

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

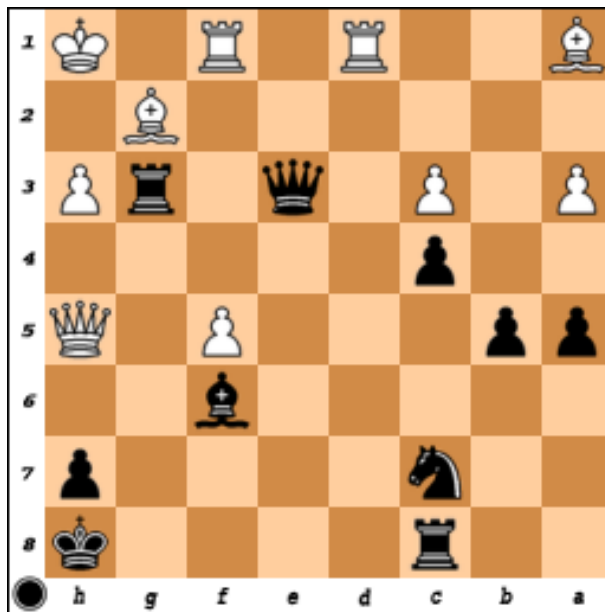
"THE HEART OF CONNECTICUT CHESS"

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2018 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Cyr

BLACK TO MOVE AND WIN



Damian Lemos vs. Fabiano Caruana: Caleta 2011

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

The solution is on page 33.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR	2 – 17
NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS	18
CHESS TRIVIA	19
NBCC PICTURE GALLERY	20 – 25
REMEMBERING JAMES "JIMI" WILKIN	26
REMEMBERING JOHN BACLAWSKI	27
NBCC BEST GAME OF 2018 (GAMES JUDGED, ANNOTATED, AND PRIZES AWARDED TO WINNERS BY FIDE MASTER RICHARD BAUER)	28 – 30
UConn vs. Simsbury Chess Match – Two Scholastic Chess Programs in Action (with Photos) ...	31
BOB Cyr's Commentary	32
SOLUTION AND ANSWERS TO Chess Puzzle and Trivia	33

INTRODUCTION

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

Welcome to another trip down memory lane as we relive the most exciting and momentous moments that happened in our wonderful organization during 2018. There were just so many this past year that we almost broke a club record for the most pages of the annual newsletter, which started as a pilot in 2005. Slightly over a decade later, it truly amazes me that so much could be written about a thriving organization like the NBCC.

I imagine that everyone is busy with holiday plans, but I surely do hope that you can find an hour to two to sit down with your favorite beverage (alcoholic or not!) and read the 2018 NBCC newsletter, a report that I wrote with deep passion and fulfillment. As always, I welcome any feedback and appreciate your support and input. Enjoy and cheers!



"The game of chess is not merely an idle amusement; several very valuable qualities of the mind are to be acquired and strengthened by it, so as to become habits ready on all occasions; for life is a kind of chess."

Benjamin Franklin

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The NBCC commenced its first meeting of 2018 in high gear by hosting another exciting “What are the Odds Blitz Chess Tournament.” This event, which has recently become a New Year’s club tradition, drew almost twenty players. The idea behind these unique tournaments is to attempt to equalize the playing field by requiring the higher-rated players to give time odds to their lower-rated opponents based on rating differences. The rules are quite simple. First, there is no time adjustment if the difference in the players’ rating falls within 100 points (5 minutes vs. 5 minutes). However, for every one-hundred point rating difference (up to a maximum of 400 points), the higher-rated player loses one minute and his or her opponent gains one minute. Because of the significant range of the ratings of our competitors that evening, many of our masters, experts, and even class players were forced to play at extreme time odds against their lower-ranked opponents (1 minute vs. 9 minutes), many of them with ratings below 1,000 points. In addition, all games were played with no time delay, thus providing our underdogs with greater fighting chances. After seven rounds of energetic play, members Danny Pascetta and Raghav Arun were tied for first place. Using conventional tie-breaks, Danny edged out eight-year-old Raghav for the title but, in an act of pure kindness, decided to give the trophy to Raghav, who becomes the youngest member to earn or tie for first place in any NBCC event. It should also be noted that all participants who had an overall positive performance received cash prizes.

The club also started 2018 in high momentum with its stimulating weekly training classes. Our family is so fortunate to have a core group of masters and experts who have been willing to offer these lessons for the benefit of our members. These classes have added tremendous value to our club, and we anticipate that these weekly sessions will become the NBCC’s newest tradition.

FEBRUARY

They say that history tends to repeat itself. That has surely been the case at the club. During the month of February 2018, there were two significant milestones that also occurred in the same month ten years ago. The first was a visit by a grandmaster, and the second was the club’s decision to reimburse our teams for their entry into the annual eastern team tournament in New Jersey. I proudly share some of the highlights from both of these events.

On February 2 and 3, 2018, the club welcomed prominent Grandmaster Alexandr Lenderman, one of the top chess players in America. On Friday, the GM began his two-day visit to the club with a master training class. The intense and engaging three-hour session focused on the topic of prophylaxis applied to the game, thinking about our opponents' moves and deciding whether we want to prevent our opponents' plans or not. The next day, GM Lenderman began with a nice lecture in which he used one of his recent games (with another GM) as a teaching tool to instruct his class on how he was able to capitalize on his opponent's lack of development by creating quick counter-play and launching a sharp attack on his kingside. The lecture was followed by a simultaneous chess exhibition, where twenty-one players from our community, including a few players from the Hartford YMCA Chess Club, participated. Our competitors gave Mr. Lenderman a tough battle on the chess board, with many challenging games, according to the GM. Despite our players' attempts to slow him down, though, the GM emerged victorious on all boards (a perfect 21-0) in exactly three hours to the minute! Afterwards, a few of our members went to lunch at the Olive Garden with Mr. Lenderman, the same restaurant where some of our club officers treated the GM the evening before. This historic weekend in club history would not have been possible if it were not for member Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, who arranged the GM's visit and furthermore provided him with transportation to and from Milford. I also want to thank Rob Roy for helping us promote the GM's visit and for taking so many pictures. The NBCC sincerely appreciates Rob's continual efforts for promoting our club and chess in Connecticut for over four decades. Lastly, we are grateful to our club officers, who work so tirelessly to provide a social and friendly environment at the club and who continue to expand programs for the betterment of all chess enthusiasts. NBCC Historian Bob Cyr was able to get in contact with the *New Britain Herald* to publish this event. Their article is published on the club website. Perhaps we can start using this media resource again to promote more club activities.

