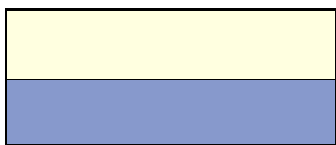


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2003 United States Chess Championships

by Michael Franett

[January 20:](#) **Anna Hahn Wins Playoff for US Women's Title**

[January 19:](#) **Fortune Favors the Brave: Shabba Wins US Title**

[January 18:](#) **Whoops! Shabba Stumbles, Playoff Looms**

[January 17:](#) **Shabba Sees the Promised Land**

[January 16:](#) **Coming into the Stretch**

[January 14:](#) **Midway Battles**

[January 13:](#) **Shabalov Joins Kaidanov at the Top**

[January 12:](#) **The Kentuckian**

[January 11:](#) **The Thinning of the Herd**

[January 10:](#) **The Most Important Round**

[January 9:](#) **Wish You Were Here**

[January 7:](#) **The U.S. Championships**

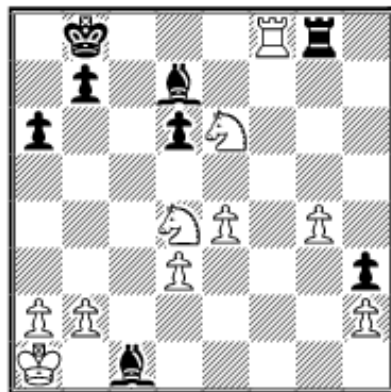
January 20

Anna Hahn Wins Playoff for US Women's Title

Anna Hahn of Jersey City, New Jersey, defeated both defending champion Jennifer Shahade and Irina Krush in a fifteen-minute-game round-robin to score a major upset and take the 2003 US Women's Championship. Anna's two playoff wins were worth a record \$12,500 to the 26-year-old programmer. Hahn coolly fought her way back to win from inferior positions in both games..

Playoff Women's US Championship *Shahade,J (2330) - Hahn,A (2219)* United States Championship 2003 Women's Seattle, 19.01.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qd2 h6 8.Bxf6 gxf6 9.0-0-0 a6 10.Kb1 Bd7 11.f4 Qb6 12.Nf3 0-0-0 13.Bd3 Kb8 14.Rhf1 h5 15.Ne2 Be8 16.f5 Qc5 17.Qe1 Rc8 18.Nf4 Ne5 19.fxe6 Nxd3 20.cxd3 Qc2+ 21.Ka1 Bh6N 22.g3 fxe6 23.Nd4 Qa4 24.Nfxe6 Bd7 25.Rf5 Be3 26.Ra5 Qxd1+ 27.Qxd1 Rc1+ 28.Qxc1 Bxc1 29.Rf5 h4 30.g4 h3 31.Rxf6 Rg8 32.Rf8+?



32.Kb1 Be3 33.Nf5 and white is still winning. Now Hahn's bishop pair becomes ominously active.

32...Rxf8 33.Nxf8 Bxg4 34.Ng6 Be3 35.Nf5 Bg1 36.Nh6 Bc8 37.Nf4 Bxh2 38.Nxh3 Bxh3 39.Nf5 Bxf5 40.exf5 Be5 41.Kb1 Kc7 42.Kc2 Kc6 0-1

2003 US Championship Final standings after Round 9, January 18, 2003



The Champions

1 Shabalov 6½

2 Kaidanov, Goldin, Gulko, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Ivanov, Fedorowicz 6

9 Seirawan, De Firmian, Christiansen, Yermolinsky, Akobian, Nakamura, Zaitshik, Burnett, Sarkar 5½

18 Finegold, Serper, Kreiman, Fishbein, Gurevich, Foygel, Muhammad 5

25 Kudrin, Lapshun, Browne, Mulyar, Kraai, G. Shahade, Enkhbat, Paschall, J. Donaldson, Lein, Kaufman, Krush*, J. Shahade*, Hahn * 4½

39 Ashley, Perelshteyn, Pixton, Ippolito, E. Donaldson *, Watson 4

45 Baginskaite*, Pruess, Markzon, Battsetseg*, Shiber * 3½

50 Kriventsov, Esserman, Epstein*, Ross*, Groberman * 3

55 Bennett, Tsai * 2½

57 Sagalchik* 2

58 Levina* 1½

- * - female player

So another beautifully-run US Championship comes to a close. For the second year in a row, the venue was on the site of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair at which I ran a Automat-style food stand providing inedible hamburgers to the fair goers who flocked to Seattle for a glimpse of the future. Little did they know that inedible hamburgers in the billions were to be a big part of that future.

Some event highlights for me: Jeremy Silman's game commentaries...the perfectly functioning electronic boards and monitors...the Arbiter team of Carol Jarecki and Jonathan Berry... Alexander Shabalov's fighting finish...Press Officer John Henderson's humor, efficiency and photos which have been a welcome part of these reports...the 300-player kids' event next door on the last day, Mig's arrival which pepped up the press room no end...Event Director Yvette Nagel's fine work and fantastic website...the America's Foundation for Chess's continuing support for the US Championship...Anna Hahn's win which exemplifies the ideal of this tournament of giving outsiders a chance to win it all.

And thanks to Hanon Russell and the **ChessCafe** readers for giving me an excuse to be where I wanted to be anyway. See you next year I hope.

January 19

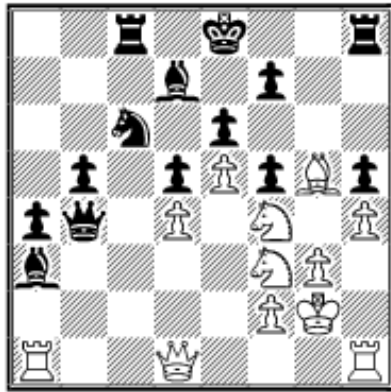
Fortune Favors the Brave: Shabba Wins US Title

Alexander Shabalov won an uphill struggle against Varuzhan Akobian to take the \$25,000 clear first in the 2003 US Championships. Shabalov was the only one of eight players tied for first at 5½-2½ willing to go all out for a win (his opponent had no choice) and Caissa rewarded Shabba after making him squirm, as befits a chess goddess. Thus a nine-way playoff for the title was avoided.



Round 9, Board 4 Shabalov,A (2613) - Akobian,V (2531) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 18.01.2003

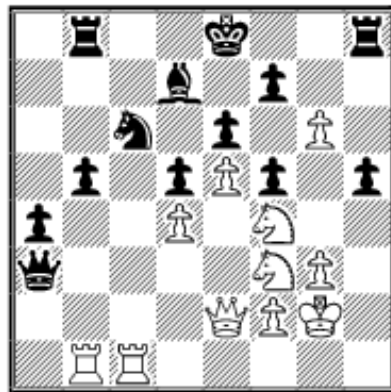
**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Qb6 6.a3 Nh6 7.b4 cxd4
8.cxd4 Nf5 9.Bb2 Be7 10.h4 h5 11.Bd3 g6 12.Bxf5 gxf5 13.Nc3
Rg8 14.g3 Bd7 15.Bc1 Rc8 16.Ne2 a5 17.b5 Qxb5 18.Bg5 a4
19.Rb1 Qa5+ 20.Kf1 Bxa3 21.Ra1 Qb4 22.Nf4 Rh8 23.Kg2 b5**



FRITZ said black was winning here and FRITZ could probably win it but Akobian had to nurse his material edge to victory through time pressure against a world-class player who has the initiative. After the game, Joel Benjamin told me that around here, he and colleague GM Gregory Serper agreed with FRITZ's assessment that black was winning but thought that

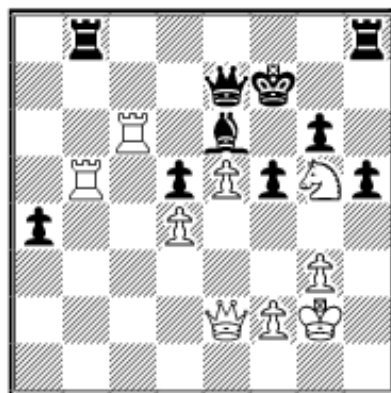
Shabalov would win the game anyway!

**24.Bf6 Rh6 25.Re1 Qf8 26.Qe2 Be7 27.Bg5 Rh8 28.Rec1 Rb8
29.Rab1 Bxg5 30.hxg5 Qa3 31.g6 fxg6?**



Black finally falters. 31...Rg8 32.gxf7+ Kxf7 33.Nxh5 Ke7 34.Nf6 Rh8 would keep his edge.

32.Nxe6! Bxe6 33.Rxc6 Qe7 34.Rxb5 Kf7 35.Ng5+!



Winning black's queen and the US Championship.

35...Qxg5 36.Rc7+ Qe7 37.Rxe7+ Kxe7 38.Rc5

38.Rxb8 Rxb8 39.Qa6 is easier.

**38...Rhc8 39.Qa6 Rxc5 40.Qa7+ Ke8
41.dxc5 Rc8 42.Qxa4+ Bd7 43.Qd4
Be6 44.f4 Ke7 45.Qb4 Rc6 46.Kh3 Bd7 47.Kh4 Kf7 48.Kg5 Ke7
49.Qb3N Re6 50.Qxd5 Bc6 51.Qa2 Bd7 52.Kh6 Be8 53.Kg7 Bd7
54.Qh2 Rc6 55.Qh4+ Ke8 56.Qf6!N Rxf6 57.exf6 Be6 58.c6 g5
59.fxg5 f4 60.g6 fxg3 61.f7+ 1-0**

The win gives Shabalov his first outright US title. In 1993 he shared the title with Alexander Yermolinsky, and in 2000 he shared a three-way tie for first with Yasser Seirawan and Joel Benjamin.

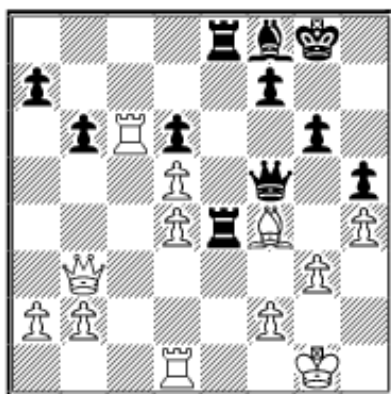
Photo: Akobian resigns against Shabalov.



Anna Hahn caught the women's leaders by defeating Elina Groberman.

Round 9, Board 25 Groberman,E (2117) - Hahn,A (2219) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 18.01.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.g3 g6 7.Nde2 b6 8.Bg2 Ba6 9.0-0 Bg7 10.Nd5 Nd7 11.c3 0-0 12.Re1 Nde5 13.Nd4 Nxd4 14.cxd4 Nd3 15.Bf1 e6 16.Bxd3 Bxd3 17.Qxd3 exd5 18.exd5 Qf6 19.Be3 Qf3 20.Qb3 Qf5 21.Rac1 Rfe8 22.Red1 h5 23.Rc6 Bf8 24.h4 Re4 25.Bf4 Rae8



26.Bxd6??

26.Rcc1 guards the first rank and white is still okay.

26...Bxd6 27.Rxd6 Re1+ 28.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 29.Kg2 Qe4+ 30.Qf3 Rg1+ 31.Kxg1 Qxf3 32.Rd8+ Kg7 33.d6 Qd1+ 34.Kg2 Qxd4 35.d7 Kf6 0-1

Despite one playoff being avoided in the overall championships, the three leading women players, Jennifer Shahade, Irina Krush and Anna have to come back tomorrow to play off for the women's title and the \$12,500 first prize. In the final round, defending champion Jennifer Shahade lost to IM Ben Finegold to finish on a score of 4.5/9. This allowed the 1998 champion Irina Krush, who drew her last round game against IM Eugene Perelshteyn, to catch her rival. And Anna Hahn will now join the two top US ladies. The playoff for the women's title will start at 1.30pm Pacific Time in the Northwest Rooms at the Seattle Center, with free entry to spectators. Chess fans around the world can watch the excitement of the three-way playoff live over the Internet at www.af4c.org.

