



COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg



*Winning Chess
the Easy Way*
by Susan Polgar

St. Louis "Young"sters

The 2005 National Youth Action tournament has concluded and we have a brief report this month. As this column goes to press, the 2005 National K-12/Collegiate championship, featuring over 1500 players, has also been completed. We'll let you know who won in each division, but our primary coverage will take place in the January column.

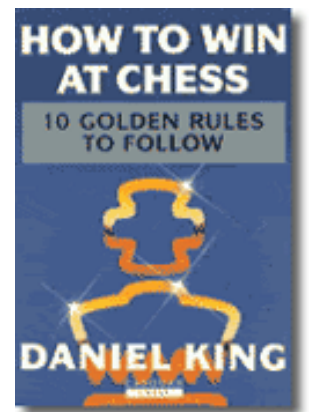
This month we're treated to an interview with an up-and-coming 8-year-old girl in Philadelphia, and we'll hear from a St. Louis middle-school science teacher accomplishing wonderful things with the school chess club he has operated for more than ten years. In addition, new USCF Executive Board member Greg Shahade is ready to open the curtain on a unique chess school for some of the nation's most gifted young players. Read all about it ...

Everyman Quiz of the Month - New Format!

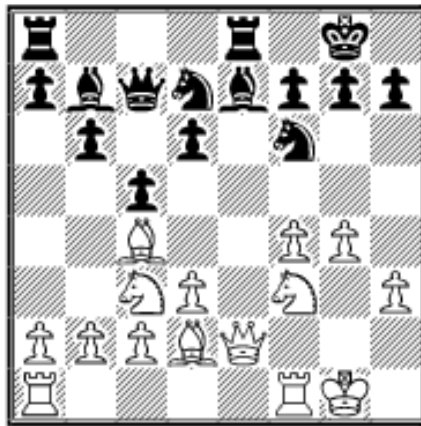
Each month Everyman Chess Books sponsors our Everyman Quiz of the Month, offering a free chess book to three respondents with correct answers. We introduce a new format this month - instead of asking questions from previous Scholastic Chess columns, we will ask you to solve one or more chess problems. Winners of our new-format quiz will receive *How to Win at Chess* by Daniel King. Send your answers to

scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. Good luck!

Please note - winners within the last three months are not eligible to enter this month's contest.

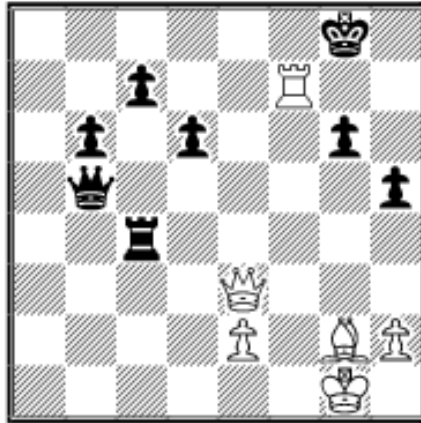


We will accept all contest answers for one week following the appearance of the column and then randomly select our three winners from this group. In order to meet the one-week deadline, please e-mail your responses to me by December 21, 2005.



Problem 1:

It is White's turn to move in this example from GM Yasser Seirawan's instructive book *Winning Chess Tactics*. How should White proceed?



Problem 2:

Also from *Winning Chess Tactics*, this position is from one of Seirawan's own games. Again, it is White's turn to move. What move do you suggest?

For both problems, send your answers to scholasticchess@chesscafe.com.

Upcoming Tournaments

2005 Pan-Am Intercollegiate: December 27-30, 2005

Miami-Dade College hosts this premier annual event for college teams throughout North America, Central America and South America. Christine Ferreras, Assistant Program Coordinator at the school, estimates that approximately 40 teams will be competing. The past two years have seen the powerful University of Texas-Dallas (UTD) teams win the championship, but always-strong University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) is sure to challenge for the title. Six rounds are scheduled at 40/2, SD/1.



