

Chess Aotearoa

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CHESS AOTEAROA MAGAZINE

After the Olympiad: Success on the International Stage



Foreword

At the recent Chess Olympiad in Budapest, the NZ Open team placed 70th, seven places above their original ranking, while the Women's team placed 48th, a staggering 26 places above their original ranking!

Meanwhile, after many previous attempts, Wellington College has finally conquered the National Interschool Final.

Find reports, interviews, and more inside this issue of Chess Aotearoa!

Enjoy!
-Weiyang Yu



National Interschools Finals held at Wellington College

At the highly anticipated 2024 National Interschools Finals, Wellington College dominated the field. The event was held at the heart of Wellington College's own charming campus.

Published seasonally; February, May, August, November

Many thanks to Christoph Thurner for his article submission. Please send best game entries and articles submissions to chessmagnominations@gmail.com.

For any issues or queries regarding the puzzles, contact Felix Xie at felix2008xie@hotmail.com. Answers can be found at the back of this edition.

Editorial

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Photos from the Olympiad Torch Ceremony were taken by Weiyang Yu. Photos from the National Interschools Finals were taken by Karthik Sethuramalingam.

On the cover

FM Felix Xie carrying the Olympiad torch alongside other team members.



3 Puzzles Felix Xie

4 Recent & Upcoming Tournaments

Leo Malcolm

6 Nationals

Aadhav Dhamodharan
& Karthik
Sethuramalingam

14 Olympiad Torch Ceremony

Karthik
Sethuramalingam &
Weiyang Yu

18 Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

32 Olympiad Q&As

Craig Hall, Nadia
Braganza & Tom
Middelburg

38 Olympiad Team Captains

Anya Thurner

40 Coach's Corner

Christoph Thurner

42 Chess Clubs

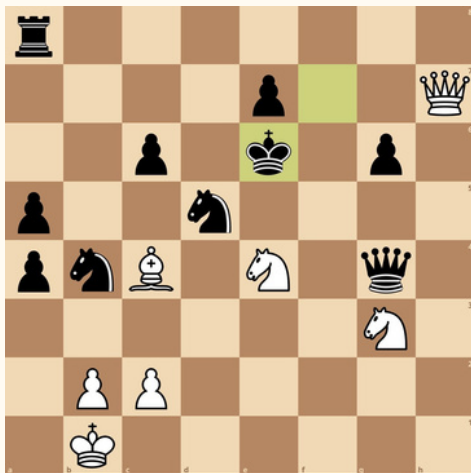
Anya Thurner



(1) Black to move and win
Lichess



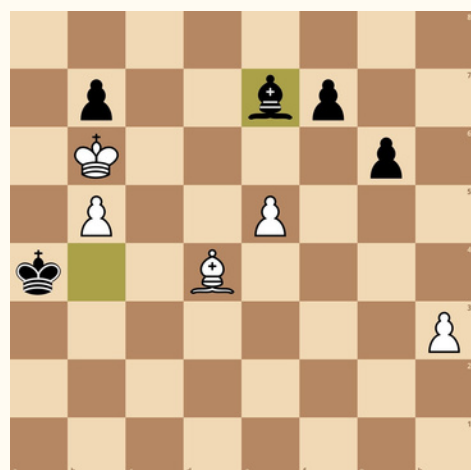
(2) White to move and win
Lichess



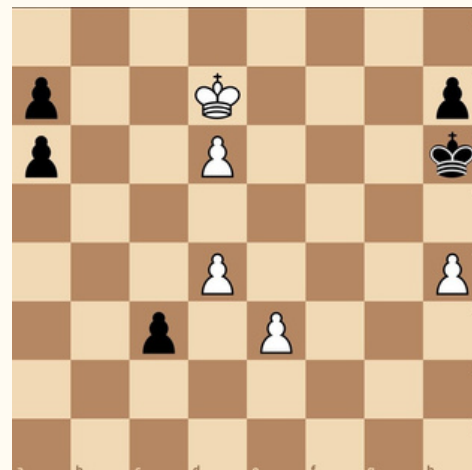
(3) White to move and win
Lichess



(4) Black to move and win
Lichess



(5) White to move and win
Lichess



(6) White to move and win
Study

Recent Tournaments

Leo Malcolm

NZ Senior Championship 2024

8th - 11th August 2024

St. George Bowls and Sports Club, Auckland

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (6/6): FM Leonard McLaren

Asian Senior Championships 2024

9th - 19th August 2024

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

90+30 9-round swiss

1st place (7.5/9): IM Evgenij Kargin

Otago Spring Rapid

1st September 2024

Otago Chess Club, Dunedin

20+5 6-round swiss

1st place (5.5/6): Alex Nedyhalov

National Interschool Finals 2024

28th - 29th September 2024

Alan Gibbs Centre, Wellington College

25+5 7-round team swiss

1st place (14/14): Wellington College

2nd Southern Chess Classic

4th - 6th October 2024

Invercargill Bridge Club

60+30 6-round swiss

1st place (5/6): FM Michael Steadman

NZ Fischer-Random Championship 2024

20th October 2024

Takapuna War Memorial Hall, Auckland

25+5 6-round swiss

1st place (4.5/6): FM Felix Xie, FM Alexei Kulashko

Merv Morrison Memorial 2024

26th - 28th October 2024

Auckland Chess Centre, Mt Eden

90+30 6-round swiss

1st place (5.5/6): CM Isabelle Ning

Upcoming Tournaments

Leo Malcolm

NZ Women's Championship 2024

9th - 11th November 2024

Auckland Chinese Presbyterian Church

90+30 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

2024 North Island Rapid Championship

16th November 2024

Wellington Bridge Club, Wellington

25+5 6-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

Otago Summer Rapid

1st December 2024

Otago Chess Club, Dunedin

20+5 6-round swiss

NZCF rated

NZ Championship 2025

2nd - 10th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

40/90 + 30mins + 30 9-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

NZ Major Open 2025

2nd - 10th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

40/90 + 30mins + 30 9-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

NZ Junior Championship 2025

3rd - 9th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

60+30 7-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

NZ Blitz Championship 2025

11th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

3+2 9-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

NZ Rapid Championship 2025

11th - 12th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

25+5 9-round swiss

NZCF and FIDE rated

Bob Wade Memorial Masters 2025

13th - 19th January 2025

Waipuna Hotel and Conference Centre,
Auckland

90+30 10 player round robins

NZCF and FIDE rated

2025 Oceania Zonal Championship

24th - 29th January 2025

Huntingdale Golf Club, Victoria,
Australia

90+30 9-round swiss

FIDE rated

With another year comes another captivating interschools chess cycle. The national gold medal is what every school dreams of, making the tournament a grueling competition where even the best are put to the test. A complete tournament package full of nerves, rivalries, and the glory of victory is why interschools nationals attracts more players from around the country than many other tournaments in New Zealand.

This year the tournament was hosted at Wellington College in the Alan Gibbs Centre. This venue was a great place to host the tournament as spectators could admire the action from just above the boards. This year's edition showcased spectacular games ranging from sharp endgames to violent sacrifices and checkmating attacks.

Wellington College (WC) has been a team that has narrowly missed out on gold many times. With the recent high-profile arrival of Kayden Loke as a replacement for Joshua Langford, this year the WC team, consisting of CM Cohen Young, CM Ollie Archer, Kayden Loke, and Zachary Thirkell, was stronger and more motivated than ever. Coming into the tournament after a dominating regional performance, dropping only 1.5 game points out of 24, the WC team was definitely the clear favourite. The WC teams showed

dominance at the regional qualifiers by taking not only first place, but second place as well as ninth, with the B and C teams. However, interschools is not that simple. Even the best players struggle to cope with the high stakes of this fast-paced and competitive tournament. The WC team, after a sub-standard result in the previous national final, was much more experienced and knew what it took to win.

On the morning of the tournament, nerves were high and there was an air of restlessness in the playing hall. All the players were eager to start the action. Round one saw many teams overperform, with St Kentigerns College taking the fight to WC. On board two, CM Ollie Archer faced a Benko gambit from Anderson Chen. Ollie surprised his opponent early by playing the half-accepted variation. However his opponent was resilient and took the initiative, causing Ollie to play on the back foot. The b-file was open and Anderson had all the Benko compensation, but there was a reason Ollie has a title to his name. Trading into an endgame where he was no doubt worse, Ollie used some of his endgame magic to make his opponent blunder an unexpected checkmate. Board three was even more unusual as Kayden Loke faced some of his own infamous openings, in the form of 1.Na3 from David Lai of Saint Kentigerns. Kayden knew that round one wasn't the time to use his

cutting-edge preparation; there would come a time later in the tournament, so he followed standard principles by responding with d5. David had a weapon, though, in the shape of a milk bottle. If only Kayden had brought his coconut. Despite that Kayden fought back and won a solid game. Zachary Thirkell, in a class of his own throughout the tournament, started his board four domination by beating St Kentigerns' Nicholas McKinlay, converting a small advantage in a drawn endgame to bring home the win. Board one ended in a swift victory for Cohen. WC was off to a good start with a 4 - 0 victory against a fighting St Kentigerns. It was a scary round to begin with, but still ended with the desired result.

