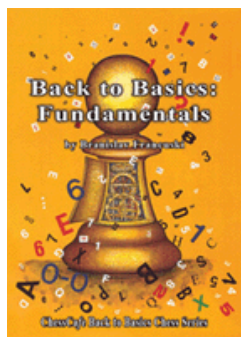




COLUMNISTS

Scholastic Chess

Steve Goldberg



CHESSTHEATRE

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The Future of Scholastic Chess, Part One

That many kids take an interest in chess, only to give it up, is nothing new. Nor is the fact that many very talented, successful chess players give up the game at a still-young age. This month we try to examine some of the reasons this occurs, and what, if anything, might be done about it. Eighteen top scholastic chess personalities throughout the U.S. contributed their thoughts. My favorite comment is “You can’t fight hormones.” Or as we’ll read, perhaps we can.

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, at the discretion of [ChessCafe.com](#), one of the following: *Starting Out: Closed Sicilian* (CD), by IM Richard Palliser; *Starting Out: Sicilian Najdorf* (CD), by IM Richard Palliser; and *Starting Out: 1 e4!* (CD), by GM Neil McDonald. Please note – winners within the last three months are ineligible for this month’s contest.



We will accept all contest answers for *two weeks* following the appearance of the column, then randomly select our three winners from this group. Please e-mail your responses to me by October 22, 2008. Send your answers to scholasticchess@chesscafe.com. Good luck!

For this column, we have a change of pace from our regular Everyman Quiz. Instead of a quiz, I’m asking our readers the first two questions I posed to the scholastic players, coaches, teachers, and other national scholastic chess leaders around the country. I’m interested in your ideas. The three responders with the most intriguing, practical suggestions (as judged by this columnist) will be awarded this month’s prize.

1. What can be done to remedy the common situation in which talented youngsters often drift away from chess after high school?
2. Should anything be done? Is it fair to try to encourage kids to devote serious time to chess when, at least at present, it is virtually impossible to make a decent living from chess?

Why Do They Leave, and What Can Be Done?

“Where Have You Gone, Rachels, Shaked & Rao?” is the title of an interesting article by FM Mike Klein in the September 2008 issue of *Chess Life* magazine. It is essentially a brief “where are they now” piece profiling Stuart Rachels, Tal Shaked and Vivek Rao, all of whom were young talents who achieved significant success in chess, only to leave the world of competitive chess in their prime, or even before reaching their prime.

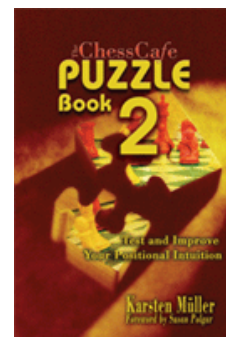
This of course, is nothing new. Even the reasons why “chess dropouts” occur are not a mystery. But I was interested in hearing from those closest

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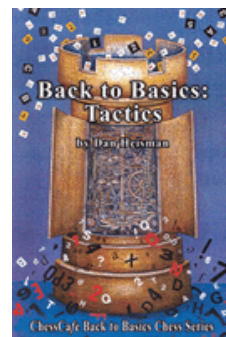
by Bruce Alberston



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by Karsten Müller



[Back to Basics: Tactics](#)

by Dan Heisman

to this issue – players, coaches, parents, teachers, and administrators – what might be done to stem the flow. Here are the questions I posed to them:

1. What can be done to remedy the common situation in which talented youngsters often drift away from chess after high school?
2. Should anything be done? Is it fair to try to encourage kids to devote serious time to chess when, at least at present, it is virtually impossible to make a decent living from chess?
3. What suggestions might you offer to encourage greater corporate or government involvement in the financial support of chess in K-12 schools and colleges/universities? Should there be any government involvement?
4. Imagine that the USCF is financially healthy and free from the infighting and turf battles that have raged for years. Also imagine that a five-year \$10,000,000 grant (\$2,000,000 per year) has been provided for the support of scholastic and college chess. How might you allocate such funds and what type of five-year plan might you offer?

