

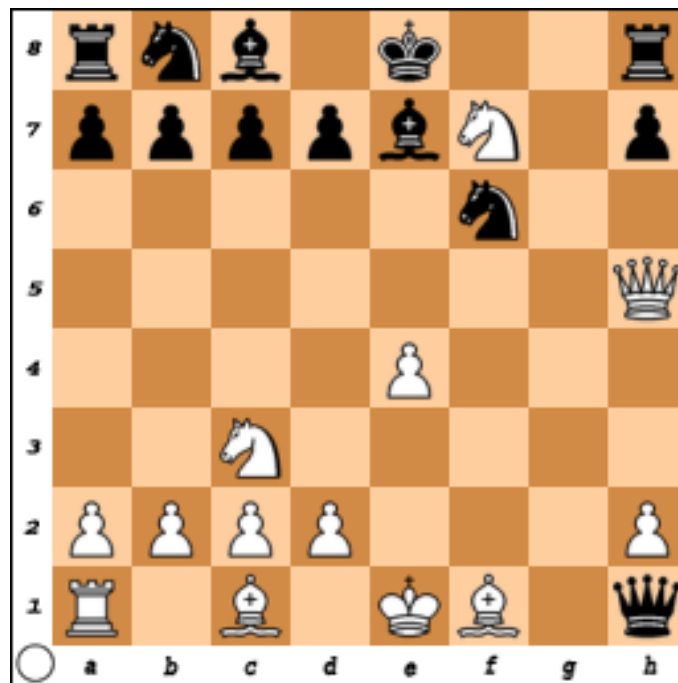
NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

"THE HEART OF CONNECTICUT CHESS"

IN CARE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION
1910 STANLEY STREET NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT 06053
WWW.NEWBRITAINCHESSCLUB.COM

2024 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Cyr



White mates in 3.

Henry Bird vs. NN: London 1886

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

The solution is on page 14.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The NBCC commenced 2024 on January 2 with a qualifying event for its annual championship. The preliminaries part of this heritage event was the first held in many years. The rules, as outlined by directors Mark Bourque and USCF NM Suhas Kodali, stated that only players rated under 1600 were allowed to compete in the qualifier, with the top scorer in the Swiss automatically advancing to the championship section. After the completion of the qualifier, because of some confusion regarding the qualifiers, the top four players were ultimately allowed to advance to the top section.

FEBRUARY

On Saturday, February 17, a few light snow showers and a winter chill in the air in the quaint little town of Parsippany, New Jersey, set the stage for some serious but spirited chess action at the largest team tournament in the history of chess – the annual World/U.S. Amateur Team East Chess Championship (USATE). Since the early 1970s, this heritage, three-day chess retreat has attracted players of all ages and levels from around the country and even abroad. Mr. E. Steven Doyle, who is one of the most experienced (50 years!), amiable, and devoted chess organizers in the world, was the chief organizer and director of USATE. He and his professional staff did a phenomenal job in coordinating all aspects of this grand chess competition, which took months to plan. On behalf of the NBCC and the Connecticut chess community, thank you Mr. Doyle and your crew for making everyone feel like one big chess family, where players reconnect with each other and where new friendships are built.

Each year since 2007, the NBCC has fielded at least one team to this incredible event. This year, the club was fortunate to recruit three four-player teams for a total of twelve members past or present. On the first team, We Got Out of Perpetual Belicheck, we had veteran USATE players FM Richard Bauer, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Doug Fiske, and Joe Bihlmeyer. As a team, they ended up with four match points and won the title of Top Connecticut Team on tie-breaks over the club's second team, which I will mention shortly. The Belicheck team faced strong competition throughout the tournament, and there were many close, nail-biting games.