Next up the WC team was paired against the Macleans team composed of Charles Zhang, Tejasvi Kichavadi, Alexander Pan and Lucas Xiao. On board one, Cohen continued his speedrun, finishing very quickly by winning an exchange early in the game. Cohen finished the game in style by allowing his opponent to promote and forcing checkmate on the next move. Ollie's opponent boldly played the Queen's Gambit with the white pieces; an opening sometimes played by Ollie himself. Although the opening was fairly balanced, Ollie landed a beautiful knight on c4 and attained superior piece activity in the endgame, ultimately

resulting in a classic Ollie Archer victory. Kayden continued his lightning pace on board three, playing very quickly. This time he turned to his faithful 1.a3 repertoire! The game was very back and forth throughout the middlegame, but Kayden traded into a two bishops vs bishop and knight endgame. The position was very closed with many pawns on the board, allowing Kayden's knight to overpower his opponent's bishop completely. However, this wasn't necessary as Kayden found a nice tactic, simply won a pawn, and pulled off a clean victory. The game was a victory for WC but Zachary wasn't going to settle for 3.5-0.5. He wanted to win! Zachary's opponent, Lucas Xiao, playing with the white pieces, opened with the Jobava London. The game became very closed and odd, as White chose to castle long. The idea was obviously to go for a kingside attack, however, Zachary had not yet committed to choosing a side to place his king. White's kingside attack was very strong and he got a very nice pawn on g6 and knight on h5, putting huge pressure on the g7-pawn. This meant Zachary's rook was tied down defending the g7 pawn. Zachary had no choice but to castle long. However, as pieces were traded off, Zachary's remaining pieces, positioned on the queenside, came into play. A violent king hunt occurred, including a brilliant sacrifice of a knight by Zachary, which ended in a hard-fought victory for him.

Round three was a much-anticipated affair with reigning interschool champions Rangitoto College taking on the favourites WC. Rangitoto had been dominant for the past few years. One of their key players was FM Felix Xie, one of the NZ Olympiad team. Occupied with a GM norm tournament in Hungary after the Olympiad, unfortunately, Felix was unavailable to play this year. However, one person cannot carry a whole team to victory. The key to Rangitoto's dominance has been their consistency across the team. This year's team consisted of CM Zachary Yu, who had recently acquired the CM title, on board one as well as Sarah Sun and Roul Preeyansh on board two and three and finally Sam Lin on board four, completing a very strong team. But WC were fighting at home and after Zachary Yu and Cohen drew on board one, playing a rather simple c4 e5 English, Ollie pulled off a stunning knight sacrifice on g6 in a Slav, an opening not exactly famed for its attacking play. This allowed for either mate or serious material gains as the back rank was weak, further intensified as the infamous Slav bishop was no match to Ollie's incredible light-squared bishop, eyeing key squares like h7 and g6, leading to the collapse of the kingside after the beautiful knight sacrifice. On board three, Kayden pulled off yet another victory playing a Queen's Indian Defense, an opening not seen at the high levels anymore but still a very solid option for

Black, especially as White had decided to play the Catalan, meaning that the all-important Catalan bishop was no longer as dominant as it was meant to be. Kayden chose to go for a double fianchetto setup and soon both dark-squared bishops were traded off. Black's minor pieces were a touch more active but White had the open e and c-files which his rooks could enjoy. The game was very complicated and Kayden even temporarily offered a queen sacrifice, which his opponent wisely rejected. Kayden had a tiny advantage before but his opponent found some very resourceful moves and was piling the pressure. Time was also getting low for both players and the position was very sharp. Kayden left victorious out of the time scramble by keeping a cool head and winning a rook, leading to a simple continuation and victory on board 3. Zachary was in his element playing the Trompowsky, an opening that he adores. He managed to get great kingside pressure with his major pieces, eventually getting into a winning endgame with the help of a few little tactics, and ended up with two extra pawns. As a master of the endgame - speaking from personal experience - Zachary cruised to another victory on board four. This was one of the biggest matchups of the tournament, so it was a great feeling to take home without any losses.

After 3 consecutive wins on board one,

WC was moved to board 2, where they were to face off against St Cuthberts, as on board one Auckland Grammar and Takapuna Grammar were to lock horns. St Cuthberts had a strong team composed of Emily Gan on board one, Sophia Feng on board two, Adele Zhou on board three, and Alyssa Yuan on board four. Before this round, Kayden was very busy grinding a Geometry Dash level. He wasn't even aware the round had started until the WC support team found him. He was not happy to stop his Geometry Dash grind, so he played extra quickly and swiftly won his game in around 10 minutes! Zachary also won a clean game finishing relatively quickly. On board one, Cohen faced Emily Gan with the white pieces. His Queen's gambit attempt was met with a King's Indian defence from black. An opening known for its very aggressive nature, this was right up Cohen's alley. Opening up the h-file and sacrificing a rook, Cohen obliterated the Black king's defence and his opponent resigned. Ollie's game was probably the most interesting of the matchup, unlike his usual style, the game went on for a long time. Ollie responded to Sophia's Queen's gambit with the Ragozin Defense and he played a very intriguing move out of the opening, playing 5.Nbd7 against Bg5 as opposed to the more popular 5.h6. The uncommon opening worked perfectly as Ollie got a nice position and won a pawn early in the middle game. The position out of the

middlegame was very imbalanced, as Sophia Feng, with the white pieces, had good central control, while Ollie had a nice bind on the Queenside and an active Queen on h4. The game went on for a long time and White defended valiantly, but Ollie eventually came out on top to secure another 4-0 victory.

After a tiring day of chess, one more round was left to go. WC was paired against our biggest competition, Takapuna Grammar School. Takapuna was the second seed and had a monster team composed of Daniel Wang, Hayden Steele, Samuel Moffit, and Qixuan Liang. This match would be hard to win on boards one and two, so it was up to Kayden and Zachary to bring home the clutch victories. This round saw two Catalans, both from the Takapuna side. On board three, Kayden faced a Catalan from Samuel Moffit and he responded with his trusty Queen's Indian Defense. The opening was pretty standard, but Kayden started getting very active in the middlegame. His pieces were all pointed towards White's king and his opponent crumbled, falling prey to the classic Arabian checkmate pattern. Another swift victory from Kayden heightened the team's spirits.

Ollie, with the white pieces, faced off against Hayden Steele on board two. As usual, Ollie was very prepped up as he faced one of the most explored openings in chess, the Grünfeld Defense. A

Grünfeld player plays the Grünfeld to bait White into taking the centre so that he can slowly undermine it. The key idea of the Grünfeld is that the a and b-pawns on the flank will be able to turn into a passed pawn. Trading pieces in the Grünfeld is playing right into the Grünfeld player's comfort zone. But this is Ollie we're talking about; he has multiple lines up his sleeve, this has been seen throughout the tournament as Ollie has shown mastery of many different openings and positions. This time, Ollie decided to go for 5.Be2 instead of the much more popular 5.e4. This is the second most popular move and the idea behind this move is to take the Grünfeld player out of their usual comfort zone and turn the position into a more traditional d4 position. The opening resulted in a very weird position with Black having a fianchettoed bishop on g7 but with a pawn on e5 blocking it. Ollie made some advancements in the queenside and Black surprisingly decided to sacrifice an exchange and go for a kingside attack. This however, despite being difficult to play for White, was not the right idea. Although the computer had some comments on Ollie's play, it was extremely tough to play for both sides and Black made the final mistake, going all in and sacrificing the bishop for an attack that didn't exist.

Zachary was playing very versatile

chess all day, ranging from brutal checkmating attacks to positional endgame grinds. He continued his excellent form this round with a beautiful attacking game. Zachary opened with his trusted d4 and his opponent responded with Nf6. This allowed Zachary to go for his infamous Trompowsky. Throughout this tournament, Zachary had been crushing people in the Trompowsky and didn't disappoint this round. Zachary had a dominant light-squared bishop out of the opening and a nice space advantage. Throughout the middlegame, he masterfully placed almost all his pawns on dark squares allowing his pieces to control both colour complexes. Black had placed most of his pawns on light-squares which obstructed his light-squared bishop and other pieces. This allowed Zachary to launch a nice kingside attack with his pieces and completely swarm the black king.

Cohen's game was quite the surprise this round. Beginning with another Catalan, a Daniel Wang special, Cohen played a very sharp line with dxc4 and c5 and both players blitzed out some theory. The queens were slowly traded off but the position was still very imbalanced with Cohen having some extended pawns in the Queenside while Daniel piled on the pressure with an avalanche of pawns in the centre. It looked like Cohen had all the chances in the position because his pieces were very coordinated but then out of

nowhere, it seemed as though Cohen had hung checkmate and the players shook hands. On the board beside, Ollie was quite confused as it appeared that the position was not checkmate because Cohen could escape by taking an undefended piece. Both players had not realised it was not checkmate! Unfortunately for Cohen, the players had already shaken hands, which meant that the result counted. Both players were good friends and despite the odd turn of events, they had a good time analysing the games and having a laugh. This unfortunate loss meant that WC had dropped its first game point, but still managed to win the match 3-1.

At the end of the first day of action, WC was on 10/10 match points and dropped only 1.5 game points. They were closely followed by Takapuna Grammar School and Auckland Grammar School on 8/10. WC was set to play Auckland Grammar the next morning for round six. If WC managed to beat Auckland Grammar, then they would have one hand on the trophy. Ollie, Kayden, and Zachary were also on track to win best on each of their boards as well.

