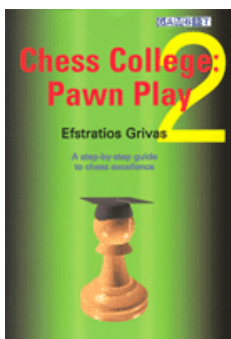




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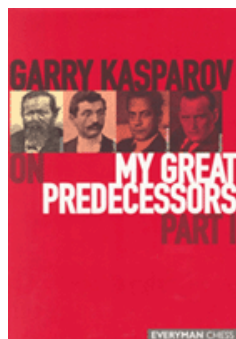
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All-Girl U.S. Chess School  
Part Two

Last month, we began our coverage of the all-girls session of the U.S. Chess Camp, held this past August in St. Louis. We conclude this month, with additional coverage, and insightful thoughts from GM Gregory Kaidanov, IM Greg Shahade, WFM Elizabeth Vicary, and new national master Abby Marshall.

## 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 *Garry Kasparov On My Great Predecessors, Part One*, by Garry Kasparov.



We will accept all contest answers for *two weeks* following the appearance of this column, then randomly select our three winners from this group. In order to meet the two-week deadline, please e-mail your responses to me by December 23, 2009. Send your answers to [scholasticchess@chesscafe.com](mailto:scholasticchess@chesscafe.com). Good luck!

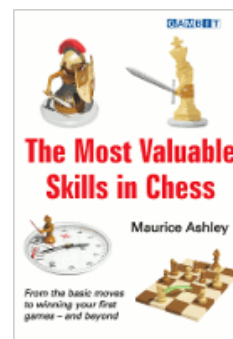
## Problem #1



This one is a little tricky. It's White to move. Hint: remember that White's pawn at g3 is pinned.

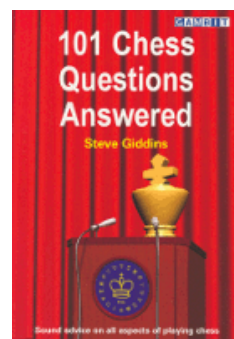
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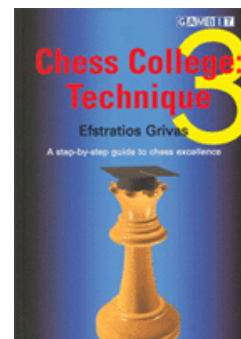
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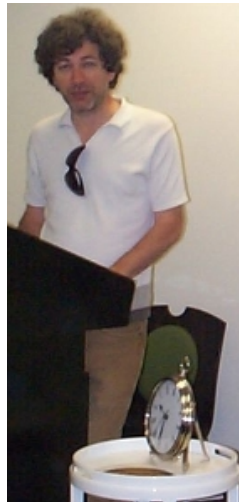


This one may be a little easier. It is White to move.

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### The U.S. Chess School

In last month's [column](#), we began looking at the tenth U.S. Chess School (USCS) session, held in August 2009 in St. Louis. As noted, this session was unique in that it was the first all-girls chess camp in the nearly four-year history of the USCS.



GM Gregory Kaidanov, whom many regard as one of the finest chess instructors in the U.S., was the primary teacher for this camp, assisted by IM Greg Shahade and WFM Elizabeth Vicary.

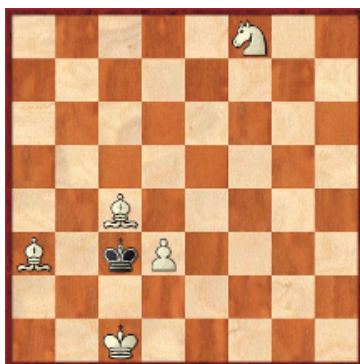


The players who attended, ranged in age from twelve to nineteen:

- Abby Marshall
- Darrian Robinson
- Amanda Mateer
- Sarah Chiang
- Megan Lee
- Eve Litvak
- Rochelle Ballantyne
- Linda Diaz

## Chess Computer Engine Strength

Kaidanov presented the above problem to the students, with white to move and mate in five. He also had his computer look at the problem, with interesting results.



First he presented the position to the Fritz9 chess engine on his laptop, and found that it had still not identified the solution after nearly a minute of “thinking.” On the other hand, when had his Rybka engine (on the same laptop) take a look, it produced the solution almost instantly.

Kaidanov suggested that perhaps the newest Fritz engine might perform better, but he stated that Rybka generally is faster/stronger than Fritz. Of course, few humans will defeat either engine.

Intrigued by how long Fritz took to solve the problem, I tested my own copy of Fritz9, expecting to wait awhile for a solution to the problem above. Instead, on my laptop, the program produced the mate-in-five solution before I could blink an eye.