On Presidents Day weekend, four club teams comprised of sixteen players competed in one of the largest team tournaments in chess history - the 2018 World/U.S. Amateur Team East Chess Championship (more commonly known as USATE). The ultimate three-day chess vacation, where friends bond in the love of friendship and compete in the arena of sportsmanship, was held in Parsippany, New Jersey. It was clear from my observations that our NBCC teams (with our USATE veterans and first-timers) had a fantastic time playing on this world stage. Here are some of the memorable moments that our teams and members experienced at this historic tournament.

On our first team, Very Fine People on Both Sides, we had International Master Jan van de Mortel, USCF National Master Derek Meredith, Expert Doug Fiske, and Class A player Gert Hilhorst. Our top team did exceptionally well, going on an unprecedented 5-0 run to play on board one in the final match. Unfortunately, our superstars lost this critical match but still proudly ended up winning the Top Connecticut Team title and tying for third place (not including tie-breaks). On our second team, Bitcoin Ponziani Scheme, we had Suhas Kodali, Mike Pascetta, Bob Cyr, and Bill Montross. Joe Bihlmeyer was scheduled to play on this team but had to cancel due to illness. Nevertheless, Team B forged ahead with determination to play for perfection. Overall, these players faced well despite having to play up a number of rounds. In the end, the Bitcoin Team earned three match points. Thanks to Bill for being a substitute on this team on such short notice. The next two club teams, which formed quite late due to last-minute scrambles, featured all first-time USATE players. On our club's third team, Lucky Random NBCC Players, we had Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, Jithu Sajeevan, Art Nagel, and Laurent Lafosse. These competitors played very solidly throughout the competition and ended up earning four match points. They were so close to winning a class prize. The fourth and final NBCC team consisted of the club's first all-scholastic USATE team, with Nakul Ramaswamy, Michael Chen, Yogahari Jeadeeswaran, and Geoffrey Yu. Even though our young men took home two match points, I was told by one of their parents that they had a blast and really enjoyed the atmosphere at this awesome event. Their team name was the Fantastic 4 Back Rankers.

Besides support from New Britain in the central part of Connecticut, the growing University of Connecticut Chess Club family in Storrs fielded two USATE teams. A tremendous token of gratitude to Gert and Jan, who acted as coaches, supporters, travel providers, and much more, for recruiting eight bright and inspiring young men from this university to compete at this world-class tournament. Finally, there was another all-Connecticut team from Fairfield County who ended up clinching the prize for the top team name, Ruy Lopez Just Got Deported.

Former USCF President E. Steve Doyle has been the executive director of USATE for many decades. Mr. Doyle and his dedicated, professional staff do an exceptional job every year as they coordinate everything necessary to make USATE run as efficiently as possible. It is indeed a collaborative labor of love. Friends, this three-day retreat brings people of all backgrounds and skills from across the world together. In these challenging global times, USATE is a testament of how people who are passionate about a common interest like chess can unite in the spirit of comradery. This is the essence of USATE, "the holy grail of chess."

Since 2010, the club has been hosting quick chess events to honor our members based on their longevity in our organization. On February 20, the club held a tournament for Gert Hilhorst, our first honoree of 2018. Gert, or Gary as he cheerfully refers to himself in America, is one of the club's most veteran members, having joined our community over a decade ago. This gentleman, however, was not new to the chess world prior to his membership in the club. One of the most traveled people in the NBCC, Gert is proud to hold memberships in chess clubs in Germany and in his birth country, the Netherlands, where two of our members had the experience of a lifetime visiting with Gert and his wife Holly in 2008. They treated our visitors to an enlightening Dutch experience. Months prior to the visit, Gert tried coordinating an international chess match between the NBCC and the Fischer-Z Chess Club of Amsterdam, but that never happened unfortunately. Maybe it will one of these days! With chess deeply rooted in his blood, shortly after moving to the United States, Gert formed a scholastic chess program in the Simsbury Public School System. Since 2008, Gert has worked passionately to expand and enrich scholastic chess in his hometown. Because of his steadfast efforts, the Simsbury Public Library Chess Club, where he has coached his son Eric, has become one of the largest scholastic chess communities in Connecticut. Beyond Simsbury, Gert, who is rated near 2000 these days, has been actively involved in our club for years. As you all know, Gert is our club treasurer. He was elected to this position in 2015 after the tragic passing of his predecessor, Andris Strazdins, who had held the position for a club record forty-two years. Gert has done wonders for the club in this major role. Gert is a very altruistic person like Andris was, always giving of himself with his time and money. The NBCC is proud to recognize Mr. Hilhorst for his amazing contributions to the enrichment of chess and for the warmth and generosity that he has bestowed to everyone in our family for so many years. Instead of choosing to host a traditional quick chess tournament, Gert opted to organize a Fischer Random (or Chess960) event, the first one in NBCC history. In addition, Gert awarded non-cash prizes to the place winners of his special event. What a display of generosity! Winning first place (and the four pack of Grolsch Dutch beer!) was member USCF NM David Herscovici. Two of our rising scholastic members, Jack Clayton and Nakul Ramaswamy, each received lovely chess books for finishing second overall and second among the scholastic players, respectively.

MARCH

Throughout most of January and February, the club held its annual championship, a heritage event, on its weekly Tuesday meetings. This tournament drew almost forty participants of all ages and levels.

After nearly two months of serious play, veteran member FIDE Master Nelson Castaneda took home the coveted title of 2018 NBCC Champion. Incidentally, Professor Castaneda has won this distinct honor ten times! And he continues to sitting atop the rankings in the club. The battles were just as intense in the candidates section of our annual championship. Jimi Wilkin, another club veteran, edged out his nearest rival by one-half point to claim the title in the candidates section. All winners were presented with beautiful medallions. We owe Laurent Lafosse a huge thanks for doing a superb job as the sole tournament director of the club's largest annual tournament.

We briefly depart from club to state chess news to cover the highlights of the annual Connecticut State Chess Championship. The NBCC hosted this state-sanctioned event, now for the fifth consecutive year, at Hall High School on March 10. Twenty-three players, including two from Massachusetts and one from New York, participated. Incidentally, Hall High School was the venue of last year's state championship. After five rounds of extreme competition, USCF NM Arslan Otchiyev clinched the title of 2017 Connecticut State Chess Championship. Master Otchiyev is an instructor at the Fairfield County Chess Club, is a six-time national chess champion of Turkmenistan, and is ranked in the top one percent of competitive players nationally. Earning second and third place in the state-sanctioned championship were NBCC's Suhas Kodali and FM Richard Bauer, respectively. We extend our appreciation to Doug Fiske, who did an efficient job as the tournament director.