The spirits were high as the team arrived in the morning for round six. All the players were in excellent form and a WC win seemed inevitable. The Auckland Grammar team had a lot of pedigree, with multiple titles to their

name. This matchup was one of the biggest matches of the tournament. Cohen was playing Oscar Qin on board one, and he responded to Oscar's 1.e4 with his trusty Sicilian Defense. Cohen went for a Classical Sicilian after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6. This is the second most popular option, behind the Najdorf with 5.a3. The game was very evenly matched but in the middlegame, Cohen squeezed a small advantage out of the position. However, he misplayed the position and the tides turned in Oscar's favour. Cohen defended valiantly in an endgame down multiple pawns, but Oscar was a skilled player and he knew how to convert. This was an unfortunate loss and it heightened the nerves of the team. However, Kayden struck back on board three, carrying on with his usual lightning pace. Kayden's opponent was the skilled youngster, Hunter Po'e-Tofaeono. Kayden had been effortlessly outplaying his opponents in the past few rounds, so Hunter was very careful with his play and wisely took some time to carefully counter Kayden's lightning pace. However, it seemed he was a little too cautious and hesitant, which allowed Kayden to get a dominant position. The job was still not done, but these sorts of easy-to-play positions were where Kayden's pace could put some serious pressure on his opponent. Kayden's position was simply too dominant. In the knight endgame, Hunter had doubled isolated c-pawns along with an h-pawn

while Kayden had b and c-pawns and a pawn on the h-file as well. Hunter's pieces were tied down to the queenside, allowing Kayden to pick up the h-pawn. After this, it was very simple and Hunter soon resigned. Ollie's game was pretty quiet at the start. They began with another Queen's Gambit, where Ollie took on d5. His opponent, Markis Tew, played the opening very well and didn't allow Ollie to get any significant advantage. Pieces were traded and the action really started in the resulting rook endgame. Markis defended well and was even slightly better for a while, but he made a mistake trading the rooks at the wrong time. He had missed that Ollie had a very nice sequence of pawn breakthroughs, allowing him to promote his pawn faster than his opponent and checkmate. This meant that as long as Zachary didn't lose, WC would win this match and effectively win the tournament.

Considering Zachary's stunning form throughout the tournament, there was little chance he was going to lose. In fact, he had a great position in the middlegame with dominant piece play. The Trompowsky was Zachary's biggest weapon in this tournament and he continued its employment in this game, when his opponent attempted to play the King's Indian Defense. The King's Indian setup against the Trompowsky made for a very interesting closed

position, but like usual positional anti-King's Indians, White had most of the piece play. Zachary won a pawn in the middlegame and was rolling his pawns down the queenside. However Matthew Chen, playing with the black pieces, had the crucial resource of trading all the pieces into an opposite coloured bishop endgame with lots of drawing chances. This is exactly what happened. Although it seemed as though Zachary had some chances to press for a win, there was simply no reason to as a draw was enough to secure the match. The Zachary engine had finally been slowed down by Matthew Chen.

This 2.5-1.5 victory was WC's closest score in a match. It put them in a position similar to India in the last round of the Chess Olympiad. The only team which could catch them now was Takapuna Grammar School who were two points behind, but WC still had monstrous tiebreaks in the form of a monstrous 21/24 game points. The only way Takapuna could catch WC was if WC somehow lost 0-4 and Takapuna won 4-0.

WC had played most of the top seeded teams already, so they were playing a slightly lower seeded Avondale College team. This team was still very strong but the boys were in very good spirits with the cup so close and in great form. Cohen made a quick draw on board one and finished the tournament with a

respectable 4/7. Despite some challenges in the endgame, Ollie also won his game and finished with an amazing 7/7, winning the best board two prize! Ollie's openings, especially were phenomenal as he showed proficiency in multiple different systems with cutting-edge lines. Kayden finished his board three domination run with another comfortable win. He also finished with an incredible 7/7, also winning best on his board. If there was a prize for the quickest finishes, Kayden probably would have won that as well!

Some of the finest games were delivered on board four by Zachary. He showed extremely versatile chess, playing all sorts of different positions ranging from violent attacks to slow manoeuvring based positions. Zachary won best on board four. Board one was a very tough competition containing many of the top juniors in the country. Daniel Wang of Takapuna Grammar prevailed with 6.5/7 half a point ahead of Thomas Van der Hoorn.

The end of the tournament had some bittersweet emotions as this was the last appearance of Cohen and Zachary for the Wellington College team. Next year they would be moving on to university, leaving big shoes to fill for the junior players. However, I cannot describe the feeling of relief and joy of the players as they finally clinched the prestigious gold after two years of near

misses.

Overall, the tournament was a great success thanks to the amazing team of arbiters we had from Wellington and Kapiti Chess Clubs, and Gordon Lyall, the organiser of the tournament. Cohen and Wellington College are also to thank for the amazing venue. Cohen finished off the closing ceremony with an inspiring speech. It was amazing to see students, parents and teachers from all around the country to come together to celebrate chess. Some of the teams also stayed behind to help the staff and WC team pack up the hall, which was greatly appreciated.



How often does a 5-time World Chess Champion come to New Zealand? The 10th of August was a special day for New Zealand Chess as we were privileged to be selected as the Oceania representative for the lighting of the Chess Olympiad torch. On top of that, we were graced by the presence of 5-time World Chess Champion GM Vishwanathan Anand who was here as the FIDE representative. Players from all around the country travelled up to the Waipuna Conference Centre in Auckland for a potentially once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet the legend. Anand Sir also hosted a captivating chess lecture, sharing insights into how a top player thinks.

The day began with the lecture at 12pm. The lecture started with Anand Sir walking everyone through his inspiring game against Veselin Topalov in game 4 of the 2010 World Chess Championship.

GM Anand, Viswanathan (1-0) GM Topalov, Veselin

Annotated by Ryan Winter

World Chess Championship 2010,
Game 4

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 dxc4

The most popular option against the Catalan. Black can also flick in ...Bb4+ first, which is a nice move-order finesse.

5. Bg2 Bb4+ 6. Bd2 a5 7. Qc2 Bxd2+

8. Qxd2 c6 9. a4 b5 Free pawn! The battle lines are set: White has more space, more active pieces, and play against the Black queenside. But it's not all doom and gloom for Black as he has relatively straightforward play and an extra pawn.

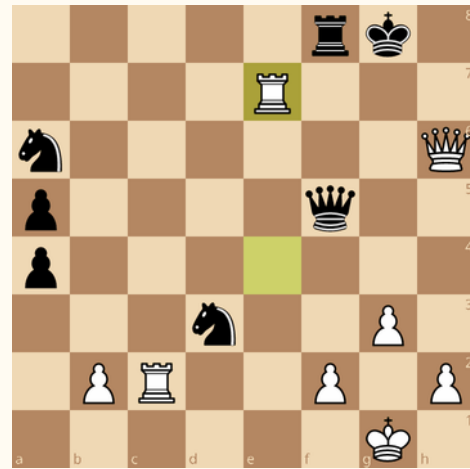


10. Na3 Bd7 11. Ne5 Nd5 First Black ensures that e4 is played, blocking the g2 bishop.

12. e4 Nb4 13. O-O O-O 14. Rfd1 Be8 15. d5
Cracking open the position, and undermining the defense of the b5 pawn.

15... Qd6 (15... cxd5? 16. exd5 exd5 17. axb5)
(15... exd5? 16. exd5 cxd5 17. axb5)

16. Ng4 Qc5 17. Ne3 N8a6 18. dxc6 bxa4
19. Naxc4 Bxc6 The position has partially cleared. Black is up a doubled pawn on the a-file in exchange for activity for White. Even so, Anand whips up an attack and in just 5 more moves, the game is essentially over.



20. Rac1 h6 21. Nd6 Qa7 22. Ng4 Rad8?
23. Nxf6+! gxh6 24. Qxf6 f6 Black needs to do something, otherwise White will play e5 and bring the pieces towards Black's king.

25. e5 But ...f6 didn't stop e5!

25... Bxg2? 26. exf6! Rxd6 (26... Ba8 If Black saves the bishop, the end comes swiftly: 27. Qg6+ Kh8 28. f7)

27. Rxd6 Be4 28. Rxe6 Nd3 29. Rc2 A calm response, ending all resistance.

29... Qh7 30. f7+ Qxf7 31. Rxe4 Qf5 32. Re7 (D) And mate comes soon. 1-0

This was an amazing game and it was extremely insightful to see a top player's thought process throughout a game. After this, Anand Sir showed everyone a few endgames including a king and rook vs king and knight endgame and explained the technique behind some of these endgames. To finish off the

lecture he answered some questions from the audience. Anand Sir revealed that during his 2013 World Championship match against GM Magnus Carlsen, he was not in great form. He told everyone that for the next match, he tried to take a different approach; instead of spending the whole day on chess, he started taking some more time to do things like yoga and exercises. When asked about how to study endgames, he said that it was really useful to go on an endgame tablebase, play around, and try and figure out the technique for different endgames.

After the lecture, the attendees got the rare chance to take some photos and get Anand Sir's autograph.

Olympiad Torch Ceremony

Weiyang Yu

After lunch, the attention returned to the Promenade Room of the Conference Centre. Anticipation pulsed through the crowd gathered in the room as NZCF and FIDE personnel alike began preparing for the upcoming torch ceremony. We had the pleasure of hearing from WGM Dana Reizniece-Ozola, FIDE's Managing Director. Reizniece-Ozola had also previously been the Minister of Economics and Minister of Finance of Latvia, so it is always immensely inspiring to hear from her. Reizniece-Ozola's speech was followed by the exchange of tokens between FIDE and NZCF. Those in attendance included Reizniece-Ozola, Anand, FIDE Event Manager Sergei Indreikin, NZCF President Nigel Metge, NZCF Vice-President Paul Spiller, Australian Chess Federation President Gary Wastell, and long-time local chess supporters such as two of New Zealand's oldest registered chess players, Tony Booth (86), and Brian Winsor (95).



