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INTRODUCTION

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

Hello, everyone! I hope that you and your family are doing well. I could not be in better spirits this time of the year as I spend quality time with family and friends. This is the season to be jolly and happy!

As has become a club tradition since 2005, I have published an annual newsletter to review and recap the highlights of the year, to note memorable membership achievements, and to report on the overall condition of our organization. I am elated to state that our club continues to grow and network with other chess organizations. The NBCC does so much for the welfare of our members and their extended family.

Our organization strives to accommodate everyone's chess interests. We hold a variety of events from bullet to blitz to quick to standard and host many social functions for the benefit of all members. Your experiences at this club will be memorable ones. If you have not renewed your membership for the current fiscal year, please do so soon. If this is your first time visiting, welcome! And even if you are unable to pay the club a visit in the near future, I hope that you will take some time out of your busy schedule this holiday season and read about the wonderful adventures that happened at the NBCC in 2023. Enjoy your holiday, friends!

**“I HAVE COME TO THE PERSONAL CONCLUSION THAT
WHILE ALL ARTISTS ARE NOT CHESS PLAYERS, ALL
CHESS PLAYERS ARE ARTISTS.”**

Marcel Duchamp

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The NBCC's first honorary tournament of 2023 was held for veteran member Harold Blanchard. Like many of the recent members who the club has honored, Harold learned how to play chess when he was very young. He was only eight years old when his older brother taught him how to play the game, and he fell in love with it ever since, playing practically every day until the age of twenty-one. Unfortunately, once he migrated to the U.S. from his native country of Haiti, he stopped playing chess for the next twenty-five years. Regrettably, Harold was not able to continue playing the game he loved due to a lack of access. Ten years ago, in 2013, Harold met Bill Campbell. Bill and Harold worked in the same department at the state of Connecticut. They played casual chess during their lunch hour. Bill was pleasantly surprised by Harold's skill set despite not playing the game for a long time. It was then that Bill introduced Harold to the NBCC. And the rest is history, my friends! Harold is one of our club's amateur and active competitors, and he enjoys the variety of activities that the club has to offer. He has maintained a consistent rating of 1500 for many years but has been known to defeat a few class B players along the way. Do not let his peaceful personality fool you! He can be a very aggressive chess player when he is pressured! One of Harold's biggest achievements in the club was winning first place in the first Andris Strazdins Stein. What an honor! Harold is a genuinely kind and gentle soul, a very soft-spoken man with the highest integrity and values. He is passionate about the game and compassionate towards all of his friends in the chess community. We look forward to many more years with Harold. He is truly a nice guy! For his special tournament, Harold opted to have players choose an opponent within 200 rating points of each other for a two-game, G/24; d/5 match. If there was a tie after both rounds, an Armageddon playoff would take place. The following members won this unique event: Matthew Costello, Kevin Corteville, Ian Wohlhieter, Nathan Mezheritskiy, Thomas Sullivan, Norman Burtness, Dennis Himes, USCF NM David Herscovici, and Yonatan Axelrad.

On the second meeting of the year, the scholastic training sessions started up again. USCF NM Derek Meredith was the instructor of these classes. These classes were very instrumental in helping our scholastic crew grow in their knowledge of the game, and the club really appreciates Derek for coordinating these sessions.

FEBRUARY

On the long three-day Presidents Day weekend in the quaint town of Parsippany, New Jersey, 325 teams competed in the largest team tournament in the history of chess - the 2023 World/U.S. Amateur Team East Chess Championship (USATE). This incredible event, which was directed by the esteemed Mr. E. Steven Doyle, and which his staff ran very efficiently under his leadership, attracted chess enthusiasts from across the nation - young to old to beginner to grandmaster.

This year, the NBCC fielded one team. This team was comprised of veteran USATE players USCF NM James Nitz, Mike Pascetta, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, and Norman Burtness (Magnus Won't Play Us, Either), who scored 3.5 - 2.5 overall. This team faced very tough competition, most notably having to play GMs in the first round. The best scorer on the team was Norman Burtness, who went 5-0 but then lost his final game, unfortunately. This team was one that got nominated for the best team name, but they did not receive enough claps to win the best team name. There were many exciting games from the players on this team, nine of which were analyzed by FM Richard Bauer.

There was another member of the club, Bill Montross, who comprised a team with Sherif Hanna (an expert-rated player who replaced Bob Cyr, who could not participate because of a stomach virus), Dwayne Wilson, Charles Miller, and Julian Ma. This team called themselves the Artistic Attackers, and they blazed the competition, going 4-2 overall. This team also faced stiff opposition. Julian, a bright nine-year-old, went 4.5-1.5. Incidentally, Bill had t-shirts made up for his team. What a cool concept!

The best team in Connecticut went to an extraordinarily strong group of players from the Fairfield County Chess Club (In Memoriam: Mr. Melvin Patrick), who went 4.5 - 1.5 overall.

If you have never had the experience of playing in USATE, this is the holy grail of chess. Thanks again to Mr. Doyle for making this year, and every year, a memorable one for our players at USATE. I eagerly expect to return to this arena next year in better health! And I hope that our club can generate more teams in 2024.

On the third week of February, the club held its second honorary tournament of the year, this one for John Pasco. John, who recently rejoined the club after a very long two-decade hiatus, began his membership in our organization during the 1970s, when we met at the General Haller Post on Broad Street and when chess in America and at the club was at its peak. Prior to joining the club, John played chess casually. And he, like many other chess players in our country did at the time, followed the Fischer – Spassky match with greatest interest, without the internet, social media, computers, or cell phones. Back at the club, John was introduced to our family by Arkadijs Strazdins, club president at the time. “Straz,” as John notes, was very encouraging to young players, not to drink beer, though, which “Straz” often enjoyed doing during games! John dropped out of the chess scene in the late 1970s but returned with a vengeance in the 1980s. He continued to climb up the rankings in the club and, to this day, has maintained his status as a strong class chess player. In the 1990s, John became a USCF certified tournament director and learned how to direct tournaments under the guidance of Mr. Strazdins. In 1998, John assumed the position of club vice president, which he would hold for three years. It was also that year when John was the club champion. In 2001, John was elected the first NBCC president of 21st century when Mr. Strazdins decided not to run for re-election. In late 2002, unfortunately, John resigned from the club presidency due to demands of work and personal life. However, during his short duration as our leader, he dutifully carried out the many club traditions that Mr. Strazdins had established during his thirty-one years as president. When John returned to the club last year, he played in the 2022 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, his first big chess tournament in nearly twenty years. John has often told USCF NM Suhas Kodali and me that he is quite impressed with how the club has grown since 2002, especially with the scholastic outreach. Having been a member for over thirty-five years, I had the pleasure of getting to know John during the 1980s and 1990s, and I am so delighted and thrilled to see him back in action at the club. We thank John for his dedication to the club during a period of huge transition. His pleasant personality, kindness, and delicious sense of humor are personal attributes that make John a nice person to be around with. He always looks out for everyone’s interest – that is for certain. Recently, John visited Cuba, where he had the grand opportunity to visit the historic site of Jose Capablanca, a former world chess champion. Check out his report in the 2022 NBCC newsletter. John is extremely elated to be a part of the NBCC family once again, and I speak for the entire club when I say, “Welcome back, friend. We missed you!” USCF NM David Herscovici, our club’s treasurer, won the tournament.

