

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2020 - #3

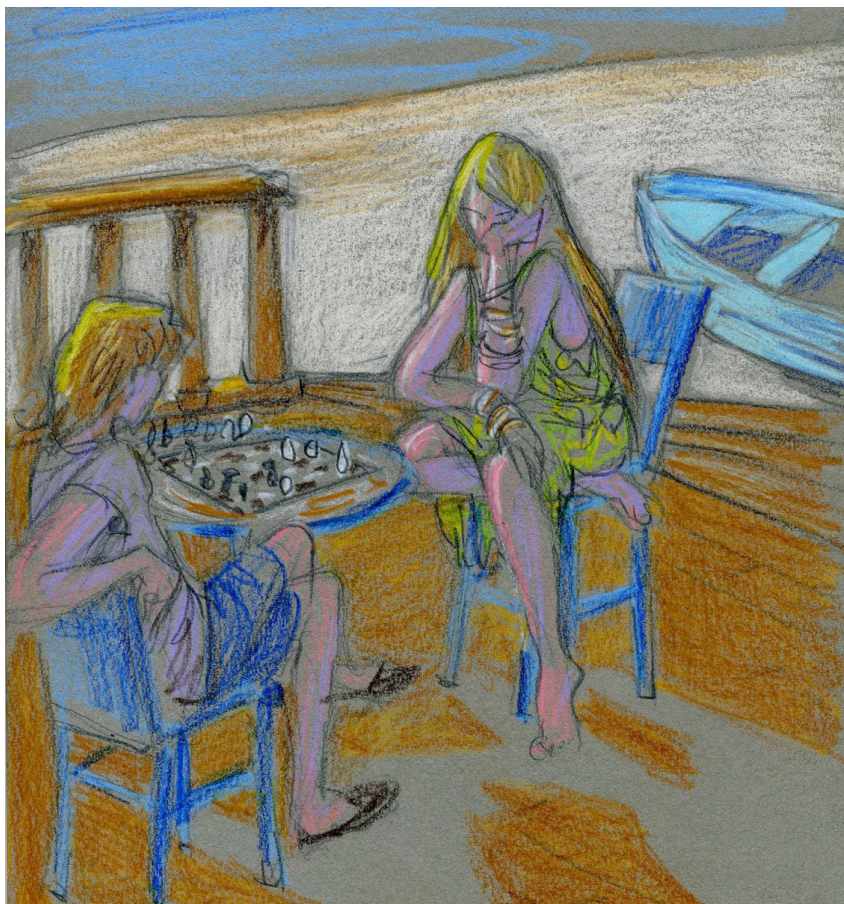


Illustration for MY FRIEND MAIGRET by María José Acosta - <http://deludosachorum.blogspot.com/2020/04/mi-amigo-maigret.html>

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2020 - Issue #3

Editor:

Macon Shibut
8234 Citadel Place
Vienna VA 22180
vcfeditor@cox.net

Circulation:

Georgina Chin
2851 Cherry Branch Lane
Herndon VA 20171
membership@vachess.org



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The **Virginia Chess Federation (VCF)**



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VA 20151 adommalapati@yahoo.com Membership Secretary: Georgina Chin, 2851 Cherry Branch Lane, Herndon VA 20171, membership@vachess.org Treasurer Mike Hoffpauir, 405 Hounds Chase, Yorktown VA 23693, mhoffpauir@aol.com Scholastics Coordinator: Mike Hoffpauir, mhoffpauir@aol.com Women's Chess Coordinator Tina Schweiss, cschweiss2@cox.com VCF Inc Directors: Andrew Rea, Michael Callaham,

Anand Dommalapati, Mike Hoffpauir, Adam Chrisney.





