



COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg

We are pleased to introduce our first regular column dealing with Scholastic Chess. Dr. Steve Goldberg is an optometrist and writer who lives in St. Louis with his wife, three children, a dog, a lizard, and three fish. Winner of many local scholastic tournaments himself, he has taught chess at the elementary school level and is a long-time USCF Life Member. Dr. Goldberg writes on a variety of topics but chess remains his first love. He can be reached at scholasticchess@chesscafe.com.



We hope you enjoy *Scholastic Chess*...

An Inquisitive Mind

I am very pleased to be submitting my first column for the Scholastic Chess feature at **ChessCafe.com**. Those of you who are regular visitors to this website know how extensive is the depth and breadth of material to be found. Whether you are looking for the latest opening strategy or endgame studies, the latest news concerning chess anywhere in the world, or analysis to help you reach expert or master level, this is the place for you. What I hope to add is more of a human interest side to chess. So much of what we do as chessplayers is game analysis in one form or another; I intend to do more people analysis (in a good way!).

I want to know what drives one student to excel at chess when so many others lose interest or fail to advance. Why are so many girls playing and succeeding at chess when a generation ago they were few and far between? How does an inner-city chess club find so much success when there is so much turmoil around them?

Who are the people driving the fast-moving engine that is scholastic chess today? What are they doing that the rest of us can learn from? These are the kind of questions I want to ask and find the answers to.

Understand that I do not hold myself out as an expert in the field of scholastic chess. Rather, I have an inquisitive mind and a natural curiosity. I want to know what's around the next curve, what's over the next hill. Although my children

have a difficult time believing it, it's true that I was a kid once. I came up in the early days of the Fischer boom and remember the excitement of going to the library to get my first chess book. It was *My System* by Aron Nimzovich, and I would recommend it today to anyone at Class A or below. I remember, after finishing the book, devilishly challenging my cousin to a game. In the past we had played aimlessly and without any real plans, but after I demolished him a few times, he looked up at me and said "You set me up!" He knew something had happened.

I remember as a freshman in high school joining the chess club (the Parkway North Pawn Pushers) and quickly ascending to first board. We met frequently after school, playing each other in both classical and various forms of speed chess. At tournaments, we met and played other students and gave each other encouragement and the occasional high-five. I remember the feeling of executing a beautiful combination to win a game – it was like a work of art before my eyes. It was a wonderful time in my life – the excitement and self-esteem that came with success in chess was undeniable. Almost as good as being the first-string quarterback on the football team, which I was not going to be.

These are the memories I have of my own time in scholastic chess. As I grew older, other priorities came up and chess had to move to the background, but I have seen the tremendous impact chess can have on a child, and it is these positive aspects of our game that I want to emphasize in this column. I want to do everything I can to publicize and promote scholastic chess and bring to you the stories, the highlights, and the "thrill of victory and the agony of defeat." I want to report on the who, what, why, when, and where of what's going on in the world of chess for the college-age and below.

But I need your help.

I want to hear your own stories, or the stories about people you know. What am I looking for? Any chess story involving kids that will put a smile on someone's face. Some practical advice that will help another child reach or even exceed his or her potential at the chessboard. As examples, here are some of the stories I have come across recently:

- *The kindergarten boy who played in a tournament for much older 3rd-5th graders and won.*
- *The 4th-grade girl who may well win her state girls' championship (K-12) this year.*
- *The young man from an inner-city high school with average grades who won a scholarship to Yale based on his accomplishments in chess.*
- *The tournament organizer and teacher in one community who has galvanized chess to the point that there are more elementary and high-school kids with USCF ratings there than in much larger cities.*

Some other areas I plan on covering:

- *Chess scholarships available from colleges and universities around the U.S.*
- *How chess instruction is entering many schools as an in-school educational tool, not just an after-school activity.*
- *How to start a chess club at your school if there isn't one already there.*
- *How to choose a summer chess camp.*
- *Sources of funding to assist organizers in setting up scholastic programs.*

And of course, as major scholastic tournaments come up, I plan on providing coverage beyond what you'll find in other publications or websites. My goal is to speak with organizers, players, parents, coaches, and civic officials to find out the personal and community impact such tournaments bring: new friends, bitter chessboard battles, camaraderie afterwards.

Website of the Month

I found a website recently that I want to bring to your attention:

<http://www.chesskids.com/>

This website has been developed by Richard James of the United Kingdom and is "specifically designed for young kids learning how to play." Mr. James has been teaching chess to children for over thirty years and his students range from absolute beginners to world-class players. This site has multiple lessons and quizzes for kids and downloadable worksheets and instructional texts for chess coaches and parents. Although donations are requested in order to maintain the site, no fees are required to use any portion of this helpful website. Some areas are written in "UK English" and are intended for a British readership, but most of the information provided will be helpful to students and chess teachers anywhere.

