

Spring 2026

# RANK & FILE

Magazine of the Southern California Chess Federation



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa

Left to right: FM Rostomyan, GM Baryshpolets, IM Colville, GM Mikaelyan, GM Batchuluun, Chuck Ensey, IM Shlyakhtenko, FM Atwell, James Harrell, Anthony Ong, GM Khachiyani, CM Ala'a Addin Moussa

## ***GM Baryshpolets wins 2026 SoCal State Championship***

By CM Ala'a Addin Moussa

*Article continues on page 10*

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**DEADLINE FOR THE Summer 2026 ISSUE IS:**

**August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.**

# UPCOMING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EVENTS

## **31<sup>st</sup> Annual Pacific Coast Open**

July 31 – August 2, 2026

\$30,000 guaranteed prizes. Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel.  
6-round Swiss, SD/30 d30 (2-day option, rounds 1-3 G/35, d10).

## **August Weekend Chess Classic**

August 22-23, 2026

6 rounds, G/60+30. Hilton Orange County Airport Hotel.

## **2026 Summer Chess-Fest**

August 30, 2026

5-round Scholastic tournament. Round Meadow Elementary, Hidden Hills.  
See [https://scchess.com/calendar\\_kids.html](https://scchess.com/calendar_kids.html) for details.

## **2026 Southern California Open**

September 4-7, 2026

See page 23 for details.

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# LETTER FROM THE BOARD

SCCF hosted another highly competitive state championship invitational in May alongside the Memorial Day Classic. The Board congratulates GM Andrey Baryshpolets for winning the 2026 SoCal State Invitational Championship with an undefeated score of 5/7, and FM Rose Atwell, who finished clear second on 4½/7, for crossing the FIDE rating of 2400 for the first time. The event was made possible by generous donations from Board members, SoCal chess clubs and academies, and many SCCF members. Together,

they contributed nearly \$15,000, enough to cover a prize fund of \$9,700 and additional organizational expenses.

Our SoCal girls continued to shine at national events. Right after Rose's victory at the K-12 National High School Championship, Chloe Zamojski placed third at the KCF All-Girls National Championship in April. The Board thanks them for their contributions to this issue. Tori Porat reached the final four at the Susan Polgar Invitational held online in June. WIM Avery Yu received the prestigious

Scholar-Chess Player Award, which recognizes outstanding high school juniors and seniors who promote a positive image of chess while excelling in academics and leadership.

SCCF is holding its first board member election since becoming a charitable not-for-profit organization. Six of twelve board seats are up for reelection in August. Incumbents and new candidates have included their statements in this issue. The Board encourages SCCF members to get involved and vote when the SCCF election portal opens on August 1st.

Sincerely,  
*The SCCF Board*



# FM Rose Atwell: National K-12 Championship

By FM Rose Atwell

Editor's Note:

The 2026 National High School (K-12) Championship was held March 27-29 at the Sheraton Grand Chicago Riverwalk in Chicago. More than 1,500 students from across the United States competed in the event, making it one of the largest scholastic chess tournaments of the year.

The championship section was a seven-round Swiss tournament played at a G/90 d10 time control. After three days of competition, FM Rose Atwell of Southern California and IM Eric Chang Liu of Texas tied for first place with 6½/7, with Atwell winning on tiebreaks.

Atwell shares her final-round game against IM Julian Colville below.

**IM Julian Colville (2364)**

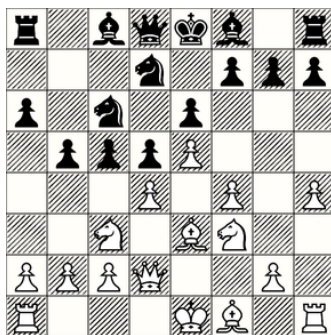
**FM Rose Atwell (2354)**

2026 National High School K-12 Chess Championship (7), 0-1

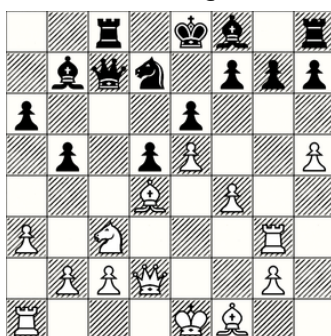
*Annotated by FM Rose Atwell*

This game was played in the last round of the high school national championship. There were four players tied for first place: IM Eric Liu vs NM William Safranek playing on board 1, and IM Julian Colville vs me on board 2. So both Julian and I knew our game would need to have a decisive result if either of us was going to win the championship.

**1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. e5 Nfd7 5. f4 c5 6. Nf3 Nc6 7. Be3 a6 8. Qd2 b5 9. h4!?**



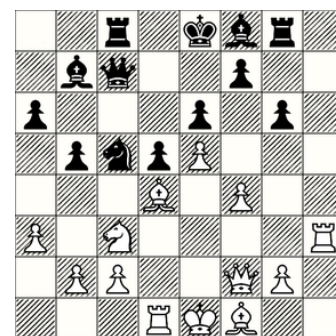
An intriguing, rarely played move that caught me by surprise. White simply wants kingside expansion with h5-h6, and maybe a rook lift Rh3-Rg3. **9...Qb6** (9...Qa5 The Queen may have been better placed on a5, inhibiting his Knight from moving. A trade of Queens ought to benefit me here, since I am trying to defend against his kingside initiative.) **10. Rh3 Bb7 11. h5 Rc8 12. Rg3** White's Rook looks a bit strange here, but it's exerting unpleasant pressure on my kingside and making it kind of impossible to finish development. **12...cxd4 13. Nxd4 Nxd4 14. Bxd4 Qc7 15. a3**



Prophylaxis against my idea of ...b4. **15...g6** I wanted to free my Bishop from guarding the g-pawn, but this brings me new problems after his accurate move Rh3. **16. Rh3 Rg8** I played this to avoid having to recapture on g6 with my f-pawn, because then my whole kingside would be weak. **17. hxg6 hxg6 18. Qf2 Nc5 19. Rd1**

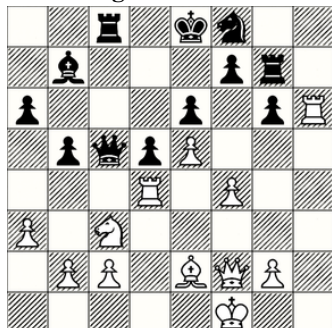


Photo courtesy of Lian Castellanos  
**FM Rose Atwell wins 2026 National K-12 Championship**

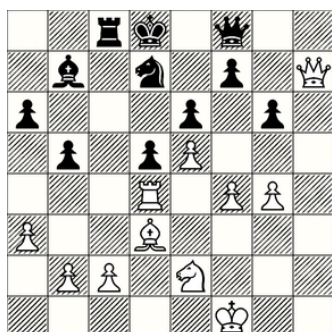


**19...Nd7?** Annotating this now, I can tell I was really out of it during the game :) (19...Ne4 Of course my idea when playing Nc5 was to play Ne4, but evidently I saw something I didn't like and switched back at the last moment. 20. Nxe4 dxe4 21. Rc3 Bc6 22. Bc5 The position is still difficult, but it's better than aimlessly jumping around with the Knight.) **20. Be2?** After this I get to free myself somewhat. (20. b4! was best, to take away the c5 square from my minor pieces. He is controlling all the

squares on the c-file, so I can't really do anything here.) **20...Bc5 21. Kf1 Bxd4 22. Rxd4 Qc5** Immobilizing his Rd4; trades in general are favoring me, due to my limited space. **23. Rh7 Nf8 24. Rh6 Rg7**

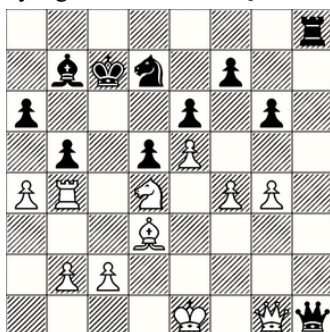


Preparing Rh7 to trade off his most active piece. I'm not out of the woods yet, but the worst is behind me. **25. g4 Rh7 26. Rxh7** (26. g5 Probably this was more accurate, forcing me to be the one to exchange rooks, and give him a cumbersome passer. 26...Rxh6 27. gxh6 Nh7 I am incredibly passive here.) **26...Nxh7 27. Bd3 Nf8 28. Ne2 Nd7 29. Qh4 Qe7 30. Qh8+ Qf8 31. Qh7 Kd8**

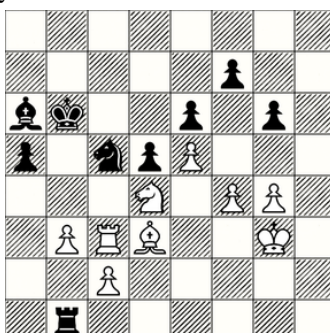


My King will evacuate to the queenside, where it is more or less safe. Plus I can't have my King obstructing the coordination between my major pieces if I want to fight for the h-file. **32. Rb4 Kc7 33. Nd4 Qg8 34. Qh2** (34. Qxg8 His best was to trade Queens, but given the tournament situation and the fact that he had been the one pressing the whole game thus far, his decision was understandable.) **34...Qh8 35. Qg1** He could play a4 to open the queenside,

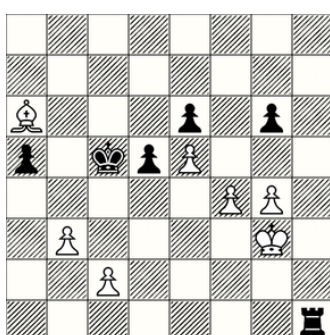
or even a sacrifice on b5 if I'm not careful. **35...Qh3+ 36. Ke1 Rh8** Luckily I am in time. **37. a4 Qh1** Finally I get to trade the Queens.



**38. Qxh1 Rxh1+ 39. Kf2 bxa4 40. Rxa4 Nc5** If anything I am the one who's better in this endgame, due to my more active pieces. **41. Ra3 Rb1 42. Rc3 Kb6 43. b3 a5 44. Kg3 Ba6** Here was his last chance to save the game. But at this point we were both below 5 minutes, with only a 10 sec delay.

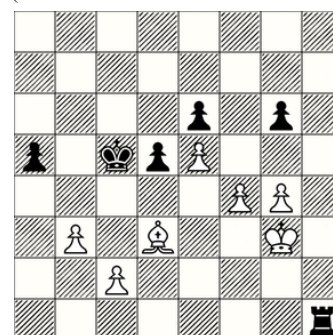


**45. Kh4?** (45. Rxc5! I was trying to calculate this move and its ramifications during the game, but couldn't evaluate it properly. 45...Kxc5 46. Nxe6+ Important intermezzo 46...fxe6 47. Bxa6 Rh1!

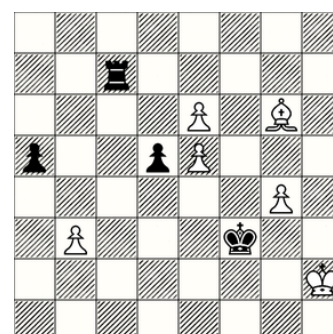


Apparently this is still winning for

Black, but I'm not sure I understand it even analyzing with the help of the engine. (47...Kd4 48. Kh4 Ke4 49. Kg5 Rg1 Now White has several moves that hold. 50. Bd3+ Kf3 51. Kxg6 Rxg4+ 52. Kf6 Kxf4 53. Kxe6 Rg5 54. Kxd5 Rxe5+ 55. Kd4= There is no progress to be made here for either side.) (47...Rc1? 48. Bd3=) 48. Bc8 (48. Bd3



This move is also tricky. 48...Kd4 49. Bxg6 Ke3 50. f5 Rg1+ The point is that I can utilize mate threats against his King pressed to the edge of the board. 51. Kh3 Kf3 52. Kh2 Rg2+! 53. Kh3 Rxc2 54. fxe6 Rc1 55. Kh2 Rc7



Now I think the position is clear. His pawns are going nowhere and I should be able to pick them off eventually.) 48...Rg1+ 49. Kh4 Rc1 50. Bxe6 Rxc2 51. Bf7 Rb2 52. Bxg6 Rxb3 I guess the combined forces of my King and Rook should be able to stop White's pawns.) **45...Bxd3 46. cxd3 Rd1 47. Kg5 Nxd3 48. Nf3 Nf2 49. Rc2 Ne4+ 50. Kh6 Rf1 51. Nd4 Rxf4 52. Kg7 Ng5 53. Nc6 Rxc4 54. Nd8 Rf4 55. Kf8 d4 56. Ke7 d3 57. Rc8 d2 58. Rb8+ Kc5 59. Nb7+ Kb4 60. Rd8 Ne4 61. Rd4+ Kc3 62. Rd8 Rf1 0-1**

# Chloe Zamojski: 2026 All-Girls Chess Nationals

By Chloe Zamojski

## About the tournament

The annual All-Girls chess nationals attracts stronger players every year. This year, the 2026 All-Girls Chess Nationals took place in Chicago, Illinois, from April 10-12. There were 6 sections: U8, U10, U12, U14, U16, and U18, with 6 rounds over 3 days.