Also held at the high school that day was the annual West Hartford Scholastic Chess Tournament. Over thirty enthusiast boys and girls from the area, some competing in their first chess event, enjoyed an exciting day of action on the sixty-four squares. NBCC's Jack Clayton, one of our club's rising talented youths, proudly won the tournament, clinching it with a perfect 5-0! Many thanks to Norman Burtness and Bob Cyr, who co-directed the event.

We conclude the highlights of the first quarter of 2018, one of the busiest and most historic first quarters in NBCC history, with the FM Nelson Castaneda's simultaneous chess exhibition held on March 20 at the club. Recently, the club restarted the tradition established decades ago where the club champion gives a simul the week following his title win.

We had a high turnout for Professor Castaneda's simul, with twenty-five eager competitors (about 50 percent of them scholastic participants) from the area. Even though our players attempted to make the professor sweat, Mr. Castaneda blazed the stage with his solid performance, going undefeated. Roger Bessette, one of club's newest members, nicked a draw against Nelson. We sincerely thank Professor Castaneda for hosting this wonderful event for our chess community.

Prior to Professor Castaneda's big event on the evening of March 20, IM Jan van de Mortel, the second-highest Connecticut ranked chess player, gave a beautiful training class that featured a review of his final game at USATE. He was quite enthusiastic as he presented a thorough analysis of his lively and crucial game, which ended up being a draw. We hope that Jan can come back to the club later this year to offer more training classes.

APRIL

In April, Richard Bauer, one of the club's resident FMs, joined the NBCC training staff. The topic of Mr. Bauer's first lecture held on April 10 was how to analyze a chess position from a standpoint of understanding the features that drive the game and applying this knowledge to move selection. Mr. Bauer applied the two objectives to practical play by examining one of Suhas Kodali's games from USATE 2018. The master spent many hours preparing for his class and did a marvelous job engaging and energizing his students. The NBCC is fortunate to have many trainers, like Mr. Bauer, to provide different perspectives on chess theory. Our chess community looks forward to more of his classes.

After FM Richard Bauer's class, the club commenced its 2nd annual Class Championship. The quick chess event drew a diverse playing field, with the competitors vying for a chance to compete for the top prize within their own rating class. It was nice to see some of our newest members, like Elizabeth Smith, playing in their first rated NBCC event. The winners were:

- Master/Expert: David Herscovici
- Class A/B: Alexander Ruth
- Class C/D: Bill Campbell
- Class E: Elizabeth Smith

Based on the overwhelming support for this event, it appears that it will become an annual club tradition.

MAY

On May 1, the NBCC hosted its second honoree event of 2018 for veteran member USCF NM Dennis Prawira. Master Prawira, like many of the members who the club has recently honored, has belonged to our family for over a decade. Shortly after joining the club, Dennis competed in his first tournament - the 2007 Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. After sweeping the competition, going an incredible 5-0, defeating experts and masters, Dennis attained a record-breaking 2700 USCF provisional rating, the highest of any member. The master set the bar extremely high with this astounding tournament performance, one that definitely was a shining and unforgettable moment in his very early chess career in our organization. Over the last ten years, the master has achieved many tournament victories and has risen quickly in the NBCC tournament standings, currently ranking fifth overall. Last year, nearly ten years from when he made his stunning performance in Oktoberfest 2007, Master Prawira won Oktoberfest 2017. This win, however, was even more momentous for the master. His solo win in Oktoberfest 2017, along with his wins in the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup and the NBCC Championship held earlier that year, placed Master Prawira into the NBCC Hall of Fame for being only the fifth person in our club's history to have won or tied for first place in three or more classical time-controlled events in the same year. But there is no doubt that Dennis' major achievement in the club was earning the title of Club Champion for three consecutive years (2015-2017) before taking this year off. In spite of Dennis' long commute, he is a regular participant in most club tournaments, especially those with long time controls. Dennis, who is playing more online than over-the-board chess these days, is one of the most friendly people in our community. Master Prawira really enjoys the club's spirit. We are so delighted that Dennis has been a part of our club's history, and we look forward to have him be a part of our club's future. Before the tournament, FM Richard Bauer reviewed the critical game that Dennis played against FM Nelson Castaneda in the 2015 NBCC Championship, which propelled the master to his first of three consecutive club championship victories. USCF NM David Herscovici won the open section of the Dennis Prawira Quick Chess Tournament, and Elizabeth Smith won the U1700 section. David and Lisa emulated Prawira that evening, with their outstanding play.

The annual Arkadijs Strazdins Cup/Andris Strazdins Stein was the club's next major event of the year. This tournament has been held annually to honor Arkadijs and Andris Strazdins, arguably our club's two greatest contributors.

Arkadijs was the club president for thirty-one years and a tournament director for fifty-six years. Many players owe their love of chess to his influence. Arkadijs' son, Andris, who passed away three years ago, was our treasurer for forty-two years, selflessly committing his time and energy to the club. Prior to round one of their event, Norman Burtness delivered a touching tribute to these gentlemen, recognizing their decades of loyal service to the club and mentioning their major contributions to the enrichment of our organization. The five-week tournament, a Swiss style format, was held during most of May and during the first week of June. It was nice to see veteran members and new chess enthusiasts compete in this tributary event. FM Nelson Castaneda, who continues to climb up the overall standings in classical time-controlled events in the club, took home the top prize in the Arkadijs Cup section. Teddy Theodoropoulos, who recently joined our family, won his first major event in the NBCC with his win the Andris Stein section. Both players received their beautiful trophies on the night of the annual club business meeting held later in June.

JUNE

For the eighth consecutive year, the NBCC has had the illustrious distinction to host the annual Planet Earth Chess Championship. This year's tournament was directed by Norman Burtness and was held at Hall High School. This galactic event has typically been held at different venues in Connecticut nearly every year. This year, we were fortunate to see a few players from the surrounding states participate in this incredible event, which took place on the first weekend of June. Our earthly chess warriors had some tough battles and close games. Some of the players opted to compete in the two-day event, with all of their four games at a time control of G/85. Others, rather, decided that it was to their advantage to play in the one-day event, with their first two games at a time control of G/45 and then their final two games at a time control of G/85. Shortly before 5:00 p.m. on June 2, the results of this historic event were in and broadcasted throughout the chess world. It is with highest honor to report that USCF NM Rajesh Shanmugasundaram of Massachusetts was crowned with the impressive title of 2018 Planet Earth Chess Champion. The master won on tie-breaks over FM Nelson Castaneda, a former chess champion of Planet Earth. Incidentally, both players were presented with stunning crystal trophies with the NBCC logo embroidered on them. In the Under 1800 section, the playing field was just as challenging. Finishing first in this section was Roger Bessette, who earned his first win in a G/30 or longer event in the club. Before we depart on our next club journey, we extend a huge debt of gratitude to Norman for planning, organizing, and directing this stellar event.

