

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

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Drawing by Susan Shibut

United States Women's Champion Jennifer Yu

VIRGINIA CHESS

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Jennifer Yu Wins US Women's Championship

by Macon Shibut

JENNIFER YU, of Ashburn, won the US Women's Championship, an invitational event contested in St Louis March 18-April 1. The 17-year old Stonebridge High School junior dominated the event, scoring 10-1 to place a Fischeresque $2\frac{1}{2}$ point margin between herself and the rest of an elite field that included the cream of US women chess players.

In 2014 Yu won the Girls Under-12 World Championship. Closer to home, she became our Virginia state champion a year later, the only female ever to do so. This latest triumph eclipses those in terms of both prestige and quality of play. Indeed, it ranks among the most outstanding tournament performances ever by a Virginia player.*

Former world champion Boris Spassky says that the best indicator of a chess player's form is his (or her!) ability to sense and respond to the critical moment of the game. With that in mind, we will try to identify critical moment in each of Yu's games en route to her 2019 US Championship.

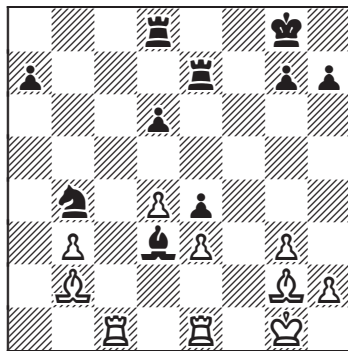
Round 1. Based on past results, Anna Sharevich might have seemed a challenging opponent to start with. She beat Jennifer in a couple previous US Championships. On the other hand, Sharevich is twice Yu's age, so the trajectories of their respective games may not be headed in exactly the same direction.

Anna Sharevich - Jennifer Yu Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nbd2 Be7 5 g3 O-O 6 Bg2 b6 7 cxd5 exd5 8 O-O Bb7 9 Ne5 Nbd7 10 b3 Ne4 11 Nxe4 dxe4 12 Qc2 Nf6 13 Bb2 Bd6 14 Nc4 Re8 15 Rac1 Qe7 16 Nxd6 cxd6 17 Qc7 Nd5 18 Qxe7 Rxe7 19 Ba3 Rd8 20 e3 b5 21 Rfe1 f5 22 f3 [White tries to open the position for her bishop pair. But the knight turns out to be a beast and White's e3 pawn winds up being a greater weakness than any targets created in Black's position.] 22...b4 23 Bb2 Ba6 24 fxe4 fxe4 25 a3 Bd3 26 axb4?! Nxb4 (diagram)

The critical moment. Only the tactical defense 27 Rc3 suffices, so that if 27...Nc2 28 Rc1 Nxe3 29 Bxe4 Rxe4 30 Rxd3

27 Red1? Nc2 [Boom. Down goes e3.] 28 Rd2 Nxe3 29 Bh3 g5 30 Re1 g4 31 Bg2 [31 Rxe3 gxh3 32 Re1 (if 32 Rdx d3 exd3 33 Rxe7 d2) 32...



* "by a Virginia player..." — meaning not, eg., GM Kavalek, although he does live in Reston; but by someone who regularly appears at our local tournaments.

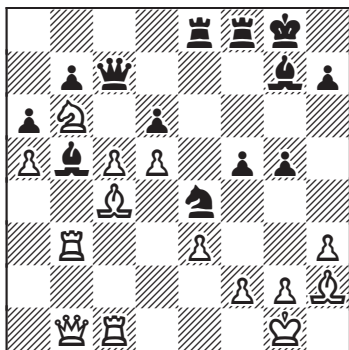


Rb7 & Rxb3 is similar to the game] 31... Nxg2 32 Kxg2 Rb7 33 d5 Rxb3 34 Bd4 a6 35 Rf2 Rf8 36 Rxf8+ Kxf8 37 Rc1 Be2 38 Rc8+ Ke7 39 Re7+ Kd8 40 Rxh7 e3 41 Rf7 Rd3 42 Bxe3 Rxe3 43 h4 Bf3+ 44 Kf2 Re2+ 45 Kf1 Re7 46 Rf8+ Kc7 47 Rf4 Kb6 0-1

For round 2 Yu faced the lowest rated player in the field. Still, at 2295 Ashritha Eswaran was no slack, plus as a 1900 player a couple years ago she'd scored an upset over Yu in a U20 Girls championship.

Jennifer Yu - Ashritha Eswaran Benoni

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 Nc3 g6 7 Bf4 a6 8 a4 Bg7 9 h3 O-O 10 e3 Nh5 11 Bh2 f5 12 Bd3 Qe7 13 O-O Nd7 14 Re1 Ne5 15 Be2 Nf7 16 a5 Bd7 17 Nd2 Nf6 18 Nc4 Ne4 19 Na4 Qh4 20 Rf1 Rae8 21 Nab6 Bb5 22 Qe1 Qe7 23 Ra3 Nf6 24 b4 Qc7 25 Rb3 g5 26 Qb1 Ne4 27 Rc1 [Black's queenside construction begins to wobble.] 27...Ne5 28 bxc5 Nxc4 [If 28...Nxc5 29 Nxe5 is good for White after either 29...Bxe2 30 Ned7; or 29...Bxe5 30 Bxb5 axb5 31 Rxb5] 29 Bxc4



29...Be5 [The Seirawan/Shahade/Ashley commentator team pegged this

as the critical mistake and said Black needed to try 29...f4. For her part, Jennifer recalled she expected 29...Nd2 when White is very happy after 30 Bxd6] 30 Bxe5 Rxe5 31 cxd6 Qxd6 32 Bxb5 axb5 33 Rxb5 Qh6 34 Nd7 Qh4 35 Qb2 Re7 36 Nxf8 Kxf8 37 Rxb7 [The pressure on f2 is no concern because if 37...Rxb7 she will first check 38 Rc8+ and only then retake on b7 with check and soon mate] 37...g4 38 Rc8+ Kf7 39 Rcc7 Rxc7 40 Rxc7+ 1-0

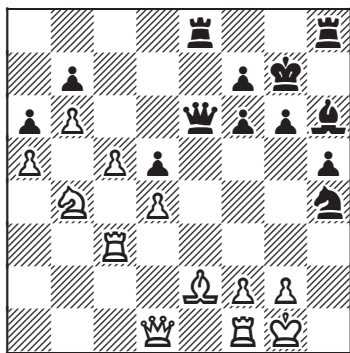
The Big Challenge loomed next. Irina Krush was the tournament's top seed, the only grandmaster in the field, and a 7-time winner of the championship.