## My experience

In the first round, I got a completely winning position on move 8, winning a piece out of the opening. However, I became too confident and a few moves later I realized that I had made a critical blunder which would allow my opponent to come back into the game! Luckily, she missed it and the rest of the game went smoothly. Then, in the second round I was again paired against a lower rated opponent, and I played somewhat quickly in the opening, but then I realized that I had missed a chance. I tried the same idea on the next move, but my opponent found a nice way to avoid losing material. The game quickly became quite complicated, with both sides getting chances, but ultimately, we agreed on a draw as the position fizzled out. At this point, I did not think that my tournament was going super well, but I just had to focus on the next games. In the third round I managed to trap my opponent's queen, and in the fourth we played many moves of theory before I forced a draw with a repetition (see below position).

**Chloe Zamojski (1965)**

**WCM Elizabeth Xia (2014)**

2026 All-Girls Chess Nationals (4), ½-½

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. f3 Qb6 4. Nc3 dxe4 5. fxe4 e5 6. Nf3 exd4 7. Nxd4 Nf6 8. e5 Ng4 9. e6 Bxe6 10. Bc4 Bxc4 11. Qxg4 Na6 12. Bd2 Nc5 13. O-O-O Be6 14. Nxe6 Nxe6 15. Bg5 h6 16. Rhe1 hxg5 17. Rxe6+ fxe6 18. Qxe6+ Be7 19. Qg6+ Kf8 20. Rf1+ Bf6 21. Rxf6+ gxf6 22. Qxf6+ Kg8 23. Qg6+ Kf8 24. Qf6+ Kg8 25. Qg6+ Kf8 26. Qf6+ ½-½

With 3/4 points after 2 days, I thought that the only way for me to have a chance at a podium spot would be if I managed to win my last 2 games the following day.

In round 5 I got a dominant position out of the opening, but then allowed my opponent to equalize, with the game ultimately ending in a draw. At this point, I didn't think I had a chance at the podium any longer, but it was important to play a good last game nevertheless. Knowing that I had to win, I started spending a lot of time in the opening, trying to get some kind of advantage. However, I was soon down 30 minutes on the clock despite only being on move 13 (see below position)! However, she then made a mistake allowing me to grab the initiative. I managed to win the game and ended with 4.5 out of 6 points and finished third place!

**Chloe Zamojski (1965)**

**Emily Tang (1816)**

2026 All-Girls Chess Nationals (6), 1-0

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. Nf3 Qb6 6. Bd3 cxd4 7. O-O Bd7 8. Re1 Nge7 9. h4 h6 10. Nbd2 dxc3 11. bxc3 Rc8 12. c4 Na5 13. Ba3 Nec6



Photo courtesy of US Chess  
Chloe Zamojski wins 3<sup>rd</sup> at All-Girls Nationals 2026

14. Bxf8 Rxf8 15. cxd5 exd5 16. Rb1 Qc7 17. Rc1 Qb6 18. Rb1 Qc7 19. Nb3 Be6 20. Nbd4 Qd7 21. Nb5 Ke7 22. Qa4 Kd8 23. Nd6 Rc7 24. Nb5 Rc8 25. Nfd4 a6 26. Nxc6+ Nxc6 27. Qa3 Rh8 28. Nd6 Rc7 29. Qb2 b5 30. a4 bxa4 31. Bxa6 Bf5 32. Rbc1 a3 33. Qxa3 Ne7 34. Nxf7+ Ke8 35. Rxc7 Qxc7 36. Nxe8 1-0

## The tournament in a greater context:

This year was the 21st edition of this annual tournament. It helps girls meet other girls in chess and build friendships in chess. Additionally, the winners in each category are invited to participate in international events such as the FIDE World Youth or World Cadet. This year the tournament saw a record number of participants: 601. This highlights the growing number of girls playing chess, a trend that will hopefully continue.

# NM Paul Rohwer: Senior State Championship

By NM Paul Rohwer

Editor's Note:

Paul Rohwer won the 2026 SoCal Senior State Championship (50+) hosted at the San Diego Chess Club with a score of 3.5 points from 4 rounds. He will represent Southern California at the National Tournament of State Champions in Grand Rapids, MI, in August.

In the 65+ section, FM Matthew Beelby edged Anthony Su on a tiebreak for the title with a score of 3 points from 4 rounds. Two of Paul's games appear below.

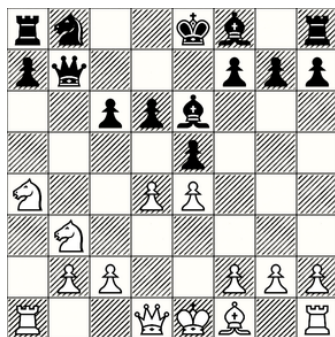
## NM Paul Rohwer (2220)

### Justin Ballard (1936)

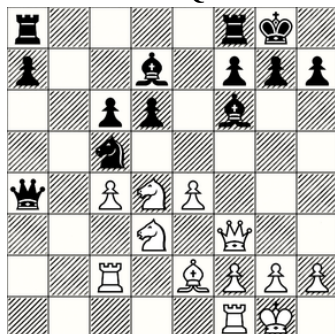
2026 SCCF Senior State Championship U65 (2), ½-½

Annotated by NM Paul Rohwer

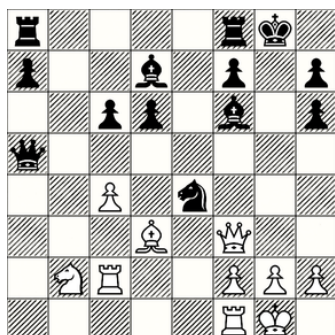
**1. d4** Thank you to the organizers for an idyllic tournament setting. Arriving via a morning Amtrak along the coast to San Diego, where the beaches were filled with surfers, e-bikes, and 10k runners, we senior chess players gathered to play a tournament just for us. My opponent in this game Justin Ballard is sneaky good and like me, he arrived with luggage in tow. He must have had an early start because he continually nodded off during our game, so while I sat losing, picture my opponent dreaming because dreaming is still thinking and he was just as formidable in that state! **1...Nf6** **2. Nc3** **d6** **3. Bf4** **c6** **4. a4** **Qa5** **5. Nf3** **Ne4** **6. Bd2** **Nxd2** **7. Nxd2** **e5** **8. Nb3** **Qb4** **9. a5** The Queen has no more squares. Watch as I squander this advantage! **9...b5** **10. axb6** **Qxb6** **11. Na4** (11. d5 A better opening plan than to chase the Queen.) **11...Qb7** **12. e4** **Be6**



**13. c4** Squander I will. A bad mistake. **13...Qb4+** **14. Nc3** **exd4** **15. Ra4** **Qb6** **16. Nxd4** **Qxb2** **17. Qd3** Desperate to keep Queens on the board—another mistake. **17...Nd7** **18. Ra2** **Qc1+** **19. Nd1** **Nc5** **20. Qf3** **Qb1** **21. Rc2** **Bd7** **22. Bd3** **Be7** **23. O-O** **O-O** **24. Nb2** **Qa2** **25. Be2** **Bf6** **26. Nd3** **Qa4**

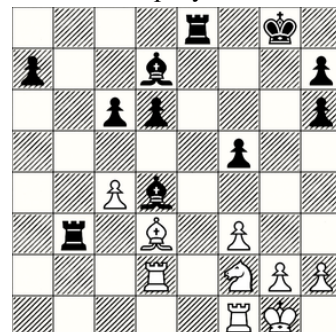


**27. Nb2** (27. Nxc5 dxc5 28. Nb3 Rfb8 Is better, but I am still shellacked.) **27...Qa5** **28. Nf5** **Nxe4** Great move. (The computer gives **28...Qa2**. I am cooked either way and decided to scramble his pawns as the best alternative to losing.) **29. Nh6+** **gxh6** **30. Bd3**



**30...Qf5** (30...Bxb2 31. Qxe4 f5 32. Qe7 Rf7 33. Qxd6 Be5 34. Qxh6 This

is the position I expected. Fully lost, but messy.) **31. Qxe4** **Qxe4** **32. Bxe4** **Rfe8** **33. f3** **Rab8** **34. Nd1** **Bd4+** **35. Nf2** **f5** **36. Bd3** **Rb3** **37. Rd2** I am lost and running out of moves. The computer gives -5.1. It is a stunning turnaround to draw from here. And the method is simple: I make my pieces active and pray.

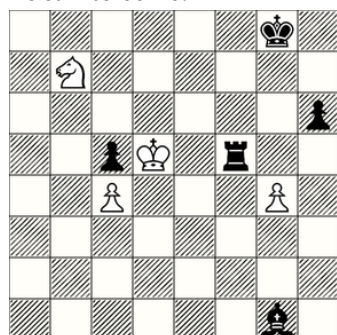


**37...c5** **38. h3** **a5** **39. g4** **Be3** **40. Rdd1** **fxg4** **41. hxg4** **Bc6** **42. Kg2** **Rf8** **43. Bf5** After the game, Justin said he missed this move. From here, you find my knight and rook get active, but I still need prayers answered. **43...Bd4** **44. Ne4** **a4** **45. Nxd6** **Kh8** **46. Rde1** **a3** **47. Re7** In this position, I have innocuous threats and Justin now starts to go wrong.

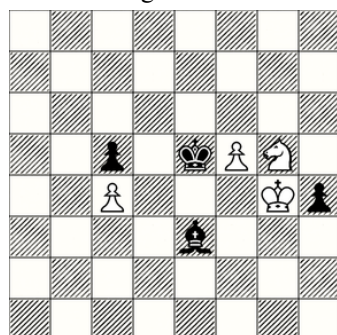


**47...Rxf3** **48. Rxf3** **a2** **49. Rxh7+** Yikes, this was late in the evening and we both missed how poor my move was. The Rook needs to retreat back to e1 because after **50. Ra7** **Ra8** is a nice win. **49...Kg8** **50. Ra7** **Bxf3+** **51. Kxf3** **a1=Q** **52. Rxa1** **Bxa1** My prayers are answered. I still make one

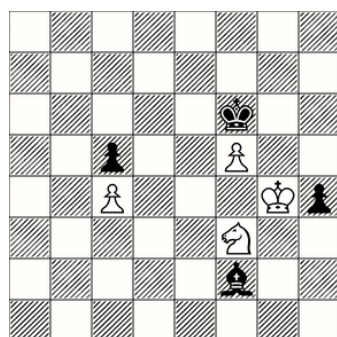
more ridiculous error, but I have gone from lost to just much worse. **53. Ke4 Bd4 54. Kd5 Bg1 55. Nb7 Rxf5+ A** gift. Justin was worried about the c8 square with the Bishop on f5. My last error is still to come.



**56. gxf5 h5 57. Nd6 h4 58. Ke4 Kg7 59. Kf3 Kf6 60. Kg4 Ke5 61. Nf7+ Kf6 62. Ng5 Be3 63. Ne4+ Ke5 64. Ng5** During the game I thought this was a tricky trap; however, the joke is on me. Justin's king is active and closer to the remaining pawn and I should lose this game anew.