Why the difference between Fritz9 on my laptop and Fritz9 on Kaidanov’s laptop? Perhaps my laptop has a much faster processor, or more RAM, or maybe Kaidanov’s Fritz is just intimidated by him.

## Television Videographer Disrupts Instruction

Just as Gregory Kaidanov was about to deliver another grandmaster discussion, on the last full day of the chess camp, a video photographer from a local television station appeared. Instead of hearing from Kaidanov, the players were asked to play blitz while the photographer was shooting video.

In the midst of one blitz game, one girl turned to her opponent and asked, “Were you really mad last night?” The other girl answered, “Yes!” with a sly smile on her face. Girl One then said, “What were you mad about?” Girl Two laughed and replied, “Your face!” Indeed, the kids were having fun.

The video photographer also interviewed Elizabeth Vicary and GM Kaidanov while he was there. Here are some excerpts of those interviews, with Vicary first up at bat:

**Q:** What do you hope to get out of this week?

**Vicary:** The primary objective is to make them stronger as chess players. But as well as that, they’re making friendships that will hopefully keep them in chess for a long time. One of the difficulties and one of the important tasks is to get the girls who are interested in chess to stay involved, in junior high school and high school.

**Q:** Is chess moving up in the sport world with girls?

**Vicary:** We’re trying to bring more girls into the game. Right now, only

about four percent of U.S. chess players are women, and we're trying to encourage them.



**Q:** Do you consider chess a sport?

**Vicary:** Chess certainly has sporting aspects, and the competitive experience is very similar.

**Q:** What can you tell me about your instructor, Gregory Kaidanov?

**Vicary:** I think he's the best chess trainer in the whole country. He's one of the top grandmasters in the country. Even people who don't play chess and watch him teach will be impressed.

**Q:** Are the girls having fun, too?

**Vicary:** Yes, I think they're having fun. They're all getting along pretty well, and their chess is very engaging.

**Q:** Where do you hope to see girls chess in five years? Do you have a goal?

**Vicary:** More girls.

At this point, Gregory Kaidanov sat down in the interview seat.



**Q:** How's the week going so far?

**Kaidanov:** Very well. The girls are very enthusiastic.

**Q:** Tell me about your background.

**Kaidanov:** I have played chess since I was six years old. I became an international grandmaster when I was twenty-eight years old. I grew up in the Soviet Union, in Russia, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1992. I won about thirty international tournaments and played for the U.S. national team for about twelve years.

**Q:** How are the girls doing this week?

**Kaidanov:** They're doing great. They all love chess, and they're very knowledgeable chess players. It's a real pleasure to work with dedicated players.

**Q:** Is it different teaching girls than boys?

**Kaidanov:** I thought that it would be different, but it's not. I don't see a big difference. It's sometimes thought that girls are very different from boys in their chess approach, but I was surprised to find out that they are the same.



**Q:** After the week's over, what happens next?

**Kaidanov:** There is a lot of information that they are getting here – it will be overwhelming. There is no way they can process this information over those five days. So I hope they will go back home and play some tournament games and they will review these strategies over and over. Chess is not just knowing – it's a lot of different things. It's a game where personality plays a big part. For example, we talked a lot about psychology, how to improve your personality to help your chess games. So I hope they will build on those strategies for the next few years. It will take time for them to process all this information.

**Q:** Anything else you want to add?

**Kaidanov:** I think what we do here in the chess school is not only good for their chess, it's good for their lives. Chess is a wonderful game – it teaches you to be resourceful. When you play a chess game, you are the one who is responsible. With a team sport, you can rely on your teammates to carry the game, but here, you're on your own.

### **Blitz/pizza party**

Later that afternoon, the U.S. Chess School held a combination blitz tournament/pizza party. It was somewhat informal, with the players sometimes playing, sometimes eating, sometimes both.

Abby Marshall and Megan Lee ended up tying for first in the blitz tournament. No word on who won the pizza-eating event.

For those who haven't witnessed Greg Shahade playing blitz, it's a sight to behold. His arms move at warp speed, moving the pieces and banging the clock so hard, I was sure the clock was going to explode at some point. One game I witnessed him winning in seventeen seconds clock time.





### Interview with Greg Shahade

After the chess school concluded, I had an opportunity to speak with U.S. Chess School founder IM Greg Shahade, who offered his thoughts on a number of matters:

**Q:** How do you select which players are invited to the U.S. Chess School?

**Shahade:** There's a combination of things. We use the ratings, whoever's playing more, if somebody's more serious. We normally try to keep them as close together in age and ratings, but with girls it's tough because there's not so many of them. With this session, Abby's rating is higher than the others but the rest are about the same. When we started the camp, I talked to her and said, "We're going to have this girls camp and you're probably going to be higher rated than everybody – do you mind?" but she didn't have any problem with it. She wasn't hogging the answers, so it wasn't a problem.

