king would be and then launching an immediate assault and relying on the closed position to protect his own more centralized king. An honorable mention goes to the Bourque - Castaneda game, which may have been played on a higher level throughout but trailed on the all-important 'Wow!' factor. I will admit that my lack of familiarity with the two winning players contributed to this. FM Nelson Castaneda has already collected three times (one win, two losses). It is time for fresh blood."

Aaron Britt vs. Vijay Yammanuru
Julius Fuster Memorial Tournament
November 2017
Nimzovitch Defense
G/45 with a 5-second delay

1. e4 Nc6

The Nimzovitch Defense is one of the rarest chess openings. It is a left-right inversion of the very popular Indian defenses to 1.d4, but instead of holding the strategic center square, it develops a piece and prepares to strike back in the center once White occupies it. World Champion Garry Kasparov and Grandmaster Raymond Keene wrote that this defense "has never been fully accepted as a dependable opening. Nevertheless, it is sound and offers the maverick spirit a great deal of foreign territory to explore" [Wikipedia]. Now, 2. Nf3 would be a reasonable alternative to the full center grab, which generates some counter-play due to White's slight lapse in piece development.

2. d4 e5

This is the way that New England legend John Curdo would play this surprise weapon. Slightly more popular is 2... d5.

3. d5

Most players can't resist the opportunity to win time against the knight, but now the position becomes closed and solid for Black. White could also keep the game open with 3. dxe5 Nxe5 4. Nf3, with similar prospects in a more open position. After 3. d5, Black cannot play 3... Nd4 due to 4.c3, trapping the knight in the center.

3... Nce7 4. Nf3 Ng6 5. Bb5 a6

5... c6!? would accomplish more, with a central attack and diagonal for the Qd8. We are now out of ECO. Both sides will be on their own. This benefits Black, who likely knows his surprise defense better than White.

6. Ba4 b5 7. Bb3 Nf6 8. Nbd2

8. Nc3 would not work here because of 8... b4.

8... Bb4 9. c3 Bc5 10. Bc2

Losing time with the king's bishop appears to be contagious. Clearly, 8... Bc5 would have been a bit better, and there is no reason to spend another tempo on White's KB.

10... d6

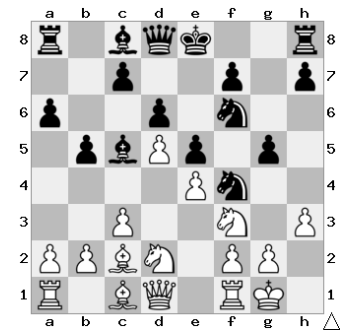
The computer found an even stronger line here that is deeply tactical: 10... Ng4! 11. O-O Bxf2+ 12. Rxf2 Ne3 13. Qe2 Nxc2 14. Rb1 Nf4 and the Nc2 escapes.

11. h3 Nf4(!)

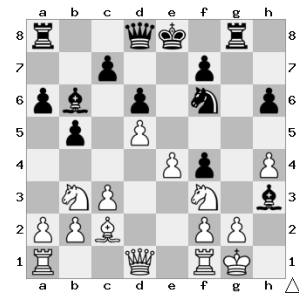
Both sides have stumbled a bit in, but Black is starting to find strong posts for his pieces. First White's king bishop and now Black's dynamic queen's knight find a square worthy of the four moves they each have made!

12. O-O g5!? [DIAGRAM TO THE RIGHT]

After inducing White to castle, Black takes advantage of his uncastled king to start an immediate attack. 13. Nxg5 Rg8 leads to a devastating attack along the g-file.



13. Nb3 Bb6 14. Nxg5



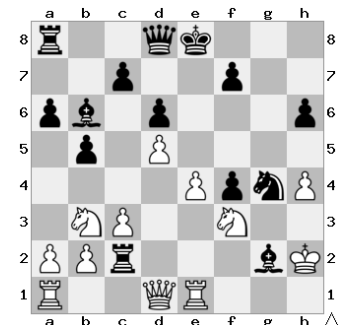
White thinks that trading off the Nf4 will make this pawn more palatable, but there are a few problems. For one thing, Black could just re-enforce that square with 14... N6h5 15. Bxf4 Nxf4 16. Nf3 Rg8, and the pin of the f-pawn prevents any hope of survival. The best hope was 14. Bxf4 gxf4 15. Kh1, when, despite the open file, Black has nothing concrete. Now, the attack on the g-file is quite critical for White. All this because Black neglected his obligation to castle on move 12. It is worth noting that one of the key differences between closed and open play is in the competing advantages and detriments of castling.

14... Rg8 15. Bxf4 exf4 16. h4 h6 17. Nf3 Bh3 [DIAGRAM TO THE LEFT ABOVE]

There is no defense, but the best try would be 18. Ne1. Black would then have to come up with 18... Bxg2!! 19. Nxg2 Qd7 (quiet move) 20. Qf3 Rg3! 21. Qxf4 Qh3 to secure the win.

