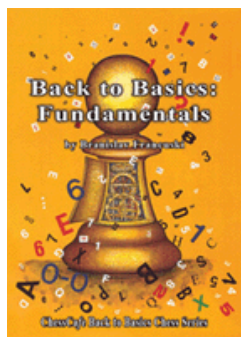




COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg



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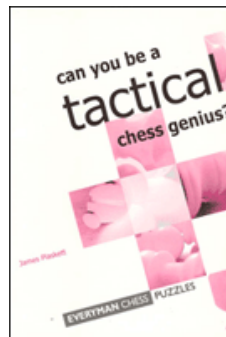
2008 Spring Championships

At the high school nationals last month, the Catalina Foothills team from Tucson captured its third national championship in four years. At the junior high school nationals, there was a three-way tie for first heading into the penultimate round, but Michael Lee edged out his competitors for the title.

The college chess "final four" also took place last month, with the University of Texas at Dallas continuing its dominance. Plus, at the 10th North American FIDE Invitational in Chicago, teenager Alisa Melekina captured not one, but three (!) FIDE norms and is now closing in on a rating of 2300 (USCF).

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 *Can You Be a Tactical Genius?*, by GM James Plaskett. 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 May 21, 2008. Send your answers to scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. Good luck!

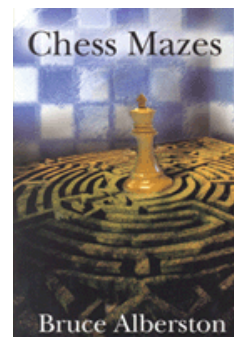
This month, questions are taken from our [April 2008](#) column.

- Where did Ray Robson earn his "fourth" IM norm?
 - Dallas, Texas
 - Reykjavik, Iceland
 - Chicago, Illinois
- Where does national master Jonathan Hilton live?
 - Indiana
 - Ohio
 - New York
- Which tournament did Murrow H.S. coach Eliot Weiss describe as "the most exciting finish of any of our tournaments, ever!"?
 - New York State Scholastic Championship
 - SuperNationals
 - National High School Championship

2008 National Junior High School Championships, April 4-6, Dallas-Fort Worth

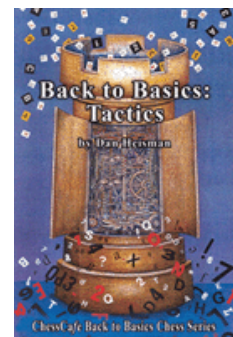
In the K-9 Championship section after four rounds, there were three

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players with perfect 4-0 scores – Michael Lee, Darwin Yang and Steven Zierk. In round five, Lee and Yang were paired and drew their game, while Zierk also drew his, leaving all three still tied for first heading into the sixth round. This time Lee and Zierk were paired together, and it was a wild game that was critical in propelling Michael Lee to a clear first place finish. Darwin Yang came in second, half a point behind, while Steven Zierk ended in a five-way tie for third place, but held the best tiebreak points.



Michael Lee

Photo: MonRoi

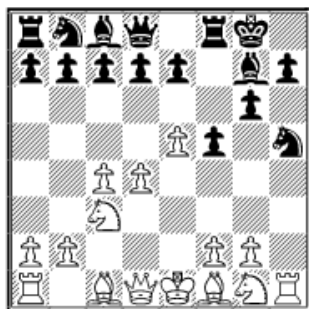
Here is the game between Lee and Zierk, with annotations by Fritz.

Lee, Michael – Zierk, Steven

National Junior High Championship Dallas (6), 06.04.2008

Dutch Defense [A85]

1.c4 f5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.d4 g6 4.h4 Bg7 5.h5 Nxh5 6.e4 0-0 7.e5



Better is 7.exf5 d6 8.Be3+/-.

7...d6= 8.Be2

8.exd6!? should not be overlooked 8...
exd6 9.Be2=.

8...dxe5-/+ 9.Bxh5 exd4

White wins a piece. 9...gxh5?? 10.Qxh5
Qd6 11.Qxh7+ Kf7 12.Nb5+-.

10.Nd5 c6 11.Nf4 e5

11...Qe8 12.Be2 e5 13.Nfh3 and Black is slightly better.

12.Bxg6= hxg6 13.Nxg6 Rf6

13...Nd7!? is a viable option 14.Nxf8 Qxf8=.

14.Qh5+/- Qe8 15.Qh7+ Kf7 16.Nh4??

Better is 16.Rh6 Rxg6 17.Qxg6+ (17.Rxg6?! Qh8 18.Rxg7+ Qxg7 19.Qh5
+ Qg6=) 17...Kf8 18.Qh7+/-.