I heard back from a broad spectrum of interested parties. There were young players, some in high school, and some in college. I heard from parents, and I heard from teacher/coaches and I heard from chess administrators and organizers. This list consists of one grandmaster, several international masters, and some of the leading scholastic chess coaches, teachers and organizers in the country. It's certainly not all-inclusive – many others with valuable opinions could have been included as well, but the people quoted herein are the individuals who shared their thoughts with me as of press time. *Additional opinions and suggestions are welcomed and encouraged.*

At least one person understandably took exception to my question asking if it is fair to encourage youngsters to devote serious time to chess, given the dismal career outlook for professional chess players. Perhaps the question might have been worded differently, but fundamentally, I was asking – would you encourage your children to pursue a career in chess? Not just to play chess, but to pursue a career?

This month, we'll look at the answers these experts gave to my first two questions. Next month, we'll examine what they had to say about the final two.

Question 1 What can be done to remedy the common situation in which talented youngsters often drift away from chess after high school?

IM Greg Shahade, founder of the U.S. Chess League and U.S. Chess School:

The main way to encourage players to play more is to have a system where perhaps the top 10-20 players in the country can make six figures from chess quite easily. We are a long way from that however.



Elizabeth Vicary

Photo: Betsy Dynako, Chess Life Online

WFM Elizabeth Vicary, chess teacher and coach of the high-achieving I.S. 318 in New York:

I don't think that we have to keep people in chess at the semi-professional level. People play for different reasons. Some maybe are most attracted to the way chess allows you to measure your intellectual level, and these people would probably be happier and more productive if their energy was channeled into academia or whatever they do in college. Some people get busy, but then come back to the game.

I suspect the way to make chess "stickier" in a life-long sense is to build up the social aspects of it and to broaden the ways people can play chess. The U.S. Chess League is a great example – a social and multi-age way to play that encourages team camaraderie. College chess clubs are another way, of course.

I also feel like a big part of the problem is ratings. Just like people often quit when they make GM, people get to some rating and then don't want to lose that feeling of accomplishment and social status. If the emphasis were more on playing beautiful games and less on getting a higher number, I think people would have more reason to play later in life. It's just so hard if you fought for years to become 2400, to then accept playing at 2250 strength.



Alex Lenderman

IM Alex Lenderman, student at Brooklyn College, formerly of Edward R. Murrow High School:

Give more scholarships for college, and provide sponsors for youngsters who want training but can't afford to pay \$100/hr for good GM coaches and to travel to Europe for norm tournaments. Also maybe enable organizations to give real money prizes in scholastic tournaments, like

\$1,000 for winning the Nationals. People who aren't rich and go to a public school rather than private, also end up being more tied down to school and have to stay away from chess. So for these people more opportunities should be made.

Make chess more popular in the U.S. as a sport. The U.S. Chess League is a good start. Increase the money there and stakes. I think people should get contracts for playing there just like in baseball, football, etc. Start say with \$1,000 salary for playing a season for a team, if you're a GM, or \$500 for IM's, etc., and let the people in charge of U.S. Chess League get sponsors to provide more money. Also, increase the prize fund in tournaments, especially Opens and reduce the prizes in the class sections. I think as far as teaching in chess, people can actually make a decent living as a GM, but not from playing.



Dan Heisman

NM Dan Heisman, popular chess author and full-time chess tutor:

In the U.S., chess is not held as a decent occupation, so talented youngsters are normally going to choose to go into something "worthwhile." If ever we got a major U.S. sponsor and some big money tournaments, that might change. Unless the culture is changed, the high dropout rate is inevitable.



Abby Marshall; Photo: Elizabeth Vicary

WFM Abby Marshall, prominent high school chess player:

I think there are two things that can be done. The first is money: increase prize funds for tournaments and especially have more Samford Fellowship-type sponsorship. How about also provide \$3,000 a year to ten talented kids for training? And the second thing is increase the numbers of kids that play, which is most important because if my friends are also into chess, it makes it a lot easier to stay focused on the game.

This could be done by more programs introducing chess into the schools, which is how I learned. I just think it's impossible to do anything about college kids having little money and time, or high school kids having more stuff to do that takes away from chess, but these incentives should definitely help keep the interest alive. I've had problems sticking with chess after I moved to Newport News, where at the time there was not even a chess club at my school, and I would just feel like am I wasting my time. Having friends who are enthusiastic about chess and having a financial motive I think would keep kids involved.

