

**Joel Benjamin & Harold Scott**

# **Winning the World Open**

**Strategies for Success at America's Most Prestigious  
Open Chess Tournament**

**New In Chess 2021**

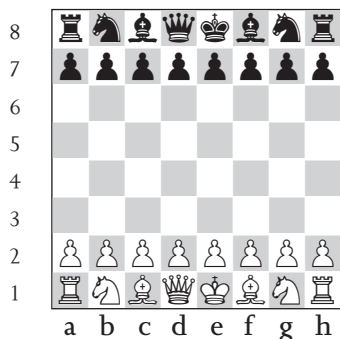
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## Explanation of symbols

### The chessboard with its coordinates:



- White to move
- Black to move
- ♔ King
- ♚ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White stands better
- ∓ Black stands better
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- = balanced position
- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- !?! interesting move
- ?! dubious move
- # mate
- ch championship
- zt zonal tournament
- izt interzonal tournament
- ct candidates tournament
- tt team tournament
- ol olympiad
- m match
- cr correspondence

# Acknowledgments

I (Joel) sometimes take the great and unique qualities of the World Open for granted; thank you to my friend and colleague Harold Scott for seeing them better and thinking of me for this project. It was a book I wanted to write without realizing it. It was my first go with a co-author since my debut with the late Eric Schiller in 1987 (!) but with way more work! I couldn't have even managed it alone. Harold was easy to work with and our visions were similar and, I believe, augmented by the presence of the other. Thanks, once again, to Allard Hoogland for his insights on how best to frame the World Open for this book.

This book required research of the human kind as well as conventional chess investigation. Our grandmaster 'heroes' interviews greatly informed the core of this book. Many thanks to Alex Yermolinsky, Greg Kaidanov, Alex Shabalov, Alex Goldin, Ilya Smirin, Dmitry Gurevich, John Fedorowicz, Larry Christiansen, Nick De Firmian, Varuzhan Akobian, Illia Nyzhnyk, Hikaru Nakamura, Leonid Yudasin, and Gata Kamsky for readily consenting to interviews. They filled in gaps in our knowledge and gave us insights into how master craftsmen strive for success in an important but underexplored field in chess culture: winning the big open tournament.

My co-author may think he is the 'fanboy' in this equation, but even with the understanding that my skills are more or less comparable to these guys, I am a huge fan of them as well. I wish I had learned some of their lessons when I was in my playing prime! I'm also thankful for the opportunity to strengthen old friendships and make new ones as well.

Many of these guys helped with follow-up questions and requests for game data, without hesitation, particularly Yermo, Alex G, Fed, Greg, and Ilya. Thanks also to Yermo for providing annotations, which I would not have had the temerity to ask for. Thank you to Michael Rohde for his interview, and to David Norwood for his cheerful correspondence.

I produced all the analysis/game annotations for this book (unless otherwise noted), with the support of everyone's close friend Stockfish, versions 9 64 and 11 64. I think Fishy actually creates more work for me, but does indeed cut down on my errors. All parts after the \*\*\* in the 'Heroes' chapters were written by me. Harold is primarily to completely responsible for the introductions to those chapters, the decades chapters, the Goichberg chapter, and the cheating chapter.

The project made me think of a few who have departed us. Walter Browne was a legendary figure in my early career. I would have loved our interview! Just thinking of him makes me proud to be a fellow 'six time'.

Michael Rohde expressed to us an appreciation of the familiarity of the World Open; a large part of that is reconnecting with familiar faces that you might go months without seeing. IM Richard Delaune was one of those people, a tenacious opponent who died tragically in 2004 at age 49. He would have loved this book; as a Chess Chow contributor he enhanced our chess lexicon with phrases like 'I went to the W'open but only got to watch the Gooms on television' (World Open, GMs, demo boards).

Carol Jarecki's passing shortly before the 2021 'return' World Open saddened us, but also reminded us of her integral presence as the floor arbiter (usually the only one) at so many World Opens.

Thankfully Bill Goichberg is still staying strong and focused on his magical creation at age 78. This book is, in part, for him. I haven't agreed with everything he has done with the World Open, but I know so many lives would be diminished without it. I also know I would not be a chess player at all without Bill.

Finally, I would like to personally dedicate this book to my father, Alan Benjamin. He was an important part of the World Open staff (and my chauffeur) for many years before his sudden passing in 2001. Dad, I wish my kids could have seen you in action.

\*\*\*

I (Harold) wish to thank my great friend and co-author Joel Benjamin for his dedication, patience and trust. Without him, my idea for this book would never have seen the light of day.

Special appreciation to Allard Hoogland for taking a chance on a first-timer.

I would like to thank Bill Goichberg for his help on the history and data for this book.

Harold Stenzel contributed with stories and fact checking for the chapter on Cheating in Chess.

I also want to acknowledge many of my friendships who have either inspired me or helped me along the way – Efstratios Grivas, Lars Bo Hansen, Jay Bonin, Paul Ascolese, Roger LaFlair, Tony Renna, Jon Schroer, John Kennedy, Sophia Rohde, Danny Rohde, Steve Immitt, David Hater, Kimberly Doo McVay, Steve Sperling, Eric Sangvic, Roger Sangvic, Alanna Katz, Abby Marshall, Alan Kantor.

Thanks to my wonderful sister Linda Ege and her husband Richard Ege.

I want to express my love to my sweetheart Beverly Cabarrubias for her love, patience and understanding.

I wish to personally dedicate this book to the loving memory of my mother and father Linda Scott and Harold Scott Sr.

# Preface

The circuit of American tournaments that grandmasters have plied their trade in for years relies almost entirely on the efforts of one organizer, Bill Goichberg. The Goichberg model – large prizes, large entry fees, and no frills – has stood the test of time. And the flagship tournament of the Goichberg empire, the immodestly titled World Open, has mesmerized grandmasters and amateurs alike for almost fifty years. For some it's an opportunity to reunite with chess friends or test themselves against stout competition. For others, it's the ultimate Swiss system challenge.

The World Open has been all those things for me, from a ten-year-old playing in the Booster section in the early years to a grizzled old veteran in the 21st century. I was surprised to read in a *New In Chess* article that I have the most World Open victories (clear, shared or playoff win) of any player. I am almost tempted to demand, in a bit of historical chess humor, that media refer to me as 'Six-time World Open Champion Joel Benjamin'. It's not the top line on my resume, but not all that far down either.

Over the years, the best American players have been joined by a changing assortment of foreign hopefuls in the quest for the Holy Grail of American tournaments. The games and the details are all here, but we wanted to investigate an untapped question: What enables grandmasters to emerge victorious from such classic battles of chess and endurance skills? We explore that issue with profiles of several winners of multiple tournaments, our 'heroes of the World Open', as we examine their strategies for success.

I am proud to have been personally involved in so many of these epic battles. I think that readers will not only gain insights into how great players get the job done, but also into how they may find their own achievement in the many lucrative class sections.

We see a wide spectrum of styles, personalities, and approaches among our champions. Some were emotional, others unflappable. Some preferred technical chess, others engaged in constant tactical battles. Some paced themselves, some went hard for wins in almost every game. There is no one way to win the World Open. But it certainly helps to be as adaptable as possible to opponent, tournament standing, round number, etc. At the same time, know who you are and what you do best. And it doesn't hurt to be psychologically tough, with all the pressure to win. Let's see how our heroes got it done.

Joel Benjamin, Waldwick NJ, USA  
November 2021

## Introduction

The World Open has become an iconic event in American Chess. For nearly fifty years, chess players have been making their annual pilgrimage to this tournament in the days surrounding the 4th of July holiday. What makes the World Open so unique and why do players travel near and far to compete in it? For starters, I think it has something to do with the title itself. The World Open is such a broad, far-reaching and inclusive name that you immediately recognize the significance of the event. Secondly, the atmosphere is simply different than any other tournament. After all, the prize fund is the highest, the stakes are more consequential and the tension in the air is considerably more palpable. For these reasons, the World Open remains the most highly-anticipated tournament of the year for many.