**64...Bf2 (64...Bxg5 65. Kxg5 h3 66. f6 h2 67. f7 h1=Q 68. f8=Q Qg2+ 69. Kh6 Qh3+ 70. Kg5 Qe3+ 71. Kh5 Kd4 72. Qf7 Kc3) 65. Nf3+ Kf6 66. Ng5 Ke5 67. Nf3+ Kf6**



And we agree to a draw. Justin and I exited into the San Diego night with our luggage—and we both played

decidedly better the next day. In fact, the reason I won the tournament is because Justin held the second place finisher to a draw in the final round and I miraculously drew this game.  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

**NM Paul Rohwer (2220)**

**CM Ala'a-Addin Moussa (2200)**

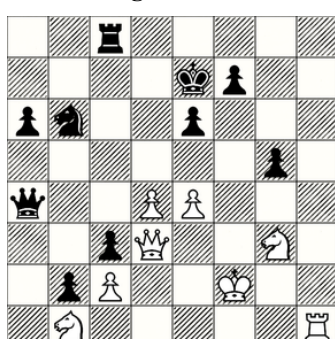
2026 SCCF Senior State Championship U65 (4), 1-0

*Annotated by CM Ala'a Addin Moussa*

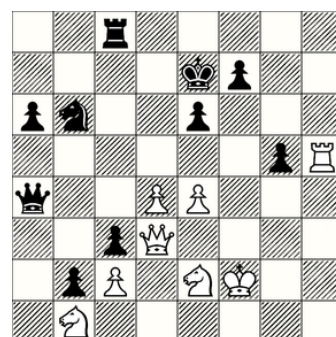
**1. d4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e6 3. Bf4 Bb4 4. e3 c5 5. Nge2 cxd4 6. exd4 d5 7. a3 Bd6 8. Qd2 Nc6 9. g4 h6 10. f3 a6 11. O-O-O b5 12. Bxd6 Qxd6 13. Qf4 Qe7 14. Ng3 b4 15. Nb1 Rb8 16. a4 g5 17. Qe3**



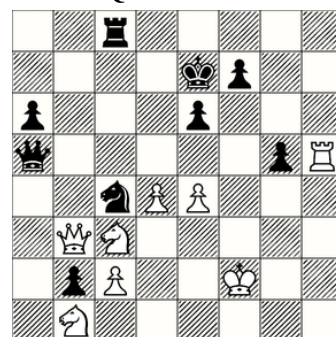
**17...Qc7?** (17...b3 was better to prevent White's next move.) **18. b3 Nd7 19. Nh5 Nb6? 20. h4 gxh4 21. Rxh4 Na5** The whole plan of invading c4 square is too slow compared to the White kingside attack. **22. Kd2 Bb7 23. g5 Rc8 24. Bd3 Nac4+ 25. bxc4 dxc4 26. Be4 c3+ 27. Ke2 Bxe4 28. fxe4 b3 29. Rc1 b2 30. Rd1 Qc4+ 31. Kf2??** (31. Kf3 Qxa4 32. Nf6+ Kd8 33. d5+-) **31...Qxa4 32. Qd3 hxc5 33. Rhh1 Ke7 34. Ng3 Rxh1 35. Rxh1**



**35...Qa5?** (35...Qb5! 36. Qd1 a5 37. Qg4 a4=) **36. Ne2 Na4 37. Rh5 Nb6 38. Qg3 Qa4 39. Qd3?**



(39. Qxg5+ Kd7 40. Qf4 Qxc2 41. Qxf7+ Kd6 42. Rh7+-) **39...Qa5** (39...Nc4 40. Nxc3 Qb4 41. Rxc5 Na3 42. Rg1 Nxb1 43. Nxb1 Qb5 44. Ke3 Qh5 45. Rf1±) **40. Nxc3 Na4 41. Ne2 Nb6 42. Qb3 Nc4 43. Nec3?**



(43. Qb7+ Rc7 44. Qb8+-) **43...Qc7?** (43...Nd2! 44. Qxb2 Nxe4+ 45. Nxe4 Qf5+ 46. Ke3 Qf4+ 47. Kd3 Qf3+=) **44. Qb4+ Kf6 45. e5+ Kg6 46. Rh3 Rd8? (46...f6=) 47. Ne2 Qc6 48. Qc3 Qd5 (48...f5) 49. Qd3+ f5 50. exf6+ Kxf6?? (50...Qf5+±) 51. Qh7 Qf5+ 52. Rf3 1-0**

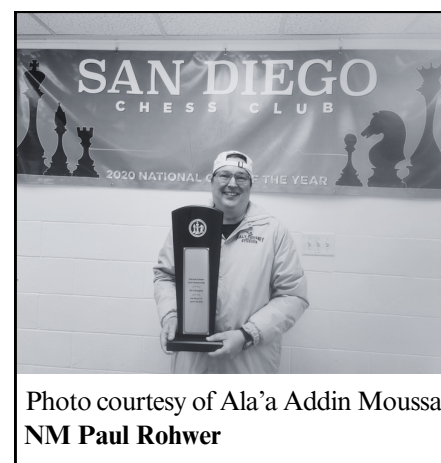


Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
NM Paul Rohwer

# GM Baryshpolets wins 2026 SoCal State Championship

By CM Ala'a Addin Moussa

For the third consecutive year, SCCF organized a highly competitive state championship invitational. For the second year in a row, it ran alongside the Memorial Day Classic. GM Baryshpolets, GM Mikaelyan, IM Shlyakhtenko, GM Tsegmed, FM Atwell, and GM Khachiyany were the highest-rated SoCal players who accepted the invitation to compete for the title. IM Colville earned his spot by winning the K-12 State Championship in March. FM Rostomyan won the candidates tournament in early May to secure the 8th and final spot. National Arbiter Anthony Ong directed. All games can be found on chess.com. A link to the games can be found on the SCCF website, [sccfchess.com](http://sccfchess.com).



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
**GM Baryshpolets wins 2026 SoCal State Championship**

## Round 1

The drawing of lots one week ahead of the tournament resulted in the top two seeds facing each other in the first round. It was the only decisive encounter. GM Khachiyany and GM Tsegmed continued to trade pieces until reaching a drawn rook endgame.

| No.     | Player                                 | USCF Rtg | FIDE Rtg | 1 AB | 2 AM | 3 RS | 4 BT | 5 RA | 6 MK | 7 JC | 8 MR | Total | Place             |
|---------|----------------------------------------|----------|----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------------------|
| 1       | <a href="#">GM Andrey Baryshpolets</a> | 2607     | 2556     |      | 1    | 1    | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1    | 5     | 1st Place         |
| 2       | <a href="#">GM Arman Mikaelyan</a>     | 2606     | 2511     | 0    |      | 1    | 1    | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1    | 0    | 4     | Tie 3rd-4th Place |
| 3       | <a href="#">IM Robert Shlyakhtenko</a> | 2558     | 2461     | 0    | 0    |      | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1    | 1/2  | 0    | 2 1/2 | Tie 6th-8th Place |
| 4       | <a href="#">GM Bachuluun Tsegmed</a>   | 2476     | 2431     | 1/2  | 0    | 1/2  |      | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1    | 1    | 4     | Tie 3rd-4th Place |
| 5       | <a href="#">FM Rose Atwell</a>         | 2467     | 2383     | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1/2  | 1/2  |      | 1/2  | 1    | 1    | 4 1/2 | 2nd Place         |
| 6       | <a href="#">GM Melikset Khachiyany</a> | 2458     | 2381     | 1/2  | 1/2  | 0    | 1/2  | 1/2  |      | 0    | 1/2  | 2 1/2 | Tie 6th-8th Place |
| 7       | <a href="#">IM Julian Colville</a>     | 2399     | 2331     | 1/2  | 0    | 1/2  | 0    | 0    | 1    |      | 1/2  | 2 1/2 | Tie 6th-8th Place |
| 8       | <a href="#">FM Mikayel Rostomyan</a>   | 2371     | 2260     | 0    | 1    | 1    | 0    | 0    | 1/2  | 1/2  |      | 3     | 5th Place         |
| Average |                                        | 2493     | 2414     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |       |                   |

IM Colville and FM Rostomyan played a complex Nimzo-Indian, where both squandered winning positions with inaccurate play and agreed to a draw by repetition. IM Shlyakhtenko built a winning position but could not break Atwell's staunch defense.

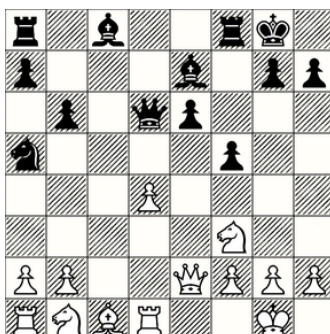
## GM Arman Mikaelyan (2511)

## GM Andrey Baryshpolets (2556)

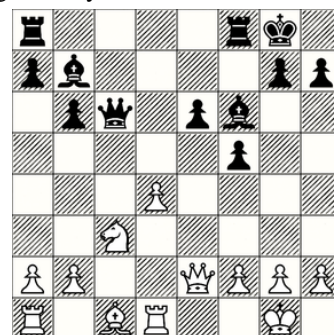
2026 SoCal State Championship (1), 0-1

Annotated by JJ Lang

1. e4 c5 2. c3 Nf6 3. e5 Nd5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. Bc4 e6 6. O-O d6 7. d4 cxd4 8. cxd4 Be7 9. Qe2 O-O 10. Rd1 Na5 11. Bd3 Nb4 12. exd6 Qxd6 13. Be4 f5 14. Bd3 Nxd3 15. Rxd3 (15. Qxd3 is the "usual" in this admittedly rare position, and it's equal.) 15...b6 16. Rd1N



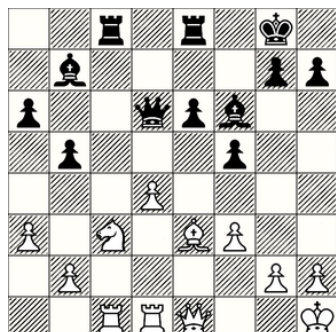
(16. b4 was tried in both of the previous games to reach this position, and even though Black can play 16...Nc4 the point is 17. Rc3 b5 18. a4 allows White some counterplay. But 18...Bb7 19. axb5 Bxf3 20. gxf3! (20. Rxf3?! Qxd4 21. Nc3 (21. Qxe6+?! Kh8 22. Nc3 Rae8+ gives Black too much pressure against White's still-weak back rank.) 21...Bxb4+ 20...Nb6 21. Rc6 Qxd4 22. Nc3 Kh8 might be best. White is still fighting for a small plus after (22...Bxb4 23. Qxe6+± is better for White.) 23. Be3±, however.) 16...Bb7 17. Nc3 (17. b3 was more prudent, with the point that 17...Bf6? is met by 18. Ba3±) 17...Bf6 Black has a lot of pressure against the d4-pawn. 18. Ne5 Nc6 19. Nxc6 Qxc6 And now Black is pressuring White's king directly.



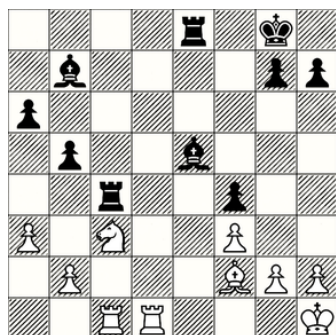
20. f3 Rad8 21. Be3 a6 (21...Rd7 would be even more direct.) 22. Rac1

**22...Qd6 23. Qe1 Rfe8** With the weakened white kingside, Black can play for ...e6-e5 to trade off weak pawns while maintaining an initiative.

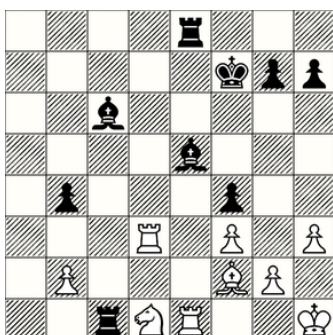
**24. a3 b5 25. Kh1 Rc8**



**26. Bf2 e5 27. Bg3!?** (27. dxe5 Qxe5 28. Qd2 Rcd8 29. Qc2 Qe6 is slightly easier for Black to play due to the bishop pair, but White is probably okay.) **27...f4 28. dxe5 Qxe5 29. Qxe5 Bxe5 30. Bf2 Rc4**



Despite restricting the e5-bishop, Black's ...f5-f4 actually improves his position by further fixing White's kingside. **31. Re1 Kf7 32. Rcd1 Bc6 33. Rd3 a5** (33...b4 34. axb4 Rxb4 35. Re2 a5 was more direct.) **34. h3??** This misses a way to reduce pressure and also weakens the g3-square for the future. (34. Rxe5! The engine calmly suggests this saving resource. 34...Rxe5 35. b3 Material will be returned. 35...Rcc5 36. h4 Black's c5-rook is still out of squares, so White should first slow down Black's play on the kingside. 36...h6 37. Bxc5 Rxc5 38. Ne2 g5=) **34...b4! 35. axb4 axb4 36. Nd1 Rc1**



The b-pawn is very weak! (36...Bf6 was another try: 37. Rxe8 Bxe8 38. Kh2 Bb5 39. Rd2 Ba4+- wins the b-pawn again. The trade of rooks clarifies Black's advantage more, too.) **37. Kh2** (37. Rg1 g5 38. Be1 It's hard to suggest a move for White! 38...Bb5 39. Rd5 Bc4 40. Rc5 Bd4+-) **37...Bf6 38. Rxe8 Kxe8 39. b3 Bb5 40. Rd6 Kf7 41. Bb6** (41. Rb6 Bf1 42. Rd6 Rc2+-) **41...Bh4!** Now the power of Black's kingside pressure becomes clear. **42. Bf2 Rxd1 43. Rxd1 Bxf2** The bishops will overpower the rook here. **44. Rd5 Bc6 45. Rd6 Be8** White resigned. **0-1**



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
**Round 1: IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (left) vs FM Rose Atwell (right)**

### Round 2

GM Khachiyan seemed unprepared for a theoretical battle in the Sicilian Dragon, sacrificed material, and ended up a piece down to IM Colville, who scored his only win in the tournament. GM Baryshpolets earned his second consecutive win with the Black pieces, taking advantage of Rostomyan's inaccurate play in the opening. FM

Atwell reached a winning position vs. GM Mikaelyan with an unstoppable passed pawn, only to allow him a miraculous escape. IM Shlyakhtenko and GM Tsegmed agreed to a draw in a balanced position.

