

## LIVING A CHESS LIFE

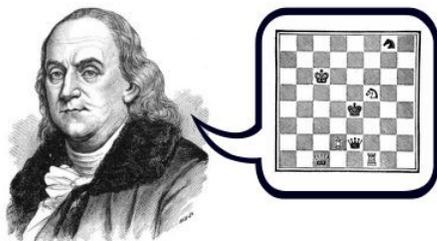
by Jennifer Vallens

Bobby Fischer once said "Chess Is Life". For most of us in the Chess world, that is true. There have been people reflecting on the game of Chess since its inception. Most notably, one of our founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin wrote about his philosophy on chess in his 1776 essay entitled "Morals of Chess". Since then, there have been countless books, article and blogs devoted to Chess and its relationship to life, whether it be business, politics or life survival skills.

Chess is so much more than a game to us "chess heads". We don't just play Chess, we live Chess. A Chess life is like anything else that is a source of inspiration connecting your world view to your personal identity like surfing, fishing, or clean living might be to some. Chess as a way of life can sneak up on you. You may first learn how the pieces move and slowly work your way into tactics and strategy and then suddenly at some point you "catch the chess bug" and every experience you have seems to relate or connect you back to Chess. You may even start to dream about Chess. Suddenly you become hooked and your life is forever changed. Some fall victim of this Chess bug and their passion borders on compulsion.

It is this "culture" and shared understanding of how Chess relates to the world that people tend to hold as sacred. Chess is revered in most countries, but in the US, Chess is somewhat of an underground culture.

There almost seems to be a divide between those that want to share the Chess experience with others and those that want it to remain below the surface. I think that is why there are skeptics that want to see Millionaire Chess fail. People can be protective about their passion and fear that the game they love will somehow be exploited. Some of these old school chess folks are anti computer and are threatened by the influx of kids playing at the tournament level. Some simply like to keep Chess on the street level and don't want it mainstream.



"Chess teaches foresight, by having to plan ahead; vigilance, by having to keep watch over the whole chess board; caution, by having to restrain ourselves from making hasty moves; and finally, we learn from chess the greatest maxim in life - that even when everything seems to be going badly for us we should not lose heart, but always hoping for a change for the better, steadfastly continue searching for the solutions to our problems."

Founding Father, Benjamin Franklin quote from "Morals of Chess"

It is sad really, because Chess is a game that unites people of all walks of life. It defies racial, geographical and generational lines. And we are just beginning to see many more women play competitively. Tournament directors have started to incentivize more women to play by offering mixed doubles team prizes at tournaments.

It doesn't matter if you are a casual or tournament player though, the shared love and understanding of the game connects us all.

I am on my own Chess journey. I am not a great player, but I know I will be studying Chess for the rest of my life. Because I see the value it has had on me and my son, I want to impart my experience to others. I think it is like any other culture or lifestyle that you want to preserve and celebrate. This might be why I devote so much energy promoting Chess and volunteering my time writing this newsletter.

To me, Chess is just bubbling under the surface in the US and I want to be there when it breaks. Magnus Carlsen has helped change the perception of Chess as a game for young people and the onset of the internet has sprung a whole new crop of scholastic players. Millionaire Chess, although promoting Chess as a high stakes game, is taking us one step closer to exposing the US to the Chess community and hopefully we will see more people interested in learning the game. But again, learning how to play is only the starting point. Chess, is a lifelong journey.

Adisa Banjoko, co-founder of the Hip Hop Chess Federation has a new book coming out this year. His book delves into the common thread woven through Chess, Hip Hop and Martial Arts and its connection to self discovery, self mastery and non-violence. It should be an enlightening read. Look out for my interview with the "Bishop" in my next newsletter as we tackle more on the future of chess.

Now. GO PLAY CHESS.

### Inside this issue:

Q&A with GM Kayden Troff	<b>3-4</b>
Sean Reader Simul Recap	<b>5-6</b>
Q&A with Jay Stallings	<b>7-8</b>
Local Play	<b>9</b>
Q&A with Alexandra Kostenuik	<b>10-11</b>
Game Review with Larry Smith	<b>12-13</b>
Blindfold Simul Recap	<b>14</b>
Puzzles	<b>15</b>
Upcoming Tournament	<b>16</b>

## Introduction

This newsletter is written and edited by Jennifer Vallens. Thank you to Jay Stallings and Larry Smith for your contributions. I couldn't do it without your help!

Please know I am not affiliated with any group or organization. The purpose of this newsletter is to help build chess in our community.

If you would like me to cover your chess event or have feedback on what you'd like to see for future editions, please email me at [offdarook@gmail.com](mailto:offdarook@gmail.com)



**MILLIONAIRE CHESS**

**\$1,000,000 GUARANTEED**

OCTOBER 9-13, 2014  
LAS VEGAS

That's right, a million dollars absolutely guaranteed! No other Open tournament in the long and storied history of chess has ever come close to guaranteeing that kind of prize money. The Millionaire Chess Open will signal a new era in prizes and recognition for players at all levels.

