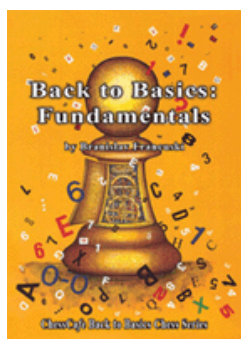




COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg



CHESSTHEATRE

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Iceland & Indiana

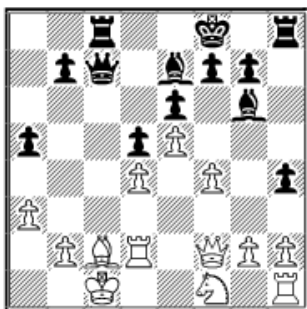
Did he or did he not? We thought that Ray Robson had already earned all three international master norms by last December, but his father explains that there was a glitch, requiring him to earn yet another norm. Not one to complain, Ray just traveled to Reykjavik, Iceland, competing against a field replete with GMs and IMs, and picked up that extra qualification norm.

Growing up in a region with minimal chess resources would not seem conducive to chess mastery, but Fairfield, Ohio's Jonathan Hilton explains that doing just that was "the greatest blessing of my chess career."

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, three different books are offered – one book per winner: *Offbeat Spanish*, by GM Glenn Flear, *Offbeat Nimzo-Indian*, by GM Chris Ward, and *Offbeat King's Indian*, by IM Krzysztof Panczyk. Please note – winners within the last three months are ineligible for this month's contest.

We will accept all contest answers for one week following the appearance of the column, then randomly select our three winners from this group. Please e-mail your responses to me by April 16, 2008. Send your answers to scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. Good luck!



Problem 1

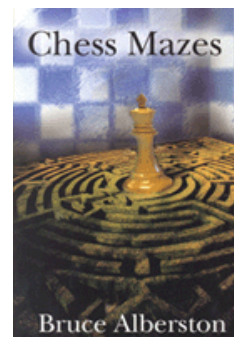
Black to move



Problem 2

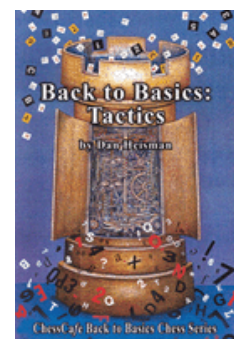
White to move

Check out these bestselling titles from [USCFSales.com](#):



[Chess Mazes](#)

by Bruce Alberston



[Back to Basics: Tactics](#)

by Dan Heisman



[Mastering Tactical Ideas](#)

by Nikolay Minev

Reykjavik Open, March 3-11, 2008, Iceland

As noted in our [January 2008](#) column, we thought that Ray Robson had collected his three IM norms in just a six week span. However, Ray's father told us that "Everything was submitted to the USCF, and, just a few weeks ago, we were told that they wouldn't accept the norm issued by the Turkish federation [from the World Youth Chess Championship]. I think it had something to do with the number of titled players that Ray played. At this point, of course, it doesn't matter."



Gary and Ray Robson

That's because Ray just went out and earned another IM norm, at the 2008 Reykjavik Open. In a 91-player field composed largely of GMs and IMs, the youngster earned a score of 5/9, drawing with four of the five GMs he faced, and defeating both IMs he was paired against. He might have done even better, if not for a time trouble induced loss in the final round. Entering the tournament, his FIDE rating stood at 2389, but his performance rating for the event was a robust 2470. So once more, it's IM-elect Ray Robson.

The Robsons were effusive in their praise of the organizers of the Reykjavik Open. "We're here at the invitation of the Icelandic Chess Federation, who have been extremely generous," Gary said from Reykjavik. They provided all of the expenses, and they even gave Ray a small stipend for participating. It is obvious that the people here take chess seriously and that chess is highly respected in this culture (quite the opposite to how chess is viewed in the United States). They support chess here, and they put money into it. This has probably been our best chess experience to date. The Icelandic Chess Federation folks – and in particular both Bjorn Thorfinnsson and Lilja Gretarsdottir (the President of the Icelandic Chess Federation) – have been extremely kind and attentive to Ray and to all of the participants. If we're lucky enough to be invited back next time, we'll definitely come back."