Irina Krush - Jennifer Yu Panov

1 c4 c6 2 e4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 d4 Nf6 5 Nc3 Nc6 6 Bg5 Be6 7 a3 Qd7 8 Be2 Rd8 9 Bxf6 exf6 10 c5 g6 11 Nf3 h5 12 b4 Bh6 13 b5 Ne7 [Black's position is not pleasant in light of the gathering storm on the queenside.] 14 h4?! Kf8 15 a4 Kg7 16 a5 Nc8 17 b6 [An instructive choice. Leading with the a-pawn might appear more attractive inasmuch as 17 a6 b6 18 c6 yields a protected passed pawn. However, that would be the end of White's achievement. Black will blockade and White's Nc3-Be2-Ra1 all beat their heads against the backside of her own pawn front. For the remainder of the middlegame White would just sit and await whatever Black can conjure up on the kingside. After the text on the other hand, it's Black who will possess a static advantage—the outpost/hole' on c6—but endure the dynamic risk that White will sacrifice something on a6, unleashing a tidal wave of far-advanced passed pawns.] 17...a6 18 Na2 Ne7 19



Nb4 Qc8 20 Ra3 Rde8 21 Rc3 Bd7 22 O-O Bc6 23 Ne1 Nf5 24 Nxc6 Qxc6 25 Nc2 Nxh4 26 Nb4 Qe6



The critical moment, according to Irina Krush herself. She originally intended 27 Bf3 but had overlooked 27...Nxf3+ 28 Qxf3 Bd2 skewering her pieces. Even then the exchange sacrifice 29 Nxd5 Bxc3 30 Nxc3 “looked interesting” she said, but it was hard to accept this after the wonderful position she’s enjoyed only a short time before.

Maybe this was the moment for 27 Bxa6!? Anything could happen. One crazy computer line runs 27...bxa6 28 Nxa6 Qe4 29 Rg3 Bf4 30 Qd3 Bxg3 31 Qxe4 Bxf2+ 32 Kxf2 dxe4 33 b7 Nf5 34 c6 e3+ 35 Kg1 Nd6 36 Nc5 h4 37 a6 Nb5 38 d5 h3 39 gxh3 Rxh3 40 Kg2 Rhh8 41 Re1 —0.00!?

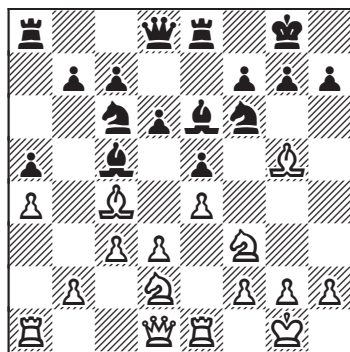
27 Bd3 Bf4 28 c6 Bd6 29 Rc5? [White goes overboard. Simply retreating 29 Nc2 left it still anyone’s game.] 29... Bxc5 30 dxc5 bxc6 31 Nxa6 Qe5 32 Nc7 Re7 33 Qa4 Qg5 34 g3 Nf3+ 35 Kg2 Ne1+ 36 Rxe1 Rxe1 37 Qf4 [37 a6 is too slow. 37...h4 38 a7 hxg3 delivers mate] 37...Qg4 38 f3 [38 Qxg4 hxg4 39 a6 (39 f3 Rd1 is also winning for Black)

likewise gets mated after 39...Reh1] 38... Qd7 39 a6 Qe7 40 Qd2 [40 a7 Qxc5 41 a8Q Qg1+] 40...Ra1 0-1 Move 40... I wonder if White lost on time? The position is indeed losing but it seems strange to resign with the connected pawns still offering blunder potential. After 41 Qf2 to prevent Qxc5 I guess the way forward is 41...Rc8 intending to sacrifice the exchange, but Black would still have to show a little something.

3-0! With this tremendous victory Yu found herself alone in first place. It’s pretty easy to zero in on the critical moment of the next game. Black mistimed a central pawn break and her position fell apart.

Jennifer Yu - Emily Nguyen Italian

1 e4 e5 2 Bc4 Nf6 3 d3 Nc6 4 Nf3 Bc5 5 O-O d6 6 c3 O-O 7 Bg5 Be6 8 Nbd2 a5 9 a4 Re8 10 Re1



10...d5? [10...h6] 11 Bxf6 gxf6 12 exd5 Bxd5 13 Bxd5 Qxd5 14 Ne4 Be7 15 Nh4 [The damage to Black’s kingside is decisive. Moves like Qh5, Nf5, R-e3-h3 are coming.] 5...Qe6 16 Qh5 Bf8 17 Nf5 Ne7 18 Nxe7+ Bxe7 19 Ng3 Kh8 20 Re4 f3 21 Nxf5 Qg6 22 Qxg6! [White



breaks off the attack because she wins a second pawn by force, reducing to a pretty easy endgame win.] **22...hxc6 23 Nxe7 Rxe7 24 d4 Rd8 25 f4 f6 26 fxe5 fxe5 27 Rae1 c5 28 Rxe5 Rxe5 29 dxe5 Kg7** [29...Rd2 30 e6 goes through] **30 e6 Kf6 31 e7 Re8 32 Kf2 1-0**

The win streak ended in round 5 against Annie Wang. While hard fought, the game never strayed far from equality and so it is difficult to say there ever was a 'critical moment'.