Since 1973, professionals and amateurs alike have come to the 'undisputed king' of American Swiss tournaments to fulfill their hopes and dreams. They mark the dates on their calendar and begin their preparations. For many, it is the allure of the substantial prize fund. Others may be seeking a norm for a title. Unfortunately, the vast majority end up finishing the tournament with their goals unfulfilled. Thus, there begins a period of reflection and re-evaluation of what could have been done differently on the long journey home.

American Swisses come with their own unique set of challenges. The schedule can often be grueling with multiple games per day. Often, there isn't enough time between rounds to have a proper meal and adequate rest. Many players check out of the hotel prior to the start of the morning round on the last day. It's not uncommon to see players bring their suitcases to the board. Tournaments in Europe and in other parts of the world are not faced with the same time constraints. The schedule is far less demanding – one game per day and you might even get in some sight-seeing if you desire. How do players conserve their energy for 10-12 hours of play per day? How do they ready themselves for battle round after round?

With sections consisting of hundreds of players there is a greater emphasis placed on winning in order to end up in the winner's circle. Seven points (7/9) may be good to get to the winner's circle in the Open section; however, it is often higher in the 'Under' sections. Seven and a half points (7½/9) may be good to win clear 1st in the Open section. In

1998, Ilya Smirin found out that 7½ was only good enough for clear 2nd. Alexander Goldin tallied an astonishing (8½/9). Why do some players always seem to be in contention and make the top boards their home? Sure, they may be strong players, but there are many examples of strong players winning a minimal prize or out of the money altogether.

My co-author Joel Benjamin and I set out to find answers as to why some players consistently find their way to the winner's circle. We have conducted a series of interviews with those who have won the World Open on multiple occasions (the 'Heroes of the World Open') and we attempt to answer why they have been so consistent in their efforts. [For the purposes of this book, we consider any clear or shared first to be a World Open victory.] Hundreds of games have been examined in the process and the reader will enjoy a fantastic collection of the very best and most essential games. Many games were crucial in deciding the outcome of the tournament. What was our heroes' approach to their critical games? Did they take any calculated risks in the game? What was their mindset when facing lower-rated competition? When did they play for a win or decide that a draw was an adequate result? Were there any special considerations in their choice of opening? These are some of the many questions that we wanted to explore to find out what it takes to Win the World Open.

During this process, we have discovered that there were many paths that were taken on the road to victory. We saw that our 'heroes' varied widely in both their style and approach. However, there was one unquestionable common factor between them – their fighting spirit! In order to play consistently at a high level, and in very tense situations, it requires a warrior who is willing to outfight and outlast their opponent.

Also, in our book we will present to the reader the rich history of the World Open from its humble beginnings to the juggernaut it has become today. There are many entertaining stories and scandals that the reader will enjoy. We will all see how the tournament has evolved over time.

The man who deserves credit for creating the World Open is William Goichberg. Bill has directed events in the United States dating back to the 1960's and there seems to be no stopping him. Even during the pandemic of 2020, Bill managed to move the World Open online via the Internet Chess Club (ICC). It is hard to imagine what American Chess would look like today without him.

We have included a selection of tactics from many of the fierce battles that have been fought at the World Open. Many of these games could stand on their own merits, but space limits us from listing the whole game. In this section, you will find many brilliant sacrifices and dazzling



combinations that you can solve as part of your preparation for your next World Open!

I hope you enjoy the book and find the information useful for your own success in open tournaments.

Harold Scott, Bronx NY, USA  
November 2021

## CHAPTER 1

# The History of the World Open



The World Open was the brainchild of William 'Bill' Goichberg (see photo above) and its first edition was held in 1973. However, Bill's humble beginnings as a tournament director and organizer began about a decade prior. In 1962, he had played in the New York City Junior Championship, which was open to players under the age of 21. The following year the tournament was not held, it was also Bill's last year of eligibility, and he was disappointed about not being able to play. The following year, the tournament was not going to be run as well. Having heard this, Bill decided to give it a shot and run the tournament himself. So, he approached Hans Kmoch, Secretary and Manager of the Manhattan Chess Club, and asked him if he could get permission to use the club to run the tournament. Bill vividly remembers his conversation with Mr. Kmoch.

Hans asked, 'Have you ever run a tournament before?'

And Bill replied, 'No, but I've played in a lot of them and I think I understand how the pairing system works. I think I understand everything and I think I can run it.'

Kmoch then, somewhat discouragingly, said, 'Oh, it's very difficult! You don't know how difficult it is. It's ok with me if you use the club, but I strongly recommend you get a lot of help, and speak to the people who ran the tournament the last time and make sure you're ready.'

Bill couldn't fathom what could be so difficult about running the tournament, there had been only 24 players in the 1962 tournament, and it seemed very easy for him to run a similar-sized event. In the 1962 tournament there were three directors: Aben Rudy, Julius Stoppock, and

William Lombardy. Lombardy writes in his recap of the tournament in *Chess Life Magazine*:

*For their untiring efforts in organizing, directing, and making the tournament an overall success, special thanks are due Aben Rudy and Julius Stoppock who must have walked at least fifteen miles each round, setting up clocks, giving out scoresheets, and scoring the results.*

The tournament was scheduled the tournament for July 10-12, 1964. Bill started to do mailings about the tournament, a practice that continues to this day. He also heard that at the 1964 World's Fair there was going to be a junior tournament. So, Bill went there to hand out flyers promoting the 1964 New York City Junior Championship. In preparation for the tournament, Bill decided not to consult the directors of the previous tournament, as recommended by Kmoch, and chose to run the tournament himself without the aid of other directors. Bill also thought, why hand out the clocks or scoresheets when you could ask the players to come and get them? He had a clear idea of how he wanted to run the tournament and decided to rid the tournament of the inefficiencies that had plagued the event previously. In fact, the tournament ran so smoothly that Bill had nothing to do most of the time. So, after each game finished, Bill would play over each game out of curiosity. The 1964 tournament also drew 10 more players than the 1962 edition did. And this was how it all began...

After running his first successful tournament, Bill wasn't struck by the idea of running more tournaments yet, but was more focused on how to make this one more successful the following year. He instituted some new changes: firstly, he expanded the tournament to 8 rounds over two weekends, rather than the 6 rounds over 1 weekend. Next, he asked the hotel for more space in addition to the club. During the 1950's and 1960's, the Manhattan Chess Club was located within the Henry Hudson Hotel on W. 57th St and 9th Ave. The 1965 New York City Junior Championship tournament was an overwhelming success! It drew 92 players, over the weekends of August 21-22 and August 28-29, 1965, which at the time was the largest turnout ever for a USCF-rated junior event. In fact, the 1965 tournament had more players than the 1961, 1962, and 1964 tournaments combined.

After the 1965 New York City Junior Championship, Bill started running more tournaments. At first, he was adding additional junior events, such as the Jamaica Junior Open, King's County Junior Open and Westchester

## CHAPTER 3

# Walter Browne



(Photo by Rob Mieremet,  
New In Chess Archive)

**Born:** 1949, Sydney, Australia  
**Died:** 2015, Las Vegas, Nevada (age 66)

**World Open 1st Place Finishes:**  
1973, 1979, 1989

**Favorite Player:** Bobby Fischer

Walter Browne was an Australian-born American Grandmaster who became America's greatest hope to fill the void left by Bobby Fischer. There were some similarities between Bobby and Walter. They both attended Erasmus Hall High School in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn, although Bobby was several years older. They were friends who would sometimes spar and have blitz sessions against each other. They were both known to be hard workers at their craft and they were both fierce competitors against those who had to face them. They also employed the Najdorf Sicilian as their main weapon of choice against 1.e4.

