

Young and Old(er) Dominate 86th GBO Chess Tournament

Westford, MA. During the last minutes of the final game of the tournament, 16-year old Thomas Guo sat tensely at the chessboard. Even though he had won his first three games, and held a slight advantage against his opponent in this, the final game for all the marbles, Tom faced an opponent who fought hard and well. In a game of chess, one tiny mistake can ruin even a strong position, let alone one with only a small edge for one player. And as the chess clocks tick away, and time runs out, the pressure to make just the right moves greatly increases. Fortunately for Tom, he kept his cool, and came up with a clever tactic that increased his lead: giving up his knight for his opponent's more powerful rook. Still, his opponent fought on and continued to put pressure on Tom's position until the very end of game. It was only after he fended off his opponent's last ploys, and finally won the game, that Tom could relax. This hard-fought contest had secured for him the top prize in the Under-1900 Section of the recently concluded Greater Boston Open Chess Tournament.



Thomas Guo

To those who aren't familiar with Tom, this achievement of a 16-year old against far older and more experienced players in a prestigious chess tournament, may seem like a surprise. But to his coach at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, Kevin Bartkovich, it's par for the course: "Thomas is a special person, talented in so many way." A native of Markham, Ontario, Canada, Tom is the embodiment of an well-rounded student, excelling in interests outside of chess, including competitions in math, computer science, and ice hockey. In the world of chess, he's competed in tournaments in Canada and the United States, and at the World Youth Championship in 2013 in the United Arab Emirates.

After the tournament, Thomas was gracious about his opponent's good play and objectively admitted his own mistakes during the event. Added to his many talents, these character traits ensure a bright future for him.

In the top ranked Open Section, it was again a case of round-up-the usual winners. Grandmaster Alexander Ivanov, 63, who these days has replaced legendary Senior Master John Curdo as the most active and successful player in New England, tied for first with local International Master Denys Shmelov, 33, who's recently gained notice as a chess coach of girl phenom, 16 year old Carissa Yip of Andover, who, in St. Louis, just gained the title of International Master herself, the youngest female player in the U.S. to do so.



**Carissa Yip wins
International Master title
in St. Louis, MO**

But the surprise was that the two senior champions were joined in the winner's circle by another 16-year old. Brandon Wu, a local Master, has had a fast rise in the rankings of late, but has gone relatively unnoticed, perhaps partly due to his low-key demeanor. In this tournament, he played strong chess and made it a triple tie for top honors, a real achievement competing against the older and more seasoned Ivanov and Shmelov.

In the strong Under 2100 Section, it was a matter of experience delayed. Michael Carey, 61, had played lots of chess in his youth, and gained significant success, including winning the Tennessee State Championship twice, as well as a Master title. Then, focusing on his career and raising a family, he stopped playing chess for 32 years! Now a Professor of Medicine and Public Health at Brown University and Director of the Centers for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine at The Miriam Hospital, he's scrubbed off the rust since returning to chess three years ago, and, as he aptly puts it, is once again enjoying "the beauty of the game, the competitive challenges, and the friendships afforded by chess." He looks forward to a semi-retirement with travel to interesting places all over the world with his wife, as well as playing in tournaments along the way. Finishing the sole winner in his Section, Mike has taken a happy next step on his future path.



Michael Carey

A theme emerged in the Under 1700 Section. Chess players are generally not known for their modesty, but veteran player Jim Hankard, 66, who can trace his chess career to the Bobby Fischer days, admitted after finishing first in this section, that he had an inferior position in all four games he played, and would have finished out of the money if Caissa, the chess goddess, had not caused his opponent to blunder a queen in the final round. Winners in other sections also admitted to getting into bad positions during the tournament and being saved from losses only by the unexpectedly poor moves of their opponents in critical situations. The role of luck is not a good argument to make in chess playing discussions as to what brings home the points. But from the evidence of the winner's play here, a more obvious psychological factor emerges. The winners all shared the common trait of *perseverance*. Skill at the game, natural or acquired, is of course paramount to success in chess, but the ability to keep fighting in difficult circumstances is a key emotional element. All the winners, amply displayed this trait.

Robert Tango, the First Prize winner in the Under 1500 Section, has a similar background to many other tournament players. He's played chess since the age of four, continued to play throughout the years in clubs, with family and friends, and online. But only after a recent move to Nashua, NH, did he decide to get serious about the game and enter the world of competitive tournament chess; that is, joining the official national (United States Chess Federation) and state (Massachusetts Chess Association) bodies of chess in this country. It is one thing to beat your Uncle Fred over and over in off-hand games, but any player who wants to up his game must join official tournaments that allow him to face the strongest players in his area. This is a big step. Of the estimated millions of people who play chess casually in the US, there are only 85,000 who are USCF members, serious players who seek to improve their game, and thus more fully enjoy all the pleasures and benefits of the Royal Game. After many years, Robert took that step. Untypically, he was able to win a tournament, after only a little more than a year of tournament chess.