From the VCF Board of Directors

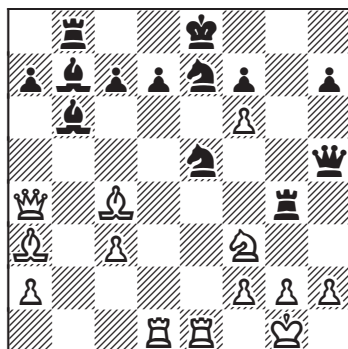
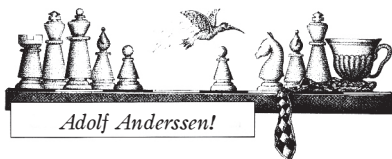
For the present, all over-the-board tournaments have been cancelled/postponed. The Virginia Open has been rescheduled for July 24-26 and the Charlottesville Open for December 12-13. Obviously these plans are subject to change, Please monitor the VCF website and your email closely for news on how the COVID-19 issue affects our 2020 tournament schedule.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced our local, state and national leaders to enact certain orders and/or provide guidance that makes over-the-board chess impractical in the Commonwealth for the foreseeable future. While the guidelines may allow very small events like a small swiss, a quad or a match, the VCF strongly encourages everyone to avoid situations that could increase the risk of infection to anyone present at such a venue. We urge everyone to listen to and take heed of the directives and guidance from your local and state authorities, keeping personal and family health and safety foremost during this time. We also encourage you to satisfy your appetite for our beloved game by becoming part of one (or more) of the excellent online chess platforms such as Chess.com, ICC, LiChess, Chess24, etc, or to play with friends using Skype, Zoom, Webex, GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Teams, etc. Parents who are concerned about their kids online activity with the above sites, specifically the younger ones, are encouraged to use chesskid.com as a safe and friendly means to play chess and have fun, while the parent can still be assured there is some level of monitoring by the Adult/Parent who is signing up for the account.

Evergreen Post Mortem

Regarding the Evergreen Game from our previous issue, in the critical 19...Rg4! 20 Bc4 line, Andy Rea writes in to point out that another move, 20...Ne5, merits mention even though it is incorrect and does not change the evaluation. But the refutation is sweet: *(diagram)*

21 Rxe5 Rxcg2+ 22 Kf1! Rxf2+ 23 Ke1!





Bob Vassar

by Macon Shibut

I NEVER HAD A COACH or chess teacher, but of course there were many older, more experienced players who helped me out when I was growing up and getting into the game in Richmond in the 1970s. My two most important benefactors were the late Jim Snapp, who lived nearby and provided rides to countless tournaments and chess club meetings, and Bob Vassar.

As reported last issue, Bob died March 23 at the age of 82. He lived in Richmond his whole life, and he worked his entire 60-year career for a single employer, the *Times-Dispatch/News Leader*. His obituary noted that Bob was “a masterful stock market tactician and an avid chess player”. Unmentioned was the fact that he was also Richmond City Checkers Champion.

He was playing chess ‘blindfold’ the first time I ever saw him. In the early 1970s a chess club met in the cafeteria of the Reynolds Metals headquarters building. There I first encountered “real” chess players, as opposed to just my neighborhood friends. On only my second or third visit, I witnessed a guy reclining on a sofa in a dark corner of the room. His opponent puzzled over board and pieces some twenty feet away in the well-lit center of the room. An amused gaggle of onlookers couriered the moves back and forth.

I’d read about the blindfold exploits of legends like Morphy and Pillsbury. The fact that a guy was doing it right there in front of me seemed amazing. Looking back, it’s almost as amazing how precocious and ambitious my 15-year-old self must have been, since the very next week I challenged the *maestro* to a game.

Macon Shibut – Bob Vassar Reynolds CC, November 1972 Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O b5 6 Bb3 Be7 7 Re1 O-O 8 c3 d5 [I was basically ignorant of theory in this or any opening, but probably I’d at least seen the Marshall Gambit before since one of my few chess books was the Wade & O’Connell collection of Fischer games. I remember carefully, methodically calculating here, visualizing each capture and recapture, searching for the trick. We played without clocks. I was intense and slow but Vassar showed no impatience.] **9 exd5 Nxd5 10 Nxe5 Nxe5 11 Rxe5** [Foreseeing this position, I couldn’t find any immediate trouble and I put great stock in the fact that Black’s knight was attacked, reckoning it meant I would have a “free tempo” to secure my game next turn.] **11...c6** [Played instantly, of course. To naive me it seemed a curious way to follow up a pawn sacrifice. And you know, perhaps Marshall felt



