

## American Chess Academy goes to Nationals

My son Evan takes a weekly chess class at ACA Calabasas led by Coach Jerry Yee. Several of Jerry's students represented their schools at the USCF Nationals December 11-15, 2014 in Orlando, FL.

Evan, 10 years old and a Fourth grader represented Westlake Elementary and Rachel Burak, age 11 and a sixth-grader represented AC Stelle Middle School. Two other students of Jerry's played in the First Grade section, Alexander Bankhead, and Vanessa Scheiner, both age 6.



Evan with his coach, Master Leo "Quinn" Creger.

For those of you who are new to chess, at the scholastic level, trophies and recognition are awarded to both individuals and school teams based on grade and skill levels. The USCF sponsors five major scholastic tournaments each year. Three in the Spring (National Elementary K-6, National Junior High K-9 and High School Nationals K-12). And two in the fall, the Nationals K-12 and a Collegiate Tournament. Any student that is part of a school can compete in Nationals.

Every 4 years the Super Nationals are held in lieu of the three Spring tournaments. The next Super Nationals will be in 2017.



Evan and Rachel Burak of ACA Calabasas

Each State also runs their own State Championships. California has two Championships. It is divided between Northern and Southern California. Southern California's Championship is the Super States. It is generally held in March. Coach Jay Stallings and California Chess Youth League have hosted this annual event for the last few years. This year's Super States takes place March 7-8 in Valencia, CA. There are both rated and unrated sections. The K-12 Champion of Super States earns an invitation to the Denker Tournament.

"The Denker" is an annual invitational only event held in conjunction with the U.S. Open, in which the 51 champions of each state affiliate and the District of Columbia compete to determine who will be crowned the Denker Champion and receive a prestigious prize package including a 4 year Academic Distinction Scholarship from the University of Texas, Dallas. UTD has been a leader in the promotion of Scholastic Chess for many years.

Two prominent events which proceed these are the US Junior Open (under 21 years) and US Junior Invitational. The invitational is a closed, invitation only tournament. The winner of this tournament is declared the US Junior Chess Champion. Both these events are typically held during the summer.

## Introduction



Let me guess... You didn't get the promotion. Cartoon by today.info

This newsletter is written and edited by Jennifer Vallens. A special thank you to Larry Smith for your contribution.

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

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

Enjoy and now GO PLAY CHESS.



Evan Vallens and Rachel Burak at Coach Jay's Chess Academy booth

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

This has been an exciting year for Evan and me in the chess world. This year, I launched my website [www.offdarook.com](http://www.offdarook.com). My website is an extension of the newsletter. You can find past issues on the site along with event photos, beginning chess training videos and my blog.

I also teamed up on a mixed doubles team with GM Timur Gareyev as I competed in my first non club tournament. Evan and I also did quite a bit of traveling for chess attending the Millionaire Chess tournament in Las Vegas and Nationals in Orlando.



I was fortunate to interview some really exciting chess players who are also Entrepreneurs for this issue of OFF DA ROOK. I have heard of the saying "dress for success" but given these three trail blazers, the saying should be "chess for success!"

Adisa Banjoko, founder of the Hip Hop Chess Federation brings a new spin to the ancient game of Chess by merging it with art and sport. The HHCF mission statement: *To fuse music, chess and martial arts to inspire philanthropic entrepreneurship in the youth.* I read his blog regularly and am anxious to read his new book "*Chess is Jiu-Jitsu for the Mind*" due out in February. I admire his ability to connect with others by speaking openly and honestly without reservation or judgment. He has inspired me to think, write and act.

I had the pleasure to not only interview Danny Rensch, VP of Chess.com and ChessKid.com, but I got to meet him in person at the Nationals and hear him speak. He is passionate about teaching kids and I only wish I had more time to discuss his thoughts on Chess and Common Core.

AJ Steigman caught my interest when I read about a challenge he made to Pay Pal founder Peter Theil. He challenged him to a \$1 million chess challenge to invest in his company a few years ago. His innovative approach to fundraising and his ability to bring a spotlight to chess and its application in the business world is impressive.

Each of these chess players have taken a different path, but all attribute chess and family support as crucial factors to their success. I hope you enjoy their interviews as much as I enjoyed interviewing them.

## Q&A Adisa Banjoko



**Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision of Chess and Hip Hop Culture** is an exhibition that explores the surprising ways in which the ancient game of chess intersects with the powerful, creative expression in hip hop culture, which includes music, fashion, art, dance, and spirituality.

The centerpiece of *Living Like Kings* is an immersive, multimedia experience created by artist Benjamin Kaplan. Commissioned by WCHOF, the installation includes archival and original video, music and photography, custom-designed type and illustration, and a series of interviews. Kaplan weaves these pieces together to create a linear narrative that will literally surround visitors in sound and sight using inventive projection techniques.

Kaplan's piece is approximately 20 minutes in length and will be shown in WCHOF's first floor gallery. It touches on themes that chess and hip hop share: history, strategy, spirituality, process, creativity, education, and symbolism. Interviewees for the piece include Banjoko, International Grandmaster Maurice Ashley, Wu-Tang Clan member RZA, Eugene Brown (founder of Big Chair Chess Club, Inc.), Dr. Daaim Shabazz (founder of thechessdrum.net), and woman Grandmaster Jennifer Shahade.



***Living Like Kings*** runs through April 26, 2015. Admission to the first floor gallery is free with a \$5 per person recommended donation. Visit [worldchesshof.org](http://worldchesshof.org) for details on educational programming.

## Adisa Banjoko

Adisa Banjoko is a motivational speaker, journalist, activist and the author of two books, *Lyrical Swords Vol. 1 and 2*. A new book titled *Chess is Jui-Jitsu for the mind* is due to release in February 2015. Adisa founded the Hip-Hop Chess Federation in 2006.



The Hip-Hop Chess Federation is a non-profit organization based out of the Bay Area. HHCF programs utilize chess, performing arts and sports to help students improve strategic thinking and life skills through non-violence. The HHCF programs have reached over 25,000 youths through a variety of educational programs across the country including lectures, in school chess / fitness programs, seminars and other community based events.

The HHCF also now sponsors MMA Fighter and Brazilian Jiu- Jitsu Purple Belt D'Juan "Dirty South" Owens.

Adisa, referred to as "The Bishop" hosts a podcast which is produced by Mike Relm called *The Bishop Chronicles*. This show provides Adisa's take on current events and his personal adventures delivered with humor and insight.

Adisa has lectured on the connections between Hip-Hop, chess and martial arts at Harvard, SF State and serves as education and history consultant for the *Living Like Kings* exhibit now showing at the World Chess Hall of Fame.

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

Catch the Hip Hop Chess Panel Discussion with Adisa Banjoko and RZA from the Wu Tang Clan and see the *Living Like Kings* trailer on YouTube. See links below.