Final standings after Round 9, January 18, 2003

1 Shabalov 6½**2 Kaidanov, Goldin, Gulko, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Ivanov, Fedorowicz 6****9 Seirawan, De Firmian, Christiansen, Yermolinsky, Akobian, Nakamura, Zaitshik, Burnett, Sarkar 5½****18 Finegold, Serper, Kreiman, Fishbein, Gurevich, Foygel, Muhammad 5****25 Kudrin, Lapshun, Browne, Mulyar, Kraai, G. Shahade, Enkhbat, Paschall, J. Donaldson, Lein, Kaufman, Krush*, J. Shahade*, Hahn * 4½****39 Ashley, Perelshteyn, Pixton, Ippolito, E. Donaldson *, Watson 4****45 Baginskaite*, Pruess, Markzon, Battsetseg*, Shiber * 3½****50 Kriventsov, Esserman, Epstein*, Ross*, Groberman * 3****55 Bennett, Tsai * 2½****57 Sagalchik* 2****58 Levina* 1½***** - female player**

Results Round 9, January 18, 2003

1	13	GM Alexander Ivanov	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov ½-½
2	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	3	GM Boris Gulko ½-½
3	17	GM John Fedorowicz	5	GM Joel Benjamin ½-½
4	6	GM Alexander Shabalov	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian 1-0
5	11	IM Ben Finegold	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade 1-0
6	2	GM Alexander Goldin	20	GM Alex Fishbein 1-0
7	36	IM Ron Burnett	9	GM Larry Christiansen ½-½
8	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	44	IM Justin Sarkar ½-½
9	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich	4	GM Yasser Seirawan 0-1
10	28	IM Jesse Kraai	7	GM Nick De Firmian 0-1
11	39	WGM Elena Donaldson	25	GM Maurice Ashley ½-½
12	16	IM Hikaru Nakamura	29	IM Greg Shahade 1-0
13	24	FM Igor Foygel	14	GM Gregory Serper ½-½
14	33	IM John Donaldson	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik 0-1
15	42	FM Stephen Muhammad	19	IM Boris Kreiman ½-½
16	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	41	WGM Irina Krush ½-½
17	37	GM Anatoly Lein	22	GM Walter Browne ½-½

18	38	IM Larry Kaufman	50	WIM T. Battsetseg 1-0
19	52	WIM Esther Epstein	53	WIM Cindy Tsai ½-½
20	27	IM Michael Mulyar	15	GM Sergey Kudrin ½-½
21	31	IM William Paschall	40	WGM K. Baginskaite 1-0
22	46	David Pruess	21	IM Yury Lapshun 0-1
23	35	IM Dean Ippolito	43	IM John Watson ½-½
24	30	FM Tegshsuren Enhbat	47	FM Gregory Markzon 1-0
25	57	WIM Elina Groberman	51	WIM Anna Hahn 0-1
26	32	FM Aaron Pixton	34	IM Stan. Kriventsov 1-0
27	58	Julia Shiber	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik 1-0
28	49	Marc Esserman	48	FM Allan Bennett 1-0
29	56	Anna Levina	55	WFM Laura Ross 0-1

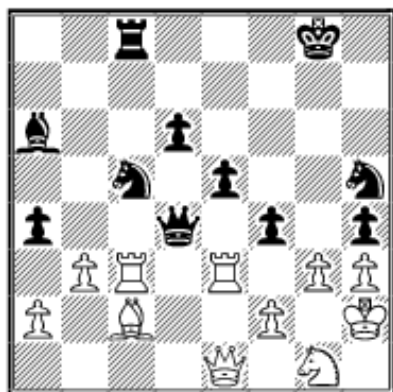
January 18

Whoops! Shabba Stumbles, Playoff Looms

Sole leader Alex Shabalov fell to his nemesis Joel Benjamin tonight and was joined by no less than seven title aspirants going into the last round tomorrow. Shabalov blinked first in a complex struggle that had the spectators on the edge of their seats.

Round 8, Board 1 *Benjamin, J (2587) - Shabalov, A (2613)* United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 17.01.2003

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.Nbd2 cxd4 13.cxd4 Rd8 14.d5 Bd7 15.Nf1 Rdc8 16.Re2 Nb7 17.Ng3 Nc5 18.Be3 b4 19.Rc1 Bb5 20.Re1 g6 21.Bb1 Nfd7 22.Nh2 Qd8 23.Ng4 Bg5 24.Qd2 Bxe3 25.Rxe3 Qg5 26.Qxb4 h5 27.Nh2 h4 28.Ngf1 Nf6 29.Rce1 Nh5 30.Nf3 Qe7 31.N1h2 Nf4 32.Qd2 a5 33.Kh1 a4 34.Ng1 Rab8 35.g3 Nh5 36.Rc3 Ba6 37.Ree3 Rb4 38.b3 Qb7 39.Bc2 f5 40.exf5 Rd4 41.Qe1 Qxd5+ 42.Nhf3 gxf5 43.Kh2 f4 44.Nxd4 Qxd4?



44...fxe3 45.Nf5 exf2 46.Qxf2 Re8 47.Nxh4 and white is better but not winning clearly.

45.Ne2! Bxe2 46.Rxe2 hxg3+ 47.fxg3 Rf8 48.Be4 d5? 49.Bxd5+! Kh8 50.Rxe5 fxg3+ 51.Rxg3 Nxg3 52.Qxg3 Qf2+ 53.Bg2 Qxg3+ 54.Kxg3 Rc8 55.b4 Nd3 56.Rh5+ Kg7 57.b5 Kg6 58.Rd5 Nb4 59.Rd6+ Kf5 60.b6 Ke5 61.Rd2 1-0

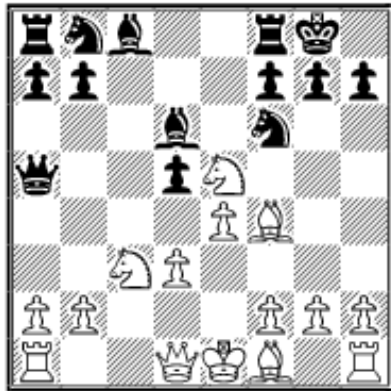
The eighth and penultimate round was easily the most fiercely contested of the tournament with only three draws on the top fourteen boards. Gulko, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Akobian, Ivanov and Fedorowicz all won to get to the leading score of five-and-a-half out

of eight.

Former Champion Boris Gulko ended young Hikaru Nakamura's hopes. Nakamura was undoubtedly fatigued after saving a long game against Seirawan in round seven. Against Gulko, he lost a pawn early and the game later.

Round 8, Board 3 *Gulko,B (2584) - Nakamura,H (2520) United States Championship 2003 Seattle 17.01.2003*

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c6 3.e4 e5 4.Nf3 Qa5 5.d3 d5 6.cxd5 cxd5 7.Nxe5 Bd6 8.Bf4 0-0



8...Bb4!? Now white gets a pawn with a surprising shot and, even better, keeps it.

9.Nc4! dxc4 10.Bxd6 Re8 11.f3 cxd3 12.Bxd3 Qb6 13.Bb5 Rd8 14.e5 a6 15.Be2 Ne8 16.Nd5 Qa5+?

16...Qxb2

17.b4 Qa3 18.Bxb8 Kh8 19.Bd6 Nxd6 20.exd6

Rxd6 21.Qd2 Be6 22.Qe3 Qa4 23.Nc3 Qa3 24.0-0 Rc8 25.Nd5 Qxe3+ 26.Nxe3 Rd2 27.Rfe1 Bxa2 28.Bc4 Bxc4 29.Nxc4 Rd4 30.Nb6 Rcd8 31.Rab1 R4d6 32.Nc4 Rd4 33.Na5 R4d7 34.Re2 Kg8 35.Kf2 f6 36.b5 Kf7 37.bxa6 bxa6 38.Rb6 Ra8 39.Ra2 Rd5 40.Nc4 Rd7 41.Rbxa6 Rxa6 42.Rxa6 Ke7 43.g4 Kf7 44.Rb6 Ke7 45.h4 1-0

Jennifer Shahade won against Eugene Perelshteyn to stay half a point ahead of Irina Krush who bested Aaron Pixton.

Round 8, Board 4 *Shahade,J (2330) - Perelshteyn,E (2442) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 17.01.2003*

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Qb3 Bg7 7.cxd5 0-0 8.Be2 Na6 9.Bf4 Qb6 10.Qxb6 axb6 11.d6 exd6 12.Bxd6 Rd8 13.Ba3 Rxd4 14.Nf3 Rd8 15.0-0 Be6 16.Ng5 Nd5 17.Nxe6 Nxc3 18.Bxa6 fxe6 19.Bc4 Nd5 20.Rad1 Rac8 21.Bb3 b5 22.Rfe1 b4 23.Bxb4 Nxb4 24.Bxe6+ Kf8 25.Bxc8 Rxc8 26.Rd7 b5 27.g3 Nc6 28.Rc1 Bxb2 29.Rc2 Be5 30.Rd5 Rd8 31.Rxd8+ Nxd8 32.Rc5 Bd6 33.Rxb5 Ke7 34.a4 Ne6 35.Rb7+ Nc7 36.h4 Kd7 37.Rb8 Ne8 38.Rb7+ Bc7 39.Kg2 Nd6 40.Rb1 Ne4 41.Rd1+ Nd6 42.Kf3 Ke6 43.Rc1 Bd8 44.Rc6 Kd7 45.Rc5 Bb6 46.Re5 Nc4 47.Re2 Nd6 48.Kg4 h6 49.h5 g5 50.f4 gxf4 51.gxf4 Bd8 52.Rd2 Ke6 53.f5+ Kd7 54.Rd5 Bg5?

The black bishop had to stay on d8 to prevent the advance of the white a-pawn. Jennifer now gets a vital square for the a-pawn and sets up winning tactical shots.

55.a5 Kc6 56.Re5 Nc4 57.Re6+ Kd7 58.a6 Ne3+ 59.Kh3 Nxf5

60.Re5 Nd6 1-0

Defending Women's Champion Shahade's destiny is in her own hands as they say. A win with black against IM Ben Finegold in the last round gives her the title no matter what her pursuers do. The closest to her, Irina Krush, has black against none other than Eugene Perelshtyen who just lost to Shahade! I'm sure Eugene's goal for this tournament was not to decide who wins the women's title. It's hard to believe that he won't be very careful against the aggressive Krush which essentially gives Jennifer draw odds in her game with Finegold.

Standings after Round 8, January 17, 2003

1 Kaidanov, Gulko, Benjamin, Shabalov, Stripunsky, Akobian, Ivanov, Fedorowicz **5½**

9 Goldin, Christiansen, Yermolinsky, Fishbein, Gurevich, Burnett, Sarkar **5**

16 Seirawan, De Firmian, Serper, Nakamura, Zaitshik, Kreiman, Foygel, Kraai, G. Shahade, J. Donaldson, Muhammad, J. Shahade * **4½**

28 Finegold, Kudrin, Browne, Mulyar, Lein, Krush * **4**

34 Lapshun, Ashley, Perelshteyn, Enkhbat, Paschall, Ippolito, Kaufman, E. Donaldson*, Baginskaite*, Watson, Pruess, Markzon, Battsetseg*, Hahn * **3½**

48 Pixton, Kriventsov, Groberman* **3**

51 Bennett, Epstein*, Shiber * **2½**

54 Esserman, Tsai*, Sagalchik*, Ross * **2**

58 Levina* **1½**

* - female player

Results Round 8, January 17, 2003

Bd	White	Black
1	5 GM Joel Benjamin	6 GM Alexander Shabalov 1-0 2
1	GM Gregory Kaidanov	2 GM Alexander Goldin ½-½
3	3 GM Boris Gulko	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura 1-0
4	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade	26 IM Eugene Perelshteyn 1-0
5	50 WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	28 IM Jesse Kraai 0-1
6	9 GM Larry Christiansen	42 FM Stephen Muhammad 1-0
7	4 GM Yasser Seirawan	17 GM John Fedorowicz 0-1

8	19	IM Boris Kreiman	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky 0-1
9	20	GM Alex Fishbein	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky ½-½
10	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	24	FM Igor Foygel 1-0
11	29	IM Greg Shahade	13	GM Alexander Ivanov 0-1
12	14	GM Gregory Serper	33	IM John Donaldson ½-½
13	22	GM Walter Browne	36	IM Ron Burnett 0-1
14	41	WGM Irina Krush	32	FM Aaron Pixton 1-0
15	25	GM Maurice Ashley	46	David Pruess ½-½
16	7	GM Nick De Firmian	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat 1-0
17	55	WFM Laura Ross	51	WIM Anna Hahn 0-1
18	11	IM Ben Finegold	37	GM Anatoly Lein ½-½
19	15	GM Sergey Kudrin	38	IM Larry Kaufman 1-0
20	27	IM Michael Mulyar	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich 0-1
21	21	IM Yury Lapshun	44	IM Justin Sarkar 0-1
22	43	IM John Watson	39	WGM Elena Donaldson ½-½
23	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	31	IM William Paschall 1-0
24	48	FM Allan Bennett	35	IM Dean Ippolito 0-1
25	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	58	Julia Shiber 1-0
26	53	WIM Cindy Tsai	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik 1-0
27	47	FM Gregory Markzon	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov ½-½
28	56	Anna Levina	57	WIM Elina Groberman 0-1
29	52	WIM Esther Epstein	49	Marc Esserman ½-½

What's going to happen in round 9? Well, if I knew I'd be an a lot more successful sports better than I am. But if the top four boards (all on 5½-2½) draw and rest of the games fall just right, a *twelve-way* tie at 6-3 is possible. More likely is that one or two of the top eight will win to take the title or force a playoff. But if they all draw... Let's just say that if they do, Larry Christiansen's reign as US Champion may not be over, among many other interesting possibilities. I don't know about you but I'm going to have a *real* good time tomorrow.

Round 9, January 18, 2003

Final round pairings

1	13	GM Alexander Ivanov	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov
2	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	3	GM Boris Gulko
3	17	GM John Fedorowicz	5	GM Joel Benjamin
4	6	GM Alexander Shabalov	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian
5	11	IM Ben Finegold	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade
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21	31	IM William Paschall	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite
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27	58	Julia Shiber	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik
28	49	Marc Esserman	48	FM Allan Bennett
29	56	Anna Levina	55	WFM Laura Ross

Oh, it's not all work, work, work for the press at this tournament. Tonight I attended a Seattle Supersonic-Memphis Grizzly NBA game at the Key Arena next door to the playing site. Also in attendance were some players who finished early and other luminaries. I sat next to the legendary "Mig" (Michael Greengard)—chess journalist extraordinaire. After the demise of Kasparov.com, Michael has continued to live and work in New York and has his own web site (ChessNinja.com). We were early and it soon became apparent that Mig's cell phone has a much more interesting life than I do. The Sonics broke a six game losing streak with a 103-97 overtime win. They're playing about 2550 basketball in a 2900 league. See you tomorrow.

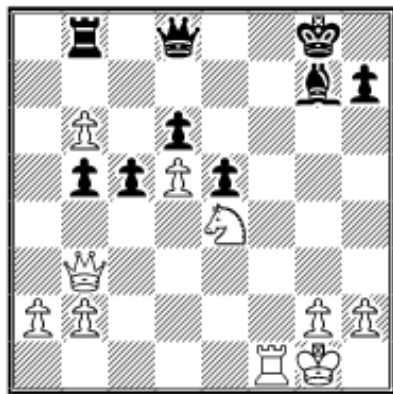
January 17

Shabba Sees the Promised Land

Alexander Shabalov stormed into the lead with two rounds to go behind a solid positional win over Alex Fishbein. Early leader Gregory Kaidanov was unable to keep up with Shabba, drawing Alexander Stripunsky.