Walter became one of two players to be awarded the GM-title in 1970 – the other was a fellow by the name of Anatoly Karpov. By comparison, it was much harder to achieve the title in those days than it is today. Walter also had a couple of nicknames that were appropriate and well earned. The first was that of 'Six-time', which of course refers to his six

U.S. Championship titles. The second was ‘King of the Swiss’, as he won countless tournaments in America during his era of dominance – the 1970’s, 1980’s and early 1990’s. What was Walter’s secret sauce? Well, it was his immense fighting spirit and the great energy that he brought to the board. If you were to witness a game of Walter’s, you would see a vast array of movements, gestures, and facial expressions. It was obvious that he expended great energy at the board and you couldn’t help but think that he gave it his all on the 64 squares.

He was also known for his fearlessness and he would revel in playing complex positions. Walter was a superb calculator and was often able to see deeper into the position than his opponent. The always eloquent Yasser Seirawan pens in his Foreword to Walter’s book *The Stress of Chess... and its Infinite Finesse: In the many games we contested we held a deep post-mortem. Often these lasted for hours and during them it was obvious, time in and time out, that Walter had out-calculated me. We had looked at the same variations, but he had calculated them more deeply than I had. In many instances Walter went far beyond the point where I had stopped, being satisfied with a line. However, this can be a double-edged sword. As with many other ‘truth-seekers’ time pressure can become a factor. Often, Walter found himself in brutal time scrambles and many times he came out of it in even better shape than he entered it. He was a fantastic blitz player and those skills would often see him through the rough waters before the time control is met. There were also times that being in time pressure was to his detriment.*

### **Playing against a Time Pressure Addict**

It has often been said that the best way to deal with time trouble is by not getting into it to begin with. While this is great advice, what we don’t have control over is the speed and pace of play of our opponent. Some players are well-known to be habitual time-pressure addicts – our heroes Walter Browne and Nick De Firmian fall into this category – and it is important to know how to handle such situations. It is important to keep in mind that your opponent can be very dangerous in their time pressure, as they have nothing to lose. Sometimes a player’s descent into time pressure can be a ploy, if they know their ‘customer’ well enough or their position is desperate enough.

In your opponent’s time pressure, it is most important to breathe deeply and remain CALM. The worst thing that you could do is fall into the psychological trap of blitzing out moves in your opponent’s time pressure. Nikolai Krogius talks about this in his book *Psychology in Chess: In this case an actual equalization of time takes place, but no account is made for the fact that the opponent is emotionally attuned to rapid play and understands the importance of each*

move. Also, there is a tendency to play forcing moves or simple threats by the player with the time advantage. However, these are the very moves that the player with less time is analyzing and the responses usually come quickly.

\*\*\*

The World Open premiered as Walter Browne was ascending to the top spot in American chess. He moved to California in 1973 but would come back to New York for the World Open.

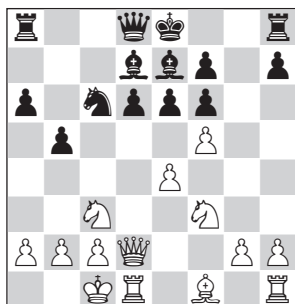
He didn't have much competition in his first year, but a nice win over a strong British player showcases Browne's commitment to patience and exactitude even in sharp positions.

Game 12 Sicilian Defense

**Walter Browne** 2530  
**Robert Bellin** 2320

1st World Open, New York 1973 (5)

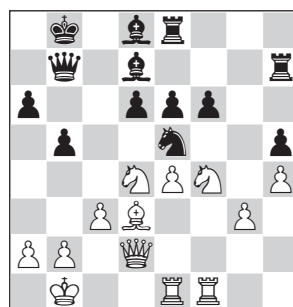
**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 ♗c6 6.♖g5 e6 7.♞d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♖d7 9.f4 ♖e7 10.♗f3 b5 11.♗xf6 gxf6 12.f5**



I've always felt that this Richter-Rauzer Variation is difficult for Black to play. He has to manage

pawn weaknesses and figure out where to place his king. Browne plays with infinite patience.

**12...h5 13.♖d3 ♜b6 14.♗e2 0-0-0 15.♗f4 ♜dg8 16.g3 ♗e5 17.♞hf1 ♗b8 18.♗b1 ♞h7 19.c3 ♞e8 20.♗d4 ♖d8 21.h4 ♜b7 22.fxe6 fxe6 23.♞de1**



**23...♖c8**

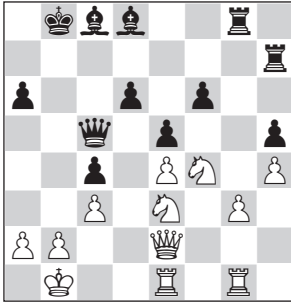
Walter has slipped a bit, and Bellin can take advantage with 23...♗xd3! 24.♗xd3 (24.♞xd3 e5) 24...♞g8 and Black has some counterplay.

**24.♖e2 ♗c4**

24...♞xe4+ 25.♖d3 was an aesthetic way to win the exchange.

**25.♗xc4 bxc4 26.♗c2 ♞c6 27.♞e2 ♞c5 28.♗e3 ♞g8 29.♞g1 e5?**

Bellin finally blinks. Conceding outposts to the knights will be fatal. Only with super cool defense can Black survive, like 29...a5 hoping for 30.♞xc4?! ♞xc4 31.♗xc4 ♖a6, holding White to a small advantage.



30. ♖fd5 ♜hg7 31. ♚xh5 ♜xg3  
32. ♜xg3 ♜xg3 33. ♚h8 ♙a5 34. h5  
♜h3 35. h6 ♜h2

Black has finally prepared a threat. While there are other solutions, I have to admire Browne's commitment to taking his time.



36. ♙a1! ♚b5 37. ♜b1 f5  
Whatever Black tries, the h-pawn will win.  
38. exf5 ♙b7 39. ♚g7+ ♙a8 40. h7  
♚e8 41. ♚g8 1-0

The strongest player of the seventies, Browne was a legendary figure to American juniors. He had a target on his back; every junior wanted a shot, and a few made the most of it. Browne was an uncompromising player, especially in his early career. Like Fischer, he

always wanted to win. He would occasionally take liberties against players who had not yet earned his respect. We have already seen how 15-year-old Michael Rohde took him down. Five years later, I got my shot at the same age as Rohde.

Game 13 Queen's Indian Defense  
**Joel Benjamin** 2320  
**Walter Browne** 2540

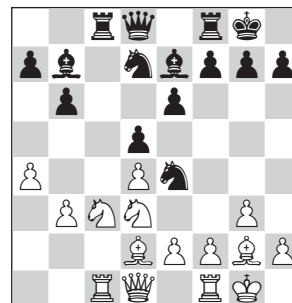
7th World Open, Philadelphia 1979 (3)

1. d4 ♘f6 2. ♘f3 e6 3. c4 b6 4. g3 ♙a6  
You guys may not believe this, but I had never seen this move before. Hey, it was still pretty rare in 1979, and Al Gore hadn't invented the Internet yet.

5. b3 ♙b4+ 6. ♙d2 ♙e7 7. ♙g2 c6  
8. ♘c3 d5 9. 0-0 ♘bd7 10. cxd5

In later years grandmasters stopped caring about the c4-pawn in the Catalan. I could not contemplate the more popular 10. ♙f4 or, for that matter, 10.e4!?