Dr. Jeff Seiken, parent of Abby Marshall:

I am not a chess player myself, although I know how to play of course. Thus, my comments are based on my own experiences as a chess parent and from conversations with other chess parents and their kids over the years. I have been removed from the scholastic chess scene since we moved from Columbus, OH to Newport News, VA three years ago. Columbus, where Abby went to school through the 7th grade, has a very vibrant scholastic chess community with lots of local and regional tournament opportunities for scholastic players. I remember at one point, when Abby was in 4th or 5th grade, there was a scholastic event within the city or its suburbs just about every other weekend. We owe much of Abby's interest in and development as a chess player to the fact that she grew up in this environment. Her elementary school, in addition to a chess club that met once a week during lunchtime, also had a chess team composed of players who regularly participated in tournaments.

With no chess background ourselves, we would have never steered her towards chess had she not started playing the game on her own in school as a kindergartner. In the Hampton Roads area where we live now, however, chess is practically non-existent in the schools. Abby helped establish a chess club at her middle and high schools and there are pockets of activity here and there, but very little in the way of organized tournaments for scholastic players. Oddly enough, this area does have an active and long-established chess club—the Tidewater Chess Club—that holds regular rated events during its weekly meetings and also hosts several small tournaments during the year and one semi-big money tournament, the VA Millennium, once a year. Yet the interest in chess has not penetrated down to the scholastic level. The completely opposite situation prevails in the Richmond area, which has an active scholastic chess scene but little adult chess. Go figure.

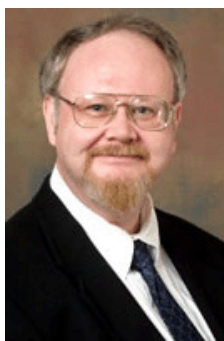
I think there are two different dimensions to this problem. First, you have strong players who discover other interests as they grow older and drift away from the game or scale back their involvement. While this is to be regretted, I do not believe it is worth figuring out ways to rope them back into the game. As players reach the 1700-1800 level or higher, it takes progressively more time and greater effort to raise their game to the next level. If some would rather devote their time and energy to other pursuits, I don't think you can begrudge them their choice. So they may no longer play chess competitively, but at least they will have an appreciation and understanding of the game that they will carry with them through life. And perhaps they will have the chance later in life to teach chess to young kids or others who show an interest in the game. Last year, at the World Youth Championship, the father of one teenage girl on the U.S. team told me how his daughter had become focused on track and was fast losing interest in chess. Obviously, for his daughter to qualify for the World Youth, she was a very strong player, but I did not see her decision to concentrate on track as particularly unfortunate. Why is chess more worthwhile than track? I don't think it is. Back in Columbus, I had similar discussions with the father of a player who was at one point in the top twenty nationally of his age group. But as he entered his teen years, he fell in love with tennis and lost his passion for chess. Again, I did not see this as a problem.

What does concern me are promising young players who are devoted to

the game but grow discouraged about their future prospects in chess. It is hard to generalize, though, about how to address this problem because so much depends on the specific circumstances of the player. Players who live in a very chess-rich environment—say in the metropolitan area of a major city like New York or San Francisco—are probably less at risk due to the wealth of chess playing and learning opportunities within easy reach. For others, simply getting the tournament experience they need to improve their game can pose a major challenge. Much also depends on the circumstances of the player's family. One of the things I have always liked about chess and one reason I think it flourishes in inner cities is how little overhead is required to play. A vinyl board with plastic pieces costs, what, \$12? On the other hand, the care and nurturing of a serious chess player can be an expensive proposition [Jeff noted that he read one chess parent was spending upwards of \$60,000 annually for chess lessons for his son, who has done exceptionally well].

Besides the financial costs, there are also the family opportunity costs to consider. I know of some chess parents who travel with their kids to out-of-town tournament once or twice a month. While such commitment is laudable, if you have other kids, then this kind of travel can be hard on the rest of the family. Over the years, my wife and I have often struggled with the issue of how to balance Abby's needs as a chess player with our needs as a family. It's tough to find the right balance and we often ask ourselves, how much is enough. Frankly, I feel Abby's progress in chess has suffered to a degree in that we have not gone all-out to rearrange our lives to support her chess endeavors. But I am reasonably happy with the compromises we have struck.