MARCH

For seven grueling weeks during the months of January and February (with a few break weeks in between), forty-eight players battled it out in the club's most heritage and prestigious tournament – the annual championship, almost a club record for turnout for this event. Players participated in two sections, the championship and the candidates (or reserves). The reserve players were all rated below 1600. In early March, a new champion was crowned. It gives me great pleasure to congratulate and welcome our newest member and 2023 club champion to our organization, Expert Jordan Groff. Ian Wohlhieter, another new member, clinched first place in the reserve section. Way to go, Ian! Besides the winners, I want also to take this opportunity to recognize members Lisa Smith and Kevin Corteville, both of whom decided to play in the championship section despite their ranking below 1600, for their exceptional performance. They each scored three major upset wins in the top section and gained over 150 rating points. They are now class B chess players. Wow! Watch out for them! Lastly, the club would like to thank Tournament Directors Mark Bourque and USCF NM Suhas Kodali for their excellent job in organizing, directing, and managing this huge event.

On March 14, someone at the club commented that the date was 3-14, so a few members started discussing ordering pizza and fruit pies for the crew present for Pi Day. Before you knew it, some of each appeared, courtesy of Estee Axelrad.

On March 21, as tradition has it, our newest club champion gave a lecture and a simultaneous chess exhibition. During his lecture, Jordan reviewed some of the key positions from three of his games in the club championship. His lecture was very engaging and insightful. After the lecture, twenty-nine players (almost a club record for a simul), ranging from beginner to class A, challenged Jordan. The simul started at 7:30 p.m. and lasted for four hours. Some players had to leave early, so these games could not be counted. However, of the remaining games, two of our rising scholastic superstars, David Mashkov and Mridhulaa Rajagopal, nicked wins off of Jordan. Overall, Jordan's performance was 19-0-2. Thanks to Jordan for his time and efforts for this incredible evening of chess at the club.

On the last week of March, the club held another time odds event, where the higher-rated players had to give time odds to their lower-rated opponents based on their rating differences, thus equalizing the playing field. You just never know who is going to win these events. The turnout for this event was incredible, with thirty-three players competing.

And, after eight rounds of spirited play, Vaibhav Singh won the tournament with seven points. And, of historical note, Vaibhav is the lowest-rated player (693) ever to win a time odds event at the club. Now, I ask you, what are the odds of that? Ha ha!

APRIL

The month of April commenced with the spring scholastic training classes held by FM Richard Bauer. The master spent his time reviewing games played by the kids and analyzing various openings. The students were definitely engaged by Mr. Bauer's lectures. Mr. Bauer has been a lecturer of the club going back many years, and he does an exceptionally fine job with his instructional sessions. The kids have greatly benefited from Rick's lessons, and we extend a token of esteemed gratitude to the master for his contributions to the club in this regard.

After the scholastic lectures each week, USCF NM Suhas Kodali devoted about forty-five minutes to analyzing some of the games in the 2023 World Chess Championship match between Ian Nepomniachtchi and Ding Liren. Suhas provided nice commentary to the games, covering key positions and discussing the thought process behind the moves. Overall, this event between these two chess icons has been fought tooth and nail, with each player winning every other game, with a few draws along the way. As many of you know, Magnus Carlsen decided not to defend his world chess championship title, mainly because it takes quite a lot of mental energy and preparation for such a tournament. Even so, Magnus is still ranked number one in the world! If you have not had an opportunity to check out the games from this year's match between Ian and Ding, I would highly recommend it.

Our club's next classical tournament in 2023 was a new event created by USCF NM Derek Meredith, the first Winner's Keepers event. This tournament, which drew a respectable forty-plus players and saw many spirited battles, especially among the youths, was divided into three sections (open, U1800, and an U1200). The cool thing about winning this tournament was that each section winner would have his or her name immortalized for next year's event. Wow! After four rounds of intense competition, the lines were drawn in the sand. And we have our first Winner's Keepers champions. They were members Mark Bourque (open section), David Mashkov (U1800), and Krystian Tkaczewski Jr. (U1200). Of historical significance, this was David's and Krystian's first time winning a major tournament in the NBCC.

MAY

Back during the Strazdins era, the club used to hold many blitz chess tournaments between its major tournaments. Starting in 2012, during the Meredith administration, the club began hosting rated blitz chess tournaments, which have attracted many players. Usually, the masters and experts win these events, but the rated blitz event held on May 2 was one for the history books. The underdogs literally put the full-court pressure on the elite players and crushed the competition. One of these class chess players, Jithu Sajeevan, defied the odds and won the tournament, becoming one of only a few non-experts or masters to win a rated blitz chess event in our club. Way to go, Jithu!

Can you believe it? The NBCC is now hosting its fiftieth honorary event, which we celebrate for our dear friend and veteran member, Roger Bessette. Roger has a very long, rich, and diverse history with chess. He first learned how to play the game at six years old. He was taught by his father and his older brother, who was on the high school chess team. Although Roger enjoyed the game and learned quickly, even giving his much older brother solid competition, he only played casual games until the sophomore year of high school, when he joined the Chicopee High School chess team. Roger's early casual experience was helpful as he dominated the competition, primarily playing board 5 in high school team matches during his sophomore year. The following year, as a result of all the higher boards graduating, Roger was suddenly playing board 1 as a junior. Even playing on board 1, he had respectable results in team matches during his junior and senior years. He also had strong individual performances during high school. In his junior year, Roger came mere tie-break points away from reaching the Massachusetts high school state finals, placing second (with 3 wins and a draw) in the qualifying tournament. Roger continued playing chess during his freshman year of college. He played in the 1983 Pan American Intercollegiate Team Chess Championship, playing on board 3 on the 4-player team from Western New England College. In the eight-round event, Roger finished with 4 wins and 4 losses against mostly higher rated competition (all the losses against players rated over 2000). As a team, Western New England College scored 4.5 - 3.5 and won awards for both top team in their rating class and top small school. The overall winning team from Yale featured 3 future US Chess Champions: Joel Benjamin, Michael Wilder, and Inna Izrailov. After freshman year of college, Roger took an extended break from chess competition to pursue other interests. Many years later, the chess bug returned, and Roger joined the Springfield Chess Club. During his time at the SCC, he participated in a few club matches against none other than the NBCC.