**International Grandmaster Maurice Ashley**

**ENTRY FEE**  
\$2000 before Jul 31, 2014  
\$2500 Aug through Oct 8, 2014  
\$3000 Oct 9 through 13/14

Can't wait for the tournament? It's going to be a historic event! All 4-6 tournaments a year, but this one will be the most important for me.  
Grandmaster Gregory Kaidanov

**VIP**

**PRIZE FUND FOR TOP SECTIONS**  
Open section: \$20,000, 1st-2nd \$5,000, 3rd-4th \$3,000, 5th-6th \$2,000, 7th-8th \$1,500, 9th-10th \$1,000, 11th-12th \$500, 13th-14th \$250, 15th-16th \$100, 17th-18th \$50, 19th-20th \$25, 21st-22nd \$10, 23rd-24th \$5, 25th-26th \$2, 27th-28th \$1, 29th-30th \$0.50, 31st-32nd \$0.25, 33rd-34th \$0.10, 35th-36th \$0.05, 37th-38th \$0.02, 39th-40th \$0.01, 41st-42nd \$0.005, 43rd-44th \$0.002, 45th-46th \$0.001, 47th-48th \$0.0005, 49th-50th \$0.0002, 51st-52nd \$0.0001, 53rd-54th \$0.00005, 55th-56th \$0.00002, 57th-58th \$0.00001, 59th-60th \$0.000005, 61st-62nd \$0.000002, 63rd-64th \$0.000001, 65th-66th \$0.0000005, 67th-68th \$0.0000002, 69th-70th \$0.0000001, 71st-72nd \$0.00000005, 73rd-74th \$0.00000002, 75th-76th \$0.00000001, 77th-78th \$0.000000005, 79th-80th \$0.000000002, 81st-82nd \$0.000000001, 83rd-84th \$0.0000000005, 85th-86th \$0.0000000002, 87th-88th \$0.0000000001, 89th-90th \$0.00000000005, 91st-92nd \$0.00000000002, 93rd-94th \$0.00000000001, 95th-96th \$0.000000000005, 97th-98th \$0.000000000002, 99th-100th \$0.000000000001

VISIT [WWW.MILLIONAIRECHESS.COM](http://WWW.MILLIONAIRECHESS.COM) FOR MORE DETAILS

**THE MC EXPERIENCE**  
We believe a chess tournament should be a unique and pleasurable experience, so we're offering amenities that will cater to our players and their guests. It is our intention that anyone who joins our event will walk away with memories that last a lifetime. Some amenities include gift bags, opening breakfast, and catered VIP meals, admission to the LINDY Project, on-site catering service, and more.

[www.millionairechess.com](http://www.millionairechess.com)

Las Vegas

October 9-15, 2014

The Millionaire Chess Event will be broadcast live on the following websites: [millionairechess.com](http://millionairechess.com), [Chess.com/TV](http://Chess.com/TV), [ICC.com](http://ICC.com) and [ChessLive.com](http://ChessLive.com)

Hi, my name is Jennifer Vallens and I am chess mom living in the Conejo Valley.

This issue I was fortunate to interview three very unique and significant contributors in the chess world. Coach, Author and Software creator **Jay Stallings, #7** ranked Women's player in the world, **Alexandra Kostenuik** and youngest Grandmaster in the US, 2nd youngest in the world, **GM, Kayden Troff**. Thank you!

Other exciting news, the Millionaire Chess Open takes place at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas October 9-15. I will be there with camera and pen in hand to document this unprecedented chess event. I will be keeping my blog updated daily, so make sure to check it out on [www.offdarook.com](http://www.offdarook.com). I am so excited for Maurice Ashley and Amy Lee. I feel fortunate to be attending this groundbreaking Chess event.

My buddy Timur and I will be leading an inspirational sunset walking tour in Las Vegas on Wednesday October 8 from 6-8pm for those of you attending the Millionaire event. If you come early and want to explore a little Vegas before the big tournament begins, meet us at the Earl of Sandwich at Planet Hollywood. We will leave promptly at 6pm. We will watch the Bellagio water show, walk through the Cosmo hotel and Crystal shops and then end the tour viewing the Las Vegas skyline while playing some Blitz. Friends and family are welcome.

The next Off da ROOK issue will focus on the future of Chess. I'd like to hear from you. Tell me what Chess means to you and where you think it is headed.

Please send submissions for consideration to [offdarook@gmail.com](mailto:offdarook@gmail.com). I will do my best to include all submissions.

Thanks for reading.

Jennifer

## Interview with Grandmaster Kayden Troff

**Hi Kayden. Where do you currently reside?**

It depends on the week :). But I call home West Jordan, Utah!

**How many hours a day do you study chess and what does your training process look like?**

I usually study 6-7 hours a day unless I am at a tournament then it's basically all day. I usually do two hours in the morning before school then I do my school work and after that two more hours then finish it up with at least two more hours in the evening. Lately I've been doing a lot of calculation work (3 hours) and then mix the rest of my time between opening study, endgame study, Kasparov's book series "My Great Predecessors", analyzing my games, playing training games, or anything else my coach might have told me to do. I have to switch days between which ones I study since I can't quite fit all of that and the time they take into the 6-7 hour time period.

**Do you adhere to a specific diet and fitness program?**

I can't really say I have done much for a specific diet. The only thing I could say is I stopped drinking carbonation several years ago because my brothers were running cross country and their coach didn't want them drinking it and I didn't want to be left out and I've keep that now because of my chess career. I have had to do more exercise to build up my endurance! I don't think a lot of people realize the amount of energy some of these games can take! Honestly even though I do play it myself, I didn't realize how much energy it took until the last couple years when I've started exercising more to build my endurance simply because by those last few games I would just be drained.

**How many tournaments a year do you play?**

The aim is usually to go to one tournament a month but sometimes it is hard to find a really good tournament during some months, so I probably play about 10-12 tournaments a year.

**Now that you have made Grandmaster, do you think there is more or less pressure? (expectations from you or from others)**

I definitely expect more from myself. Not necessarily because I'm a GM, it's great, I've been working for it for a long time, but I have to expect more from myself because I want to keep on improving and I can't reach that if I don't push myself to get there.



I would guess people expect more from me. The truth is I don't know if there was a huge difference between the few games before I was GM and the next few games after, I was still trying to go up in rating, still trying to play good chess, still winning, still drawing, still losing, still enjoying the game I love, but growing up in the "chess community" there is a certain and understandable respect for those that hold the GM title and so without seeing me play or knowing who I am, I do believe that some expectation will come simply because it is the Grandmaster title. It does add some pressure, but I'll just keep doing my best to play my best, I can't control the expectations and sometimes I'll lose bad games but I can control the way I play.