### Panel Discussion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kpHI50agLc>

### Living Like Kings Trailer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p49EahAQAI>

## Interview with Adisa Banjoko (cont.)

**How old were you when you learned to play chess? Who taught you?**

I learned to play chess from my father at about age 4. I was not a good sport. I almost always knocked over all the pieces and cried when I lost. But I always came back. I never lost that love. Despite being a rather average player, I have learned more from it than any other game I have played. Except maybe, Jiu-Jitsu.

**Do you play chess online?**

Yes, but rarely. I like to be face to face. I like the experience of the tension of a real game. The smiles, the hidden tells of intention. I like the laughter and the anger and the joy of playing live.

**Do you have an USCF rating? If not, what do you think your playing strength is?**

I do not have a USCF rating. If I were a guessing man, I'm really about 1500. There is nothing super special about my gaming. Anyone who has played me can tell you that. LOL.

**Can you tell me how the Hip Hop Chess Federation (HHCF) came about? Where do you see the program going?**

The HHCF is an organization that fuses logic and the arts to unite minds and hearts. We do this by blending the corresponding themes from Hip-Hop, chess and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu to inspire young people to find themselves and then plan for their future. WE are not trying to make chess masters, or world class Jiu-Jitsu fighters or rappers. We just use these tools so people can find and improve themselves.

We started in 2006. Eight years later we finally opened our own facility and I just served as an education consultant to the World Chess Hall of Fame (WCHOF). It was an amazing experience to educate their curator and the rest of their team on the specifics of how chess and Hip-Hop are connected. They certainly did not understand it at first. But in the end, we put together a great event. The exhibit *Living Like Kings: The Unexpected Collision Between Chess and Hip-Hop Culture*.



When it opened, I brought RZA out from Wu-Tang Clan and it was the biggest opening the WCHOF ever had.

People were lined up around the block like it was Studio-54. It felt great. But better than that, RZA and I spoke with kids from several schools, as in Juvenile Hall about the benefits of chess and Hip-Hop.

In the future, we hope to be in high schools and juvenile halls with after school programs. Our goal is to help promote peace through art and mutual understanding.



**What common themes do you link between chess, martial arts and Hip-Hop?**

Well, chess is promoted through Hip-Hop more than any other form of music on Earth. Most people do not know that. Jay-Z, Wu-Tang Clan, 50 Cent, Will Smith—a lot of these guys play. They may not be professional, but they do play. But people in the Hip-Hop community play chess for the life lessons that come from the winning and the losing on the board.

Falling for traps, holding a position, sacrifice...all these things are a part of the chess experience. Its similar to Jiu-Jitsu in that way. Bruce Lee and the Kung-Fu film explosion of the 1970's happened along side Hip-Hop. So the lessons from Taoism and Buddhism thrived within Hip-Hop. The films taught Hip-Hop people the importance of respect for the one's lineage, of honest expression and most of all, the value of non-violence.

Young people love MMA, so by virtue they are curious about Jiu-Jitsu, they love Hip-Hop and chess is one of the world's oldest games. So, its not that big of a leap really. People are just unaware of it.

**What do you think are the most important aspects of chess with regard to building character and self esteem?**

I think the most important aspects of chess is consistent discipline. It's also something that many in the Jiu-Jitsu and Hip-Hop community value. The best dancers, fighters, rappers and DJ's are all united and inspired by the same thing—consistent discipline.

**Do you listen to music while you play chess? If so, what?**

Yes. I love music very much. Mostly I play instrumental Hip-Hop. I try not to have too many words from other people influence my mood. I might play beats from Wu-Tang, or Jedi Mind Tricks, Mobb Deep or Dre. Other days, I might play Mozart or Dub Reggae from Israel Vibrations. It's all about my mood.



## Interview with Adisa Banjoko (cont.)



### How often do you practice Jiu-Jitsu?

I don't train as often as I used to. I train at Heroes Martial Arts in San Jose under Alan "Gumby" Marques. I injured one of my knees and to avoid surgery the rehab was pretty long term. So, I drill often to keep crisp but real rolling these days is pretty rare. I hope to be back on the mats within the next few months. Being injured really messes with your sense of self esteem. But I watch tapes and videos to keep my spirit connected to the art and try to notice the more subtle aspects of a technique. Plus I read books all the time to keep my head sharp. Right now my goal is to compete in Master Worlds in 2015.

### Can you tell me about the "Living Like Kings" exhibit at the World Chess Hall of Fame?

Yes, it is a fantastic exhibit at the World Chess Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Missouri. It is a beautiful city and I have fallen in love with it. I'd move there if I did not hate Winters. I'm a Cali boy for life.

Women's Grandmaster Jennifer Shahade connected me to Susan Barrett who was the Director of the World Chess Hall of Fame at the time. I flew out there to meet with her and her team with my friend Mike Relm. I explained to them that the connections between chess and Hip-Hop were many and very deep.

From there, I mentored their chief curator about how Hip-Hop and chess were connected so we could do an exhibit. Susan also connected me to Benjamin Kaplan, a local guy who does a lot of amazing storytelling and we worked together on a short film about Hip-Hop and Chess. It runs on two screens with different content at the same time. It's pretty impressive stuff.

St. Louis is a city divided on many racial and class lines. The pain over the police killing of Mike Brown, an unarmed teen has really poured gas on a hot situation. My experience so far is one where the Living Like Kings exhibit inspired unity for the Black and White people of that city. I hope the World Chess Hall of Fame can serve as a neutral ground where people can find peace in themselves and the humanity of others. We won't always agree on everything going on in this country. But we can start, by honoring our collective humanity and potential to do better. Chess forces us to deal with the consequences of our actions. Just having that alone, can change a great deal.

But a rap song and a chess game can't be a cure all for everything in society. But it can play a role in how we view unity, strategy and the power of nonviolence. That is what I think America and the world needs more of.

### I know you hold celebrity chess tournaments. Any plan for another Chess Kings Invitational?

Oh, yes. I'm working on something really big right now. But, I can't speak on it. I'm still trying to pull it together.

### Any plans to expand the HHCF to Southern California?

Yes, we are currently working with Santee High in South Central Los Angeles. I love that school and I used to work with their Principal, Dr. Gomez when he was living in San Francisco. We have

most of everything set up but we need some funding to get the coaches paid properly.

I hope to have it fully launched by Jan 2015. That is a great school and I love the students there. We did a special series of events there with Kenny Florian and LA Chessboxer Andrew McGregor. It was highly impactful.

### I understand you have a new book coming out soon. Can you tell me about it?

The book is called *Chess is Jiu-Jitsu for the Mind*. It will be out in February 2015 and it is all about the connections between chess, martial arts and Hip-Hop. It breaks down a lot of the methodologies we teach inside the organization. We also talk about how military strategy and business are connected.