### Round 3

GM Mikaelyan outplayed GM Tsegmed in an endgame that looked equal for a long period. FM Atwell missed a winning chance against GM Baryshpolets and settled for a draw by repetition. FM Rostomyan had no trouble defending against GM Khachiyan's advanced Caro-Kann. IM Shlyakhtenko and IM Colville agreed to a draw one move shy of the first-time control in an equal rook endgame.

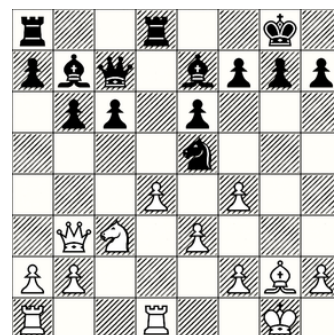
**GM Andrey Baryshpolets (2556)**

**FM Rose Atwell (2383)**

2026 SoCal State Championship (3), 1/2-1/2

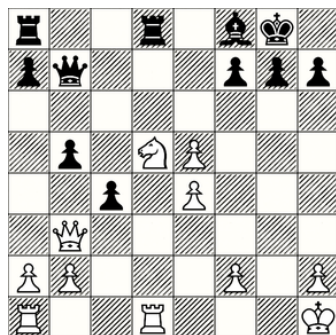
Annotated by JJ Lang

**1. c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3. d4 Nf6 4. g3 Bb4+ 5. Bd2 Be7 6. Bg2 O-O 7. O-O c6 8. Bf4 dxc4 9. Ne5 Nd5 10. Nxc4 Nxf4 11. gxf4 Nd7 12. Nc3 Qc7 13. e3 b6 14. Qb3 Bb7 15. Rfd1 Rfd8 16. Ne5 Nxe5**

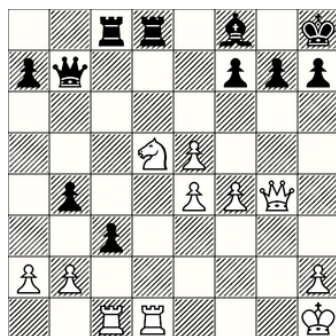


**17. fxe5 c5** (17...Rd7!? is the engine's initial suggestion. The point is 18. Rac1 c5 19. Bxb7 Qxb7 20. d5 exd5 21. Nxd5 can now be met by 21...Qc6! because Black's e7-bishop

is over-protected. But after a longer "think," the engine realizes that 22. Qd3! is very good, and Black has to retreat with 22...Rb7 when 23. f4 looks very menacing.) 18. Bxb7 Qxb7 19. d5! exd5 20. Nxd5 Bf8 21. e4 (21. Rd2 b5 22. Rad1 c4 23. Qc2 Re8 24. f4 Qc8 25. Rg2± Was a slightly more ambitious approach. The rook makes a lot of sense on the second rank with so much lateral mobility.) 21...b5 22. Kh1 c4

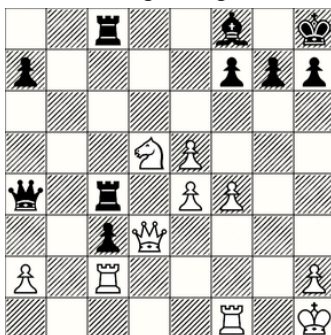


23. Qg3 This is a bit slow. (23. Qh3! b4 24. Rg1 Already, Black is forced to commit to 24...Rxd5 (24...Kh8? Unlike in the game, here White has 25. Rg4! when Black should sac on d5 as simple moves like 25...Rac8? are refuted by 26. Rag1+- followed by Nd5-f6!) 25. exd5 and then find 25...Re8! (25...Qxd5+?! 26. Qg2 is better for White as Black's queen is pinned to the hanging a8-rook.) 26. f4 Qxd5+ 27. Qg2 Qc5 28. Qe4± when White still has the better position due to the material edge.) 23...b4 24. f4 Rac8 25. Rac1 Kh8 26. Qg4 c3!?

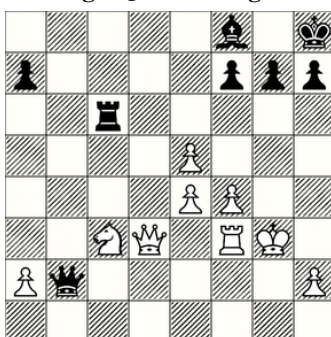


Going directly for the weakened center pawns. (26...Qa6± But going for the a-pawn first might be even better.) 27. bxc3 bxc3 28. Rc2 Rc4

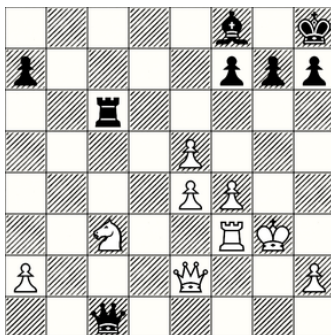
29. Qf3 Rdc8 30. Rf1 Qa6 31. Qd3 Qa4 Black is the one with all the play due to White's exposed pawns.



32. Rxc3 Rxc3 33. Nxc3 Qa3 34. Rf3! Qc1+ 35. Kg2 Qb2+ 36. Kg3 Rc6



37. Qe2! (37. f5 makes more sense, preventing Black's check on the g-file. 37...Rh6 38. Rf2=) 37...Rg6+?! But immediately going for the check was not the most precise! Black should squeeze every ounce of juice out of the rook on the d-file first with: (37...Qc1!!



This turns out to be an incredibly powerful "invisible" move. 38. Nd1 (38. Qd3?? Qg1+ 39. Kh3 Rh6#) 38...Rc2 39. Qf1 (39. Qd3 Rd2+) 39...Rd2 40. Rd3 (40. Ne3 White appears to have untangled, but 40...Qc6 leaves the e-pawn en prise. 41. h4 (41. Nd5?? Qg6+ 42. Kh4 Rxd2+-) 41...Qg6+ 42. Kh3 Qxe4±)

40...Rxa2±) 38. Kh3 Qc1 39. Qd1 Qb2 40. Qe2 Qc1 41. Qf1 Qd2 42. Qf2 Rh6+ 43. Kg2 Rg6+ 44. Kh3 Rh6+ 45. Kg2 Rg6+ 1/2-1/2

#### Round 4

A round of blunders. GM Baryshpolets blundered in the 48th move in a Queens endgame, but GM Tsegmed went for a perpetual, not aware his position was winning. GM Khachiyan got his queen trapped and fell soon after against IM Shlyakhtenko. FM Rostomyan blundered and fell to Rose's fierce King-side attack. IM Colville blundered on the 34th move and lost to GM Mikaelyan soon after.

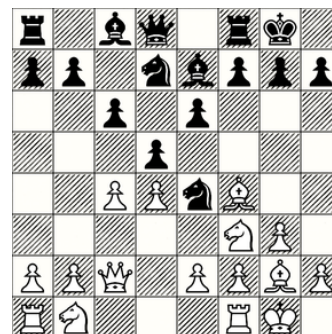
FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2260)

FM Rose Atwell (2383)

2026 SoCal State Championship (4), 0-1

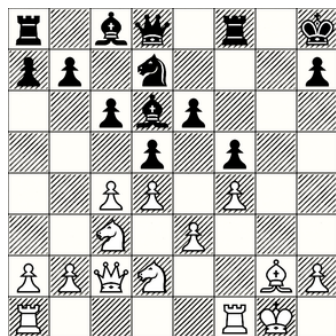
Annotated by FM Rose Atwell

1. Nf3 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. d4 d5 4. g3 Bb4+ 5. Bd2 Be7 6. Bg2 O-O 7. Qc2 c6 8. O-O Nbd7 9. Bf4 Ne4

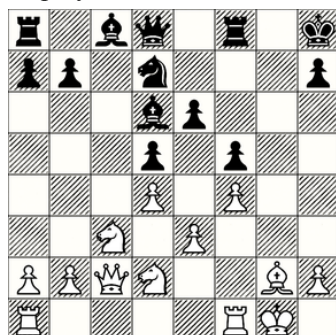


The lines in the Catalan where Black plays an early ...Ne4 tend to be rather dynamic and interesting, more so than in your typical Catalan. The idea is usually to go for a quick ...g5 and f5, with some kingside initiative. 10. Nfd2?! Slightly inaccurate, though it's played quite a lot according to the database. (10. Nc3 Maybe this is more accurate, so that now the bishop can flee to c1 in the case of g5. 10...g5 11. Bc1) 10...g5 11. Nxe4 gxf4 12. Ned2 Bd6 13. gxf4 Bxf4 14. e3 Bd6 15. Nc3

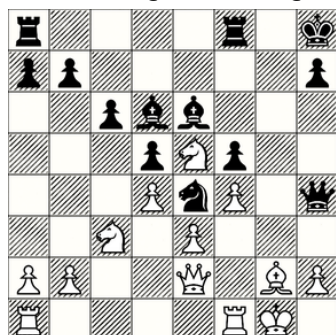
15...Kh8 16. f4 f5



I thought the locked central structure would benefit me since it seems like I have more kingside chances, due to my Rook immediately being ready to switch to the g-file, and my Queen being able to jump out to h4. My bad light-squared Bishop could be improved via d7-e8-h5, if necessary. 17. cxd5 exd5 (17...cxd5 allows counterplay:



18. Nb5 Bb4 19. Nc7 Bxd2 20. Nxe6 Bxe3+ 21. Kh1 Qf6 22. Nxf8 Nxf8 23. Rael Qxd4 24. Qb3 Bxf4 25. Re8 Kg7 26. Rg1 The engine thinks the position is balanced, and I am up material for the time being, but I would not want to play this with Black...) 18. Nf3 Nf6 19. Ne5 Be6 20. Qf2 Ne4 21. Qe2 Qh4

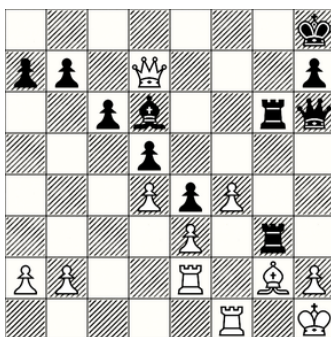


I am developing my kingside initiative, as planned. Also, it is

interesting to point out the difference between my Ne4 vs his Ne5. They're both on outposts, but my Knight is contributing to my attack (White's king can never go to h1 to escape the g-file due to Ng3+), while his Knight also looks strong, but it's not threatening as much. 22. Nxe4 So it's logical to trade away my active Knight, but this lets me open my bad Bishop. (22. Qe1 is preferable) 22...fxe4 23. Kh1 Rf6 24. Qe1 Now he wants to trade Queens, but I will not allow it. 24...Qh5 25. Qd1

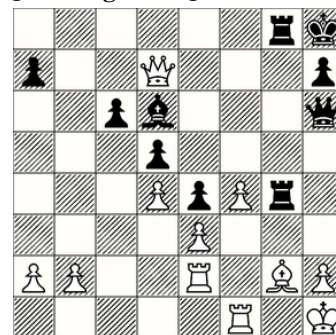


25...Qh6?! But this was a judgement error on my part. This allows him to trade off my light-squared Bishop, which was more instrumental to my attack than the dark-squared one. (25...Qh4 It was better to admit my mistake 26. Qe1 and only now play 26...Qh6) 26. Ng4 Bxg4 27. Qxg4 The point is that my remaining Bishop is not really any better than White's. They are both restricted by the pawns of the opposite side. The only reason why Black still has an advantage here is due to more active major pieces. 27...Rg8 28. Qd7 Rg3 29. Rael Rfg6 30. Re2

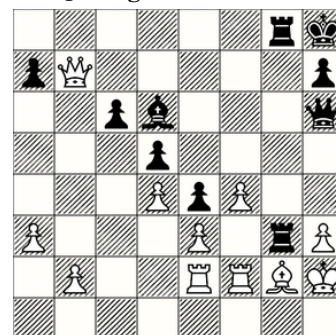


My opponent has defended well. I

have placed my major pieces on basically the most active squares, and yet there's still not a clear way to break through. 30...Rg7 31. Qc8+ Rg8 32. Qxb7 R3g4 33. Qd7?