Some matches were held in Springfield and others in New Britain. The matches taking place in New Britain were held at the Quartette Club. These matches marked the first chess events Roger played in that were hosted by the NBCC. Roger took another extended break from chess as his daughter reached the age when extracurricular activities were numerous. His time became occupied with the responsibilities of coaching for his daughter's softball and basketball teams as well as handling her transportation to her various dance, music, and theater related events. She never developed an interest in playing chess, however, as the stage was her true calling. Eventually, Roger got back into chess and started attending quick tournaments at the Stafford Springs Chess Club, where he met Mark Bourque. Roger was looking for the opportunity to play in longer time control events, so Mark encouraged him to join the NBCC. Roger officially joined the NBCC in early 2017 and has played in many club events and has established many friendships ever since. Roger has also given an occasional lecture at the club and has helped with closing the club most weeks. He is an asset to our club, and we are grateful for his service. Roger is truly a personable and outgoing person, always giving to others. Outside of the club, Roger occasionally has played in area tournaments on the weekends. He also helped start a chess club at his place of work where they offer both online and OTB play to employees. This club also teaches employees newer to chess about how to play the game and improve their skills. Roger decided to have a team format for his tournament, a first for any honorary event the club has held. There were three matches. Each of the teams consisted of four players. The top match was won by FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Suhas Kodali, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, and Jithu Sajeevan. The middle match was won by Mark Bourque, Dennis Himes, Roger Bessette, and David Mashkov. And the lower match was won by Jithya Sajeevan, Vaibhav Singh, Michael Acosta, and Varshith Errabelly.

In almost every year since 2011, the NBCC has been the proud host of the famous Planet Earth Chess Championship. This year was our club's 10th Planet Earth event. The club owes gratitude to USCF NM Derek Meredith for creating the ideas for this event over ten years ago. This year, NBCC Vice President Justin Lalor was the event planner and organizer, and we had a decent turnout with twenty-nine players. Unfortunately, the weather, like last year's event, did not cooperate. It was raining all day. Terrible! Therefore, the entire tournament was played indoors at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, our club's home since 2014. Besides Justin, the club was blessed to have other volunteers that made this year's event a success.

They were USCF NM Suhas Kodali (assistant organizer and TD), Norman Burtness (chief TD), Roger Bessette and Estee Axelrad (setup and clean-up committee members), Lisa Smith (food coordinator), and Bob Cyr (assistant TD). For lunch, our galactic chess troops were treated to meat and veggie subs, potato chips, cookies, and refreshments. At around 5:00 p.m. on May 20, a new chess champion of Planet Earth was crowned. And the winner was Jasmine Su, the first female to win this coveted tournament and only the second female player to win or tie for first place in a major club tournament. Her brother, Alan, took home first place in the U1600 section. Jasmine and Alan earned a new spot on the NBCC Hall of Fame for becoming the first members of the same family to win different sections of a major club event. Wow! Lastly, Vignesh Nagarajan won the scholastic section. Overall, it was an incredible day for the club and for chess in Connecticut. If you have never had the pleasure of playing in this tournament, we hope to see you next year.

One of my favorite club tournaments is the annual Arkadijs Strazdins Cup – Andris Strazdins Stein, which I had the pleasure directing with FM Nelson Castaneda. Nelson did a great job filling in for me as the chief tournament director for two rounds while I was sick. The tournament pays tribute to two of the greatest and most outstanding leaders in the history of our club, Arkadijs Strazdins (club president from 1970-2001) and Andris Strazdins (club treasurer from 1973-2015). We had a respectable turnout for this tournament, a five-round Swiss. After many spirited games, USCF NM Jordan Groff and new member Ryan Zheng won their respective sections (Cup and Stein). This was Ryan's first win in a major tournament at the club. Both winners were presented with their rotating trophies in early July. It should be noted that the final game of the tournament between Mark Bourque and Justin Lalor, which was played on the Sunday after the prior Tuesday's final round, determined who would win "The Strazdins Cup" – Nelson or Jordan.

JUNE

Every year in June, the club holds a meeting to discuss business and to elect officers for the upcoming fiscal year. This year's meeting, which drew over thirty members and was one of the longest in club history, was extremely important. The major topic of discussion, which is elaborated below, was the plan to incorporate the NBCC into a 501(c)(3) non-profit with the Internal Revenue Service, which will be a very positive thing for the club and for Connecticut chess. But before this subject was discussed, the following board members and the club historian gave their respective annual reports.

NBCC Secretary Mario Guevara-Rodriguez reviewed the minutes of the 2022 club business meeting. After a brief deliberation, the members approved them.

Bob Cyr, the NBCC historian, gave his report.

- The major highlights of 2023 so far were covered.
- He mentioned that the honorary member tournaments will be suspended until more of the members reach greater longevity in the club.
- He gave an update on the Best Game of the Year and Grand Prix contests.

NBCC President USCF NM Suhas Kodali gave his report next.

- He gave an overview of the operations of the club in the last year.
- He expressed his gratitude to the folks who help to set up and close the club every Tuesday and to the TDs who help to run the tournaments. He also made a special mention to Norman Burtness for his dedication to conducting the Summer Open and Planet Earth tournaments.
- He highlighted the success of the youth club and the Tuesday training sessions, making them accessible to players of every level. He gave special thanks to all trainers for the time devoted to preparing every lesson.
- He made a special mention to Estee Axelrad for her dedication to the youth club and her efforts to open the club every week.
- He mentioned the significant improvement in efficiency with running the tournaments using the new Caissa chess software.
- He asked all members for their feedback on the application and by-laws on the non-profit 501(c)(3) project the club wants to pursue. Obtaining this status will allow the club to receive tax deductible donations, formalize its legal business status in Connecticut, and grant legal protection to NBCC officers and volunteers.

NBCC Vice President Justin Lalor then gave his report.

- He has been working on a pro-bono basis to analyze, prepare, and draft all of the legal documents for the NBCC to obtain the legal status as a 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code of 1986. A thorough and rich exchange of ideas with the NBCC members took place.

- He explained, in great detail, every section of the ten articles of the new club by-laws. He highlighted the following points:
 - The purpose as a non-profit will be to foster chess education and national and international amateur sports competition.
 - Upfront costs need to be considered.
 - The NBCC will be a member-run organization.
 - The potential disadvantages of becoming a 501(c)(3): extra administrative and accounting workload, which were accepted by the members.
 - The club will be able to receive tax deductible donations and will be exempt from paying sales tax on large purchases.
 - A vote took place to authorize the officers to proceed with filing the necessary paperwork to make our club a 501(c)(3) non-profit in the state of Connecticut. In addition, the following changes to the by-laws were requested:
 - Grant the lifetime membership to members who already have it.
 - Clarify the fiscal year (September to August).
 - Craft an easier mechanism to call the membership meetings but considering a reasonable minimum quorum.
 - The final vote was 32 members in favor and one abstention.

USCF NM David Herscovici next gave his treasurer's report.

- He explained his detailed and comprehensive report.
- He highlighted the positive change in the unrestricted net worth as a good sign for the financial health of the club.
- A motion was made to invest the cash surplus in a money market account.
- He informed the members about the prompt rent payments to the church and mentioned that our club is a very good tenant.

After the reports, the election of the club officers was held. All four board members were unanimously elected to their respective positions for the 2023-2024 club year.