### Hip Hop has undeniably influenced pop culture. Do you think Chess will ever break through to the mainstream?

Yes! This is mainly because chess is much older than Hip-Hop. Also, up until the mid 1970s, chess was in the mainstream. Look at the movie Bobby Fischer Vs. The World and you will see American was possibly more in love with chess then, than ever before. Chess is still huge, but its more of a social thing, a personal thing. Not something that can simply be marketed on face value to millions like a super bowl.

### Are you familiar with the Millionaire Chess Event? What are your thoughts on Chess becoming a high stakes game like Poker?

I think high stakes chess is very cool. Maurice Ashley is a great friend and mentor of mine on many aspects of chess culture. I'm not sure American is ready for Millionaire chess, but I think the world is. Hip-Hop, chess and martial arts are way bigger overseas than here.

I think the global attraction of chess will always make it something compelling. Add a million bucks to it and it just goes way more interesting. I'm proud of Maurice Ashley and Amy Lee for putting together such an amazing event.

### What accomplishment are you most proud of?

I'm most thankful to be happily married and have three amazing children. Other than that, I think the opening of the Living Like Kings and some of the smaller moments helping kids we mentor are my more grateful moments.

### How did you come to be known as the Bishop?

I always loved that piece because I'm consumed with hitting people at different angles. From a social perspective, I like the idea of the Bishop. He is not a king or a queen, but the people respect him. Ruling people has never been a big thing to me. But keeping the respect of the people, is priceless.

### Is there anything else you would like to share?

Yes, I want to thank you for interviewing me. It was an honor. I just want to remind my Jiu Jitsu family to check out my book *The Iron Hook Scroll* to learn more about how to have a more effective closed guard game. Also, I have a podcast called *Bishop Chronicles* I do with my man Mike Relm. Please check them out as [www.bishopchronicles.com](http://www.bishopchronicles.com). For more information on us please visit [www.hiphopchessfederation.org](http://www.hiphopchessfederation.org) and DONATE if you can or follow us on Instagram@realhiphopchess PEACE.

## Highlights from Millionaire Chess



Amy Lee, Maurice Ashley and Susan Polgar



Amy Lee and yours truly



Maurice Ashley with Evan



Keith Dunbar and Evan Vallens



Wes So and Timur Gareyev on Board 1



Simone Sobel and her Opponent



MILLIONAIRE  
CHESS

The first groundbreaking Millionaire Chess event held October 9-13, 2014 in Las Vegas was a class act all the way. Grandmaster Maurice Ashley and his partner Amy Lee pulled off an amazing feat despite the odds. I was happy to be included. I met some really great folks. And congrats to Wes So for winning the top prize!

Millionaire 2 is scheduled for October 8-12, 2015. It will be held in Vegas with the venue to be announced. Registration begins January 1. Early registration discount of \$880 for the first 500 entrants. Special ends January 31st. Price will go up to \$1000 entry after that.

For more information and to register for MC2, please visit:

<http://millionairechess.com/>



My new friend "Oz" OrTelin Zahairagunn



Kshitij and Sasha Patibandla and mom, Revathi



Sherri and Turner Gough



Gabriel Eidelman and Evan



Beau Mueller picks Hawaiian Chess Festival winner



Juan Jauregui

## Q&A with Daniel Rensch

A part owner and full time Staff Member for Chess.com LLC, Danny Rensch is Vice President of Content and Professional Operations, managing the products and "team of contributors" on the site, as well as for our scholastic extension site, ChessKid.com.

He earned the status of USCF National Master at age 14. Danny achieved the title of International Master at age 23. He was ranked in the Top 10 for his age nationally every year from the age of 12yrs-21yrs old. He was the #1 rated 19-year old in the United States.

Danny received numerous State and National scholastic titles, including: 1998 Elementary National Champion; 2000 Junior High National Champion; 2004 High School National Champion. Multiple 1st place Individual State Championships from 1995-2004.

He was a member of the Shelby School Chess Team's multiple State and National Championships. He was Captain of the 1998 team that won the K-3, K-6 and K-9 National Championships in the same year. (The 1998 Shelby School chess team is the only team in American scholastic chess history to accomplish this feat.)

Danny was a 6-Time All American Chess Team Member. As a Chess Coach/Trainer, Daniel has developed multiple State and National Scholastic Chess Champions. He is currently teaching several of America's best scholastic chess players, many of whom are rated in the "Top 50" for their age nationally. He also has many years of experience in training adult chess players.



**How old were you when you learned to play chess? Who taught you to play?**

9 years old. My grandfather. I played in my first tournament when I was 10.

**What is your current USCF rating?** 2488. International Master title.

**How often do you compete in tournaments?** These days, rarely. I used to compete in tournaments (a serious event) at least every other month. Now, I'm lucky to play 3-4 times a year.

**What do you think are the most important aspects of chess with regard to building character and self esteem?** Chess demands self-responsibility and a high level of self reflection. Unlike team sports, there is no one to point fingers at. And your mom and dad can't blame the coach for "playing time". Ultimately, your success is based on your own focus, determination and, ultimately, your love and enjoyment of the game. Other sports claim this, but none really demand it like Chess does! Because of this, a successful chess player truly feels the fruits of his labor. In a way that builds the mindset of "being able to achieve anything" because they have experienced all the success and failure of their OWN hard work.

**Do you listen to music while you play chess? If so, what do you listen to?** No. BUT I do listen to music when I study chess. Basically anything. Pop. Rock. Instrumental stuff. etc.

**Why do you think people in America do not see the value in Chess like they do in other countries? In your opinion, how can we change the perception of chess in the US?** I think this is changing on its own. I think a big part of it is just history and culture. Those things are richer (history and culture) in other countries regarding chess because they have had more champions than we have. Bobby Fischer could have catapulted chess to heights maybe even beyond Magnus Carlsen if he had had the state of mind to do so. So the "Fischer Boom" was not nearly as large as it could have been. But overall, the education benefits are becoming more and more clear, with districts adopting chess in the classroom more and more across of the world (and in our own country). I think if people start something they love young, they will be more likely to stick with it and / or comeback to it later on. Just takes time to build that kind of culture...

**What other activities and hobbies do you enjoy outside of chess?** CrossFit. Music. Sports. Kids. Watching comedy shows with my wife.

**Chess.com in THE go to site for chess players. How did you get started with this site and what is the future of the site?** I personally got started with the site making videos and contributing content projects in the early stages.

I was lucky enough to be one of the few to jump on board (pun intended) when we were still a start up company and get some ownership stake.

