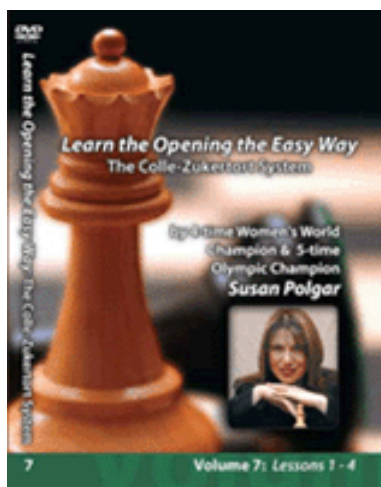




COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg



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The Complete

2007 Year-End Tournaments Part One

WFM Abby Marshall annotates one of her games from the recent World Youth Chess Championship in Antalya, Turkey, and we discuss the outrageous case of the Belgian 14-year-old who was forced to play at midnight.

From the 2007 "Grade Nationals" in Houston, Texas, we bring you the game between the two top rated participants at the event.

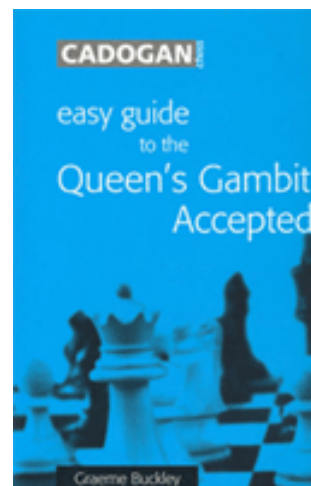
Ray Robson is no stranger to readers of this column, and he has made the news again, by garnering *three* international master norms in a six-week span. His father Gary Robson shares some thoughts with us below.

Everyman Quiz of the Month

Each month Everyman Chess sponsors our Everyman Quiz of the Month, offering a free chess book to three respondents with correct answers. This month, winners of our quiz will receive *Easy Guide to the Queen's Gambit Accepted*, by IM Graeme Buckley. Please note – winners within the last three months are ineligible for this month's contest. Send your answers to scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. Good luck!

We will accept all contest answers for one week following the appearance of the column, then randomly select our three winners from this group. So please e-mail your responses to me by January 16, 2008.

This month's questions come from our [December](#) column:



1) How many players were on the U.S. team at the 2007 World Youth Chess Championship?

- a) 18
- b) 25
- c) 33

2) Which was the only U.S. player to win a gold medal at the 2007 WYCC?

- a) Ray Robson
- b) Daniel Naroditsky
- c) Alisa Melekhina

3) How many players competed in the 2007 National Youth Action tournament?

- a) 376
- b) 476
- c) 576

World Youth Championship, November 17-29, 2007

A number of games from the 2007 World Youth Chess Championship were included in our [December 2007](#) column. Up-and-coming WFM Abby Marshall kindly contributes an annotated game for our readers, her ninth round encounter with Krithika Pon. “Incidentally,” Abby writes, “she is the teammate of Bhakti, who I had swindled in the third round.”

Abby Marshall (2208) - Krithika Pon (2140)

World Youth Antalya, Turkey (9), 26.11.2007 [B03]

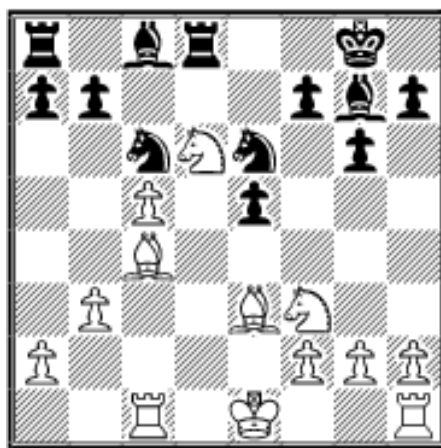
1.e4

There were many ups and downs in this game. After talking to my coach in Antalya, Joel, and my coach John Watson, I think the lesson to learn is not to be so caught up in general considerations without backing them up with concrete analysis. It sounds obvious, but several times I caught myself thinking, “OK, this looks correct, so I’ll play it and when she moves I’ll take a couple minutes and think of something else.” Not a good habit, as the game will show.