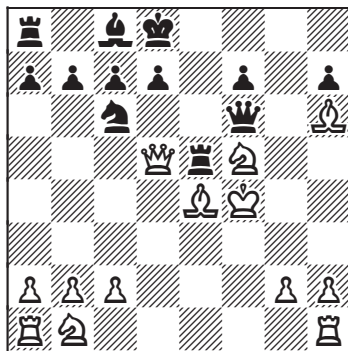
the same. In his variation's famous 'debut' against Capablanca in 1918 (the game is indeed famous but it was not in fact the debut of 8...d5) he played the move I rather expected, 11...Nf6. After that the kingside attack could have developed along slightly different lines: 12 d4 Bd6 13 Re1 Ng4 14 h3 Qh4 15 Qf3. Marshall & Capablanca actually reached this position via a more exotic move order, 11...Nf6 12 Re1 Bd6 13 h3 Ng4 14 Qf3 Qh4 15 d4] **12 d4 Bd6 13 Re1 Qh4 14 g3 Qh3 15 Nd2 Bg4 16 Nf3 Rae8 17 Rxe8 Rxe8 18 Bd2?** [I had the right idea—I played it next turn!—but first I wanted to “complete my development” as Fred Reinfeld taught. Now Vassar could have won by 18...Qh5 19 Kg2 Re6 ΔRf6] **18...Re6? 19 Ng5!** [For the first time in my life, something “tricky” against a truly good opponent!] **19...Qh5 20 Qc2** [20 f3!] **20...Re2 21 h4?** [21 Qd3 was necessary] **21...Be7?** [21...f6!] **22 f4** [22 Re1] **22...Bxg5 23 fxg5 Bf3 24 Bxd5?** [White is still in the game with 24 Qf5] **24...Rg2+ 25 Kf1 Bxd5 0-1**

Bob and his friend Jim Addison were complimentary of my effort. They encouraged me, and in the ensuing weeks they introduced me to the Richmond Chess Club. Bob became my regular sparring partner for clock games played under something like tournament conditions. I filled a small scorebook, which Bob gave me, with moves and analysis from these games. Most of them were not very good because I wasn't a very good player. But Bob never begged off from playing me. Knowing Bob also gave me entrée into a circle of other really strong players, including Ed Kitces, Steve Bookbinder, and especially seven-time state champion Charlie Powell. Bob and Charlie were close. Charlie was a true bohemian, his living arrangement never too stable, so for safekeeping the VCF's Moorman Cup trophy resided at Bob's apartment when Charlie held the state championship.

Bob Vassar – Macon Shibut 'Training Game' with clocks (40 moves/2 hours) 1973 Scotch

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4 Bc5 5 Nf5!? Nf6?! [Of course 5...g6, but I tried always to play developing moves in the opening, trusting that the logic of chess would justify them somehow.] **6 Nxc7+ Kf8 7 Bh6 Bxf2+** [This doesn't really work, but such is the quest for justification!] **8 Kxf2 Nxe4+ 9 Ke3!?** [Sporting of him—9 Kg1 was safe and winning.] **9...Qf6 10 Nf5+ Ke8 11 Qd5 Kd8!** [Hanging in there. Now if 12 Qxe4 Re8 of course; or if 12 Kxe4 there could follow 12...Re8+ 13 Kf4 Ne7!] **12 Bd3 Re8 13 Bxe4 Re5 14 Kf4!** (diagram)

There's a diagram for you. White intends Bg5.





14...Qg6 15 Bg5+ f6 16 Bxf6+ Qxf6 17 Qg8+ Re8 18 Qg7 Rxe4+ 19 Kxe4 d5+ 20 Kf4 Qxf5+ 21 Kg3 Be6 22 Nc3 Qg6+ [Bob is winning again—he probably scored at least 90% in our games—but I survive for the moment.] 23 Qxg6 hxg6 24 Rad1 Ne7 25 Rhe1 Kd7 26 Ne4 b6 27 Nf6+ Kd6 28 c4 c6 29 Ne4+ Kd7 30 Ng5 Bf5 31 b4 Rf8 32 b5 cxb5 33 cxd5 Kd6 34 Ne6 Bxe6? 35 dxe6+ Kc5 36 Rd7 Nf5+ 37 Kg4 Re8 38 Rxa7 Kd6 39 Rd7+ Kc6? 40 Rc1 *mate* 1-0 Mate on move 40. The final mistakes probably happened in time trouble.

Aside from playing, Bob also gave me rides before I had my driver's license. When I was in college he got me good summer jobs at the newspaper. And he dispensed life advice. In that connection, let me tell you why I think of Bob every time I *lose* a chess game.