Here is one way to help up-and-coming players and perhaps to level the playing field for kids from families of modest or limited means: offer travel subsidies for participation in state or national events. For instance, players who qualify for the Denker or Polgar typically receive a few hundred dollars. It would be great if local scholastic tournaments could offer not just trophies but also prize money that could be used to pay for the costs of travel to an out-of-town state championship or national championship event. Similarly, perhaps some of the big open chess tournaments could offer subsidies for qualifying scholastic players in the form of reduced or waived entry fees. In other words, anything that can be done to lessen the expense of supporting a player's chess activities would help.



Timothy Redman

Dr. Timothy Redman, Professor of Literary Studies at University of Texas at Dallas and founder of its Chess Program:

I don't see the story about Shaked, Rachels, and Rao as in any way sad. As an advocate of college chess, I am delighted when any student who comes to college through chess moves on to a more productive, stable, and beneficial profession.

Dan DeLeon, chess organizer in south Texas, where chess is wildly popular:

I have always said "Eliminate the parents and chess kids will thrive."

Parents have turned chess into Little League Baseball.

From “Anonymous,” a prominent chess administrator with many years of experience on both a local and national level:

There are no easy answers. Everyone has a different idea of what should be done and what should work, based on their own parochial experiences. There’s nothing wrong with that; it’s just that most of us put on blinders when it comes to developing a national strategy (“My way or the highway!”).

You’re asking about less than one percent of the total number of kids involved in scholastic chess. We operate on the assumption that chess is a useful aid in developing critical thinking and social skills. If chess prepares a youngster to make good life choices, then we have succeeded. If they choose to continue in chess, fine. If not, that’s okay also. You should be asking what USCF can do to keep the other 99% interested in the game.

It begs the question: Should our stronger youngsters be encouraged to continue in chess? Edmondson encouraged Madera, Weinstein, DeFotis, etc., to stick with chess – in the vain hope of finding a replacement for Fischer. They all quickly found out there was only enough resources to promote one new “Messiah” (Browne first, and later, Seirawan), and they moved on to successful careers in banking and finance.

I don’t have any answers as to how to retain kids in chess after middle school. You can’t fight hormones.

For those who do survive high school, USCF membership intact, USCF must keep in touch. I’ve suggested to the College Chess Committee that they send out letters, asking what their college plans are. Once the college is identified, build a database for cross-referencing. Explain in follow up letters, how each college student government works, how to apply for student activity funding for a club, etc. Let them know about local clubs near their home away from home.

[One local major college chess club] was on the verge of folding. I went through the list of incoming freshmen and by eye, identified over 80 kids who were active in our state scholastics. Intercollege mail got them all connected and the club was revived. If I had access to out of state USCF members, who knows how many kids would have been involved. [This college later] sponsored two Pan-Am Intercollegiate Team Championships.

The goal is to make sure every incoming freshman is aware of and knows how to contact other USCF members or former members attending their college or university. It won’t happen by osmosis.



Gary Robson (L) and Ray Robson

IM Ray Robson, perhaps the most promising young junior player in the U.S.:

If there were more money in chess, some of those talented players who go away from the game might still play. A lot of players leave (have left) because they know they can earn a lot more money by doing other things.

Dr. Gary Robson, professor and parent of Ray Robson:

I don't see this one as a problem. It's natural for most young adults to move away from their childhood activities. It also happens in sports too. Besides the natural shift towards wanting to try new things, there are other reasons why young stars move away, and I think it's important to consider these reasons too. For example, many young stars quit when chess becomes too demanding. I'm thinking of the young stars who, with natural ability, do well against opponents for quite some time (years, in some cases). However, if these persons haven't developed serious study habits along the way, then they will eventually be passed by others with talent and a better work ethic. Former stars without the study habits who now lose to kids they used to crush may find that it's easier to move away from chess. Attitude comes into play here. Anyone who does not have the kind of personality that allows for losses, that finds lessons in the losses, and that can face failure is not going to stick with chess for very long.

Yet another reason has to do with love (not romantic love, which, of course, is still another reason why teens move away from chess). I'm talking about a love of the game. I think that most people who play chess like it a lot, a few who play it seem to absolutely hate it, and fewer still are so into it that they make it one of the central themes of their lives. Most of us never find things that we truly love, and so we all "drift away" from one activity or another.