1...Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 Nb6 5.exd6 cxd6 6.Nc3 g6 7.Be3 Bg7 8.Rc1 0-0 9.b3 e5 10.dxe5 dxe5 11.Qxd8 Rxd8 12.c5 N6d7 13.Bc4 Nf8

I’m not so sure this is best. 13...Nc6 may be a better move.

14.Nb5 Nc6 15.Nd6 Ne6 16.Nf3



So far, so...interesting? Joel and I had this position on the board during preparation, and he said this position was good for White; upon return to the States, John said this line had been doing fine for Black. Joel and I looked at a game where my opponent had been squeezed to death, so I felt good even if objectively the position is unclear.

16...Bf8

my own.

Unfortunately, now my opponent deviated from the game Joel and I had looked at, so I was on

17.Nxc8 Raxc8

17...Bxc5? 18.Bxe6 Bxe3 19.fxe3 fxe6 20.Rxc6 bxc6 21.Ne7+; 17...Nxc5!? Best move; I was a little worried about tactics like this, since my c8-knight is trapped. 18.Nd6!? Bxd6 19.Ng5 Rd7 20.Nxf7 Nd3+ (20...Rxf7? 21.Bxf7+ Kxf7 22.Bxc5+-) 21.Bxd3 Kxf7 22.Bb5 with White slightly better. White has the two bishops and better pawns.

18.Bxe6 fxe6 19.Ng5

I need to ensure adequate defense for the c5-pawn, so castling/development will have to wait. Also, e4 is a beautiful square for the knight.

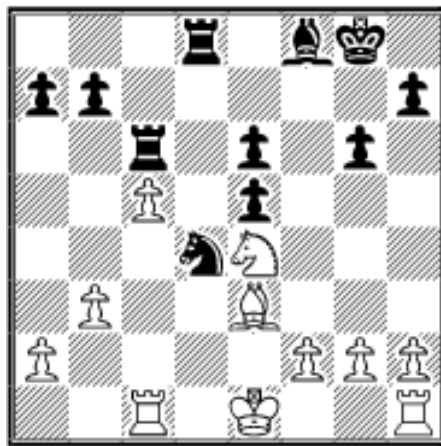
19...Nd4

19...Nb4 I wasn't very concerned about this. 20.Ke2 Nd3 (20...Nxa2 21.Rc4) 21.Rc4 Nxc5? 22.Rhc1 b6 23.b4+-.

20.Ne4

Not 20.Bxd4? exd4 21.Nxe6 Re8.

20...Rc6!



A very nice move, combining defense of the third rank (d6-square and e6-pawn) and doubling rooks on the advanced c-pawn and – what I had missed – planning to swing the rook to the a-file to attack my queenside pawns.

21.f3?!

I overestimate my position and go too slowly. 21. Rc4!? Ra6 22.a4 Nxb3 23.Rb4 Rb6 24.Rxb6 axb6 25.cxb6 Ra8 26.Ke2 Rxa4 27.Rb1 Na5 28. Kf3, though down a pawn, White has wonderful pieces, and the edge.

21...Ra6 22.Bxd4 exd4 23.a4 Bh6

The position has changed. I still feel White is better. Plusses for Black include undoubling his pawns and increasing the scope of his bishop (which ends up being very annoying), while White still has a strong knight and queenside majority.

24.Rd1?!

It was a tough decision about where to place the rook, I chose d1 because of vague principles of keeping my rook in front of her passed pawn and eventually adding my rook to e1, then finally a crusade to queen my pawn majority. Thing is, my other rook wants to be on the queenside to support my pawns immediately. 24.Rc4 is better: 24...d3 25.Kf2 Rc6 26.b4 (simple chess) 26...a6 27.b5 Rc7 28.Rd1.

24...e5 25.Ke2 b6!

Now it's more or less equal.