These days there are lots of kids at any open tournament, but not so in the 1970s. In 1974 I won the Top Junior trophy at the Virginia Open—my score was 3-3, I think, but I was the only Junior in the tournament! I was used to being conspicuous as “the kid” in adult tournaments, and it was important for me to prove myself the Alpha Kid on occasions when there were other juniors playing. One time there was another guy about my age. When we'd played previously, I beat him in something like 12 moves. But on this occasion I blundered somehow and he was beating me. I dragged the game out and the last hour was torture. My position was hopeless and defeat was unavoidable even as my opponent added insult to injury by showing poor technique, finishing me off in a bumbling manner. Afterwards, my sportsmanship was terrible. I didn't shake his hand, I insulted him, I basically did everything I could to channel Nimzowitsch's infamous “*Why must I lose to this idiot?*”

Bob was not pleased but his manner of correcting me was brilliant. Rather than criticize, he appealed to my vanity. As I fumed to him about the indignity of losing to such a patzer, Bob replied softly “You're going to be a good player. Maybe a master, maybe you win state championships someday. That kid? Probably not. This win he got against you might even turn out to be a highlight of his whole chess career. You should think more about how you want him to remember you from it.”

Ever since, whenever I'm about to resign in a tournament game I take an extra minute or so to compose myself and prepare to concede gracefully.

The last time I saw Bob was at the Virginias Closed in 2013. We had lunch between rounds. I wanted to reminisce about the old days but Bob was more interested in the present, so we talked about my wife and kids, and about Bob's health issues. More recently I tried to visit him once when I was in Richmond. However, I didn't know his current address and no one answered when I called various possible phone numbers that I fished out of Google.

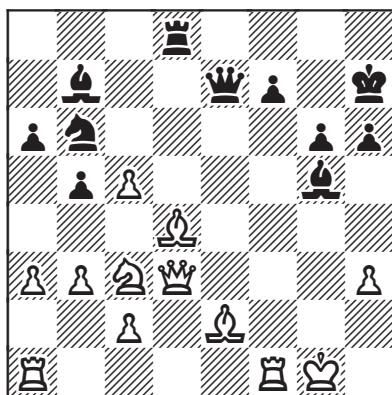
The Internet is wonderful, but sometimes I miss the old, reliable phone book. Likewise old, reliable friends like Bob Vassar.





The Human Factor

by James Richardson



Yes, I am a full rook up. Yes, if you input this Quiz Position into an engine, the evaluation is ridiculously in White's favor. Yes, you are a human, you make mistakes, and it's your job to convert the advantage into a win despite your shortcomings.

James Richardson - Franco Moncera Jose 2017 World Open Pirc

1 d4 d6 2 e4

Although I played 1 d4, my opponent invited me to a Pirc with 1...d6. After some reflection, I decided to accept the invitation for a couple of reasons. From an objective standpoint I consider 2 e4 to be a likely candidate for the strongest move. 2 Nf3 is another strong choice but it narrows your options against the King's Indian. Also 2 c4 e5 was an option I did not want to allow. Another reason for my choice is that I had recently adopted the Pirc into my Black repertoire within the past year and I had some ideas about the most testing variations to play against it. Qindong Yang is expert on the Pirc and he has inspired me to analyze this interesting counterattacking opening in greater depth. Although it is not currently my main defense against 1 e4, my experience from the Black side has informed my decisions as White. Playing an opening from both sides can significantly deepen your understanding of it. Strong players constantly search for the objectively best decisions from both sides, so this can be a good way to raise your level of analysis. Victor Bologan has called this the "Ivanchuk method". Vassily Ivanchuk has played nearly every mainstream



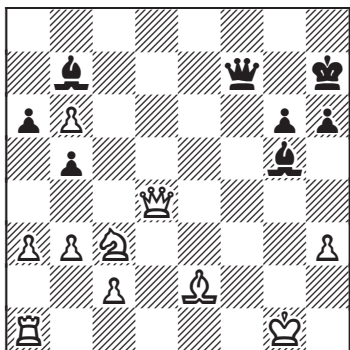
opening from both sides, so he has a very deep understanding of many openings. This method can be very demanding, but also greatly rewarding.

2...Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 Be3 Bg7 5 Qd2 c6 6 h3 b5 7 a3 a6 8 f4 Nfd7 9 Nf3 Bb7 10 Be2 Nb6 11 O-O N8d7 12 e5 O-O 13 Ng5 h6 14 Nge4 d5 15 Nf2 e6 16 b3 Qe7 17 Nd3 Kh7 18 g4 Rac8 19 f5 exf5 20 gxf5 c5 21 f6 Nxf6 22 exf6 Bxf6 23 Nxc5 Rxc5 24 dxc5 d4 25 Bxd4 Bg5 26 Qd3 Rd8

And so we reach the Quiz Position. I built a strong attack and now my opponent was desperately seeking complications to swindle me out of the win. After a long think, I found the strongest move.