FM Aviv Friedman, coach to many U.S. national scholastic teams at international tournaments:

I am assuming you mean leading kids in their age groups. Casual players are either bitten by the bug and will keep playing socially (even in tournaments) during school and college. If not, they would be bored with it and drop it. Leading kids should have coaching and tournament support. Sponsorship of (at least significant partial support) of lessons, organized camps and seminars for them, help in playing in strong and important tournaments, to name a few. Relieving some of the burden from the parents gives incentive for both the parents and the kids to excel and reap tangible benefits from their success. These programs will help improve and encourage them, but again, at some point there is going to be a pause when some get to [a high level], and then it's either professional pursuit, or dropping it. Since chess for the most part is a risky business, many choose the latter. It's often harder to slow down the work (as other things enter one's life), and maintain a level. That decline isn't acceptable for many and hence the "total withdrawal."



Sal Bercys

IM Sal Bercys, on the powerful University of Texas at Dallas chess team, previously on the Edward R. Murrow High School team:

To really continue training in chess you have to be extremely in love with chess, or there has to be enough money provided as an objective. And I am not talking about having a World Open give away 10k to an 1199 player for winning U1200...that is just ridiculous. Instituting a policy where the main event (open) gets 90% of all prizes would encourage people pursuing higher levels in chess. It is quite absurd that some beginner who is not a good player, will win 10k and a talented kid who is much higher rated will win nothing playing with stronger players. The junior high school and high school environment does not really encourage pursuing chess. There is just too much pressure put on being accepted by your peers, and sadly, chess usually marks you as a nerd or social “loser” rather than a prodigy. Not much to be done about that – kids are just cruel.

WIM Dr. Alexey Root, chess author and teacher at the University of Texas at Dallas:

One exciting development is that full-ride college scholarships are available for chess. Therefore, high school players can combine their higher education with playing for a chess team. While enrolled at The University of Texas at Dallas, several players have made grandmaster norms and grandmaster titles. They have also earned degrees. UTD’s information is [here](#). Several other universities also offer similar scholarship opportunities.



Jim Stallings

Photo: Stephen A. Solomon

Jim Stallings, Director of Chess Program, University of Texas at Dallas, and Chair of USCF College Chess Committee:

Since this situation has been pervasive and ongoing for some years now, it would seem that the answer must be systemic. Certainly, if young basketball players got to middle/high school and found no coaches or clubs, we would probably not see very much basketball being played. Thus, for openers, we do not have the infrastructure to sustain young players. However, this begs the question as to why we do not. A similar situation exists at the collegiate level as players cycle through their respective chess clubs every four or so years. If new organizers do not step forward to take over the leadership, the organization disappears.

It is clear that talented young players and their parents make the decision to exit the chess scene every year. I think a more valid approach might be whether they could get a scholarship for their chess ability, time, and effort. That would be a precursor to making a professional living. On this question, scholastic parents have far more power than they realize. As I have publicly stated at workshops in the past, scholastic parents, as alumni, need to write to their universities and request that scholarships be

offered for superior chess ability/academic ability. It is not a question of whether colleges are going to offer scholarships, they all do. However, scholarships are provided for all matter of things. Might I suggest that until people request scholarships for chess, there will be no move to provide them? We at the University of Texas at Dallas would sincerely like to see more scholarships being offered for chess ability. However, it is not our job to write to other universities on behalf of the scholastic chess youth.

Eliot Weiss, teacher and chess coach at New York's Edward R. Murrow High School, winner of multiple city, state and national championships:

Colleges should give more incentives to play chess. Just like the NCAA, these chess athletes should be pampered like the football and basketball players. Scholarship money would also help.

Jerry Nash, USCF Scholastic Director:

My contention is that the lack of a strong collegiate program (broadly-based across the country – we obviously have several strong programs but at only about 10 or so universities) is a major reason why high school players drop out. They (and their parents) are concerned with finding college scholarships and pursue the activities which are most likely to help them get that funding. The trickle-down affect of the high school players dropping out is that the middle school players tend to model their behavior on what they see the high school students doing. If it is not cool to play chess in high school, it is not cool for them either. Soon you can have a culture created where chess is seen only as a “little kids” game. I know there are pockets of strong middle school and high school chess programs. But almost all academic programs, not just chess, face this dilemma. Sports programs (and related programs like Band) see an increase in activity because of the perceived popularity and as the entryway to college and potential career.