Round 7, Board 1 *Shabalov,A (2613) - Fishbein,A (2489)* United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 16.01.2003

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Be2 e5 7.0-0 c6 8.d5 Na6 9.Be3 Ng4 10.Bg5 f6 11.Bh4 c5 12.Ne1 Nh6 13.f3 Bd7 14.Nd3 g5 15.Bf2 f5 16.Rb1 g4 17.fxg4 Nxg4 18.exf5 Nxf2 19.Nxf2 Bxf5 20.Bd3 Nc7 21.Bxf5 Rxf5 22.Qb3 Rb8 23.Nfe4 Rxf1+ 24.Rxf1 b5 25.cxb5 a6 26.b6 Nb5 27.Nxb5 axb5



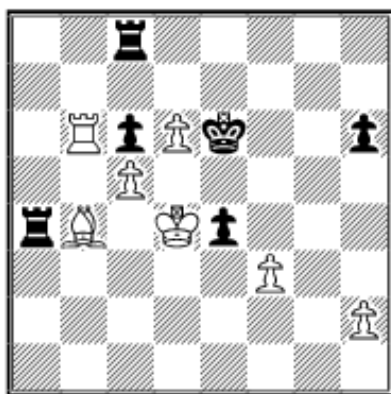
After achieving positional dominance, Shabalov switches over to the attack and nobody does it better.

**28.Qh3! h6 29.Qe6+ Kh7 30.Rf7 Qh4
31.Qf5+ Kg8 32.g3! Qxe4 33.Rxg7+
Kxg7 34.Qxe4 Rxb6 1–0**

The Seirawan-Nakamura cross-generational match up turned into a desperate fight that mesmerized the spectators who avidly followed home town hero Seirawan. In the end, Yasser was unable to push the youngster over the cliff and they both joined the fifteen-player logjam at 4½-2½ trailing Shabalov and Kaidanov.

Round 7, Board 4 *Seirawan, Y* (2636) - *Nakamura, H* (2520) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 16.01.2003

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bf4 Bg7 5.e3 c5 6.dxc5 Qa5 7.Rc1 Ne4
8.cxd5 Nxc3 9.Qd2 Qxa2 10.Rxc3 0–0 11.Bc4 Qa1+ 12.Rc1 Qxb2
13.e4 a5 14.Ne2 a4 15.Rc2 Qa1+ 16.Rc1 Qb2 17.Rc2 Qa1+ 18.Nc1
Na6 19.Be3 Qb1 20.Ba2 Qb4 21.f3 Qxd2+ 22.Kxd2 Nb4 23.Rc4
Nxa2 24.Nxa2 e6 25.d6 Bb2 26.Rb1 a3 27.Rb4 e5 28.R4xb2 axb2
29.Rxb2 Bd7 30.Nb4 Bc6 31.Nxc6 bxc6 32.Rb6 Rac8 33.Bh6 Rfd8
34.Bg5 Rd7 35.Bf6 Kf8 36.Bxe5 Ke8 37.Ke3 Ra7 38.Kf4 Kd7
39.Kg5 Ke6 40.Bd4 h6+ 41.Kf4 Ra4 42.Ke3 Ra3+ 43.Ke2 Ra2+
44.Kd3 Ra3+ 45.Bc3 Ra7 46.g4 f5 47.gxf5+ gxf5 48.Kd4 Ra4+
49.Bb4 fxe4**



50.Kxe4?

FRITZ doesn't like this one and "thinks" that 50.fxe4 leads to a win as in 50...Rf8 51.Rb7 Rf2 52.Re7+ Kf6 53.e5+ Kg6 54.Rb7 winning.

**50...Rf8 51.f4 h5 52.h4 Re8 53.Kd4 Rf8
54.Ke4 Re8 55.Kd4 Rg8 56.Kc4 Rc8
57.Rb7 Ra2 58.Re7+ Kf5 59.Kb3 Ra1**

60.Kb2 Ra4 61.Kb3 Ra1 62.Kb2 Ra4 63.Kb3 Ra1 ½–½

Popular IM John Donaldson has fought back from a bad start to a very respectable 4-3 score. Here is his win over GM Sergey Kudrin in a classic attack out of an isolated queen pawn position.

Round 7, Board 23 *Donaldson, J* (2399) - *Kudrin, S* (2542) United

4 4 GM Yasser Seirawan	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura	1/2-1/2
5 24 FM Igor Foygel	5 GM Joel Benjamin	1/2-1/2
6 12 IM Varuzhan Akobian	42 FM Stephen Muhammad	1/2-1/2
7 26 IM Eugene Perelshteyn	50 WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	1/2-1/2
8 10 GM Alex Yermolinsky	19 IM Boris Kreiman	1/2-1/2
9 2 GM Alexander Goldin	27 IM Michael Mulyar	1-0
10 23 GM Dmitry Gurevich	9 GM Larry Christiansen	1/2-1/2
11 30 FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat	40 WGM Kamile Baginskaite	1-0
12 17 GM John Fedorowicz	28 IM Jesse Kraai	1-0
13 18 GM Gennadi Zaitshik	29 IM Greg Shahade	0-1
14 44 IM Justin Sarkar	22 GM Walter Browne	1/2-1/2
15 34 IM Stanislav Kriventsov	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade	0-1
16 36 IM Ron Burnett	11 IM Ben Finegold	1/2-1/2
17 31 IM William Paschall	7 GM Nick De Firmian	1/2-1/2
18 32 FM Aaron Pixton	1 4 GM Gregory Serper	0-1
19 39 WGM Elena Donaldson	52 WIM Esther Epstein	1-0
20 51 WIM Anna Hahn	35 IM Dean Ippolito	1/2-1/2
21 37 GM Anatoly Lein	21 IM Yury Lapshun	1/2-1/2
22 25 GM Maurice Ashley	43 IM John Watson	1/2-1/2
23 33 IM John Donaldson	15 GM Sergey Kudrin	1-0
24 38 IM Larry Kaufman	48 FM Allan Bennett	1-0
25 54 WIM Olga Sagalchik	41 WGM Irina Krush	0-1
26 46 David Pruess	55 WFM Laura Ross	1-0
27 47 FM Gregory Markzon	57 WIM Elina Groberman	1-0
28 58 Julia Shiber	56 Anna Levina	1/2-1/2
29 49 Marc Esserman	53 WIM Cindy Tsai	1-0

If Shabalov can hold with black against Joel Benjamin, he will have white(probably) in the last round and be in no worse than in two-way tie for the title with Kaidanov, who has to beat a resurgent Alexander Goldin to catch Shabba before the last round. In other particularly interesting games, Nakamura's reward for surviving Yasser with black is black against former US Champion Boris Gulko--talk about rites of passage! And on the distaff side, Tsagaan Battsetseg has been joined on the lead by Jennifer Shahade and they are trailed by Irina Krush and Elena Donaldson. One of these women will likely win the title and my fearless and invariably wrong pick is . . . Krush!

Round 8, January 17, 2003

1 5 GM Joel Benjamin	6 GM Alexander Shabalov
2 1 GM Gregory Kaidanov	2 GM Alexander Goldin
3 3 GM Boris Gulko	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura

4 45	WIM Jennifer Shahade	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn
5 50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	28	IM Jesse Kraai
6 9	GM Larry Christiansen	42	FM Stephen Muhammad
7 4	GM Yasser Seirawan	17	GM John Fedorowicz
8 19	IM Boris Kreiman	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky
9 20	GM Alex Fishbein	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky
10 12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	24	FM Igor Foygel
11 29	IM Greg Shahade	13	GM Alexander Ivanov
12 14	GM Gregory Serper	33	IM John Donaldson
13 22	GM Walter Browne	36	IM Ron Burnett
14 41	WGM Irina Krush	32	FM Aaron Pixton
15 25	GM Maurice Ashley	46	David Pruess
16 7	GM Nick De Firmian	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat
17 55	WFM Laura Ross	51	WIM Anna Hahn
18 11	IM Ben Finegold	37	GM Anatoly Lein
19 15	GM Sergey Kudrin	38	IM Larry Kaufman
20 27	IM Michael Mulyar	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich
21 21	IM Yury Lapshun	44	IM Justin Sarkar
22 43	IM John Watson	39	WGM Elena Donaldson
23 18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	31	IM William Paschall
4 48	FM Allan Bennett	35	IM Dean Ippolito
25 40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	58	Julia Shiber
26 53	WIM Cindy Tsai	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik
27 47	FM Gregory Markzon	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov
28 56	Anna Levina	57	WIM Elina Groberman
29 52	WIM Esther Epstein	49	Marc Esserman

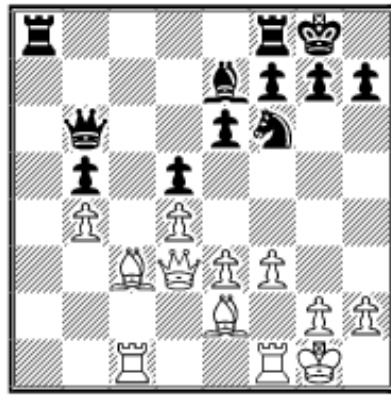
January 16

Coming into the Stretch

Heading into the last three rounds, Gregory Kaidanov and Alex Shabalov both drew (against Seirawan and Gulko respectively) to stay on the lead.

**Round 6, Board 1 Kaidanov,G (2629) - Seirawan,Y (2636) United States
Championship Seattle 15.01.2003**

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.e3 Bb7 5.Nc3 Ne4 6.Nxe4 Bxe4 7.Bd2
Be7 8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 d5 10.Bc3 c6 11.b4 Nd7 12.Rc1 Bxf3 13.Bxf3
b5 14.cxb5 cxb5 15.Be2 a6 16.a4 Qb6 17.axb5 axb5 18.Qd3 Nf6
19.f3**



19.Qxb5 Qxb5 20.Bxb5 Rab8=

19...Rfb8 20.Ra1 Rxa1 21.Rxa1 Ne8
22.Be1 1/2-1/2

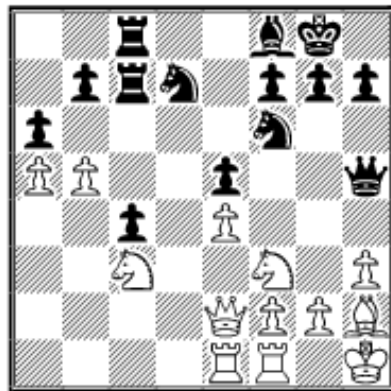
Shabalov and Kaidanov were joined by Alex Fishbein who downed defending champion Larry Christianson in a long game.

Round 6, Board 6 *Christiansen, L (2566) - Fishbein, A (2489)* United States Championship 2003 Seattle 15.01.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Bxd7+ Nxd7 5.0-0 Ngf6 6.Qe2 e6
7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Be7 9.c4 0-0 10.Nc3 Rc8 11.Bd2 Re8 12.b3 Qc7
13.Rae1 a6 14.Kh1 Qc5 15.Be3 Qa5 16.Bd2 Qc5

Fishbein offers a repetition of moves which Larry refused. He had to win this game to have any real chance to defend his title.

17.Nf3 Bf8 18.h3 Qh5 19.a4 Nc5 20.b4 Ncd7 21.a5 Rc7 22.Bf4
Rec8 23.c5 e5 24.Bh2 dxc5 25.b5 c4



White's queenside demonstration has come to less than nothing and he is just worse.

26.Rb1 Rc5 27.bxa6 bxa6 28.Qa2 Nb8
29.Rb4 Nc6 30.Rxc4 Nb4 31.Rxc5 Rxc5
32.Qd2 Nc6 33.Rb1 Qg6 34.Rb7?

Last train to Clarksville. White had to play 34.Rb6 to get the pawn back in the ensuing exchanges. Larry defends the losing position well but Fishbein is relentless.