It's also good that they can't buy their way in. So everyone who goes understands there is going to be a good group of players on their level. They're not going to be in a class with much weaker players.

**Q:** Was it a problem that the girls ranged in age from twelve to nineteen?

**Shahade:** Nope. The younger ones hung out together; the older ones hung out together. It was fine.

**Q:** Was the camaraderie at this camp typical?

**Shahade:** They're normally pretty friendly. The girls got along pretty well, but a lot of them already knew each other. We had an issue with the Pan-American Games going on at the same time. A lot of people wanted to come, but couldn't come. Normally, we'd have more players and slightly higher rated, but I think it was a really good group.



**Q:** Have you very often had kids turn you down when you invite them?

**Shahade:** Usually, about ninety percent of the people accept. Somehow, though, I've definitely noticed that girls are more likely to decline, by a

large margin. I don't know why that is; I don't know if it's the parents. The one we're setting up in Atlanta, we've invited nine people, and eight of them have accepted. With this camp, it was tricky. Girls are just more likely to decline for some reason.

**Q:** I think it is tremendous that the instruction at the U.S. Chess School is free, but are the families responsible for housing?

**Shahade:** They usually have to pay for the hotel. However, in this case, the Chess and Scholastic Center of St. Louis donated the hotel rooms.

**Q:** Can you discuss the sponsorship of the chess school?

**Shahade:** At the moment, Dr. Jim Roberts [on the board of America's Foundation for Chess] is our sole sponsor. But Mark Schein, who funds the Schein-Friedman Scholarship, wanted to have a chess camp once a year for kids. He sees how well the U.S. Chess School is doing, so he's going to join up with us for his camp – it's going to be a joint venture, so we're going to get some funding for that, too.

**Q:** Has Jim Roberts been a sponsor from the beginning of the U.S. Chess School?

**Shahade:** No, at the beginning, I had to get money from a lot of people, and put some of my own in. I think sometime around the fourth one, he got involved.

**Q:** What were some of the topics that primary instructor GM Gregory Kaidanov covered?

**Shahade:** Kaidanov gave lectures on a bunch of topics, including prophylaxis, calculation, isolated pawns. He had a "solitaire chess" discussion where you display a game of top grandmasters and try to guess the moves. That went pretty well.



**Q:** And what did you cover in your lectures?

**Shahade:** I took a look at a lot of their games. My lectures were all based on their games. They sent me some games before the camp, so I would take a quick look through them, trying to find interesting moments. Then we would set them up and take a look at those. We would also analyze certain tournament games that they played on the first day. I took a look overnight and tried to come up with some instructive ideas from those.

**Q:** About those first-day tournament games, Kaidanov had asked the girls to select one idea to concentrate on. How did that go?

**Shahade:** It's tough. Once the game has started, you kind of forget and get caught up in the moment. Most of them had trouble. A lot of them wanted to avoid time pressure [and chose this as their primary idea to focus on] but then they would spend an hour on the first fifteen moves! It's definitely not easy – the game is rated, they don't want to lose – it's hard to do that.

**Q:** Did this session differ much from previous sessions?

**Shahade:** I used to never lecture, but I started at the last program, and I'm going to do it regularly, I think. It gives the main instructor a break. I'm doing it for free, for the love of the game, so I want to do as much as I can. I think I'm good at that aspect. In the future, maybe I'll lecture twenty-five to thirty percent of the time.

**Q:** Will you be discussing general principles, or going over games?

**Shahade:** Almost all games. They'll send me games from the previous month or two. I'll look through them all and try to find really instructive moments. I'll try to group them into themes. Maybe I'll show them three games where somebody did something wrong, and then one game where they did it right. We had one group where I was showing positions – the players kind of rushed into things. They could have just slowly improved their position, but instead they rushed into action. I showed two or three examples of that. We talked about it, then the last one was where somebody actually did take their time and improved their position. It works really well. I'm still learning with this, but I think I'm getting much better at it.

**Q:** What did you think about this group of students?

**Shahade:** I was happy with the whole group. Every now and then you'll have a group where one or two people lag behind and don't talk much, but we didn't have that with this group. They were all pretty much involved, they were all focused. When it got to be 6:00 p.m. and we were finishing, they still had a burst of energy. Every now and then, they'd drift off a little bit, but it's a lot of stress. They had no problem staying focused for eight hours of chess, five days in a row.



**Q:** Do you track how previous students have done following their U.S. Chess School session(s)?

**Shahade:** Well, it's just one week in their chess development; you can't take too much credit – it's just five days. I'm sure it helped them. They're all young players and they're going to get better naturally. This program just helps it along a little bit. It's a great experience, to be with so many of their peers who are at their level. Every camp the kids have so much fun.