As the torch was now ready, the Open and Women's Olympiad teams were escorted outside alongside NZCF and FIDE representatives. As a photographer, I had the amazing opportunity to follow at a distance along with some excited parents. After some momentary delay, the proud Olympians held the blazing torch high as they marched across the parking lot and into the open space behind the Conference Centre. Waiting for them there was a crowd of chess enthusiasts who came from across the country and beyond to witness the remarkable moment of the everlasting flame of chess being extended to Oceania. The Olympiad team, now led by FM Felix Xie, raced down the slope and successfully handed over the torch to the awaiting NZCF representatives. Soon, the flame was transferred to the FIDE100 silver bowl, which burst into a bright orange flame that danced joyfully, also seeming to rejoice in the special occasion.



The entire crowd gathered beside the flame, waving miniature NZ

Olympiad Torch Ceremony

Weiyang Yu

flags wildly as a drone zoomed around above our heads.

The eventful day ended with a celebratory dinner inside the Conference Centre. The guests shared a specially made FIDE100 cake and other delicious food. On display was the skillful painting debut Olympiad player WFM Yolanda Chang had created for the FIDE's art competition celebrating FIDE's 100th anniversary.



As the trees of Hungary became awash with autumn colour, 975 players from 195 nations travelled to Budapest, the 'Pearl of the Danube'. Of course, being from New Zealand, ten of these players were of particular importance, those being the members of our Open and Women's teams. Alongside a management team of captains IM Herman van Reimsdijk and GM Dejan Bojkov, head of delegation Craig Hall, and NZCF President and Vice-President Nigel Metge and CM Paul Spiller, these teams were composed of:

Open Team

B1 - FM Felix Xie

B2 - IM Tom Middelburg

B3 - IM Sravan Renjith

B4 - FM Nicolas Croad

B5 - FM Daniel Gong

Women's Team

B1 - WIM Layla Timergazi

B2 - WIM Jasmine Zhang

B3 - CM Isabelle Ning

B4 - WCM Yolanda Chang

B5 - WCM Nadia Braganza

At the beginning of the tournament, both teams were seeded in the top half, with the Open team 77th and the Women's team 74th. As a result, both were paired down, playing 181st seed Macau and 169th seed the Democratic Republic of the Congo respectively. While Middelburg, replacing Xie on

board one for the first round, came away with a long-fought and well-played draw as black against FM Joel Celis, the remaining three players all claimed a full point to start their tournament. One particular highlight was Croad's game against Kai Wong on board three – an almost perfect match complete with a superb Greek gift sacrifice. Renjith and Gong also used their experience to accurately dispatch their opponents, bringing the final score to 3½-½. Meanwhile, the Women's team was even more successful, beating the DRC on all four boards. Timergazi, coming out of the opening a piece up, confidently converted her advantage into a win. It was a similar story for both Zhang and Chang, who both turned an early material advantage into smooth wins. With Ning winning by forfeit on board three, the team was off to a great start with a perfect score.

The second round saw both teams paired against the 33rd seed of their respective tournaments, with the Open team against Argentina and the Women's team against Sweden. On board one, Xie's opponent, GM Fernando Peralta, came out of the opening with the upper hand, and managed to retain it for the remainder of the game. Board two saw Middelburg weather some middlegame troubles and trade down into a drawn endgame. As against Macau, this round was

highlighted by the game on board three, where Renjith beat GM Diego Flores with the black pieces, after trading into a winning endgame where his queen and rook overpowered Flores' two rooks and knight. However, with GM Thomas Sosa beating Gong on board four, New Zealand went down 2½-1½. Against the Swedish team, Timergazi went down to GM Pia Cramling on board one, despite a well-played game. Ning suffered a similar result against the second, younger Cramling on the team, a mistake in the endgame resulting in a passed pawn being created, an unfortunate end to an otherwise drawn game. While both Zhang and Braganza came away with relatively smooth draws by repetition and agreement respectively, it sadly was not quite enough to save the match, with New Zealand going down 3-1.

GM Flores, Diego (0-1) IM Renjith, Sravan

Annotated by Michael Sole

Open Chess Olympiad 2024,
Round 2

1. Nf3 d5 2. d4 Nf6 3. c4 e6 4. g3 c5
Sravan playing his usual Tarrasch defence. Against this move order Black has to accept some concessions if White is prepared to try and exploit the minor differences in not having played Nc3 yet.

5. cxd5 exd5 6. Bg2 Nc6 7. O-O Be7

8. dxc5! Sravan's Grandmaster opponent plays the critical line. The point is that without Nc3 played, d4 can't come with a tempo. (8. Nc3 This will transpose to the usual Tarrasch lines.)



8... Bxc5 9. a3 O-O 10. b4 Be7 This position is meant to be one of the main problems with the Tarrasch against everything. Indeed White does score very well from this position that slightly favours White (~0.6), but this is likely a case of stronger players knowing to enter this line that further inflates the score. From the master database, after Nc3, White scores an impressive 75.5%, but in reality there is still a game to play.

11. Bb2 Ne4 12. Nc3 Bf6 13. Rcl Re8 14. e3 Be6 15. Na4 (15. Qc2 Nd6 16. Ne2 Rc8 17. Bxf6 Qxf6 18. Qd1 This was the engine's preferred way of managing the position where White maintains a small edge and the easier position but has a lot of work to make anything out of it.)

15... Bxb2 16. Nxb2 Qf6! Great play from

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

Sravan who shows his master understanding of this opening. Black now has active pieces and a comfortable position while White has to try and regroup his pieces while having a space disadvantage.

17. Nd3 Bg4 18. b5? This fails to the surprising...

18... Ng5! Adding to the pin while ignoring the attack on the c6 Knight. Black is now starting to attack the weak light squares around White's king.



19. bxc6 Nxf3+ 20. Bxf3 Bxf3 21. cxb7 Bxd1 22. bxa8=Q Rxa8 23. Rfxd1 After a series of exchanges we reach this endgame which is very pleasant for Black with easy co-ordination and easier targets.

23... d4! Seizing the chance to remove his weakness.

24. exd4 Qxd4 25. Nf4 Qb2 26. a4 Qb4 27. Ra1 h6 28. h4 Rc8 29. Nd5 Qe4

30. Ne3 Rb8 31. Rac1 Rb2! Placing the rook on its best rank where it can attack both the pawn and threaten White's king.



32. Rc4 Qf3 33. Rf4 Qb7 34. Rcl Ra2 35. Nf5 Qd7! With perfect coordination between the queen and rook. White can't defend the pawn with Rcc4 due to Ra1+ and a mating attack.

36. h5 Rxa4 37. Ne7+ Kh7 38. Rxf7 A desperate hope for counterplay but Sravan spots the winning path.

38... Qe8 39. Rf5 Qxe7 With an easy conversion from here.

40. Rd1 Re4 41. Kf1 Re5 0-1 Black wins. A brilliant game from Sravan, defeating a strong Grandmaster with the black pieces through masterful play of his favourite line.

In round three, the open team was paired against 133rd seed Afghanistan. Despite getting a nice position out of

the opening, Xie found himself in a worse middlegame. However, after his opponent miscalculated a tactic, Xie won back a pawn and with it: equality. After another blunder he was able to promote his pawn and win the game. Middelburg came away with his third draw from three rounds, following an almost perfect game from both players. Renjith also came away with a draw, but from a game that was much wilder, with the evaluation bar bouncing around like a caffeinated toddler. Afghanistan needed a win to tie the match, but with accurate play from Croad on board four, he came into the endgame two pawns up and completely winning, bringing the final score up to a match-winning 3-1. Playing 123rd seed Fiji, the Women's team fared even better. Against WFM Kieran Lyons, a quick series of mistakes in an equal position enabled Timergazi to win a knight and with it, the game. On board two, Ning lost an early advantage, but regained it after a failed bishop sacrifice to easily convert the point. Chang got a great position early on, allowing her to give up a pawn in exchange for an attack while her opponent's pieces were constricted. This was successful, and she promptly won back the material with interest and checkmate looming. On board four, Braganza was able to win a knight by way of *zwischenzug*, using the extra material to increase her advantage into another win for the team, finishing the

day 4-0.

Both teams were paired against strong opponents in the fourth round, with the Open team against 37th seed Australia and the Women's team playing 42nd seed Montenegro. The highlight of this round was found on board one in the Open section, where Xie defeated GM Timur Kuybokarov – a player who has beaten some of the world's best – with a spectacular attack. While Renjith was holding his own on board two, an endgame blunder enabled his opponent to begin picking up pawns while surrounding his king, forcing a resignation. With Croad also going down, and Gong surviving a losing endgame for a draw, the match ended $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$, an impressive result. Meanwhile, on board one of the Women's team, Timergazi found herself with awkwardly-placed pieces, which her opponent exploited to grow her advantage and win the game. It was a similar story for Ning, her opponent taking advantage of her superior activity. Chang was also defeated, losing pawns and eventually the game. Braganza, however, was able to take home half a point, after her opponent salvaged a draw from an endgame in which she was a pawn down. The match ended $3\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$.

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

FM Xie, Felix (1-0) GM Kuybokarov, Temur

Annotated by Alexandre de Maupeou d'Ableiges

Open Chess Olympiad 2024,
Round 4

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. h3 An interesting move by Xie, a small waiting move forcing black to play their hand as White hasn't committed to any major openings (Bc4, Bb5 or d4 to mention a few).

4... g6 5. Bc4 Bg7 6. d3 d6 7. a4 O-O 8. O-O h6 9. Re1 Na5 10. Ba2 c5 11. Nd5 Nc6 12. Ne3 Kh8 13. c3 Nh7 13...Nh7 by Kuybokarov seems to mark the end of the opening, both sides have completed development and both sides have a clear plan, Black intends a kingside attack with f5-f4 and White hopes to control the centre with moves like Nd5 and d4.