Lastly, we had the new business portion of the meeting. During this session, the following ideas were brought forth by the membership:

- A motion to perform more weekend tournaments was raised by one member. Suhas explained the cost benefit for the club has been marginal or negative compared to the significant effort, resources, and time to organize them. Only the Summer Open has brought a positive balance for the club.
- Norman volunteered to organize a scholastic tournament during a weekend next year.
- Bob expressed his desire to proactively advertise the NBCC to increase youth membership.
- Mark Bourque raised the point about the long-time control in the open section and the option for students to choose a reduced time control. He recommended that every player in the open section should play with long time control. A suggestion to start the rounds earlier was presented.
- A motion to maintain the members' dues was made, and a vote took place to approve it. Everyone present voted in favor.

For two weeks in June, Kevin Corteville, one of our newest and brightest scholastic chess players, gave a lecture about the King's Indian Defense: Mar Del Plata variation. The lecture featured key games that show how Black attacks in the classical King's Indian. Kevin is now our youngest club lecturer. On behalf of the club, we are sincerely grateful for your contributions, Kevin. Keep it up!

JULY

For the past number of years, the club has held an annual knockout and Swiss tournament in July. We thank FM Nelson Castaneda for creating the ideas for this incredible and unique event. Nelson also was the chief tournament director for this four-week tournament. The rules for this event, as outlined by Nelson, were quite simple. Initially, all players were assigned numbers based on rating and were grouped into two sixteen player sections for pairing purposes. The first and all subsequent winners in each round of two knockout sections would advance until there was one champion. The losers in each round of each knockout section 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.

After three rounds of spirited competition, Nelson and USCF NM Suhas Kodali were tied for first place in the knockout A section. They both made some mistakes in their game, but Suhas made the last mistake and thus lost, making Nelson the NBCC Knockout Champion – Section A – of 2023. In the knockout B section, we had youths Jithya Sajeevan and Ryan Zheng in serious play. Jithya had a slight material advantage, and this was just enough to claim victory. The NBCC records show that this was Jithya's first win in a major club tournament. Historically, the club has only awarded cash prizes for this tournament. But this year, the club received a very generous donation from Mrs. Chaudhuri, the mother of member Niloy Chaudhuri, for trophies for the winners. This was such a lovely gesture.

AUGUST

The club is blessed to have many volunteers give lectures at the club. On August 8, Niloy Chaudhuri gave his first presentation at the NBCC. He prepared his lecture with the assistance of FM Richard Bauer, who unfortunately could not be at the club that night. Niloy's presentation focused on opening lines against 1. d4. Niloy was so grateful for this opportunity to share his expertise with the audience, which included his mother and his mother-in-law, about various opening theories against the Queen's pawn opening. And we thank him for his marvelous presentation.

Speaking of lectures, FMs Nelson Castaneda and Richard Bauer took turns reviewing games from the 2023 FIDE World Cup, which was won by Magnus Carlsen, later in the month. They analyzed some of the key games from this historic event. We also thank them for their nice presentations.

On a glorious and pleasantly warm August 27, with temperatures in the 70s and a refreshing north-westerly breeze, sixty-six players participated in Connecticut's grandest social chess outing of the year – the annual New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship – at the beautiful Wickham Park in Manchester. This event attracted not only the same number of players as in 2022, making this the third-highest attendance for this event in club history, but it drew an unprecedented forty-four scholastic players (eighteen or younger), setting a new club record. This tournament takes a collective effort to ensure its success. We first want to thank our esteemed club president, USCF NM Suhas Kodali, for planning and organizing the tournament, as well as for advertising it. Next, we want to thank Norman Burtness, our chief tournament director, who, once again, seamlessly ran this major event. He was phenomenal. He also promoted the tournament by sending out a few e-mail blasts.

Then we had chef Mario Guevara-Rodriguez – master of the grill – cooking hot dogs and hamburgers for our hungry crew. In addition to the barbeque lunch, we had chips, cookies, apples, and beverages, which were purchased by Gert Hilhorst, our former club treasurer. There were many extra drinks for the players throughout the day. Also, there were coffee and breakfast goodies, including the delicious brownies made by David Mashkov. They were so delicious. Thank you! Finally, we appreciate the efforts of Estee Axelrad, Justin Lalor, and Bob Cyr, who volunteered with the setup and cleanup. Like in many years past, there were three sections (an open, an under 1600 (keeping with the yearly theme, it was U1623 for 2023), and a scholastic (but only for kids rated under 1123)). It was nice to see new faces this year, including Eric Hilhorst, Gert's son, who just happened to be in town from New Hampshire, where he lives. As the day progressed, the temperatures rose while the competition was getting hot. At around 6:30 p.m., USCF NM Derek Meredith won the tournament over USCF NM Suhas Kodali on tie-breaks. A few very interesting historical observations from this win. First, this is the first time in club history when two presidents have tied for first place in a major tournament. And second, Derek won this event in 1981 under his former name, Matthew Columbe, and becomes the first player in NBCC history to win the same big tournament in the open section under two different names. Now, go ahead, I would just like to see you top that! Many of the scholastic players, like last year, received medals for good performances. So, my friends, we have reached the end of another incredible Summer Open. From what I gathered, everyone had an enjoyable time playing chess, eating some fine BBQ, and socializing. If you were unable to play in this year's exciting open-air tournament, you missed an awesome time. However, there is always next year. I hope to see you then.

SEPTEMBER

Between the club's major tournaments, the officers host faster-time controlled events to add a little more variety and structure to the schedule of activities to afford players a rest from the serious competition. In September, the club held its annual quick chess championship, a three-week event consisting of nine rounds, where players had the opportunity to hone their rapid chess skills. FM Nelson Castaneda has historically been the NBCC Quick Chess Champion. This year, however, Nelson could not commit to all rounds, unfortunately. The competition was still very strong in this event, and after a very exhaustive but spirited nine rounds of action, FM Richard clinched the title of 2023 NBCC Quick Chess Champion, going undefeated, which was an incredible feat. According to Rick, he was put to the test in every game. The only player to nick a draw against Master Bauer was Norman Burtness, who is also a good blitz chess player.

It is always a joy and a delight when long-time, former members of the club return for a visit. This month, we were so thrilled to see USCF NM Ted McHugh (who has been a continuous member since 1991) and Steve Sanabria (who used to play regularly in the early 2000s at the New Britain Quartette Club). We hope that these gentlemen can come back to our family soon. It was nice seeing you guys!

OCTOBER

For most of October and in the first week of November, the club held its final major tournament of the year (and my second favorite behind the Summer Open), the Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. Former NBCC President Joseph Mansigian and his administration created this new event in 2006 to celebrate and remember the rich and diverse German heritage of our club dating back many decades. This year's tournament was filled with numerous highlights. First, the tournament drew a record fifty-one players. Second, in the first round, three of our lady members (Lacey Wang, Lisa Smith, and Jithya Sajeevan) earned major upsets against top-notch players. And then, last but definitely not least, the biggest highlight of the tournament (and of the year) was earned by USCF NM Jordan Groff. He went 5-0 and took home first place. What made his run most impressive was that he now joins an elite group of players in our club (Arkadijs Strazdins, USCF NM James Bolton, FM Richard Bauer, FM Nelson Castaneda, and USCF NM Dennis Prawira) for winning or tying for first place in three or more major tournaments in one year. Wow! And Jordan just joined the club earlier this year! You might recall that Jordan won the NBCC Championship and the Strazdins Cup. Also, for his historic wins in all three events, Jordan edged out Ian Wohlhieter by .5 points to win the 2023 NBCC Grand Prix prize. I have to admire and give respect to Ian, though, who would have probably won this contest if he had played in the U1600 section but decided to play with stronger competition in the open section. Nonetheless, it was a great tournament for Jordan. Thanks to USCF NM Suhas Kodali and Mario Guevara-Rodriguez for assisting me with directing this event, especially for filling in for me for two weeks when I was ill.