Historically in June, the club's executive board of directors holds an annual business meeting. The main purpose of these meetings are for the committee to provide an overview of past club operations, present the club's current financial health, hold officer elections for the upcoming club year, and allot time for members to present and discuss their ideas, and possibly vote, on club matters. Some of the highlights from the productive 2018 NBCC business meeting held on June 12, as noted by NBCC President Norman Burtness, are summarized below.

OPERATIONS

- ✚ The club organizes a variety of activities for the members. The weekend events, however, tend to draw little participation from the membership. These events will be more geared toward scholastic players in the future. Inter-club activities, specifically a match between the UConn CC and the NBCC sometime in the future, was brought up and will be explored by IM Jan van de Mortel. New at the NBCC was the use of PayPal and the website for tournament registrations and payment of tournament fees and dues. The weekly training classes have attracted much interest, and a parent suggested that these sessions be recorded for publication on YouTube.
- ✚ Several members were acknowledged for their contributions to the club this year: Suhas Kodali for opening the club each week; Gert Hilhorst for maintaining the club website; Joseph Bihlmeyer for coordinating the training classes; and Bob Cyr for putting the NBCC history on the website. Bob was presented with an engraved crystal plaque in recognition for his work.

FINANCES

- ✚ The club's financial health is good, with ninety-four members, twenty-five of whom are scholastic players. Compared to last year, this was the same membership at this time but with six more scholastic players. Presently, however, membership dues do not cover annual rent. A proposal was made to increase annual membership dues from \$60 to \$65 (or two installments of \$35), \$50 for scholastic, and \$35 for 65+/hardship/second family member. Out-of-state college students were also included in the \$35 rate. The vote was almost unanimous (one dissention).

ELECTIONS

- ✚ The following club officers were elected unanimously: Norman Burtness, president; Suhas Kodali, vice president; Laurent Lafosse, secretary; Gert Hilhorst, treasurer. Our incoming officers, Suhas and Laurent, were welcomed. Our outgoing officers, Mark Bourque and Luis Delgado, vice president and secretary, respectively, were thanked for their service to the club. Mark will continue to organize and direct tournaments. The club also extends its appreciation to Luis for always being very welcoming to new members.

Before we bid a fond farewell with the NBCC highlights from the first half of 2018, I am proud to recognize Rob Roy once again for his continual efforts to promote our club and chess throughout our state. As many of you know, Rob has worked on numerous chess projects for our state for over four decades, during which time he has been the editor of *Connecticut Chess* magazine. Since May 2016, Rob has been hosting monthly events at his house in Coventry. On June 23, ten players competed in Rob's annual summer chess tournament there. After round 1, Rob transitioned his role from tournament director to chef, serving hamburgers, corn-on-the-cob, watermelon, and beverages. There was a good representation from the NBCC at Rob's event. Two of our veteran members, FM Richard Bauer and USCF NM Derek Meredith, tied for first place, with their final match being a hard-fought draw. Kudos to Rob for hosting another fantastic event! Starting in July, Rob's monthly tournaments will be hosted at Mill Brook Place in Coventry. This site is a brand-new meeting hall that can accommodate as many as seventy people. In order to make this transition possible, Rob will work with officials from the local library, schools, and the parks and recreation department. We thank Rob for his lifetime of service and devotion to Connecticut chess!

JULY

The club started its third quarter of 2018 with its 3rd annual July Knockout and Swiss event created by FM Nelson Castaneda. Players were initially grouped into one section (knockout bracket). After each round, the winner would advance in the knockout bracket. In the 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. Anyone eliminated or knocked-out would be placed into an open Swiss-style event. Many of the games from this tournament were analyzed by Nelson and are published with his extensive notes on the club website. The final round was won by Expert Suhas Kodali, who knocked-out Nelson to claim the title of the 2018 NBCC Knockout Champion, his first win in a major club event. Also winning classical time-controlled events for their first time were two strong class players, Andrew Colwell and Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, who tied for first place in the Swiss section. Many thanks for Nelson for directing and analyzing many of the interesting games, some of which I imagine will be nominations for the best game of the year contest.

Prior to the start of Nelson's event, our community was stunned to hear about the passing of James Wilkin. During the event, we also received tragic news about the passing of John Baclawski, another veteran member. Details on both of their memorial events and their eulogies are published later in this newsletter.

AUGUST

To honor the memory of Jimi Wilkin, the club hosted the Jimi Wilkin Memorial Tournament on August 7. Before the event, Suhas Kodali did a wonderful job analyzing Jimi's style of play by reviewing a number of his games. The NBCC was able to raise \$700 to support Jimi's family during their difficult time. Thirty-four players played in the event, with a pretty equal split in each section. In the rated section, FM Nelson Castaneda was the winner. In the more fun unrated gambit section, with the Albin Counter Gambit, the Wing Gambit, and early h4 moves, Ilya Goffman was the winner. Many thanks to Mark Bourque for directing and to Gert Hilhorst for collecting the entry fees.

In mid-August, the club continued its summer schedule by hosting a one-week event for Eric Hilhorst, the next member to be recognized for his longevity in our organization. Eric was introduced to the game at the young age of seven. Soon thereafter, he joined the club with his father, Gert, who has been a guiding force in his life. With his father as his coach and mentor, Eric quickly moved up the rating ladder. Today, Eric's rating is around 1750. He has worked hard to attain this level and has aspirations to reach class A soon! Beyond our family, Eric has competed in many regional and state tournaments, especially at the library chess club in his hometown in Simsbury, where he has won several events and developed many friendships. Eric, like his father, is one of our few members who has had the opportunity to play chess internationally. When he was fourteen years old, Eric competed on team leagues in Amsterdam. Incidentally, Eric has traveled to this beautiful city over seventy times with his father! Talk about earning frequent flier miles! All levity aside, when looking back at Eric's chess history, his proudest achievement was earning the prestigious high school title at the 2015 Connecticut State Scholastic Championship and representing our state at the Denker Tournament in Arizona. Eric recently completed his freshman year at the University of Connecticut, where he is an active member and vice president of their chess club. Even though Eric has not been able to play chess as often as he would like to, due to his intensive academic workload, he does make an effort to compete in events at the UConn CC and the NBCC during school breaks.