We must increase our focus on the development of a variety of collegiate chess programs – which must include scholarships to be attractive. This will require a combined effort from the national office with local contacts at area universities. The local connection to a university is the primary way which existing funds may be re-routed or new funds solicited. The national voice provides the reinforcement that this will help the university. People must understand that just saying that “chess is good for students” is not enough to get a university’s attention. You must discover what *that* university’s needs and goals are and speak their language when proposing a chess scholarship or program. And you must be flexible in proposing a chess program so that it can potentially meet their needs and goals in the community and/or the state, or even in attracting international students.

When more universities are offering scholarships, then the incentive is there for remaining with the game. We must expect the normal attrition that other activities face but we do not have to give up all hope. There are solutions but there are no silver bullets or magic wands which will change our situation overnight.

Now, if the goal is strictly to find a way to produce chess professionals, then the only way I see that happening is to have long term private or corporate sponsorship. I do not see that on the horizon. If someone has the money and wants to create leagues like they have in other countries, I am sure they can do so. But for them to expect a financial return on that investment is not realistic at this time and I suspect that they (and many others) know that situation far better than I do.

On the other hand if we can succeed in marketing chess as a means of impacting student success or identifying top students for universities, then we may have more open doors for grants, scholarships, and sponsorships.

These in turn may make it attractive for a student who plays chess but also intends to become a teacher or a researcher to find scholarships. We have to understand that these efforts are ongoing. Securing a university scholarship or program one year does not mean that they will automatically be offered the following year. A great deal of effort is required to maintain what you have achieved. We can throw up our hands and say, "That's too much work!" If it is, we can keep doing what we have always done and not be surprised with the same results.



Susan Polgar

GM Susan Polgar, former Women's World Champion and founder of multiple Polgar tournaments and the SPICE program at Texas Tech University:

As I have repeatedly tried to convince my colleagues, the key is College Chess. It is the vital bridge to avoid losing our young talented players. To give you an idea what a difference it can make, let's examine SPICE (Susan Polgar Institute of Chess Excellence) at Texas Tech University. The institute officially started on September 1, 2007. Within a year, nearly 100 chess playing students inquired/showed interest in attending Texas Tech BECAUSE of SPICE. That is only within a year. Imagine if we have 50-100 colleges/universities offering chess scholarships/programs similar to SPICE. It can make a serious positive impact.



Alisa Melekhina

WFM Alisa Melekhina, prominent high school chess player who recently earned her first IM norm:

At present, when there is much emphasis and pressure on kids, both from the school and parents, to obtain college degrees, chess is just not a viable career option. Even if the prize funds at tournaments were to increase, it wouldn't solve the problem. Most chess professionals make money coaching, but that is just too risky of an endeavor for kids to pursue. The bigger problem isn't that chess wouldn't make a good future career, but that it's not prestigious at all. Apart from the parochial constituency of about 75,000 USCF members (considering some are inactive, don't

follow the news, etc., it is definitely not representative of active members), no one cares about the current rating lists or recent tournament winners. To remedy this, we would have to somehow elevate chess to the prestige of other sports. However, since chess is too esoteric and tedious for most people to follow, I don't see how we can reach the interests of those outside of the insular chess world.

Question 2 Should anything be done? Is it fair to try to encourage kids to devote serious time to chess when, at least at present, it is virtually impossible to make a decent living from chess?

Greg Shahade: I find this question somewhat ridiculous. Chess has many benefits aside from the possibility of making a living one day. Would you encourage all kids who play soccer for fun, who aren't world class, to stop spending a lot of time doing it? Just the fact that questions like this are asked shows that most people don't respect chess as a sufficiently enriching activity, because no one would be saying the same thing about music, sports etc. Honestly I find the question quite offensive.

Dan Heisman: Chess is still good for you. Maybe not as a living, but as a brain-enhancing (and maintaining) hobby. Many come back to chess when their kids get old enough to want to hang out with their friends. But it is not at the professional level.