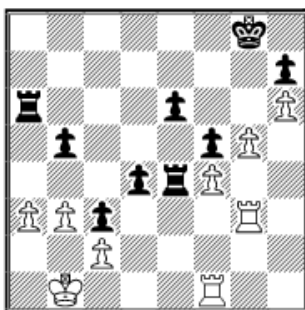
Ray with Boris Spassky

Ray's father noted that their goal is to have him play in events where GM norms are possible. And if he again has an apparent norm dismissed, I suspect "Tiger" Robson will just go out and earn another.

Here is his eighth round game against IM Peter Vavrak. Ray castles queenside and launches a kingside attack, while his opponent does the opposite. Securing and maintaining the initiative in such cases is crucial, and Ray manages to bring home the victory.

Robson, Ray (2389) – Vavrak, Peter (2472)
Reykjavik Open (8.20), 10.03.2008 [A00]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Be7 5.e5 Nfd7 6.Bxe7 Qxe7 7.f4 Nb6 8.Qd2 Bd7 9.Nf3 c5 10.dxc5 Qxc5 11.0-0-0 Nc6 12.Nb5 0-0 13.Nd6 Nc8 14.Nxc8 Rfxc8 15.Bd3 Ne7 16.Qe2 a6 17.Kb1 Bb5 18.g4 Rc6 19.h4 Rac8 20.Bxb5 axb5 21.Nd4 Rb6 22.h5 Nc6 23.Nb3 Qc4 24.Qxc4 bxc4 25.Nd4 c3 26.b3 Rb4 27.Nxc6 Rxc6 28.Rdf1 f6 29.exf6 gxf6 30.Rhg1 Re4 31.Rg3 b5 32.g5 f5 33.a3 d4 34.h6 Ra6



35.g6 hxg6 36.Rxg6+ Kh7 37.Rg7+ Kxh6 38.Rg3 1-0

U.S. Junior Congress, March 8-9, 2008, Indiana

The annual U.S. Junior Congress serves as a nice warm-up for the other spring national scholastic tournaments, and a record 260 players attended this year.

The event began with a snowstorm that briefly delayed the start of the first round. According to Indianapolis native Ben Goosman, the Cary Kings team from Ohio had difficulty navigating through the unplowed snow in their bus, but the remainder of the tournament ran smoothly.



Ben Goosman

The 17-year-old Goosman entered the Junior Congress ranked fifteenth in the 28-player 18 & Under section. In fact, he had played in only three other rated tournaments, but he finished with a score of 4½/6 to tie for 2nd-3rd place, taking third on tiebreaks. "Third place for me is a huge achievement!" he exclaimed. He had only positive remarks about the tournament, especially enjoying the chance to meet one of America's top grandmasters. "Seeing Yury Shulman there was neat," Goosman said. "He had a table outside the main room where a player could bring his/her notation sheet and he would analyze it. He had a projector and ChessBase running."



GM Yuri Shulman

Photo: Betsy Dynako

One of Goosman's opponents was Jonathan Hilton. With his 2192 rating, Jonathan was easily the highest-rated player in any section, and won the 18 & Under division with a perfect 6-0 score.

Hilton, also 17, hails from Fairfield, Ohio, just north of Cincinnati, and is a frequent contributor to *Chess Life Online*. He's also quite an animated young man. "I played in the U.S. Junior Chess Congress back in 2003, when it was held in nearby Columbus. The Under18 Section only had nine players! I was rated around 1800 and finished with 3/5, tying for fourth," he said. "However, the atmosphere of the tournament felt like an exclusive closed event, not like a large open. I much preferred my experience playing this year – the atmosphere was much more like that of a national scholastic event."