34...Nxe4 35.Nxe4 Qxe4 36.Ng5 Qd5 37.Qxd5 Rxd5 38.g4 Nxa5
39.Ra7 f6 40.Ne6 Rd6 41.Nc7 Nb3 42.Nxa6 Nd2 43.Kg2 Ne4
44.Bg1 Rd2 45.Rc7 Ra2 46.Rc6 Kf7 47.h4 Bd6 48.Rb6 Be7
49.Nb4 Rd2 50.Nc6 Bc5 51.Rb7+ Kf8 52.Rb8+ Kf7 53.Rb7+ Ke6
54.Rxg7 Nxf2 55.Bxf2 Rxf2+ 56.Kg3 Rd2 57.Kf3 Rd6 58.Re7+
Kd5 59.Na5 Ra6 60.Rd7+ Ke6 61.Nb3 Ra3 62.Rd3 Bd6 63.Re3

Ra4 64.Re4 Ra3 65.Re3 Ra4 66.Re4 Ra2 67.Nd4+ Kd5 68.Nb5 Rh2 69.Nxd6 Kxd6 70.h5 Rh3+ 71.Kf2 f5 72.Ra4 f4 73.Ra6+ Kd5 74.Ra5+ Ke4 75.Ra4+ Kd5 76.Ra5+ Ke6 77.Ra6+ Kf7 78.Ra7+ Kf6 79.Rxh7 e4 80.Rh8 e3+ 81.Ke2 Rh2+ 82.Kd1 Kg5 83.Rg8+ Kh4 84.g5 f3 85.h6 e2+ 86.Kd2 Rh1 0-1

Standings after Round 6, January 15, 2003

1 Kaidanov, Shabalov, Fishbein **4½**

4 Gulko, Seirawan, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Yermolinsky, Akobian, Ivanov, Nakamura, Kreiman, Foygel, Mulyar, Muhammad **4**

16 Goldin, Christiansen, Fedorowicz, Zaitshik, Browne, Gurevich, Kraai, G. Shahade, Burnett, Sarkar **3½**

26 De Firmian, Finegold, Serper, Kudrin, Lapshun, Perelshteyn, Paschall, Pixton, J. Donaldson, Lein, Battsetseg * **3**

37 Ashley, Enkhbat, Kriventsov, Kaufman, Baginskaite*, Watson, J. Shahade *, Bennett **2½**

45 Ippolito, E. Donaldson*, Krush*, Pruess, Markzon, Hahn*, Epstein*, Sagalchik*, Ross*, Groberman*, Shiber * **2**

56 Tsai*, Levina * **1**

58 Esserman **½**

* - female player

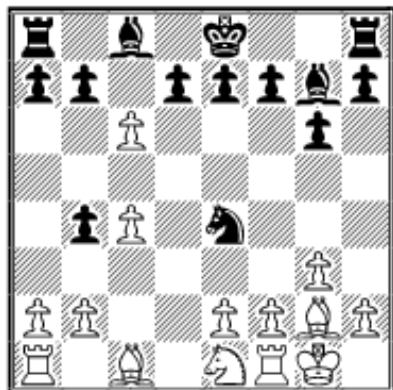
The surprise women's leader is WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg at 3-3. Tsagaan is 29 and was born in Darkhan, Mongolia. Her father taught her to play chess when she was about four years old. After playing thousands of offhand street games with her father and others, she became the women's champion of her city and then seven time women's champion of Mongolia. She moved to the United States in 1997 to improve her English and study Computer Science at UVSC in Utah. She currently attends University of Maryland at Baltimore on a full chess scholarship and is very proud of her school which is a five-time Pan-American collegiate champion. Tsagaan is married to Tegshsuren Enkhbat who is also competing here.

Round 6, Board 13 Ippolito,D (2378) - Battsetseg,T (2229) United States Championship 2003 Seattle 15.01

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nf3 Bg7 4.g3 c5 5.Bg2 Qa5+ 6.Nc3 Nc6?! (6...Ne4 is good here.) 7.d5 Ne4?!

Battsetseg loves sharp play and this game is good illustration of the principle that it's better to be worse in a position you like than better in one you don't.

8.dxc6 Nxc3 9.Qd2 Qb4 10.0-0 Ne4 11.Qxb4 cxb4 12.Ne1?



12.Ng5! Nxg5 13.cxb7 Bxb7 14.Bxb7 Rb8 15.Bd5 and white is still better. Now Battsetseg's pieces all get active and she's in her element.

12...f5 13.cxd7+ Bxd7 14.Nd3 a5 15.a3 b3 16.f3 Nd6 17.c5 Nc4 18.a4 Be6 19.Kf2 0-0 20.f4 Rab8 21.Rb1 Rfd8 22.c6 bxc6 23.Bxc6 Rbc8 24.Bb7 Rc7 25.Ba6 Bd4+ 26.Ke1 Bd5 27.Bd2 Nxd2 28.Kxd2 Rc2+ 29.Kd1 Be3 30.Bb5 Bg2 31.Ke1 Kg7 32.Rd1 Be4 33.Ra1 Rdc8 34.Rb1 Rd2 35.Rd1 Rxd1+ 36.Kxd1 Bg2 37.Ke1 Rc2 38.Bd7 Kf6 39.g4 fxg4 40.Bxg4 Bxf1 41.Kxf1 Bd4 42.Bf3 e6 43.Be4 Bxb2 0-1

Tsagaan moves up to board seven in the next round against IM Eugene Perelshteyn while her husband has white against close pursuer Kamile Baginskaite. Welcome to Family Feud.

Round 6, January 15, 2003

Bd	White	Black
1	1 GM Gregory Kaidanov	4 GM Yasser Seirawan ½-½
2	3 GM Boris Gulko	6 GM Alexander Shabalov ½-½
3	5 GM Joel Benjamin	12 IM Varuzhan Akobian ½-½
4	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura	8 GM Alex Stripunsky ½-½
5	22 GM Walter Browne	40 WGM Kam.Baginskaite 1-0
6	9 GM Larry Christiansen	20 GM Alex Fishbein 0-1
7	42 FM Stephen Muhammad	10 GM Alex Yermolinsky ½-½
8	11 IM Ben Finegold	24 FM Igor Foygel 0-1
9	13 GM Alexander Ivanov	26 IM Eugene Perelshteyn 1-0
10	27 IM Michael Mulyar	14 GM Gregory Serper 1-0
11	15 GM Sergey Kudrin	39 WGM Elena Donaldson 1-0
12	28 IM Jesse Kraai	18 GM Gennadi Zaitshik ½-½
13	35 IM Dean Ippolito	50 WIM T. Battsetseg 0-1
14	19 IM Boris Kreiman	31 IM William Paschall 1-0
15	41 WGM Irina Krush	33 IM John Donaldson 0-1
16	43 IM John Watson	2 GM Alexander Goldin 0-1
17	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade	38 IM Larry Kaufman ½-½
18	23 GM Dmitry Gurevich	36 IM Ron Burnett ½-½
19	51 WIM Anna Hahn	48 FM Allan Bennett 0-1
20	17 GM John Fedorowicz	30 FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat 1-0
21	7 GM Nick De Firmian	44 IM Justin Sarkar ½-½
22	37 GM Anatoly Lein	25 GM Maurice Ashley ½-½
23	21 IM Yury Lapshun	32 FM Aaron Pixton ½-½
24	29 IM Greg Shahade	34 IM Stan. Kriventsov 1-0
25	52 WIM Esther Epstein	46 David Pruess ½-½
26	55 WFM Laura Ross	47 FM Gregory Markzon ½-½

27	53	WIM Cindy Tsai	58	Julia Shiber 0-1
28	56	Anna Levina	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik 0-1
29	57	WIM Elina Groberman	49	Marc Esserman 1-0

Pairings for Round 7, January 16, 2003

1	6	GM Alexander Shabalov	20	GM Alex Fishbein
2	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov
3	13	GM Alexander Ivanov	3	GM Boris Gulko
4	4	GM Yasser Seirawan	16	IM Hikaru Nakamura
5	24	FM Igor Foygel	5	GM Joel Benjamin
6	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	42	FM Stephen Muhammad
7	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg
8	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	19	IM Boris Kreiman
9	2	GM Alexander Goldin	27	IM Michael Mulyar
10	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich	9	GM Larry Christiansen
11	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite
12	17	GM John Fedorowicz	28	IM Jesse Kraai
13	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	29	IM Greg Shahade
14	44	IM Justin Sarkar	22	GM Walter Browne
15	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade
16	36	IM Ron Burnett	11	IM Ben Finegold
17	31	IM William Paschall	7	GM Nick De Firmian
18	32	FM Aaron Pixton	14	GM Gregory Serper
19	39	WGM Elena Donaldson	52	WIM Esther Epstein
20	51	WIM Anna Hahn	35	IM Dean Ippolito
21	37	GM Anatoly Lein	21	IM Yury Lapshun
22	25	GM Maurice Ashley	43	IM John Watson
23	33	IM John Donaldson	15	GM Sergey Kudrin
24	38	IM Larry Kaufman	48	FM Allan Bennett
25	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik	41	WGM Irina Krush
26	46	David Pruess	55	WFM Laura Ross
27	47	FM Gregory Markzon	57	WIM Elina Groberman
28	58	Julia Shiber	56	Anna Levina
29	49	Marc Esserman	53	WIM Cindy Tsai

Free Day Fun

The American Foundation for Chess asks some of the top players to do a bit of media work during the tournament. On the rest day Press Officer John Henderson had the task of getting defending women's champion Jen Shahade out of bed before 8.00am to accompany her as the "special guest" on the "Bob Rivers and Twisted Radio" morning show at Seattle classic rock radio station KZOK. Jen's billing on the KZOK website read: "Jennifer Shahade (rhymes with "hottie"), defending U.S. women's chess champion, competing in the U.S. Chess Championships this week in Seattle." Okay. At least they knew what to expect.

The radio hosts were amazed that the lovely Jennifer was a chess player, let alone a women's champion. Assorted jokes about whether or not she undid a few buttons on her blouse before playing against men were about as intellectual as the conversation got but the feisty defending champion took it with good humor and held her own despite the early hour.



The main activity of the day was as a giant simultaneous organized at the Seattle Center as 25 of the players each played 20 K-12 students (a total of over 300). The kids loved it! They got to play some of the top stars in the game such as Maurice Ashley, Boris Gulko, Yasser Seirawan and Walter Browne. The players loved it too as they felt they were doing a worthy job of taking chess to the community.



Walter Browne plays the kids.

The What Might Have Been Blues

In our last report, before the free day, we mentioned the trial of having losses to agonize over on the “rest day.” Maurice Ashely lost this potential brilliancy in round four.

Round 4, Board 14 Ashley,M (2485) - Nakamura,H (2520) United States Championship 2003 Seattle 14.01.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.Bg5 Be7 9.Qf3 Qb6 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.Rhe1 h6 12.e5 Bb7 13.Qh3 dxe5 14.Nxe6! fxe6 15.Bxe6 Rd8 16.Rxd7 Rxd7 17.Bxf6 Rd6 18.Qh5+ Kd8 19.Bxe7+ Kxe7 20.Qxe5 Kd8 21.Nd5?

Fritz says 21.Bd5! Bxd5 22.Nxd5 Qc6 (22...Rxd5 23.Qxd5+ Kc8 24.Re6+-; 22...Qc5 23.Qxg7 Qxd5 24.Qxh8+ Kc7 25.Re7+ Rd7 26.Qc3+ Kb7 27.Qf3+-) 23.Qxg7 Qxd5 24.Qxh8+- winning. But White's position is so good he is still better.

21...Bxd5 22.Bxd5 Qc7 23.f4 Rd7 24.Qf5 Qc5 25.Be6??

Throwing it all away. 25.Rd1 Rf8 26.Qe4 Qc7 27.g3 Re8 28.Qf3 Qd6 and white still has chances to draw.

25...Qf2 0-1

This heartbreaking loss was followed by another loss in a game that could have been won against Ron Burnett the next day. The free day wasn't exactly carefree but Maurice stabilized with a draw against GM Anatoly Lein in round six and was gracious enough to talk about his experiences.

“Sure there was some soul-searching on the free day but I was encouraged that I played well against Nakamura. I've never played in a U.S. Championship before and I have been preparing for this event since I qualified at Foxwoods in March. I'm confident that I can play well at this level now and I'm going to start preparing for next year's Championship as soon as I get home.”

Maurice is one of the class acts in American chess and I'm sure he'll do well in the future. See you tomorrow.

January 14 Midway Battles

Today marked the mid-point of the tournament with the only rest day coming tomorrow. Rest days are great when you're scoring points but provide little comfort when things are going badly—just more time to sit around contemplating

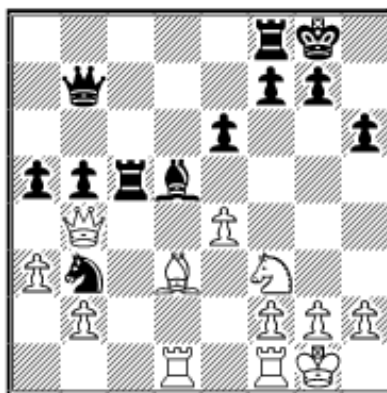
what might have been. Two guys who will no doubt enjoy Wednesday are co-leaders Gregory Kaidanov and Alex Shabalov who played a hard but circumspect draw in round 5.



Gregory Kaidanov

Round 5, Board 1 *Shabalov,A (2613) - Kaidanov,G (2629) United States Championship 2003 Seattle 13.01.2003*

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 dxc4
7.Qa4+ Nbd7 8.Qxc4 a6 9.e3 b5 10.Qb3 c5 11.Be2 Bb7
12.0-0 Rc8 13.a3 0-0 14.Rad1 Nd5 15.Bxe7 Qxe7
16.dxc5 Nxc5 17.Nxd5 Bxd5 18.Qb4 Qb7 19.Rc1 Nb3
20.Rcd1 Rc2 21.Bd3 Rc5 22.e4 a5



Kaidanov has held his own nicely without allowing the cut and thrust that Shabalov loves. Gregory has by far played the best with black so far in this tournament.

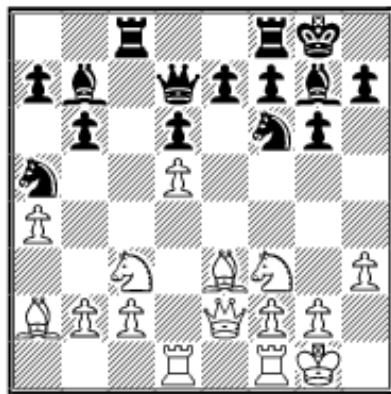
23.Qe1 Bc4 24.Qe3 Rfc8 25.Bxc4 bxc4 26.h3 a4 27.Rfe1 c3 28.bxc3 Rxc3 29.Rd3 Rxd3 30.Qxd3 Qc6 31.e5 Nc5 1/2-1/2

Yasser Seirawan arrived in the group immediately behind the leaders with an easy win over an exhausted Yury Lapshun who had played 233 moves in the last two rounds and hung a pawn on move eleven against Yasser. Yaz has the black against Kaidanov after the rest day. With two straight wins under his belt and a day to prepare, hometown hero Seirawan can be expected to make a peak effort.

Joel Benjamin also moved to 3 1/2-1 1/2 by outplaying Perelshteyn nicely with the black pieces.