**Q:** What kind of activities were held away from the chess board?

**Shahade:** We went to the park at lunch every day. They played Frisbee, they played soccer. I wasn't sure how much with girls they would be into that, but everyone was playing Frisbee, everyone was pretty much doing stuff most of the time, athletically.

**Q:** Have you had much problem with kids feeling homesick?

**Shahade:** No, I don't think so. I think some of them are pretty upset to leave [the camp]. One of them in particular seemed really upset to leave.



At our last camp, one of them burst into tears – they were much younger, about ages nine to eleven.

**Q:** What can you tell us about future sessions of the U.S. Chess School?

**Shahade:** Our locations are pretty much set up for the next three – in Atlanta, Dallas and Seattle. We'll have three a year. There's only so much time in the year, it's hard to have during school, so three is a good number. I think the most we could do is four. Every time after these camps, I'm always inspired. I always want to start teaching chess. It always makes me feel real good after a program.

**Q:** What are the prospects of coming back to St. Louis for another session of the U.S. Chess School?

**Shahade:** They [the host St. Louis chess club] said they're interested. If they're going to give free hotel rooms for the kids, we'll definitely want to come back. We have an unwritten rule that we won't come to the same spot for three years – that causes us to move around the country. However, if they're going to pay for the kids' hotel rooms, I think we can waive that rule, because that's an expense for the students. I expect if they're interested and are continuing to pay, we'll be back in 2011.

### **Interview with Abby Marshall**

I also had the opportunity to ask Abby about her experiences at the chess camp:

**Q:** What were some of the more important things you learned from the camp?

**Abby:** Kaidanov emphasized that it's difficult to play good moves when you are focusing on the result, especially with that half point lead because "draw" is always on your mind. He advised choosing a specific aspect to focus on to counteract that focus on results. It can be on time management, calculating deeply, trading, pawn structure, candidate moves, anything to do with good chess moves. We also talked about women's chess. One of the funny things I learned was if someone is acting really condescending to you, like when you're analyzing the game afterward and the guy is acting like he was winning the whole game when you actually crushed him easily and are being nice to go over the game, a good strategy is not to argue with him, but agree with everything. Secretly you are making fun of him for being so wrong. You sometimes have to pick your battles. We also did exercises on intuition and prophylaxis, topics I've never studied deeply before.

**Q:** Gregory Kaidanov mentioned that it will be very difficult to really absorb everything presented that week immediately – it will take time to do so. Has the chess camp altered how you plan to approach your chess in coming months? Anything in particular you feel you need to work on to reach even greater heights?

**Abby:** I need to work on openings. Kaidanov said that when you make a big rating jump, normally openings lag behind. Mine have lagged behind for years. Also, Greg Shahade talked about how important it was to review the opening right after you play a blitz game.

**Q:** At this camp, you were the highest rated of all the participants, by a large margin. Did this prove to be a problem at all?

**Abby:** No, not at all. I was really impressed by Darrian and Rochelle, who had lots of great suggestions that I hadn't considered or hadn't found as quickly. The lessons were complex and open ended enough that everyone had something to add.

**Q:** It appeared to me that all the girls seemed to get along nicely, both at

the camp sessions and at the recreational activities away from the club. Is this an accurate read on things? Were you especially close with any of them prior to this camp?

**Abby:** Yeah, we all got along really well. A lot of us knew each other before the camp, so that helped. I've known Linda and Darrian for a couple of years.



**Q:** How were Kaidanov and Shahade as instructors?

**Abby:** They are the best. I felt that they really respected everyone's chess.

**Q:** Any other thoughts you care to add?

**Abby:** I hope Greg organizes a similar camp in the future, maybe for the many younger girls who are ridiculously good.

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## Answers to Last Month's Quiz

### Problem #1



It is White to move, with Black threatening to capture the b2-pawn, and threatening mate on g2. What can White do?

**Answer:** 1.Rxh6+! turns the tables and wins. If 1...gxh6, 2.Qg8+ Kf6 3.Qf8+ Kg6 4.Qxf3. If 1...Kxh6, 2.Qh8+ Kg5 (or 2...Kg6 3.Qh5+ Kf6 4.g5+ followed by 5.Qxf3) 3.Qh5+ Kf4 (or 3...Kf6 4.g5+) 4.Qf5+ Ke3 5.Qxf3+. From *The Giants of Power Play*, from the game Bronstein-Kortchnoi, 1962.

### Problem #2



It is White to move. Put your tactical caps on – what should White do?

**Answer:** 1.Qxg4!. Now if 1...Qxg4, 2.Rf8+ Rxf8 3.Rxf8+ and mate next move. From *The Giants of Power Play*, in the game Geller-Smyslov, 1965.

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