10... cxd5 11. a4 ♙b7 12. ♘e1 0-0  
13. ♘d3 ♘e4 14. ♜c1 ♜c8



15. ♘xe4?!

There was really no reason to give ground. White should have made a

draw with something like 15. ♖e1, though not with great pride.

**15...dxe4 16. ♘b2 e5**

Black could comfortably keep his doubled pawns but I react poorly in any case.

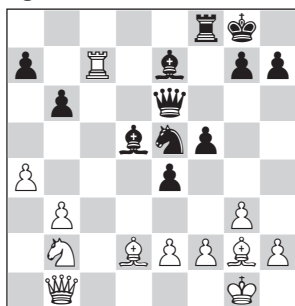
**17. ♖xc8 ♜xc8 18.dxe5**

I could be pushed into passivity too easily. 18. ♖e3 is stronger.

**18...♘xe5 19. ♜b1 f5 20. ♖c1 ♜e6**

**21. ♖c7 ♖d5**

It seems logical to centralize, but 21... ♖a6 and 21... ♖b8 are both more accurate, preserving a solid advantage.



**22.b4?**

Trading bad pieces for good ones can save an ugly position. After 22. ♘c4! ♘xc4 (22... ♖xc4 23.bxc4 ♘xc4 24. ♖c3 with equal play) 23.bxc4 ♖xc4 24. ♖xa7 White somehow manages to equalize. I might have been scared of 22... ♖d8 23. ♖xa7 ♘c6 24. ♖a6 ♘d4, but White may be okay even if he loses a pawn.

**22...♘c6**

This looks promising, but even stronger was 22... ♖d6! with the idea 23. ♖xa7 ♖b8, trapping the rook.

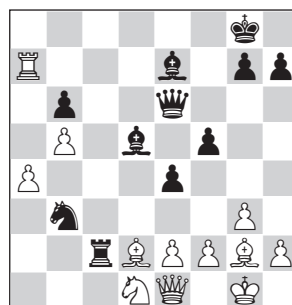
**23.b5 ♘d4 24. ♜e1?!**

The knight has to be challenged. I was probably afraid of 24.e3 ♘f3+.

**24...♖c8**

24... ♖f6 was stronger. I think it's difficult to see which threatening looking moves will be harder to meet.

**25. ♖xa7 ♖c2 26. ♘d1 ♘b3**



**27. ♖b4?**

Sheer panic. 27. ♖e3 surprisingly holds, even though White can hardly move constructively.

**27...♖xb4 28. ♜xb4 ♖c1**

Oops. The knight goes bye-bye.

**29. ♜e1 ♜d6 30. ♖h3 ♖e6 31. ♜g2 ♜xd1 32. ♜xd1 ♖xd1 33. ♖b7 ♖d6 0-1**

Though the computer takes some luster from this game, we see the Grandmaster playing with great energy, while the kid is pushed along in a defensive mentality. I was clearly not ready for prime time, but my esteemed opponent gave me some incentive for the future. Upon arrival he related, 'I thought I'd played you before, but it was that other kid Root.' Doug Root, a talented teenager from California, was if anything even skinnier than I was, and, I would like to think, somewhat geekier. I thought, in



## CHAPTER 10

# 1990-1999 – The Fall of the Iron Curtain

| Year | Dates            | # Players | Total Prize Fund | City         |
|------|------------------|-----------|------------------|--------------|
| 1990 | June 30 – July 4 | 1158      | \$178,600        | Philadelphia |
| 1991 | July 1-7         | 1255      | \$200,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1992 | June 29 – July 5 | 1126      | \$150,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1993 | June 29 – July 5 | 1135      | \$150,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1994 | June 28 – July 4 | 1269      | \$160,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1995 | June 28 – July 4 | 1299      | \$160,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1996 | June 29 – July 7 | 1274      | \$180,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1997 | June 28 – July 6 | 1229      | \$180,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1998 | June 27 – July 5 | 1331      | \$190,000        | Philadelphia |
| 1999 | June 26 – July 5 | 1417      | \$200,000        | Philadelphia |

The 1990's were a transformational decade for the World Open. With the collapse of the Soviet Union came an ease of travel restrictions and the field was noticeably different than just a few years before. What happened next for American chess was beneficial, as it brought many new players who came to play and would call America their home. Yermolinsky, Shabalov, Goldin and Kaidanov, among others, would contribute much to chess in the U.S. in the nineties and in the new millennium. 1990 did produce a clear winner in Russian IM Igor Glek who finished with  $7\frac{1}{2}/9$ . There was a bit of controversy involving some of the Soviet contingency in the last round. You will want to read about it in the 'Cheating in Chess' chapter.

### 1990

There were a couple new changes at the World Open in 1990. One was the option to drop out and re-enter the tournament with  $\frac{1}{2}$ -point byes for games missed for an additional fee. This option was made available for any section and you could re-enter a different section providing your rating was under the limits for that section. The

other new feature in 1990 was the creation of a consolation prize fund for GM's scoring +2 or better. This resulted in a prize of \$650, which was somewhat helpful in offsetting expenses. The 'Goichberg' Way is to continually innovate and look for ways to draw more players to an event and it has been successful over the years.

When I first saw Max Dlugy's 1990 article in *New In Chess* magazine entitled 'Chess Crimes in Philly', I got very excited as I thought it was going to be about the group of Soviets who were coming to play as a consortium. However, it was about a sailor who left the navy to play in the National Open. The problem was after the event he didn't return to his unit. He moved on to Philly to play in the World Open. Max's article continued, *When his mother and sister realized that he would be up for desertion if absent for more than thirty days, they contacted local police to find him before his time was up. Even when warned that police were on the way the Caissa-inspired sailor refused to leave the tournament. He wanted to get in just one more game. Now I don't advocate this for our men and women in uniform; however, I do admire this guy in some small way.*



**Michael Rohde**

Michael Rohde is a two-time first-place finisher in the World Open – in 1981 and 1989. Michael is also an author and is well-known as a top teacher and coach in New

York City. He was also a regular writer for *Chess Life* with his 'Game of the Month' column from 1991 to 2006. As a player, Michael is known for his attacking style, and he has received Brilliancy Prizes in the 1986, 1987 and 1988 U.S. Championships. We offer you a duo of miniatures from Michael in an opening variation that he has had quite a bit of success with over the years – the Lisitsin Gambit.

Game 65 Dutch Defense

|                           |      |
|---------------------------|------|
| <b>Michael Rohde</b>      | 2555 |
| <b>Oscar Castro Rojas</b> | 2320 |

18th World Open, Philadelphia 1990 (2)

1. ♖f3 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3. ♘g5 e5 4.d4 exd4 5. ♗xe4 ♗c6 6. ♙c4 ♗f6 7. ♙g5 ♙e7 8. ♗xf6+ ♙xf6 9. ♖h5+ g6 10. ♖e2+ ♙e7 11. ♙d5 ♖f8 12.h4 ♖f5 13. ♙xc6 dxc6 14. ♗d2 h6 15.g4 ♖f7 16.h5 ♖d5 17. ♗e4 hxg5 18.hxg6 ♖f4 19. ♖h8+ ♗d7 20.f3 b6 21.g7 ♙b7 22.0-0-0 c5 23. ♖e1 ♖f7 24. ♗g3 ♖xg7 25. ♖e6# 1-0

Game 66 Dutch Defense

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| <b>Michael Rohde</b>  | 2555 |
| <b>Semon Palatnik</b> | 2440 |

18th World Open, Philadelphia 1990 (4)