### Q&A with Daniel Rensch (cont.)

Now, as the Vice President (of Professional Relations and Content if you want the long title besides just VP) I spend most of my time working on how to grow the site and helping to guide us in the right directions of:

more presence within the professional (top level chess) community)- more growth for our scholastic extension site, chesskid.com (we are SO excited there) and helping our content and products be the best they can be for the CURRENT community that enjoys it

#### What steps is Chess.com taking to bring Chess into the mainstream?

We are always looking for ways to push the educational benefits of chess (with chess kid), to reach the 'casual game seeking' traffic on the internet to say "hey, check out chess! It's a game and it's better than video games!" and we do a lot of that with our SEO and social marketing techniques to the "casual chess fans" and we are also looking more and more into how to get involved with the tournament scene (having presence at events, providing support in terms of marketing and financial to big organizers, and looking to help provide software to tournament organizers that will make their lives running tournaments easier!!!)



**Did you attend the Millionaire Chess Event? Do you ever see chess becoming a high stakes game like Poker?** I did not attend. I think what Maurice, Amy and company did was amazing! And I can only hope people will look at these events as great opportunities for chess to reach the "grand spotlight" in this country. I'm not sure how I feel about the chess to poker comparisons because I think in many ways, chess will never be poker, and in the same turn, poker will never be able to boast things (like educational benefits, etc) that chess can. So I think the event itself was amazing and it's a great idea – but I think chess is going to continue to grow regardless of whether it "makes it to tv" like Poker did.

**What are your personal chess goals? Professional chess goals?** I'd like to help Chess.com and ChessKid.com make the world (and the chess world) a better place. And at some point, I'd like to focus on becoming a Grandmaster. Something I haven't thought about seriously for a few years, but hey, I'm an International Master and still young. 28 years old. I think I have time...

Check out Danny's video lessons:

<http://www.chess.com/video/library.html?>



**What accomplishment are you most proud of?** Um, wow. I can think of lots of failures? if you want those... But I guess I'd have to say my ability to find balance in my professional and home life with my wife and kids. It wasn't easy to do that for a long time and be as focused and driven as I wanted to be with chess and business. But I think I've found the right rhythm (though my kids would want more time I guess). My scholastic chess achievements and the team accomplishments of The Shelby School (11 national titles in 5 years) is definitely something I look back on with joy and pride. But right now I'm really just proud of the work we are doing on growing chess with chess.com and chesskid.com! our team is amazing and we all have so much passion about chess and gaming that it's a joy to go to work each day.

**What advice do you have for a parent whose child is new to chess?** Remember it takes courage to stick with something when you fail. And Chess, will bring lots of losses. Don't ridicule and point out weaknesses, instead, try positive reinforcement and rewarding things they CAN control like their effort, focus and enjoyment of the game... and you might be surprised by the results!

**At what point do you think a child should get a chess coach or private lessons?** It really depends on the temperament of the given kid, honestly. Some 6 year olds are ready, while other 12 year olds can't take criticism for a second. I would say at about 1200 to 1400 (depending on the emotional stability of the child and personality) is about the right time to dive into self criticism which is needed beyond just "general knowledge and experience" at that point.

#### Is there anything else you would like to share?

Lots! But we don't have lots of time! Gotta get back to work. I will be doing a workshop for parents and coaches in Orlando at the Grade Nationals! So come say hi there and mention this newsletter interview!



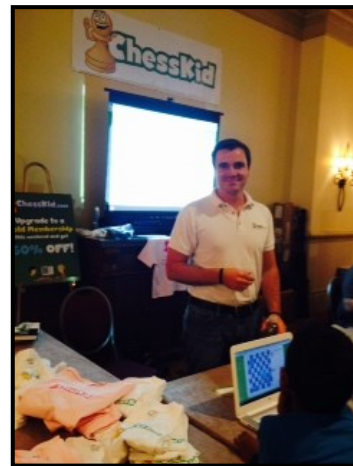
## Highlights from Nationals



Members of United States Chess Federation greet head of Haiti Chess Federation. Jay Stallings, Jean Lamothe, Frank Guadelupe, Ruth Haring (in back), Jean Hoffman, Elizabeth Tejada, Jacques Muller Luxama, Irina Krush, and Isabel.



GM Timur Gareyev with Jay Stallings, CYCL



IM Danny Rensch busy with ChessKid demo

## All American Chess Team 2015

Congratulations to the 2015 All American Chess Team! 53 USCF members received this prestigious A few team members were awarded their team jackets at the Nationals.

The All American Chess Team was created in 1987 to honor the very best players ages 18 and under. The team is selected by age, rating and activities during that year.

The All American Chess Team is sponsored by Trophies Plus of Templeton, Iowa. Trophies Plus has sponsored the team since 2004. In addition to the support provided for this award, Him Jensen, owner of Trophies Plus, provides trophies for national tournaments as well as post-tournament trophy shipping.



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



John Gabriel Ludwig, Gabriel Eidelman, Logan Wu, Maximillian Lu, Henry Hawthorn, Jean Hoffman, USCF, Jay Stallings (back row)

For a complete team list, click [HERE](#)

## Local Clubs and Events

### American Chess Academy

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

Contact: Jerry Yee (818) 915-5572.

### Conejo Valley Parks and Recreation

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

### Los Angeles Chess Club

The LACC run by Mick Bighamian runs both open and scholastic tournaments and Blitz tournaments every weekend. Visit [www.LAChessClub.com](http://www.LAChessClub.com) for more details.

### Thousand Oaks Chess Club

Meets Mondays 6-8:45pm. Goebel Senior Center at 1385 E. Janss Road. Casual play and rated tournaments. Contact Cindy Garcia at [thousandoakschess@att.net](mailto:thousandoakschess@att.net)

### West Valley Chess Club

Meets Thursdays 6:30-10:30. 7353 Valley Circle Blvd., West Hills. Continuous rated tournaments, blitz, casual play. Contact Jerry Yee (818) 915-5572 or at [jyee6@socal.rr.com](mailto:jyee6@socal.rr.com).

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

### Ventura County Chess Club

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

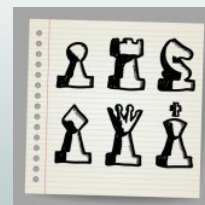
### Ventura Youth Chess League

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

### CHESS COACH?

If you are looking for a chess coach, contact me at

[offdarook.com](http://offdarook.com)



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



Jay Stallings with two of his students at CYCL.



Scott Hunt of WVCC goes over one of Evan's games with him at the American Open.

### West Valley Chess Club

Weekly rated  
tournaments

Thursdays

6:30pm-10:30pm

## Q&A with AJ Steigman

AJ Steigman was a childhood prodigy. He learned to play chess at the age of 4, and played in his first tournament at age 5. He was coached by Bill Cornwall, a nationally-known chess teacher and award-winning columnist. He credits his success to the support he received from his coach and his parents.