Earlier this year, Eric had a blast participating on the grand stage at USATE for his first time with his fellow UConn teammates. Eric is truly an amazing young man and superstar, and he has so much passion and energy for life and a deep affection and compassion for people. My friends, our chess community is bright because of members like Eric. We are so thrilled to have Eric as part of our family, and we wish him the utmost best in his future chess and academic endeavors in his long life ahead. For his tournament, Eric proposed the Basque format, where each player played two games, one with the white pieces and one with the black pieces. Because of the format, the tournament could not be rated. Players were grouped into quads. The following players won their respective quad: Nelson Castaneda (Quad 1), Carter Clayton (Quad 2), Bill Campbell and Elizabeth Smith (Quad 3), and Norman Burtness and Joseph Hricko (Quad 4). Carter was presented with a trophy for the most unexpected result. Thanks to Gert for organizing and directing this exciting event.

Prior to Eric's special event, FM Richard Bauer went over John Baclawski's contribution to chess opening theory, examining his game from the 2008 NBCC Championship vs. Andres Castaneda. Mr. Bauer has plans to submit this game to *Chess Life* or to another popular chess magazine.

On August 21, USCF NM David Herscovici, our club's newest lecturer, reviewed some of his recent games, noting how high-rated players make decisions during critical parts of their games. We are most fortunate for David's analysis and look forward to having him teach more lessons to our growing audience.

On a glorious and pleasant late summer day (August 26) at Wickham Park in Manchester, sixty-four players from the area (the third highest turnout for any event in NBCC history) gathered for spirited play and social interaction at the 53rd Summer Open. This year, the club broke a record for the most youths ages eighteen or younger competing in one of our events - thirty-five! Many hours of work were performed on-site and behind the scenes to ensure the success of Connecticut's huge summer outing of the year. The following people did a fantastic job: Manager Gert Hilhorst, TD Jan van de Mortel, and Chef Mario Guevara-Rodriguez. The club also thanks Rob Roy, NBCC's loyal advocate, for bringing in ice-cold beverages and for being available to assist whenever needed and for advertising our event. Incidentally, the event winner on tie-breaks was FM Richard Bauer, who is now only one win or tie for first place away in this event to tie Arkadijs Strazdins' record of ten. Richard tied with FM Nelson Castaneda, Jack Wang, and Charles Hua. We hope to see you all next year!

SEPTEMBER

Every once in a while, a new event is held at the club. On the second week of the month, the club held its first Rated Rapid Showdown event. According to NBCC President Normal Burtness, “this new event is based on the chess.com Champions Showdown held last fall.” Players were paired to their nearest rival, and they had play ninety minutes of G/15; d/1, sixty minutes of G/5; d1, and fifteen minutes of G/1; d1. The winner was determined by a points system that awarded four points for each G/15 win, two points for every G/5 win, and one point for every G/1 win. The G/15 and G/5 games were rated but not the G/1 games. It was one wild evening of chess at the club that evening, and we thank Mr. Burtness for making this event possible.

OCTOBER

The club commenced its fourth and final quarter of this already successful year with a presentation by NM Harris Appelman on his victory against Fabiano Caruana at the Marshall Chess Club in 2003. What was particularly interesting about the lecture was the motifs that Harris used to obtain the victory. Harris had studied a game between Byrne vs. Fischer involving the “Russian sacrifice,” a rook for a bishop, but the bishop gets to control a long diagonal and eventually becomes a dominant piece in mate threats. The game was very interesting and dynamic, and we really thank Harris for sharing his incredible game against a to-be world chess champion contender.

Every year since 2006, the club has held an annual Oktoberfest tournament and dinner shortly after the event. FM Nelson Castaneda tied for first place in the event, making this his fifth out of sixth major tournament win or tie for first place in 2018. Amazing! This year was different in that we returned to the East Side Restaurant (our first dinner there since 2008) in New Britain to celebrate the festive season of Oktoberfest. It was former NBCC President Joseph Mansigian’s idea to organize such an event to pay respect to the club’s German heritage. The NBCC wished to thank its biggest volunteers (those who direct tournaments, run the website, and keep the club running) by treating them to dinner. Without these volunteers, the club would not be as successful as it is. Overall, it was a grand evening of spirited fun and friendship.

The week after the Oktoberfest event, the NBCC held its fourth and final tributary event of the year for one of its veteran members and friends, Joe Hricko. More popularly known as "HR," Joe has belonged to our family for nearly a decade. Joe is a very jovial and cordial man who enjoys playing with members of all ages and skill levels. Prior to joining the club, Joe was quite active with the Southbury Chess Club. Once this club disbanded, he found a new home at the NBCC. Joe has consistently maintained a class A rating for years, peaking at expert level at 2007 in 2013. It is truly evident that Joe has a solid command of the chess board when he faces his friends for a serious match. However, "HR" does relish the faster time-controlled events that the club offers and enjoys these rapid games just as much as the classical, slower tournaments. One of Joe's most memorable tournament wins was taking home first place in the Robert Kozlowski Quick Chess Tournament, going undefeated in the four-round event. Joe has told me on many occasions that this victory was a true honor. He often thanks members like me and many others for being so warm and welcoming to him. Beyond the club, Joe does still play in a few Continental Chess events and is an infrequent visitor to the Friday casual games night at Barnes and Noble. "HR" also enjoyed the spirit of playing with fellow teammates at USATE years ago. Even though Joe is busy with life today, we eagerly anticipate that he will be more active in the NBCC in the years to come. We certainly miss his gentle personality, kind disposition, and sociable nature. In the five-round Joe Hricko Quick Chess Tournament, USCF NM Derek Meredith won the open section. Elizabeth Smith and new member Samuel Sirag tied for first place in the U1700 section.

The John Baclawski Memorial event took place on the final meeting of October. There was a nice turnout of players of all ages and skills. The winners in each section (Joe Bihlmeyer and Elizabeth Smith) were presented with cash prizes and a book from the Baclawski collection in care of FM Richard Bauer. Both players moved up the ladder for overall quick chess ties or wins for first place. Suhas Kodali got his first directing experience, working under the direction of seasoned TD Laurent Lafosse. All of John's chess books were donated to the club's library.

NOVEMBER

For many years now, the club has hosted annual events to recognize prominent players in our chess community who have passed on. This year's event paid tribute to one of the greatest chess professionals and luminaries in our region during the mid-20th century, Dr. Joseph Platz. Prior to residing in Connecticut, Dr. Platz had already built an impressive chess resume, earning the Cologne Chess Championship in 1926 and the Hannover Chess Championship in 1931.