Did You Know?

Judit Polgar, at the age of 9 in 1986, won the unrated section of the NY Open, winning 7 games with 1 game drawn. At 11 she was rated 2350 and earned an International Master title, younger than Fischer or Kasparov. At age 12 she was rated 2555 and was awarded the Woman GM title. At 13 she was FIDE's highest rated woman. She reached Grandmaster status at age 15 years, 4 months, and 27 days.

(Courtesy of the website, www.chess-poster.com)

World Youth Championship (Crete, Greece)

As this column hits the presses, so to speak, two large tournaments are taking place. The 2004 World Youth Championship is being held Nov. 3-14 on the Greek island of Crete. Barbara DeMaro, managing director of the U.S. Chess Trust, informs me that 25 American players are set to participate, in five categories : Under 10, Under 12, Under 14, Under 16, and Under 18. Last year there were 13 kids from the U.S., two of which (FM Aaron Pixton and FM Joshua Friedel) achieved FIDE title norms in the event. Coaches this year include Aviv Friedman, John Fedorowicz and Armen Ambarrtsaumian.

National Youth Action Championship (Hershey, PA)

In addition, the National Youth Action Championship is set to begin in Hershey, PA, on Nov. 12-14. With nearly 700 players last year, it consists of a blitz tournament Friday Nov. 12 and a game/30 nine-round swiss tournament Nov. 13 and 14. Players can enter one of four sections : Primary, Elementary, Middle School/Junior High, and High School. Teams can also enter to play other teams. Expect a report on this event in next month's column. For those who couldn't make this tournament, next year's National Youth Action Championship is scheduled to be held in Atlanta, Georgia, although it is possible that the 2005 championship may be divided into two separate tournaments, one for the eastern U.S. and another for the western U.S. I'll pass on more details as they become available.

National K-12/Collegiate Championship (Lake Buena Vista, FL)

Coming up shortly is also the National K-12/Collegiate Championship in Lake Buena Vista, Florida on December 10-12, at the Walt Disney World Dolphin Hotel and Resort. I can't imagine a more fun place to play! This tournament annually attracts over 2000 players and produces individual champions for each grade level, kindergarten through 12th grade. The 2003 event added a collegiate section for the first time and amazingly, the top six finishers all came from one team – the University of Texas – Dallas (UTD) B Team, directed by Dr. Tim Redman, professor of literary studies at UTD and former USCF president. Note to other collegiate players: be prepared – Redman's team returns again this year, freshly-loaded with new players and ready to defend their results from last year. This seven-round tournament will be played at a time control of game/90. Diane Reese, USCF National Event Director, is predicting perhaps 2400 participants in this year's event.

Pan-Am Intercollegiate Tournament (Wichita, KS)

Shortly thereafter, the Pan Am Intercollegiate tournament takes place, on Dec. 27-30, in Wichita, Kansas. The two perennial powerhouses UTD and UMBC (University of Maryland – Baltimore County) are sure to again be battling for the top position (for eight consecutive years, the Pan-Am team title has gone to one of these two schools).

It's certainly a busy time for scholastic chess! Look for further discussion about these events in upcoming columns. As many of you know, the big event on the calendar for 2005, with thousands of players coming, is the SuperNationals tournament, to be held in Nashville. We'll be covering this mega-tourney in depth.

I have been told that perhaps half of the USCF membership is now comprised of the under-20 crowd. As such, I'm asking to hear from coaches, organizers, parents, or other players regarding a high school chessplayer who has an interesting story to tell. The best story, if received in time, will appear in next month's column. The player may be a master or a patzer, but if there is a special hurdle he or she overcame, or something special or unique that was accomplished, I want to hear from you. Remember, I can be reached at

scholasticchess@chesscafe.com.

In addition, if you are a student attending one of the scholastic tournaments mentioned here or a parent/teacher/coach accompanying students to these tournaments, I'd like to hear about your experience. Tell me what motivated you to attend, what you thought was wonderful and what needs some improvement and what you might advise others planning to attend similar events in the future.

I welcome all comments and suggestions and look forward to hearing from you.

Have something newsworthy you'd like to share? E-mail me at scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. I can't promise that I'll be able to respond to each e-mail, but every one will be read and considered. For all games submitted, please provide the following information: (1) Names and age of both players; (2) Ratings of both players; (3) When and where the game was played; (4) The time control used in the game; and (5) Any other information you think would be helpful for us to know.

Copyright 2004 Steve Goldberg. All rights reserved.



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Bulletin Board\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2004 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe**®" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.