**How do you recover from a loss? Celebrate a win?**

Losses are not fun! It's hard to recover from a loss and I don't know if I could say if I do very quickly. I might be able to put it out of my head to play my next game but I always get that feeling of wanting to have done better, or thoughts of how I could have improved. My goal is to stop thinking about it and focus on my next game. It's tough and I won't pretend that I have perfected it by any means but I don't want my one loss to cause me to lose another!

Celebrating a win is much easier! Usually if there was any point I thought I could have improved I still will check it out and see how I can do better next time, but now I still go and play my next game and carry the boost of morale into the next game. If it's the end of the tournament then shoot play some blitz, relax, enjoy talking with other chess players, and maybe get a good dinner and then orange juice or chocolate milk!

(continued on page 4)

## Interview with Grandmaster Kayden Troff

(continued from page 3)

### Do you ever get distracted by all the media attention and spectators during a tournament game?

Yeah definitely! As a young player getting into some of these big tournaments and suddenly you realize a lot of people are watching and performing well is important, it can be very intimidating. Now I feel like I'm getting more comfortable with all that stuff, but it definitely was a big psychological challenge at first, I still can say the idea of these things happening or going on can come into my head but I hope I can say I do pretty good at just playing and not worrying about it.

### What was it like to meet Garry Kasparov for the first time? Can you tell me about Kasparov's Young Stars?

Meeting Kasparov was both really cool!... and really intimidating. I mean he's Kasparov, the KASPAROV, he's pretty cool but when I first met him it was for a sort of camp/workshop I was invited to attend, basically we (the others there and I) presented 4-6 annotated games and he would go over and give his thoughts. That's a little nerve racking to have Kasparov looking at your games and you just have to pray he'll be nice when saying what you can do better, it's not easy to play a game Kasparov can't at his level say how you could have played better.

The Young Stars program is sponsored by both the KCF (Kasparov Chess Foundation) and the CCSCSL (Chess Club & Scholastic Center of St. Louis) to help progress some of the young talents in the US to later become some of the top in the world and form a strong Olympiad team. It's been a great opportunity and I can only be grateful to be part of it along with some other great talents.

### How did you enjoy playing blitz with World Champion Levon Aronian? Were you nervous?

Yeah very much! Aronian has probably been my favorite, or at least in the top of my favorites, of top chess players in the world for a few years. It was a great opportunity to play him!

I was nervous, he is pretty good! I don't think the opening really went my way and I appreciated the advice he gave afterwards.

### Have you ever played blindfold chess?

I have now and then. I have only ventured far enough to play two games simultaneously, I am not nearly as ambitious to see how many I can do as such as one like GM Timur Gareev. It's fun and I probably will keep pushing to do more and more at a time from year to year, but I am more focused on playing games with my eyes open :).

### Is there anyone that you really want to play?

Well given the privilege of playing absolutely anyone, I think playing one of the old masters would be really cool! Botvinnik in particular I would like to play. Someone who would be playing today, probably Carlsen, I don't think it would go very well for me, but still a fun unique opportunity!

### What are your thoughts about the Millionaire Chess Open coming this year in Las Vegas?

I think what Maurice Ashley has pushed and worked for is definitely admirable, he is trying to start something in chess that really has not been done before. I think maybe the format can be improved, but it is hard to dispute the time and money going into this is impressive and hopefully can lead to good things for chess in the future

I am not planning on playing this year, maybe in the future but not this year

### Who do you consider the best player of all time? Why?

Ahhh hard choice. There are lots of fantastic players and a few that really stand out, but I think I would have to give the 1st place, in my eyes at least, to Kasparov. Players like Fischer, Karpov, Botvinnik, Carlsen, Alekhine, and others have really proven and impressed with their chess ability, but Kasparov I think has the highest mix overall, between how many World Titles he won, his peak rating, his dominance of "his" era, and his amazing play. It is all subjective and arguably the crown of "best player" can't go to anyone a 100%, but in my opinion it's Kasparov right now.

### Do you plan to play chess at the college level? Do you have thoughts on where you would like to go and what you would like to study?

Chess is something I plan on doing for life so as much as I can get in during college the better! Webster University in St Louis, Missouri has definitely shown a strong chess program but who knows what the future holds. I don't quite know what I would study, I have some interest in a few different things but for career I'm always looking towards chess so I haven't thought as much about it other than that.

### What are you doing when you are not playing chess?

When's that? :). Honestly just normal things, I am doing schooling of course but also I like to hang out with friends, read books, any sports can be lots of fun, play video games, usually eating and sleeping but chess sometimes takes away from that, I am religious and I have my personal beliefs and that definitely plays into part of things I do, and also I have learned some ukulele. It's a good life I enjoy it!



Kayden Troff seen here shaking hands with Levon Aronian.

## Highlights from the Sean Reader Junior Master Simul 9.20.14

### Sean Reader



Sean's Fund honors the memory of Sean Christian Reader, who lost his valiant battle with leukemia on August 14th 2006. Sean, age 12, was a nationally-ranked chess player and fought his battle with cancer as fiercely as he faced any opponent across the chess-board.

Sean was Team Captain of the Meadows Elementary School Chess Team, coached by Jay Stallings of the California Youth Chess League, at the 2005 Super Nationals in Nashville, TN. The team placed 2nd among the nations best young chess players.

Sean's Fund works with California Chess League (CYCL) to provide financial aid to those who need it to pay for chess classes and tournaments. Additionally, Sean's Fund provides for private lessons for children in the Santa Clarita Valley who suffer from cancer and brings chess to the patients at Children's Hospital Los Angeles who suffer from cancer and other serious ailments.