1. ♖f3 f5 2.e4 fxe4 3. ♘g5 ♗f6 4.d3 e5 5.dxe4 ♙c5 6. ♙c4 ♖e7 7. ♙f7+ ♗f8 8. ♙b3 h6 9. ♗f3 d6 10. ♗c3 g5 11.h4 g4 12. ♗h2 ♙b4 13.f3 ♙xc3+ 14.bxc3 ♖g7 15.fxg4 ♗e8 16.0-0 ♗c6 17.g5 hxg5 18. ♙xg5 ♗xe4 19. ♙f7+ 1-0

## 1991

In 1991, there was a four-way tie at the top of the leaderboard. Gata Kamsky, Alex Yermolinsky, Johann Hjartarson and Semon Palatnik all finished with 7½/9. For Gata and Yermo, this was their first time finishing first at the World Open, but certainly not their last. This year, Goichberg added the new option of alternate schedules. Players had the option of either a 4-day, a 5-day, or a 7-day schedule. After the 5th round, all schedules would merge into one big section at the standard time control of 30/90, 20/60, SD/60. A benefit of the alternate schedule system is that a player could re-enter another schedule without having to take byes at all. A clean and fresh start! There were some weird moments that occurred in the 1991 Open. The first two tales involve Bill Lombardy, Bobby Fischer's second in Reykjavik just 19 years earlier. In his round 3 game against Soviet IM Vladislav Fedorov, Lombardy's flag had fallen. But Lombardy claimed that his opponent had made an illegal move. An illegal move would mean that two minutes be added to Bill's clock. However, there was no impartial witness that could substantiate Bill's claim. Therefore, Goichberg had no choice but to rule against Lombardy. A late witness did appear and supported Lombardy's version of the events. Upon hearing this new information, Goichberg reversed his decision and ruled the

game a draw. While all this was being litigated in the TD room, the next round started and Lombardy arrived at his board 15 minutes late as a result. Goichberg entered the playing hall, explained the situation to Lombardy's opponent Leonid Yudasin, and reset the clock. However, Yudasin grabbed the clock and deducted the 15 minutes. Goichberg adjusted the clock and warned Yudasin of a forfeit if he reset the clock again. And Yudasin did just that and was forfeited! Lombardy then offered to solve the situation by offering a draw. Yudasin declined and told Goichberg he would not accept the half point. After reconsideration, he asked if the draw offer was on the table and Goichberg, after checking with Lombardy, said indeed it was if he asked Lombardy in person. Yudasin didn't go for it. However, after a night to think about it, he called Lombardy and the point was halved through peaceful means. Our next incident was between Helgi Olafsson and Zurab Azmaiparashvili. In Chess Chow magazine, Joel Benjamin wrote of the dispute: *After a dispute over whose equipment would be used, Helgi refused to play Zurab at all. It turns out that there was more to this than met the eye. Apparently the two had once previously come to blows over a personal matter. All well and good, but should you have the right to play someone you don't like? Olafsson instead played Sherzer, an easier opponent on paper but a tiger*

as things turned out. The biggest losers were Fedorowicz and Dolmatov, who were unhappy to play each other in the re-pair, and agreed to a quick draw.

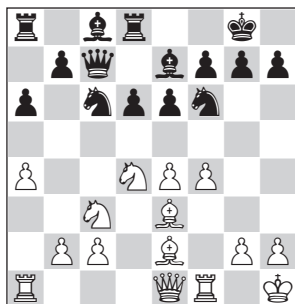


Alex Sherzer

Here is the game between Olafsson and Sherzer.

Game 67 Sicilian Defense  
**Alex Sherzer** 2460  
**Helgi Olafsson** 2525  
 19th World Open, Philadelphia 1991 (7)

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙e3 e6 7.a4 ♗c6 8.♙e2 ♙e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f4 ♖c7 11.♘h1 ♜d8 12.♗e1**



**12...♙d7**

Black's last move set up 12...♗xd4 13.♙xd4 e5 14.fxe5 dxe5 when 15.♖g3 is impossible because the rook is attacking the bishop. But Olafsson opts for a more complicated game.

**13.♖g3 ♙f8 14.♜ad1 ♜ac8 15.♗f3 ♗b4?**

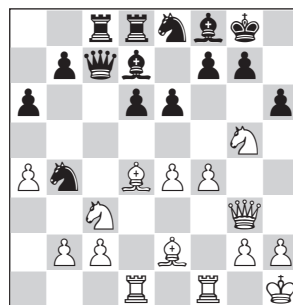
Black could have got good counterplay with 15...d5 but it's surprising how things turn so bad after this innocent looking mistake.

**16.♙d4 ♗e8?**

16...♙e7 17.e5 dxe5 18.♙xe5 ♖b6 19.a5 ♖xa5 20.♗e4 is a white initiative but with nothing decided: 20...♗h5.

**17.♗g5 h6**

Now comes a hail of sacrifices.



**18.♙h5! hxg5**

18...g6 19.♗xf7 splat!

**19.fxg5 g6**

19...♙c6 20.♙xf7+ ♖xf7 21.♜xf7 ♗xf7 22.♜f1+ ♙e7 23.g6+-.

**20.♙xg6 fxg6 21.♜xf8+ ♗xf8**

**22.♖f3+ ♘g8 23.♜f1 ♗f6 24.♖xf6 e5 25.♖xg6+ 1-0**

If that wasn't enough excitement for one tournament, there is one more

story from the final round game between Patrick Wolff and Gata Kamsky. During the game, Gata's father Rustam observed Patrick talking with some other American players. At one point, Rustam chose to confront IM Victor Frias and a heated discussion ensued. Frias was asked to stop talking. But then he responded to Rustam by saying, 'We are not in Russia.' After that Rustam suggested that they go outside to handle the matter, and we all know what that meant. There was no evidence against Wolff to prove any wrongdoing, of course. And it didn't appear that Gata had been affected by what had transpired. The game reached its natural conclusion with Gata winning the last round game against Wolff. Gata was declared champ after a playoff. The game between Kamsky and Wolff is analyzed in greater detail in the chapter on Kamsky.

## 1992

One thing is for certain, the 90's were a decade of dominant individual performances. No other decade has had as many clear winners and there were also four performances with at least a score of 8/9. In 1992, Gregory Kaidanov turned in a powerful performance to win first place by a full point with 8/9 and a performance rating of 2850. He capped off his tournament with a win against Alex Goldin in the final round. Goichberg noted, 'He has not failed

to win one of my tournaments yet.' His only blemish came in round 6 with a loss to Joel Benjamin.

## Fool Me Twice

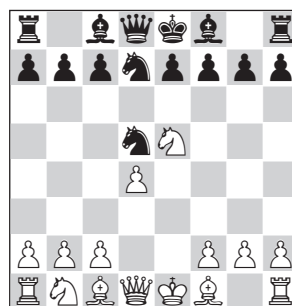
Game 68 Alekhine's Defence

**Joel Benjamin** 2555

**Gregory Kaidanov** 2550

20th World Open, Philadelphia 1992 (6)

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3  
dxe5 5.♗xe5 ♘d7!?



In later years Kaidanov would streamline his repertoire and open 1...e5 almost exclusively, but he was unpredictable in his early American days. This provocation, famously essayed by Larsen against Tal in 1965, was actually played against me by Bagirov in the Manila Olympiad, which I had just returned from. There I contemplated 6.♘xf7 ♖xf7 7.♔h5+ ♜e6 8.c4 which I 'knew' to be strong for White after reading Leonid Shamkovich's article in *Chess Life*. But my memory is far from perfect, and I wasn't going to risk that in a team tournament. So I played 6.♘f3 and eventually drew. I figured I would look over some

analysis after the Olympiad to be ready for the next time. But who plays this line anyway?

I thought 5...♟d7 served best with surprise value, so I was shocked to see Kaidanov repeat this move under the circumstances. Even so, it seemed prudent not to pull the trigger on the sacrifice.