Robert Tango

In the Under 1200 Section, it was again youth marching on. Two 14 year-olds finished for first with identical scores. Amit Piryatinsky won the first place trophy on tiebreak. Anand Chintapalli won the second place trophy, with the two players splitting the prize money evenly. In post-mortem comments on his games, Anand, who hails from Westborough, and whose outside interests include karate, displayed good understanding of important tactical and strategic themes which even many older players fail to understand.

It was Mike Carey who best captured the overall spirit of this 86th version of the annual GBO, "It was wonderful to see so many boys and girls playing chess, as well as people my age. New England is rich with opportunities!"

Arthur Barlas, for MACA

Some unedited games below.

[Event "Greater Boston Open"]

[Site "Westford, MA"]

[Date "2019.10.27"]

[Round "4"]

[White "Cameron Ruchholz"]

[Black "Thomas Guo"]

[Result "0-1"]

[TimeControl "G60 D5"]

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5. a3 Ba5 6. Qg4 Kf8 7. Nf3 Nc6 8. Bd2 cxd4 9. Nb5 Bxd2+ 10. Nxd2 Nxe5 11. Qxd4 Nc6 12. Qf4 Nf6 13. Be2 a6 14. Nc3 e5 15. Qh4 Bf5 16. O-O-O Nd4 17. Bd3 e4 18. Bf1 Qb6 19. Qg5 Bg4 20. Re1 Ne6 21. Qh4 Rc8 22. Nxd5 Nxd5 23. Qxg4 Qxf2 24. Bc4 e3 25. Ne4 Qf4 26. Qxf4 Ndx4 27. Bb3 Nd3+ 28. Kb1 Nxe1 29. Rxe1 Nd4 30. Rxe3 Nxb3 31. Rxb3 b5 32. Rd3 g6 33. Rd7 Kg7 34. Ng5 Kf6 35. h4 Rcf8 36. Ra7 h6 37. Rxa6+ Kg7 38. Ne4 Re8 39. Nc3 Re1+ 40. Ka2 Rb8 41. Rd6 b4 42. axb4 Rxb4 43. g3 Re3 44. Rd3 Rxd3 45. cxd3 Rd4 46. Ne4 Rxd3 47. b4 Rd4 0-1

October 27, 2019

Game 2

Robert Tango Jr. (1484) v. Michelle Chudnovsky (1191)

Annotated by Robert Tango Jr.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nc3

As I'm not fully versed in the main line of the Petrov Defense, I played Nc3 here.

3...Bb4 4.d3 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 d5 6.exd5 Nxd5 7.c4 Nb6 8.Nxe5?

As soon as I grabbed her pawn and placed my knight in the square, I realized she had 8...Qd4, but obviously it was already too late.

8...Qd4 9.Nxf7

White's best try, getting at least 2 pawns for the knight. Of course, if 9...Qxa1, then 10.Nxh8 and white is actually better there

9...Kxf7?!

Black is still somewhat better in this position, but I believe a better move would just be 9...0-0, still winning the knight while getting the king to safety. There wasn't really a rush to recapture the knight here.

10.Qh5+ g6 11.Qf3+ Kg7 12.Rb1

Threatening Bb2 next move.

12...Re8+ 13.Be2 Qg4?

This essentially equalized the position. Much better was 12...Bg4 instead, where it would force white to simplify the position by trading pieces while already down in material (e.g. 12...Bg4 13.Bb2 Qxb2 14.Rxb2 Bxf3 15.gxf3)

14.0-0!!

Seemingly sacrificing the bishop on e2 now. I thought for about 20 minutes on this move. I wanted to make sure I knew how to attack if Black took the bait.

14...Rxe2

A terrible blunder by Black, but I can't justify giving the move a "??" because I believe it was very difficult to see White's plan here. Much better was to just trade the queens with an equal position (e.g. 14...Qxf3 15.Bxf3)

15.Bb2+ Kh6?

The better (and only other) move is 15...Kg8. It loses considerable material, but 15...Kh6 runs into a mating net (e.g. 15...Kg8 16.Qf6 Qd7 17.Qh8+ Kf7 18.Qxh7+ Ke6 19.Qxg6+ Ke7 20.Ba3+ and Black has to now give up the queen to avoid mate).

16.Qf8+ Kh5 17.h3

A faster way to mate would have been via 17.Bc1 (e.g. 17.Bc1 g5 18.Qf7+ Kh6 19.Bb2)

17...Qf5 18.g4+ Kg5 19.Bc1+ Kh4 20.Qh6+ Qh5 21.gxh5 gxh5 22.Qg5+ Kxh3 23.Qg3#