Annie Wang - Jennifer Yu Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Qc7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 Nfd7 11 Bg2 f6 12 O-O Rd8 13 Qc1 Be6 14 Nxe5 Nxe5 15 Qe3 Qa5 16 Bxe5 fxe5 17 Qg5 Qc7 18 Ne4 Bb4 19 Qh5+ Bf7 20 Qg4 Bb3 21 Qf5 Bf7 22 Rad1 O-O 23 Ng5 Bg6 24 Qg4 Qe7 25 h4 a5 26 Qc4+ Bf7 27 Qc2 g6 28 Bh3 Kg7 29 Nxf7 Qxf7 30 Rd3 Qf6 31 Rxd8 Rxd8 32 Rd1 Rxd1+ 33 Qxd1 Qd6 34 Qxd6 Bxd6 35 Bc8 b5 36 axb5 cxb5 37 Bd7 b4 38 Kg2 Kf6 39 Kf3 Ke7 40 Ba4 Bc5 41 e3 Ke6 42 Ke4 Be7 43 b3 Bd8 44 Bb5 h6 45 Bc4+ Kf6 46 Kd5 g5 47 h5 Bc7 48 Kc6 Bd8 49 g4 ½-½

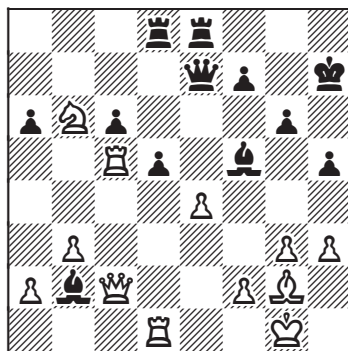
If there was no critical moment in round 5, round 6 made up for it by having two.

Maggie Feng - Jennifer Yu Grünfeld

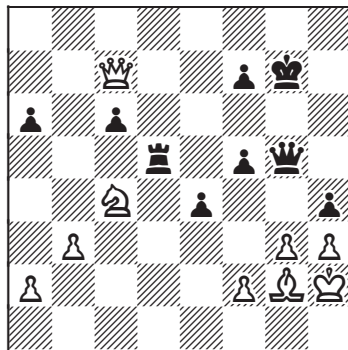
1 Nf3 Nf6 2 g3 g6 3 Bg2 Bg7 4 d4 d5 5 c4 c6 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 Nc3 O-O 8 Ne5 Nc6 9 O-O Bf5 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Na4 Nd7 12 Bf4 Qa5 13 b3 Rac8 14 Rc1 Rfe8 15 Bd2 Qb5 16 Bc3 e5 17 dxe5 Nxe5 18 h3 Rcd8 19 Bb2 h5 20 Re1 a6 21 Rc5 Qb7 22 Qa1 Qe7 23 Rd1 [23 f4

doesn't work because of **23...Nd3**] **23... Kh7 24 e3** [now if **24 f4 Nd7**] **24...Bh8 25 Bxe5 Bxe5 26 Qc1 Bd7 27 Nb6? Bb2! 28 Qc2 Bf5 29 e4**

By **29...Bxe4 30 Bxe4 dxe4** Black could have secured the advantage. But instead...



29...dxe4? 30 Rxd8 Rxd8 31 Rxf5! [This is the difference—White gains two pieces for the rook.] **31...gxf5 32 Qxb2 h4 33 Nc4 Rd1+ 34 Kh2 Qg5 35 Qe5 Rd5 36 Qc7 Kg7**



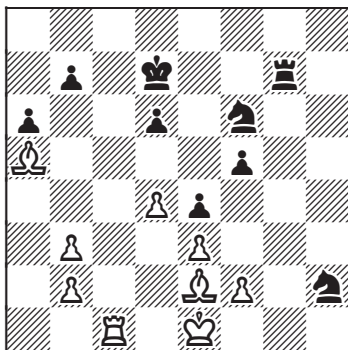
37 Qxc6? [Time trouble converts a winning position to a losing one with a single move. White needed to play **37 gxh4 Qxh4 38 Qg3+**] **37...hxcg3+ 38 fxg3 f4 39 Qc7** [39 g4 f3 40 Bf1 Qf4+ is no better] **39...Qxg3+ 40 Kg1 Rd1 mate 0-1** Jennifer's summation: "Not the best game, but it was really exciting throughout."



Sabina Foiser won the championship a couple years ago, so she is not an opponent to take lightly. Her record head to head versus Yu over the last four championships was a win apiece plus two draws. But at first the game looked like a route.

Jennifer Yu - Sabina Foiser English

1 c4 e5 2 e3 f5 3 d4 e4 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 Nge2 g6 6 Nf4 Bg7 7 h4 Nc6 8 h5 Ne7 9 c5 g5 10 h6 gxf4 11 hxg7 Rg8 12 Rxh7 [Black appeared to be on the ropes right out of the opening, but maybe the position was not as one-sided as all that.] 12...f3 13 Rh6 Ng4 14 Rh8 fxe2 15 Bxe2 d5 16 cxd6 Qxd6 17 Qb3 Be6 18 Nb5 Bxb3 19 Nxd6+ cxd6 20 axb3 Kf7 21 Bd2 a6 22 Bb4 Ke6 23 Rxe8 Rxe8 24 Bf1 Rxe7 25 Rc1 Kd7 [Things have turned completely. The knights are more effective than the bishop pair. Black could have turned the screws by 25...Nh2] 26 Be2 Nd5 27 Ba5 Nh2 28 Bc4 Nf6 [She has an idea of going Nf3+ and if this knight is captured (B-e2xf3) she will trade the rooks and enjoy the endgame with this knight settling on the tremendous central outpost e4. But the correct way to get where she's headed was 28...Rg1+ first, and after 29 Kd2 then 29...Nf3+ 30 Kc2 Rxc1+ 31 Kxc1 Kc6] 29 Be2



And here 29...Rg1+ 30 Kd2 Rxc1 31 Kxc1 was called for. Instead she chose a move order that allows a different resource, making this the critical moment.