16...f4-/+ 17.Ngf3 Bg4 18.Ng5+ Kf8 19.f3 Rh6-/+ 20.Qd3 Be6

20...Qd8 21.Ng6+ Ke8 22.Rxh6 Qxg5 23.fxg4 Qxh6 24.Qf5+-.

21.Bd2 Bf6

21...Kg8!? is noteworthy 22.0-0-0 Na6 23.Nxe6 Qxe6 and Black is

slightly better.

22.Nh7+ Kg7 23.Nxf6 Rxf6 24.0–0–0 Qf7

24...b5!? should be examined more closely 25.Rdg1 bxc4+/-.

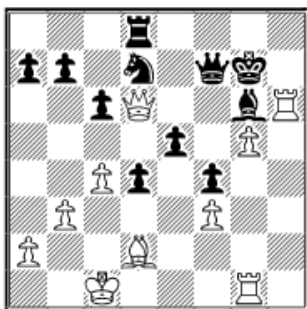
25.g4+/- Rh6? 26.Rdg1+- Kf8?? 27.g5 Rxh4 28.Rxh4 Bf5 29.Qa3+

Better is 29.Qe2. It becomes clear that White will call all the shots: 29... Qe6 30.Rh6 d3+-.

29...Kg7 30.b3

30.Qd6 Qxc4+ 31.Bc3 Nd7+-.

30...Bg6 31.Qd6 Nd7 32.Rh6 Rd8



32...Re8 33.Rxg6+! Qxg6 34.Qxd7+ Qf7 +-.

33.Rxg6+! Qxg6 34.Qe7+ Qf7 35.Qxd8 Qf5 36.Rh1 Kf7 37.Rh6 1–0

37.Rh6 Kg7 38.Bb4 b5 39.Qh8+ Kf7 40. Rh7+ Qxh7 41.Qxh7+ Ke6 42.Qg6+ Nf6 43.Qxf6+ Kd7 44.Bd6 Kc8 45.Qe7 bxc4 46.Qc7#.

In the K-8 section, there was a logjam at the top, with seven players tied for first: Alec Getz, Jason Altschuler, Matthew Dahl, Justin Karp, Michael Chiang, Brennen Lee and George Qi, all with 6 points in the seven-round event. Getz was awarded the first-place trophy on tiebreak points.

2008 National High School Championships, April 18-20, Atlanta

For the third time in four years, the Catalina Foothills H.S. team won the team championship at the High School Nationals. In 2005 and 2007, Edward R. Murrow High School tied for first place with Catalina Foothills, but lost out on tiebreak points. In 2006, the Murrow squad won the team title outright.

So for three years, Catalina Foothills and Murrow had fierce battles for the title of the nation's top high school team. Murrow had the superstar duo of IM Sal Bercys and IM Alex Lenderman, while Catalina Foothills could lay claim to a bit better depth on their squad.

But Bercys and Lenderman have graduated, with Bercys playing for the University of Texas at Dallas, and Lenderman attending college in Brooklyn. So this year, Murrow played with a lot of heart and enthusiasm, but wasn't able to compete at the same level as in the recent past.

Although Catalina Foothills also lost players to graduation, they still have excellent depth, with masters Landon Brownell and Vaishnav Aradhyula and expert Kevin Zhang. Their main competition this year came from Thomas Jefferson H.S. in Alexandria, VA, with top players Edward Lu (2203), Aryan Khojandi (2064) and Craig Saperstein (1949) and the up-and-coming Niles North team from Chicago, with Ilan Meerovich (2117) and Ben Rothschild (2036).

In the end, Catalina Foothills scored a total of 19½ points to claim sole first place, with Thomas Jefferson H.S. a half-point behind. The spunky Niles North team was close behind, claiming third place with 18½ points.



Catalina Foothills H.S. – national champions again

Robby Adamson, the coach of Catalina Foothills, said, “Winning three out of four years is a tremendous accomplishment for the team. Playing the role of the favorite this year was a new experience for our team. We had less depth than we had before, which meant we had very little margin for error. I am very proud of the team for being able to come through when it counted (the last day) and keeping a positive attitude despite some upsets we suffered. Each championship we have won has been special, but I don’t think I will ever forget this year’s team and their run to the title. This caps an amazing run from a program that almost didn’t exist a few years ago. I have been so lucky to be able to work with a fantastic group of students, supportive parents, coaches in Tucson, and a Tucson community that truly roots for our team because the students are well-rounded and great role models.”