**6.♙c4 ♘xe5 7.dxe5 ♙e6 8.0-0 g6**

**9.♟d2 ♙g7 10.♟f3 c6 11.♚d4**

Patrick Wolff wrote in *Chess Life* that my experience playing Lev ‘Uncle’ Alburt in the Alekhine taught me the queen belongs on h4.

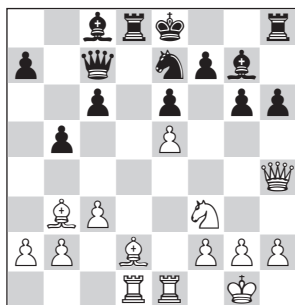
**11...♚c7 12.♞e1 ♞d8 13.♙b3 ♚b6**

**14.♚h4 h6**

This prevents the annoying ♙c1-h6 but now castling becomes problematic.

**15.♟d4 ♙c8 16.c3 e6 17.♙d2 ♟e7**

**18.♞ad1 ♚c7 19.♟f3 b5?**



It's not easy to be patient in an unpleasant position, but Black needed to ‘do no harm’.

**20.c4 bxc4 21.♚xc4**

It seems Greg forgot the queen could recapture.

**21...0-0 22.♙b4**

The price of castling was too high, and Black's position soon crumbles.

**22...♞xd1 23.♞xd1 ♞d8 24.♙d6 ♚b7**

**25.♟d4 c5 26.♚xc5 ♙f8 27.♚a5**

**♞d7 28.♙a4 ♞xd6 29.exd6 ♟d5**

**30.♚d8 ♟f4 31.♙c6 ♚a6 32.d7**

**♙xd7 33.♚xd7 1-0**

After the game, I just had to know...

‘You know I just had this opening against Bagirov?’ Kaidanov told me he did. ‘Didn't you think I would have studied it after the game?’ I asked. ‘I thought you wouldn't have time’ he replied, unfortunately on the mark.

But there was another mystery which was only answered during our research for the book. Kaidanov had spent some time with Shabalov before the tournament. Shabba, who was a teammate of Bagirov, showed Kaidanov some new analysis on this line.

This year's event featured a ‘no talking’ rule. After the previous year's Open this was probably a good idea. The signs were posted not only in English, but also in Russian and Spanish. Alex Fishbein ‘loosely’ translated the signs to Russian and Luis Bernardo Hoyos-Millan took care of the Spanish translation. No incidents were reported after this new rule was enacted.

There were a few reports of buy-and-sell offers from Russian players in the last round. All three offers were flatly refused and reported to the TD office at the start of the round. The two GM's tried to ‘dump’ their games for cash considerations. A female player

in the Open section offered to buy a win from her opponent. She went on to lose her game. She was having an excellent result in the tournament. However, she won't be remembered for her earlier excellent play, as it was overshadowed by her unethical behavior.

### 1993

1993 was known for a player by the name of 'John Von Neumann' who played in the Open Section. However, this was not his real name and, even worse, he had no real chess ability. This was the first documented case of cheating by the use of computer assistance. The details are rather interesting and we talk about it extensively in the 'Cheating in Chess' chapter. Another unfortunate crisis occurred at this year's open when a local pumping station failed. The consequences were that the hotel was left without water, which also meant no air-conditioning and no showers. Not exactly ideal conditions when you have over 1100 participants playing together in close quarters. Fortunately, the problem didn't linger for more than half a day.

The tournament was won by Alex Yermolinsky with 7½/9. Finishing just behind him in a tie from 2nd -7th place were Gata Kamsky, Alex Shabalov, Alexander Ivanov, Lubomir Ftacnik, Walter Browne and Alonso Zapata. Yermo won 7

games in the tournament with a draw to Kamsky in the final round and a 4th round loss against Lev Albur.

The personable Slovakian GM Lubomir Ftacnik stumbled horribly in his first round against a talented 16-year-old who would go on to win the National High School Championship.

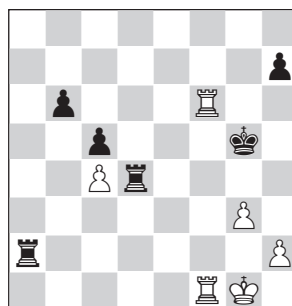
Game 69 Grünfeld Indian Defense

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| <b>David Arnett</b>    | 2335 |
| <b>Lubomir Ftacnik</b> | 2535 |

21st World Open, Philadelphia 1993 (1)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♘g7  
 4.♗c3 d5 5.♙g5 ♘e4 6.♚c1 c5  
 7.♙h6 ♙xd4 8.e3 ♙xc3+ 9.bxc3  
 ♙e6 10.♙d3 ♘d6 11.cxd5 ♙xd5  
 12.0-0 ♘c6 13.e4 ♙xe4 14.♙xe4  
 ♘xe4 15.♚f4 ♘d6 16.♘e5 f6  
 17.♘xc6 bxc6 18.♙g7 g5 19.♚f3  
 ♖g8 20.♙xf6 exf6 21.♚xc6+  
 ♙f7 22.♖ad1 ♙c8 23.♚a6 ♚b6  
 24.♚xb6 axb6 25.♖xd6 ♖a8 26.f4  
 ♖xa2 27.fxg5 ♖xg5 28.♖dx6+ ♙g7  
 29.g3 ♖d5 30.c4 ♖d4 31.♖f7+ ♙g6  
 32.♖7f6+ ♙g5??

After 32...♙g7 White would have had nothing but perpetual check.



## CHAPTER 24

# Cheating in Chess

With the allure of large prize funds comes the temptation to gain through nefarious means. Just like many have tried to 'break the house' in Las Vegas, the game of chess has had its fair share of those who have tried to beat the system. And the World Open is often their target! As if the challenge of running a tournament of over 1,300 players smoothly isn't enough, tournament directors need to be on their toes to keep the integrity of the tournament intact.

### Sandbaggers and Ringers

Before computers became strong enough to be of assistance to a player, the chief concern that a tournament organizer would have is a player who was sandbagging. This is when a player intentionally performs poorly in a tournament or series of tournaments to purposely lower their rating, so that they can play in a lower section. To combat this problem, the USCF had established rating floors. However, this in itself was not sufficient, therefore CCA created minimum ratings for certain players. For example, one player tried to enter the U1600 section of the World Open in 1998. Bill Goichberg assigned this guy a CCA minimum rating of 1600, as Bill had noticed that this player had performed great at the New York Open and that he had scored zero points in two subsequent events.

Larry Christiansen mentioned to us that there was a guy who hung out at Harvard Square who would brag about winning the Class D, C, B and A sections of the World Open back in the late 80's and early 90's. He was clearly a player of Master strength, but played so infrequently that his old rating was very low. Larry couldn't help think of the poor fellow from Nebraska, hypothetically speaking, who would drive to the World Open only to run into a buzzsaw. Doesn't seem fair, does it?

### The Consortium

The composition of the field at the World Open drastically changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Prior to that, the top of the crosstable read like a Who's Who of American Chess with names like Browne, Christiansen, De Firmian, Seirawan, Benjamin, Rohde and Fedorowicz. Then the ex-Soviets came, and it was never quite the same. The tournament became a lot stronger and it was more difficult to make it to the winner's circle.



In the past, Soviet players only received a small fraction of the prizes they earned. The lion's share was taken by the Sports Committee. This was the case even for a great player like Mikhail Tal. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, however, they were now grandmasters of their own destiny – free to keep their profits in their entirety. Many players flocked to the World Open in search of prizes that seemed like a fortune to them. There was only one problem though. Some of the Soviets agreed to work as a team. They had decided that in the critical final rounds, if they were paired against one another the game needed to be decisive. Their logic was correct because a decisive result would generate a higher overall prize between the two players than if they drew the game. The loser would be given a share of the winner's purse. In essence, the loser would be given 'insurance' for his contribution. And, in some cases, if there was a last round pairing between two members of the Consortium, and they were separated by half a point, it was decided that the player with the higher score would win the game. I want it to be clear that not all players who came from the former Soviet Union were a part of this scheme. For some players this was out of the question, as they were hoping to make America their home and didn't want to have a reputation for such things.