26.Rhe1

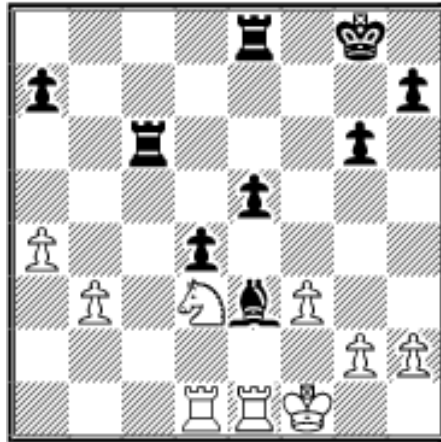
26.c6 Rc8 27.b4 (27.Nf6+ Kf7 28.Ng4 (28.Nd5 Bf8) 28...Bg7 29.Rc1 Ke6 Black is too

active.) 27...Rxa4 28.b5, I toyed with this idea but didn't trust it. Maybe I should have, as it seems better than what I played. 28...Ra2+ 29.Kd3 a6 30.Nd6 Rc7 31.Ra1 Rd2+ 32.Ke4 axb5 33.Ra8+ Bf8 34.Rc1 d3 35.Nxb5 Rc2 36.Nxc7 Rxc1 37.Ne6 Kf7 38.Ng5+ Kg7 39.Ra7+ Kg8 40.Kxd3 Rxc6 41.Nxh7 unclear. Of course not all of this is forced, but even after all the excitement, Black has sufficient resources.

26...bxc5 27.Nxc5 Rc6 28.Nd3

28.Ne4? d3+ 29.Kf1 d2 30.Re2 Rc1 31.Nf2 Rd3 Black dominates.

28...Re8 29.Kf1 Be3



Now I'm worse. 24.Rd1 and 26. Rhe1 were not the greatest. I definitely wanted to prevent ...e4, so I brought the knight around.

30.Nf2 h5!

Another nice move from my opponent. Luckily she didn't pursue her plan with this. 30...Bxf2 31. Kxf2 Kf7 Likely result is a draw.

31.Re2 Kf7

31...g5! 32.h3 a5 33.Rb2 Rf8 34.Ke2 g4 35.hxg4 Bxf2 36.Kxf2 hxg4 37.Re1 White can probably survive, but Black holds all the play.

32.b4 Rc4 33.Ne4 Ke7 34.Rb2 Rb8 35.Rdb1

At least now White has attainable counterplay, though Black has plenty of dangerous threats.

35...Rbc8?

35...d3! 36.Rb3 (36.a5? Rf8 37.Nf2 (37.Ke1 Rc2+) 37...Rd8 38.b5 e4! 39.Nxe4 Rc1+ 40. Rxc1 Bxc1 41.Ra2 d2+) 36...a5! 37.Rxd3 Bd4 38.b5 Rxa4 39.Ke2 Black has a great position.

36.Ke2 Ke6

36...g5 37.Kd3 g4 38.fxg4 hxg4 39.a5 Bf4 40.h4 gxh3 41.gxh3 Ke6=.

37.Kd3 Ke7?!

Black is holding on, but needs to do something. The aforementioned ...g5 is preferable.

38.a5



38...Bc1?



Practically losing. Again, generating open lines on the kingside is better, since White has stabilized Black's passed pawn.

39.Ra2 Be3 40.b5

Now White has concrete winning chances.

40...R4c7

40...Rc1 41.Rxc1 Rxc1 42.b6 axb6 43.axb6 Rd1+ 44.Ke2 Rb1 45.Ra7+ Kd8 46.b7 Kc7 47.Nc5 Kc6 48.Nd7 Rxb7 49.Nxe5+ Kc7 50.Rxb7+ Kxb7 51.Nxg6, I actually saw this far, and decided I was winning.

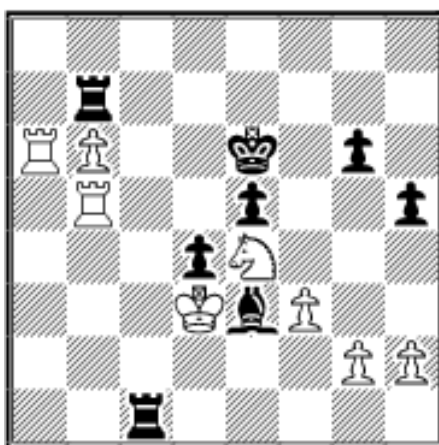
41.b6 Rb7 42.Rb5!

Hitting e5 and preparing the c5-square for the knight.

