



COLUMNISTS

Dutch Treat

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A Star that Briefly Shined on America

At the start of the Hogeschool Zeeland Open, held this month in the Dutch town Vlissingen, its main attraction was the former World Champion Rustam Kasimdzhanov, but soon everybody was talking about another player, the young American Fabiano Caruana. He had won his first six games. A new star had not exactly been born, for Caruana had already been strong for quite a few years, but it shined brightly.

When recently the American Jesse Kraai scored his final GM norm it was said that he would be the first American-born grandmaster after a drought of a decade. This was a bit formalistic. Hikaru Nakamura, born in Japan, came to the US when he was only two years old, so he can reasonably be called a product of the American chess scene. Nevertheless, the crop is lean on American soil. The talents must be there, but were do they go? Rushing to a better-paid job, it seems.

I have been reading Michael Weinreb's book [*The Kings of New York*](#), about the successful chess team of Edward R. Murrow High School. One chapter is about the Supernationals III of 2005, a tournament that combined the elementary, junior-high and high-school national championships. The morning of its first day, 5,290 participants had registered.

This is an astounding number, more than twice as big as that of the number of the players at an Olympiad. I wondered if I had ever seen so many chessplayers together. Maybe at festivals of simuls, during the Havana Olympiad of 1966 or on the Spanish island Gran Canaria, where I saw thousands of schoolchildren under banners saying "Chess is the culture of our islands," a slogan which I found a bit sad.

Thousands of American children playing in the scholastic championship, generous foundations such as Chess in the Schools, Right Move and AF4C, university scholarships, the Samford Fellowship; seen from afar American junior chess would look like a paradise, were it not for the decade's drought.



Fabiano Caruana
Source: [Hogeschool Zeeland](#)

There seems to be little danger that Fabiano Caruana will want to escape into a better-paid job. His chess future looks bright. Born in Miami he was raised in Brooklyn. In 2002, at the age of ten he gained some prominence by beating GM Alex Wojtkiewicz in an official rapid game and since then it has been all on high.

In 2003 there was a remarkable article about him in *The New York Times*. His parents told the reporter Daisy Hernandez that Fabiano had started playing chess at the age of five. His chess career had cost the family about \$50,000 yearly, for travel and trainers. To cut on expenses they had put Fabiano on a public school and at the time of the interview they were converting their basement into a rental flat. Recently the family had found a sponsor who wanted to remain anonymous. He provided the service of a private jet and money for coaching.

In 2004 the family moved to Spain, where Fabiano was to work with the trainer Boris Zlotnik. Then in 2006 they went on to Budapest, hometown of an even better qualified trainer, the ex-Russian Alexander Chernin. In Budapest, shortly before his fifteenth birthday, Fabiano scored his final GM norm in the First Saturday Grandmaster tournament. Having dual citizenship, American and Italian, he decided that his FIDE nationality would be Italian and indeed in Vlissingen he was playing for Italy.

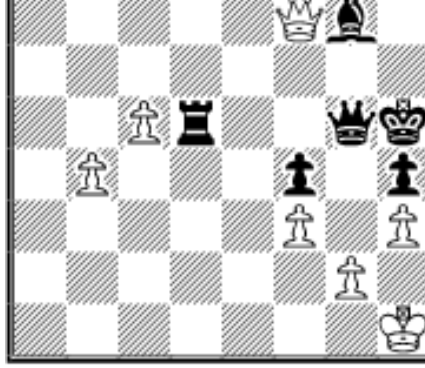
So finally, after many years, the US chess community once again saw a truly American-born and bred young super-talent, but living in Hungary and playing for Italy, Fabiano Caruana seems to have said farewell to his native country already.

Having scored 6 out of 6, Caruana lost a dramatic game against Sergei Tiviakov in the next round. In the middlegame Caruana lost one pawn after another, but then, being three pawns up, Tiviakov gave away a piece, after which the game was about equal. Then in mutual time trouble, Caruana resigned in a drawn position.



Tiviakov - Caruana, final position.

After 73...Kh6, White has a perpetual with 74.Qe6 + Kh5 75.Qf7+, but not more. But Caruana must



have seen a ghost like 73...Kh6 74.Re6+ Kh7 75. Qg8 mate?!? and resigned.

If this was a traumatic experience, young Caruana quickly recovered. The next day he beat the Indian grandmaster Barua and in the final round he held Kasimdzhanov to a hard-fought draw, thereby winning the tournament on tiebreak.

Here is the game he won against the Dutchman Daniel Stellwagen, who is also a great talent, but five years older. What's more, Stellwagen has never aspired to be a chess professional. He studies chemistry, loves the subject and firmly intends to make it his profession, which will be chemistry's gain and our loss.

Caruana – Stellwagen
HZ Open Vlissingen (6) 2007
Sicilian Defense [B54]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 d6 6.g4

Played by Karpov in a World Champion's match against Kasparov. Black is gently persuaded to put his knight not on f6 but on e7.

6...a6 7.Be3 Nge7 8.Nb3 b5 9.f4 Bb7 10.Qd2 Na5 11.Nxa5 Qxa5 12.Bg2 b4

With this and his next moves Black takes direct action, because after 12...Nc6 his development would be disturbed by 13.Qf2, intending 14.Bb6

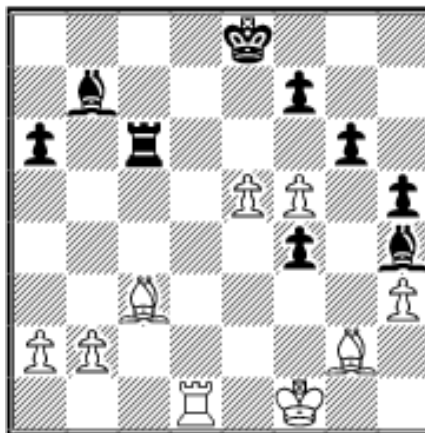
13.Ne2 h5 14.h3 Ng6 15.Bf2 Be7 16.g5 e5 17.f5 Nf4 18.Nxf4 Bxf4 19.Qxd6 exf4

After 19...Bxf4, White's 20.Bh4 would be very unpleasant.

20.0-0 Rd8 21.Qc5 Qxc5 22.Bxc5 Rc8 23.Bxb4 Rxc2 24.Rf2 Rxf2 25.Kxf2

Because of Black's weak pawns the endgame is better for White.

25...Rh6 26.Bc3 Rc6 27.Rd1 g6 28.e5 Bh4+ 29.Kf1



Now the modest 29...Rc7 would be the lesser evil, though White would be better after 30.Bxb7 Rxb7 31.Rd6

29...Rxc3 30.bxc3 f3 31.Bh1

It may seem as if Black has some compensation because of White's locked-up bishop.

31...gxf5 32.Rd4 f4

After 32...Bg3, White has 33.Bxf3 Bxf3 34.Rd3.

33.Bxf3

This is the end. It's much stronger than 33.Rxf4, for then after 33...Bg3 34.Rb4 Bc6, Black would still have some play with his two bishops.

33...Bxf3 34.Rxf4 Bg3 35.Rxf3 Bxe5 36.c4 h4 37.Ra3 1-0



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