14. Nd5 Be6 15. Bd2 Qd7 16. Kh2 f5 17. b4!

A lovely counterattack on the queenside by Xie. In the face of direct attack on his king, Xie does not falter!



17... Qf7 (17... cxb4 18. cxb4 f4 19. b5 A sample line to demonstrate the strength of the b4-b5 push, Black's knight doesn't seem to have any good squares to go to. 19... Ne7 (19... Nd4 20. Nxd4 Bxd5 (20... exd4 21. Nxf4) 21. Bxd5 exd4 A bishop pair, more space, and against a ruined structure, White is in a better position that Xie would most likely convert, but I shan't make the same conclusion about everyone.) 20. d4 Exploding the centre, trying to undermine Black's structure and halt Black's attack while maintaining a control of the centre.)

18. b5 Nd8?! (18... Ne7 Ne7 puts the knight on a more natural square, and challenges White's control of the centre, however, practically, allowing Nc7 does seem scary. 19. Nc7 Bxa2 20. Nxa8 Rxa8 21. c4 Perhaps the line that worried Kuybokarov?)

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

19. Nh4 Bf6 (19... f4 20. Ne7!!



Trying to understand Xie's seemingly mysterious 19.Nh4, I stumbled across this incredible tactic he threatened! This also explains Kuybokarov's 19...Bf6.)

20. exf5



Xie sacrifices a knight, but can the reader really conclude it as a sacrifice when accepting it would lead to such utter destruction of Black's position? Perhaps it's more accurate to call this a "Trojan Horse", food for thought.

20... gxf5 (20... Bxd5 21. Nxc6+ Kg8

22. Bxd5 Qxd5 23. Bxh6 A nice sample line to show how dangerous this Trojan Horse is, in return for all of Black's kingside pawns, White is threatening to annihilate the Black king.)

21. Nxf6 Qxf6 22. Qh5 Kg7 23. d4! Another key moment I'd like to highlight. Material is equal and without an engine it's hard to know whether White really has an advantage or if perhaps Black has some kind of a defense that holds. 23.d4 shows the importance of timing. This is precisely the right moment to break open the centre as with a slow sequence like 23.Bxe6 Nxe6, it becomes harder to justify that White has any real attack.

23... Bd7 (23... cxd4 24. cxd4 e4 25. d5 Bd7 26. Rac1 The idea behind 23.d4, opening up the diagonals on Black's king, Xie is attempting to get every possible piece into the attack, and from all angles.)

24. dxe5 dxe5 25. g3 Nf7 26. Bd5 Nd6 27. Rxe5!! "THE ROOK" - IM Levy Rozman. Xie identified that Black's queen was stretched and couldn't defend all the threats. This move allows me to reminisce on the Battle of the Bulge, where a concentrated German force attempted to break through the lines, but quickly their lines became stretched as the allies threatened encirclement.

27... Ng5 28. Re7+!! Double rook

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

sacrifice!! An unconfirmed and biased source reports that Xie was inspired by his former mentor, Nelson legend Mr. Maupeou, who had a renowned style of dangerous sacrifices which often lead to him losing, unfortunately.



28... Qxe7 29. Qg6+ Kh8 30. Qxh6+ Qh7 31. Ng6# 1-0 White wins. A beautiful checkmate! Not sure whether it counts as a smothered checkmate, but what it does count for is the game closest to the Battle of Austerlitz. A rapid advance, outmanoeuvring the old and cumbersome style of warfare, and just a small couple of mistakes led to a crushing and humiliating defeat. I'm sure Kuybokarov felt like Emperor Francis I after such a game, so sure of their might and underestimating the ability of New Zealand's rising star Killer Xie himself.

The fifth round saw the Open team play 118th seed Puerto Rico and the Women's team play 107th seed Thailand. Reminiscent of his round

three game, but this time on the other side, Xie's opponent solved his middlegame issues, entering into an equal endgame but exiting it with a win. It was an entertaining game on board two, with Middelburg's initial opening advantage being lost as he went down an exchange, but then fighting back to equality where, under time pressure, his opponent resigned. Croad lost on board three, his opponent exploiting the dark squares near his king. Unfortunately, a well-played draw by Gong on board four was not enough for the Open team to come away with the match point, the round ending with a familiar 2½-1½. Against Thailand, Zhang sacrificed the exchange on board one, but her opponent was able to simplify into what became a winning endgame. On board two, Ning had the advantage going into the middlegame, but as her opponent began pushing pawns down the board, the evaluation flipped. However, with a minute left on the clock, her opponent opted to repeat moves instead of continuing her pawn push. Chang also drew her game on board three, though it was much less back-and-forth. On board four, Braganza got a pawn to the seventh rank early, and coordinated her pieces behind it, meaning the second her opponent removed a defender of the promotion square, she was able to strike. With a win and two draws, the match ended 2-2.

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

WCM Braganza, Nadia (1-0)

Tawankanjana, Sasinat

Annotated by Leo Malcolm

Women's Chess Olympiad 2024,

Round 5

1.c4 e6 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 d5 4.Nf3 Be7 5.O-O O-O 6.b3 c5 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bb2 Nc6 9.d4 Bf6 The first major deviation, and an inaccuracy which allows White to gain space with tempo.



10.e4 Nc7 11.e5 Be7 And Black has not furthered her development.

12.Nc3 b6 13.dxc5 Bxc5 14.Nd2 An excellent move that opens White's bishop, and the d2 knight will target d6 via c4 or e4.

14...Bb7 (14...Nxe5 15.Bxa8 Nxa8 was also worth considering, where Black is slightly worse but retains the only light-squared bishop and should be able to create some problems for White's king.

15.Nc4 Rb8 16.Nd6 White correctly

judges that the d-file will remain under her control, and soon a pawn makes it to the seventh rank.



16...Bxd6 17.exd6 Ne8 18.d7 Nf6 19.Ba3 Ne7 20.Qd6 Clamping down further, and Black is having trouble finding a safe move.

20...Bxg2 21.Kxg2 Ng6 22.Qd3 Ne7 23.Rfd1 Rb7 Black could have suffered on by wasting time with pawn moves - as it happens d8 is no longer sufficiently defended.

24. Bxe7 1-0 And White will promote.



In round six, the Open team played 124th seed Malawi, and the Women's team played 107th seed Kenya. Xie, on board one, regained equality after being a pawn down, and drew his game after his opponent decided to repeat moves. Middelburg had a great game on board two, sacrificing the exchange but picking up pawns while trading down into a winning endgame. Renjith, taking control of an open h-file, was able to get into his opponent's position and break it down until resignation was inevitable. Misplaced pawns on board four allowed Gong to infiltrate with his pieces, tying down his opponent's position for the remainder of the game, meaning the match ended $3\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$. Meanwhile, Timergazi was able to overcome opening troubles to go up the exchange in the middlegame. Her opponent failing to find the way to draw in the endgame, Timergazi converted the win. Zhang had a smooth, well-played game on board two, her superior pieces picking up a pawn, then a rook, then the game. It was an accurate game on board three, Ning, as black, picking up two rooks for a queen, and using them to dominate the first rank. With Braganza picking up a pawn and trading down into a completely winning endgame, the match ended with a perfect 4-0.

Going into round seven, the Open team was paired against 109th seed Malta, and the Women's team was paired

against 48th seed Belgium. On board one, Xie won a pawn in an endgame and soundly built up his advantage, trading the pieces off until only the pawns remained. It was the same result for Renjith on board two, after a nice combination put him up the exchange with an extra pawn. With two draws on the lower two boards – Croad playing effectively perfectly into an equal opposite coloured bishop endgame and Gong missing an early chance to go up a pawn – New Zealand won 3-1. At the same time, Timergazi played well against WIM Hanne Goossens, but was unable to prevent her outside passed pawn from marching down the board. Zhang had a great game on board two, getting through a worse middlegame to reach an equal endgame, where she was able to get her rook into her opponent's position, resulting in her winning the game a pawn up. Unfortunately, the opposite occurred on board three, where Ning's knight was trapped, meaning an otherwise equal endgame was lost. Both players had chances in Chang's game on board four, but after missed wins from both, the players agreed to a draw, ending the match with a narrow $2\frac{1}{2}-1\frac{1}{2}$ loss against a strong team.

Round eight saw the Open team playing 50th seed Canada, and the Women's team playing 97th seed Trinidad and Tobago. Xie's sacrifice of two knights

and a bishop for a rook and three pawns went wrong on board one, as his opponent's subsequent attack was too strong, resulting in his queen being lost. Middelburg came away with the same result on board two, going down the exchange before losing a knight. Despite well-played, smooth draws from both Renjith and Croad, the team went down 3-1. Against Trinidad and Tobago, Zhang got a nice win on board one, after her opponent's unsound knight sacrifice was followed by a confident simplification of the position. Ning also came away with a win, after her opponent failed to use her early advantage, allowing Ning back into the game before losing material and eventually hanging checkmate. On board three, Chang had the edge for most of the game, before allowing a tricky tactic that flipped the evaluation. However, her opponent misplaying the position, she was able to regain equality before finding a winning sequence a few moves later. With Braganza converting an endgame up the exchange on board four, New Zealand won the round 4-0.