Round 5, Board 4 *Perelshteyn,E (2442) - Benjamin,J (2587) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 13.01.2003*

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.h3 0-0 6.Be3 b6 7.e5 Nfd7
8.exd6 cxd6 9.Bc4 Bb7 10.0-0 Nc6 11.a4 Na5 12.Ba2 Rc8 13.Qe2 Nf6 14.Rad1 Qd7 15.d5?



15...Rxc3!

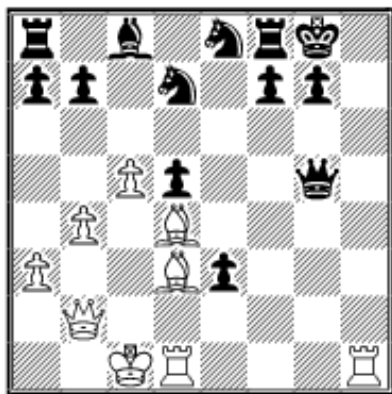
A “stock” sacrifice but with some interesting twists. Joel plays the resulting position very well and allows Perelshteyn no chances.

16.bxc3 Ne4 17.Bd4 Nxc3 18.Bxc3 Bxc3 19.Bb3 Bf6
20.Qe4 Rc8 21.Rfe1 Qf5 22.Qxf5 gxf5 23.Nd4 f4
24.Nf5 Kf8 25.Rd3 Rc5 26.g3 fxg3 27.fxg3 Nxb3
28.cxb3 Rxd5 29.Rxd5 Bxd5 30.Rc1 Ke8 31.b4 Kd7

32.Kf2 Bb3 33.a5 b5 34.Ne3 d5 35.Rc5 a6 36.Rc1 e6 37.Ng4 Bg7 38.Kf3 f5 39.Ne3 d4
40.Rb1 Ba4 41.Nd1 d3 42.Ne3 Bd4 0–1

Round 5, Board 18 *Serper, G (2556) - Ippolito, D (2378)* United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 13.01.2003

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 5.dxc5 Na6 6.a3 Bxc3+ 7.Qxc3 Nxc5 8.b4 Nce4
9.Qb2 d5 10.c5 h6 11.Be3 0–0 12.f3 Ng5 13.Bd4 Ne8 14.h4 Nh7 15.e3 Nhf6 16.g4 Nd7
17.g5 hxg5 18.hxg5 Qxg5 19.0–0–0 e5 20.f4 exf4 21.Nh3 Qh6 22.Bd3 fxe3? 23.Ng5
Qxg5



Grandmaster Serper, who now lives in the Seattle area, gets to make one of those moves that we all delight in. Mate in four.

24.Rh8!+ 1–0

Standings after Round 5, January 13, 2003

1 Kaidanov, Shabalov **4**

3 Gulko, Seirawan, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Christiansen,
Yermolinsky, Akobian, Nakamura, Fishbein, Muhammad **3½**

13 Finegold, Ivanov, Serper, Zaitshik, Kreiman, Gurevich, Foygel,
Perelshteyn, Mulyar, Kraai, Paschall, Burnett, Sarkar **3**

26 Goldin, De Firmian, Fedorowicz, Lapshun, Browne, G. Shahade,
Enkhbat, Pixton, Kriventsov, Lein, Baginskaite *, Watson **2½**

38 Kudrin, Ashley, J. Donaldson, Ippolito, Kaufman, E. Donaldson*,
Krush*, J. Shahade*, Battsetseg*, Hahn * 2

48 Pruess, Markzon, Bennett, Epstein*, Ross * 1½

53 Tsai*, Sagalchik*, Levina*, Groberman*, Shiber * 1

58 Esserman ½

*- female player

Results Round 5, January 13, 2003

Bd	White	Black
1 6	GM Alexander Shabalov	1 GM Gregory Kaidanov ½-½
2 12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	3 GM Boris Gulko ½-½
3 16	IM Hikaru Nakamura	9 GM Larry Christiansen ½-½
4 26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	5 GM Joel Benjamin 0-1
5 4	GM Yasser Seirawan	21 IM Yury Lapshun 1-0
6 39	WGM Elena Donaldson	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade ½-½
7 20	GM Alex Fishbein	7 GM Nick De Firmian 1-0
8 8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	22 GM Walter Browne 1-0
9 10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	37 GM Anatoly Lein 1-0
10 31	IM William Paschall	11 IM Ben Finegold ½-½
11 28	IM Jesse Kraai	41 WGM Irina Krush 1-0
12 44	IM Justin Sarkar	13 GM Alexander Ivanov ½-½
13 18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	23 GM Dmitry Gurevich ½-½
14 24	FM Igor Foygel	19 IM Boris Kreiman ½-½
15 40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	29 IM Greg Shahade ½-½
16 42	FM Stephen Muhammad	15 GM Sergey Kudrin 1-0
17 30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat	2 GM Alexander Goldin ½-½
18 14	GM Gregory Serper	35 IM Dean Ippolito 1-0
19 50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	57 WIM Elina Groberman 1-0
20 36	IM Ron Burnett	25 GM Maurice Ashley 1-0
21 38	IM Larry Kaufman	27 IM Michael Mulyar 0-1
22 46	David Pruess	32 FM Aaron Pixton 0-1
23 33	IM John Donaldson	43 IM John Watson ½-½
24 48	FM Allan Bennett	52 WIM Esther Epstein ½-½
25 34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	17 GM John Fedorowicz ½-½
26 54	WIM Olga Sagalchik	51 WIM Anna Hahn 0-1
27 58	Julia Shiber	47 FM Gregory Markzon 0-1
28 55	WFM Laura Ross	49 Marc Esserman 1-0
29 53	WIM Cindy Tsai	56 Anna Levina ½-½

Pairings for Round 6, January 15, 2003

Bd	White	Black
1 1	GM Gregory Kaidanov	4 GM Yasser Seirawan
2 3	GM Boris Gulko	6 GM Alexander Shabalov
3 5	GM Joel Benjamin	12 IM Varuzhan Akobian

4 16	IM Hikaru Nakamura	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky
5 22	GM Walter Browne	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite
6 9	GM Larry Christiansen	20	GM Alex Fishbein
7 42	FM Stephen Muhammad	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky
8 11	IM Ben Finegold	24	FM Igor Foygel
9 13	GM Alexander Ivanov	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn
10 27	IM Michael Mulyar	14	GM Gregory Serper
11 15	GM Sergey Kudrin	39	WGM Elena Donaldson
12 28	IM Jesse Kraai	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik
13 35	IM Dean Ippolito	50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg
14 19	IM Boris Kreiman	31	IM William Paschall
15 41	WGM Irina Krush	33	IM John Donaldson
16 43	IM John Watson	2	GM Alexander Goldin
17 45	WIM Jennifer Shahade	38	IM Larry Kaufman
18 23	GM Dmitry Gurevich	36	IM Ron Burnett
19 51	WIM Anna Hahn	48	FM Allan Bennett
20 17	GM John Fedorowicz	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat
21 7	GM Nick De Firmian	44	IM Justin Sarkar
22 37	GM Anatoly Lein	25	GM Maurice Ashley
23 21	IM Yury Lapshun	32	FM Aaron Pixton
24 29	IM Greg Shahade	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov
25 52	WIM Esther Epstein	46	David Pruess
26 55	WFM Laura Ross	47	FM Gregory Markzon
27 53	WIM Cindy Tsai	58	Julia Shiber
28 56	Anna Levina	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik
29 57	WIM Elina Groberman	49	Marc Esserman

January 13

Shabalov Joins Kaidanov at the Top

Standings after Round 4, January 12, 2003

1 Kaidanov, Shabalov **3½**

3 Gulko, Christiansen, Akobian, Nakamura, Perelshteyn **3**

8 Seirawan, Benjamin, De Firmian, Stripunsky, Yermolinsky, Finegold, Ivanov, Zaitshik, Kreiman, Fishbein, Lapshun, Browne, Gurevich, Foygel, Paschall, Lein, Muhammad, Sarkar **2½**

26 Goldin, Serper, Kudrin, Fedorowicz, Ashley, Mulyar, Kraai, G. Shahade, Enkhbat, Kriventsov, Ippolito, Burnett, Kaufman, Baginskaite*, Krush *, Watson **2**

42 Pixton, J. Donaldson, E. Donaldson*, J. Shahade *, Pruess **1½**

47 Bennett, Battsetseg*, Hahn*, Epstein*, Sagalchik*, Groberman*, Shiber * **1**

54 Markzon, Esserman, Tsai*, Ross*, Levina * **½**

* denotes female player

Alexander Shabalov won yesterday and joined Gregory Kaidanov at the top of the standings with 3½ out of four points. They meet today with Shabalov manning the white pieces. This game will no doubt go a long way to determining the winner of the 2003 US Championship.

Shabalov outplayed three-time Marshall Chess Club champion Yury Lapshun in round four. Lapshun, yet another Ukrainian, might have been a bit fatigued after his 164-move attempt at winning against Akobian in round 3. The game was a draw. "Shabba" won a

nice game against Yury and it only took him 69 moves to do it.

(3) Lapshun, Y (2419) - Shabalov, A (2613)

United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 14.01.2003

1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.c4 Nb6 4.d4 d6 5.f4 dxe5 6.fxe5 c5 7.d5 e6 8.Nc3 exd5 9.cxd5 c4
10.Nf3 Bb4 11.Bxc4 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Nxc4 13.Qa4+ Nd7 14.Qxc4 Nb6 15.Qb5+ Qd7
16.Qxd7+ Bxd7 17.e6 fxe6 18.dxe6 Bxe6 19.0-0 0-0 20.Be3 Nd5 21.Bd4 Nf4 22.Rfe1
Bc4 23.Bc5 Rf6 24.Re3 b6 25.Ba3 h6 26.Be7 Rg6 27.Nh4 Re6 28.Rxe6 Bxe6 29.Re1
Bxa2 30.Bd6 Ne6 31.Nf5 a5 32.Ba3 Rd8 33.Nd6 a4 34.Rd1 Bb3 35.Rd2 Rd7 36.h3
Nc5 37.Rd4 Re7 38.Kf2 Re5 39.Bb4 Bc2 40.Nc4 Re6 41.Rd8+ Kh7 42.Bxc5 bxc5
43.Ra8 Bd1 44.Rd8 Bb3 45.Na3 h5 46.h4 Kg6 47.Rc8 Re5 48.Rc7 Kf6 49.Nb5 Rd5
50.Ke3 Bc2 51.Kf4 Rf5+ 52.Ke3 Re5+ 53.Kf3 Be4+ 54.Kg3 Bd3 55.Na3 Re3+ 56.Kf4
Re4+ 57.Kf3 Rxh4 58.Rxc5 Be4+ 59.Kf2 Rh2 60.Kf1 Rxd2 61.Rxh5 Ra2 62.Nb5 a3
63.Nd4 Rb2 64.Ra5 a2 65.Ra6+ Kg5 66.Ra5+ Kg4 67.Nb3 Rxb3 68.Rxa2 Rxc3
69.Ra5 g5 0-1

Lapshun's reward for losing? The black pieces against Yasser Seirawan. Yes, this is a tough tournament.

Sixteen-year-old Hikaru Nakamura won with black against Maurice Ashley. Wins with black are especially highly-prized here partly because the winner usually gets white next and a chance to start a winning streak. Hikaru's white comes against defending champion Larry Christiansen. Larry has endured three straight draws and is in no mood to fool around. This clash of generations is a game to watch. My pick: Christiansen.

(14) Ashley, M (2485) - Nakamura, H (2520)

United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 14.01.2003

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.Bg5 Be7 9.Qf3
Qb6 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.Rhe1 h6 12.e5 Bb7 13.Qh3 dxe5 14.Nxe6 fxe6 15.Bxe6 Rd8
16.Rxd7 Rxd7 17.Bxf6 Rd6 18.Qh5+ Kd8 19.Bxe7+ Kxe7 20.Qxe5 Kd8 21.Nd5 Bxd5
22.Bxd5 Qc7 23.f4 Rd7 24.Qf5 Qc5 25.Be6 Qf2 0-1

Results Round 4

Bd	White	Black	
1	1 GM Gregory Kaidanov	12 IM Varuzhan Akobian	1/2-1/2
2	3 GM Boris Gulko	26 IM Eugene Perelshteyn	1/2-1/2
3	21 IM Yury Lapshun	6 GM Alexander Shabalov	0-1
4	18 IM Boris Kreiman	4 GM Yasser Seirawan	1/2-1/2
5	5 GM Joel Benjamin	19 GM Gennadi Zaitshik	1/2-1/2
6	15 GM Sergey Kudrin	40 WGM Kamile Baginskaite	1/2-1/2
7	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade	20 GM Alex Fishbein	0-1
8	7 GM Nick De Firmian	22 GM Walter Browne	1/2-1/2
9	24 FM Igor Foygel	8 GM Alexander Stripunsky	1/2-1/2
10	9 GM Larry Christiansen	28 IM Jesse Kraai	1-0
11	23 GM Dmitry Gurevich	10 GM Alex Yermolinsky	1/2-1/2
12	11 IM Ben Finegold	42 FM Stephen Muhammad	1/2-1/2
13	13 GM Alexander Ivanov	31 IM William Paschall	1/2-1/2
14	25 GM Maurice Ashley	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura	0-1
15	2 GM Alexander Goldin	44 IM Justin Sarkar	1/2-1/2

16 41	WGM Irina Krush	14	GM Gregory Serper	1/2-1/2
17 17	GM John Fedorowicz	38	IM Larry Kaufman	1/2-1/2
18 43	IM John Watson	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat	1/2-1/2
19 37	GM Anatoly Lein	46	David Pruess	1-0
20 27	IM Michael Mulyar	50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	1-0
21 29	IM Greg Shahade	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik	1-0
22 39	FM Aaron Pixton	32	WGM Elena Donaldson	1/2-1/2
23 51	WIM Anna Hahn	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	0-1
24 35	IM Dean Ippolito	58	Julia Shiber	1-0
25 52	WIM Esther Epstein	36	IM Ron Burnett	0-1
26 33	IM John Donaldson	55	WFM Laura Ross	1-0
27 57	WIM Elina Groberman	48	FM Allan Bennett	1/2-1/2
28 47	FM Gregory Markzon	53	WIM Cindy Tsai	1/2-1/2
29 49	Marc Esserman	56	Anna Levina	1/2-1/2