On Halloween night, the club hosted a thematic tournament for this ghoulish holiday. The participants, of which there were only eight, played the Frankenstein-Dracula Variation of the Vienna Game, the Halloween Gambit, and the Creepy Crawley Opening. I guess these chess openings scared off or terrified our core players, including myself, who decided to stay home and give out candy to the kids. Oh, well. But that did not stop USCF NM Jordan Groff from playing these unique openings. And guess what? He won the thematic event.

NOVEMBER

In keeping with the tradition of Oktoberfest, the club held its annual dinner party on November 18. This year, like last, USCF NM Suhas Kodali made reservations at the Wood 'N Tap restaurant in Farmington. Club volunteers and their extended family were invited to this festive gathering. Everyone thanked Suhas for the amazing work that he does for the club, and Suhas thanked his fellow club officers and other contributors for their service to the club, making it one of the greatest chess organizations in America. Incidentally, Bob Cyr holds the record for attending the most NBCC Oktoberfest dinner parties – all eighteen. You could say that Bob is a party crasher!

I want to take this opportunity to recognize and welcome Roger Bessette to the tournament directing team at the club. Roger directed the November quick tournament at the club. Way to go, Roger! We wish you all the best in your future tournament directing assignments.

DECEMBER

One of the final club tournaments of the year was held in memory of Joseph Hricko. Players were grouped into various quad or Swiss sections in this three-week event to honor such a wonderful person and outstanding chess player. Norman Burtness directed and submitted this tournament for rating, and we thank him for that. A eulogy about our dear late friend “HR” is published later in this newsletter. The winners of the event were: Quad 1 (USCF NM David Herscovici), Quad 2 (Ryan Zheng), Quad 3 (Nabeel Chasmawala), Quad 4 (Krystian Tkaczewski Jr.), Swiss (Ben Lewis), and Scholastic Swiss (Zaynab Chasmawala).

To cap another fantastic year at the historic NBCC, the officers held our organization’s annual Christmas party on December 19. Friends and family of the club were cordially invited to attend. Many contributors were involved in making this party a success. We thank USCF NM Suhas Kodali for planning and promoting the celebration and for bringing in drinks, cups, plates, and utensils. We thank Estee Axelrad for the decorations and the setup. We thank Lisa Smith for ordering the food from Fitzgerald’s Foods in Simsbury. And we thank Bob Cyr for his year-end commentary, annual newsletter, but, most importantly, with his entertaining of traditional Christmas carols on his keyboard throughout the evening, which the kids really loved. He also brought in Christmas music to play on his CD player during times of intermission. The party began at 6:30 p.m. with the food.

On the grand menu, we had chicken parmigiana, cheese lasagna, meat lasagna, green bean almandine, scalloped potatoes, carrot cake, and beverages. Also bringing food were John Nitz, David Mashkov, Bhawana Singh, Estee, Suhas, and Bob. At 7:30 p.m., our club's annual bullet chess championship was held. This usually fun tournament drew many players, and everyone enjoyed themselves as the pieces were literally flying off the chess board, with each game having a time control of only 1, 1. Reclaiming the title of NBCC Bullet Chess Champion was USCF NM Ted McHugh. Overall, the evening was filled with delicious food, awesome entertainment, socialization, and, of course, chess. This is what the NBCC is all about, my friends. Good times and a great family. Cheers to an incredible 2023!



NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2023.

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
USCF NM Edward McHugh	Age 50 or Older	2297	62 nd tied
	Quick Overall	2297	91 st tied
	Quick Age 50 or Older	2297	37 th tied
FM Nelson Castaneda	Age 65 or Older	2325	17 th
	Quick Age 65 or Older	2237	14 th tied
	Blitz Age 65 or Older	2231	10 th
	Age 50 or Older	2325	58 th
	Quick Age 50 or Older	2237	48 th tied
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2231	30 th
FM Richard Bauer	Age 65 or Older	2200	62 nd
	Quick Age 65 or Older	2005	86 th tied
	Blitz Age 65 or Older	2135	21 st
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2135	57 th
Elizabeth Smith	Women Age 65 or Older	1529	11 th
	Quick Women Age 65 or Older	1300	17 th
	Blitz Women Age 65 or Older	1358	5 th
	Women Age 50 or Older	1529	27 th
	Quick Women Age 50 or Older	1300	33 rd
	Blitz Women Age 50 or Older	1358	11 th
Jithya Sajeevan	Girls Age 15	1541	36 th
Lacey Wang	Age 10	1765	55 th
	Girls Age 10	1765	9 th
	Quick Girls Under Age 13	1442	47 th
	Blitz Girls Under Age 16	1431	57 th
	Blitz Girls Under Age 13	1431	16 th

NBCC MEMBER ATTAINING THE LEVEL OF USCF MASTER

Jordan Groff attained the level of USCF NM in 2023.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

USCF NM Derek Meredith won the 2023 Western Massachusetts / Connecticut Valley Chess Championship held in Florence, MA, from February 25 to 26.

Jordan Groff drew GM Sergey Kudrin in the 2023 Connecticut State Action Chess Championship held in Fairfield on May 20. He also drew the GM at the Connecticut State Chess Championship held in Middletown on November 12.

Krystian Traczewski took home first place in the kids born in 2011 or earlier section of the Lato z Liskiem chess tournament held in Lisia Góra, Poland, on July 2.

On December 3, USCF NM Jordan Groff tied for first place in the 1st Hartford County and City Chess Championship held at Trinity College.

David Mashkov broke the club record for the fastest established rating point gain in one year. His gain was 690 points (almost three-and-one-half rating classes).



CHESS TRIVIA

Chess history is ingrained in my blood. This is why I love creating chess trivia questions about the rich and diverse history of this ancient game. This year, like last, I am simply creating a potpourri of chess trivia questions. I hope that you can take a few minutes to test your knowledge of chess history. Good luck! The answers are on page 40.

1. Who was awarded a silver cup for winning the first brilliancy prize in a chess tournament?

A: Harry Pillsbury
B: Aaron Nimzowitsch
C: Paul Morphy
D: Henry Bird
2. Who were the chess opponents in the famous Evergreen Game?

A: Adolf Anderssen vs. Jean Dufresne
B: Paul Morphy vs. Howard Staunton
C: Wilhelm Steinitz vs. Emanuel Lasker
D: Jose Raul Capablanca vs. Alexander Alekhine
3. How many moves was the longest known chess game in history?

A: 101
B: 231
C: 269
D: 382
4. In what year was the Staunton chess set design, created by Nathaniel Cook, endorsed by Howard Staunton?