He received his training from his mentor, Dr. Emanuel Lasker, a world chess champion, and they became close friends. When he moved to the United States, Dr. Platz won the Western Massachusetts & Connecticut Valley Open Chess Championship fourteen times, won the Connecticut Chess Championship three times, and tied for the New England Chess Championship four times. He also won many tournaments in the New York City region. Dr. Platz ultimately earned USCF Master Emeritus status for his amazing tournament performances. He was also greatly involved as president of the Hartford Chess Club for many years during the 1950s and 1960s. Toward the end of his chess career, he wrote his memoirs. It was around that time when he gave a simultaneous chess exhibition at our club. On that May evening in 1979, twenty-two players took on the master, the result being 13.5 wins for the master and 8.5 for his opponents. There is an extensive amount of history on Dr. Platz on the internet, and I encourage you to check it out. Suffice it to say, Dr. Platz was a highly respected person in our chess community and one of the most accomplished chess players of all-time.

On Saturday, November 24, the club held an open house where players from our chess community could watch and analyze the 11th round of the 2018 World Chess Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana. It was a smaller than anticipated crowd, but everyone enjoyed themselves nonetheless. Incidentally, the three-hour game ended in a draw.

Just three days later at the club, FM Nelson Castaneda reviewed the tenth game from the World Chess Championship match. The master, along with assistance from Suhas Kodali, gave a very thorough analysis, and the presentation drew quite a high turnout. This game ended in another draw. After going twelve games with draws, there were tie-breaks to determine the winner. Magnus Carlsen won on tie-breaks and retained his title.

DECEMBER

The final month of the year had three major highlights.

On the first Tuesday of the month, Bob Cyr, along with assistance from Suhas Kodali, directed the club's twentieth rated blitz chess tournament. Directing this event was a momentous occasion for Bob, marking his twenty years as a director of NBCC events. That is amazing. Also outstanding was FM Nelson Castaneda's win in this event. The master went undefeated in the eight-round Swiss system tournament, which attracted twenty players.

Are you ready for another NBCC news flash? Well, on the second club meeting in December, we hosted a rated quad event with the time control using increments instead of delays for the very first time. That is historic news! Thanks to Norman Burtness for creating this cool, new idea.

Traditionally, the NBCC has hosted a Christmas party on the third Tuesday in December to celebrate the year's accomplishments and to welcome friends and family to partake in these festivities and to reflect on many happy times of the last year. This was the final highlight of the club year, and it was a joy to see many of our members and chess friends around the state celebrate in the spirit of Christmas. Hall's Market in West Hartford catered the party, and we thank Norman Burtness for arranging the food details again for the third consecutive year. 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. We also were treated to John Nitz's famous cheese dip platter (actually, it is his wife's!) 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 playing Christmas songs on the piano. All in all, it was certainly one of the most wonderful times of the year at "The Heart of Connecticut Chess."



NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Our members earned the following major achievements in the USCF in 2018.

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	2337	39 th
	Quick Age 50 or Older	2197	30 th
	Blitz Overall	2372	75 th
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2372	11 th
FM Richard Bauer	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2231	21 st
USCF NM Derek Meredith	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2145	55 th
USCF NM David Herscovici	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2128	61 st tie
Elizabeth Smith	Women Age 50 or Older	1346	42 nd

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✚ USCF NM Derek Meredith won the U2210 section of the 2018 World Open Senior Amateur Chess Championship held between June 27 and July 1 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- ✚ At the 3rd Massachusetts State Senior Open Chess Championship held in Marlborough, MA, on September 15 and 16, the following members performed exceptionally well:
 - NM Derek Meredith tied for 2nd place
 - Norman Burtness tied for 4th place and took home the U2010 prize
 - Art Nagel (one of our newest members) earned the top prize in the U1810 section
- ✚ FM Nelson Castaneda tied for second place in the 2018 New Hampshire State Senior Open Chess Championship held in Manchester, NH, from December 22 to 23.

CHES TRIVIA

Welcome to my favorite section of the NBCC newsletter - trivia. For a decade now, I have included various thematic trivia questions in each annual report. I figured that this year's questions be geared toward prior world chess champions.

Best of luck! The answers are on page 33.

1. Who was the first official world chess champion?
 - a) Paul Morphy
 - b) Adolf Anderssen
 - c) Wilhelm Steinitz
 - d) Johannes Zukertort

2. After the death of Alexander Alekhine in 1946, FIDE established a new system to determine who should be the next world chess champion. Who was the first person to win under these new rules and conditions?
 - a) Vasily Smyslov
 - b) Mikhail Botvinnik
 - c) Paul Keres
 - d) Max Euwe

3. Who organized the PCA (Professional Chess Association) with Nigel Short in 1993?
 - a) Gata Kamsky
 - b) Anatoly Karpov
 - c) Viktor Korchnoi
 - d) Garry Kasparov

4. Who won the reunification world chess championship match held in late 2006?
 - a) Vladimir Kramnik
 - b) Viswanathan Anand
 - c) Boris Gelfand
 - d) Veselin Topalov

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by
Rob Roy, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, Murugavel Arun, Doug Fiske, Richard Bauer,
Gaetano Bompastore, and Bob Cyr.

GRNDMASTER ALEXANDR LENDERMAN'S HISTORIC VISIT TO THE NBCC



DAY 1: GM ALEXANDR LENDERMAN (CENTER) WITH MASTER CLASS PARTICIPANTS

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Norman Burtness, Suhas Kodali, Allen Mo, Andrew Colwell, Gert Hilhorst, David Herscovici,
GM Lenderman, Nelson Castaneda, Derek Meredith, and Doug Fiske



DAY 2: GM ALEXANDSR LENDGERMAN GIVES A LECTURE FOLLOWED BY A SIMULTANEOUS CHESS EXHIBITION

LEFT PHOTO: Norman Burtness, Bob Cyr, and Art Nagel take on the GM
RIGHT PHOTO: Scholastic member Jack Clayton eagerly awaits the GM's next move

SIXTEEN NBCC MEMBERS PROUDLY REPRESENT AT 2018 WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



FANTASTIC 4 BACK RANKERS (NBCC'S FIRST ALL-SCHLOASTIC USATE TEAM)
Nakul Ramaswamy, Michael Chen, Yogahari Jeadeeswaran, and Geoffrey Yu



Michael and Yogahari preparing for their next match!