After nine years of tournament experience, Hilton doesn't shy away from the pressure of being in the spotlight. "I love to play on the stage and enjoy the rush of adrenaline that comes when I look out over the crowd below; it helps me to focus during my games and gives me a sense of strength and fighting spirit. Many scholastic players simply come to enjoy their games and socialize, which in itself is not a bad thing; however, when you play each round on Board 1 on the stage, the feeling is much different. I feel as if I am fighting for my life, and I love that feeling. My opponents all felt the pressure of playing on the stage to some extent, too – I could tell by how they behaved and how they played – and it caused most of them to set aside any fears they might have of my much higher rating and simply *fight*. This built a firm sense of camaraderie among the players on the stage and created intense, exciting games. Now that I am a fairly strong player I enjoy intense games."

In contrast to many players, scholastic and adult, who play with the hope that their opponents will blunder the game away, Hilton says, "I remember when I was little, I used to spend time during my games thinking of how nice it would be if my opponent fell into a trap or hung a piece suddenly, but now I would find such thoughts revolting. I wish only to play combatively and to put everything on the line to do so if I must. This is not to say that I play exclusively for tactics – I will work just as hard, if not harder, in a positional endgame as I will in open warfare. But I must feel that strain of giving the game all I've got, or else I lose my edge and begin to play passive, mediocre chess, the kind simply recited from prior knowledge and not of my own creation and inspiration at the board."



Jonathan Hilton, center, with relatives

Jonathan has had a number of highlights to his chess career, but is most proud of his first-place finish in the 2006 Cincinnati Chess Championship, in which most of his opponents were rated between 1950 and 2100. With his score of $5\frac{1}{2}/6$, his sole draw was against a master. He has also tied for second in the Ohio state championship twice, and won the state high school championship in 2006, representing Ohio at the national Denker tournament. He also finished in a three-way tie for first at the K-9 SuperNationals in Nashville in 2005.

Hilton's writing career began after Jennifer Shahade interviewed him following his success at the 2005 SuperNationals. Jennifer advised him to consider writing about chess, and now, with an excess of a dozen published articles, Jonathan is planning on working this summer on a book covering the late GM Alex Wojtkiewicz, based on Hilton's "How Wojo Won" series for *Chess Life*.

Although he lives far from major chess centers, Jonathan says, "Probably the greatest blessing of my chess career was that I have grown up in a 'small town' chess community. I became a chess writer, tournament director, lecturer, guest speaker, and Ohio Chess Association (OCA) Trustee, because in this small town chess community, there were needs to be filled and everyone had to pitch in and help fill them. To keep chess going and active, we all have had to do our part."

Until recently, he's hardly left the state of Ohio for any tournaments, but he hopes to spend more time traveling to national events. He recently competed at the 2008 Foxwoods event, where he had an outstanding tournament, finishing with $5\frac{1}{2}/9$ against a very strong field – his lowest-rated opponent was a 2312 player. He finished in a five-way tie for top Under 2300 player. He also plans to attend the K-12 Nationals in Atlanta, the Chicago Open, the U.S. Open and possibly the World Open.

Hilton has been hovering around the 2200 mark in recent months, although after Foxwoods, his rating stands at an all-time high of 2246. Currently a home-schooled high school junior, he says, "I hope in the next year to study, train, travel, and work hard to get up above 2300 or higher before I go to college."

The well-rounded young man is also an Eagle Scout, a second-degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do, a swing dancer, a pianist, and quite active in his church. He also is a small businessman, with his [Ohio Chess Connection](#) chess magazine. He generously annotated one of his games from the 2008 U.S. Junior Congress:

Niles, Cody – Hilton, Jonathan

US Junior Chess Congress (3), 08.03.2008 [D91]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bg5

This is considered fairly harmless if Black plays accurately, but Seirawan used this system to good effect a few decades ago.

5...Ne4!



The correct response, based on the following tactical trick.

6.cxd5

6.Nxd5?? Nxe5 7.Nxe5 e6 of course loses for White.

6...Nxe5 7.Nxe5 e6!

Thus Black regains the pawn.

8.Nf3

Sharper is 8.Qd2!?, with the line I planned to play running 8...exd5 9.Qe3 + Kf8 10.Qf4 Bf6 11.h4 h6 12.Nf3 Kg7. My opponent's move leads to a structure where White can embark on a minority attack on the queenside, just as Seirawan played it.