For more information on Sean's Fund, visit <http://www.seansfund.org/>



Coach Jay

### Team Creger

Master Leo "Quinn" Creger 2209

Dylan Gould 1424

Cole Lidgett 1271

Ross Pope 1019

Pamu Patibandla 990



### Team McCreary

Taylor McCreary 2023

Adam Draheim 1710

Zachary Montenergo 1100

Sasha Patibandla 1050

Shreyas Sakharkar 910

### Team Korba

Master Nicky Korba 2311

Evan Vallens 1361

Alex Tsatryan 1299

Joe Brennan 1015

Eric Luo 1004



### Team Shuben

Matthew Shuben 2174

Sam Aycock 1447

Andrew sung 1265

Tobin Thannickal 1025

Landon Hu 946

## Highlights from the Sean Reader Master Junior Simul



Sean Reader was invited to play in the Master-Junior Simul in 2005. Back then, a 1200 rating was impressive enough to earn the right to participate! After his passing in 2006, his parents set up Sean's Fund with me as the director, and we started to fund worthwhile chess causes.

The Sean Reader Junior Simul is a very unique mentoring event in which the strongest young players in Southern California are each paired with 4 of California Youth Chess League's over-900 rated students on 4 separate teams. In the event, the four teams play a 2-round Swiss, with the Super-Juniors playing simultaneously against the aspiring juniors on the opposing team. So, each team has a possibility of 8 points - 1 by each aspiring junior as they play the much-higher rated opponent, and 4 by their team captain who is simultaneously battling the four on the other team. To win the match, your team needs 4.5 points.



One fun twist in the Junior Simul is that, besides Board 1, the Super-Juniors are playing with odds! Knight odds on Board 2, Rook odds on Board 3, and Queen odds on Board 4! In today's inaugural event, the Super-Juniors were hopeless in the first round when they played with no queens, but after the lunch break they took 3 out of 4 on Board 4!

Sean's Fund carefully selected the Super-Juniors. We chose three young men, and a young woman who had shown, over the years, great sportsmanship and respect for their opponents of all levels. They were each paid to play, but you could tell that they were thrilled to be there! NM Nicky Korba (2311), NM Leo Creger (2205), Matt Shuben, and Taylor McCreary, displayed character nothing short of exemplary. They introduced themselves to their teammates, then to their opponents, then settled in for the battle!



Round 1 saw Team Korba defeat Team Shuben 5-3, with both Super-Juniors losing on Board 4, and Matt Shuben dropping the full-point on Board 3 after spurning draw offers that would have given his team and extra half-point towards tie-breaks, but would have lost the match. In the other match, Team McCreary earned a victory by a score of 4.5-3.5 after Taylor forgot about her clock in a game in which he opponent had only a king.

Round 2 saw two draws - Nicky and Taylor each swept 4-0, while Matt lost on Board 1 and Leo lost on Board 4. That left Team Korba with the 1st Place trophies on individual point tie-breaks over 2nd Place Team McCreary.

Best Game prizes were awarded to Dylan Gould (vs Matt Shuben on Board 1), Zach Montenegro (vs Leo Creger on Board 2), Alex Tsaryan (in a loss vs Taylor McCreary on Board 2), and Landon Hu (the only competitor to win both games, vs Nicky Korba on Board 4).



Summary written by Jay Stallings.

## Coach Jay's Chess Academy

If you are looking for a STRAIGHT FORWARD chess training app that is both instructive, fun and engaging, look no further. Coach Jay has a new training app available for both iPhone/iPad and Google devices. If you like what you see after downloading the app, please write a review for Coach Jay's Chess Academy and by clicking "Unlock Full App" for \$4.99, you can unlock all 150+ lessons and 1250+ chess puzzles!



Here are the links!

iOS (iPhone/iPad):

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/coach-jays-chess-academy/id907007624>

Android:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ghostmaninc.coachjayschessacademyandroid>

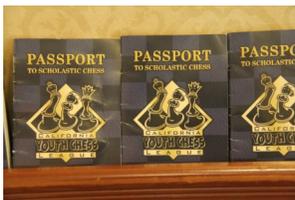
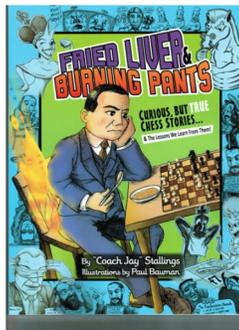
Also like Jay's facebook page!:

<https://www.facebook.com/CoachJaysChessAcademy>

"Great chess app for anyone who wants to learn to play"

by Erixhart

*I really wanted to learn to play chess and this app taught me! At first I thought it may only for kids but turns out it's great for adults too! Coach Jay teaches you everything from the basics of chess to advanced technique. The app is interactive, educational, and tons of fun. It also has a personal feel to it with Coach Jay there to guide you each step of the way! A must download.*



Coach Jay's original training materials, passport training book and Fried Liver, Burning Pants book.

### More about Jay Stallings?

Jay Stallings founded the CYCL (California Youth Chess League) in 1996. Jay is ranked Expert with the USCF. The CYCL offers afterschool programs, classes, tournaments and chess camps in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Jay authored "Fried Liver, Burning Pants" chess stories book and created the new Coach Jay's Chess Academy training App.

You have probably seen Coach Jay at the SuperStates (Southern California State Championship). He has organized and run this tournament for the past 3 years.

## Q&A with Jay Stallings

### Can you tell me your background and how you ended up coaching chess?

My dad was the Florida State Champ in 1963. He was a strong Expert and he taught my brothers and me how to play. I learned how to play when I was five, but I didn't get into tournaments until after I beat my brother when I was about seven. After that, my dad and I looked over games of the classic masters and played blitz every day for the next four years or so. By that time, at age 11, I was #3 in the US for players under 13. So chess was a big part of my life.