The individual title was won by Daniel Yeager, a 2343-rated player from Pennsylvania, who finished with a perfect 7-0 mark. Second place was taken (on tiebreak points over Warren Harper, Edward Lu and Ilan Meerovich) by Michael Thaler from the Hunter College Campus team. Thaler’s only blemish was his final-round loss to Yeager.



Daniel Yeager

Photo: MonRoi

In the thrilling Thaler-Yeager encounter, Black trades two rooks for a queen, and each player has one or more pawns propelling down the board. Here is their game:

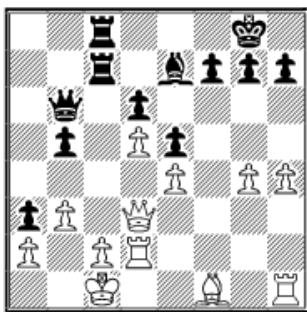
Thaler,Michael – Yeager,Daniel

National High School Championship Atlanta (7), 20.04.2008
Sicilian Najdorf [B90]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be3 e5 7.Nb3 Be6 8.f3 Nbd7 9.Qd2 b5 10.Nd5 Bxd5 11.exd5 Nb6 12.Bxb6 Qxb6 13.0–0–0

13.a4!? should be investigated more closely 13...b4 14.a5.

13...Be7 14.g4 0-0 15.h4 a5 16.Qd3 a4 17.Nd2 a3 18.b3 Rfc8 19.Ne4
Nxe4 20.fxe4 Rc7 21.Rd2 Rac8



22.Rh3??

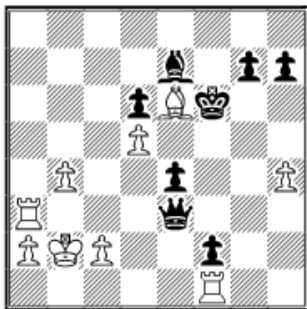
Better is 22.Kb1.

22...Rc3+ 23.Qxc3 Rxc3 24.Rxc3 Qg1
25.Rd1 Qxg4 26.Bxb5

26.Bd3 Bxh4 27.Rf1 b4+.

26...Qxe4 27.Rc4 Qe3+ 28.Kb1 f5 29.
Ra4 Kf7 30.Bd7 f4 31.Rxa3 f3 32.Be6+

Kf6 33.Kb2 f2 34.Rf1 e4 35.b4



35...Qe1! 36.Bh3 e3 37.b5 Kg6

Better is 37...e2 and Black can already
relax: 38.Rf3+ Kg6 39.R3xf2 Qb4+ 40.
Kc1 e1Q+ 41.Rxe1 Qxe1+ 42.Kb2
Qxf2+.

38.b6 Bf6+ 39.c3 e2 40.b7

40.Rxe1 fxe1Q 41.Rb3 Qd2+ 42.Ka3
e1Q 43.Bf1 Qec1+ 44.Ka4 Qxa2+ 45.

Kb4 Bxc3+ 46.Kb5 Qxf1+ 47.Kc6 Qa4+ 48.Kc7 Qf7+ 49.Kxd6 Qad7+
50.Kc5 Qfxd5#.

40...Qd2+ 41.Kb3 Qxc3+ 42.Ka4 Qc4+ 0-1

2008 College Final Four, April 5-6, Baltimore

For the second year in a row, the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) has won the "College Final Four" event (formally known as the President's Cup), the annual competition among the top four U.S. collegiate chess teams.

UTD edged out its perennial rival the University of Maryland – Baltimore County (UMBC) with a team total of 9½ points to 8 for UMBC. Miami Dade College finished with a score of 3½, and New York University was close behind at 3 points.

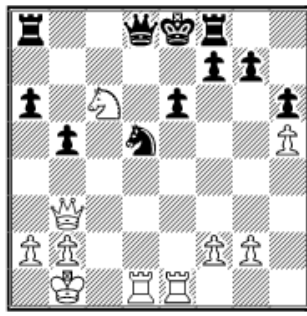
Here is the one of the first round games, in which White jumps out to a quick lead in development, avoids Black's attempts at trading queens, and triumphs in a middlegame tactical melee.

Boskovic, Drasko (2508) – Gonzalez, Javier (2131)

2008 College Final Four` Catonsville, MD (1), 05.04.2008

Caro-Kann [B19]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.h4 h6 7.Nf3 Nd7 8.
h5 Bh7 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Ngf6 11.Bd2 e6 12.0-0-0 Qc7 13.Ne4
Nxe4 14.Qxe4 Bd6 15.Qg4 Rh7 16.Qe4 Nf6 17.Qe2 Bf4 18.Bxf4 Qxf4+
19.Kb1 Qe4 20.Qd2 Rh8 21.Ne5 Rf8 22.Rhe1 Qd5 23.c4 Qd6 24.Qa5
Qd8 25.Qa4 a6 26.d5 b5 27.Qb3 cxd5 28.cxd5 Nxd5 29.Nc6 1-0



Black can't avoid the loss of his knight at d5.