29...Nf3+ 30 Bxf3 Rg1+ 31 Kd2 Rxc1 32 Bxe4! [changes everything] 32...Ra1?! [Not atypically, an unpleasant surprise leads to further mistakes. Black would have nothing to fear after 32...Nxe4+ 33 Kxc1 Nxf2] 33 Bxf5+ [Now the knight has no secure outpost and White is good material-wise. Still, the rook is a strong endgame piece. Black should hold the position.] 33...Ke7 34 Bc3 a5 35 e4 d5 36 f3 b5 37 b4 a4 38 Kd3 Ne8 39 e5 Ng7 40 Bg4 Ne6 41 Bf5 Rh1 42 Ke3 Rh2 43 Bd3 Nc7 44 f4 Rh3+ 45 Kd2 Rh2+ 46 Ke3 Rh3+ 47 Kd2 Ke6? [Being up an exchange must have skewed Foiser's judgement. 'Playing for the win' in this case loses critical tempi, and after the huge achievement f5 Black can no longer defend.] 48 f5+ Kd7 49 Ke2 Kc6 [It's too late to seek a draw by 49...Rh2+ 50 Kd1 Rh1+ 51 Be1 and White can make progress much as in the game.] 50 Bd2 Rh2+ 51 Kd1 Rh4 52 Be3 Kd7 53 Kc2 Rg4 54 Be2 Rg2 55 Kd1 Ke7 56 Ke1 Kf7 57 Bf4 Rg1+ 58 Kd2 Rg2 59 e6+ Nxe6 60 fxe6+ Kxe6 61 Ke3 Kf5 62 Bd6 Ke6 63 Bc5 Rg3+ 64 Kf4 Rb3 65 Bxb5 Rxb2 66 Bxa4 Rf2+ 67 Ke3 Rb2 68 Bc6 Rb1 69 b5 Kf5 70 b6 Rb3+ 71 Kd2 Ke4 72 b7 1-0

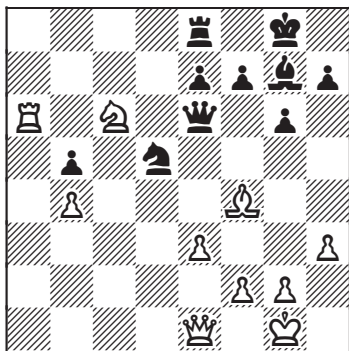
Commenting on her 6½ out of 7 score, Jennifer suggested that she maybe wasn't really playing all that well but that "luck" had been on her side. There is something to that if you consider these last two rounds. But luck in chess is largely an expression of willpower and competitive temperament. She was winning because, round after round, even against the



strongest opponents, she was more tough-minded at the critical moments.

Akshita Gorti - Jennifer Yu Torre

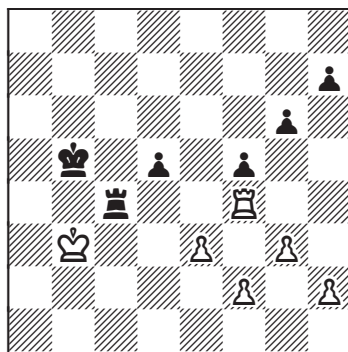
1 d4 d5 2 Bg5 Nf6 3 e3 g6 4 Nf3 Bg7 5 Nbd2 O-O 6 Bd3 Nbd7 7 O-O b6 8 c4 dxc4 9 Bxc4 Bb7 10 Qe2 c5 11 Rfd1 Rc8 12 Rac1 cxd4 13 Nxd4 Rc5 14 N2f3 Qa8 15 b4 Rcc8 16 Bb5 Rfd8 17 Rxc8 Qxc8 18 Qe1 Nb8 19 h3 Be4 20 Ne5 a6 21 Ba4 b5 22 Bb3 Bd5 23 Rc1 Qb7 24 Bxd5 Qxd5 25 Nec6 Nxc6 26 Nxc6 Rd7 27 Bf4 Qxa2 28 Nb8 Rds 29 Nc6 Res 30 Ra1 Qe6 31 Rxa6 [Black's rook and knight are a little bit extended, but attacking them both by 31...Qc8 can be answered 32 Qa1 and if 32...Nd5 33 Be5. So Yu tries attacking the bishop and opening the long diagonal first, bringing about—you guessed it—the critical moment.] 31...Nd5



32 Bg3? [White cannot afford this routine retreat. 32 Qf1! hitting b5 holds the position together.] 32...Qc8 33 Qd2 [33 Nb8 fails to 33...Qb7 threatening Rxb8 so Gorti resorts to an exchange sacrifice] 33...Qxa6 34 Qxd5 Bf6 35 Be5 Bxe5 36 Nxe5 Rf8 37 h4 Qd6 38 Qe4 Rc8 39 g3 Rc1+ 40 Kh2 Kg7 41 h5 f5 42 Qf4 Qd1 0-1

Jennifer Yu - Tatev Abrahamyan Nimzoindian

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 O-O 5 Ne2 c6 6 a3 Ba5 7 c5 d5 8 cxd6 Qxd6 9 b4 Bc7 10 g3 e5 11 Bg2 Re8 12 dxe5 Qxd1+ 13 Nxd1 Bxe5 14 Bb2 a5 15 bxa5 Nbd7 16 O-O Rxa5 17 Bxe5 Nxe5 18 Ndc3 Nd3 19 Nd4 Nc5 20 a4 Be6 21 Rab1 Rea8 22 Rb4 g6 23 Rd1 R8a7 24 Ra1 Nd5 25 Bxd5 Bxd5 26 Nxd5 cxd5 27 Nb3 [Yu: "I was looking at her just taking a4 but then I saw that she could play ...b5"] 27...Nxb3 28 Rxb3 b5 29 Rd1 bxa4 30 Ra3 Kf8 31 Rd4 ["I thought I could hold because it looks like kind of a fortress, but probably she has chances here."] 31...Ke7 32 Kf1 Kd6 33 Ke2 [not 33 e4? Ke5] 33...Kc5 34 Kd3 Kb5 35 Kc3 [and here not 35 Rxd5+? Kb4] 35...Rc7+ 36 Kb2 Rc5 37 Rad3 Kc6 38 Ka3 Rc2 39 Rf4 f5 40 Rdd4 Rac5 [maybe try 40...Rb5 41 Rxa4 Rbb2] 41 Rxa4 R5c3+ 42 Kb4 Rc4+ 43 Kb3 Kb5 44 Raxc4 Rxc4



The draw is in sight but there remains one more shoal to navigate.