This team was also nominated for the Best Team name but unfortunately did not receive enough claps from the audience to win the coveted prize. Better luck next year! On the second team, Pawn Solo & Chewbacca the Rook, we also had veteran USATE players USCF NM James Nitz, Norman Burtness, Mike Pascetta, and John Nitz. It was nice to see a father and a son play on the same team. The Pawn Solo team, like the Belicheck team, also scored 4-2. In essence, we had two NBCC teams tie for top Connecticut team performances at USATE, a first in club history. Talk about being historic! This just proves how strong our club really is! It should be noted that this team performed very well despite having to deal with some challenging lower-rated players. Finally, Bob Cyr was grateful to form his own NBCC team, New Britain Chess Club's Greatest Name in History (how cool!), with USATE newcomers Kashvi Madhwani, Krystian Tkaczewski Jr., and David Fusco (our club's newest photographer). Despite having to play up in nearly every round, Bob's fellow teammates had a wonderful experience. Even though Bob went scoreless on board one, having to face class A and expert players in four of six rounds, his team overall did well with two match points. Especially impressive was Krystian's nicking of a draw against a player rated over 1900! Bob was so thrilled to develop a friendship with David, whom he drove down with, whom he shared a hotel room with, and whom he dined with (and others) during the three-day event.

There were other members, like USCF NM Jordan Groff and Lacey Wang, who competed on mixed state teams. It was nice to see them as well.

Well, friends, USATE 2024 is officially in the history books. I hope that next year, we can get even more teams from the club to play in this awesome tournament. USATE is truly the holy grail of chess. This was my eleventh USATE experience, and it was a memorable one. USATE is a unique event that all chess players should put on their bucket list. Until next Presidents Day in Parsippany, New Jersey, folks, this is Bob Cyr signing off and wishing you a happy and healthy year.

MARCH

After leaving the national stage at USATE, we went back to highlights at the NBCC with the conclusion of our annual championship, a heritage event with records dating back to the 1930s. Spanning ten weeks (two weeks missed because of snowstorms and one week missed to allow a mental rest for players from the club who participated at USATE), the championship event of 2024 was truly one for the history books.

There were many extreme battles and close matches, just like in the NCAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament. The fifty-three players (perhaps an attendance record for this event) gave it their all in this exciting, entertaining, exhilarating, and, at times, exhausting tournament. In the end, though, USCF NM Jordan Groff and USCF NM Derek Meredith tied for first place in the championship section. Instead of using conventional or play-off tie-breaks, these gentlemen agreed to share first place equally as co-champions, probably a first time there were co-champions in any major club event. Daniel Knowles, who returned to chess after five decades, won the reserves (candidates) section. This was his first major tournament win in the club, and he is only the second unrated person to win a major event at the club (the first was USCF NM Dennis Prawira back in 2007). We owe our esteemed gratitude to Mark Bourque, who had assistance from USCF NM Suhas Kodali, for directing the tournament and dealing with the Caissa pairing software company when difficulties were encountered when submitting the tournament for rating. They both went above and beyond the call of their duties as tournament directors. Way to go! Also, thanks to Roger Bessette for helping with on-site registrations on the first night of the tournament in Mark's absence.

A week after becoming co-club champions, USCF NM Jordan Groff and USCF NM Derek Meredith reviewed their drawn game from the club championship during their lecture. It was a very insightful, interesting, and intriguing class. After that, they gave a joint simultaneous chess exhibition, a first in club history. They started at separate boards across from each other and proceeded with making moves around the tables. The masters allowed between zero and three passes (using envelopes as the passes!) for each participant based on ratings. In essence, some players like the youngest of the kids got three passes, and those highest rated (yes, we know you, Mashkov, got no passes!). The NBCC simul of 2024 was the shortest (about 2.5 hours) ever at the club (obviously, because we had two masters). Members defeating the masters were Yonatan Axelrad, Jack Qian, Krystian Tkaczewski, Jr., and Aryan Jangle. Draws were earned by Roger Bessette and David Mashkov. Twenty-four players of all ages and levels (up to class A) competed in the simul. Thanks to Jordan and Derek for hosting this fun activity at the club.