27 Rf2!

This was not initially my first candidate. The move I really wanted to play was 27 cxb6!? inviting 27...Rxd4 with the witty retort 28 Rxf7+! Qxf7 29 Qxd4 simplifying the position with the exchange of rooks. My initial impression was that this would be a trivial win. White is indeed winning, but accuracy is required. Black's bishop pair can be very annoying and there are issues coordinating White's pieces.



29 Qxd4 (analysis)

With silicon assistance, I judge best play to be 29...Qe7 30 Nd5! If moves like this come easily to you then I'd possibly question your status as a human. 30...Qxe2 31 Qg4! Yep, totally natural defensive moves you'd see from a human. 31...Qxg4+ 32 hxg4 Bxd5 33 Rd1 Be3+ 34 Kf1 and White is winning. Although I determined this trivial win within 2048 milliseconds (slightly longer than I anticipated), I happened to notice a more optimal solution increasing my evaluation by 2.19 to within a 95% confidence interval of 0.81. At this point, the solution was *obvious*.

Just kidding. Of course humans don't think this way, and over the board I saw *none* of the moves of this insane Fritz variation after 29...Qe7. Returning from Computer Fantasyland to my actual OTB calculations, the move that worried me most was 29...Qe6. For instance, if White defends against the check on e3 with 30 Nd1? then 30...Bf6 is very annoying. Also 30...Qxh3 appears to force a draw. Checking my analysis with an engine, it appears I missed the clever resource 30 Bg4! Be3+ 31 Kh2 saving the queen. For instance, 31...Bxd4 32 Bxe6 Bxc3 33 Rd1 is a clear win.

Of course, this is only one variation, and this is not the most stubborn defense (see 29...Qe7 above). My point is that variations like these can be very messy. White often has to seek counter-intuitive methods of returning material to prove a decisive advantage.



Richard Rieve

by Jim Guill

LONG-TIME NoVa chess player Rick Rieve died peacefully at his home the evening of Wednesday, January 15 after a valiant struggle against that monster called cancer. There is much that could be said about Rick's wide-ranging interests, irrepressible curiosity and keen *joie de vivre*. Perhaps some of his many friends will share stories with you of their time together. Here's one of mine...

For the past few years, Rick and I had a standing movie appointment. We took advantage of the Angelika Theater, Thursday night Boomer special, where those 55 and older can get discount tickets to movies being released on Friday. Rick liked comic-based movies and I like sci-fi, so those were must-see when they came out. Of course we saw and enjoyed many that were neither. Some of the last ones were Jojo Rabbit, Peanut Butter Falcon, Parasite, Honey Boy, Harriet, Brittany Runs a Marathon, Ad Astra, Once Upon a Time in Hollywood and—our last film together—Knives Out.

We had a special ritual. Upon exiting the seating area Rick (comic guy) would stroke his chin and sagely note that for a film without a talking raccoon, it was pretty good! I (sci-fi guy) would respond that, y'know, for a film without a flux capacitor, it was pretty good! I will miss our little exchange and I smile just to think back on it. Sometimes it's the small things that are somehow meaningful, yes? Afterwards we would repair to the upstairs lounge and study chess together, often until midnight.

Rick loved chess! He reveled in sharp tactical clashes! He didn't believe in any of that pansy-a**, positional grandmaster c***. He was convinced his pieces should be attacking right out of the box and there was no talking him out of it. When some people whisper to their pieces and ask them where they want to be, the answer is to reinforce a weak square or to occupy a clever post that strengthens their position. Not so Rick! When Rick asked his pieces where they ought to be, the answer was invariably, unapologetically—joyfully!—swarming the opponents defenses and hacking at the head and heart of the king!

No attack, no melee; no melee, no fun; no fun, why play chess? Hence Rick's love affair with the Traxler Counterattack. No sample of Rick's play would be representative or complete without at least one boffo Traxler! So without further ado, here we see Rick living his dream!