45 Rf3!

45 Rd4? Rxd4 46 exd4 g5! the pawn ending would be lost because White runs out of moves, eg 47 h3 (47 h4 g4 48 h5 h6) g4.



45 Rxc4!? also makes less sense than the text because the outside passed pawn could be dangerous, although it appears in this case White might just hold, eg 45... dxc4+ 46 Kc3 g5 47 f3 g4 48 fxg4 fxg4 49 e4 Kc5 50 e5 Kd5 51 e6 Kxe6 52 Kxc4 Ke5 53 Kd3. But that would be risky, and as Abrahayan remarked after the game, “she [Yu] is a practical player.”

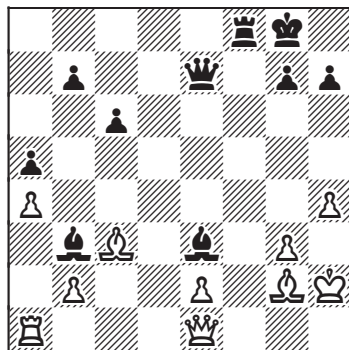
45...Kc5 46 Rf4 Rxf4 47 gxf4 d4 48 Kc2 Kc4 49 Kd2 h6 $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Writing for CHESSBASE NEWS, Antonio Pereira set the stage for the decisive penultimate round: *It might be a little frustrating for Yu to realize that after piling up eight points in nine rounds, she is still very much in danger of finishing in second place. The big clash against her relentless chaser Zatonskih will be played in round ten, and a loss would leave Jennifer with a hard task in the final day.* Indeed, while Jennifer was sweating out her rook ending, four-time champion Anna Zatonskhi beat Annie Wang to move to within just a half point.

Anna Zatonskih - Jennifer Yu Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5 6 Ne5 Nbd7 7 Nxc4 Qc7 8 g3 e5 9 dxe5 Nxe5 10 Bf4 Nfd7 11 Bg2 f6 12 O-O Rd8 13 Qc1 Be6 [The same variation as in round 5, so White's next move was almost certainly preparation.] **14 Ne4 Bb4 15 Rd1 O-O 16 Rd4 a5 17 h4 Nc5** [Yu: “There were just so many combinations that you could take with, so I wasn't sure about that. I don't think she played the best move order because I got ...Bxf2...”] **18 Rxd8 Qxd8 19 Nxc5 Bxc5 20 Nxe5?** [Indeed, 20 Bxe5 fxe5 21 e3 was a better try, although Black is okay there too.] **20...Bxf2+! 21 Kh2 fxe5**

22 Bxe5 Bd4 [“It looks a lot easier for Black to play but I still didn't think I was going to win this.”] **23 Bf4 Qb6 24 Qc2 Bb3 25 Qc1 Qb4 26 Bd2 Qd6 27 Bf4 Qb4 28 Bd2 Qe7 29 Bc3 Be3**

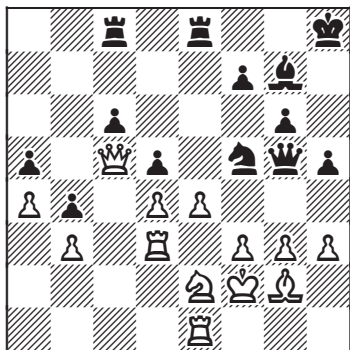


30 Qe1? [“I took a minute to make sure. I didn't want to be rash. It's the US Championship.”] **30...Bf2! 31 Qd2 Bxg3+ 32 Kxg3 Qc7+ 33 Kg4 Be6+ 0-1** The end will be **34 Kh5 Qf7+ 35 Kg5 Qf5 mate**

With this stylish finish Jennifer Yu clinched the US Women's Championship with a round to spare. A bloodless draw in the last round would have been understandable, but instead the champion gave us one more complicated, protracted battle.

Jennifer Yu - Carissa Yip English

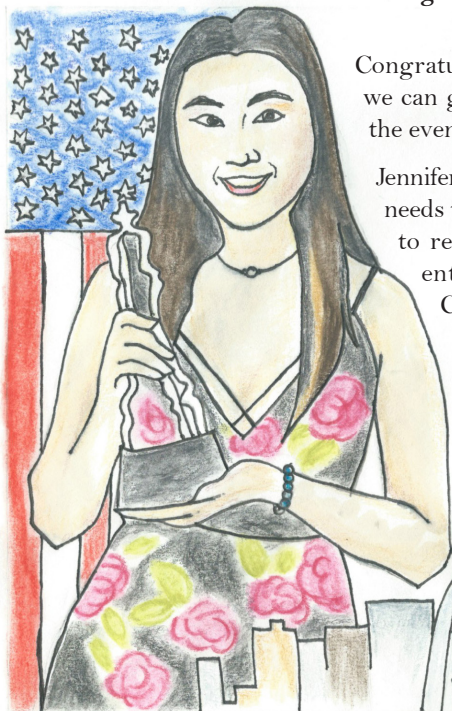
1 c4 g6 2 Nc3 Bg7 3 g3 e6 4 Bg2 Ne7 5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Nf3 O-O 8 O-O Nbc6 9 a3 Nf5 10 e3 a6 11 Ne1 Nce7 12 Nd3 c6 13 b3 Nd6 14 a4 a5 15 Ba3 Re8 16 Re1 Nef5 17 Qc2 h5 18 h3 Nh6 19 Rad1 Bf5 20 Qc1 Rc8 21 Nf4 Kh8 22 f3 b5 23 Bc5 b4 24 Nce2 Nb7 25 Nd3 Qg5 26 Kf2 Bxd3 27 Rxd3 Nxc5 28 Qxc5 Nf5 29 e4



Black's moment of decision—sacrifice a piece to try to tear through to White's king? In case of 29...Bxd4+!? 30 Nxd4 (or 30 Rxd4 Qe3+ 31 Kf1 dxe4 32 fxe4 Nxd4 33 Qxd4+ Qxd4 34 Nxd4 c5 with mutual chances) 30...Qxg3+ 31 Kf1 Nh4 32

Rd2 Nxg2 33 Rxxg2 Qxh3 with three pawns for the moment, and in any case the exposed king complicates exploiting the extra piece. A checking repetition may not be far off.