VERY FINE PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES PLAY FOR THE GOLD ON BD. 1 IN RD. 6
Jan van de Mortel, Derek Meredith, Doug Fiske, and Gert Hilhorst



BITCOIN PONZIANI SCHEME
Suhas Kodali, Bob Cyr, Bill Montross, and Mike Pascetta



LUCKY RANDOM NBCC PLAYERS (center four)
Art Nagel, Jithu Sajeevan, Mario Rodriguez, and Laurent Lafosse

ACTION AT THE 2018 CT STATE CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



BACK ROW: Arslan Otchiyev and Derek Meredith
FRONT ROW: Suhas Kodali and Richard Bauer



Mark Bourque and Art Nagel

SIMUL HOSTED BY 2018 CLUB CHAMPION NELSON CASTANEDA



PLANET EARTH CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP 2018



Planet Earth Chess Champions Nelson Castaneda and Rajesh Shanmugasundaram with Norman Burtress. Rajesh won the trophy on tie-breaks.



Grand view of some of the Planet Earth chess players pondering their next move during round three.

SOME OF ROB ROY'S PHOTOS FROM SUMMER OPEN 2018



MASTERS AND EXPERTS BATTLING IT OUT



HIGH TENSIONS IN THE DOUG FISKE - JAKE WANG GAME



BILL CAMPBELL (RIGHT) TRIES TO SLOW DOWN JOE BIHLMEYER



STUDENTS ARE EAGERLY WAITING FOR LUNCH SERVED BY CHEF MARIO

NBCC CELEBRATING OKTOBERFEST IN STYLE AT THE EAST SIDE RESTAURANT



DR. PLATZ MEMORIAL



Elizabeth “Lisa” Smith and Carter Clayton get ready for their friendly game

REMEMBERING JAMES “JIMI” WILKIN



It is with deep sadness to inform you about the sudden passing of James "Jimi" Wilkin, one of our club's veteran members. Jimi left his world on June 30, 2018, at the young age of forty-one. Jimi joined our family in 1998 and was a regular participant in many of our events for nearly two decades. Soon after joining the club, Jimi earned an expert rating of 2020. In chess, Jimi was particularly known for his unique opening repertoire and sharp tactical and positional play. He surely put an enormous amount of energy into his games. A few of Jimi's most memorable club achievements were winning the 2002 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship and finishing in first place in the 2014 NBCC Championship Candidates Tournament, which automatically qualified him for the 2015 NBCC Championship. Jimi learned chess at an early age. In 1992, he won the high school division of the state championship and represented our state on a national level in Detroit later that year. He had such a passion, love, and enthusiasm for chess, and he treasured his friendships in the club. Jimi will be dearly missed by those who had the pleasure of knowing him. May he rest in eternal peace in heaven.



Jimi's family (above) attended the Jimi Wilkin Memorial Tournament

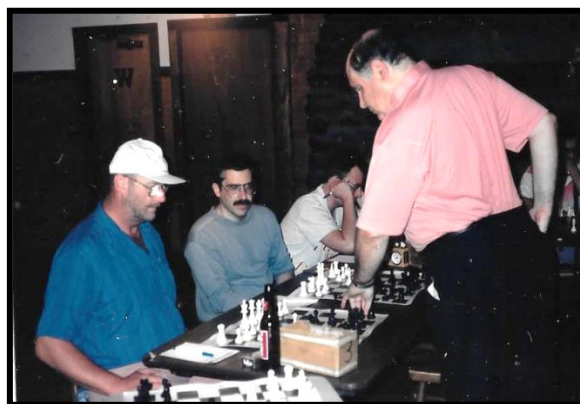
REMEMBERING JOHN BACLAWSKI



It is with a sad and heavy heart to inform you about the passing of one of our veteran members, John Baclawski. John left this world on July 24, 2018, after a very long and courageous battle with cancer. John's history with our family spanned nearly fifty years. Widely known for his fighting and energetic spirit on the chess board, John appropriately earned the nickname - "The Claw." In the annals of the club, John ranked in the top ten players in overall major (G/30 or longer) tournament victories, his first one earned in 1979 and his last one in 2010. Even though John preferred competing in the slower time-controlled events, he was always up for a quick or blitz game with his buddies. John was a friendly man who exhibited kindness to everyone in our community. May he rest in eternal peace in heaven. On July 29, a celebration of John's life was held at the New Britain Quartette Club, where he was a member for many years.



John finishes 3rd
1978 NB City Chess Championship



"The Claw" defeats longtime MA chess master David Lees in 1994

NBCC BEST GAME OF 2018

The NBCC sincerely thanks Judge FM Richard Bauer for continuing to do such an exemplary job in reviewing games for the best game of the year contest. Not only does he judge the games but awards prizes to the players of the best game. He is the greatest!

Mr. Bauer notes that “Doug Fiske has been the backbone of the number one New Britain team at the United States Amateur Team East (USATE). This team almost always comes home with top Connecticut honors, and three times Doug has come home with a board prize, which requires a perfect 6-0 score in this gigantic event. Two-thousand-and-eighteen was a watershed tournament for the NBCC, with the team going into the last round with a 5-0 score and a chance for clear first. Caissa was not kind in the last round, but in tying for third the team of IM Jan van de Mortel, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Doug Fiske, and Gert Hilhorst still finished ahead of all previous efforts. Playing on the lower boards requires a shift of style for Doug, who generally plays very solidly but needs to avoid long and drawish opening lines here. Fortunately, he has a very broad and effective opening repertoire from which to choose. He has had great success with the Pirc due to the subtleties involved in proper piece placement and the potential for overextension. White goes wrong so subtly in this game that it was hard to find his errors without an engine. Doug punishes them so effectively that the game lasts only twenty-one moves and ends in forced mate.”

[Event "U.S. Amateur Team East"]

[Site "Parsippany, NJ"]

[Date "2018.02.18"]

[Round "3"]

[White "Idnani, Roshan"]

[Black "Fiske, Douglas"]

[Result "0-1"]

[ECO "B08"]

[WhiteElo "2078"]

[BlackElo "2083"]

[Pirc Defense]

1. e4 g6

Allowing White to form the ideal pawn center and deferring counteraction until Black is better developed. The Modern Defense should get a new name as we approach the 100th anniversary of the hypermodern (delayed center) movement.

2. d4 Bg7 3. Nf3 d6 4. Nc3 c6

A very flexible approach, fortifying d5 and b5 and opening a line for the queen.

5. Be3 Nf6

Transposing into the Pirc Defense (1. e4 d6 2. d4 Nf6) now that White's formation is better known.

6. h3

Preventing easing piece exchanges by ...Ng4 or ...Bg4.

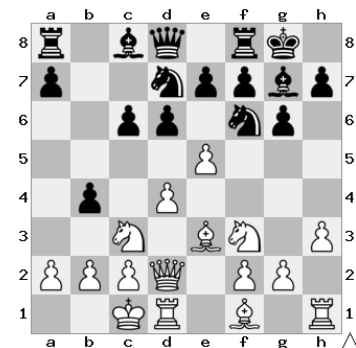
Nbd7 7. Qd2 O-O 8. O-O-O?!