8...exd5 9.e3 0-0 10.Be2 Re8

It was more accurate to play 10...c6, with the idea of 11.0-0 Qd6, halting White's b2-b4 for another couple of moves, though a transposition would be likely.

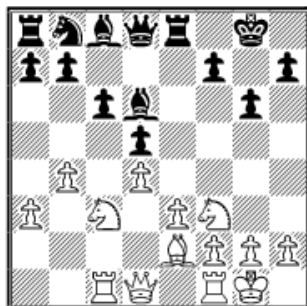
11.0-0 c6 12.b4 Bf8?!

During the game, I was not aware of how bad this move looked. Having not played the Grünfeld in some years, I had forgotten how to play this position (though I had remembered how to reach it, which can be dangerous!) and decided to play ...Bd6, ...Bc7, and ...Qd6. Black probably can still hold his queenside, but it is far better to play something like ...a6, followed by ... Qd6, ...Bf5, and ...Nd7, with the idea of ...Nb6 and from there into c4. I looked at a handful of games and Black's chances are excellent; he has the two bishops and counterplay on the queenside and against the dark squares. He can even think of playing the sacrifice ... Nxe3 if he first anchors the knight on c4. Now, all my pieces are on the back rank and White can begin his attack.

13.a3

This is in keeping with the spirit of the variation, but given my odd last move, I believe White would be justified in rushing ahead with 13.b5!. After the text, Black's bishop maneuver does not seem so bad, as he actually gets strong counterplay.

13...Bd6 14.Rc1!?



During the game I believed White should have developed his king's rook to this square and left his queen's rook to guard the a3-pawn. For instance 14.Qb3 Bc7 15.Rfc1 Qd6 16.h3. However, Black's counterplay is significant here and White finds it annoying that he cannot play the typical maneuver Nf3-e1-d3. White's move is actually fine, and it is possible I should have met it with 14...Bc7 anyway.

14...a5

My opponent had overlooked this move, which effectively wins a pawn.

The move is not nearly as strong as I believed it to be at the time.

15.Qb3 Qe7 16.b5!

A good move by my opponent, making a strong positional sacrifice out of an oversight.

16...Bxa3 17.Ra1 Bb4 18.bxc6!?

There was no hurry to play this. 18.Na4 was stronger; for instance, if 18...Nd7 19.Rfc1 Qd6, Black finds it difficult to hold everything after 20.Qc2.

18...bxc6 19.Rfc1 Ba6

Ceding the two bishops, but at this point I wanted to just trade down and hold the position. I could come back and win with my extra pawn much later, in the endgame; for now, I wanted to get my pieces developed and coordinated, even for a positional price.

20.Bxa6 Rxa6

I now had no doubt I could hold my extra pawn, but White has adequate compensation in his pressure on my queenside.

21.Na4 Nd7 22.Qd3 Rea8 23.Ra2 Qd6 24.Nd2

A critical moment. We both had less than ten minutes on the clock at this point. I could either play 24...Nb6, holding my extra pawn but allowing White to keep his bind, or destroy White's bind with 24...c5, which would probably cost me my d5-pawn. In the heat of the moment, I played the more aggressive option.

24...c5!?



24...Nb6 25.Nb3 Nc4 26.Nbc5 R6a7 looked double-edged. Although Black holds his pawn, it is difficult for him to come up with a constructive plan. In a longer game, I would have played this, but I was hoping to create new tactics to fluster my opponent in the time scramble.

25.dxc5 Nxc5 26.Nxc5 Bxc5 27.Nb3 Bb4 28.Rac2

I had not expected my opponent to go after tactical play himself, eschewing the possible win of a pawn with 28.Rd1 a4 29.Nd4, followed by building up on the d5-pawn, so this was a surprise! I decided to seize the a1-h8 diagonal immediately.

28...Qe5 29.Rc8+ Kg7 30.Rxa8 Rxa8 31.f4?

A poor decision – weakening the second rank and the area around White's king – but I had hoped my opponent would crack under the physical and mental pressure of a time scramble on Board 1 when I opted for 24...c5!?. Of course 31.Nd4 is better, when White has reasonable drawing chances.