Before we leave the month of March, there is one more highlight that occurred at the club that I really want to share with you fine people. For over a decade now, the club has held rated blitz chess tournaments in between our club's classical time-controlled tournaments, except for two unrated. That is ok for historical purposes. Most of these events have been won by masters or very high- ranked expert players. For our fortieth event, which attracted almost forty players (thirty-nine – if only Bob had played, it would have been forty – darn, Bob!), the underdogs gave it their all, putting the full-court pressure on the top guns. In the end, three of our esteemed players, NBCC Vice President Justin Lalor (an expert), Lacey Wang, and Senthil Paramasivan tied for first place. Both Lacey and Senthil are class chess players. Way to go, guys! We now officially end the month of March.

APRIL

Last year, the club hosted its first Winner's Keepers event, where the winners of each section had their names immortalized for this year's tournament. The winners of last year's event were Mark Bourque, David Mashkov, and Krystian Tkaczewski, Jr., so these players had this year's event named after them. After four rounds of spirited and lively competition, the following players won the Bourque – Mashkov – Tkaczewski Jr. Chess Tournament: Mark Bourque (Open section), Luca Festa (U1800 section), and Benjamin Fields (U1200 section). It should be noted for the record that Mark becomes the fourth player in club history to win or tie for first place in his own tournament. And we should also recognize both Luca and Benjamin, new members, for winning their first major tournament in the club. Congratulations, superstars!

On April 30, the club organized a memorial rated blitz chess tournament for Joseph Mansigian, who passed away earlier in the month. Bob Cyr wrote a very touching eulogy for Joseph, which is published later in this newsletter and which he read before the tournament commenced. Many of Joseph's longtime friends attended. In all, over thirty people came to pay their respects to one of the most legendary and kind people in our chess community. Thanks to USCF NM Suhas Kodali for hosting and directing this seven-round tournament. After a night of blitz fun, USCF NM David Herscovici, Suhas Kodali, and Mark Bourque shared first place in the Joseph Mansigian Memorial.

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2024.

Lacey Wang, one of our club's talented scholastic players, became the 2024 Connecticut state elementary chess champion on January 8.

Lisa Smith took home the title of Top Senior Aged 65 or Older in the 2024 Connecticut State Senior Open Chess Championship held in Middletown on February 24.

USCF NM Derek Meredith drew GM Sergey Kudrin in the 2024 Connecticut State Senior Open Chess Championship held in Middletown on February 24.

Joseph Bihlmeyer also drew GM Sergey Kudrin in the 2024 Connecticut State Senior Open Chess Championship held in Middletown on February 24.

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by David Fusco, Estee Axelrad, and Bob Cyr.

WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP 2024



BACK ROW

Bob Cyr, Richard Bauer, Joseph Bihlmeyer, Doug Fiske, Mike Pascetta,
John Nitz, Norman Burtness, and James Nitz

CENTER

Krystian Tkaczewski, Jr.

Missing from this picture were Derek Meredith, David Fusco, and Kashvi Madhwani

NBCC CHAMPIONS OF 2024 (WITH TD SUHAS KODALI)



BACK ROW

Daniel Knowles, Alexander Alvarez-Filschtein, Jordan Groff, Joe Bihlmeyer, Derek Meredith, John Pasco,
David Mashkov, Doug Fiske, and Suhas Kodali

FRONT ROW

Yonatan Axelrad, Aryan Jangle, Luca Festa, and Sean Bianchi

JOINT SIMULTANEOUS CHESS EXHIBITION OF 2024
BY DEREK MEREDITH AND JORDAN GROFF



Derek (standing up - left) ponders his move against John Pasco while
Jordan (standing up - right) makes his move against David Fusco

THE GREATEST HIGHLIGHT OF EACH MONTH **IN THE LAST TWENTY YEARS**

A myriad of highlights has been written and preserved about the club in the last twenty years, many of them having an indelible impact on the history of our organization. Listed below are the most significant highlights of each month since 2005 that I have chosen to publish. I hope you will agree that these were our biggest hits!