29...Bf8 30 Qc1 Qxc1 31 Rxc1 Ng7 32 Rd2 Ne6 33 exd5 cxd5 34 Rxc8! [Surrendering the open file but only temporarily.] 34...Rxc8 35 f4 Rd8 36 Rc2 Bh6 37 Rc6 [Gradually Black's game slips away.] 37...h4 38 Ra6 hxg3+ 39 Kxg3 Bg7 40 Rxa5 Nxd4 41 Nxd4 Bxd4 42 Bxd5 Kg7 43 Rb5 Ba7 44 Kf3 Kf6 45 Ke4 Rb8 [45... Re8+ 46 Kd3 Re3+ 47 Kc4 Rxh3 48 Rb7 Bg1 49 Rxf7mate!] 46 Rxb8 Bxb8 47 a5 Ke7 48 a6 f6 49 h4 Ba7 50 f5 g5 51 h5 Kf8 52 h6 1-0



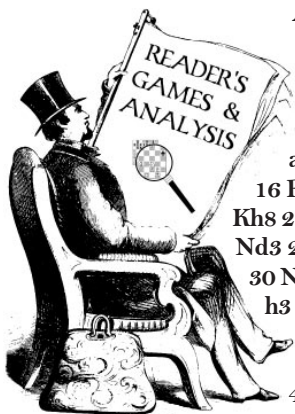
Congratulations to the champion! Hopefully we can get some of her own reflections on the event in a future issue of *Virginia Chess*.

Jennifer Yu already has three IM norms; she needs to increase her FIDE rating in order to receive the title. She will now gain entry to the FIDE Women's World Cup next year, a qualifier en route to a possible world championship.

"It feels pretty good. I never expected it would happen. It's something you dream of but you never actually think you'll do it."



Aleks Lenderman - Bryan Smith 2019 George Washington Open Benko Gambit

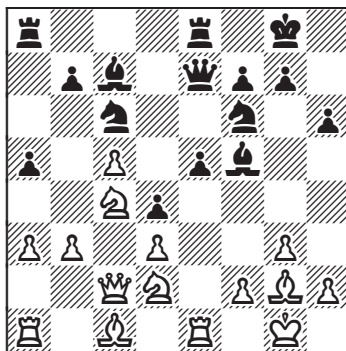


1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3 g6 6 Nc3 Bg7
7 Nf3 O-O 8 a4 Bb7 9 Ra3 e6 10 dxe6 fxe6 11 Be2
axb5 12 Nxb5 Ne4 13 O-O d5 14 b3 Nc6 15 Bd2 Qe7
16 Ra2 Rad8 17 Rc2 e5 18 Qc1 Rc8 19 Be1 Nb4 20 Rb2
Kh8 21 Nd2 Ng5 22 f3 e4 23 fxe4 dxe4 24 Nc4 Nf3+ 25 Bxf3
Nd3 26 Qb1 Nxb2 27 Be2 Nd3 28 Bg3 Rxf1+ 29 Bxf1 Rd8
30 Nbd6 Bd5 31 Bxd3 exd3 32 Qxd3 Bxc4 33 bxc4 Bf6 34
h3 Kg7 35 Qd5 Qxe3+ 36 Kh2 Bd4 37 h4 Qe7 38 a5 h5 39
a6 Bf6 40 Qxc5 Bxh4 41 Be5+ Kh7 42 Qd5 Bf2 43 g3
h4 [43...Rd7 44 c5 h4 45 gxh4 Qxh4+ 46 Kg2 Be3 =]
44 gxh4 Qxh4+? [44...Bxh4 ΔRd7] 45 Kg2 +/- Rd7
46 Qf3 Bc5 47 Ne4 Ra7 [47...Re7 48 Nf6+] 48 Nxc5

Qxc4 [The remaining few moves may be a bit off as they were reconstructed from where the scoresheet ended] 49 Qh3+ Kg8 50 Qh8+ Kf7 51 Qg7+ Ke8 52 Qxg6+ 1-0 GM Lenderman scored 4½ out of 5 to win the 4th Annual George Washington Open, February 22-24, 2019, at the Westin Tysons Corner.

Justin Paul - Praveen Balakrishnan 2019 Virginia Scholastic Championship Reverse Benoni

Thomas Jefferson High School (Alexandria) teammates met on the top board in the last round to decide the 2019 K-12 championship, March 9-10 at Monticello HS in Charlottesville. 1 Nf3 d5 2 g3 Nf6 3 Bg2 c5 4 O-O e6 5 c4 d4 6 e3 Nc6 7 exd4 cxd4 8 d3 Bd6 9 a3 a5 10 Nbd2 O-O 11 Re1 h6 12 Qc2 e5 13 c5 Bc7 14 Nc4 Re8 15 b3 Bf5 16 Nfd2 Qe7 (diagram) 17 Nd6 Bxd6 18 cxd6 Qxd6 19 Nc4 Qc5 20 Bd2 Rac8 [20...b5 21 Ne3 Qxc2 22 Nxc2 Rac8 (but not 22...Bxd3 23 Bxc6)] 21 Rac1 Re6 22 Qb1 Qe7 23 Nxa5 e4 24 Bb4 Qe8 25 dxe4 Bxe4 26 Bxe4 Nxe4 27 Rxe4 Rxe4 28 Nxb7 Nxb4 29 Rxc8 Qxc8 30 Qxe4 d3 31 Nd6 Qc1+ 32 Kg2 d2 33 Qe8+ Kh7 34 Qe4+ g6 35 Qe7 Qc6+ 36 f3 Qd5 37 Nxf7 d1Q 38 Ng5+ Kg8 39 Qe8+ Kg7 40 Qe7+ ½-½ The exciting time trouble finish left Paul & Balakrishnan tied for 1st with 4½-½ apiece. Andy Huang, Nicholas Xie & Saigautam Bonam all followed at 4-1.