Round 5, January 13, 2003

Bd	White	Black
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1 6	GM Alexander Shabalov	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov
2 12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	3	GM Boris Gulko
3 16	IM Hikaru Nakamura	9	GM Larry Christiansen
4 26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	5	GM Joel Benjamin
5 4	GM Yasser Seirawan	21	IM Yury Lapshun
6 39	WGM Elena Donaldson	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade
7 20	GM Alex Fishbein	7	GM Nick De Firmian
8 8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	22	GM Walter Browne
9 10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	37	GM Anatoly Lein
10 31	IM William Paschall	11	IM Ben Finegold
11 28	IM Jesse Kraai	41	WGM Irina Krush
12 44	IM Justin Sarkar	13	GM Alexander Ivanov
13 18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich
14 24	FM Igor Foygel	19	IM Boris Kreiman
15 40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	29	IM Greg Shahade
16 42	FM Stephen Muhammad	15	GM Sergey Kudrin
17 30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat	2	GM Alexander Goldin
18 14	GM Gregory Serper	35	IM Dean Ippolito
19 50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	57	WIM Elina Groberman
20 36	IM Ron Burnett	25	GM Maurice Ashley
21 38	IM Larry Kaufman	27	IM Michael Mulyar
22 46	David Pruess	32	FM Aaron Pixton
23 33	IM John Donaldson	43	IM John Watson
24 48	FM Allan Bennett	52	WIM Esther Epstein
25 34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	17	GM John Fedorowicz
26 54	WIM Olga Sagalchik	51	WIM Anna Hahn
27 58	Julia Shiber	47	FM Gregory Markzon
28 55	WFM Laura Ross	49	Marc Esserman
29 53	WIM Cindy Tsai	56	Anna Levina

The key women's match up for the day is Elena Donaldson against Jennifer Shahade—a rare meeting of two top women players in this particular US Championship format. A decisive result in this game is doubly valuable for the winner because not only does she move forward, she pushes the loser backward in the women's race.

Belated 54th birthday greetings (Tuesday) to six-time US title winner Walter Browne. And he's still in the hunt for this tournament title too.

See you tomorrow.

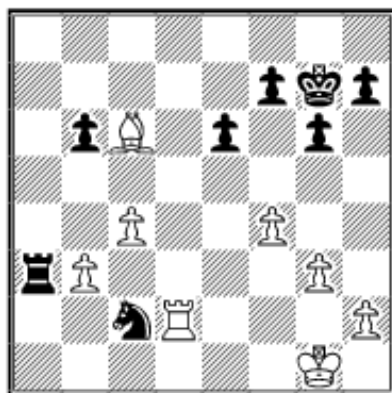
January 12

The Kentuckian

Forty-two-year-old Grandmaster Gregory Kaidanov of Lexington, Kentucky seized sole first place in the third round today with an impressive win with the black pieces against GM Gennadi Zaitshik.

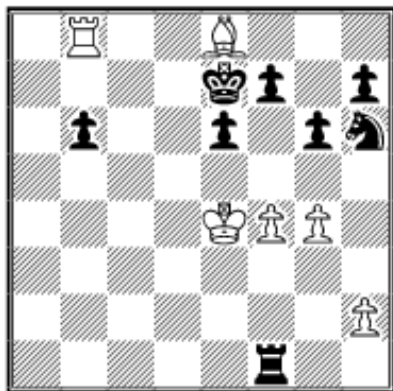
Round 3, Board 1 Zaitshik, G (2468) - Kaidanov, G (2629) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 11.01.2003

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 g6 3.Bg2 Bg7 4.d4 Nf6 5.0-0 0-0 6.c4 dxc4 7.Na3 c3
8.bxc3 c5 9.e3 Nc6 10.Qe2 Bf5 11.Rd1 Qa5 12.Bb2 Rfd8 13.Nd2
Bg4 14.f3 Be6 15.Nb3 Bxb3 16.axb3 Qb6 17.Qb5 Nd5 18.Qxb6
axb6 19.Nc2 cxd4 20.exd4 Rxa1 21.Bxa1 Ra8 22.f4 e6 23.c4 Ndb4
24.d5 Nxc2 25.dxc6 bxc6 26.Bxg7 Kxg7 27.Bxc6 Ra3 28.Rd2?



After an interesting opening and early middlegame that has led to a roughly equal position, Zaitshik makes a mistake leading to the loss of a pawn. Better is 28.Be4 Ne3 29.Rd3 and the position still balanced.

28...Ne3 29.Ba4 Nxc4 30.Rd4 Ne3
31.Rd7 Ra2 32.Rb7 Rg2+ 33.Kh1 Rf2
34.Bb5 Rb2 35.Kg1 Rxb3 36.Be8
Rb1+ 37.Kf2 Ng4+ 38.Kf3 Nh6 39.g4 Kf8 40.Rb8 Rf1+ 41.Ke4
Ke7



Kaidanov's endgame technique is flawless. Yasser Seirawan has been heard to say, "Good technique, Grasshopper, is a matter of good tactics!"

42.Bb5 Rb1 43.Be2 Re1 44.Kd3 Rh1
45.Rb7+ Kf8 0-1

Sporting a USCF rating of 2742,

Gregory is the highest-rated player in the field. He first visited the US in 1990 and an invitation to teach chess in Kentucky led to permanent residence. The winner of 25 international tournaments, Kaidanov will not give up his narrow lead easily.

Leader board standings after 3 rounds

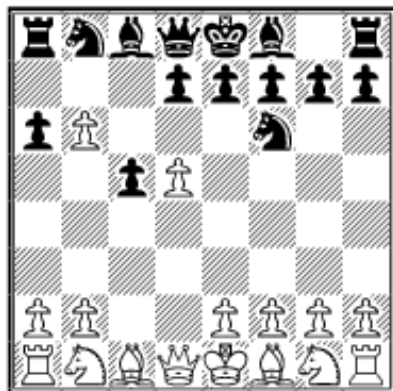
1	GM Gregory Kaidanov	+31	+30	+16	3.0
2	GM Boris Gulko	+41	=18	+22	2.5
3	GM Alexander Shabalov	+43	=19	+29	2.5
4	IM Varuzhan Akobian	+35	+39	=5	2.5
5	IM Yury Lapshun	+46	+26	=4	2.5
6	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	+53	=11	+28	2.5
7	GM Yasser Seirawan	=51	=32	+43	2.0
8	GM Joel Benjamin	=42	=24	+41	2.0
9	GM Nick De Firmian	+44	=20	=15	2.0
10	GM Alexander Stripunsky	=32	+51	=19	2.0
11	GM Larry Christiansen	+33	=6	=18	2.0
12	GM Alex Yermolinsky	+45	=21	=20	2.0
13	IM Ben Finegold	+34	-22	+42	2.0
14	GM Alexander Ivanov	=24	=42	+44	2.0
15	IM Hikaru Nakamura	=37	+36	=9	2.0
16	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	+55	+50	-1	2.0
17	IM Boris Kreiman	=52	=25	+45	2.0
18	GM Walter Browne	+47	=2	=11	2.0
19	GM Dmitry Gurevic	+48	=3	=10	2.0
20	FM Igor Foygel	+57	=9	=12	2.0
21	GM Maurice Ashley	+49	=12	=26	2.0
22	IM Jesse Kraai	+54	+13	-2	2.0
23	IM William Paschall	-26	+46	+50	2.0
24	FM Stephen Muhammad	=14	=8	+39	2.0
25	IM Justin Sarkar	=28	=17	+40	2.0
26	GM Alexander Goldin	+23	-5	=21	1.5
27	GM Gregory Serper	=36	=37	=32	1.5
28	GM Sergey Kudrin	=25	+38	-6	1.5
29	GM John Fedorowicz	=38	+52	-3	1.5
30	GM Alex Fishbein	+56	-1	=35	1.5
31	FM Tegshsuren Enhbat	-1	+56	=37	1.5
32	GM Anatoly Lein	=10	=7	=27	1.5
33	IM Larry Kaufman	-11	=53	+54	1.5
34	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	-13	=54	+53	1.5
35	WGM Irina Krush	-4	+58	=30	1.5
36	IM John Watson	=27	-15	+52	1.5
37	WIM Jennifer Shahade	=15	=27	=31	1.5
38	David Pruess	=29	-28	+51	1.5
39	IM Michael Mulyar	+58	-4	-24	1.0
40	IM Greg Shahade	-50	+55	-25	1.0
41	FM Aaron Pixton	-2	+47	-8	1.0
42	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	=8	=14	-13	1.0
43	IM Dean Ippolito	-3	+48	-7	1.0
44	IM Ron Burnett	-9	+57	-14	1.0
45	WGM Elena Donaldson	-12	+49	-17	1.0
46	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	-5	-23	+57	1.0
47	WIM Anna Hahn	-18	-41	+58	1.0
48	WIM Esther Epstein	-19	-43	+55	1.0
49	WIM Olga Sagalchik	-21	-45	+56	1.0
50	Julia Shiber	+40	-16	-23	1.0
51	IM John Donaldson	=7	-10	-38	0.5
52	FM Allan Bennett	=17	-29	-36	0.5
53	WFM Laura Ross	-6	=33	-34	0.5
54	WIM Elina Groberman	-22	=34	-33	0.5

55 FM Gregory Markzon	-16	-40	-48	0.0
56 Marc Esserman	-30	-31	-49	0.0
57 WIM Cindy Tsai	-20	-44	-46	0.0
58 Anna Levina	-39	-35	-47	0.0

Many more GM clashes today and the Shabalov-Fedorowicz matchup looked extremely watchable. “Shabba” is a consummate attacking player and “The Fed” is a one of the world’s great experts on the Benko Gambit. Would Shabalov allow John to play his favorite? Yes. Would Shabalov accept the Gambit? No.

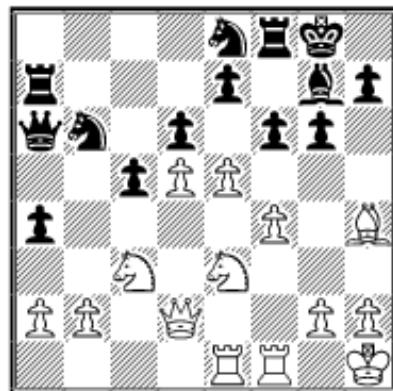
Round 3 Board 4 Shabalov,A (2613) - Fedorowicz,J (2505) United States Championship 2003 Seattle, 11.01.2003

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4.cxb5 a6 5.b6



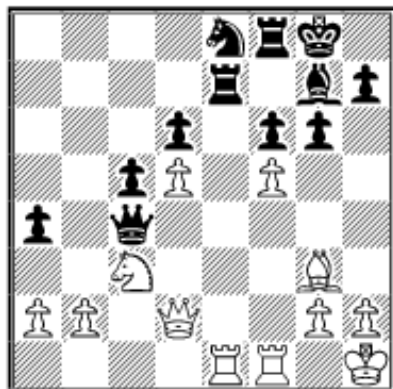
Another great Latvian attacking player, Alexy Shirov, also regularly declines the Benko Gambit. Attackers just don’t like to accept pawns and give up the initiative. I think it’s a particularly good idea against the Benko. Taking the pawn and nursing it to victory requires the patience of Job or Anatoly Karpov.

**5...Qxb6 6.Nc3 g6 7.e4 d6 8.Nf3 Bg7
9.Nd2 0-0 10.Be2 a5 11.Nc4 Qd8 12.0-0 Nbd7 13.Bg5 a4 14.Qc2
Nb6 15.Ne3 Ba6 16.Bxa6 Rxa6 17.f4 Qb8 18.Kh1 Ra7 19.Rae1
Qb7 20.Qd2 Qa6 21.e5 Ne8 22.Bh4 f6?**



22...dxe5 23.fxe5 Bxe5 24.Ng4 Bd6 25.Nh6+ Kg7
26.Qg5 is the kind of thing John didn’t like because White is attacking and that is what Shabalov lives for but the text doesn’t work out either.

**23.exf6 exf6 24.f5 Nc4 25.Nxc4 Qxc4
26.Bg3 Re7?**



A blunder in an unpleasant position.
26...Rb7 was much better though white still has the edge.

27.Rf4! Rxe1+ 28.Qxe1 Qa6 29.Rxa4 Qb7 30.Qe6+ Kh8 31.b3 gxf5 32.Bxd6 Nxd6 33.Qxd6 Re8 34.Kg1 Bf8 35.Qf4 Qe7 1-0

The question for round four is whether Gregory Kaidanov can maintain his lead on the field against extremely solid IM Varuzhan Akobian who is tournament commentator Jeremy Silman's dark horse choice to win it all. As we have noted, Akobian is only eighteen and youth must be served and all that but I don't think today is the day.