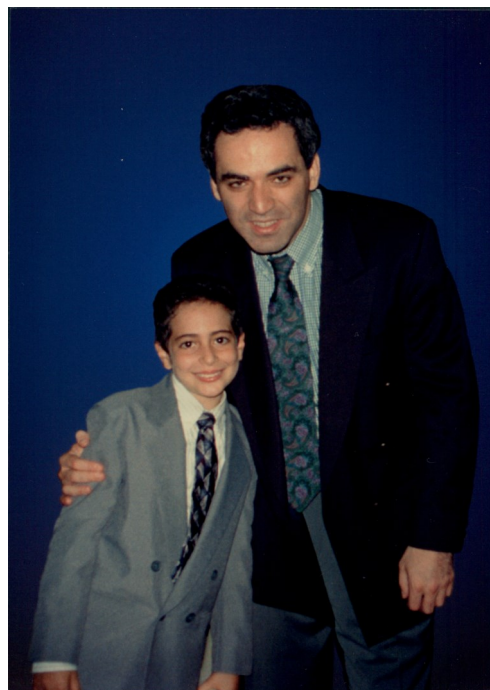
Steigman has numerous chess accomplishments including being ranked #1 in the U.S. for his age group for 8 years in a row (1993–2001), being awarded the title of Chess Master at age 13 (the same age as when Bobby Fischer became a master), being the first Floridian ever to make the All-America Chess Team of which he was a member for 8 years. Steigman won the 2002 U.S. Junior Open Championship and turned down a full scholarship to The University of Texas to attend Emory University.

He represented the U.S. in the World Youth Championships in Sao Lourenco, Brazil (1995); Cannes, France (1997); and Oropesa del Mar, Spain (1999). Steigman's highest international performance was tying for 12th in the world in Cannes, France. He and Irina Krush of New York were the highest-scoring members of the 11-person U.S. team. Several years later, he traveled to the Pan-American Championships in Argentina (2001).

AJ left the chess world in favor of studying business at college. He became an investment banker for Merrill Lynch and became an Entrepreneur and founded Soletron in 2010.

In 2012, AJ challenged Billionaire Pay Pal founder, Peter Theil to a \$1 million chess match as a way to gain funding for his startup company, Soletron.

Soletron started off as an online distribution outlet for unique Sneakers and other collectible street wear. It morphed into a platform that created cutting edge content on topics like music fashion, technology and sports. Karmaloop, the worlds largest leading retailer of street wear acquired Soletron in 2014.



AJ Steigman, age 10 with former World Champion Gary Kasparov.



AJ with American chess player Josh Waitzkin, the subject of renowned *Searching for Bobby Fischer* film.

## Q&A with AJ Steigman (cont.)

**How old were you when you learned to play chess?  
Who taught you to play?**

I learned to play when I was 4 years old. My mother (who was a big part of my chess career) bought me a Toys R US Chess set, and my father taught me. Having no siblings, and since my father worked all the time, I taught my mother how to play when I was 5. My first tournament was when I was 5, and I started taking lessons from Bill Cornwall who was my personal chess coach my entire career. We were all a great team together, and I couldn't have done it without all of them.

**What is your highest rating?**

My highest USCF and FIDE ratings were 2306 and 2291 respectively when I was 20 years old. For Quick chess it was 2326. I was #1 ranked for my age on the Top 50 lists for 8 years in a row and had the privilege of representing the country in the World Youth Championships and Pan-American Championships all over the world.

**How often do you play chess now? Do you prefer over the board or playing online? Do you still compete in tournaments?**

I like to play chess online almost every day. It keeps my brain sharp and relaxes me. I haven't played in a standard tournament since 2006, but I did play some in some blitz tournaments in the World Open in 2012. I still prefer to play over the board in standard tournaments. At my level, however, I would need to train for a few months before going back to compete.

**You were 13 years old when you became a Chess Master and now we have our first 13 year old Grandmaster. What do make of this?**

It is incredible. At age 10, I was the U.S.'s youngest expert and at age 13, the 2nd youngest master in the U.S., having beaten Bobby Fischer's record. Now we are having GMs at that age. I think it is great for the competitiveness of the game.



AJ Steigman, age 10 shown here playing chess with former world champion Anatoly Karpov

**You left the chess world to study Business at Emory University's Goizueta Business School. You then went into Investment Banking and eventually left that to start up Soletron. Did you always want to be an Entrepreneur and looked for opportunities or did the idea for Soletron happen organically?**

I've always wanted to be an entrepreneur and the Financial Crisis me help to propel that. I thought that I might as well take a shot at it when I was young. I left banking and actually had one of the top Nike Tier 0 accounts in the country at the Hard Rock Casino in South Fl. I had a 3,000 sq ft store that was successful. Coming from finance and not retail, I saw a lot of inefficiencies in the industry, and that is where the idea for Soletron originated. I loved the designs of these smaller local brands, but couldn't take the risk of holding their products as there was limited square footage. I thought it would be cool to have a platform with potentially unlimited designs where the retailer doesn't have this inventory risk problem.

**In 2012 you challenged Peter Thiel (Pay Pal co-founder) to a \$1 million chess match to help fund your Soletron venture. It made big news. Did Peter ever respond to your challenge?**

Unfortunately, publicly no. I knew a Managing Director at one of his funds that said it was brought up on a conference call, so clearly his team knew about the challenge. Plus, it was syndicated on Forbes, Business Insider, Venture Beat, and numerous international outlets, so clearly his PR team knew about it. I think it would have been great for chess if the match went through. A GM friend of mine recommended that I reach out privately to him on ICC. I reached out to him, but he never responded to my messages. I have randomly played several speed chess games on the ICC with him, and he thanked me for one of them. I've won practically every game except a couple of draws. If one follows him, he is on the ICC quite a lot. It would have been great for the game, however, I understand though why Peter wouldn't want to do the match and don't hold anything against him.

**You started Soletron with your partner Shane Robinson. From what I understand, Soletron started as a company catering to those "sneakerheads" who collect and spend high dollars on rare "sneakers". Soletron provided an online platform for this unique market. Can you tell me how Soletron evolved from the idea in 2010 to 2014.**

Soletron started out as a marketplace for up-and-coming street wear and sneakerhead designers. Think of it as Etsy but for the retail segment of street wear, where we didn't hold any inventory and just took commissions off of all the sales. We had thousands of products on our site from hundreds of brands/designers. We pivoted in 2012 to a full content platform because we couldn't compete on the search engines with the industry leader Karmaloop (which actually bought out Soletron this year).

Karmaloop has raised approx. \$80M to date, do hundreds of millions of dollars of sales, and had been around for 14 years. They are the Microsoft of that industry, and with their scale, we simply couldn't compete. However, our e-commerce users were still part of the same youth demographic, and we decided to try to monetize that through content. We had hundreds of thousands of social followers and were in the top 99% of all sites worldwide on traffic.