A: 1839
B: 1849
C: 1859
D: 1869

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, Suhas Kodali, Estee Axelrad, Krystian Traczewski, and Bob Cyr.

WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP 2023



James Nitz, Mike Pascetta, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, and Norman Burtness

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB CHAMPIONS (WITH OFFICERS) OF 2023



David Mashkov, Norman Burtness, Jordan Groff, Aryan Jangle, Lisa Smith, Ian Wohlhieter, Mridhulaa Rajagopal, Kevin Corteville, Justin Lalor, Suhas Kodali, Ryan Zheng, Michael Acosta, and Dave Herscovici

JORDAN GROFF SIMULTANEOUS CHESS EXHIBITION OF 2023



Jordan Groff makes his move against Mridhulaa Rajagopal
(This was the final game remaining of the night)

WINNER'S KEEPERS CHESS WINNERS OF 2023



Mark Bourque, David Mashkov, and Krystian Tkaczewski Jr.

PLANET EARTH CHESS CHAMPIONS (WITH DIRECTORS) OF 2023

OPEN SECTION



Mark Bourque, Jennifer Su, Norman Burtness, David Herscovici,
David Mashkov, and Suhas Kodali

UNDER 1600 SECTION



Nitya Nair, Norman Burtness, Alan Su, Krystian Tkaczewski Jr.,
Suhas Kodali, and Bill Campbell

SCHOLASTIC SECTION



Thenumi Fernando, Norman Burtness, Vidun Fernando, Pragyan Pandey,
Vignesh Vidya, and Suhas Kodali

STRAZDINS CUP – STEIN CHAMPIONS OF 2023



David Herscovici, Suhas Kodali, Ben Lewis, Mario Guevara-Rodriguez, Jordan Groff, Ryan Zheng,
Ian Wohlhieter, Michael Acosta, Vaibhav Singh, Jithu Sajeevan, Nelson Castaneda, and Bob Cyr

NBCC KNOCKOUT AND SWISS CHAMPIONS OF 2023
(WITH MRS. CHAUDHURI)

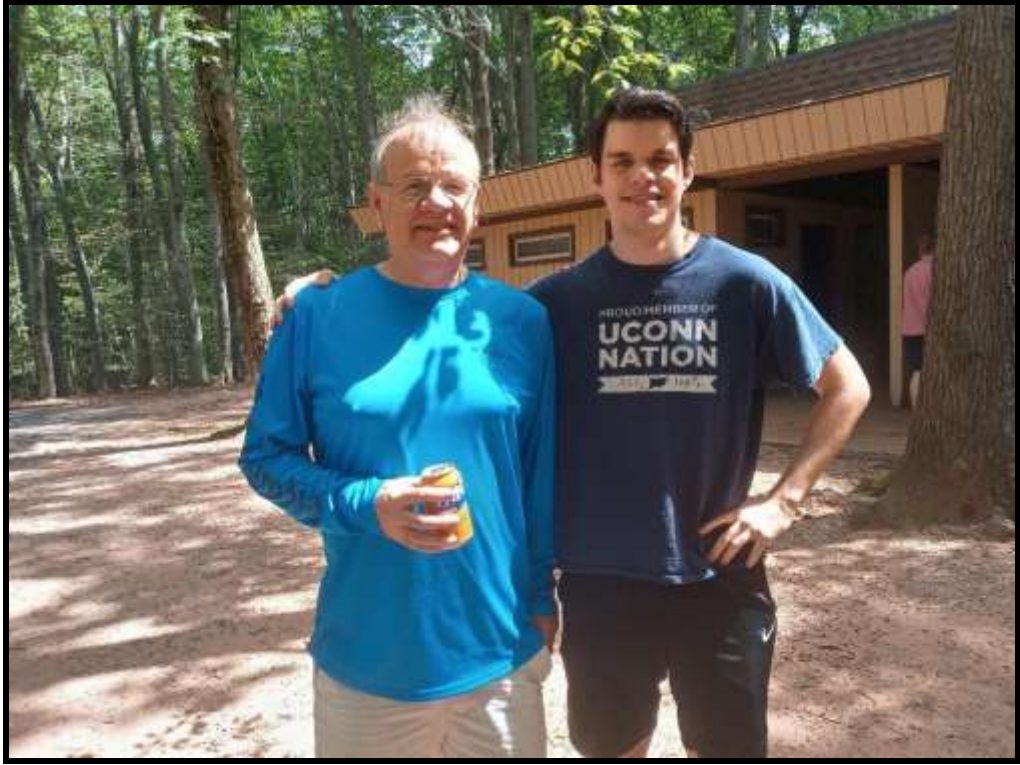


Nelson Castaneda, Senthil Paramasivan, John Pasco, Ben Lewis, Bob Cyr,
Nathan Mezheritskiy, Ryan Zheng, Jithya Sajeevan, Mrs. Chaudhuri, and Suhas Kodali

NEW BRITAIN SUMMER OPEN CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP OF 2023



Chef Mario Guevara-Rodriguez - master of the grill



Father (Gert) and son (Eric) Hilhorst



Dennis Himes and David Mashkov



Tom Zissu and John Pasco

**OKTOBERFEST OPEN CHESS CHAMPIONS
(WITH DIRECTORS) OF 2023**



Bob Cyr, Senthil Paramasivan, Jordan Groff, Krystian Tkaczewski Jr., David Mashkov,
Joseph Bihlmeyer, Alexander Alvares-Filshtein, Suhas Kodali, and Mario Guevara-Rodriguez

2023 NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB OKTOBERFEST DINNER PARTY



NBCC GRAND PRIX WINNER OF 2023

Last year, FM Richard Bauer and Bob Cyr came up with the ideas for the first NBCC Grand Prix contest. The process and conditions to determine a winner are quite simple. Throughout the year, points earned by the top two scorers in each of the club's major tournaments (New Britain Chess Club Championship, Planet Earth Chess Championship, Winner's Keepers Chess Tournament, Strazdins Cup / Stein, New Britain Knockout and Swiss Chess Tournament, New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, New Britain Summer Show-Up Chess Tournament, and Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship) were tabulated. In the end, one of our masters and instructors, Jordan Groff, earned 14.5 GP points. Way to go, sir! Jordan was presented with a plaque for his fine accomplishment. Jordan just joined the club earlier this year and has already had much success in tournaments at the club, scoring in the top two positions in many of them. His picture is below.



CHESS SONNET

In early 2023, FM Richard Bauer, Roger Bessette, USCF NM David Herscovici, and Michael Smith asked ChatGPT to write them a sonnet about chess. Here is what it came up with. They think that you will enjoy it.

Here is a sonnet in the Romantic era style about the game of chess.

The chess board stands, with pieces all arrayed, a battlefield for strategic minds, where pawns and knights and bishops make their raids and queens, the most majestic of their kinds.

Paul Morphy, with his genius excelled, a master of the game, his moves so bright, he proved that chess, with skill, one could compel and leave his foes with nothing but defeat in sight.

Mikhail Chigorin, from Russia came, with clever strategies and tactics sound, a worthy opponent, sought for fame, his games, a source of knowledge all around.

But in this noble game, not all is fair, as Hans Neimann proved, with moves so rare.