In round nine, the Open team found themselves against 106th seed Nicaragua, and the Women's team against 57th seed North Macedonia. Xie once again showcased his endgame skill on board one, building up a positional and then material advantage to take home the point. Middelburg also

emerged victorious, going up the exchange and comfortably converting the extra material into a win. Croad got a dominant position after a nice combination in the centre, causing his opponent to resign. On board four, Gong had a mostly equal game, missing a win near the end but still bringing the match score to 3½-1½. Unfortunately, the Women's team had a tough match against their Balkan adversaries. Timergazi held her own for a long while against WFM Monika Stojkowska, but the latter was eventually able to win an important pawn in the endgame, and the threat of promotion was too much. It was much the same story for Zhang on board two, resigning once the position became impossible to defend. On board three, Ning's opponent gradually, for the most part, built up an advantage, winning the exchange and pushing her pawns up the board. While Chang had chances on board four, a late mistake resulting in the loss of queen and pawn for rook and knight meant New Zealand went down 4-0.

As the host country, Hungary had the privilege of entering three teams into this year's Olympiad. The third, 55th seed Hungary C, was paired against the Open team, while the Women's team played 93rd seed Uganda. Middelburg, on board one, gave up a pawn in the opening but never gained it back, eventually resigning after being forced

to give up significant material. Renjith sacrificed the exchange on board two for a great position, but his opponent defended well enough to hold the draw. Unfortunately, both Croad and Gong were defeated, Croad after miscalculating a combination and losing a piece, and Gong after his opponent was able to chase his king around the board and eventually find a checkmating sequence, meaning a $3\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ loss for the team. Meanwhile, Timergazi had a smooth win on board one, pushing her pawns up the board while picking up material along the way. Zhang also took home the full point on board two, winning a knight and soon after, the game. Chang maintained a positional advantage throughout her game, which eventually translated into an extra bishop with checkmate soon following. It was a wild game on board four, with Braganza at one point being down an exchange and two pawns. However, she fought back, her opponent blundering a rook and losing the game, allowing the New Zealand team a perfect 4-0.

The final round saw the Open team playing 108th seed Guatemala, and the Women's team playing 51st seed Mexico. While Xie had the edge for much of the game, a mistake in the middlegame cost him a rook and the game, leaving him on $4\frac{1}{2}$ /9 for the tournament, a number of those being

against very strong players. Middelburg took a well-earned break for the final round (with an impressive overall score of $4\frac{1}{2}$ /8), being replaced by Renjith on board two who, winning a rook, was able to take home another point to end on a massive $6\frac{1}{2}$ /9, the highest of the team. Croad also ended with a win to take him to 5 /9, turning the advantage he held throughout the game into an exchange-up endgame. Gong, also winning an exchange and then the game, took his total score to 5 /9 and ensured a 3-1 victory for the team. Meanwhile, against Mexico, Timergazi was the only one to hold a significant advantage in her game against WIM Zenia Corrales Jimenez, though eventually opting for a draw by repetition to end the Olympiad on a solid $4\frac{1}{2}$ /9, the same as her fellow board one, Xie. Ning also drew on board two, accurately trading down into an equal endgame for a splendid total score of 5 /9 (with Zhang, not playing the final round, on $5\frac{1}{2}$ /9). It was a high-stakes game on board three, as a final point would award Chang the WFM title. Indeed, with a knight for three pawns, Chang's superior pieces were able to strike as soon as her opponent misstepped, forcing checkmate and reaching the necessary score of 6 /9. With a final smooth win on board four, Braganza brought her score to an huge, undefeated 7 /8, the highest of either team, as well as ensuring a 3-1 win over a strong Mexican team.

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

WIM Mendez Tovar, Yessica Yissel (0-1) WCM Chang, Yolanda
Annotated by Michael Sole
Women's Chess Olympiad 2024,
Round 11

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Nc3 A rarer move order played by White here, keeping open options of Bb5 or transposing back into an open Sicilian with d4.

3... Nf6 (3... e5 This is one of the downsides of the 3.Nc3 move order as Black can take the opportunity to clamp down on the d4 square and secure good play on the dark squares. This is the usual way for Sveshnikov players to handle delayed d4 lines. One high level example is Carlsen's game against Peter Svidler in 2019 using his World Championship preparation to great effect.)

4. d4 (4. Bb5 Would now transpose into a Nf6 Rossolimo which has scored well for White. 4... Qc7 5. d3 Nd4 6. Ba4 a6 7. Nxd4 cxd4 8. Ne2 As an example line that gives White a comfortable position)

4... cxd4 5. Nxd4 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 Transposing into the mainline of the Sveshnikov, an opening Yolanda has employed in the last few months. Known for having a mix of forcing lines with dynamic positional battles around the d5 square and kingside attacks.

7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 9. Bxf6 Going for the sharpest option. A great choice if well prepared, as is likely the case in the one-day-a-game Olympiad format.



9... gxf6 10. Nd5 Bg7 (10... f5 This is the more common move with a direct conflict arising. 11. Bxb5 axb5 12. Nxb5 Ra4 13. Nbc7+ Kd7 14. O-O As an example of the engine chaos that awaits in 10...f5. These b5 sacrifice lines need to be carefully considered for both sides.)

11. c3 f5 12. Nxb5? An aggressive choice but not one approved by the engines. With Bg7 played, Black is a move faster to castling and takes away Black's main source of counterplay.

12... axb5 13. Bxb5 Bd7? The natural move but isn't active enough. This lets White get enough control of the position to have sufficient chances for the sacrificed piece (13... Bb7 14. Nb4 Rc8 15. Qa4 Qd7 16. exf5 O-O 17. O-O Qc7 18. Nd5 Qd8 19. Qg4 Kh8 This would have been the best defence with White's

Olympiad Overview

Tyne Grant

attack being halted while Black's pieces are well placed to counter attack with an impressive bishop on b7.)

14. **exf5 O-O** 15. **Qg4** (15. O-O e4) 15... **Kh8** 16. **O-O e4!** Resourceful thinking from Yolanda to ease up the pressure White was building. Now Black can use the e5 square to great effect.



17. **Qxe4 Ne5** 18. **Bxd7?** Trading away one of White's best attacking pieces for the passive d7 bishop. Black now has the more active pieces and can use them to fight against the queenside pawns. (18. a4! This would have given Black some concerns with the double passed pawns posing immense difficulties for Black.)

18... **Nxd7** 19. **a4 Nc5?!** Giving White a future tempo with b4 to further her queenside plans.

20. **Qc2 Re8** 21. **b4 Ne4** 22. **Rae1?** (22. a5 White would have great chances in this position with a clear plan. 22... **Nxc3** 23. **Nxc3 Rc8** 24. **Ra3** A key resource that is

voided with **Rae1**.)

22... **Nxc3!** Staying in the game with this nice tactical shot.



23. **f6 Nxd5** 24. **fxg7+ Kg8** 25. **Qd2** Now Black fully enjoys the benefit of the material advantage and can look to convert it.

25... **Nf6** 26. **a5 Re6** 27. **Ra1 Qb8** 28. **Rfb1 Qb5** 29. **Rc1 Ng4** 30. **h3 Ne5** 31. **f4 Ng6** 32. **a6 Re2!** Spotting the chance to use the extra piece for attacking plans.



33. **Qxd6 Nh4** The knight and rook are working together perfectly with White's

pieces unable to help.

34. Rc5 Rxc2+ 35. Kh1 Qe2 36. f5 Nf3 0-1

Black wins. A decisive attack seals the game after a tense fight against White's initial pawn onslaught.

In the final standings, both teams placed above their initial seedings – perhaps an indication of the continuous improvement in New Zealand chess – with the Open team at 57th= and the Women's team even higher at 37th=. Both teams also placed near the top of their categories (both Category C), coming 5th and 4th respectively. And so – with a huge congratulations to all players, especially Nadia Braganza and Yolanda Chang for their new WFM titles – the sun set over Budapest, and the 45th Chess Olympiad came to an end.

Could you please give a brief introduction about yourself (how long you've been chess playing for, whereabouts you're from)

My name is Craig Hall, and I have been playing chess since I was 4, so about 40 years. I am from Christchurch.

This was my second Olympiad, and my first was Chennai in 2022. I became involved in NZ chess in 2000 after emailing the NZCF president of the time, Bob Smith, about South Island chess, and was co-opted to [the] NZCF Council as the Canterbury regional Councillor at the next Council meeting. I have been on Council ever since, with my main focus being junior chess (I have been on various iterations of the junior and interschools subcommittees since 2001), and more recently, tournaments generally and various rules and regulations. I have been an arbiter, organiser and trainer since I was 16.

What does being the head of delegation entail? How did you come into the role of being the head of delegation? What do you find most enjoyable about being the head of delegation/about attending the Olympiad?

The role of head of delegation entails managing the various arrangements outside the team selection (at the

Olympiad, this is done by the coaches/captains), particularly accommodation, meals and transport. These are provided by the organisers of the Olympiad, so the main role for head of delegation is to ensure they are adequate and communicate relevant details to the teams e.g. meal times, transport arrangements/timetable etc. (teams stay in a hotel - if it is not in walking distance, buses are provided to transport everyone between their hotels and the venue), and if there are any issues, to resolve them for the teams (there are always issues...). Besides that part of it, I also travelled to the venues with the teams and waited for everyone to finish (and looked after their phones etc. while they were in the playing hall), and celebrate good results, and offer commiserations for losses. There is also attending the Bermuda Party with the teams, in part to hopefully avoid anything too problematic happening!

With my arbiter background, I can also help work out any title and norm chances. The team captains can also do this, but it is helpful to have someone else check. If there were issues with team discipline, I would also handle those, but fortunately, neither Olympiad has required anything serious. I also have a first aid certificate, which came in handy when one of the players needed to go to hospital for treatment and we

were waiting for the ambulance (luckily, the player recovered quickly)! Before the Olympiads, I also handled the entry of the teams and their information for the organisers to allocate accommodation, airport pick up and drop off, accreditation etc.