## Q&A with AJ Steigman (cont.)

We did tens of thousands of original blog articles for the youth demo and had partnerships with such entities as: Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Under Armour, NBA, and numerous other entities. It was a really fun ride.

### Are you a “sneakerhead”?

While I do appreciate the sneaker culture, I am first a businessman and a financial opportunist. The culture is highly fanatical and price inelastic. When retailers were getting smoked in 2009, this niche culture was actually growing. The consumers of this industry are responsible for economically fueling numerous Fortune 500 companies including Nike, Adidas, Reebok, etc.

**Even though the chess match with Peter Thiel was never realized, it was quite an innovative and creative fundraising proposition. I especially liked your plan to donate all sponsorship capital from the match to charities revolving around chess and entrepreneurship. It is a shame that the US doesn't get chess sponsors the way other sports do. How do you think we can change this?**

Chess has come a long way since I started playing, however as you point out, it does not command the same sponsorships as other sports. In a lot of former Soviet Republics, it is ingrained in the culture. No matter the economic or educational background of someone, practically every Soviet individual knows of Kasparov and Karpov as if they were Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant.

There isn't a quick fix for this, but more of a slow grind on several dimensions. Sponsorships follow user bases, and if more people in the U.S. are playing chess, then it will certainly follow. There needs to be wealthy philanthropists, to donate to the game. The money can be used for tournaments, scientific research, press efforts, scholarships, exhibition matches, increasing the reach in schools, as well as numerous other activities. It all has to tie back into increasing the amount of chess players, changing the culture, and showing the positive scientific benefits of the game.

**What are your thoughts on the Millionaire Chess Event that happened this year in Vegas? Do you think Chess can ever be a Spectator sport with high stakes like Poker?**

Pertaining to the Millionaire Chess Tournament, I think Maurice Ashley did a great job of putting this on. It was truly great for the game. I go back and forth on this. I'm not sure chess can be a Spectator sport without sacrificing the quality of the game. I don't think people today have the attention span to watch 6 hour games in a “language” that only the top players know how to interpret. However, as one who competes in the top sections in chess, I'm a purist in that I respect standard time controls, and don't want the corruption of speed chess replacing or decreasing the market share of standard games. However, for one who wishes more publicity around the game I think it has to go towards speed chess at least publicly.

I remember in 1995 Intel did a great job of sponsoring the Intel Grand Prix. If the prize funds are high enough and the characters of the competitors are interesting enough, I think people will tune in to watch anything.

**I heard Madonna is quite the chess player and rated near 2000. Maybe you could challenge her to a \$1 million match and donate the sponsorship capital to help establish chess in public schools....hmmm. Just a thought....**

If that is true, that would be great for the game. These are the philanthropists who have the capital and the user bases to push chess... if they want to. The beauty of the potential Thiel match is that we were both childhood prodigies and masters. Our USCF and FIDE ratings were very close so the match would have been closer than if we played someone weaker. I'm not interested in challenging Madonna just because I don't think it would be a competitive match. However, what would be interesting if someone like Madonna played someone like Gates. That would be fun to see.

**How do you think chess has helped you in business? In life?**

Of course. It is almost impossible for me to list all of the positive attributes and stories that chess has had on my life. Simply speaking the ability to: instill patience, analyze numerous variations, not mentally give up in bad situations when you just want to throw in the towel, sharpness, time management, as well as numerous other great traits.

On a personal level, when I was 16 years old, I got bitten by a bug and almost died from Lyme Disease. The bacterial infection attacked my nervous, physical, and mental systems. I lost all short term memory, but my long term memory was in-tact. It was a grueling multi-year recovering experience, but chess helped reprogram my mind throughout this process and helped to save me. I am very fortunate to be alive and owe a lot to the game.

**Now that Karmaloop (one of the largest online retailers of street wear) has acquired Soletron, what are you doing with your time? Any plans to work on your Grandmaster title?**

I spent 4 years on Soletron, and now I'm figuring out the next stage of my life. Anything is potentially on the table. I care more about the opportunity than I do about the industry or role. I have been working with a few colleagues on a few projects, but it is too preliminary to publicly discuss them. Other than that, I have been reading and playing a lot of chess online. If G-d ever blesses with me ultimate wealth, all I would do is just play chess and go for the GM title.



## Master Larry Smith Game Analysis

WOOLSEY, Bev - CASTANEDA, Tony  
30.11.2014

### 1.e4 d5

The Scandinavian Defense, formerly known as the Center Counter Game.

### 2.exd5 Nf6

Also popular is 2...Qxd5.

### 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Nf3 Bf5

More usual here is 4...Bg4.

### 5.Bd3

Developing and challenging Black's QB.

### 5...Bg6 6.Bxg6 hxg6 7.c4 Nb6 8.Qe2

Also possible is 8.Nc3 developing the QN to its most natural square, since Black cannot grab the c-pawn: 8...Nxc4? 9.Qa4+! However, e2 is a good square for the WQ, and this does develop a piece for White.

### 8...c6 9.0-0 N8d7 10.b3

Development first! Again, indicated was 10.Nc3.

### 10...Qc7 11.h3

White wisely wants to prevent any future ... Qxh7# possibilities. The other way to do this, 11.g3!?, sets up the sneaky idea of Bf4. For example: 11...e6 12.Bf4 Bd6? (12...Qd8) 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.c5 winning a piece. Also, after 11 g3 Black cannot castle queenside: 11...0-0-0 12.Ng5 (or 12.Bf4) gives White a huge edge.

### 11...0-0-0? 12.Be3?

While 12 Be3 is a good developing move, the more alert 12.Ng5! launches an unstoppable attack on the f7 pawn.

### 12...e6 13.Rd1 Re8 14.Qd2 Nf6 15.Bf4 Qd8 16.Nc3 Bb4 17.Re1

This natural move, preventing 17 ... Ne4, allows a tricky tactical shot that Black probably failed to see as well: 17...Nfd5!? 18.cxd5 Nxd5 19.Rac1 Qa5 20.Ne5 Nxc3 21.a3! is very tricky but a bit better for White. Also, the unexpected 17.a3?! Ne4! 18.Nxe4! Bxd2 19.Nd6+ Kd7 20.Rxd2 gives White tons of compensation for the queen, but is far from clear.

### 17...Nh5 18.Bh2 f5?

Anti-positional, creating a hole on e5.

### 19.a3!

A good move, getting out of the annoying pin.

### 19...Bxc3 20.Qxc3 f4!?

This was apparently Black's idea when playing 18 ... f5, trying to entomb the WB. That's a good idea, but it is unlikely to work in this position where everything else for White is going so well!

### 21.a4!

Another good idea from White, gaining space on the queenside and planning to open up the Black King's stronghold.