REMEMBERING JOSEPH HRICKO “HR”

It is with a heavy heart and a profound sadness to inform you about the tragic news of the passing of Joseph Hricko, one of the club’s most beloved veteran members. I heard about Joseph’s passing from his son, Jason, who said that his father died in early June from a long illness.



Fondly known to his chess friends as “HR,” Joseph’s passion for chess was truly infectious. According to Jason, his father involved his sister Jillian and him in the game at an early age. Jason and his sister vividly recount the many times playing chess with their father on Fridays or Saturdays at Barnes and Noble. And even though neither of “HR’s” children took the game as seriously as their father, it was always an enriching and exciting bonding experience for them to be with him, enjoying their common interest.

Beyond Barnes and Noble, “HR” was a member of the chess clubs in Waterbury and Southbury, where he played many tournaments that were directed by Rob Roy. He also competed in many of the events organized by Frederick Townsend Jr. Once both of these organizations disbanded, Joseph joined the NBCC family. Throughout his membership in the club, Joseph consistently maintained a class A rating, peaking at expert level in 2013. Whenever players competed against “HR,” whether it was a blitz or long-time controlled event, he gave them a serious match. And he was always respectful of his opponents, regardless of their age and/or rank. Two of his most favorite chess openings were the Vienna Game and the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Defense. Throughout his chess career, one of his proudest tournament victories was tying for first place alongside Expert Mark Bourque in the 2019 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship (see picture to the right – “HR” is on the right).



The last time many people saw “HR” was at my 35th NBCC anniversary party held last August at the club. “HR” was telling me and some of his other friends about his constant struggles with headaches and back pain. But he told me that he would not have missed my special tournament for anything in the world. That, my friends, was the kind of person Joseph was - a very caring, kind, and considerate individual.

My friends, “HR” will be deeply missed by everyone in the NBCC and Connecticut chess communities. May his spirit in the chess world live on, and may he rest in peace for all eternity in heaven.

PLAY MORE CHESS ACADEMY HOME OF THE HAMDEN CHESS CLUB

A BRIEF HISTORY BY ROD GROFF



“The PMCA was created in 2011 to promote the game of chess in Hamden, CT, and the surrounding communities. Founder Rod Groff grew up playing chess before and after school and eventually played on his high school chess team. After high school, however, he did not really do much with the game until much later in life when his own kids started getting interested in it, with the prospect of winning trophies. After moving from AZ to CT in 2009, Groff began teaching after school chess, first at Bear Path Elementary School in Hamden (his own kids’ school) and later in other area elementary schools. Eventually, the interest in chess grew to the point where it became feasible to centralize the classes by renting a storefront location, which allowed many additional students from a wide array of schools to participate. Having a centralized base of operations also allowed for the development of additional programs such as casual play evenings and tournaments for adults and eventually the development of the Hamden Chess Club.



Founder and instructor Rod Groff teaching a kids’ class

Groff strongly believes that the game can be learned, and he also believes that chess improvement can happen at any stage in life. Our programs seek to offer chess activities for all ages, and, indeed, the inter-generational aspect of the game is something we try hard to foster. Our students and club members range in age from four to nearly eighty-four!

Each week, 111 students meet for beginner and intermediate classes as well as individual lessons. The students are mostly kids (K-6), though currently, we have 19 students enrolled in adult classes. Most of the academy’s classes and lessons are provided in-person at our Hamden location, though the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to create online classes and lessons and venture into the world of Zoom. To this day, we offer one intermediate class online, and about half of our students take their lessons remotely.

The online class has allowed a number of our students who have moved away (to FL, PA, Korea, China, etc.) to maintain continuity not only with their chess studies but with fellow classmates.

The Hamden Chess Club is an affiliate of U.S. Chess and currently has 143 paid members. We are perhaps the only chess club in CT that offers casual play two evenings a week as a benefit of membership. Additionally, each month, we offer three USCF-rated tournaments, including at least one just for scholastic (K-12) students. Each week, we offer online blitz tournaments on lichess.org for a range of rating levels. The online tournaments have free entry for enrolled PMCA students and HCC community members, with a chance to win a \$20 gift card at any tournament that has at least four participants. As of October 2023, over \$21,000 has been distributed in cash and prizes at our adult and kid tournaments (both OTB and online) since our first tournament was held in September 2017.



NM Jordan Groff providing instruction at the PMCA summer camp program

This year has brought with it a number of milestones. In May, PMCA coach Jordan Groff passed 2200 to become a USCF National Master, and USCF NM Yassamin Ehsani also joined PMCA as an affiliated coach in June. Over 75 students participated in our full day summer chess program over five weeks in July. Additionally, this summer, eighteen students joined the newly formed Hamden Chess Team, participating in larger regional tournaments in CT, MA, and NJ in the coming year.

The Play More Chess Academy and the Hamden Chess Club seek to offer a wide range of opportunities for all ages to play and improve their skills at this most amazing game of chess!”



Members of the HCC present before round 4 of the 2023 Bradley Open Chess Championship

NBCC BEST GAME OF 2023

I (FM Richard Bauer) usually pick a game with more fireworks for Game of the Year, and there were many worthy candidates to pick from, but this game impressed me for the subtlety of its play and how hard it was to spot where White went wrong. Stockfish gave it 92%/99% accuracy and gave Black an average centipede loss of only 5, making it clearly the highest-rated game. It makes a worthy addition to the all-time study: <https://lichess.org/study/QEV9BdA1>

The two other games that struck my fancy were USCF NM David Herscovici – USCF NM Derek Meredith for its two-way action and young AJ Filshtein’s brilliant piece sacrifice. These and many other worthy games are in this year’s study: <https://lichess.org/study/36DDuD9t>

Bob Cyr has called 2023 “The Year of Jordan,” and I was reluctant to add to his winnings, but the amazing accuracy and endgame precision won the day. Dennis Himes is also well deserving of a game effort against a much higher rated opponent. His solid style has put many a master to the test!

OKTOBERFEST: R1 B2

Dennis Himes 1700 - Jordan Groff 2208

NOT DEAD (DRAWN) YET!

Site: <https://lichess.org/study/5ysHaZV1/7BMLYdLz>

Annotator: FM Rick Bauer

ECO: E20 Nimzo-Indian Defense

Bishop and Knight Ending

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4

The Nimzo-Indian fights for control of e4 by pinning the Nc3. White has a host of responses to choose from, none of which can claim a real advantage.

4. Bd2!?

I really like this unassuming move since it is the natural reaction of a beginner, breaking the pin and preparing to recapture on c3 with the bishop. Human theory has always taken a dim view of it, but computers approve. Dennis has a lot of experience with it, and it suits his solid style. If White wants to avoid doubled pawns, it is more popular to protect the knight with the queen (Qc2, Qb3).

4... c5

4... O-O also works due to 5. a3 Bxc3 6. Bxc3 Ne4 and if 7. Bb4 c5 8. Bxc5? Qf6! 9. Nf3 Nxc5 10. dxc5 Qxb2

5. a3 Bxc3

(5... Ba5 6. dxc5)

6. Bxc3 Ne4

This wins back the B/N, but in doing so makes it very hard for Black to create complications.