The Miami-Dade Final Four Team, Spring 2005

***First Annual Susan Polgar National Open Championship for Girls:
January 27-29, 2006***

I had the pleasure of speaking with Dan DeLeon, Director of the Susan Polgar South Texas Chess Center in Corpus Christi, Texas regarding GM Susan Polgar's newest national tournament. Texas may be better known for its football, but Dan is doing his best to ensure that any youngster who wants to play chess and to improve at chess will have the opportunity to do so. South Texas is brimming with chess and Dan is excited about this upcoming tournament for girls who are under 21 years of age.

There are a few items rather unique to the Polgar National Open Championship for Girls. There will be four sections: one for grades K-2, one for grades 3-5, another for grades 6-8, and the open section. Trophies are always nice, but the winner of each of these sections will receive a laptop computer and will also receive an invitation to the 2006 National Invitational for Girls, to be held again in conjunction with the U.S. Open. There may well also be college scholarships provided. One of the many side events will be a 70-board tandem simultaneous exhibition featuring GM Susan Polgar and FM Paul Truong, where Polgar and Truong will take turns making moves. For entertainment, there will be a live concert by a popular local band, composed entirely of school administrators from the Brownsville Independent School District.



GM Susan Polgar at her new chess center in Texas

Dan notes that early registration has been extended to Dec. 15, but that on-site registration is also available for those who want to show up at the last minute. He stresses that registration fees are low and that hotel and food deals abound since winter is considered the “off-season” despite the beautiful environment. The tournament hotel is one block from the water for those who can get away from chess for a bit. He expects that approximately 300 girls will compete in this championship.

Most people in the chess world already know that Susan Polgar is multi-talented, both on the chessboard and regarding chess marketing. Dan points out another of her qualities – she was recently interviewed on a

Mexican radio station, in Spanish, and she apparently spoke so well that listeners couldn't tell that Spanish is not her native language.

For more information, visit the [website](#) or contact Dan DeLeon directly at (361) 883-3930.

Pennsylvania Pawn Pusher

The little dynamo has played in 17 USCF-rated tournaments in 2005 alone, according to the latest USCF records and has amassed a collection of well over a dozen trophies. Away from the chessboard she enjoys ballet, art and music, but once the game begins, she is tenacious and doesn't like when her opponents resign. She wants to savor the feeling that comes from delivering the final checkmate. She is eight-year-old Odette Moolten.

This Philadelphia third-grader learned to play chess at age 4, from her father David. Her mother "plays a little," according to Odette, and 5-year-old little sister Shira has already shown quite a bit of interest in the game. "My sister's getting to be good, too!" Odette notes proudly.

Her father attributes much of her success to her involvement with the Masterminds chess club, which she visits weekly during the school year and two days per week over the summer months. "It's a terrific club," he says, "not just from the standpoint of chess, but socially, which I think is important too. The club meets at a retirement community in Philadelphia; the chess players are very diverse in age, ethnicity and background."



Odette Moolten

Asked to name some chessplayers she especially admires, Odette named two-time U.S. Women's Chess Champion Jennifer Shahade, fellow Philadelphia chess wiz Alisa Melekhina, and Leteef Street. I wasn't familiar with Leteef, so Odette's father explained: "Leteef Street is a Class A rated USCF player who's involved with teaching chess in the schools here in Philadelphia. He's Vice President of Masterminds and in charge of their scholastic efforts. He's also a son of the Mayor (John Street). Most importantly from Odette's (and my) point of view, he's wonderful with children, and basically just a really nice guy." Odette devotes up to an hour and a half per day approximately five days per week to chess and attributes her success to "playing a lot" and "being good at seeing tactics in my games." She advises other kids to

“start early and do simple tactics over and over so you can get good. It’s much more fun when you can win some games.”