My opponent wanted to be able to meet Rh4 with h3, but playing h3 is a concession that will give me sacrificial opportunities later. (33. Qxc6 Rh4 34. Bxe4 dxe4 And here not Qxe4? due to Rhg4, rather: 35. Rg1! where after 35...Rxxg1+ 36. Kxxg1 Rg4+ 37. Rg2 White has three pawns for the piece, and enough compensation for equality.) 33...Rh4 34. h3 Rhg4 35. Rff2 Rg3 The players at this tournament received an extra half hour at move 40; so at this point, time trouble was encroaching. 36. a3 R8g4 Threatening Rxxh3+. I wanted to provoke his King to h2, so then there would be tactical possibilities on the b8-h2 diagonal. 37. Kh2 Rg7 38. Qf5 R3g5 39. Qc8+ Rg8 40. Qb7 Rg3



Threatening Rxe3, with no good defense. 41. b4 Rxe3 42. Rxe3 Bxf4+ 43. Kh1 Bxe3 44. Rc2 Rxxg2 0-1

## Round 5

IM Shlyakhtenko blundered in a

complicated but equal position to lose material to FM Rostomyan. IM Colville went astray in a Catalan opening but recovered and forced a draw once GM Baryshpolets missed his chances to win. The two other games ended in a draw as well.

### Round 6

GM Khachiyany vs. GM Baryshpolets was a wild game as the position swung back and forth between White and Black, ultimately ending in a perpetual. FM Rostomyan unexplainably dropped his central d pawn and lost to GM Tsegmed. FM Atwell tactically outplayed IM Colville and won brilliantly. IM Shlyakhtenko castled queenside but compromised his King's safety and fell to GM Mikaelyan's fierce attack.

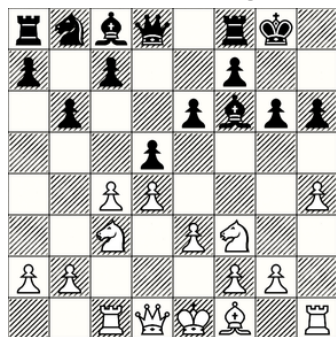
### IM Julian Colville (2331)

#### FM Rose Atwell (2383)

2026 SoCal State Championship (6), 0-1

Annotated by JJ Lang

1. c4 e6 2. Nc3 d5 3. d4 Nf6 4. Bg5 Be7 5. e3 O-O 6. Nf3 h6 7. Bxf6 Bxf6 8. Rc1 b6 9. h4 A rare move, but consistent with a plan of g2-g4 and a quick kingside attack. 9...g6!?N



This seems unnecessary, but opening the g7-square for the dark-squared bishop isn't wholly bad either. (9...dxc4 Opening up the center is logical against White's intended kingside expansion. 10. g4 (10. Bxc4?! Bb7=) 10...Bb7 11. g5 hxg5 12. hxg5 Bxg5 13. Bxc4



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
2026 SoCal State Championship  
Tournament Hall

Black has a pawn, but White has an open h-file and a half-open g-file. Now, probably 13...g6 is necessary against Qd1-d3 and the attack on the h7-square. After 14. Bd3∞ White has some play against the kingside, but at least Black has a pawn to show for it.) 10. Qb3! (10. Ne5 This move grabs space, pokes the weak c6-square, and prepares h4-h5. 10...c5 11. h5 g5 allows (11...cxd4 12. exd4 g5 13. cxd5 exd5 14. Bb5!

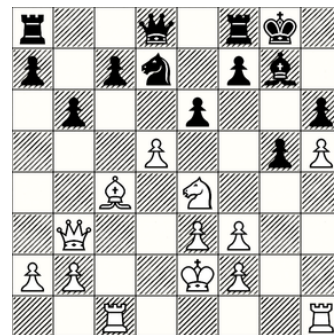


A key idea in this position. 14...Nd7 15. Bc6 The d-pawn will fall! (15. f4 is still good, too.) 15...Rb8 16. Ng4 Bg7 17. Nxd5± 12. cxd5 exd5 13. Bb5 Qd6 14. f4±) 10...dxc4 11. Bxc4 Bb7 12. Ne2?!

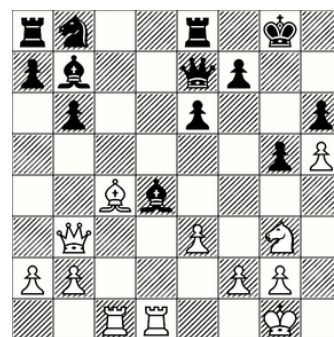


(12. h5 would make sense to soften up Black's pawns even more: 12...g5

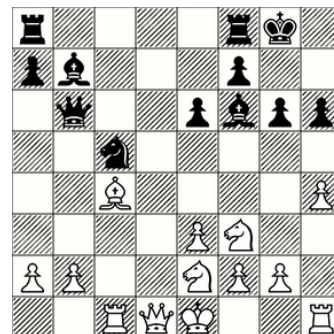
(12...Bxf3?! 13. gxf3 g5 14. Ke2! The king is remarkably safe in the center here. 14...Nd7 15. Ne4 Bg7 16. d5±



White can even open up the d-file to gain space without fear of the king coming under attack.) 13. O-O c5 14. Rfd1 cxd4 15. Nxd4 Qe7 16. Nce2 Re8 17. Ng3 Bxd4!

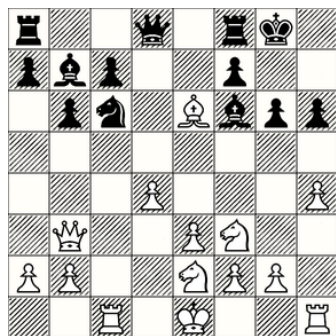


Removing pieces is Black's best bet. 18. exd4 Nc6 19. d5 Na5∞ 12...Nc6?! (12...c5 This is a surprising move. Black was operating under the assumption that ...c7-c5 was not playable without the bishop on the a3-f8 diagonal. But now 13. h5 (13. dxc5? Greed will not be rewarded here: 13...Nd7 14. cxb6 Nc5 15. Qd1 Qxb6

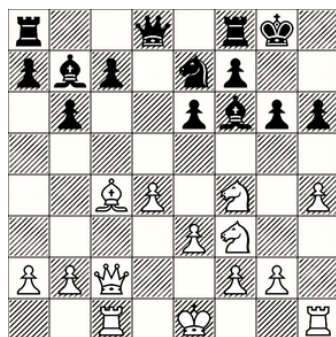


For the pawn, Black enjoys two open bishops and after 16. O-O Rfd8± a serious initiative. The b2-pawn is falling soon, too.) 13...g5 14. O-O Qe7

15. dxc5 bxc5 16. Ng3 Nc6 Black's c-pawn is no weaker than White's b2-pawn (at least as long as it is immobilized by its own queen). So play is roughly level. The game could continue: 17. Ne4 Na5 18. Nxf6+ Qxf6 19. Qb5 Bxf3 20. Qxa5 Bxh5 21. b3 Rfc8 22. Ba6=) 13. **Qc2!?** (13. Bxe6!

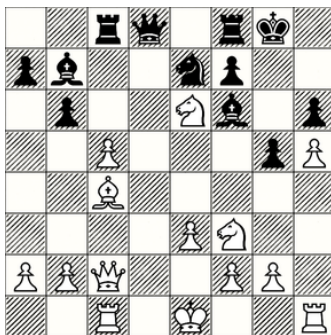


Surely this sac was on White's mind, but this was a good time for it. 13...fxe6?! 14. Rxc6 Bxc6 15. Qxe6+ Rf7 16. Qxc6±) (13...Na5 14. Qc2 fxe6 15. b4! This just gives us an improved version of the above line. 15...Nc6 16. Qxg6+ Bg7 (16...Kh8? 17. Qxh6+ Kg8 18. Qg6+ Kh8 19. Ng5+-) 17. Rxc6 Bxc6 18. Qxe6+-) (13...Qe7 14. Bh3 Bxh4 15. Nxh4 Qxh4 16. Qa4 Qf6 17. O-O± The open c-file is a nice plus for White!) 13...Ne7?! (13...Nb4 14. Qb3 c5 was a better play, opening up the center. 15. h5 g5±) 14. Nf4!?

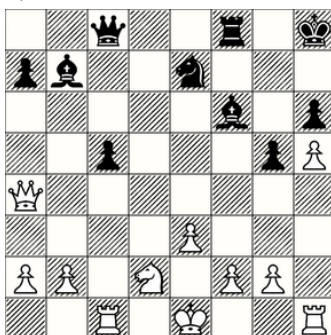


(14. h5 g5 15. O-O is roughly equal after: 15...c5 16. dxc5 bxc5 17. Rfd1 Qc7 18. Ng3=) 14...c5! Black has achieved her break and now the center is going to pose more problems for White than the kingside will for Black.

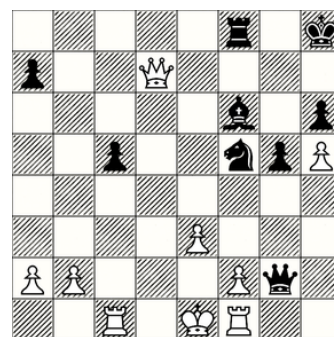
15. **dxc5 Rc8** The right gambit style. 16. **h5** (16. cxb6 Qxb6 17. O-O (17. b3?! Nf5± Black's activity compensates for the pawn.) 17...Bxf3 18. gxf3 Nf5±) 16...g5! Shutting down the kingside with an extra tempo thanks to White's misplaced f4-knight. 17. **Nxe6**



Essentially forced. (17. Nd3 b5! 18. Bb3 (18. Bxb5?? Qa5+-) 18...Be4± Black's control of the center is clearly the most important feature of this position.) 17...fxe6 18. **Bxe6+ Kh8** 19. **Bxc8 Qxc8** 20. **Qa4!?** White tries to pre-empt ...Qc8-g4, but it doesn't work. (20. O-O Qg4 21. Ne1 Qxh5±) 20...bxc5 (20...Bc6! The queen cannot keep her perch. 21. Qd1 (21. Qxa7? Qg4+-) (21. Qc4 b5 22. Qb4 a5 and the queen vacates the fourth rank, allowing ...Qc8-g4!) 21...Bxb2 22. Rb1 (22. Rc2 Ba4+-) 22...Bc3+ 23. Kf1 Qf5+-) 21. **Nd2??**



(21. O-O was best. 21...Bc6 22. Qxa7 Qg4± Black still gets her intended attack, but at least White's king is safer now.) 21...Bxg2 22. **Rg1 Qh3** 23. **Nf1** White's king is coming under fire very soon. (23. Rxc5 Qh2+-) 23...Nf5 24. **Qd7 Bxf1** 25. **Rxf1 Qg2!+-**



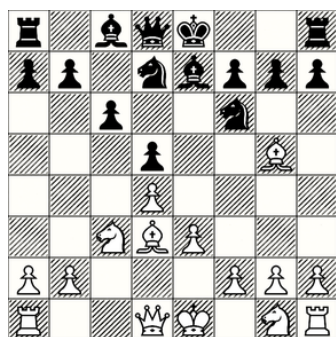
26. **Qd3** (26. Qb5 Nh4+-) 26...Nh4 27. **Qd6 Bg7** 28. **Qd7 Nf3+** 29. **Ke2 Ne5** 30. **Qa4 Qf3+** 31. **Kd2** (31. Ke1 Nd3+ 32. Kd2 Nxc1+-) 31...Qd5+ 0-1