Round 4, January 12, 2003

Bd	White	Black
1	1 GM Gregory Kaidanov	12 IM Varuzhan Akobian
2	3 GM Boris Gulko	26 IM Eugene Perelshteyn
3	21 IM Yury Lapshun	6 GM Alexander Shabalov
4	18 GM Gennadi Zaitshik	4 GM Yasser Seirawan
5	5 GM Joel Benjamin	19 IM Boris Kreiman
6	15 GM Sergey Kudrin	40 WGM Kamile Baginskaite
7	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade	20 GM Alex Fishbein
8	7 GM Nick De Firmian	22 GM Walter Browne
9	24 FM Igor Foygel	8 GM Alex Stripunsky
10	9 GM Larry Christiansen	28 IM Jesse Kraai
11	23 GM Dmitry Gurevich	10 GM Alex Yermolinsky
12	11 IM Ben Finegold	42 FM Stephen Muhammad
13	13 GM Alexander Ivanov	31 IM William Paschall
14	25 GM Maurice Ashley	16 IM Hikaru Nakamura
15	2 GM Alexander Goldin	44 IM Justin Sarkar
16	41 WGM Irina Krush	14 GM Gregory Serper
17	17 GM John Fedorowicz	38 IM Larry Kaufman
18	43 IM John Watson	30 FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat
19	37 GM Anatoly Lein	46 David Pruess
20	27 IM Michael Mulyar	50 WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg
21	29 IM Greg Shahade	54 WIM Olga Sagalchik
22	39 WGM Elena Donaldson	32 FM Aaron Pixton
23	51 WIM Anna Hahn	34 IM Stanislav Kriventsov
24	35 IM Dean Ippolito	58 Julia Shiber
25	52 WIM Esther Epstein	36 IM Ron Burnett
26	33 IM John Donaldson	55 WFM Laura Ross
27	57 WIM Elina Groberman	48 FM Allan Bennett
28	47 FM Gregory Markzon	53 WIM Cindy Tsai
29	49 Marc Esserman	56 Anna Levina

January 11

The Thinning of the Herd

It didn't take long. As you can see from the standings below, after a mere two rounds, there are only five 2-0 or "perfect" scores left among the 58 competitors. As it happens, all five are men going for the overall title which Larry Christiansen and Nick De Firmian tied for last year at 6½-2½ with Larry winning a thrilling playoff. The winning scores last year were "plus-four" as they say and just about everybody in the tournament this year would take that number. Getting to it is the problem. I bet the leaders, Grandmasters Gregory Kaidanov, Alex Stripunsky, Gennadi Zaitshik and IMs Varuzhan Akobian and Jesse Krai, all had the same dream last night: garner another plus two or three over the next seven rounds and let the chips fall where they may. (And there'll be a lot of chips to count, I promise you.) We note that all the GMs in the 2-0 group were born in the Ukraine and IM Akobian is from Mongolia. The lone US-born leader is Krai.

Yesterday I spoke to a young man who is following Krai around with a video camera to make a documentary about him. I was a bit surprised at the time but now I understand why. The American-born Krai is currently the White Buffalo of US chess. The WB may get a bit smudged today though as he plays former US Champion GM Boris Gulko who came to our shores from--need I say--the late Soviet Union. Jesse's first-round opponent, Elina Groberman gave up a lot of material to no avail and his second round foe GM Ben Finegold gave up a little. In both cases, Krai "took what they gave me" as the football coaches say and rolled to victory. Here's his long, but not much in doubt, win over Finegold.

(10) *Finegold,B* (2548) - *Kraai,J* (2453) United States Championship 2003 Seattle (2), 10.01.2003

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Bb4 5.e5 h6

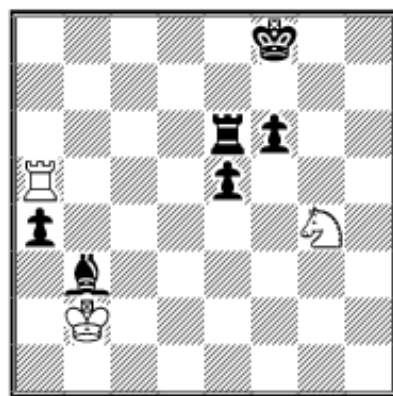
Black's opening, the MacCutcheon, is not often seen in top-class events but Akobian used it to defeat IM Michael Mulyar in this round. Mulyar gave up a pawn early too but never got much for either. He played 6.Be3 here.

**6.exf6 hxg5 7.fxg7 Rg8 8.h4 Nc6 9.h5 Rxd7 10.Bb5 Qf6 11.Nf3
Bd7 12.Qd3 Bd6 13.h6 Rg6 14.h7**



14...0-0-0 15.Bxc6 Bxc6 16.0-0-0 g4
 17.Ne5 Bxe5 18.dxe5 Qxe5 19.Ne2
 Rh8 20.f4 gxf3 21.gxf3 Qg7 22.Qa3
 Rxh7 23.Qxa7 Rxh1 24.Rxh1 Rh6
 25.Rg1 Qe5 26.Qa3 Rh8 27.Qd3 b6
 28.f4 Qf6 29.Qe3 Kb7 30.Nd4 Rh4
 31.Rf1 Bd7 32.c3 c5 33.Nc2 Bb5
 34.Rf2 Qf5 35.b3 Bd3 36.Ne1 Be4
 37.Kb2 Rh1 38.a4 d4 39.Qd2 Rh3
 40.cxd4 Bd5 41.Nc2 Rxb3+ 42.Kc1
 Rd3 43.Qe1 cxd4 44.Qb4 Qf6 45.a5 Rb3 46.Qxd4 Qxd4
 47.Nxd4 Rb4 48.Nc2 Rc4 49.Kb2 bxa5 50.f5 e5 51.Ne3 Rb4+
 52.Ka1 Kc6 53.Rc2+ Kd6 54.Rc8 Bb3 55.Ra8 a4 56.f6 Rf4
 57.Kb2 Rxf6 58.Ra6+ Ke7 59.Ra7+ Kf8 60.Ng4 Re6 61.Ra5 f6

Finegold finds a way to spend a lot more time at the board.



62.Nxf6 Rxf6 63.Rxe5 Rf3 64.Ra5
 Ke7 65.Ra6 Kd7 66.Ra7+ Kc6 67.Ra8
 Kb6 68.Rb8+ Ka7 69.Rb4 Ka6
 70.Rb8 Bd5 71.Rb4 Rb3+ 72.Ka1
 Ka5 73.Rd4 Bc6 74.Rc4 Bb5 75.Rd4
 a3 76.Rh4 Rc3 77.Rh1 Ka4 78.Rg1
 Bd3 79.Ka2 Rc2+ 80.Ka1 Kb3 0-1

Standings after Round 2, January 10, 2003

1. Kaidanov, Akobian, Zaitshik, Lapshun, Kraai **2-0**
6. Gulko, Shabalov, De Firmian, Stripunsky, Christiansen, Yermolinsky, Kudrin, Nakamura, Fedorowicz, Browne, Gurevich, Foygel, Ashley, Perelshteyn **1½-1½**
20. Goldin, Seirawan, Benjamin, Finegold, Ivanov, Serper, Kreiman, Fishbein, Mulyar, G. Shahade, Enkhbat, Paschall, Pixton, Kriventsov, Ippolito, Burnett, Lein, E. Donaldson, Krush, Muhammad, Sarkar, J. Shahade, Shiber **1-1**
43. J. Donaldson, Kaufman, Baginskaite, Watson, Pruess, Bennett, Ross, Groberman, Markzon, Esserman **½-1½**

53. Battsetseg, Hahn, Epstein, Tsai, Sagalchik, Levina 0-2**Results Round 2**

Bd	Seed	White	Seed	Black
1	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov	20	GM Alex Fishbein 1-0
2	58	Julia Shiber	8	GM Gennadi Zaitshik 0-1
3	3	GM Boris Gulko	22	GM Walter Browne ½-½
4	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich	6	GM Alexander Shabalov ½-½
5	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade	14	GM Gregory Serper ½-½
6	9	GM Larry Christiansen	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn ½-½
7	25	GM Maurice Ashley	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky ½-½
8	21	IM Yury Lapshun	2	GM Alexander Goldin 1-0
9	7	GM Nick De Firmian	24	FM Igor Foygel ½-½
10	11	IM Ben Finegold	28	IM Jesse Kraai 0-11
1	27	IM Michael Mulyar	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian 0-1
12	37	GM Anatoly Lein	4	GM Yasser Seirawan ½-½
13	5	GM Joel Benjamin	42	FM Stephen Muhammad ½-½
14	33	IM John Donaldson	8	GM Alex. Stripunsky 0-1
15	41	WGM Irina Krush	56	Anna Levina 1-0
16	13	GM Alexander Ivanov	34	IM Stan. Kriventsov ½-½
17	15	GM Sergey Kudrin	46	David Pruess 1-0
18	43	IM John Watson	16	IM Hikaru Nakamura 0-1
19	19	IM Boris Kreiman	44	IM Justin Sarkar ½-½
20	17	GM John Fedorowicz	48	FM Allan Bennett 1-0
21	39	WGM Elena Donaldson	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik 1-0
22	29	IM Greg Shahade	47	FM Gregory Markzon 1-0
23	49	Marc Esserman	30	FM Tegshsuren Enkhbat 0-1
24	31	IM William Paschall	50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg 1-0
25	51	WIM Anna Hahn	32	FM Aaron Pixton 0-1
26	35	IM Dean Ippolito	52	WIM Esther Epstein 1-0
27	53	WIM Cindy Tsai	36	IM Ron Burnett 0-1
28	55	WFM Laura Ross	38	IM Larry Kaufman ½-½
29	57	WIM Elina Groberman	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite ½-½

Pairings Round 3, January 11, 2003

Bd	Seed	White	Seed	Black
1	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov
2	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	21	IM Yury Lapshun
3	28	IM Jesse Kraai	3	GM Boris Gulko
4	6	GM Alexander Shabalov	17	GM John Fedorowicz
5	16	IM Hikaru Nakamura	7	GM Nick De Firmian
6	39	WGM Elena Donaldson	19	IM Boris Kreiman
7	20	GM Alex Fishbein	41	WGM Irina Krush
8	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich
9	22	GM Walter Browne	9	GM Larry Christiansen
10	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	24	FM Igor Foygel
11	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	15	GM Sergey Kudrin
12	2	GM Alexander Goldin	25	GM Maurice Ashley
13	4	GM Yasser Seirawan	35	IM Dean Ippolito

14 32 FM Aaron Pixton	5 GM Joel Benjamin
15 40 WGM Kamile Baginskaite	55 WFM Laura Ross
16 34 IM Stanislav Kriventsov	11 IM Ben Finegold
17 36 IM Ron Burnett	13 GM Alexander Ivanov
18 14 GM Gregory Serper	37 GM Anatoly Lein
19 42 FM Stephen Muhammad	27 IM Michael Mulyar
20 44 IM Justin Sarkar	29 IM Greg Shahade
21 30 FM Tegshsuren Enhbat	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade
22 31 IM William Paschall	58 Julia Shiber
23 46 David Pruess	33 IM John Donaldson
24 38 IM Larry Kaufman	57 WIM Elina Groberman
25 48 FM Allan Bennett	43 IM John Watson
26 47 FM Gregory Markzon	52 WIM Esther Epstein
27 54 WIM Olga Sagalchik	49 Marc Esserman
28 50 WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	53 WIM Cindy Tsai

29 56 Anna Levina

51 WIM

Anna Hahn

In today's games Zaitshik-Kaidanov battle for the lead in the Ukrainian Championship while leaders also clash in Akobian-Lapshun. Eighteen-year-old Samford Fellow Akobian has looked solid in his two wins. He's a sharp positional player in the style of Garry Kasparov's successor Vladimir Kramnik. If he wins today, this kid will be a factor. Sixteen-year old IM Hikaru Nakamura and Akobian have a shot at supplanting the American Old Guard that, along with the Soviet expatriates, has dominated US chess for twenty years. We'll see. See you tomorrow.

January 10

The Most Important Round

Seattle's IM Georgi Orlov once told me that he thought that the most important round of a tournament for a competitor was the first because it sets the tone for the rest of the event. Naturally it's partly the result of the game that counts because a first round loss is so dispiriting and can presage a miserable result. But even more important is how you play that initial game. Even a loss in which one largely plays well can be a sign of good things to come, especially in a long event. The practical advice of this is to play hard from the first move of the first game. Telling yourself that you're going to gently round into form usually means that you never will. With this in mind, let's take a look at Round 1.

As you may recall, last year's Championship was the first to feature

men and women playing each other for the Overall and Women's titles. The general feeling was that the women were in for rough time. Lo and behold, in the first round of the 2002 Championships the twelve-player women's contingent scored a very creditable 4-8 against their often much higher-rated male counterparts, with Jennifer Shahade and Cindy Tsai downing GMs Gennedy Sagalchik and Walter Browne.

This year, that which was expected last year, happened – with a vengeance. The thirteen player women's group scored only one win and one draw in their thirteen games against the guys. The one women's win was a stunning knockout of IM Gregory Shahade (2493) by 28-year-old Julia Shriber (2094) of New York. Defending U.S. Women's Champion and fourth-seeded woman Jennifer Shahade (2352) also got off to a good start by handily drawing IM Hikaru Nakamura (2614) with the black pieces. The three top-seeded women, Elena. Donaldson, Kamile Baginskaite and Irina Krush all lost. Women's favorite Krush was unable to get the sharp play that she likes against young IM Varuzhan Akobian and was relentlessly ground down. Today all three top-seeded women play other women and are likely to score. Winner Julia Shriber gets GM Gennadi Zaitshik and Jennifer Shahade has white against GM Gregory Serper. This will be Jennifer's eleventh straight game against a male in the championships over two years. She won last year without playing a woman and I think I can safely say she will win again if she doesn't play one this year.

On the men's side, defending Champion Larry Christiansen served notice that he has every intention of winning again notching a good win with black over IM Larry Kaufman. In another game that I spotlighted yesterday, Yasser Seirawan and IM John Donaldson drew in 79 moves despite the fact that I said in my report that Yaz would win a long game and draw a short one. Of course that was a typo and I meant exactly the opposite.