### What is your rating?

My rating (both USCF & FIDE) is about 2080.

### You not only teach chess, but are an author and your organization (CYCL) hosts the Southern California Super States championship.

Yes, we have been honored to host the So Cal SuperStates the past few years and hope that the So Cal Chess Federation will select us to host it again in 2015. I travel all over SoCal, getting to know the coaches and promoting the event to the scholastic community. We have a lot of fun with it!!

### Can you tell me a little about your book, "Fried Liver and Burning Pants" and how hosting SuperStates came about?

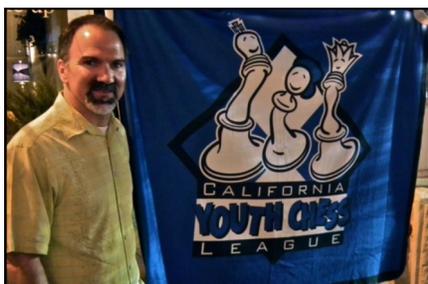
Chess has a colorful and amazing history. Many board games have come and gone over the centuries, but chess has endured. With my book, I wanted to share the funny and incredible stories from the royal game and some cool lessons that we learn from those stories. Dozens and dozens of chess players and parents have approached me to tell me how many times they have read my book.

### I hear you are starting a National Scholastic passbook program to keep kids interested and playing chess. Can you tell me about it?

The Passport to Scholastic Chess is exactly that—a colorful, chess-themed, kid-friendly passport that has spaces for stamps (or stickers) for anything chess related. There are sections for completing lesson books, attending local tournaments, special events, skills testing, accomplishments, and miscellaneous chess fun. Stamps that players earn range from Queen & King Mate, to USCF-rated. To SuperStates, and even stamps like Coach's Helper. You really have to see them to understand the excitement that the kids experience with them!

### Can you tell me about your chess app? When and how will it be available? What rating and age is it geared for?

I'm excited that my chess app hit the AppStore and GooglePlay OUT NOW! After years of telling parents "Sorry, there really are not any good apps for kids who want to improve". I finally decided to do something about it. I compiled hundreds of puzzles from my lessons, and composed hundreds more to create five levels that each have five disciplines of puzzles within them. Each level has fifty puzzles of Checkmate, Defense, Tactics, Strategy, and Endgame. The app is aimed at players rated under 600, but my students with 4-digit ratings have been Beta testing it and tell me that it has helped them improve.



### Can you tell me a little about the Sean Reader chess fund?

In 2006, Sean Reader was the strongest program of over 700 students. He had battled hard against leukemia, but it took him on August 15th of that year. His parents established the fund in his name and it has done much more than we could have imagined at that time. Besides financial aid for kids who want to take classes, attend classes, and lay in tournaments, Sean's Fund takes fun, chess-themed backpacks to the young patients at Children's Hospital LA city of Hope and Children's in Denver! Most of Sean's Fund's fame in the chess world comes from the annual Sean Reader master-Junior Simul that brings together titled players and the most promising junior players (typically with an average rating above 2000!) in a fun-filled mentoring event that is free to all participants.

### What can parents do to best support their child with regard to playing chess?

Supporting our children? Yeah, good idea! As a father of two grown boys, I always wish that I would have spent even more time to help them pursue their passions.

If your child loves chess, you are indeed fortunate! Foster it by giving them every opportunity to grow. The investment in classes, camps, private lessons, weekend tournaments, and nationals will yield a child who has learned the value of persistence, creativity, logic, hard work, dedication, sportsmanship, and much more. I know many families, and I cannot think of a single young man or woman who was a dedicated chess player who now is an embarrassment to his family. It's simply proven to be an excellent way to help insure that your child will make good choices.

I would advise parents to support their children in whatever positive passion they find whether it be chess, baseball, acting, commuters, or art!

### Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself?

Jennifer, thank you for all you do to promote chess in So Cal. I hope someone is still reading this after all my long winded answers!

## Local Clubs and Events

### American Chess Academy

ACA offers group classes at Calabasas and Simi Valley locations Monday-Friday for kids 5-16 years. Visit <http://www.achessacademy.org/> for more information.

Contact: Jerry Yee (818) 915-5572.

### Thousand Oaks Chess Club

Meets Mondays 6:00-8:45pm. Goebel Senior Center at 1385 E. Janss Road. Casual play and rated tournament play. All ages welcome. Contact: Cindy Garcia at thousandoak-schess@att.net

### Ventura County Chess Club

Meets Mondays at 7pm. Grace Lutheran Church, 6190 Telephone Road, Ventura. Contact: Jack Cashman at rationality52@hotmail.com or (805) 487-2604

<http://www.vcchess.com/>

### Westlake Village Library

Wednesdays 4-5pm, the Westlake Village library will offer beginning chess with Larry Scott consisting of half hour of instruction, followed by a half hour of play for 6-12 year olds. For more info. contact the library at 818-865-9230.

### West Valley Chess Club

Meets Thursdays 6:30-10:30. 7353 Valley Circle Blvd., West Hills. Continuous rated tournaments, blitz, casual play. Contact Jerry Yee (818) 915-5572 or at jye6@socal.rr.com.

### Conejo Valley Parks and Recreation

The Conejo Parks and Rec offer Chess instruction at various park locations. See <http://www.crpdp.org/> for more details and registration.

### Ventura Youth Chess League

Train with Women's Master Simone Liao. For more information, visit: <http://www.venturayouthchess.com/learn.html>

**West Valley Chess Club**

**Weekly rated tournaments**

**Thursdays**

**6:30pm-10:30pm**

**CHESS COACH?**

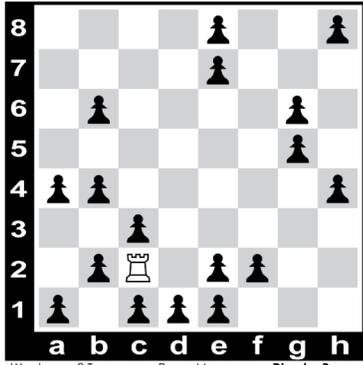
If you are looking for a chess



coach, contact me at  
[offdarook.com](http://offdarook.com)

and I will help put you in touch  
with someone in your area.