8. a4 is more conservative and better. Black has been waiting for White to commit his king before launching the queenside pawn storm. It is rare to see queenside castling punished so decisively.

b5 9. e5 b4!

[See diagram]

White is threatening e5xf6xg7xf8, but Black's counter threat of b4xc3xd2+ is faster. Both sides are playing checkers here!



10. Ne2

The first sign of trouble for White. The point of 9. e5 was to force the Nf6 to move away from the center and then bring this knight to e4. But here 10. exf6 bxc3 11. fxc3 cxd2+ loses, so White would have to settle for 11. Qxc3 Nxf6.

“If White dares to play 12. Qxc6, then Black has lots of compensation for the pawn with active pieces and open lines against White's king.” Doug Fiske.

Black's compensation for the pawn would take a long time to harvest, but the open lines against White's king are more than enough.

10 ... Nd5

This knight outpost will dominate the game from now on. Black has won the struggle for the center.

11. Bh6 dxe5

White was hoping for 11... Bxh6 12. Qxh6 Rb8 13.Ng5 mating, but Black does not have to cooperate.

12. Bxg7 Kxg7 13. dxe5 Qa5 14. Kb1 Rb8!

Stars are aligning for Black with his queen, knight, rook and b-pawn perfectly coordinated for a mating attack. The piece sacrifice Nc3+ is the key to Black's attack. It cannot be prevented, so Black takes his time and brings in the reserves.

15. Qd4 Nc5 16. h4 Be6 17. Nc1

[See diagram]

Nc3+!

Perfectly timed and decisive.

18. bxc3 bxc3+

Now if 19. Ka1, then Qa3.

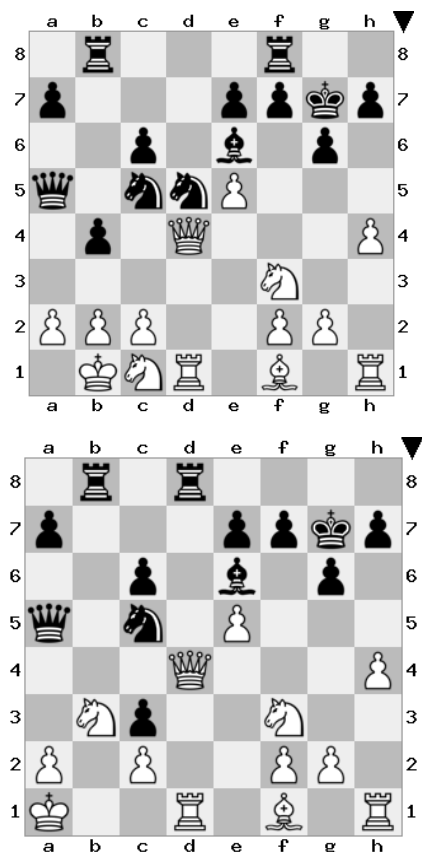
19. Nb3 Rfd8 20. Ka1

[See diagram]

White offers the queen, but Black stays focused on the king.

Nxb3+ 21. cxb3 Bxb3! 0-1

This game is a wonderful demonstration of modern methods of counter-play against the classical center



UConn VS. SIMSBURY MATCH

TWO SCHOLASTIC CHESS PROGRAMS IN ACTION

A number of years ago, I started publishing in the annual NBCC newsletter a major chess story in Connecticut chess that occurred during the year. Last year, my report focused on the growth of scholastic chess in our state and how this has been vital to the future of local and regional chess.

This year, I had the pleasure of being invited to watch a very historic scholastic event in the annals of Connecticut Chess - the third in a series of matches between the University of Connecticut Chess Club and the Simsbury Public Library Chess Club. The match took place in McHugh Hall at UConn on Friday, November 9. Despite the heavy rain and breezy conditions, which caused a slight delay in the match, the inclement weather did not stop the warriors from Simsbury! The school bus from Simsbury was only twenty minutes late.



Before this match, each school had earned a win in their previous matches, so everything was on the table in this crucial match. UConn had the home court advantage this time because the Simsbury young men and women were comprised of elementary, middle school, and high school students. This was unlike a few years ago, when this

organization was comprised of primarily high school students. Nevertheless, Simsbury gave it their all, but they resoundingly lost to UConn.

The SPLCC and the UConn CC owe their successes to their coaches, Gert Hilhorst and IM Jan van de Mortel (featured right). Both scholastic chess programs, especially at UConn, have seen tremendous growth and a surge in membership. It is devoted people like Jan and Gert who are making a significant difference in the lives of today's youths. Kudos to these chess stalwarts!



BOB CYR'S COMMENTARY

Whew! What an incredible year it has been at the NBCC. We were fortunate to accomplish even more in 2018 than in recent years. Our leaders, trainers, and support staff worked long hours to ensure the continued vitality of one of the greatest chess organizations in America. Here were just a few things that stood out as being extraordinary in 2018 at the club:

1. Grandmaster Alexandr Lenderman master training classes held at the club
2. Grandmaster Alexandr Lenderman lecture and simul also held at the club
3. Club sponsored four teams (and its first scholastic team) at USATE
4. We increased our training sessions to a weekly basis
5. Summer Open broke attendance record for most scholastic players
6. We went back to the East Side restaurant for the club's annual Oktoberfest dinner party
7. Club hosted an open house on a Saturday for players to watch the world chess championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana
8. Year concluded with a Christmas party that was greatly appreciated

Two-thousand-and-eighteen was also a year that saw many challenges for the club. Within a month, the club lost two of its longest-standing members, Jimi Wilkin and John Baclawski. Martin Garcia suffered a serious stroke and is slowly recovering, and Gaetano Bompastore was seriously injured on his way home from the Summer Open. He has a long rehabilitation ahead of him but is expected to fully recover. We wish the best to all of our members with health concerns.

Friends, it is time to sign off and say adios! Cheers to such a warm and welcoming 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
Suhas Kodali
Gert Hilhorst
Laurent Lafosse
Bob Cyr

Bob Cyr



SOLUTION AND ANSWERS TO CHESS PUZZLE AND TRIVIA

CHESS PUZZLE (FROM COVER PAGE)

1. ... Rxd2
2. Kxd2 Rg8+
3. Kh1 Rg3 wins

CHESS TRIVIA (FROM PAGE 19)

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

OPEN HOUSE – WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



The crew analyses the next moves in round 11 of the WCC match.