42...axb6 43.axb6 Ke6 44.Ra6

44.Nc5+ Rxc5 45.Rxc5 Rxb6, I thought more trouble than it's worth.

44...Rc1



45.Nc5+?

Idiot! 45.Ra7 Rxa7 46.bxa7 Rd1+ 47.Kc4 Ra1 48.Rb6+ Ke7 49.Rb7+ Ke6 50.Nc5+-.

45...Kf5! 46.Ne4

46.Nxb7 Rc3+ 47.Ke2 Rc2+ 48.Kd1 Rc1+=.

46...Kf4

Thankfully my opponent allowed me a pretty finish. 46...Rb8 47.b7 Rc7 48.Rf6#.

47.Ra7 Rxa7 48.bxa7 Ra1 49.Rb8! 1-0

Abby's opponent resigned in the face of the threats of both 49...Rf8# and 49...a8=Q.

Belgian player forced to play at midnight

The World Youth Chess Championships have at times been plagued with non-existent air conditioning, substandard housing and assorted administrative shenanigans. For details, see our [November 2006](#) and [August 2005](#) columns. For the most part, the U.S. team appeared to be spared such surprises at the 2007 WYCC. However, an unbelievable incident occurred near the end of the tournament, which the American delegation was unaware of at the time. The following report was written at chessvibes.com:

After he had gone to sleep, the 14-year-old Belgian player Nils Nijs heard somebody knocking on the door of his hotel room. He was told that he had wrongly claimed his draw that afternoon. There had been a threefold repetition (not consecutively) and then Nijs had made his move, stopped the clock and claimed a draw with the arbiter. According to regulations, this is a wrong claim because in case of a threefold repetition, a claim should be put forward before making the move. But the arbiter had made the blunder to accept the claim. Mai Lloyd, Nijs' Canadian opponent, had not agreed with the draw because different moves had been played between the three identical positions (which of course is irrelevant). He had walked away without signing the score sheet. Later it appeared the Canadian delegation had filed a protest concerning the wrong claim, about which the Belgian delegation was never informed.

And so, to his astonishment, together with his coach, Nijs had to go back to the hotel/playing hall where Zurab Azmaiparashvili, Florencio Campomanes and Georgios Makropoulos of the protest commission were waiting for him. His opponent was already there too, and both teenagers were heard by the commission.

After a ten-minute deliberation the commission summoned the players to continue the game, right then and there. And so around midnight, the two youngsters, instead of getting their night sleep before the last round, were finishing an official game. Nijs lost.

Chessvibes.com notes that FIDE awarded Nijs a “Fair Play Award” for “his honest testimony to his own disadvantage. It’s unclear whether the award was accompanied with apologies.”

At the Canadian ChessTalk Message Board, a member of the Canadian delegation who apparently was heavily involved with the Canadian appeal of the incorrect draw claim asserted that not only was the arbiter in error, but that other arbiters apparently attempted to cover up the mistake.

I asked GM Joel Benjamin and FM Aviv Friedman, both U.S. coaches at the WYCC, if they were aware of this issue at the tournament, but neither was, nor apparently were any of the U.S. players.

It appears to me that all parties to this distasteful situation have some measure of blame, although I’m not sure that all of the facts have been made available. It certainly appears, however, that the arbiter erred in declaring the game drawn, and I simply can’t fathom forcing a 14-year-old out of bed to play a game at midnight. Of course, both players needed to be more aware of the precise rules, but there’s no reason to penalize them for the error of an arbiter and the stupidity of a protest commission.



Photo: Betsy Dynako, Chess Life Online

National K-12/Collegiate Championships, December 7-9, 2007

The annual “Grade Nationals” were held in Houston last month, with titles up for grabs in all grade levels kindergarten through twelfth grade, as well as in the college section.