**PUZZLE OF THE DAY**



The rook must capture all of the pawns without moving to an empty square.



**ROOK**  
A rook moves vertically and horizontally. It can get rid of all five pawns by moving right, then down, then left, then up, and, finally right. Five pawns, five moves. An efficient way to describe this is by writing moves like this: **h5 h2, a2, a8, g8**

Want more? Try our new Pawn Mower app: **Disaster Pawns**  
For more info, puzzles & books visit [www.learningdiagonal.com](http://www.learningdiagonal.com) or [www.pawnmower.com](http://www.pawnmower.com)

## Interview with Alexandra Kostenuik

### What is your highest rating? Highest chess achievement?

My highest rating is 2540 ELO Fide in Classical Chess, 2588 in Rapid Chess, and 2612 in Blitz Chess.

I have pretty much collected all the titles I've competed for, at least once each, Russian Champion, European Champion, (men's) GM title, but of course the highest achievement is when I became the 12th women's world chess champion in 2008. (now ranked #7 on Women's World List)

### Do you think there should be separate "women" chess tournaments? Why or why not?

Of course there should be separate "women" chess tournaments, for several reasons. I wrote a long post about it on my blog a few years back, in short, men and women are different, chess is a sport, intellectual but a sport anyway, it's only recently that it has become "ok" for a woman to become a professional chess player and so more women are starting to play very well, they may catch up with men, but it will take time, as more girls start playing chess. Also, girls/women have different goals in life than boys. Boys can postpone for a long time the idea of founding a family, and can devote themselves to chess almost exclusively, but women cannot. Women must be more "reasonable" and think of their future more "globally" from a much younger age than boys.

### Have you experienced sexism as a women chess player?

Not really. At first boys think that girls play worse, but then if a girl beats a boy, that "sexism" quickly disappears.

### What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of being a woman in a male dominated sport?

The advantages are that there are fewer girls playing chess, so even if you only have a rating of about 2200-2300 you have good chances of getting on a country's Olympic team, whereas for men if you don't reach 2700 in some countries you have no hope.

### How do you think woman approach and play chess differently than men?

Chess is a game of intelligence, so basically the approach is the same. Maybe one could say women are more aggressive and will try to win at all costs, while men will first try to guarantee a draw before trying to beat their opponent. Many more draws in men's games.

### Do you have any suggestions on how to get more girls interested in chess?

There should be more prizes for girls, trophies for girls so they see that their efforts are worth it. The more girls will play chess, the better they will become. Lots of the advantage of boys is that more boys start to play chess and so more become strong. A well-known Swiss professor of Psychology made a study that concluded that a major reason for the difference in strength in men and women is that many more boys start to play chess. If the same number of boys and girls started to play chess (and did not quit at 12 years old because of lack of recognition or other reasons) the level of women would be much closer to men.

### The kids are playing variations of chess (bughouse and blitz). Do you think these fast game help or hurt your Chess game?

It's ok to play fast games, but they should write down the moves after the game and analyze them in software like Chess King so that the next series of blitz they don't make the same mistakes.

If they don't review their games before starting a new series of blitz games then it will be useless, whereas if they do review the games (at least the openings, they can write the moves from memory right after the game, it's a good exercise) the evening of the series of blitz, in very useful and the next time they will play blitz their result will be much better since people who don't review games will surely play the same mistakes over and over and you can refute the mistakes and win many more games.



### What are your thoughts about the Millionaire Chess Open coming this year in Las Vegas? Are you planning to attend? As a participant or spectator? Do you think chess will ever become a high stakes spectator game?

It's great to have big tournaments that attract lots of players, so I am happy about the Millionaire Chess Open taking place.

However, it's right at the same time as the women's world chess championship, so by definition none of the world's top 64 women players will be able to attend. And even if they could technically, in the U.S. big chess opens there is not a tradition of inviting top players (paying for airfare and hotel), and since winning a prize in the open section is practically impossible for a woman unless she is 2500+ and gets a very high finish (there is not a single prize for women in the open section), the odds are that it's not even possible to pay for the travel costs. Maybe I'd say that is an example of sexism in chess, it's ok not to have a separate women's section, but at least some recognition should be given to women or girls who finish well, trophies, or some money prizes, even if not so big.

(continued on page 11)

## Interview with Alexandra Kostenuik

(continued from page 10)

**How often do you study chess? Play chess? Do you play online?**

I have studied chess on average 5 hours a day for 20 years before I became world champion. Somebody has said that if you spend 10,000 hours on anything you can become an expert at it. Chess is a little harder to master than most hobbies, but it's true that the more you study chess, the stronger you will become.

**What are you doing when you are not playing chess? Hobbies? Travel?**

I travel for chess so no need to do special trips for holidays. I do lots of sports to keep in shape, I run, I swim, I play tennis.

**Does your opponent's rating have any effect on your playing?**

One should not think of the opponent's rating, only look at the board and the placement of the pieces.

**Do you think kids should play at their level or play up in tournaments?**

One should also try to play against someone a little stronger than you, and if you lose, it's important to learn why. Winning against a weak player who blunders has no value.

**How do you recover from a loss? Celebrate a win?**

One only recovers from a loss by understanding why one has lost. No need to celebrate too much a win, since the next game will soon be coming up.

**What accomplishment are you most proud of?**

I am most proud of having my daughter, who is now 7 years old. I am teaching her chess, languages, sports and to be the best she can be. There is lots more to accomplish with her, and I look forward to that.