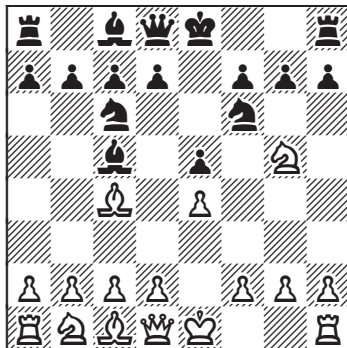


Terry Coffee - Rick Rieve
Arlington Chess Club Action
Two Knights

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Nf6 4 Ng5 Bc5!?

(diagram)

5 Nxf7 Bxf2+ 6 Kxf2 Nxe4+ 7 Ke3 Qh4 8
 g3 Nxg3 9 hxg3 Qd4+ 10 Ke2 Qxc4+ 11
 d3 Qxf7 12 Be3 d5 13 Ke1 Qg6 14 Bf2 Bg4
 15 Qd2 O-O-O 16 Na3 Rhf8 17 b4 Nd4 18
 Qe3 Nf3+ 19 Kf1 d4 20 Qc1 e4 21 dxe4
 Qxe4 22 Qb2 Nh4 23 Rxh4 Qe2+ 24 Kg1
 Qxf2+ 25 Kh1 0-1



And here are some additional games:

Ray Duchesne - Rick Rieve
Virginia Senior Ch
Vienna

1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nc6 3 d3 Nf6 4 Nc3
 Na5 5 Bb3 Nxb3 6 axb3 Be7 7 f4 d6
 8 Nf3 exf4 9 Bxf4 Bg4 10 O-O O-O
 11 h3 Be6 12 d4 d5 13 Qd3 dxe4 14
 Nxe4 Nxe4 15 Qxe4 Bd5 16 Qd3
 Bxf3 17 Rxf3 Bd6 18 Bd2 a6 19 Raf1
 Qd7 20 c4 c6 21 Rf5 f6 22 Qf3 Rf7
 23 h4 Bc7 24 Be3 Re8 25 h5 Qe6 26
 Bc1 Qd6 27 Rf4 Rfe7 28 h6 Re1 29
 hxg7 Rxc1 30 Re4 Rxf1+ 31 Kxf1
 Rxe4 32 Qxe4 Qf4+ 0-1

Rick Rieve - Arvind Rathnashyam
Kingstown Action Plus
Scandinavian

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 d4 Nxd5 4 Bd3
 e6 5 Nf3 c5 6 O-O Nc6 7 Bb5 Bd7 8
 c4 Nb6 9 d5 exd5 10 cxd5 Nb4 11
 Re1+ Be7 12 d6 Bxb5 13 Rxe7+ Kf8
 14 Nc3 Bc6 15 Be3 Na6 16 Ng5 Be8
 17 Qf3 Qxd6 18 Rxf7+ Kg8 19 Rd1
 Qg6 20 Rf8mate 1-0

The Wilkes Barre or Traxler Counterattack



Rick Rieve - Athira Arayath
Cherry Blossom Classic
Two Knights

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 c3 Nf6 5
 d4 exd4 6 O-O d5 7 exd5 Nxd5 8 Ng5
 h6 9 Nxf7 Kxf7 10 Qf3+ Ke8 11 Bxd5
 Rf8 12 Bxc6+ bxc6 13 Qxc6+ 1-0

Continued





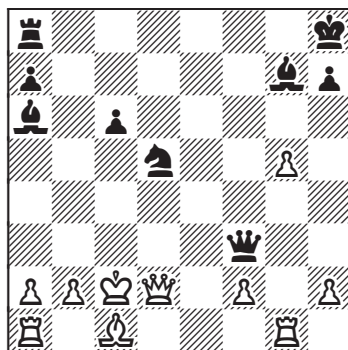
Rick Rieve - Jonathan Kenny Virginia Closed Petroff

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nxf7
Kxf7 5 d4 c5 6 dxc5 Qa5+ 7 Nc3
Qxc5 8 Be3 Qc7 9 Qd4 Be6 10 Nd5
Bxd5 11 exd5 Be7 12 Bd3 Nbd7 13
Bf5 Rhe8 14 g4 Nb6 15 Be6+ Kf8
16 g5 Nfxd5 17 Bxd5 Bxg5 18 Bb3
Bxe3 19 fxe3 Re7 20 O-O-O Rd8 21
Qd3 g6 22 Qd4 Ke8 23 Rhe1 Kd7 24
Qg4+ Kc6 25 Rd3 1-0

Akshay Kobla - Rick Rieve Continental Class Championship Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 f5 4 Nc3 fxe4
5 Nxe4 d5 6 Nxe5 dxe4 7 Bxc6+ bxc6