North American FIDE Invitational, April 19-25, Chicago

Chicago organizer Sevan Muradian held his 10th North American FIDE Invitational tournament in April. These events have proven to be a wonderful opportunity for U.S. players to earn norms toward FIDE titles. Youngsters Ray Robson and Marc Arnold have recently earned IM norms, and at this latest tournament Alisa Melekhina had one of her best events ever, earning an international master norm, as well as WIM and WGM norms (she's already a WFM).



Alisa Melekhina
Photo: Sevan Muradian

Alisa was quite pleased with the way the tournament was run. "Sevan did a fantastic job organizing the event and keeping all of the players updated," she said. "There were no problems at all during the tournament and he was really committed to having the tournament run smoothly and keeping the playing hall quiet. I think it's great that he provides players with the opportunities to score norms while keeping it within the U.S."

Alisa has been one of the rising young stars in American chess, but she has been able to "fly under the radar" to some extent, and she credits this for some of her recent success. She explained, "This tournament was probably just one of the 'ups' in the ups and downs of my fluctuating tournament performances. A lot of the players underestimated me and didn't take me very seriously at the start, and I don't mind that at all since it worked in my favor, but I don't think that will be the case from now on. The only negative upshot of this tournament is that people will expect me to have IM performances at tournaments from now on, and while I have my moments, it will be difficult for me to achieve such results every time. I picked up a lot of valuable USCF and FIDE rating points and I just hope I don't lose them all in my next tournaments."

Alisa called her fifth round game against Aleksander Stannov, which she has annotated below, "especially significant," since her victory guaranteed her at least a WIM norm. It's instructive to see how Alisa's minor pieces remain active throughout the game, while her opponent's bishops stay mostly hemmed in. She didn't know at the time that she would go undefeated in the tournament, with four wins and five draws.

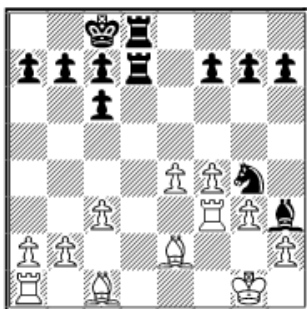
**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 exd4 4.Nxd4 Bc5 5.Nxc6 Qf6 6.Qd2 dxc6 7.Nc3
Be6 8.Na4 Bd6 9.f4 Nh6 10.g3**

Here, White usually continues with h3, and I could never understand why, since that seems to invite a future Qh4+, but after the game, the reason behind h3 is clear.

**10...Qe7 11.Bd3 0–0–0 12.0–0 Bh3 13.Rf3 Bb4 14.c3 Bc5+ 15.Nxc5
Qxc5+ 16.Qe3 Qxe3+**

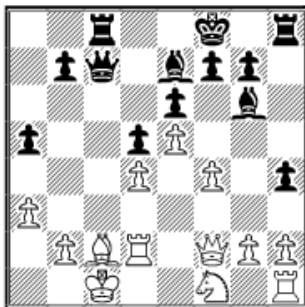
16...Qh5! 17.Be2 Kb8 18.Rf1 Ng4 19.Bxg4 Qxg4 20.Re1 Rd1 21.Bd2
Rxa1 22.Rxa1 h5.

17.Rxe3 Ng4 18.Rf3 Rd7 19.Be2 Rhd8



- Under 8: Brianna Guillen

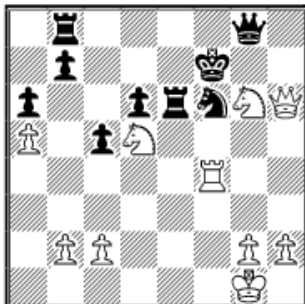
Answers to Last Month's Quiz



Problem 1

Black to move

Answer: **1...Bxa3! 2.bxa3** (2..Ne3 Qc3 3. Nd1 Qb3 4.Kb1 Bb4 5.Re2 Rxc2 =/+)
2...Qc3 3.Kd1 Bxc2+, from Grover-Perunovic, Reykjavik Open 2008.



Problem 2

White to move

Answer: **1.Ne5+!** and the game continued **1...Rxe5 2.Qxf6+ Ke8 3. Qxd6 Re1+ 4.Kf2 Re2+ 5.Kxe2 Qxg2+ 6.Ke1 Qh1+ 7.Rf1 1-0**, from Prie-Shoker, TCh-FRA Top 16 Gp A (3) 24.03.2008.

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