7. Rc1 b6

The tactical 7... Qh4! 8. g3 Nxc3! =+ shatters White's pawns after all since the queen targets d4.

8. e3 O-O 9. Nf3

9. Ne2 Qh4 (9... Bb7 10. d5) 10. g3 Qf6 11. Nf4 Bb7 =+.

9... Nxc3

I'm not sure why Jordan chose to exchange at this point. 9... Bb7 10. d5 Qe7=+ The minor piece exchanges greatly reduce the impact of an advanced center.

10. Rxc3 cxd4?!

(10... d6 and 10... Bb7 are =)

11. Qxd4

White now has a slight edge with pressure down the d file. Also good is 11. Nxd4 Bb7 12. Nb5

11... Bb7 12. Be2 Qe7 13. O-O Nc6 14. Qd2 Rfd8 15. Rd1 d5!? =

Equalizing once again by balancing the d file, White could have kept the edge with 15. b4!? d5 16. c5

16. cxd5!?

16. Qc2 dxc4 17. Rxd8+ Rxd8 18. Rxc4 Qd6 19. h3 h6 20. Rc3 g6 21. Rd3 resulted in a draw in Aleksandrov, A. - Moiseenko, A1., 1/2-1/2, Tal Memorial Rapid 2019, <https://lichess.org/oIRlwC4d>

16... Rxd5 17. Rd3

17. Qc1 Rad8 18. Rxd5 Rxd5 19. Rxc6 Bxc6 20. Qxc6 {Ivan_Naumov - mateordezpolo, 1-0, <https://lichess.org/9tIMpbPJ>}

17... Rxd3 18. Qxd3 Rd8 19. Qc2 h6 20. Rxd8+

(20. Rc1)

20... Qxd8 =

The symmetrical pawn structure and balanced pieces make it very difficult for either side to make progress here.

21. h3 Qd5 22. Qc4

22. Ne1 Ne5 (mcekic - nomnomnom, 0-1, <https://lichess.org/gHnOjoGP>) 25. Bf3 (23. Qc7!) 25... Nxf3+ 26. Nxf3 g6 27. Qd2 Kf8 28. Qxd5 Bxd5 29. Nd4 Ke7 30. f3 e5 31. Nb5 a6 32. Nc3 Bc6 33. Kf2 Kd6 34. e4? (34. b4) 34... Kc5 35. b3 Kd4 36. Nd1 Kd3 (mcekic - nomnomnom, 0-1, lichess.org/gHnOjoGP)

22... Qxc4 23. Bxc4 Kf8

Dennis has survived to an BN ending that is very balanced. It is hard to see how either side is going to win. But White will gain a winning advantage over the next several moves!

24. b4?!

The first mistake. Black will now be able to break down the b4 pawn and gain a post on c5 for his king.

24. Kf1 Ke7 25. Ke2 Kd6 26. Bd3 Ke7

25. Kf1?!

25. Nd2 a5 26. bxa5 Nxa5 27. Bd3 Kd6 28. Kf1) (25. Bd3)

25... Kd6

(25... a5)

26. Ke2?!

White's first mistake was not bringing his king in, but the last two were natural king moves. The last hope was for White to retreat the Bc4. How does Black take advantage?



26... a5!

The pawn break is devastating as the Black king now penetrates the queenside.

27. bxa5

The best try. White cannot play 27. b5? Na7 28. a4 Kc5 29. Bb3 Kb4 30. Bd1 Bxf3+! 31. Kxf3 Nxb5!! 32. axb5 a4 when Black wins the B and the b pawn.

27... Nxa5 28. Bd3 Kc5 29. g3?

(e4!)



29... Bxf3+!!

Giving up the bishop leads to a clear win. Less clear is 29...Nc4 30. Bxc4 Kxc4 31. Ne5+

30. Kxf3 Nc4 31. Ke2

31. Bxc4 Kxc4 32. Ke4 f6 is hopeless as is 31. a4 Nb2 32. Bb5 Kb4

31... Nxa3

The b pawn cannot be stopped.

32. Kd2 Kb4 33. Kc1? Kc3!



The only way for White to stop the b pawn is to give up his bishop.

**34. Be2 b5 35. h4 b4 36. Bd1 b3 37. Bxb3 Kxb3 38. Kd2 Kc4 39. f3 h5 40. Ke2 Kc3 41. g4 g6
42. gxh5 gxh5 43. f4 f5 44. Kf3 Kd3 0-1**

BOB CYR'S COMMENTARY

Friends, we have reached the end of another successful year at the historic NBCC. As you can tell from the stories of 2023 that I have written, our organization continues to thrive on so many levels – financially, socially, and structurally. And despite a rotation of membership and a large number of members who have not rejoined the club in recent years, the NBCC still continues to be one of the best places to play chess and meet new friends in Connecticut.

In 2023, two new members joined our executive club committee, USCF NM Jordan Groff and Joe Miglizzi. Jordan, who is an accomplished chess player, has devoted his time to giving lectures at the club. He has done a phenomenal job in teaching our students and adults about all aspects of the game, utilizing the tools on lichess.org. Joe, an amateur player, has stepped up in setting up and taking down chairs, tables, and equipment at every meeting. He has demonstrated a clear commitment to assisting our club whenever and wherever needed. The NBCC is very fortunate and grateful to have these two gentlemen devote their time to the organization.

The most significant highlight of 2023 for the club was the creation of our non-profit status and the writing of the new club by-laws. This major undertaking was performed by our esteemed club vice president, Justin Lalor, who is an attorney. We are eternally grateful for his vast services and knowledge for this major project for the club.

Our institution has seen a surge in active participation levels in the club this year, with many of our tournaments reaching record attendance levels, like at the Summer Open and at the Oktoberfest Open. We are blessed to have players of all ages and skills coming together for this intellectual hobby and hope that the younger folks can stay around for many years to come. It was also nice to see some veteran faces, like former NBCC President Joseph Mansigian, return to action at the club this year.

Two-thousand-and-twenty-three marked my twenty-five years as a certified tournament director with U.S. chess. Even though there are situations that do arise during tournament play where some unfortunate rulings have to be made, being a TD has definitely enhanced my leadership skills in the club. I encourage those who are not TDs to perhaps think about taking on this responsibly in the new year.

And with that, folks, I am officially closing the NBCC history books for 2023. As I have said countless times before, I love the NBCC family. We are truly one special and unique chess organization proud to be called “The Heart of Connecticut Chess.”

Take care of yourself and each other. And merry Christmas and happy new year. God bless!

President: Suhas Kodali
Vice President: Justin Lalor
Secretary: Mario Guevara-Rodriguez
Treasurer: David Herscovici
Website Admin: Gert Hilhorst
Historian: Bob Cyr



SOLUTION AND ANSWERS TO CHESS PUZZLE AND TRIVIA

CHESS PUZZLE (from cover page)

1. Qf7+ Kxe5
2. f4+ Ke4
3. Re1+ Kd3
4. Qd5#

CHESS TRIVIA (from page 20)

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