Winners include:

- Kindergarten: Aravind Kumar, Colin Zhu, Garrett Wright
- 1st grade: Raymond Sun
- 2nd grade: Alex Liu
- 3rd grade: Luke Harmon
- 4th grade: Patrick Chi, Joel Pena
- 5th grade: Jarod Pamatmat
- 6th grade: Vincent Zhang, Robert Perez, Derek Chang
- 7th grade: Justin Karp
- 8th grade: Darwin Li, Andrew Ng, Ben Gershenov, Chaz Daly
- 9th grade: Alex Heimann
- 10th grade: Shinsaku Uesugi, Thomas Riccardi
- 11th grade: Scott Lalli
- 12th grade: Warren Harper
- College: Chaitanya Vaidya



MyChessPhotos.com

One of the more interesting games occurred when University of Texas-Dallas teammates Igor Schneider and Keaton Kiewra met in round six. Schneider entered the tournament as the highest-rated player in the event, at 2389, while Kiewra was number two with his 2317 rating. In their tussle, however, Kiewra came out on top.



MyChessPhotos.com

Schneider, Igor (2389) - Kiewra, Keaton (2317)

K12 Houston (6), 09.12.2007

Sicilian Scheveningen [B83]

(Annotations by Fritz9)

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nf3 e6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 d6 6.Be2 Nf6 7.Be3 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Nb3

d5 10.exd5 exd5 11.Bf3 Be6 12.Bf4 Rc8 13.Re1 a6 14.a3 d4 15.Ne2

15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Bxe4 Bxb3 17.cxb3 f5 with White slightly better.

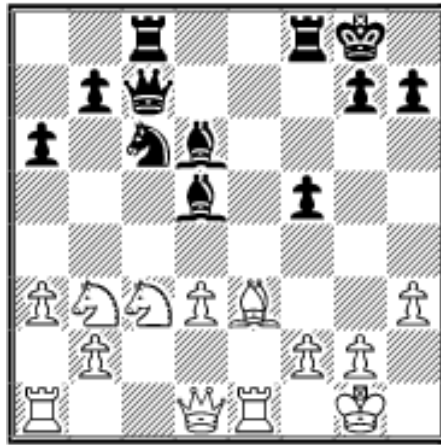
15...d3= 16.cxd3 Qb6 17.Nec1 Nd5 18.Bxd5

18.Bg3 Bg5 19.Bg4 Bxg4 20.Qxg4 Bxc1 21.Nxc1 Qxb2 22.Ne2 b5 23.Qf5 Rfd8.

18...Bxd5 19.Be3 Qc7

19...Qb5 20.a4 Qb4 21.d4 b6 22.a5 Bd6 23.Bd2 Qb5 24.axb6 Qxb6.

20.Ne2 Bd6 21.h3 f5 22.Nc3



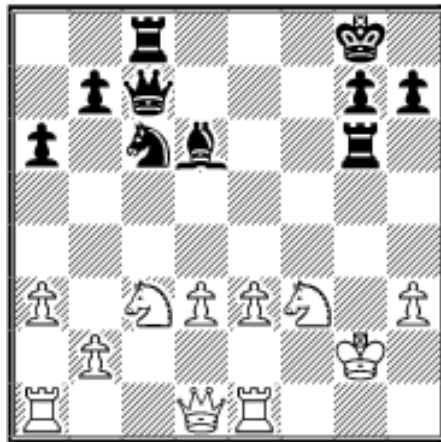
22...Bxg2

22...Bf7 23.Rc1 f4 24.Bc5 f3 25.Ne4 Bxc5 26.Nbxc5 Nd4 27.Qd2 Bd5 28.Qe3 Ne2+ 29.Rxe2.

23.Kxg2 f4 24.Nd2 fxe3 25.fxe3 Rf6 26.Nf3

26.Nde4 Rg6+ 27.Kh1 Qd7 28.Qh5 Kh8 29.Nxd6 Rxd6 30.Ne4 Rh6 31.Nc5 Qd6 32.Qg4 Rf8.

26...Rg6+



27.Kf1??

Fritz's evaluation at this point changed from -0.89 to -5.39. 27.Kh1 Qd7 28.Ng1 Qe6 29.Ne4 Bg3 30.Nxg3 Rxg3 31.Qh5 Ne5 and Fritz is back to -0.89.

27...Rf8

27...Qf7 seems even better 28.d4 Rg3 29.Ke2 Qxf3+ 30.Kd2 Nxd4 31.Kc1-+.

28.Ne4

28.Qb3+ does not help much 28...Kh8 29.Ke2 Rg2+ 30.Kd1 Rxf3-+.