### 21...Qf6 22.a5 Nd7 23.Qb4 e5 24.dxe5

The sequence 24.a6 b6 25.c5! is sharp, but favors White as well.

### 24...Nxe5 25.Nxe5 Rxe5 26.Rxe5 Qxe5 27.Re1 Qb8!?

### 28.Qe7 Qc7 29.Qc5 b6 30.axb6 axb6 31.Qa3!

A strong retreat.

### 31...Kb8 32.Re7 Rd8!

The only try.



Beverly Woosley, my good friend and leader of my monthly chess group called "the Rookies"

## Master Larry Smith Game Analysis

**33.g4!**

Of course not 33.Rxc7?? Rd1#!

**33...Rd1+**

If 33...fxg3 34.Bxg3! (34.Rxc7 also wins, but is less precise) 34...Nxg3 35.Rxc7 Ne2+ 36.Kf1 Kxc7 37.Kxe2 and White wins easily.

**34.Kg2 Ra1**

34...f3+ 35.Kxf3 and White is safe; 34...Rd7 35.Rxd7 Qxd7 36.gxh5 also wins for White

**35.Re8+ Kb7 36.Qf8?**

Sufficient, but here simpler is better: 36.Qxa1 wins the rook and threatens Qa8# as well.

**36...Ra8?**

The more resilient 36...Nf6 makes White work for the full point! 37.Re7 Nd7 38.Bxf4 Nxf8 (38...Qc8 also requires finding some good moves: 39.Rxd7+! Qxd7 40.Qb8+ Ka6 41.Bc7!) 39.Rxc7+ Ka6 40.Rf7 Ne6 41.Bb8! with the crushing threat of Ra7+, either mating or winning the Ra1. However, these are not obvious sequences, and thus 36 ... Nf6 is a much better try than the text, which basically throws in the towel.

**37.Rxa8 f3+ 38.Kg1 Nf4 39.Bxf4 Qxf4 40.Qxf4 [40.Qc8#] 40...Kxa8 41.Qxf3** and Black resigns.

An interesting game with some good ideas and moves, as well as some missed opportunities for both sides: in other words, a chess game! 1-0

Larry Smith started playing in chess tournaments in 1969, and reached the rank of master in 1985 at the age of thirty. His current rating is 2210. An ardent student of the game, Larry has lived in Thousand Oaks, CA for over fifty years, and can be found competing in local club tournaments.

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

### Larry's MASTER TIPS:

**10 b3**

Not a bad move, but one should strive to develop pieces before moving pawns in the opening.

**12 Be3**

Solid developing moves like Be3 can be a mistake if you miss an opportunity to win material (12 Ng5!)

**Moves 17 Re1 Nh5**

Look at the tactical ideas given in the notes. There always a lot more going on under the surface in a game of chess than most of us realize!

**18 ... f5**

Beware of anti-positional moves that leave weak pawns or squares behind in their wake.

**36 ... Ra8**

Capitulation! The move 36 ... Nf6 forces White to find some good moves in order to gain the win. In a difficult, even hopeless situation, your job is to find the moves that makes your opponent work the hardest. Also, even if you see the best moves for your opponent, don't assume that they will also see them: make them earn it!



Chess Master Larry Smith

### Announcements



Congratulations to my friend GM Timur Gareyev for taking home first place in the American Open!

Timur, along with Marck Cobb, President of the Karpov International School of Chess, launched C.A.T. (Chess Academy of Timur) this year and the program is in several Las Vegas schools and continues to expand on both coasts. Timur's book, **C.A.T. Tactics** will be available later this year. The book includes tactical puzzles for all skill levels.



GM Timur Gareyev, Jennifer Vallens and Marck Cobb

### American Chess Academy



[www.achessacademy.org/](http://www.achessacademy.org/)

ACA Simi Valley will be starting a chess class on Monday evenings from 5:30-6:30pm (novice level). To enroll, please contact Jerry Yee at 818-915-5572 or [jyee6@socal.rr.com](mailto:jyee6@socal.rr.com)



A special congratulations to Gabriel Eidelman for making the All American Chess Team. Way to go!



Evan's Coach, Leo (Quinn) Creger takes 3rd for 12th grade and Shyam Gandhi takes home 2nd in K-12 Blitz. Their team takes 6th place for Bughuse tournament at Nationals.



Go So! Wesley So launches his website. Check it out [HERE](http://www.wesleyso.com)

Please send Off da ROOK your ANNOUNCEMENTS

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## Test your Opening Knowledge

1. What is one of the main aims of the Sokolski opening (1. b4)?

- a. control the a1 - h8 diagonal
- b. achieve a rapid exchange of pieces
- c. control the white squares
- d. control the kingside

2. Which piece does black often try to exchange in the French defense (1.e4 e6)?

- a. Queen's Bishop
- b. King's Knight
- c. King's Bishop
- d. Queen's Knight

3. What is the main strategic plan for Black when playing the King's Indian Defense (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6)?

- a. control the a8 - h1 diagonal
- b. attack on the queenside
- c. block the centre and attack on the Kingside
- d. exchange centre pawns and control the e-file

4. In the Larsen opening (1 b3), what is white's main strategy?

- a. attack on the queenside
- b. control the white squares
- c. control the a1-h8 diagonal
- d. open the centre

5. In the Alekhine Defense (1 e4 Nf6) what is black's main strategic idea?

- a. entice the white pawns forward and then undermine them
- b. attack on the queenside with his black square bishop
- c. quick kingside attack with knights
- d. stop the white pawns from progressing

6. What is the idea of a gambit opening - such as the Kings Gambit (1 e4 e5 2. f4)?

- a. to buy time for an attack later in the game
- b. establish a secure king position before opponent mobilizes
- c. to improve pawn formations
- d. to deflect pawns from the centre allowing rapid piece development to attack the weak spots left exposed

7. When one side (let's say White) places his queen on d2 and a bishop on e3, the reason for this is usually what?

- a. Put pressure on the queenside
- b. to exchange off his dark square bishop for blacks fianchettoed bishop
- c. prepare for a queenside pawn advance using the bishop as a defending piece
- d. defend the king

8. What is the main underlying rationale of the Caro-Kann defense for black (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5)?

- a. prepare for the move b5 to attack on the queenside
- b. support the d5 pawn without blocking in the queens bishop
- c. block the c-file
- d. control the b5 square

9. What is the main positional drawback for black of the Dutch defense against the Queens Pawn opening (1 d4 f5)?

- a. white square weaknesses
- b. knight weaknesses
- c. queenside weaknesses
- d. dark square weaknesses

10. Which of the following is a common configuration for whites pieces in the English opening (1 c4)?

- a. Nd2, Bc4, Rc1, Qd2
- b. Nd3, Re1, Bg2, Kh6
- c. Nc4, Rb1, Bd3, Qh4
- d. Nc3, Bg2, Rb1, Bg5, Qc2

If you like this quiz and want to test yourself more, please visit <http://www.funtrivia.com/>



## Test your Opening Knowledge ANSWERS

1. What is one of the main aims of the Sokolski opening

(1. b4)?