Alexander Shabalov recounts a story from 1990 in which prior to the last round he went to the sauna of the Adam's Mark Hotel. The sauna also happened to be a sort-of 'headquarters' to the Consortium, as Alex would say. When he arrived, Shabalov was asked by Nukhim Rashkovsky who was going to win in his last round game against Ilya Smirin. Shabalov responded by saying that they were not playing, which meant that neither player was going to take chances and a short draw would be the result. However, Rashkovsky also went on to say that in the Tseshkovsky-Glek game there would be a result. He didn't tell Alex who was going to win, but he was just telling him that there was going to be a result! Knowing this information could have been important for Shabalov and Smirin as they were going into their game knowing that there was going to be someone ahead of them at  $7\frac{1}{2}$  points. However, both Ilya and Alex wanted no part of this conspiracy. And, in fact, they drew their game relatively quickly with no particular benefit to either player, as both players finished with 7 points. After the game, Alex Yermolinsky recalls that Rashkovsky came up to Ilya and 'Shabba' and said, 'You two idiots, didn't you go to school? Don't you know anything about mathematics? If either of you had won, you would have won a lot more money.'

Meanwhile, Walter Browne and Ferdinand Hellers smoked the peace pipe and agreed to a draw after 22 moves with both players finishing at 7 points. That left one more battle of players with  $6\frac{1}{2}$  points. Vitaly

Tseshkovsky had the white pieces against Igor Glek. Now, Shabalov believes that Glek may have thought he was playing a real game. However, Rashkovsky, Tseshkovsky and the rest of the Russians certainly were aware that the game would be thrown to him. Now, being that Tseshkovsky had the white pieces it would have been more logical for him to get the win. However, they knew that Glek would never agree to this. So, Tseshkovsky agreed to lose as he was already an older player and he would still be compensated for his part.

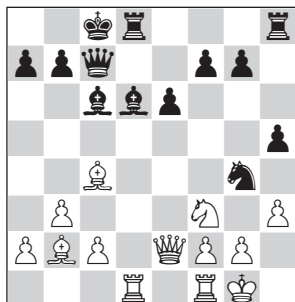
Here is the game between Tseshkovsky and Glek in which it took only 20 moves for the veteran Tseshkovsky to go down in flames. During the game, Tseshkovsky mentioned to Dlugy that he had entirely forgot the opening, perhaps to create a cover story as to why he would lose so badly.

Game 180 French Defense

**Vitaly Tseshkovsky** 2490  
**Igor Glek** 2535

18th World Open, Philadelphia 1990 (9)

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.exd5  
♙xd5 5.♘gf3 cxd4 6.♙c4 ♗d6  
7.0-0 ♘f6 8.♘b3 ♘c6 9.♘bxd4 ♘xd4  
10.♘xd4 ♙d7 11.b3 0-0-0 12.♙b2  
♙c7 13.♙e2 h5 14.♘f3 ♘g4  
15.♖ad1 ♙d6 16.h3 ♙c6**



**17.♖xd6?**

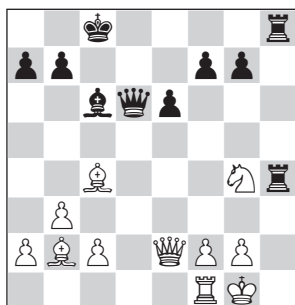
This loses, and in a not particularly complicated manner.

17.hxg4 is playable, though a tough call over the board, as White has to counter-sacrifice to hold a rough balance: 17...hxg4 18.♙xe6+ fxe6 19.♙xe6+ ♖b8 20.♖xd6 gxf3 (20...♖xd6 21.♙xd6 ♙xd6 22.♙e5 gxf3 23.♙xd6+ ♖c8 24.g3=) with a position that is probably balanced, but with better practical chances for Black.

Glek gave 17.♖fe1 ♙c5? as unclear, and in three practical tests, both before and after the World Open, White played 18.♖xd8+ which leads to some advantage after 18...♙xd8 19.♙xe6+ fxe6 20.♙xe6+ ♖b8 21.hxg4. However, the engine points out that White can safely grab material with 18.hxg4 hxg4 19.♙e5! gxf3 (otherwise White can plug the h-file) 20.♙xc7 fxe2 21.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 22.♙xd8. Instead Black can maintain equality, and a boring one at that, with 17...♙h2+ 18.♙f1 (Black executes the same maneuver on 18.♙h1) 18...♖xd1 19.♖xd1 ♙xf3 20.♙xf3 ♙e5.

**17...♙xd6 18.hxg4 hxg4 19.♘e5 ♖h4**  
The engine reports that other rook moves up the h-file also win.

20. ♖xg4 ♜dh8



21.f3

On 21.f4 the computer prefers a fancy win with 21... ♖c5+ 22. ♗e3 (22. ♖e3 ♜xg4) 22... ♗xg2!, though it is easier to see that 21... ♜h1+ 22. ♗f2 ♖xf4+ is completely crushing.

21... ♖g3 22. ♗xe6+ fx e6 23. ♖xe6+ ♗d7

White would indeed escape if not for this and the next move, but it's not exactly rocket science.

24. ♖c4+ ♗d8 0-1

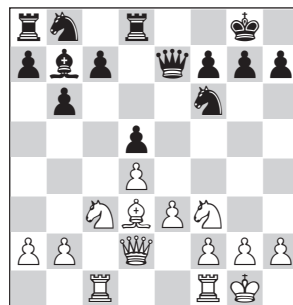
The Consortium came to an end in 1994. It was widely known that inappropriate dealings were occurring between 'teammates' of a certain country. John Donaldson reported in *Inside Chess* that Bill Goichberg came up with a solution to the problem. Donaldson wrote: This year Goichberg adopted a novel strategy. The first eight rounds were paired by computer but, for the last round money games, Bill stepped in and did the pairings by hand. Operating within the parameters of USCF pairing rules, he came up with a very viable and thematic system in which players from the same country are paired together only

as a last resort. In the final round, Rashkovsky did not get the pairing that he was hoping for. Instead, he was paired against Loek van Wely. He still held a half-point lead over the field and his destiny was still in his own hands. However, 'King' Loek was too much for him.

Game 181 Queen's Indian Defense  
**Loek van Wely** 2570  
**Nukhim Rashkovsky** 2535  
 22nd World Open, Philadelphia 1994 (9)

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♗f3 ♗b4+ 4. ♗d2 ♗xd2+ 5. ♖xd2 0-0 6. ♗c3 d5 7.e3 ♖e7 8. ♜c1 ♜d8 9.cxd5 exd5 10. ♗d3 b6 11.0-0 ♗b7

Rashkovsky wanted to play something solid but not overly passive. He traded a pair of bishops and now prepares to expand his central presence.



12.b3!

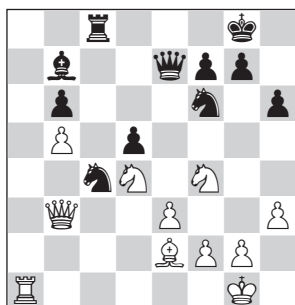
I really like Van Wely's refreshing take on this position. This move first of all prevents a coming ...c7-c5-c4, putting White in a better position to maintain the tension. Swinging the queen to b2 allows it to exert pressure on the long

diagonal with an option of sneaking to a3 to bother potential hanging pawns. All while getting out of the way of the rooks should the center open up.