18. Re1? Rxg2+ 19. Kf1 Rxf2++ 20. Kg1 Rxc2+ 21. Kh1 Bg2+ 22. Kh2 Ng4# [FINAL POSITION TO THE RIGHT]

A nice snappy finish. Note that the queens and their rooks sat this game out while the other troops did battle around White's king.



THE GROWTH OF SCHOLASTIC CHESS IN CONNECTICUT

In the last decade, Connecticut has seen an increase in scholastic chess activity to near-historic levels, the most historic occurring during the Bobby Fischer boom in the 1970s. This recent rise in scholastic chess is clearly evident by the impressive turnouts at various local and state tournaments and by the formation of numerous chess programs in our schools and clubs.

Since becoming Connecticut State Chess Association historian in 2015, I have had the pleasure of co-directing a few state-sanctioned scholastic tournaments with CSCA Directors Norman Burtness and Alexander Lumelsky. One of these tournaments was the first leg in the four-part National Nominations Grand Prix series of the 2017-18 CSCA Scholastic Chess Championship. Nearly seventy enthusiast boys and girls across the state competed in this event held at Hall High School in West Hartford on October 28. Prior to each round, it was so uplifting to watch the students' faces beam with joy and to hear them cheer as they eagerly awaited their next opponent. I was so thrilled to be a part of this amazing event with Norman and Alexander and relished the opportunity to play a role in enriching the lives of these bright young men and women.



Beyond the scholastic tournaments, chess has gained popularity in our schools. One of the most thriving academic chess communities is the Simsbury Public Library Chess Club. Founded by CSCA Treasurer Gert Hilhorst, the SPLCC welcomes all children from second to sixth grade. As mentioned on their website, this club provides a friendly environment where students are taught chess strategy, organization, and skills of good sportsmanship. At the conclusion of each game, all players are instructed to shake hands and say “good game.” In addition to

weekly meetings during the school year, members of the SPLCC hold matches with other schools and compete in state tournaments. Through the years, this club has produced talented chess players and highly respected young adults. We are extremely grateful to Gert for his constant efforts to engage and embolden his students through chess.

The New Britain Chess Club has also been blessed with significant growth in scholastics. Historically, our club has primarily attracted adults. Recently, though, scholastic membership in our club has soared to unprecedented levels due to the introduction of weekly training sessions. Currently, nearly twenty percent of our club's membership base is under the age of twenty-one, with five to ten of these members actively playing in weekly events. Incredible!



My friends, the future vitality of Connecticut chess is in the hands of the younger generations. As the youngest of the longest-attending NBCC members, I am quite delighted to see that our state and local leaders are expanding their visions to include our children. After all, they are our future.

BOB CYR'S COMMENTARY

Two-thousand-and-seventeen will definitely be remembered as one of the most extraordinary years in NBCC history. Over the course of the last twelve months, our organization has reached new heights and set new goals, which are paving the way for a very bright future for our family.

The single-most noticeable addition to the club's schedule of activities in 2017 were the training classes. These classes, which have sparked the interest of our young men and women members, have led to historic membership and financial growth for the club. Our instructors have done a superb job with their weekly sessions, and the club is thankful for their contributions. We eagerly anticipate that their classes will become a new weekly club tradition starting in the New Year.

Our club's core mission of providing a friendly and social environment for all chess enthusiasts is the result of the untiring efforts of our past and present administrators. Their dedication has made it possible for our club to remain "The Heart of Connecticut of Chess Club." And, like many chess organizations, the NBCC has kept up with the changing times by creating new events and modifying existing ones.

This year marked a major milestone for me as club historian. With the publishing of the thirteenth issue of the annual NBCC newsletter, I have finally reached the all-important 100,000-word mark. It has been a pleasure to serve as historian of the one of the finest and most historic chess organizations in the United States of America.

Since the early 20th century, the NBCC has played a vital role in advancing chess in our community. Our club has also accomplished a great deal in recent years. As for the future, I joyfully look forward in joining you as we create more fond and lasting memories for our family.

On behalf of the club officers, merry Christmas. May your new year be blessed with health, happiness, and peace.

President:
Vice President:
Treasurer/Webmaster:
Secretary:
Historian:

Norman Burtness
Mark Bourque
Gert Hilhorst
Luis Delgado
Bob Cyr

Bob Cyr



SOLUTION AND ANSWERS TO CHESS PUZZLE AND TRIVIA

CHESS PUZZLE (FROM COVER PAGE)

1. h3+ Kf4
2. Rf6+ Nxf6
3. g3#

CHESS TRIVIA (FROM PAGE 19)

1. c
2. d
3. a
4. a

HISTORY IN THE MAKING AT THE NBCC!



NBCC'S FIRST-EVER MOVIE NIGHT!

Featured film: "Queen of Katwe"

Friday, November 17, 2017