Standings after Round 1

1-0 Kaidanov, Goldin, Gulko, Shabalov, De Firmian, Christiansen, Yermolinsky, Finegold, Akobian, Zaitshik, Fishbein, Lapshun, Browne, Gurevich, Foygel, Ashley, Perelshteyn, Mulyar, Kraai, Shiber

1/2-1/2 Seirawan, Benjamin, Stripunsky, Ivanov, Serper, Kudrin,

Nakamura, Fedorowicz, J. Donaldson, Kriventsov, Lein, Muhammad,
Watson, Sarkar, J. Shahade, Pruess, Bennett

0-1 G. Shahade, Enkhbat, Paschall, Pixton, Ippolito, Burnett,
Kaufman, E. Donaldson, Baginskaite, Krush, Markzon, Esserman,
Tsagaan Battsetseg, Hahn, Epstein, Tsai, Sagalchik, Ross, Levina,
Groberman

Pairings Round 2, January 10, 2003

Bd	Seed	White	Seed	Black
1	1	GM Gregory Kaidanov	20	GM Alex Fishbein
2	58	Julia Shiber	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik
3	3	GM Boris Gulko	22	GM Walter Browne
4	23	GM Dmitry Gurevich	6	GM Alexander Shabalov
5	45	WIM Jennifer Shahade	14	GM Gregory Serper
6	9	GM Larry Christiansen	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn
7	25	GM Maurice Ashley	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky
8	21	IM Yury Lapshun	2	GM Alexander Goldin
9	7	GM Nick De Firmian	24	FM Igor Foygel
10	11	IM Ben Finegold	28	IM Jesse Kraai
11	27	IM Michael Mulyar	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian
12	37	GM Anatoly Lein	4	GM Yasser Seirawan
13	5	GM Joel Benjamin	42	FM Stephen Muhammad
14	33	IM John Donaldson	8	GM Alex Stripunsky
15	41	WGM Irina Krush	56	Anna Levina
16	13	GM Alex Ivanov	34	IM Stan. Kriventsov
17	15	GM Sergey Kudrin	46	David Pruess
18	43	IM John Watson	16	IM Hikaru Nakamura
19	19	IM Boris Kreiman	44	IM Justin Sarkar
20	17	GM John Fedorowicz	48	FM Allan Bennett
21	39	WGM Elena Donaldson	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik
22	29	IM Greg Shahade	47	FM Gregory Markzon
23	49	Marc Esserman	30	FM Tegshsuren Enhbat
24	31	IM William Paschall	50	WIM T. Battsetseg
25	51	WIM Anna Hahn	32	FM Aaron Pixton
26	35	IM Dean Ippolito	52	WIM Esther Epstein
27	53	WIM Cindy Tsai	36	IM Ron Burnett
28	55	WFM Laura Ross	38	IM Larry Kaufman
29	57	WIM Elina Groberma	40	WGM K. Baginskaite

If you look at the pairings you can see that many GMs start bashing heads today. Now the question might be begged, “If the first round is the most important, is the second round the second-most important?” The answer is “no”. It’s the second-to-the-last round. But that’s another story. See you tomorrow.

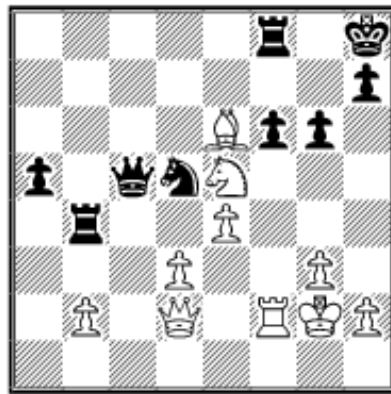
Games from Round 1

**(29) Shiber, J - Shahade, G United States Championship 2003
Seattle (1), 09.01.2003**

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.Be3 e6 7.Qd2 Qa5 8.Nf3 Nd4 9.0-0 Ne7 10.Bf4 e5 11.Be3 Qd8 12.Ne1 0-0 13.Bh6 Bxh6 14.Qxh6 f6 15.Qd2 Be6 16.f4 c4 17.Nd1 Rc8 18.c3 Qa5 19.Rf2 Nb3 20.axb3 Qxa1 21.bxc4 a6 22.Nc2 Qa4 23.Nde3 Qd7 24.Nb4 a5 25.Nbd5 Bxd5 26.cxd5 b5 27.Bf3 Rb8 28.Bg4 Qa7 29.Be6+ Kh8 30.Kg2 b4 31.Nc4 Qc5 32.cxb4 Rxb4??

32...axb4 is the only move and leaves black slightly better. Now white's pin on the f-file is deadly.

33.fxe5 dxe5 34.Nxe5! Nxd5



35.Qh6! Ne3+ 36.Kh3 1-0

**(1) Kaufman, L - Christiansen, L United States Championship
2003 Seattle (1), 09.01.2003**

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 5.dxc5 0-0 6.a3 Bxc5 7.Nf3 b6 8.Bf4 Nh5 9.Bg5 Be7 10.h4 f6 11.Bd2 f5 12.e3 Bb7 13.0-0-0 Na6 14.Nd4 Qe8 15.Ndb5 Nf6 16.f3 Qf7 17.Kb1 Rfc8 18.Bc1 d5 19.cxd5 Nxd5 20.Qd2 Nac7 21.Nxc7 Rxc7 22.Nb5 Rd7 23.Bc4 Rc8 24.Qe2 a6 25.Nd4 b5 26.Bb3 Bf6 27.Ka1 Kh8 28.Rhf1 Rdc7 29.Bd2 Qe7 30.g3 g6 31.Rc1 e5 32.Rxc7 Rxc7 33.Nc2 e4 34.Nd4 exf3 35.Qxf3 Nb6 36.Qf2 Bd5 37.Ba5 Bxb3 38.Bxb6 Rc8 39.Ba5 Bg8 40.h5?

40.Rb1 was necessary to meet 40...Qf7 with 41.b3.



40...Qf7 41.b4 Qb3 42.Qb2 Qxe3
43.Bb6 Rc3 0-1

January 9

Wish You Were Here!

I do wish you were here at the 2003 U.S. Championship in Seattle but if you're reading this, you're probably not. Too bad indeed, so in the days to come I'll try to give you some feel for what's going on at this fantastic event sponsored by America's Foundation for Chess (AF4C), formerly the Seattle Chess Foundation.

If you take a look at the January 7 article, you will see some of the basic information about the tournament as to rounds and prizes. The first number I would like to call to your attention is **\$253,600**. That's \$50,000 more than last year's prize fund and the biggest haul for an annual tournament in the world and the largest in chess history for a national title.

The second number is **\$2,100** because it's the *depth* of the prizes that I love. Let's say things go right and you qualify for the USCH. And then let's say things don't go so well and you finish last. (Hey, we all have bad tournaments.) Usually that means slinking out of town and trying not to think about your expenses. But if the pieces fall on the wrong squares at this tournament and you finish at the bottom of the score table, you go to a nice dinner, listen to some short speeches and are handed, a check for \$2,100 which is only \$400 less than Bobby Fisher got for winning his eighth U.S. title in 1966!



This year's event has twenty top-rated players (twelve men, eight women) - including the 2002 U.S. Champions Larry Christiansen and Jennifer Shahade. The 2001 and 2002 U.S. Junior Champions, Hikaru Nakamura and Aaron Pixton were automatically seeded into the event. Also competing will be 36 players (32 men, four women) who qualified at the U.S. Masters, the National Open, Foxwoods Open, the Chicago Open, the World Open and the U.S. Open.



This new open competition format has allowed many young, non-titled players to compete for the first time for a cherished spot in the national championship. In addition to the above field, the AF4C board, in furthering their mission of promoting chess among young people, has allocated their two wildcard entries to 16-year-old Laura Ross and the winner of the prestigious 2002 Samford Fellowship, 18-year-old Varuzhan Akobian.

The full playing field (including pictures and biographies) for the championship and details on the AF4C can be found at www.af4c.org. The games of the nine-round event can be viewed live at the web site starting daily at 1.30 pm to close of play January 9-18 (rest day Tuesday, 14th January).

The pairings for the games of January 9.

#	Rank	White	Black
1	38	IM Larry Kaufman	9 GM Larry Christiansen
2	30	FM Tegshsuren Enhbat	1 GM Gregory Kaidanov
3	2	GM Alexander Goldin	31 IM William Paschall
4	32	FM Aaron Pixton	3 GM Boris Gulko
5	4	GM Yasser Seirawan	33 IM John Donaldson
6	34	IM Stanislav Kriventsov	5 GM Joel Benjamin
7	6	GM Alexander Shabalov	35 IM Dean Ippolito
8	36	IM Ron Burnett	7 GM Nick De Firmian
9	8	GM Alexander Stripunsky	37 GM Anatoly Lein
10	10	GM Alex Yermolinsky	39 WGM Elena Donaldson
11	40	WGM Kamile Baginskaite	11 IM Ben Finegold
12	12	IM Varuzhan Akobian	41 WGM Irina Krush
13	42	FM Stephen Muhammad	13 GM Alexander Ivanov
14	14	GM Gregory Serper	43 IM John Watson
15	44	IM Justin Sarkar	15 GM Sergey Kudrin
16		IM Hikaru Nakamura	45 WIM Jennifer Shahade
17	46	David Pruess	17 GM John Fedorowicz
18	18	GM Gennadi Zaitshik	47 FM Gregory Markzon
19	48	FM Allan Bennett	19 IM Boris Kreiman
20	20	GM Alex Fishbein	49 Marc Esserman
21	50	WIM Tsagaan Battsetseg	21 IM Yury Lapshun
22	22	GM Walter Browne	51 WIM Anna Hahn
23	52	WIM Esther Epstein	23 GM Dmitry Gurevich
24	24	FM Igor Foygel	53 WIM Cindy Tsai
25	54	WIM Olga Sagalchik	25 GM Maurice Ashley
26	26	IM Eugene Perelshteyn	55 WFM Laura Ross
27	56	Anna Levina	27 IM Michael Mulyar
28		IM Jesse Kraai	57 WIM Elina Groberman
29	58	Julia Shiber	29 IM Greg Shahade

One of the great things about this format is that there's no feeling-out period for the top players; no opportunity to ease into form with a couple of solid draws before settling down to serious work. Winning this tournament requires a big number like the 6.5-2.5's put up by Larry Christiansen and Nick de Firmian last year so blood will flow in the first round. It's also likely that the top players won't play anyone rated this low again so they must score, even with black. Some games to watch in the first round:

Board #1 Kaufman-Christiansen; Seeded ninth, defending champion Christiansen plays on first board. Larry is not always a fast starter and would like to get out of the gate quickly with a win with black over veteran IM Larry Kaufman. If he gets it, look for him to be



*Defending Champion
Larry Christiansen*

around at the finish.

#5 Seirawan-J. Donaldson; A matchup of two longtime friends and associates that comes with Yasser having one of his precious shots with the white pieces. The Yaz is an awesome IM killer but John is very solid and determined to improve on his score of last year. A short game will be a draw but I can't remember too many IM's surviving a long game with endgame virtuoso Seirawan.

#s 10, 11 and 12 Yermolinsky-E. Donaldson, Baginskaite-Finegold, Akobian-Krush; The top three women, Elena Donaldson, Kamile Baginskaite and Elena Krush play next to each other. Last year Jennifer Shahade made her winning statement early and these women need to do the same. Elena

Donaldson may have the toughest pairing with black against Yermo but Kamile and Elena Krush have real chances in their games. My first fearless and invariably wrong prediction? Assuming only one of these women wins – she will win the women's title. As for defending champion Jennifer Shahade, she got a bad pairing break with black against up-and-comer Nakamura and it's harder to defend than win it in the first place.

That's it for now, see you tomorrow.

January 7

The U.S. Championships

The Seattle Center in Seattle Washington is the site for the 2003 Men and Women's U.S. Chess Championships. Our man in Seattle, Mike Franett, will once again provide daily coverage for ChessCafe.com. The games begin at the Seattle Center in Seattle, Wash. on January 9, 2003 at 1:30pm.

Playing Schedule

Wednesday January 8	Arrival
Thursday January 9	Round 1 - 1:30 PM
Friday January 10	Round 2 - 1:30 PM
Saturday January 11	Round 3 - 1:30 PM
Sunday January 12	Round 4 - 1:30 PM
Monday January 13	Round 5 - 1:30 PM
Tuesday January 14	Children's Simul - 5:00 PM
Wednesday January 15	Round 6 - 1:30 PM
Thursday January 16	Round 7 - 1:30 PM
Friday January 17	Round 8 - 1:30 PM
Saturday January 18	Round 9 - 1:30 PM

Sunday January 19	Closing Ceremony Benefit
Monday January 20	Departure

The Championships will be played in a nine-round Swiss System. If there is a tie for first, a short tie-breaker match will be played. A classical chess time control will be used.

Prizes

America's Foundation for Chess is pleased to announce a Prize Fund of \$253,600, distributed as follows:			
Overall		Women	
1st	\$ 25,000	1st	\$ 12,500
2nd	\$ 17,000	2nd	\$ 9,200
3rd	\$ 13,000	3rd	\$ 7,100
4th	\$ 10,500	4th	\$ 5,500
5th	\$ 8,000	<i>The four highest placed women will receive only one prize, depending on their final classification</i>	
6-10th	\$ 5,500		
11-14th	\$ 4,000		
15-24th	\$ 3,100		
25-34th	\$ 2,600		
35-46th	\$ 2,400		
47-58th	\$ 2,100		

Paul Albert Jr. Brilliancy Prizes

Mr. Paul Albert Jr. generously donates another \$2,000 for the 2003 U.S. Chess Championship Brilliancy Games. The prizes are in the amounts of 1st \$1000, 2nd \$600 and 3rd \$400. A jury of well-known and strong chess players will determine which games will be awarded at the closing ceremony.



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