She knows a bit about winning. Within the past 18 months, she went undefeated in the beginner’s section of the 2004 World Open, scored 4-1 to become the Under 8 Pennsylvania champion at the 2004 Pennsylvania State Junior Championships, achieved another 4-1 score to become the 2nd Grade Pennsylvania champion at the Pennsylvania State Scholastic Championship, and scored a perfect 4-0 at last month’s Greater Philadelphia Scholastic Championship.

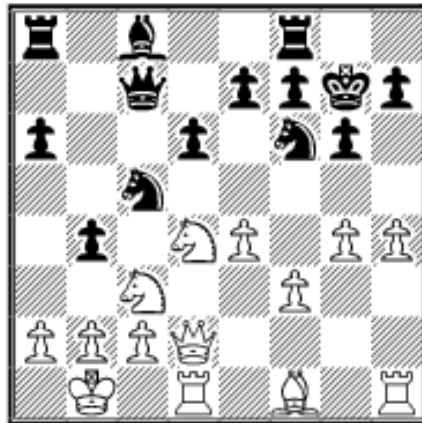
Odette has not yet played in a national event, but with the effort she has been devoting to chess, I wouldn’t be surprised to see her take this on as her next challenge before long. She hopes to reach master level within the next five years. Take a look at her fighting spirit in the game below, which she describes as one of her favorites. Thanks go out to fellow **ChessCafe** columnist Dan Heisman for putting me in touch with Odette and her family.

Odette Moolten (1162) - ***Andrew Ding*** (1209)

Greater Philadelphia Scholastic Championship

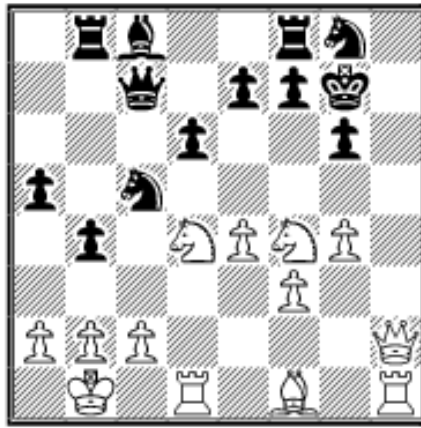
Round 4, November 13, 2005

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 g6 7.Qd2 Bg7 8.f3 0-0 9.0-0-0 Nbd7 10.Kb1 Qc7 11.g4 b5 12.Bh6 Nc5 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.h4 b4



Odette goes for the kingside attack while her opponent counters on the queenside.

15.Nce2 a5 16.h5 Ng8 17.hxg6 hxg6 18.Nf4 Rb8 19.Qh2



Odette's on the prowl now,
relentless in her attack.

**19...Rd8 20.Bc4 e6 21.Qh8+ Kf8
22.Rh7 Nd7 23.Ndxe6+ Ke8
24.Qxg8+ Ke7 25.Qxf7#**

Young and Younger in St. Louis

There is a fair amount of scholastic chess activity in St. Louis, but much of it is rather quiet. Chess organizers tend to go about their business without seeking publicity or honor. They just operate day in, day out, letting chess work its magic with the children they encounter.

Darnell Young is one such chess teacher. He has taught science at Crestview Middle School in the Rockwood School District in suburban St. Louis for the past 21 years. For the last 11 years, he has also served as the school's chess sponsor, operating its chess club, which now meets three times per week immediately after school. Whereas many local schools lack a chess club at all, and many of those that do offer chess may draw half a dozen students at a time, Darnell routinely sees 30-50 kids at his after-school chess meetings. At the recent Chess Night he organized this past October, over 180 students were in attendance, joined by numerous parents, teachers and school administrators. What's his secret?

There is no one simple answer, but it begins, Darnell says, with the teacher having a high level of interest in the game. If the instructor doesn't exude excitement and fascination with the intricacies and benefits of chess, the students will quickly gravitate elsewhere. Furthermore, he is careful to "lay down the law" at the beginning of the school year, letting the kids know that they are there to have fun, but in a disciplined manner. There are frank discussions about respecting one another despite their differences. He takes pride in working successfully with a diverse population that includes gifted students, "at risk" kids, and children from a variety of cultures. "I have been able to reach some of these kids when other teachers have not," he says, "because I treat each kid the same, regardless of their background. They see this, and as I show them respect, I gradually earn their respect." It is apparent that these kids not only respect Darnell, they genuinely enjoy being around him. As I walked with him recently through the school, smiling students repeatedly called out, "Hello, Mr. Young!"