JANUARY 2007: The club directed its first tournament (a quick event) using SwissSys, a computerized pairing software.

FEBRUARY 2010: The club fielded the most teams ever (six) at the World Amateur Team Chess Championship.

MARCH 2011: The club held its first Planet Earth Chess Championship. It was held at the Hawk's Landing Country Club. A buffet style lunch was served.

APRIL 2023: The club hosted its first Winner's Keepers Chess Tournament, where the section winners got their names immortalized for next year's event.

MAY 2007: The club organized the first Arkadijs Strazdins Cup in honor of the club's greatest contributor and advocate.

JUNE 2023: At the club's annual meeting, our vice president presented his ideas, along with the new club bylaws, for our club to become incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-for-profit organization.

JULY 2009: A record seventy-eight players attended the New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, the greatest turnout for any event in club history.

AUGUST 2005: The first quick and sectional event in club history was held.

SEPTEMBER 2005: Derek Meredith organized a chess function at his house, which began the hugest social network expansion in our club for many years to come.

OCTOBER 2006: The first Oktoberfest Open Chess Tournament took place, and, at the conclusion of the event, a dinner party was held at the East Side Restaurant.

NOVEMBER 2017: The club hosted its first movie night, with the featured film "Queen of Katwe." Food and refreshments were served before the movie.

DECEMBER 2005: Members and friends attended the club's first Christmas party and raffle.

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY: THROUGH THE YEARS



Yogesh Raghunathan, Brian Kosnoff, Doug Fiske, Gert Hilhorst
2007 NBCC Oktoberfest Dinner Party



USCF NM Ted McHugh
2008 Arkadijs Strazdins Cup Winner



Sofia Leja, Andres Castaneda, and Mark Leja
2009 Zimmerman Games Day



Tom Hartnayer, Andris Strazdins, and Rob Roy
2010 New Britain Summer Open



Christopher Lomeli vs. John Nitz

2011 NBCC – UConn Chess Match



George "Good Knight" Himes takes on his dad, Dennis "Bad Bishop" Himes
2012 NBCC CHRISTMAS PARTY



JOE HRICKO AND MARCUS KOMONS

2013 New Britain Summer Open



NBCC Chef Crew
Mitch Daniels, Marie Juergens, and Kevin Zimmerman

2014 New Britain Summer Open



Bob McDaniel and Jimi Wilkin

Nick Stevens Memorial – 2015



Norman Burtress and Richard Bauer

2016 CT State Closed Chess Championship



Master Chef Mario Guevara-Rodriguez

with Derek Meredith (left) and Joy (right)
2017 New Britain Summer Open



BITCOIN PONZIANI SCHEME

Suhas Kodali, Bob Cyr, Bill Montross, and Mike Pascetta

2018 USATE

2019 CT STATE CHAMPIONSHIP



Yoon-Young Kim vs. Nelson Castaneda

CONNECTICUT STATE OPEN 2020 WOMEN'S CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



BACK TO FRONT, LEFT TO RIGHT

THEJA SURESHNAGAN VS. ELIZABETH SMITH, JASMINE SU VS. MACKENZIE FURMAN



Bob Wooster vs. Eric Hilhorst

JUSTIN LALOR SIMULTANEOUS CHESS EXHIBITION OF 2022



Justin Lalor makes his move against Jozef Madej

2021 NBCC Championship

WINNER'S KEEPERS CHESS WINNERS OF 2023



Mark Bourque, David Mashkov, and Krystian Tkaczewski Jr.

THE PASSING OF JOSEPH “JOE” MANSIGIAN

I am the bearer of very sad and tragic news for the NBCC community. I found out through Kevin Zimmerman, who is friends with Preston (who shared a home with Joseph Mansigian), that veteran member, former club president, and our beloved friend, Joseph “Joe” Mansigian, suddenly passed away on April 12. Joe just turned seventy-seven on March 30.