My predecessor was Hilton Bennett who was a fantastic head of delegation. I became head of delegation in 2022 when Hilton stepped back as Covid made international travel less desirable. The teams, coaches and Council were happy with my effort in 2022 and recommendations for 2024, so I was reappointed for 2024 and my recommendations were accepted. Council agreed to the Olympiad squads as the first recommendation which I coordinated, and a much earlier application and selection so teams had plenty of time to arrange their flights. There are still improvements to make, but preparation for this Olympiad was generally good, and it showed in the results.

The most enjoyable part of the Olympiad for me was watching great performances and seeing the teams do really well and players attain titles. It's a great chance to hear what some of our best players think about chess in NZ and how to develop the game and our best and most promising players further. It's also a great chance to meet people from

other countries and catch up with chess friends from other countries and hear how things are going in their countries. Since I was there anyway, I took the Fair Play seminar (as did Ying Wang) and Ying and I both passed the exam for a norm, so I had a chance to go into the playing hall (normally unavailable to anyone other than players, team captains/coaches, arbiters and a few VIPs - Ying was one of the official arbiters, so spent every day in the playing hall!) to watch the entry scans etc. as players entered the playing hall - something noticeable was that a lot of team captains had non-chess books to help pass the time while they waited for their teams. One personally enjoyable part of the trip was getting around Budapest a bit in the first few mornings, particularly St Stephen's Basilica and the National Gallery.

Was there anything which set this Olympiad aside from the others you've attended? Were there any particularly memorable experiences from this Olympiad you'd like to share?

What set this apart from Chennai was that accommodation was only provided to the teams and captains, not the head of delegation so NZCF had to cover my costs. Past Olympiads have also provided accommodation at cost for accompanying persons (for NZ teams, those are usually parents), but we were

informed 3 weeks prior to this Olympiad that accompanying persons had to organise their own accommodation away from their children. This obviously was not popular but everyone managed to make it work. This is unlikely to be an issue in 2026 or 2028 (I checked the regulations...). Possibly the most memorable experience of the Olympiad was being at the venue in the café area on the last day, waiting for the teams, and watching the women's team defeat the much higher-seeded Mexico and confirm Yolanda's WFM title and also Nadia's rating for the award of her WFM title from the Oceania Youth earlier this year (both titles have since been awarded).

Could you please give a brief introduction about yourself (how long you've been chess playing for, whereabouts you're from, how you would describe your playing style, etc.)

I grew up in Auckland on the North Shore and [have been] playing chess since I was 8 years old. I first [learnt] about the game at my primary school and ever since then I have been playing. I would say my playing style is positional but it has changed over the years and it is still evolving.

You have played in an Olympiad before, in Baku in 2016. What sets this Olympiad apart from Baku 2016?

Baku was my first Olympiad and it was a super cool experience, I was 10 years old and it was the biggest tournament I had ever been to and I learnt a lot. This time around in Budapest I am definitely a more experienced and better player than I was in Baku and this helped me alot.

What do you find most challenging about playing in an Olympiad? Do you have any advice for aspiring players about international tournaments?

Normally, in most chess tournaments, you are just playing for yourself but when it comes to the Olympiad, you are playing for not just yourself but also,

more importantly, for your team and country so it adds a little bit more pressure. This added pressure can sometimes be a motivator. With regards to advice to upcoming players who want to play in international events, it's a great opportunity to play against people you've never played before and this can only be beneficial for improvement.

Could you please give a brief introduction about yourself (how long you've been chess playing for, whereabouts you're from, how you would describe your playing style, etc.)

I was born in 1980 in the Netherlands where I started to play chess at school at about 9 years old. The Dutch national chess federation considered me a talent and I have been lucky to have been offered quite a bit of training through the years. My style is mainly positional but I like to play an attacking game as well. At age 18 I scored my first IM norm and ultimately got the IM title in 2004. The Netherlands is quite a strong chess nation with a lot of opportunities to play chess. It is also a small country so you don't have to travel very far to play a rapid or weekend tournament for example.

How long have you been playing chess in New Zealand for? Where did you play before this?

Due to other interests and studies I slowed down on chess and stopped playing altogether in 2009. In 2016 I moved to New Zealand but did not play any chess at all until recently. A few years ago I had played some games against Stockfish and I remember being in awe of how strong the engine plays. This fascinated me and renewed my interest in chess but it was a 2023

Facebook post from the NZCF asking for applications for the Chess Olympiad which inspired me to start playing again to try and qualify for the team.

So I worked hard on a new opening repertoire and trained my tactics and calculation skills before playing my first games in 14 years at the North Island Open mid 2023 and at the NZ Open in 2024. I got second place at both tournaments which was sufficient to be selected for the Olympiad team.

Were there any particularly memorable experiences from this Olympiad/anything you'd like to share?

The Olympiad itself was quite a memorable experience. The fact that 183 countries are present having sent their best chess players in itself is special. They say that sport unites people and for me it certainly felt that way. Everyone was there for the same reason, to play chess, regardless of what part of the world you live in or what language you speak or what skin colour you have. And of course it is cool to see the top chess players in real life playing chess for their countries, although I actually did not know a lot of the names of famous players because I have not been following the chess scene, which was a good reason for my teammates to make fun of me!

Playing in the Olympiad was much more demanding than I had anticipated. You get completely immersed in this bubble of chess and it is quite full on. You would basically follow the same routine every day: get up, have breakfast, prepare for half an hour with your coach and then continue to prepare on your own. Then have lunch and take the bus to the playing hall. The games started at 3 pm so it would often be between 8 and 9 pm before you got back to the hotel. Then have dinner and have a team meeting at 10 pm. Then sleep and repeat the following day.

What do you find most challenging about playing in an Olympiad? Do you have any advice for aspiring players about international tournaments?

My advice to aspiring players for international tournaments is to make sure you are well prepared before the tournament actually starts by having a solid opening repertoire and an up-to-date database. Also, allow yourself plenty of rest and relaxation in between the games to be able to focus on your game completely. And finally, only think about the next move. Not about what you could have done a few moves ago or how you should really study this opening better or whatever thoughts and feelings might come up. Just the next move.

Olympiad Team Captains

Anya Thurner

Extensive amounts of work go into each Chess Olympiad, and one role not to be forgotten about is the role of the team captain. At the latest 2024 Budapest Olympiad, our team captain for the open team was GM Dejan Bojkov and for the women, IM Herman van Riemsdijk.

Originating from Bulgaria, GM Bojkov started playing chess at age six, joining a chess club soon after. He continued on to graduate from the National Sports Academy “Vassil Leveski” as a chess coach and earned his grandmaster title in 2008. So far, he has attended six Olympiads as captain, the first two with Papua New Guinea, followed by four with New Zealand. It was during these initial olympiads that Bojkov met and befriended the late Hilton Bennett, who introduced him to New Zealand chess. In 2012, he participated in a tournament in Queenstown, and then returned in 2015 to Auckland to conduct a FIDE trainer’s seminar. ‘Little by little, I got to know the New Zealand chess players and was appointed a captain for my first Olympiad with the team in Baku, 2016,’ says Bojkov.

IM van Riemsdijk was born in The Netherlands, where he first learnt how to play at the age of five. At age ten, he moved to Brazil, and started playing in tournaments there a year later. He has since had many chess achievements,

including winning the Brazilian Chess Championship three times, winning the São Paulo Chess Championships seven times, and winning the South American and Pan-American championships. He gained his IM title in 1978, and became an IA soon after in 1981. It was in the Chess Olympiad of 1978 (one of twelve he played for Brazil) that he befriended Paul Spiller and, twenty years later, was invited to the 1999/2000 New Zealand Chess Congress. Since then, he has returned regularly, and his upcoming participation in the 2025 New Zealand Chess Congress will be his 12th visit. This most recent Olympiad was van Riemsdijk’s third time as captain for our women's team.

So what does being a team captain entail? ‘The most important role of a team captain is to maintain a good spirit among the team members,’ says van Riemsdijk, who also mentions the difficulties of deciding who is to play on which days. Our teams are composed of five players, but only four can play at a time, so before each round, the team captain must decide who is to play and who is to sit out. This may be decided by the strength of opposing teams and individual player’s chances for titles, among other things. In terms of the chess itself, an important role of the team captain is to constructively analyse the player’s games with them and to help prepare the team for the

next round, both on the board (with opening preparation) and psychologically. The role of the team captains has become more limited over the past few years, specifically in terms of communication with the players during the match. A key example of this is that they are no longer able to advise on offering and/or accepting draw offers. However, it is still important that the captains are present during the matches as they are crucial in handling any conflicts during the games.

Olympiads are not only a place for chess players from around the world to compete with each other, but they also give the opportunity for chess players to meet, befriend, and make connections with players from a variety of different countries. Both of our team captains agree that the social aspect is a major highlight of the Olympiads they attend, with each Olympiad holding opportunities to catch up with old friends and create new ones. 'The captains can observe the action in real time and mix with all the great players in the venue,' says Bojkov, who also comments on the opportunity to visit new countries, new places, and experience new cultures. A particularly unique aspect of this Olympiad, as van Riemsdijk points out, was the sheer amount of teams playing, something which must have made the life of the organisers significantly harder! Almost

200 countries participated, hitting a record number of 1893 players.