He is quick to credit school administrators with being very supportive of his efforts and they, in turn, express appreciation for his

accomplishments. Principal Jim Wipke confirmed Darnell's statement to me that the chess club is the single most-active extracurricular activity at the school, outpacing even athletics. This has occurred because Darnell has taken an active approach to promoting chess at the school. A large "Chess Epidemic" poster greets students as they enter and leave the lunchroom, filled with photos of recent chess events at the school, and the chess coach has been known to enter the cafeteria to announce to all the kids present that the active chess club is one they might want to consider joining. The school also provides daily announcements about the chess club, which Principal Wipke described as "a very 'cool' club to get involved in at Crestview Middle School. We have a diverse group of students involved."



Darnell Young with student Carynne Steptoe

Mr. Young goes even further, however. He has made chess an integral part of his science curriculum. On the first page of his ten-page classroom syllabus, Darnell stresses the importance of problem solving and notes that "chess will be used as a problem-solving activity," because of the critical thinking and problem-solving inherent in playing chess. The syllabus continues: "Chess is becoming more popular in schools due to the fact that it is a board game of skill and strategy. The children learn how to evaluate which move is best and then they must live with the consequences of their decisions. This is a skill that can be applied in their day-to-day living. Chess also teaches children about good sportsmanship as well as how to lose with grace." He doesn't expect students to become master players, but he does spell out the following instructional objectives he expects to achieve by including chess in his class curriculum:

- increase and improve analytical thinking skills
- improve problem-solving techniques
- increase self-confidence and improved organizational habits
- improve logic and reasoning skills
- increase patience and persistence
- improve decision-making skills

When I asked if he had any difficulty with kids in his class not wanting to learn about chess, he replied, "They have to – it's part of their grade!" He uses chess as an abstract way of demonstrating the scientific method of observing, analyzing, inferring, and predicting. He'll show a chess position and ask his students to determine a solution. Parental support of chess both in his classroom and in the chess club has been

phenomenal, Darnell notes.

The academic benefits of learning chess are well known, but character development may be an even more important side effect. Young points out the tremendous boost in self-esteem which results when an academically-challenged child is able to defeat an academically-gifted student at a scholarly game such as chess. He claims that he has seen clearly improved behavior from students who are able to express their aggression on the chessboard rather than in other, harmful ways. Assistant Principal Pat Sills says that while it is difficult to quantify behavioral improvement, there hasn't been a single "incident" at the chess club and that he has been pleased to see that kids who weren't participating in any other school activity were getting involved in the chess club. Principal Wipke adds that "anytime students get involved in after-school activities it is a good thing. Students feel more a part of the school and connected. We are proud of our chess club ... It provides many of our students with a 'safe haven' after school while promoting critical thinking."

Young wryly noted that despite the fun and social aspects of the chess club, another important element must be present – food. He routinely provides snacks to his players and parents contribute to a significant degree. At the recent Chess Night, for example, the "snacks" included "over 80 pizzas, 1120 chicken wings, two 12-ft-long sub sandwiches and 400 sodas." The evening also featured students, parents, teachers and administrators all playing each other in chess. As Darnell explained, "This is a great way for everybody to build rapport with each other."

Incentives are also important. In addition to occasional candy, soda and the ever-present snacks, participation certificates are awarded to every student who attends the chess club. The kids also enjoy the Maurice Ashley chess CDs that Young has provided to the club.

For the last three years, he has also served as the sponsor of a chess club in the Jennings school district, also located in the St. Louis metropolitan area. Many of those students have traveled to Crestview to join in their periodic Chess Night events. This coming spring, the situation will be reversed as a Chess Night is planned for the Jennings kids, which Crestview students will visit.