**IM Robert Shlyakhtenko (2446)**  
**GM Arman Mikaelyan (2506)**

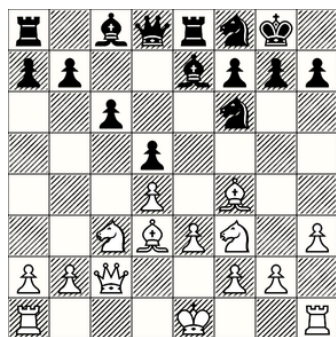
2026 SoCal State Championship (6), 0-1

*Annotated by GM Michael Brown*

Hi everyone! This is GM Michael Brown, born and raised in the Southern California chess community. It brings me great joy and pride to follow the current chess talent and tournaments happening in SoCal, and the Southern California Chess Championship this year didn't disappoint! This game especially caught my eye, an attacking masterpiece and a good example of how solid openings can lead to some pretty complicated battles! 1. **d4 Nf6** 2. **c4 e6** 3. **Nc3 d5** The Queen's Gambit Declined. I used to play this a bit with Black when I was playing regular tournament chess, with mixed results. Most pointedly, I assayed this opening in the 2017 US Junior Closed Championship against GM Kayden Troff in a pivotal game for that tournament. That game progressed in a very similar vein to this one; I encourage you to take a look at that game after if you want to get a flavor of some more attacking chess that can arise in the QGD! 4. **cxd5 exd5** 5. **Bg5 Be7** 6. **e3 c6** 7. **Bd3 Nbd7**

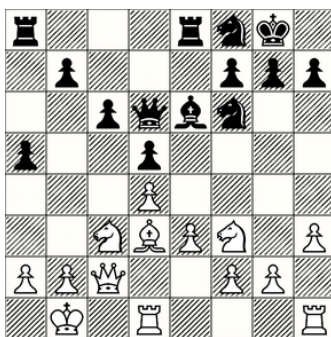


So far, the players have followed the main line of the Exchange Variation. **8. h3!?** Shlyakhtenko opts for a sideline here, which as we will see has some particular venom. Normally, White would continue with Qc2, Nf3 or Nge2, O-O, and play for pawn breaks either on the queenside or in the center. This move, however, aims for a different type of play entirely. **8...O-O 9. Qc2 Re8 10. Nf3 Nf8 11. Bf4**

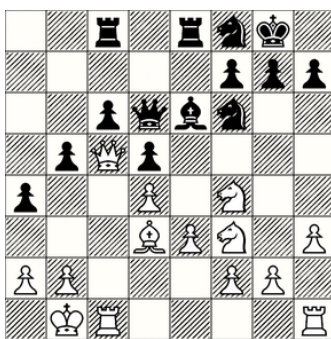


An important move to sidestep one of Black's hidden threats in this position. White should avoid. (11. O-O-O?! Ne4 When White's planned kingside play is difficult to accomplish as Black gets a lot of counterplay in the center.) **11...Bd6** The most popular move. Black immediately forces the bishops off, though there is an argument that Black could play another developing move to try to neutralize White's planned kingside attack. (11...Ne6!? 12. Bh2 g6 White will likely have to castle kingside here, since 13. O-O-O? is no longer very good as Black can strike in the center with 13...c5! and Black has the initiative.) **12. Bxd6 Qxd6 13. O-O-O!?** The whole point of this line. White castles on the opposite

side of Black's king, making the game immediately double-edged. In these types of positions, both players have to be very energetic with their attacks; as they say, sometimes the best defense is a good offense! **13...a5 14. Kb1 Be6**

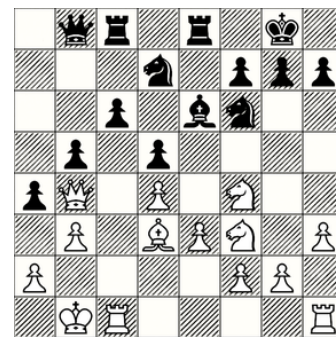


**15. Rc1** I'm not sure if this was part of White's preparation, but this move does not seem to be in the spirit of the position. In my view, White should start advancing his kingside pawns with (15. g4! b5 16. Ne5 with f4 to follow. Black's attack on the queenside is difficult to prosecute; for instance, if Black tries 16...a4 17. f4 a3 18. b3 White can avoid pawn exchanges and keep the queenside closed. White has a clear advantage here.) **15...b5!** Simple and good. Black needs to get his pawns going to attack White's king. **16. Ne2 Rac8 17. Nf4 a4 18. Qc5**

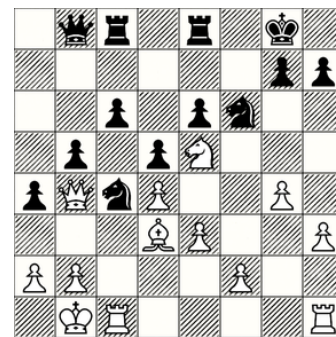


White is continuing to play on the queenside, but again this does not feel right to me. Black will never trade queens, and his pawns have already advanced several squares to claim outposts for Black's knights (e.g., the c4-square). In fact, White's queen here may become a target if he is not

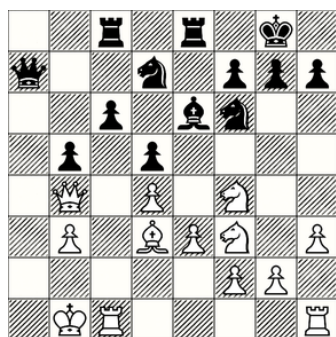
careful. **18...Qb8 19. Qb4 N8d7** Black is planning to route his knight to the c4-square via b6. What should White do here? **20. b3?**



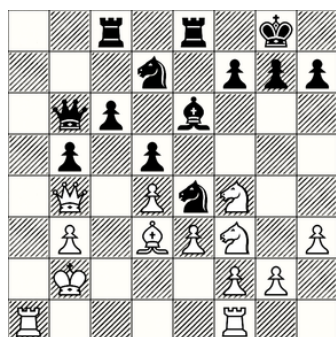
This is a mistake. White continues to play only on the queenside, but this is where Black has a pawn majority and where all of his pieces are pointing! By contrast, White's pieces are more focused on the center and the kingside; just on principle alone, White needs to play on the side of the board in which he has plusses. (20. g4 Nb6 21. Nxe6 fxe6 22. Ne5 Nc4



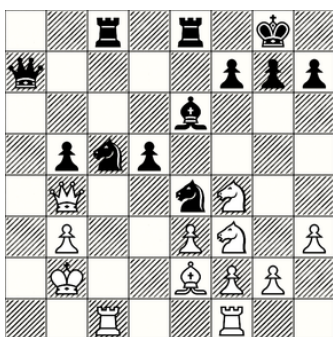
I'm sure this is one of the positions that White considered. How can White play around Black's knight getting to such a good outpost? Well, he needs to continue playing energetically in the kingside and center with 23. f4! with g5 to follow. White will have a strong bind on the dark squares, and again it is difficult to come up with Black's plan to attack on the queenside. Note that White should avoid taking on c4 since this only helps Black. (23. Bxc4? dxc4 Black can now make use of the d5 square, and can prepare pawn breaks such as c5, c3, or a3.)) **20...axb3 21. axb3 Qa7!**



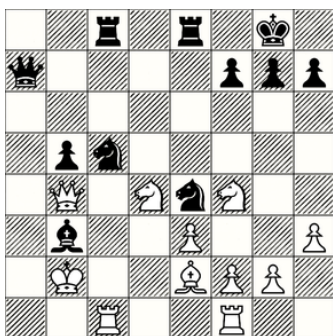
Another simple but strong move by Black. He is simply moving his major pieces to the open file. White's position is already critical. **22. Kb2 Ne4 23. Rhf1?** I sense that White may have underestimated the danger to his position. This move is simply too passive, as Black has a concrete way to break through White's queenside and continue building pressure on his position. (23. Ra1 This was necessary to take control of the a-file and limit Black's attacking chances. 23...Qb6 24. Rhf1



The point is that the idea Black utilized in the game is not nearly as devastating as it was in the game, as Black's queen on b6 is actually misplaced. 24...c5?! (24...h6 Black doesn't need to rush in this position. He can work on preparing c5 by repositioning his queen and/or c8-rook.) 25. Qxb5 Qc7 26. Bxe4 dxe4 27. Nd2 Rb8 28. Qa5 and there's still a lot of fight left in this position.) **23...c5!** Black's attack is coming together. With this pawn break, he will bring his d7-knight into the game and open up the c-file as another avenue to get to White's king. **24. dxc5 Ndx5 25. Be2**

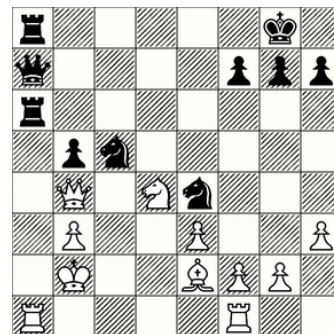


**25...d4!!** Another great decision from Black, and an amazing show of how to utilize pawns to open avenues into an opponent's position when attacking. White was one move away from somewhat consolidating his position with Nd4, after which he would cover some of the key squares on the queenside. However, after this move, White's king will lose its last bit of cover. (25...h6 26. Nd4 Bd7 Even if White's knight gets to d4, his position remains chronically worse given his poor king safety, passive rooks and lack of space. In fact, Black can continue pressing here with little risk, as the b5-pawn is basically poisoned.) **26. Nxe6** Losing, but White's choices here were already very bleak. (26. Nxd4 Bxb3 is the point of the pawn sacrifice. The shield around White's king is torn apart.



27. Nxb3 Na4+ 28. Ka1 Nac3+ 29. Na5 g5 The cleanest win, removing the defender from the e2-bishop. The knight on a5 is not going anywhere.) (26. Ra1 This may have been White's last try, but here Black can win material with 26...Qe7 27. exd4 Na4+ 28. Rxa4 bxa4 29. Qxe7 Rxe7 30. Nxe6 Rxe6 when the endgame is

winning for Black, though he will have to play some accurate moves to earn the full point...) **26...Rxe6 27. Nxd4** (27. exd4 Ra8 28. Ra1 Ra6 is similar to the game.) **27...Ra6 28. Ra1 Ra8**



Triple stack on the a-file. White cannot stop Black from invading. **29. Rxa6 Qxa6 30. Rb1 Qa2+ 31. Kc1 Na6** The final touch, both dislodging White's queen from a prime defense square and opening up the c-file for Black's Rook to deliver a fatal check. White resigned in this position. A great attacking showing from GM Mikaelyan, and an illustration of how the QGD can lead to some incredibly sharp and complicated games! **0-1**

### Round 7

IM Shlyakhtenko blundered in an equal rook endgame to give GM Baryshpolets the full point. GM Mikaelyan suffered the same vs FM Rostomyan. GM Tsegmed won against IM Colville to secure a tie for 3rd/4th place. FM Atwell drew with GM Khachiyanyan to secure her 2nd place finish.

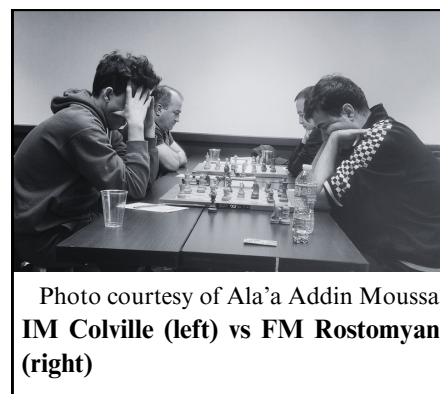


Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
**IM Colville (left) vs FM Rostomyan (right)**

# 46th Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic

By Chuck Ensey and JJ Lang

This 6-round event with a \$20,000 prize fund was held at the Sonesta LAX hotel and drew a total of 226 players. The Air Tel Hotel in Van Nuys was supposed to hold this event, but an unexpected closure forced us to the Sonesta as a late replacement venue. We had to use the 2nd floor ballrooms instead of the more spacious downstairs ballroom due to the short booking notice. However, things went fairly smoothly anyway.

The very large Open section had 64 players, with 9 of them rated 2200 or higher. Anthony Ong was the FIDE Arbiter. The clear first-place winner was **Ashwin Damaraju** with 5 ½ points for a prize of \$1,800, with five wins in a row and a last round draw with Patrick Liu. One of his wins was in round 5 over second-place finisher **GM Vahe Bagdasaryan**, who scored 5 points for \$1,000. Five other players scored 4 ½ points to split a pooled prize for \$440 each: **FM Patrick Liu**, **Ararat Bagdasarian**, **Young Cui**, **Raffi Ghazaryan** and **Bryan Leano**. 9 others scored 4 points, but finished out of the money.

The U2000 section had 46 players. **Victor Yi** and **Aaron Palmer** tied for first/second with 5 points, earning \$1,000 each. Four players tied for 3rd/4th with 4 ½ points for \$250 each: **Martin Leung**, **Advit Venkatesh**, **Emma Yang** and **Evan Han**. 35 players were in the U1800 section where **Evan Zhong** and **Brandon You** tied for 1st/2nd with 5 points for \$1,000 each. Three players tied for 3rd-5th with 4 ½ points for \$333 each: **Mason Chairunas**, **Bryce McIntyre** and **Ryan Yeung**.