8 Qh5+ g6 9 Nxg6 Nf6 10 Qe5+ Kf7
11 Nxh8+ Kg7 12 g4 Qd5 13 Qxc7+
Kxh8 14 Qf4 Bg7 15 Rg1 Ba6 16 Rg3
Qc4 17 d3 Qxc2 18 Qd2 Qc5 19 g5
Nd5 20 dxe4 Qc4 21 Rg1 Qxe4+ 22
Kd1 Qf3+ 23 Kc2



23...Nb4+ 24 Qxb4 Qd3mate 0-1

Virginia Scholastic Chess Association

by Michael Hoffpauir, National Tournament Director/FIDE Arbiter & President, VSCA

FELLOW MEMBERS of the VSCA—Players, Parents, Coaches and our Volunteers: On behalf of the VSCA Board of Directors, I hope this note finds all of you, your families, friends and those you care about, safe and healthy.

The VSCA is at a crossroads. Because of three pending and critical staff departures this fall, we will not be able to continue as an organization without a significant commitment from new, dedicated volunteers.

At the end of this summer, Bart Mebane will retire after 20 years as webmaster, registration and pairings coordinator, board member. Gopal Bhagavatula, whose son Rohit is a graduating senior, is also retiring this fall after 9 years as treasurer; and board member. Mike Hoffpauir, VSCA president and a National Tournament Director with 20 years of experience, will very likely relocate to Louisiana before the end of 2020 to tend to his elderly mother. Mike's increasing commitments to chess at the national and international level also limit his VSCA involvement.

None of these departures are in any way related to the coronavirus pandemic. However, the loss of 50 years of experience, coupled with the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, means that the VSCA will need to change and adapt if it is to survive.



While the VSCA heretofore split its activities between Central Virginia and Hampton Roads, the growth and success of the Hampton Roads Chess Association (HRCA) has made future VSCA involvement in that area unnecessary. Going forward, VSCA will need to refocus its efforts in the Greater Richmond-Charlottesville corridor.

The only US Chess-certified Tournament Directors from the Richmond area who have worked at VSCA tournaments in the past year are Mike Callaham (VSCA secretary and Board member), Brian Garbera (former VSCA Board member) and Varun Natarajan (graduating senior at Maggie Walker). They are all valuable volunteers, but we need more.

Of our nine members of the VSCA Board of Directors, three are departing, and four live in the Hampton Roads area, serve also as board members of HRCA, and cannot consistently staff Richmond-area events. The remaining two VSCA Board members are Mike Callaham, from Richmond, and Nailya Plaskey from Louisa County. Mike has his own chess organization and commitments. Nailya has three young children and hosts a local chess club. Both already volunteer for the VSCA as much as their schedules allow.

At present there is very little parent involvement from the Richmond area. Unless that changes drastically and immediately, the VSCA will not be able to continue. This is not about occasionally helping out at a tournament if your child happens to be playing; it's about a dedicated commitment to the organization. If an event is on the calendar, it has to happen, and there have to be enough volunteers to support it both on the front lines and behind the scenes.

We need a President, a Treasurer, Board Members, Tournament Directors, a registration and pairings coordinator, a webmaster, a newsletter editor, and volunteers to handle scheduling, supplies, awards. We also need ideas and vision. President or Treasurer are more than titles, those offices require experience and knowledge about running a non-profit organization or properly maintaining books, filing taxes, preparing financial reports, and maintaining compliance with 501c(3) statutes. Learning these things "on the fly" is risky, missteps can be costly.

Once the pandemic has stabilized, the options for the VSCA are:

1. Continue the current program of monthly or semi-monthly tournaments.
2. Continue holding events, but on a more limited basis.
3. Reorganize and continue to support scholastic chess in other ways.
(Some form of income/fund raising would be required.)
4. Dissolve the organization.

This summer the Board of Directors will choose among these options. Your response to this email will help to determine our choice. Let us know your thoughts ... we want to hear them. Please respond to: vsca.entries@gmail.com

— For the Board, and wishing you good health and good chess.



My First Love by Robert Fischer



TURNED ELEVEN in 1971 and I was the best chess player at Summit Country Day School in Cincinnati, Ohio. We were in the early stages of the Fischer boom. Bobby was marching inexorably toward a match with Spassky, chess was on the evening news, and department stores started to carry chess sets and books. My mother read that a professional chess player would play all comers at Shillatoe's, a department store in downtown Cincinnati, and I asked my father if he would take me to challenge him.