Mr. Young's chess club has plenty of sets, plenty of kids excited about chess, and wonderful support and participation from faculty, administrators and parents, but the one thing they lack is chess clocks for the busy program. If any of our readers are interested in lending a hand, contact me at scholasticchess@chesscafe.com and I'll put you in touch with the people at Crestview Middle School.

2005 National Youth Action Championship

Over 400 kids competed at the 2005 National Youth Action

championship, held in Atlanta, Georgia. Nine rounds were played at a time control of game/30. Individual section winners were:

- K-3: Darwin Yang (Texas)
- K-6: Paul Taylor (Georgia)
- K-9: Scott Low (Maryland) and Adam Kostrinsky (Georgia)
- K-12: Timothy Moroney (Michigan)

It is interesting to note that well over a third of the participants in this national event came from host state Georgia. Chess parent Mark Taylor adds that they certainly fared well, winning a total of 74 individual and 23 team trophies.



Happy National Youth Action Players

2005 National K-12/Collegiate Championship

Nearly 1600 players from 40 states came together in Houston for this major annual tournament. We'll have a more complete report in our January column, but here are the section winners:

- Kindergarten: Dachey Lin (TX), Raymond Sun (TX), Ian Gilchrist (IL)
- 1st grade: Christopher Wu (NJ)
- 2nd grade: Michael Baldyga (NV)
- 3rd grade: Darwin Yang (TX)
- 4th grade: Daniel Naroditsky (CA)
- 5th grade: Ray Robson (FL), Lucas Van Beuzekorn (FL)
- 6th grade: Michael Lee (WA)
- 7th grade: Mark Heimann (PA)

- 8th grade: Kevin Wang (TX), Thomas Riccardi (NY), Richard Herbst (CO), Grand Ho (FL)
- 9th grade: Robert Lau (HI), Troy Daly (FL)
- 10th grade: Daniel Ludwig (FL)
- 11th grade: Christopher Williams (MA), Francisco Guadalupe (TX), Eric Dong (TX)
- 12th grade: Atakan Sirin (KS)
- Collegiate: Timur Gareev



Excited 6th Grade Trophy Winners

Watch for our National K-12/Collegiate coverage in next month's column. I have heard only wonderful things about how well-run this event was.

U.S. Chess School

An exciting new chess school is about to begin, founded by new USCF Executive Board member Greg Shahade. As stated at the school's [website](#):

The United States regularly boasts some of the top young talents in the world, yet somewhere along the way most of them drop out of chess or fail to improve. Much of this lack of improvement can be attributed to the lack of support, training and guidance these young chessplayers are given. The USCS is hoping to change that, with a high level of chess training programs devoted to developing the strongest young players in the country.

Shahade notes that "the only major expense the students will need to pay is the airfare, as the training and lodging is provided free of charge."

The initial group of eight students is already set for the inaugural session January 2-7, 2006. The school's application review committee however, is actively searching for a number of additional players, and is composed of IM Greg Shahade, GM Gregory Kaidanov and FM Aviv

Friedman. If you are interested in applying to this school, see the guidelines at the website noted above. We'll likely hear more about this school in future columns.

Answers to our November Everyman Quiz

Included below are the questions from our quiz last [month](#), together with the correct answers:

1. The 2005 U.S. Cadet Championship, 2005 U.S. Junior Open and the 2005 U.S. Junior Invitational were all held in which city?

- a) Nashville, Tennessee
- b) Kings Island, Ohio
- c) Phoenix, Arizona

answer: (b)

2. Tournament Director David Cohen's own first chess prize as a child consisted of:

- a) a t-shirt
- b) a hot dog and fries
- c) a toy store gift certificate

answer: (a)

3. What school has won the past two Pan-American Intercollegiate team championships?

- a) Miami Dade College
- b) University of Maryland - Baltimore County
- c) University of Texas - Dallas

answer: (c)

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.

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