**12...c5 13. ♖b2 ♘bd7 14. ♗fd1 ♘f8  
15. ♘e2 ♗ac8 16. ♘f4 a5?! 17. ♙b5  
♗c7 18.dxc5 ♗xc5**

Rashkovsky is hesitant to isolate the a-pawn by taking with the pawn, but now Van Wely gets a lot of squares to work with.

**19. ♘d4 ♗dc8 20. ♗xc5 ♗xc5 21.a3  
♘e4 22.b4 axb4 23.axb4 ♗c8 24. ♗a1  
♘d6 25. ♙e2 ♘f6 26. ♖b3 ♔g8 27.h3  
h6 28.b5 ♘c4**



### 29. ♗c1

White had an opportunity to strike now: 29. ♘c6 ♙xc6 30.bxc6 ♗xc6 (30... ♖e5 31. ♗d1 ♗xc6 32. ♘xd5 ♘a5±) 31. ♗a8+ ♔h7 32. ♘xd5 ♘xd5 33. ♙xc4 with a difficult defense for Black.

**29... ♖c5 30. ♘d3 ♖d6 31. ♘b4 ♘e5**

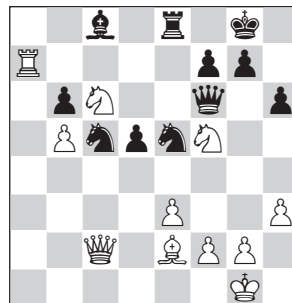
The engine suggests the unlikely defense 31... ♗c5 32. ♙xc4 ♘e4!.

**32. ♘bc6 ♗e8**

Black has to tolerate the intruder on 32... ♘xc6 33.bxc6 ♙xc6 34. ♖xb6.  
**33. ♖b2 ♙c8 34. ♗a1 ♙d7 35. ♗a6  
♙c8 36. ♗a7**

Not 36. ♗xb6? ♘fd7, trapping the rook.

**36... ♘e4 37. ♖c2 ♘c5 38. ♘f5 ♖f6?  
Black could have continued to grimly defend with 38... ♙xf5 39. ♖xf5 ♘ed7.**



**39. ♘fe7+ ♔h8 40. ♘xd5 ♖d6  
41. ♘xb6 ♙e6 42. ♘c4 ♙xc4  
43. ♘xe5! ♖xe5 44. ♖xc4 ♘e6 1-0**

White can add a third pawn to his collection. Van Wely played a very professional last round game, squeezing until the position popped.

### Nice Try Guys

In 2007, there was a last round scandal in the U2200 section. Apparently two players also had the same idea as the Soviets in the Consortium. They decided that a decisive game was more profitable than a drawn game. So they gave us this nice little miniature.

Game 182 Benoni Defense

**Player A**

**Player B**

35th World Open, Philadelphia 2007 (9)

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4. ♘c3 exd5  
5.cxd5 d6 6. ♘f3 g6 7. ♙g5 ♘xd5????  
8. ♙xd8 1-0**

Naturally, a game on one of the top boards of the section in the last round draws a certain amount of attention. It wasn't long before complaints found their way to the TD office. Steve Immitt, one of the most experienced TD's in the nation, looked into the matter as this was a serious problem with consequences for others in the section who were playing for top prizes. After asking around, Steve found a young witness who had witnessed what had occurred. He summoned the two players and asked them 'What was this all about?' Jerry Hanken's article from Chess Life picks up the story: The winner cheerfully pointed out that they would get more money if someone won rather than if there was a draw. The article then continues, Steve then double forfeited them and wrote it on the wall chart. The loser, whom I will call player 'B', came into the TD room very indignant. He explained that he had touched the knight so he felt honor bound to move it. When asked why he touched the knight he had no answer. He then was told about the witness and immediately broke down in a fit of remorse and made a full confession. 'I know it was wrong and I'm sorry. I will never do anything like that again!' He accepted his forfeit and was assessed no further penalties. Later the 'winning' player came storming into the TD room full of indignation. When told of his fellow conspirator's confession, all the air seemed to go out of him. 'OK, we did it and I know it was wrong and I am sorry. Couldn't we just play a real game now, maybe a fast game?' Hanken

summed it up perfectly: Some people just don't get it. He was of course told in no uncertain terms that that train had left the station!

### The Strange Case of John Von Neumann

Up until this point, the biggest problems for directors and organizers were of 'sandbaggers' and players working together. However, 1993 may have started something that continues to plague modern day chess. The late Eric Schiller prophetically penned in his October 1993 Chess Life article on the World Open: We may be entering an era of cyberspace crime at chess tournaments! A prize was withheld from a player who seemed to be getting assistance in a high-tech manner. The player in question went by the name of 'John Von Neumann', which also happened to be the name of a famous Hungarian-American mathematician. He entered the Open Section as an unrated player and scored an incredible 4½ out of 9 for a new player. After a bye in the first round, he faced Icelandic GM Helgi Olafsson in the following game and managed a draw.

Game 183 Sicilian Defense  
**'John Von Neumann'** -  
**Helgi Olafsson** 2530  
 21st World Open, Philadelphia 1993 (2)

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**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♕g5 e6 7.f4 b5 8.e5**

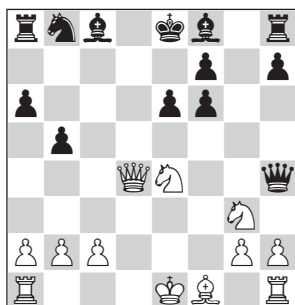
**dx e5 9. fxe5 ♖c7 10. exf6 ♖e5+  
11. ♗de2?!**

This strange novelty seemed to lull Olafsson into a false sense of security.

**11... ♖xg5 12. ♗e4 ♖h4+?**

Centralization with 12... ♖e5 promises a simple black advantage, thanks to the bishop pair.

**13. ♗g2g3 gxf6 14. ♖d4**



**14... ♗e7**

It's truly painful to play such a move, but there is no satisfactory alternative to deal with the twin threats to Black's queen, 15. ♗d6+ and 15. ♗xf6+.

**15. ♖c5+ ♗d8 16. ♖b6+ ♗e8**

**17. ♖d4 ♗e7 18. ♖c5+**

Remember this is 1993. Humans like me were still beating computers in the Harvard Cup. Any 21st century engine will show Black is dead lost. The most straightforward continuation is 18. ♖b4+ ♗d8 19. ♖a5+ ♗e7 (19... ♗e8 20. ♗xb5+) 20.0-0-0 ♗d7 21. ♗xb5 and Black's position is coming apart.

**18... ♗d8 19. ♖b6+ ♗e8 20. ♖d4 ♗e7 21. ♖c5+**

Draw.



**John Von Neumann (wearing a hat and sporting dreadlocks) being interrogated by Bill Goichberg**

(Photo by Sophia Rohde)

In the *Inside Chess* article on the event, Olafsson was quoted saying, 'I was sure I was playing a complete patzer... since he had no idea about the game and I even thought he was on drugs. He took way too much time to reply to obvious moves and he was very strange. But I made a bad mistake in the opening and was punished with a draw.' The draw damaged Olafsson's ego more than his chances of winning the event, yet he decided to use the re-entry option, ultimately finishing out of the money with six points.

My co-author Joel picks up the story in the July-August 1993 edition of his *Chess Chow Magazine*: *During the above game and the others, Von Neumann never seemed to think. He looked around the room, at the ceiling, every where but the board. He moved the pieces like they were foreign objects. Von Neumann used two hands to capture, and kept score with a bizarre notation used only by computers (e.g. g1-f3, f8-c5, etc.). Strange behavior indeed, but maybe this man is some kind of*