**A. control the a1 - h8 diagonal**

In the Sokolski opening white's main aim is to control the a1-h8 diagonal. He will do this by placing the queens bishop on b2 and a knight on f3. The queen often goes to b3 to support c4 and d5.

2. Which piece does black often try to exchange in the French defense (1.e4 e6)?

**A. Queen's Bishop**

Black will often try to exchange the queenside bishop as the black pawns in the centre will have been locked onto squares on which the queen's bishop would normally operate (which is to say the light squares, of course). This is especially common in the 'Advance variation) 1.e4 d5 2 d4 d5 3 e5)

3. What is the main strategic plan for Black when playing the King's Indian Defense (1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6)?

**C. block the centre and attack on the Kingside**

Black will often attack on the kingside with ... f5 (after moving the king's knight to h5 or e8). After ... f4, Black will occasionally move a rook to g8 and play g5 then g4. White will counterattack on the queenside, often breaking through first. But, of course, Black is playing for much higher stakes on the kingside.

4. In the Larsen opening (1 b3), what is white's main strategy?

**C. Control the a1-h8 diagonal**

White will try to control the a1-h8 diagonal, often playing f4 to support this plan. Ideally, white is looking for a strong kingside attack culminating in lethal pressure on the g7 square on a castled black king.

5. In the Alekhine Defence (1 e4 Nf6) what is black's main strategic idea?

**A. entice the white pawns forward and then undermine them**

As a so-called hypermodern opening black's idea is to control the centre with pieces. White can move pawns forward to attack the knights that are controlling the centre, but this can cut them off from other pawns leaving them vulnerable. Black has to be careful that the misplaced knights are not positioned in such awkward places as to not to be able to provide defensive cover if white attacks on the kingside.

6. What is the idea of a gambit opening - such as the Kings Gambit (1 e4 e5 2. f4)?

**D. to deflect pawns from the centre allowing rapid piece development to attack the weak spots left exposed**

**Gambits (normally) involve sacrificing one or more pawns in order to create space for attacking pieces, and to enable rapid development. Most opening gambits are made by white. Black tries to consolidate and let the attack run out of steam. Alternatively, Black can counterattack or, return some of the material to take the sting out of the white attack.**

7. When one side (let's say White) places his queen on d2 and a bishop on e3, the reason for this is usually what?

**B. to exchange off his dark square bishop for blacks fianchettoed bishop**

Fianchetto bishops provide could cover for a castled king and so it is worthwhile from the attackers point of view to remove it. Be3 and Qd2 is a common sequence designed to play Bh6 and thereby (hopefully) exchanging off the defending bishop.

8. What is the main underlying rationale of the Caro-Kann defense for black (1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5)?

**B. support the d5 pawn without blocking in the queens bishop**

The Caro-Kann is designed to allow black to play d5 (getting some influence in the centre) with c6 without blocking in the queens bishop (which is the case after 1. e6 in the French defense). The problem here is that Black often has to exchange off the d5 pawn removing black's influence on the centre (which is not the case in the French defense).

9. What is the main positional drawback for black of the Dutch defense against the Queens Pawn opening (1 d4 f5)?

**D. dark square weaknesses**

Black's problem in the Dutch is that the black squares are weak. Although Black can use the advanced f-pawn for attacking purposes, he will often find White placing a knight on e5 and a bishop on b2 or c3 (or on a3 to exchange with the black dark square bishop).

10. Which of the following is a common configuration for whites pieces in the English opening (1 c4)?

**D. Nc3, Bg2, Rb1, Bg5, Qc2**

Black's problem in the Dutch is that the black squares are weak. Although Black can use the advanced f-pawn for attacking purposes, he will often find White placing a knight on e5 and a bishop on b2 or c3 (or on a3 to exchange with the black dark square bishop).

If you like this quiz and want to test yourself more, please visit <http://www.funtrivia.com/>

## Upcoming Tournaments

### January 16-19

American Youth Chess Festival  
Irvine, CA

<http://hanleychessacademy.com/2015AYCF.html>

### January 17-19

Dreaming King Open  
San Diego, CA

<http://www.sandiegochessclub.org/>

### January 22

West Valley Chess Club annual Round club championship

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

### February 8

L.A. All City Chess Championships

[Flyer](#)

### February 14-16

US Amateur Team Tournament (USA West)  
Irvine, CA

<http://metrochessla.com/>

### February 28-March 2

US Junior Chess Congress  
Santa Clara, CA

### March 7-8

Super States So. Cal State Championships  
Valencia

### March 14-22, 2015

Hawaii Chess Festival  
Oahu, HI

<http://hawaiiichessfestival.com/>

### March 20-22, 2015

Western Class  
Agoura, CA

<http://www.uschess.org/tlas/14111.ctla>



Evan with Justin Choi and sister Sadie at American Open



<http://www.hawaiiichess.org/>

### **The Hawaii International Open**

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

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



ACA December 7th holiday championships in Los Angeles (Glendale).

# [www.chessvacation.com](http://www.chessvacation.com)

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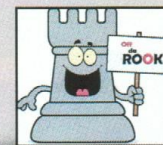
- ▶ Flight to Honolulu, Hawaii to the 2015 Hawaii Chess Festival, happening from 3/14-3/22
- ▶ 7 Nights Hotel at the Hilton Waikiki Beach
- ▶ The Chance to go skydiving with Timur Gareev or snorkeling with Sam Shankland
- ▶ 4 hours of Personal Coaching with GM Ronen Har-Zvi and;
- ▶ Entry to the Hawaii Grandmaster Challenge where you will win between \$1,000-\$5,000!

## THE HAWAII GM CHALLENGE?

One lucky player will win **the chance to play 12 games** with Women's World Champ Hou Yifan, Timur Gareev and Sam Shankland in a four player round robin tournament in Waikiki! Don't think you have a chance to win? *Think again*, as there will be a unique time handicap system that should help to level the playing field.

More info, contribute and enter to win at [www.ChessVacation.com!](http://www.ChessVacation.com)

When making a contribution, **be sure to mention that OFF DA ROOK referred you.** If you do, you will receive an **EXTRA 100 CONTEST ENTRIES!**



Three of the world's best chess players are headed to the Hawaiian Island of Oahu in March to take part in the **"Hawaii Grandmaster Challenge"** - a four player round robin invitational tournament being put on to help kick start a local scholastic chess academy.

Help scholastic chess grow by donating as little as \$10 to the start of the Chess Academy in Hawaii and YOU could win the vacation of the lifetime. **Mention OFF DA ROOK with your contribution and gain an additional 100 entries into the contest.**