Changing Address?

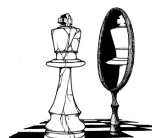
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Reflections

Reflections

by Mark Warriner



Looking Back on an Amateur Chess “Career”

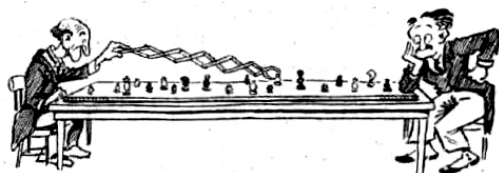
FURTHER TRAINING — WAKE UP CALLS (PART 1)

IN 2017 I took a fateful decision. With a few years of “Reflections” under my belt and having taken a good part of the “looking back”, I decided to return to tournament play after more than two decades. And not only that, I set the goal of reaching master. I enjoy writing this column immensely, and you and the Editor have been too kind with your feedback. But I can do a better job as a writer/analyst and, I believe, an over the board player. I am determined to improve in both areas. To that end, I hired master James Richardson as my Coach/Trainer. James is exceptionally adroit and possesses an unusual ability to explain the game clearly. During the 2017 US Open in Norfolk, no less than IM John Watson, himself a noted theoretician, paid James the fine compliment of calling him an exceptional chess theoretician. To the best of my poor understanding, I can confirm that—he has a real passion for learning and teaching theory.

Currently I’m caregiving for two adults with significant health issues, requiring around-the-clock care. That takes enormous amounts of effort and time. If you find yourself in a similar circumstance, you have my utmost respect and sympathy. So far it’s been impossible for me to find a way to take the two to three days necessary to play in a tournament. But I want to be ready when circumstances finally permit. To that end, my Coach/Trainer advised me to begin playing training games with local players around my level or higher.

We decided to ask Adrian Rhodes if he would be willing to work with me. Adrian tied for first in the Amateur Section of the 2018 Virginia Closed, losing the title only on tiebreaks. He’s had other good results there in the past, invested time and effort to improve his game, and has also worked with James.

It’s important to be serious and disciplined in seeking real improvement. As you kind readers might have guessed, there’s some serious rust to knock off of my game, and being an amateur there is a lot of room for improvement.





Adrian Rhodes - Mark Warriner
2018 Training Match G1
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 [Opening preparation revealed. After 35+ years of avoiding the Najdorf, I finally learn the last major opening I've never studied. A pity that I hadn't actually cracked a few of the books I purchased recently on this, such as *The Sicilian Najdorf*, John Doknjas & Joshua Doknjas, Everyman Chess 2018, ISBN 978-1-78194-483-7] **3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 h3** [James forewarned me that Adrian knows the Adams Attack. I had looked at it just a bit, but not nearly enough as this put me back on my heels. I tried my best to remember one of the plans, but stumbled in a few more moves. This was a training game and I felt relaxed at first. However, once things began to get 'serious' I realized my calculations were superficial and the emotional rollercoaster began. *Spoiler Alert:* That would prove a significant problem in this match and in training games to follow.] **6...e5 7 Nde2 h5 8 Bg5 Be6 9 Ng3** [This is not a common continuation. Former world champion Anand has played. 9 Bxf6 Qxf6 10 Nd5 a few times, eg vs Nepomniachtchi at Saint Louis 2017, and versus Vachier-Lagrave at Leuven 2017] **9...Nbd7** [a good and logical guess] **10 Bd3 b5** [The obvious 10...Be7 is a good idea. Even 10...Qc7 has clear merit, such as also getting out of the pin. Also possible 10...Rc8, and there's even an engine's disruptive suggestion 10...h4. My move doesn't really do much; White wasn't planning on putting a piece on c4 or a4 anyhow, and my light square bishop is no longer poised to fianchetto. So what was I thinking? I

suppose I wasn't.] **11 O-O Be7 12 Be2** [This move puzzled me. Either 12 a3 or 12 Re1 seemed more natural.] **12...g6 13 h4** [I felt pretty certain this was an error. I was expecting 13 Bf3] **13...b4** [This was unfortunate and badly timed. I had eyeballed 13...Ng4 immediately, but thought I could do it later.] **14 Nd5 Bxd5 15 exd5 Ng4** [Now it just flat loses a pawn. My nerves got the better of me and instead of calculating I just rejected 15...Nh7 as "too passive".] **16 Bxg4 hxg4 17 Qxg4 a5** [Black had a couple of other tries—17...Bxg5 18 hxg5 Qb6; or 17...f5 18 Bxe7 fxg4 19 Bxd8 Kxd8—but nothing is really working.] **18 Ne4** [Our metal friend screams for 18 a3 for reasons that aren't quite clear to me.] **18...Nf6 19 Nxf6+ Bxf6 20 Bxf6 Qxf6 21 g3 O-O 22 Qe4** Holding the door open for Black to hold. It's not easy for amateurs to go for 22 c4 or 22 c3] **22...Qe7 23 Kg2 Rac8 24 Rac1 Kg7 25 c4 bxc3 26 Rxc3 Rxc3 27 bxc3 f5 28 Qa4 Qc7** [We were now both running short on the clock and things can always get interesting in that situation.] **29 Rb1 f4 30 Qc6 f3+** [When you get into time trouble, it's not always about best moves. Just confusing your opponent is sometimes the right strategy.] **31 Kh2 Rf7** [I figured *why initiate and unfavorable trade?* I can't avoid it, but I can make it happen on my terms.] **32 c4** [32 g4 e4 33 Qxc7 Rxc7 34 Kg3 Rxc3 35 Rb7+ Kg8 36 Rb6] **32...e4 33 a4** [There was no need to mess around. 33 Re1—always shut down counterplay!] **33...Qa7 34 Qxd6?** Disaster strikes in time pressure!