<http://www.kosteniuk.com/>

Alexandra was kind enough to send me some of her Chess King training DVDs. The DVDs are very instructive. I am impressed and recommend them for those who prefer videos to books for apps or their training. You can purchase these video [HERE](#)



- Alexandra is rated 2547 and is 7th in the women's world rankings and #1 in Russia.
- Alexandra recently led the women's Russian team to victory winning Gold at the 2014 Tromso Chess Olympiads.



## Larry Smith Annotates game won by Jerry Yee

Bashi,P - Yee,J [C47]

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4**

The Scotch Game, an ancient opening, was revived primarily by Kasparov in the 1990s.

**3...exd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3**

5.Nxc6 bxc6 6.e5 is the tricky Mieses variation.

**5...Bb4 6.Nxc6 bxc6 7.Bd3 d5 8.exd5 cxd5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Bg5**

By transposition we have reached the game Alekhine-Lasker, Moscow 1914! That game continued as follows: 10...Be6 11.Qf3 Be7 12.Rfe1 h6 13.Bxh6! gxh6 14.Rxe6! fxe6 15.Qg3+ Kh8 16.Qg6 agreed drawn, as Black cannot avoid a perpetual check and White cannot hope to strengthen his attack a whole rook down! Of course, a short draw is a perfectly acceptable result for the Black pieces. At the time the game was played, Lasker was world champion and Alekhine was still a young upstart.

**10...c6 11.Qf3 Be7**

Although a developing move such as 11 ... Re8 is possible, allowing doubled pawns in exchange for the two bishops, breaking the pin via ... Be7 and preserving Black's pawn structure at the cost of a tempo (... Bb4 and ... Be7 took two moves) is perfectly good.

Digging back into the archives again, this same position was reached twice with White by Alekhine over 100 years ago! Oddly, in both cases now it was Black's turn to move, as in those games Alekhine's opponent had played ... Be7 instead of ... Bb4 (note that Alekhine had played the move order 5 Nxc6 bxc6 6 Nc3 in each game). Since Alekhine won both of those games, and since here White has a free move, you might think White is much better! But once the opening is over, individual tempi become somewhat less important and other considerations such as open lines, pawn structure, and control of the center gain in significance. The position in the present game is fully equal despite the loss of a tempo for Black.

**12.Rfe1 Rb8**

A good probing move (attacking the b-pawn) that also activates the QR along a half-open file.

**13.Rab1**

Likewise, a good reply, avoiding any potentially weakening pawn moves, although also quite playable is 13.b3.

**13...Re8 14.Qg3**

Hitting the rook at b8.

**14...Be6 15.Qh4!?**

Not bad, but White needs to be careful here not to overreach in his desire to attack. Black's position is very solid!

**15...Rb4! 16.f4?**

Retreat via 16.Qg3 Rg4 17.Qe5 was better than the text, but a tough pill for an attacking player to swallow! Even so, Black is better here after 17...d4.

**16...h6 17.Bxf6**

17.Bxh6?! hoping for a repeat of Alekhine's *petit combinaison* vs Lasker fails after 17...gxh6 (17...Ne4! is even stronger) 18.Rxe6 fxe6 19.Qg3+ Kh8 20.Qg6 due to 20...Bf8 as the Black KR has vacated the f8 square

**17...Qb6+ 18.Kh1**

If 18.Qf2 Bc5 is a killer.

**18...Bxf6 19.Qh5 Bxc3**

And from out of nowhere, Black wins a piece due to the pin on the b-file! Black now gives White no hope the rest of the way. An efficient game.

**20.Re2 Rxb2 21.Rxb2 Qxb2 22.h3 Qc1+ 23.Kh2 Qxf4+ 24.Kh1 Rb8 25.g3 Rb1+ 26.Kh2 Qf1 0-1**



Jerry Yee works the American Chess Academy as a scholastic chess coach. He runs the Westlake Wizards Chess Club with me and is the TD for tournaments held at the Thousand Oaks and West Valley Chess Clubs. Jerry is shown here playing black against Jabbar Hicklin as white.

## Larry Smith Annotates game won by Jerry Yee

### Larry's/Master's Notes:

After 3 d4: Not everyone plays the Ruy Lopez (3 Bb5) or the Giuoco Piano (3 Bc4)! It pays to be familiar with the less common moves in the openings that you like to play.

After 10 Bg5: Know your chess history! It's always fun, and often useful as well.

After 12 ... Rb8: Rooks belong on open (or half-open) files!

After 16 f4?: Although "fortune favors the brave," sometimes "discretion is the better part of valor." In other words, mindless aggression is just as much of a chess weakness as is playing too passively.

After 19 ... Bxc3: The pin on the White b-pawn wins a piece and the game. Almost always, alert tactical play decides games, particularly at the club level.



If you would like Larry to analyze one of your games, please send your game to [offdarook@gmail.com](mailto:offdarook@gmail.com) for consideration.

### The Hawaii International Open

To be held at the Hilton Waikiki Beach Hotel from Thursday, March 19th – Sunday, March 22nd, this open-to-all tournament will be an "anchor" event and major draw. Players of all ages and abilities will be able to compete in a six round tournament (all players will play all games, no one gets knocked out). Everyone will have a chance to win a share of an estimated \$25,000 in prizes! First place in the top section will be an estimated \$5,000!

The tournament should attract between 200-300 participants from all over the world, and will be a U.S. Chess Federation and FIDE (the World Chess Federation) officially rated tournament. Details about the tournament, including format are to be found [here](#).



American Chess Academy  
launches their new website.

Check out <http://www.achessacademy.org/>

Find out what ACA is up to!