Joe joined our family in 1970 and had a membership with our organization that spanned over five decades, one of the longest of any person in NBCC history. Joe recounted to me about his earliest experiences with the club, especially being warmly welcomed and greeted each and every week by its new president at the time, Arkadijs Strazdins. Joe said that his passion for the club was instilled by Mr. Strazdins. Joe enjoyed competing in all of the club’s activities, but he relished the blitz tournaments the most. During his peak, Joe attained a very high-class A rating, coming ever so close to expert level. In 1976, he won the New Britain City Chess Championship Reserve Tournament, which was his first major event victory in the club. In the club’s archives, as of April 2024, Joe ranked in the top 20 for earning the most wins or ties for first place in classical tournaments.

Beyond the chess board, Joe served the club very dutifully. From 1997 to 1998 and from 1999 to 2001, he served as club secretary. In 2001, he was elected to serve as club vice president with then president-elect John Pasco, who recounted to me about his fond memories of Joe. In 2003, when John unfortunately left the club presidency, Joe stepped up to the mantle and became our newest spiritual leader. For the next seven years, I had the utmost pleasure of serving as his vice president, working on projects for the betterment of the club and for the welfare of its members. Joe carried on the many traditions that both Mr. Strazdins and John did for the club, but Joe incorporated some new and very interesting tournaments during his administration. In particular, he organized the first Arkadijs Strazdins Cup to honor and pay tribute to Mr. Strazdins for his fifty-plus years of service to our organization, and he created the beautiful ideas for the first Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship, an event to celebrate the German heritage of our long-established organization. In 2005, Joe organized the club’s first Christmas party. All of these activities still exist today because of Joe. In 2010, Joe stepped down from the NBCC presidency, but he remained a strong advocate and ambassador for our tight-knit community.

In his post-presidency years, you could find Joe playing chess at Borders and then Barnes & Noble on the weekends and at his chess friends’ homes. I organized a surprise party for Joe’s seventieth birthday at a local restaurant, inviting many of his longtime friends. He was so thrilled! In 2019, under the Norman Burtneiss administration, Joe was honored with a lifetime membership for his many years of steadfast service to the club.

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic hit Joe very hard, forcing him to take many precautions because of his pre-existing medical conditions. He, therefore, decided that it was best to remain at home as much as possible, which meant taking a hiatus from the club. He returned to the club in 2023, playing in the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup and the New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, which he recently told me that he was eagerly looking forward to playing in this event later this year. In late 2023, Joe’s health took a turn for the worse again, and he was forced to reside in a rehabilitation center to undergo treatment for spinal stenosis and kidney failure. A few months ago, FM Richard Bauer, Paul Gobell, and I paid Joe a visit at Apple Valley in Plainville. Joe was a such a gracious host by treating us to a pizza lunch. He really enjoyed the time that we spent with him. I had a chance to play a couple of games of chess with Joe. Both of these games were analyzed and posted on lichess.org by Rick.

If you never knew Joe, he was one of the most altruistic persons in our family. Like Mr. Strazdins, he treated everyone with dignity and respect regardless of who you were. His loss is a deep and sorrowful one for all of us in the NBCC. The last time I spoke with Joe, he said that he wanted to treat me to dinner or cook for me at his home, which he hoped to return to very soon. I, like many others, loved and admired Joe. May Joe be remembered as one of all-time greats in NBCC history, and may he rest in peace in heaven for all eternity.

The photo of Joe above was taken at the 2009 Zimmerman Games Day. He indeed loved the club’s social gatherings.

SOLUTION TO CHESS PUZZLE

CHESS PUZZLE (from cover page)

1. Nd6+ Kd8
2. Qe8+ Nxe8
3. Nf7#