28...Ne5 29.Ned2

29.Qb3+ there is nothing better in the position 29...Kh8 30.Rac1-+.

29...Qd7 0-1

30.Qb3+ Kh8-+; 29...Qf7 30.d4 Nc4 31.Ke2 Rg2+ 32.Kf1 Rxd2 33.Kg1 Qg6+ 34.Ng5

Rxd1 35.d5 Qxg5+ 36.Kh1 Rf2 37.Raxd1 Qg2#.

Ray Robson – Six Weeks to International Master

- October 28-Nov. 3, 2007: 6th FIDE North American Invitational; Ray Robson finishes 1st in a strong ten-player event to earn his first IM norm
- November 17-29, 2007: 2007 World Youth Chess Championship; Ray places 7th out of 152 players in the Boys Under 14 section and earns his second IM norm
- December 6-14, 2007: UTD GM Invitational; Ray finishes 4th in a 12-player field composed primarily of international masters and grandmasters to earn his third and final IM norm

Veteran Robson-watchers knew it was only a matter of time, but this phenomenal 13-year-old went from having no IM norms on October 28 to completing his third and final IM norm by December 14, a span of roughly six weeks. There is little doubt that Ray will achieve the coveted grandmaster (GM) title before long.



IM-elect Ray Robson

Photo: ChessBase

In fact, Ray appears to be taking the IM-elect title in stride. His father Gary reports that “All of the certificates are now in the hands of the USCF; we’re just waiting to see what, if anything, we need to do next. I think they’ll send everything to the FIDE officials who will make the final determination about a title. After Ray’s last event (Dallas), his FIDE rating is now over 2400, but they’ll need to include that event in the next rating adjustment for Ray to have a high enough rating to officially get the title. If he has to wait a few months longer, that’s okay. Ray’s more interested in the GM title.”

Gary Robson confirmed that Ray is not presently working with any coaches, saying, “Ray hasn’t worked with anyone since May or early June. All of the prep that he’s done since then has been his alone. I think he must be doing something right!”

An interesting facet I’ve noticed with Ray’s performances is that at times, he seems to have relatively lackluster results (for him) against scholastic competition, while at other times, he’ll decimate a field of IMs and GMs. Ray’s father concurs, and has worked with Ray to try to change this. “Games against weaker players are generally less interesting to him,” he says. “Conversely, he gets very excited and motivated about the prospect of playing a top player. He’s working on bringing his ‘A’ game to all opponents.”

Is Ray the youngest IM-elect in U.S. history? I don't know, but really, the point is probably moot. He's not likely to be an IM for long anyway.

2008 USCF All America Team

Sponsored by Trophies Plus, the USCF 2008 All America Team has been announced, and consists of the following players: Salvijus Bercys, Alex Lenderman, Joel Banawa, Daniel Ludwig, Robert Hess, Warren Harper, Marc Arnold, Mark Heimann, Victor Shen, Michael Lee, Alex Heimann, Alec Getz, Ray Robson, Parker Zhao, Michael Yang, Daniel Naroditsky, Gregory Young, Christopher Heung, Ryan Moon, Andrew Wang, Darwin Yang, Aleksandr Ostrovskiy, Eric Zhang, Srikar Varadaraj, Atulya Shetty, Brian Luo, Varun Krishnan, Kevin Wang, Fernando Spada, Alexander Velikanov, Danil Fedunov, Jarod Pamatmat, David Hua, Nicolas Nip, Benjamin Moon, Christopher Wu, Kayden Troff, Raymond Sun and Mika Brattain.

Answers to Last Month's Quiz

1) Which was Simone Liao's first national tournament?

- a) 2006 National Elementary School Championship
- b) 2007 National Elementary School Championship
- c) 2007 National Junior High School Championship

Answer: (c)

2) What advice did IM Robert Hungaski offer for players in lengthy tournaments?

- a) "Don't be blinded by ambition by forcing a win against lower-rated opponents."
- b) "Every game is a war – you must win at all costs."
- c) "Early to bed, early to rise, and don't accept any byes."

Answer: (a)

3) FM Ray Robson achieved his first IM norm at which event?

- a) 2007 U.S. Junior Invitational
- b) 2007 Foxwoods Open
- c) 6th North American FIDE Invitational

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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