Full disclosure: the "professional chess player" was a college kid working for minimum wage. He probably was about 1200 by today's rating system. I played White in a Two Knight's Defense, my favorite variation (the one where I got to take his pawn on f7 and fork his queen and rook). My father, who did not play, said that he knew I was winning because I was beaming.

After the game I noticed they had some books for sale and I asked my dad if he would buy one for me. *Winning Chess* by Irving Chernev and Fred Reinfeld. It was a great book for a young player and to this day I remember being fascinated by the "brilliant" two and three move combinations. I also started to learn new chess terms like pin, skewer, discovered check and removing the guard. And I fell in love with chess books.

I never lost my passion for books from that first one that my dad bought me. Through the years I have purchased over 300 chess books and I also have learned that buying chess books is a skill. If you buy them thoughtfully, you do not have to buy very many to become a good player. Unfortunately, many people, especially younger players, do not buy them thoughtfully. It always saddens me when I see kids drag their mothers into Todd Hammer's book concession and leave with a handful of opening tomes instead of classic works that will hold their value for many years.

While stuck home avoiding COVID-19 I have revisited some of my old friends and thought I would write this ode to ten favorite chess books. Some are new, but some are not so new; your chess library would benefit from including any of these.

1. *Practical Rook Endings* by Edmar Mednis. This thin volume of less than 100 pages is like Cliff Notes for rook endings. You will find a lot of good practical advice here and the most important theoretical positions that you must memorize. Yes, I you would learn more from *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*—if you ever get through it. The nice thing about Edmar's book is that you can indeed get through it in a weekend and immediately be a much better rook endgame player.

2. *Questions of Modern Chess Theory* by Isaac Lipnitsky. This wonderful book is by a player who won the Ukrainian championship shortly after the Second World



War. Sadly, he died at a very young age. Both Anatoly Karpov and Bobby have high praise for this book. I only discovered it myself in the last five years, and even though I had been playing in tournaments for over forty years, I found important concepts here explained as I hadn't seen elsewhere.

3. *Practical Chess Defense* by Jacob Aagaard. This author has written many excellent books, but this one is my favorite. It includes two hundred puzzles. However, unlike most puzzle books, instead of giving you a juicy position where you are trying to mate your opponent or win material, Aagaard gives you positions where you are in desperate straits and trying to save your bacon.

4. *The World Chess Championship of 1948* by Paul Keres. Keres may be the best chess author of the 20th century. His notes include detailed prose that explains the key ideas of players. Gary Kasparov and Boris Gelfand have high praise for the book.

5. *Secrets of Attacking the King* by Mihail Marin. The problem with Marin is that it is difficult to pick which of his many books to recommend, they are all so good. In any case, *Secrets of Attacking the King* deserves to be studied in great detail.

6. *Recognizing Your Opponent's Resources* by Mark Dvoretsky. Dvoretsky is one of the greatest chess authors ever and all of his books are wonderful. This one is my favorite because to solve the problems you will need to pay careful attention to what ideas your opponent has. Solving the 400 or so problems in this book will make you a better chess player.

7. *Imagination in Chess* by Paata Gaprindashvili. The Georgian trainer has put together a collection of about 700 excellent problems. What makes the book unique is the problem selection.

8. *Critical Moments in Chess*, also by Gaprindashvili. Here Gaprindashvili develops the concept of Initiative through a series of problems and shows the significance of the initiative in relation to piece activation. Highly recommended.

9. *Fundamental Chess: Logical Decision Making* by Ramachandran Ramesh. GM Ramesh is one of India's top trainers. His book discusses topic such as prophylactic thinking, maintaining tension, and 'the drawback principle', which I have not seen covered in other manuals. This is a book about thinking and practical play.

10. *Lessons in Chess Strategy* by Valeri Beim. The Austrian grandmaster's discussion of the geometry of the chess board will give you a unique perspective on pawn endgames. While Beim has written many books, this one is my favorite.

All of these books are timeless. Buy them today and they will give you hundreds of hours of pleasure and still be terrific 20 years from now. You could get them all of for less than \$300 and really not need to buy another chess book.. I hope you will find this list helpful.

Virginia Chess
2851 Cherry Branch Lane
Oak Hill, VA 20171-3843

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