25 players battled in the U1600 section



Photo courtesy of Ashwin Damaraju  
**The Damaraju brothers, Ashwin (seated) and Arjun, analyze with Julian Colville**

with **Aldan Wang** coming out on top with 5 ½ points for \$1,200. **Allison Olivarez** and **Jessica Utley** tied for 2nd/3rd for \$700 with 4 ½ points each. **David Deng**, an unrated player, won 4th Place for \$300. Five other players won \$20 with 3 ½ points.

In the U1400 section **Silas Jensen** won \$1,200 with a 5-point score. **Arnav Menon** and **Adhvik Avadhanam** tied for 2nd/3rd for \$700 each in the 18-player section. **Eric Oen**, **Alexander Oen** and **Viha Dundigal** won \$133 each for 4<sup>th</sup> place. In the U1200 section 38 players competed for big prizes, with **Gianna Yin** coming out on top with 5 ½ points for \$1,200. **Lucas Selesnick** was Best Unrated with 5 points for \$100. Three players tied for 2nd/3rd/4th: **Kenneth Choi**, **Robert Younger** and **Celina Yuan**. Kenneth was provisionally rated so he only won \$284, while the other two took home \$709 each. Jim Harrell directed

the lower sections with help from Randal Hough, Jake Nemeth and Chuck Ensey.

**NM Ashwin Damaraju (2314)**

**GM Vahe Bagdasaryan (2262)**

46th Annual Lina Grumette Memorial Day Classic (5), 1-0

*Annotated by JJ Lang*

**1. e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. d4** Traditionally, 2. Nc3 signals a Closed Sicilian with d2-d3 and slow expansion on the kingside. But this is a trendy system against every flavor of Sicilian, aiming for an open position that avoids the theory of Open Sicilians. **3...cxd4 4. Qxd4 a6** We can go ahead and guess that Black was going to play the Kan Sicilian! (4...Nc6 is typically played, when 5. Qd3 is one of the most common retreats alongside (5. Qe3, which I happen to prefer slightly more against 2...e6 Sicilians, since it prepares e4-e5 in some cases.))

**5. Qd3N** The sample size was already very small, but this is a new move. (5. Bf4 might make the most sense, as now 5...Nc6 6. Qe3 keeps the benefit of playing for e4-e5 without the drawback of boxing in the dark-squared bishop!) (5. b3!? has also been tried, as if Qd4-e3 is planned, then this is a logical way to develop the dark-squared bishop.) **5...b5 6. Bf4** (6. a4?! Against an early ...b7-b5, a2-a4 only makes sense when ...b5-b4 doesn't come with tempo (and can be rebuffed with c2-c3) 6...b4 7. Nce2 Bb7 and Black has good pressure on the e4-pawn.) **6...Bb7** (6...b4!? could be very strong.) **7. Nf3 b4 8. Nb1** Black has relinquished the grip of the c4-square, so this rerouting is logical. **8...Nf6 9. Nbd2 Be7** (9...d6?! would be consistent, except White has a neat idea with 10. a3! now that the f8-bishop is closed off, as 10...bxa3 11. Qxa3 d5?! is rebuked by 12. Qb3 Qc8 13. e5 with a pleasant position for White.) **10. Bd6** It makes sense to pressure the holes on the dark squares. **10...Bxd6 11. Qxd6 Qe7 12. Qf4 d6 13. e5!?** (13. Bd3 would be the most flexible alternative, but 13...e5 would be a logical way for Black to play now that White does not have a knight that can quickly jump to the d5-square.) **13...dxe5**

**14. Nxe5 O-O 15. Bd3 Nbd7 16. Nxd7 Nxd7 17. O-O Nc5** The position coming out of the opening is balanced. Both bishops are good, both knights have potential, and the biggest imbalance will be the half-open c-file versus the half-open e-file. Black's pawn sac is an interesting way to shake things up. **18. Qxb4** White accepts the challenge. (18. Be2 a5 was the alternative, when 19. Nc4 Ba6 20. a3 starts trying to bust up Black's queenside, but 20...Na4 keeps things dynamic.) **18...Rab8** There is no time to move the d3-bishop as Black now threatens ...Bb7xg2. So, White is parting with the bishop, giving Black compensation for the pawn. **19. Qf4** (19. Qc3 would prepare Qc3xd3 but at the cost of allowing 19...Qg5 when 20. f3 is provoked and 20...Na4 still gives Black plenty of counterplay. A cute line continues 21. Qd4! Nxb2! (21...Qxd2?? 22. Bxh7++-) 22. h4! (22. Qxb2?? Bxf3-+) 22...Qf6=) **19...Nxd3 20. cxd3 Rfd8** Black has play against the b- and d-pawns, but White is indeed up a pawn. **21. Nc4 Ba8 22. Rfd1 Rb5 23. d4 Rf5 24. Qe3 h5 25. f3!** Excellent prophylaxis. (25. Rac1?! , for instance, allows 25...h4 26. h3 Bd5 27. Ne5 Qb7 when 28. f3= is still necessary and the b-pawn drops.) **25...h4 26. Ne5**

White is right to allow ...h4-h3, but Black had other resources. **26...h3?!** (26...f6! was an improvement: 27. Ng6 Qd6 28. Nxh4 Rd5= and Black has essentially traded the h-pawn for the d-pawn.) **27. g4** Black walks directly into White's plan behind f3! **27...Rf6 28. Rac1 Bd5 29. b3 Qb7 30. Rc3** White is able to develop and improve his pieces while also covering his only major weakness. **30...Rh6** (30...a5 31. Rdc1 would allow White to slowly build the advantage.) **31. Rdc1 Qb6?!** (31...Rf6 32. Kf2 Qb4 33. Kg3! would still be strategically won for White.) **32. Rc7 Rf6 33. Rc8! Kh7 34. Qf2** Right idea but wrong line. (34. Qd3+ g6 35. R1c7+- was most forcing.) **34...Rxc8** (34...Bb7! was the only way to stay afloat. 35. R8c7 (35. Rxd8? Qxd8 36. Rc4± and much of White's attack is gone without the doubled rooks.) 35...Kg8 The engine thinks this is Black's best defense. 36. Nd7 (36. R1c5?! is probably even better.) 36...Rxd7 37. Rxd7 Qb5 38. Rdc7 Qg5± and Black has a vague chance of counterplay.) **35. Rxc8 g5** (35...Bb7 36. Nd7+- is similar.) (35...Qa7 steps out of the fork, but 36. Kf1 prepares Qf2-h4+ and 36...g5 37. Qc2+ Kg7 38. Rc7 Qb6? runs into 39. Rxf7+! Rxf7 40. Qg6+ with mate next move.) **36. Nd7 1-0**

## SoCal State Championship Candidates

By CM Ala'a Addin Moussa

Ten players accepted the invitation to compete for the last spot of the 2026 SoCal State Championship. The Temecula Chess Club hosted a 4-round candidates tournament on May 2-3. FM Mikayel Rostomyan and Hayden Karkainen tied for first with 3 points, but the direct encounter tiebreak secured Rostomyan's qualification to his second consecutive state championship.

**FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2371)**

**NM Hayden Karkainen (2201)**

2026 SoCal State Championship Candidates (1), 1-0

**1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Bb4+ 4. Bd2 Qe7 5. a3 Bxd2+ 6. Qxd2 d6 7. Qg5 O-O 8. e3 Re8 9. Be2 e5 10. O-O Nc6 11. Nc3 h6 12. Qh4 Bf5 13. d5 Nb8 14. Rfe1 Nbd7 15. b4 Nf8 16. Qg3 g5 17. Nd2 Ng6 18. e4 Bd7 19. Qe3 Kh7 20. c5 Rg8 21. Nc4 b6 22. cxb6 cxb6 23. a4 Rgc8 24. Rec1 Nf4 25. Bf1 Rc7 26. Na3 Ng4 27. Qd2 f5 28. f3 Nf6 29. g3 Ng6 30. Bd3? (30. exf5 Bxf5 31. Ncb5±) **30...f4 31. Ncb5 Rxc1+ 32. Rxc1 g4 33. fxg4 Nxc4 34. Be2 Nxh2! 35. Kxh2 fxg3+ 36. Kg1 Qh4 37. Bf3 Rf8 38. Rf1 Bg4 39. Qg2 Bxf3 40. Rxf3 Rxf3 41. Qxf3 Qh2+ 42. Kf1 Nf4 0-1****



Photo courtesy of Chris Roberts  
FM Mikayel Rostomyan

# San Diego County Championships

By Chuck Ensey

This 5-round event at the Courtyard Marriott Liberty Station hotel in San Diego drew a total of 114 players. We were hoping for a bigger turnout, but wedged between the Memorial Day Classic in LA and the National Open in Las Vegas, the very next week, it was perhaps too much to expect. Players don't want to play big events every weekend! We were forced to reduce the \$17,000 prize fund (non-guaranteed) by 50% and even then we still lost money on this event.

One somewhat unusual feature at this event was that we allowed players to "play up" into a higher section as much as they wanted to, with no restrictions or play up fees. The event was also not FIDE rated, but we still drew 2 GMs and 3 IMs, plus one FM. Overall, the event was very well enjoyed by those who did play according to the comments I received. The location and ballroom are very nice, and this is one of our favorite hotels to host a large event. We will try it again next year, but with a

different date so we can hopefully attract more players.

The Open section had 36 players, with 18 of them rated 2000 or higher. There was a 5-way tie for 1st-4th, plus BU2300, between players with 4 points for a \$3,000 pooled prize, or \$600 each: **GM Kirk Ghazarian, GM Vahe Baghdasaryan, FM Mikayel Rostomyan, Sarthak Gattani and Raffi Ghazaryan**. IMs **Bryan Xie** and **Dionisio Aldama** tied for 5th/6th Place for \$150 each, but only took home \$50 because we deduct \$100 from GM and IM prizes due to their not having to pay an entry fee. Eight players with 3 points tied for BU2300 for \$25 each: **Daichi Siegrist, Ruhan Vichare, Howard Wang, Alaa-addin Moussa, Leo Wang, Jorge Suarez, Renae Chen** and **Lennart Mathe**. These were all Experts except Moussa who is a NM. One IM also finished with 3 points, but was out of the money, as he is rated over 2300 at 2446: Isaac Wang, who confided this was not a good tournament result for him, lost to Rostomyan in round 3 and then finished with two draws against Experts, losing 16 rating points overall. There are no guaranteed wins in chess, no matter how high your rating is, as Isaac well knows. Each game starts on an equal footing; you have to prove yourself every game, and that is almost never an easy task. Take it from me, a 1700 player who loses to 1400 rated players all the time!

The U2000 section had 21 players. **Andy Zhong** scored 4 points to take clear 1st Place for \$600. Four players tied with 3 ½ points for 2nd-5th Place



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
**FM Rostomyan (left) and GM Baghdasaryan drew quickly in last round to tie for first place**

and \$150 each: **Hiro Uchiyama, Wayne Ballantyne, Isabella Ding** and **Wenyi Yang**.

In the 23 player U1800 section two players tied for 1st/2nd with 4 points for \$450 each: **Michael Pecherskiy** and **Timothy McFadden**. Four other players tied for 3rd-6th with 3 ½ points for \$75 each: **Orynbay Zhanaidarov, Andrew Johnson, Bhagavat Nair** and **Mason Chairunas**.

The U1600 section was very small with only 6 players. **James Kased** scored 3 ½ for 1st Place and \$600. **Bowen Jing** was 2nd with 3 points for \$300. **Morgan Fox, Adhvik Avadhanam** and **Ryan Yu** tied for 3rd-5th with 2 ½ points for \$84 each.

U1400 wasn't much better with only eight players; we used some house players in both of these sections. **Eric Oen** was 1st U1400 with 4 points for \$400, **Michael Munoz** was 2nd with 3 ½ but was provisionally rated so he only won \$100. **Alexander Oen** was



Photo courtesy of Ala'a Addin Moussa  
**GM Ghazarian quickly disposed of SCCF president Alaa-addin Moussa to tie for first place**

3rd with 2 ½ for \$133 and then **Nivek Pulimamidi** and **Jishnu Nair** were surprised to hear they won \$58 for 4th Place with only 1 ½ points scored.

In the U1200 section a more respectable 21 players competed for prizes, with provisionally rated player **Lucas Zhang** (4 ½) winning a reduced \$150 prize for 1st Place, while **Madeleine Lim** (4) took \$200 for 2nd Place. **Charlene Situ** (3 ½) tied with **Benjamin Way** (3 ½) for 3rd/4th but Benjamin was provisionally rated, so Charlene won \$150 and Benjamin won \$75.