I cheated the hangman and I knew it. 34 c5 was called for, though even so Black has counterplay now as after 34...Qxc5 35 Qxc5 dxc5 White must deal with ...e3] **34...Qxf2+ 35 Kh3 Qg2+ 36 Kg4 f2** [with the nasty double

threat of either queening or vacating f3 for the existing queen] **37 Qe5+ Kh7 38 Rb8** [Adrian said after the game he just missed the next move, thinking his mate threat was in time to save the game.] **38...Qf3+ 0-1**

Going into the second game I mistakenly rationalized that I just needed to relax and let the rust fall away. Adrian splashed a cold glass of “you’ve got a whole bag of issues to resolve before getting back into the swing of things buddy” in my face!

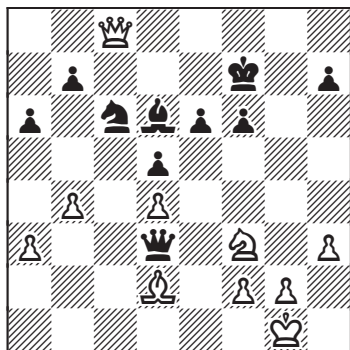
Mark Warriner - Adrian Rhodes 2018 Training Match G2 Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 [My coach alerted me that Adrian sometimes employs the Dragon variation. Not knowing much about how to deal with that, I went back to an oldie of mine, figuring that breaking even versus masters in the last three outings meant I could handle this. Psychologically and preparation-wise, this was a critical mistake. I’d begun preparing new weapons and I should have seized the opportunity to try them out! Instead I became concerned thinking that I ought to win these games against a lower rated opponent. In training games, sporting considerations aren’t the point! You don’t learn anything by “bashing bunnies” as my James likes to say. Moreover, Adrian laughs off my pitiful attempt with gusto—and he’s not that much lower rated! Or as poker player Scotty Nguyen likes to say, “It’s no fun when the rabbit’s got the gun, baby!”] **3 Bb5+ Bd7 4 Bxd7+ Nxd7 5 O-O Ngf6 6 Qe2** [I thought this might throw him off, but instead it takes me out of my experience zone.] **6...e6 7 c3 Be7 8 Rd1 O-O 9 d4 cxd4 10 cxd4 d5 11 e5 Ne4 12 Nbd2** [Blissfully unaware that this is not

a great way to go and that in fact 12 Ne1 has proven better in practice.] **12...Nxd2 13 Bxd2 Nb8** [I felt a bit flummoxed as normally Black has managed to swap off the light square bishops and can cruise to equality. I started to chew up a lot of time on the clock figuring out how to proceed, which led to a bit of panic as I fell far behind and couldn’t determine a cohesive plan.] **14 Rac1 Nc6 15 a3** [Preparing 15 Rc3 and missing the rather obvious point that it needs no preparation, ie 15...Bb4? could be refuted 16 Rxc6] **15...a6 16 b4** [I can’t even explain what I was thinking.] **16...Rc8 17 Rc3 Qd7 18 Qd3** [I played this feeling certain it wasn’t best, but by now I was quite far behind on the clock and decided I just needed to move.] **18...Na7** [Adrian dials into the correct plan.] **19 Rdc1 f6** [This offers White real chances, which in my negative emotional state I don’t even try to find. 19...Nb5 was better.] **20 Qc2** [20 exf6 Bxf6 21 Rc5] **20...Rxc3 21 Qxc3 Rc8 22 Qb2 Qb5** [Again offering White a chance, which this time I finally sensed.] **23 exf6 Rxc1+** [Oops! 23...Bxf6] **24 Qxc1** [Now White’s okay.] **24...gxf6**



25 Qc7 Kf7 26 Qb8 [And now White's not. I let too much time run down while self-flagellating and without that time I couldn't find the right plan, which was 26 Qc2 Kg8 27 Qc7 Kf7 etc] **26...Nc6 27 Qh8 Qd3** [I'd missed that the queen now protects h7] **28 h3 Bd6 29 Qc8**



29...Qxa3? [29...Qb1+ 30 Ne1 (30 Be1 Nxd4 31 Qxb7+ Be7) 30...Qd1! 31 Qxb7+ Ne7 32 Bc3 Qc1 would have won a piece] **30 Qd7+?** [I had already made up my mind in time pressure and didn't even look for the saving 30 Qxb7+ Ne7 31 b5] **30...Be7 31 Qxb7 Nxd4 32 Nxd4 Qa1+ 33 Kh2 Qxd4 34 Be3 Qxb4 35 Qxa6 Qd6+ 36 Qxd6 Bxd6+ 37 g3 e5 38 Kg2 Ke6 39 Kf3 f5 40 Ke2 d4 41 Bc1 h5 42 f3 e4 43 fxe4 fxe4 44 g4 hxg4 45 hxg4 Kd5 [45...d3+ ends it quicker] 46 Bh6 Ke6 47 Bg7 Be5 48 Bh6 Kf7 49 Bg5 Bf6 50 Bh6 Kg6 51 Bc1 Bg5 52 Ba3 d3+ 53 Kd1 e3 54 Bb4 Bf4 55 g5 Kxg5 56 Bd2** [A last pitiful gasp, but Adrian had plenty of time not to fall for the extremely feeble attempt.] **56...e2+ 0-1**

So, ouch. There was even more rust than I imagined. It was not only my play that needs improvement, but sporting qualities, specifically emotional stability, proved to be an issue. But hold your impressions, there's more to the story. I had already committed to playing a stronger player in the next two game match next...

Virginia Open

We regret that we don't have a proper Virginia Open report, but the VCF's biggest annual event was indeed held March 22-24 and won by expert Nemanja Milanovic with 4½-½. A quintet of masters followed half a point behind: Andrew Samuelson, Jason Liang, Daniel Clancy, Larry Gilden & Evan Ling. The Expert prize was split between Madhavan Narkeeran & Jack Barrow. Shawn Wang, Ronen Wilson & Brian Tay split to class A.

VCF President Adam Chrisney tied for 1st in the U1900 section with Ted Idelson. Akshay Kobla, Kebish Pius & Timothy Higgs tied for 3rd/top B. Abdul Frough was top Unrated. Top D went to David Morgan & Allen Zhang. Sean Beavers was top Under 1200. Brian Behringer took home the trophy for top Under 800. David Ge did likewise for Under 600.



Virginia Chess
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