31...Qb2?!

Overly excited by my opponent's mistake, I lose my cool. This move is not particularly accurate; 31...Qe4, forcing White into a losing endgame, was best.

32.Qxd5 Re8 33.Qd4+?

Cracking a second time, and this time I do not let my opponent get away. 33.Rc7 Qf6 34.Kf2 highlights the weakness created by the f2-f4 push, but is still a much better try for White.

33...Qxd4 34.exd4 Re2 0-1

My opponent soon resigned, with only a few seconds left on both our clocks.

New York State Scholastic Championships, March 15-16, 2008

“It was the most exciting finish of any of our tournaments, ever,” described Eliot Weiss, coach of Brooklyn’s Edward R. Murrow High School chess team. Given the many city, state and national championships this school has amassed, this is quite a statement.

Weiss was referring to his team’s action at the 2008 New York State Scholastic Championship. In the final round, Murrow was paired against I. S. 318, coached by Elizabeth Vicary, with the I.S. 318 team then in first place. Before long, all but one of the games of this match were completed, and if Weiss’ team was to pull off it’s ninth consecutive state championship, Murrow player Zachary Dikstein was going to have to come from behind. Weiss describes what happened:

“In the very last game being played, Zachary Dikstein (Murrow) was playing against a player from the first place team, I.S. 318. Down two pawns and with a horrible position, Zach had a definite loss. He asked for a draw, which would put us in second place. The other boy refused and then Zachary skewered his king and queen with 60 seconds to play and checkmated him. There was a difference of about 400 points, Zach the underdog. That gave us first place.”

And that made it nine state championships in a row for Murrow, and their twelfth since 1992.

TCA Chess in Education Conference, March 8, 2008

Sponsored by the Texas Chess Association (TCA), University of Texas-Brownsville (UTB), University of Texas-Dallas and Texas Tech University, the second annual TCA Chess in Education workshop was held on March 8 in Houston, in conjunction with the 2008 Texas Scholastic Chess Championships.



Dr. Alexey Root

The speakers included:

- Dr. Steve Lipschultz, who demonstrated the use of the [Think Like a King](#) software to assist school chess clubs.
- Russell Harwood of UTB, who explained how he developed a

- successful elementary school chess club from the ground up.
- GM Susan Polgar, discussing her goal of having chess as a standard part of the school curriculum.
 - Dr. Alexey Root, co-organizer of the event, who demonstrated activities from her books *Science, Math, Checkmate: 32 Chess Activities for Inquiry and Problem Solving* and *Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators*.
 - USCF National Scholastic Director Jerry Nash, who discussed the importance of coordinating the chess community with educational, civic, business and political communities.
 - Scholastic chess coach Thomas Johnston, explaining where to find free or low-cost resources for a school chess group.
 - Clemente Rendon, TCA Vice-President, discussing the future of the Texas Chess Association.

Selected workshop presentations may be downloaded [here](#).

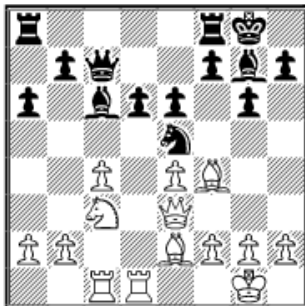
Answers to Last Month's Quiz



Problem 1

White to move

Answer: **16.Nxe6! fxe6 17.Bh5+ Kd8 18.Qxg7 Rf8 19.Bg4 Bxg2 20.Rhg1 Bf3 21.Bxf3 Rxf3 22.Qg2** with a winning attack. From Molner-Corrales, World Junior (1), 2007.



Problem 2

White to move

Answer: **18.Nd5!** Black's last move allows this tactic. **18...exd5** (18...Bxd5 19.cxd5 is also better for White.) **19.cxd5** After White takes on c6 and Black takes back, Black will have weak pawns on d6, c6, and a6. From Robson-Chow

6th North American FIDE Invitational (3), 29.10.2007. Both problems are from the [February 2008](#) column.

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