Abby Marshall: Yeah, for sure. I think the most important thing chess gives you is it teaches you how to think, not just in mathematical terms but also how to organize your thoughts and plan where you want to go. Chess can really be applied to anything: math of course, and also writing and anything involving critical thinking. Basically, chess makes you smart. And it's fun, which is a good reason to do anything.

Timothy Redman: Actually, it is now more than ever possible to make a decent living from chess by teaching it. That was not the case forty years ago when I was playing seriously. Teaching chess is honorable and beneficial. What is less than beneficial is the current climate of FIDE declaring people world champions for eight-year-olds, for nine-year-olds, etc. The current system provides little benefit for young players but feeds a lucrative coaching industry. I spent some time with Grandmaster Yuri Averbach last May in Florida and he raised the same point.

Ray Robson: Sure, it should be encouraged. But if they don't want to play, there's nothing you can do about it. Only the top players in the U.S. can make a living, or you can be lower rated (2300 or so) and still make a living if you're a teacher with a lot of students.

Gary Robson: I'm not comfortable with the focus on money. Instead, I think it's worthwhile to study and play chess as long as one enjoys doing so and as long as one continues to grow from the experiences associated with it. When we're talking about children and young adults, I think that money should be of peripheral significance (if at all).

Aviv Friedman: When a lot of it is sponsored, and the kids/parents get financial help and chess guidance, then the answer is yes. Chess has many benefits and residual benefits that justify some level of pursuit and improvement. Kids have many hobbies that won't end up in a career.

Alexey Root: I think there are opportunities to make a living from chess in the U.S. Teaching chess or writing about chess can provide a steady income for a player, even if his or her tournament winnings are inconsistent.

Eliot Weiss: Hobbies throughout childhood are many times lost in college, when serious study will lead to medical school, law school or wall street(except for this week). Piano, tennis, dance, art, etc. are lost to university studies.

Jim Stallings: The University of Texas at Dallas defines success as seeing the members of chess team graduate with degrees. We have been very successful in this area with team members going on to get PhDs, law degrees and enter medical school.

Susan Polgar: I disagree that it is virtually impossible to make a decent living from chess. If we talk about playing in tournaments, I agree. But there is more than one way to make money than just playing. I have seen class A, expert, and master players making nearly \$100,000 or more a year from teaching chess. International Masters and Grandmasters can make much more *if* they are doing the right thing. This goes back to College Chess. To be good in chess does not make you a good chess teacher. Learning how to communicate and teach can bring incredible dividends.

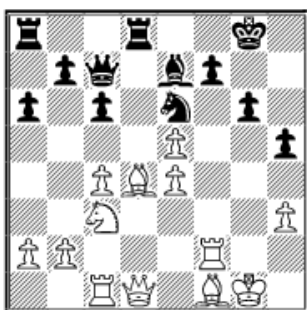
Alisa Melekhina: [Given the problems I mentioned earlier in making chess “prestigious” and mainstream,] I do not think it is fair to encourage kids to devote serious time to chess, especially if they have discovered more worthwhile pursuits.

Your Thoughts?

What are your thoughts, dear readers? More college scholarships? Better financial prizes for top sections of major tournaments? Better marketing? Or something else entirely? I’d like to hear from you, whether you are an expert in the field or simply a chess fan who cares about the future of chess in general, and scholastic chess in particular.

All of these options require strong organizations and persistent efforts by dedicated individuals. Do we have it in us to accomplish these things?

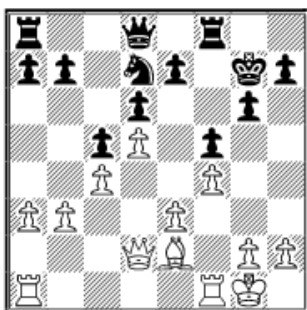
Answers to Last Month’s Quiz



Problem 1

White to move in this game from the 2008 U.S. Cadet Championship.

Answer: 21.Nd5!, from Yang-Tae, US Cadet Championship 2008 (5), 16.06.2008



Problem 2

White to move – how did he proceed in this game from the 2008 Pan American Youth Festival?

Answer: 18.e4!, from Getz-Arcos Facio, XIX Festival Panamericano de Ajedrez (2), 2008

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