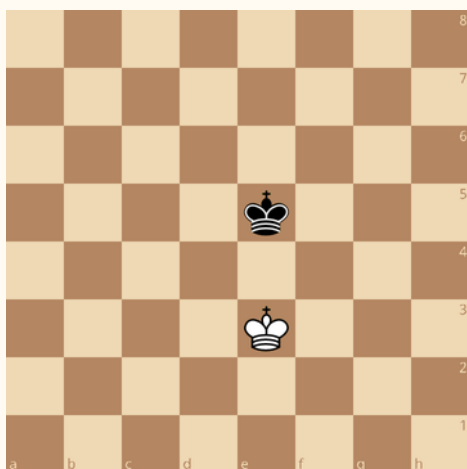
Both New Zealand teams performed very well in their respective sections, finishing above their original seedings. Yolanda Chang and Nadia Braganza (who had both held WCM prior to the Olympiad) gained their WFM titles, and the Open team also saw strong performances, with some particularly notable results from the junior players in the team. 'The young hopes that play in the team managed to score prestigious victories against established GMs,' says Bojkov. 'In the [Open], we came very close [to] defeating rating favourites, and despite the fact that we have lost three matches narrowly, it is obvious that the future is bright!'

In the position below White has exactly one move to win the game. You have 20 seconds time to figure it out!

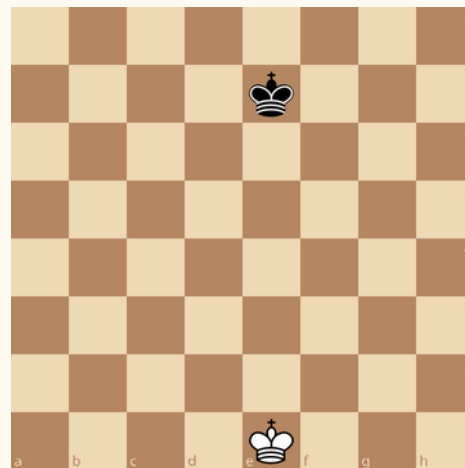


No idea? To solve the study and find the first move without calculation you need to know a bit about about "Opposition".

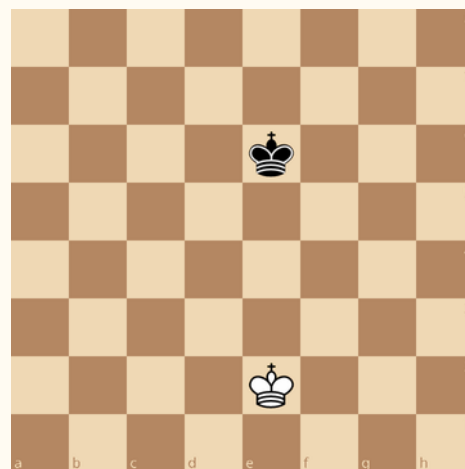
So which types of Opposition do you know? There is the "Direct Opposition" where the two kings are separated by 1 square, horizontally, vertically or diagonally.



Then there is the "Distant Opposition" with 5 squares between the kings.



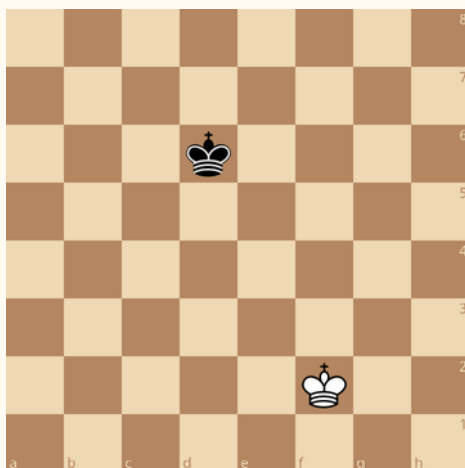
And then there is what I like to call "Medium Opposition" as I want to use different names for the 5 square and the 3 square opposition.



So far so good and you knew most of this already, didn't you? But how does this help solving the Botvinnik study?

There is one more opposition in chess, which I like to call the "Extended Opposition" as shown here, where the kings occupy the corners of a rectangle and are on the same colored square.

Unless the kings are running away from each other "normal" opposition can be reached soon.



Now have another look at the study.



Now the move should be obvious as there is only one sensible move to take the opposition.

1. Kf5! (1. Kf6 Kb6 2. Ke5 Kc7 3. Kxd5 Kd7 4. Ke5 Ke7 5. d5 Kd7 6. Kf4) (1. Kh5? is also an extended opposition, but quite obviously nonsense as White needs to win a pawn, not run away from them!)

1... Kb6 (1... Kb8 2. Ke6 Kc7 3. Ke7 We will

come across this positions a few more times later.) (1... Kc6 2. Ke6 Kc7 3. Ke7) (1... Kc7 2. Ke5 Kc6 3. Ke6 Kc7 4. Ke7)

2. Kf6! Horizontal medium opposition.

2... Kb7 (2... Kc6 3. Ke6 Kc7 4. Ke7 We will come across this motif a number of times.)

3. Kf7 Horizontal medium opposition, again.

3... Kb8 (3... Kb6 4. Ke8 Kc6 5. Kd8 Kd6 6. Kc8) **4. Ke6 Kc7** (4... Kc8 5. Kd6! Kd8 (5... Kb7 6. Kxd5 Kc7 7. Ke6 Kd8 8. Kd6 Kc8 9. Ke7 White controls the key squares of this passed pawn.) 6. Kc6 And White will win both a-pawns.)

5. Ke7!! As we have seen in the 1.Kf6 line, taking on d5 leads to a draw. (5. Kxd5 Kd7 6. Kc5 Kc7 7. Kc4 (7. d5 Kd7 8. Kc4 Kd6 9. Kd4 Kd7) 7... Kc6 Black maintains the opposition and a draw. Chess programmes without Tablebases again have a hard time.)

5... Kc6 6. Kd8 Kd6 If there would be no pawn on a6 it would be a draw.

7. Kc8 Kc6 (7... Ke6 8. Kb7 Kf5 Black goes after the d4 pawn. 9. Kc6 Ke4 10. Kc5 Zugzwang! White wins as Black cannot defend the d5 pawn anymore. 10... Kf4 11. Kxd5)

8. Kb8 Kb6 One of my rules is: If you

can't get the opposition, go to a square where your opponent can't get the opposition! So what is White's next move?

9. Ka8 Now Black can't maintain opposition as his a6 pawn is in the way.

9... Kc7 10. Ka7 Kc6 11. Kxa6 Kd6 12. Kxa5 Kc6 13. Ka6 Kc7 14. Kb5 1-0

Joining a chess club can be a great way to meet new people and learn new things, but a lot of people don't know how to go about joining one. Below is some information you might need to join your first chess club, taken and summarised from the NZCF Website (www.newzealandchess.co.nz/clubs) - more information on NZCF affiliated clubs and information regarding NZCF associated and other clubs can be found in the 'Chess Clubs' section of the NZCF website.

NZCF AFFILIATED CLUBS

Auckland Chess Centre - www.aucklandchess.nz

Canterbury Chess Club - www.chess.org.nz

Counties Chess Club - pukekohechess.co.nz

Hamilton Chess Club - hamiltonchess.net

Hawkes Bay Chess Club - www.hawkesbaychess.org.nz

Howick-Pakuranga Chess Club - www.hpchessclub.org.nz

Invercargill-Southland Chess Club - ISCC.nz

Manurewa Chess - info@manurewachess.org

Mount Maunganui RSA Chess Club - www.westernbopchess.weebly.com

New Plymouth Chess Club - chessclubnp@gmail.com

North Shore Chess Club - www.northshorechess.org.nz

Otago Chess Club - otagochess.org

Papatoetoe Chess Club - papatoetoechessclub.org.nz

Summit Chess Club - ywang@outlook.co.nz

Upper Hutt Chess Club - arh4108@gmail.com

Waitakere Chess Club - <https://waitakerechess.co.nz>

Wellington Chess Club - www.nzchessmag.com/wellingtonchessclub

(1) 1... Qh6 2. Rc2 Bxg3+ 3. Qxg3 Qxh1+

(2) 1. a4+ Kb6 2. Qe3+ c5 3. Rxc5 Bxc5 4.
Ba5+ Kxa5 5. Qxc5+ b5 6. Qxb5#

(3) 1. Be2 Qf4 2. Nc5+ Ke5 3. Qg7+ Qf6 4.
Nd7+

(4) 1... Qg5 2. Re1 Qh5 3. Bg2 Nxe5 4. dxe5
d4 5. e4 Bxe4 6. Rxe4 Rcl+

(5) 1. Kc7 Kxb5 2. Kd7 Bc5 3. Ba1 Kc4 4.
Ke8 Bd4 5. Kxf7 Bxa1 6. e6

(6) 1. Ke8! c2 2. d7 cl=Q 3. d8=Q Qxe3+

(3...Kg7 4.Qg5 + Kh8 5.Qf6+ Kg8 6.Qf7 +
Kh8 7.Qf8#)

(3..Qg1 4.Qg5+)

(3...Qc6+ 4.Kf8 Q3+ 5.Kg8! Qg3+ (5...Qxe3
6.Qf6+ Kh5 7.Qe5+ Qxe5 8.dxe5 Kg6 9.h5+
Kf5 10.Kxh7 a5 11.e6) 6.Qg5+ Qxg5+
7.hxg5+ Kxg5 8.Kf7 Kf5 9.d5 Ke5 10.e4 h5
(10...5 11.Ke7) (10...Kd6 11.Kf6) 11.Ke7 h4
12.d6 h3 13.d7 h2 14.d8Q h1Q 15.Qd6+
Kxe4 16.Qc6+)

4. Qe7! Qxe7+ 5. Kxe7 a5 6. d5 a4 7. d6 a3
8. d7 a2 9. d8=Q a1=Q 10. Qd2+ Kg7! 11.
Qg2+! Kh8 12. Kf7!