## GM Timur Gareev Chess Event Recap

Off da Rook along with the Conejo Valley Chess Club brought Grandmaster Timur Gareev to the Conejo Valley to conduct a Blindfold Simul. The event included a causal meet and greet where Justin Choi, age 10 and rated 1245 stunned the group when he had his first stab playing chess blindfolded against the group and was able to reach checkmate without looking at the board once.

The main event had Timur playing 17 participants ranging in age from 7-adult with ratings ranging from 240 to 2054 blindfolded. The boards were set up alternating black and white. The simul started at 9:30 and lasted 4 and half hours with two short 10 minute breaks. Timur ended with 16 wins and one loss. His loss was to Trent Chu, aged 12 and rated 1237. Congrats to Trent Chu!

Blitz was the name of the game in the afternoon. Everyone had fun with the blitz tourney. Timur inspired parents to play as well. It was great fun for everyone. The winners of the blitz tournament were Quinn Creger (1st), Evan Vallens (2nd) and Noah Estiva (3rd). The three winners won prizes and then each had turns playing blitz with Timur.

The 3 day event ended with a USCF rated tournament. First Place went to Kevin Davidson with a perfect score of 4 and second place was split 4 ways between Shyam Gandhi, Rick Bucaria, Sean Russell and Noah Estiva, each with 3 wins.

Video footage from the event can be found [HERE](#)



Timur with twins Darin and Sarah Shundo



Leo "Quinn" Creger shown here executing Timur's moves during the simul.



Shadow Philips and Justin Choi go over their chess moves



Quinn Creger goes over a game with Shyam Gandhi and Kevin Davidson while Rick Bucaria and Sam Kutagi look on.



Simone Liao and her brother Stan shown here with tournament player Sean Russell.

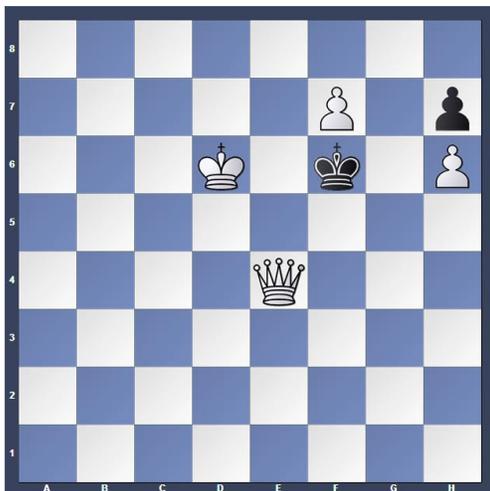
**Chess Puzzles—answers on page 15  
(thank you to Mike Leidner for submitting puzzles)**



Puzzle #1

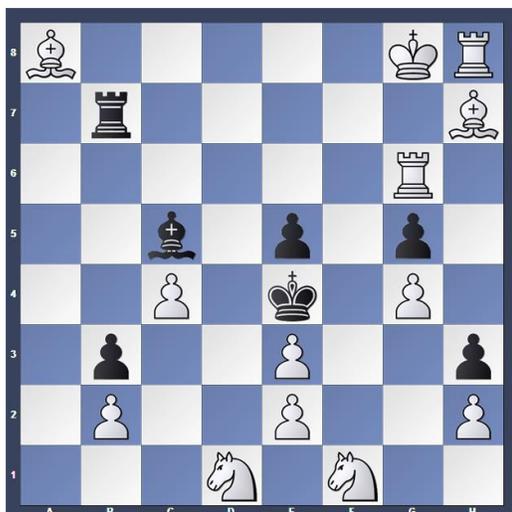
White to move and mate in 1

(hint: last move Black e5)



Puzzle #2 (a little tricky)

White to move and mate in 1



Puzzle #3

White to move and NOT mate in 1

## ***Upcoming Tournaments***

### **October 9-14**

Millionaire Chess Event  
Las Vegas, NV  
[www.millionairechess.com](http://www.millionairechess.com)

### **November 22-23 Scholastic and November 27-30 for Open**

American Open  
Orange, CA  
<http://www.americanopen.org/>

### **December 12-14**

Nationals Scholastic Championship  
Orlando, FL  
<http://www.uschess.org/tournaments/2014/k12/>

### **December**

North American Open  
Las Vegas, NV  
<http://www.chesstour.com/nao14.htm>

### **December 7**

ACA Holiday Scholastic  
Glendale, CA  
*Flyer*

*Coming next year:*

### **March 14-22, 2015**

Hawaii Chess Festival  
Oahu, HI  
<http://hawaiiichessfestival.com/>



American Chess Academy (ACA) "Back to School" scholastic Tournament



"Chess demands total concentration" - Bobby Fisher

### **Solutions from Page 14**

(in case if you're totally puzzled):

**Problem 1.** 1.dxe6# The previous move for white was Bb2+ and black blocked the check by moving his pawn from e7 to e5. This allows white to capture the black pawn on e5 via en passant for checkmate.

**Problem 2.** 1.Qg6#. In this game players started the game on the reversed chess board.

**Problem 3.** Rc6+ is the only move that is not a checkmate.

For more puzzles, please visit:

<http://www.thechessworld.com/>



**GM Timur Gareyev presents**  
*Inspirational Las Vegas sunset tour*

Wednesday, October 8

Walking Tour begins and ends at Planet Hollywood

6pm-8pm

(meet at Earl of Sandwich at 5:45, leave at 6pm)

EXPLORE

CHESS



VIEWS

FUN

Experience Las Vegas through Timur's eyes

Enjoy the Bellagio fountain show

Explore the high end Cosmo hotel and peruse the Crystal Shops

Take in the amazing Las Vegas skyline from the rooftop

And play Blindfold Blitz with Timur!

Great opportunity for photos and autographs

RSVP by Tuesday, October 7 to Jennifer at [offdarook@gmail.com](mailto:offdarook@gmail.com)