Jim Harrell directed the event with help from Chuck Ensey. There was also a 6 round Blitz event (G5, d2) on Saturday night with lots of prize winners, but the Open Section was won by **Ephraim Rosenstock** (5) for \$100 and **Isaac Neilson** (6) won the Reserve Section with a perfect score, but also for only \$100. See the USCF website for the other players in this 22-player event, including one house player, (Ken Green, and thanks Ken for filling in.) All the prize winners are listed on my facebook page.

**GM Vahe Baghdasaryan (2354)**

**Ruhan Vichare (2097)**

San Diego County Championships (2), 1-0

1. c4 e6 2. Nf3 d5 3. g3 Nf6 4. Bg2 Be7 5. O-O O-O 6. b3 a5 7. Bb2 a4 8. bxa4 Nbd7 9. cxd5 exd5 10. Qc2 Nb6 11. Be5 Nc4 12. d4 g6 13. Nc3 Ra6 14. Nd2 Bf5 15. Qc1 Ba3

16. Qd1 Bb2 17. Bxf6 Rxf6 18. Nxd5 Bxa1 19. Nxc4 Be6 20. Nxf6+ Qxf6 21. d5 1-0

**FM Mikayel Rostomyan (2391)**

**IM Isaac Wang (2446)**

San Diego County Championships (3), 1-0

*Annotated by FM Mikayel Rostomyan*

1. c4 e5 2. Nc3 Bb4 3. Nd5 Be7 4. d4 exd4 5. Qxd4 Nf6 6. Nxe7 Qxe7 7. Bg5 Nc6 8. Qc3 d5 9. Bxf6 gxf6 10. cxd5 Nb4 11. a3 Nxd5 12. Qc2 Bg4 13. e3 O-O-O 14. Be2 Qe6 15. Nf3 Kb8 16. O-O h5 17. Kh1 Rhg8 18. Rac1 Bf5 19. Qc4 Be4 20. Rg1 c6 21. Nd4 Qe5 22. b4 h4 23. Bf3 Nb6 24. Qe2 Ka8 25. Bxe4 Qxe4 26. Qf3 Qe5 27. a4 Qd5 28. a5 Nc8 29. Qxf6 Nd6 30. Rc5 Qa2 31. Qxh4 Qa3 32. Rcc1 a6 33. Nf3 Rde8 34. Qd4 Ne4 35. Rgf1 Qa2 (35...Nxf2!+ 36. Kg1 Nh3+ 37. Kh1 Nf2+ 38. Kg1 Nh3+ 39. Kh1 Nf2+) 36. Kg1 Rxe2+ 37. Kxe2 Rg8+ 38. Kh1 38...Nxf2+ (38...Qxf2 39. Ng5!) 39. Rxf2 Qxf2 40. Nh4 Qe2 41. Rg1 Re8 42. Ng2 Rg8 43. Qe4 Qf2 44. Qf4 Qa2 45. Qe4 Qf2 46. Qb1 f5 47. Qf1 Qc2 48. Qf3 Rh8 49. Rf1 Qb2 50. Qxf5 Qxb4 51. Rb1 Qd6 52. h4 Rf8 53. Qh7 Rb8 54. Rf1 Qg3 55. Qf5 Rg8 56. Qf3 Qe5 57. Qf5 Qg3 58. Rf2 c5 59. Qf3 Qe5 60. Qf6 Qg3 61. Qf4 Qg7 62. Kh2 Qc3 63. Qc7 Qc4 64. Qe7 Qg4 65. Rf8+ 1-0

**Renae Chen (2032)**

**CM Ala'a Addin Moussa (2200)**

San Diego County Championships (4), 0-1

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 cxd4

4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. Ndb5 d6 7. Bg5 a6 8. Na3 b5 9. Nd5 Be7 10. Bxf6 Bxf6 11. c3 O-O 12. Nc2 Rb8 13. Be2 Bg5 14. O-O a5 15. b4 f5 16. a4 bxa4 17. b5 Ne7 18. Rxa4 fxe4 19. Nxe7+ Bxe7 20. Qa1 d5 21. Rxa5 Bc5 22. Nb4 Bb7 23. Na6 Bxa6 24. Rxa6 d4 25. cxd4 exd4 26. Bc4+ Kh8 27. Re6 e3 28. Bd3 Qd5 29. Re4 Qb3 30. Qb1 Qxb1 31. Bxb1 exf2+ 32. Kh1 Rxb5 33. Bd3 Rb3 34. Be2 d3 35. Bf3 Rc3 36. Bd1 Rc1 37. g3 Rxd1 38. Rxd1 f1=Q+ 39. Rxf1 Rxf1+ 40. Kg2 Rf2+ 41. Kh3 d2 42. Re8+ Rf8 0-1

**CM Ala'a Addin Moussa (2200)**

**GM Kirk Ghazarian (2625)**

San Diego County Championships (5), 0-1

1. d4 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. e3 c5 4. c4 cxd4 5. exd4 g6 6. Nc3 Bg7 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. Bc4 Nxc3 9. bxc3 Qc7 10. Qb3 O-O 11. O-O Nc6 12. Bb5 Be6 13. Qd1 Na5 14. Bd2 Bc4 15. Bxc4 Nxc4 16. Re1 Rac8 17. Rc1 e6 18. Bg5 Qa5 19. Qb3 Qa6 20. Rb1 b6 21. Rbc1 Rc6 22. Rc2 Rfc8 23. Recl Qa5 24. Bf4 Na3 25. Bd2 Nxc2 26. Rxc2 Qd5 27. Qa4 Qa5 28. Qb3 Rc4 29. h3 Qa4 30. Rc1 b5 31. Qb2 b4 32. Kh2 Qc6 0-1



Photo courtesy of SDCC  
San Diego County Championships  
Tournament Hall

# SCCF Board Election Candidates

The SCCF Board is holding 2026 Board elections this summer. E-voting opens August 1 and closes August 30. Results will be tallied and announced at the SCCF general assembly during the State Open on September 1st. The top six vote-getters will be elected to two-year terms.

## James Harrell, incumbent



I have been very active at the San Diego Chess Club as a TD at the Gambito and also helped to TD many larger events such as the Dreaming King Open, The Pacific Southwest Open, and the Southern California Open. I am happy to continue my service on the SCCF board.

## Jim Mennella, incumbent



It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on the SCCF board for the past 12 years. I ask for your support so I may continue to use my experience and contacts on both the local and national levels to make Chess better for Southern California players and promote Scholastic instruction and tournaments. Thank you.

## Frank Lee, incumbent



Please allow me to promote chess in Southern California, expanding player numbers and tournament play. As the current treasurer and a seasoned marketer, I'm well-equipped to tackle modern challenges to serve our events and communications.

## Tim Abadilla



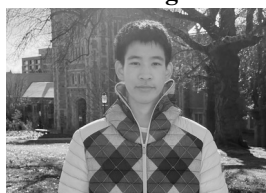
I never grew up formally in a chess club. My dad had taught me chess when I was young but I got stronger as I played the street hustlers in the parks and local meet ups. I wish I had the opportunity when I was younger to have been involved in one, I feel I could have achieved so much higher heights in my chess career if I had. Which is why it is my desire to grow the chess community in the Southern California area. I have been teaching chess for a decade, under the umbrella of California Youth Chess League, American Chess Academy, and now my own chess club Masterpiece Chess Academy. Masterpiece is a chess club in the Santa Clarita area and we serve the community with chess classes, tournaments, camps and meet ups. If you choose to elect me I wish to use my resources to build the scholastic scene in chess and create opportunities for kids in the chess world that I never had.

## GM Kirk Ghazarian



I'm a Southern California native and the youngest Grandmaster in SCCF history. Since I started playing, I've consistently ranked among America's top players for my age; today I'm #30 in the world junior ranking and #4 in the US among juniors, and the highest-rated American in Southern California. I've represented the US internationally and am the youngest American to qualify for two consecutive World Cups, starting at 16. I lecture at the prestigious US Chess School and coach some of America's brightest young players. At each level, I've had to overcome obstacles to reach the next, so I know what it takes to climb the chess hierarchy. As a Board member, I'll use that experience to strengthen junior/senior development, attract stronger events, and raise SoCal's profile nationally.

## Andersen Yang



As an active chess player since age six, I have developed friendships with several current SCCF Board Members, and would be honored to serve alongside them on the Board to promote chess throughout Southern California. In addition to being a member of the San Gabriel Valley Chess Club (SGVCC), I will be serving as my high school's chess club president this upcoming year. Beyond competing in tournaments, I've witnessed firsthand the wonderful things our chess community has been able to accomplish together, such as supporting the inaugural Chess for Cure SoCal tournament and fundraiser. I'm excited about the opportunity to continue collaborating to be a force for positive community impact.

## Chris Roberts, incumbent



My name is Chris Roberts. I am currently an SCCF Board member, the SCCF Membership Secretary, and have served as the SCCF webmaster for the past 16 years. I also served as SCCF President 26 years ago. Most of you would not recognize me by sight because these days I work largely behind the scenes. However, I feel that I know many of you, as my responsibilities touch on so many aspects of chess in Southern California. These include tournament publicity, tournament entries, and membership services. It is work I truly enjoy because I want players to focus on their chess while I work to make SCCF as professional and efficient as possible. Some of my accomplishments include being actively involved in organizing—and serving as the primary fundraiser for—several SoCal State Invitational Championships. I developed the online voting application being used in this year's SCCF Board election, as well as the application used for last year's online election. I also created the current SCCF logo and the membership e-card received by members who joined or renewed during the past two years. In addition, I serve as webmaster for the San Gabriel Valley, La Palma, and Temecula chess clubs. If re-elected, I will continue to leverage technology to streamline SCCF operations so that players receive their Rank & File magazine on time, know when their SCCF membership is due for renewal, enjoy a smooth registration process for tournaments requiring SCCF membership, and stay informed about upcoming events and opportunities through email communications. I respectfully ask for your vote so that I can continue this work.

## Chris Bunch



I'm Chris Bunch, the Vice President of the Santa Monica Bay Chess Club. I help organize events locally and am an active player, both in the SoCal area and beyond. I'm running for the SCCF board to represent my community and keep our strong chess culture intact as we move into the future. I'm excited about ensuring the continued growth of our great game and making sure that we can include people from all walks of life in it.

## Edwin Ruiz



My name is Edwin Ruiz, Founder and President of Day & Knight Chess Club, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to growing chess throughout Southern California. Since founding Day & Knight Chess Club in 2022, we have grown to serve over 100 schools across approximately 10 school districts, trained more than 200 chess coaches, sponsored over 150 youth USCF memberships, hosted free community chess events, organized district and inter-district scholastic tournaments, and organized more than a dozen USCF-rated tournaments, many attracting over 100 participants. Through these efforts, we have introduced thousands of students and families to organized chess. In 2026, we are proud to host the Pacific Southwest Open. I have taught chess for nearly 10 years, previously served as President of both the Norco College and Cal Poly Pomona Chess Clubs, and am a tournament player rated around 1800 USCF with aspirations of achieving the master title. I hope to bring my experience building partnerships with schools, universities, clubs, and community organizations to help SCCF expand scholastic chess, support organizers, and continue growing the game throughout Southern California. I would be honored to serve on the SCCF Board.



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# 2026 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

## OPEN SEPTEMBER 4-7 (4-DAY EVENT) SEPTEMBER 5-7 (3-DAY EVENT)

**7 SECTIONS:** Open, U2300, U2100, U1900, U1700, U1500, U1300

**TIME CONTROL:** G/90 with a 30-second increment

**USCF MEMBERSHIP REQUIRED**

(SCCF membership also required for Southern California residents)

OPEN - \$6,000 + \$3,000 + \$1,500 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$300

U2300 - \$5,000 + \$2,500 + \$1,250 + \$600 + \$300 + \$300

U2100 - \$4,000 + \$2,000 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$300 + \$300

U1900 - \$3,000 + \$1,500 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$300 + \$300

U1700 - \$3,000 + \$1,500 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$300 + \$300

U1500 - \$3,000 + \$1,500 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$300 + \$300

U1300 - \$2,000 + \$1,000 + \$500 + \$500 + \$300 + \$300

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- **\$195** Early Bird by 5/31
- **\$228** Regular Fee by 8/17
- **\$255** Late Fee by 8/31
- **\$285** Last minute Fee by 6pm 9/03
- Registration closed after 6pm 9/03
- Re-Entry Possible See TD



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**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA BLITZ** September 7  
(Monday evening)



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