

NM Chess Champions

Chris A. Candelario

National Master Chris A. Candelario has for many years been one of the leading players in New Mexico, though he has not played much in the last ten years. He won the New Mexico Championship in 1983.

Chris' father, John S. Candelario, was also a strong player who won the New Mexico Championship in 1946, 1947 and 1948. For more on John Candelario, see the article written by Chris in the September 2007 edition of Desert Knight at the NMCO web site.

The game below against multi-time New Mexico Champion, Steve Sandager, was played in 1972, the year Sandager won his first New Mexico Championship. At the time, Chris was a youngster rated 1732. No doubt Sandager expected an easy game.

The following is Chris' own introduction to the game in the June 2011 edition of the Desert Knight at the NMCO web site, which also has Chris' analysis of the game. The analysis below is my own. Chris must be very modest because he has a lot more to say about his opponent than about himself.

"Memoirs of a Chess Saboteur"
"Part One by NM Chris Candelario"
"SAND(ager)BAGGING"

"Steve Sandager is among the Southwest's great tournament players, winning the New Mexico state chess championship more than anyone else on record. In going over my scores, I believe I have a plus tournament score against him, 2 wins, 1 draw, 1 loss.

"With Sandager we have won the New Mexico State Team tournament at least twice [Together they scored 8-0 in the 1996 tournament, MG] and the 'chess bughouse' championship once. In fact before the bughouse tournament, neither of us had ever played that brand of chess. Steve is also a terrific tennis player."

Sandager, Steve - Candelario, Chris, 0-1
Albuquerque Open
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1972

French Defense, Rubinstein Variation

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 Rubenstein Variation. Black trades off to keep things simple.
[Both 3... Bb4 the Winawer Variation;
and 3... Nf6 the Classical Variation give White more problems]

4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Nf3 Ngf6 6. Nxf6 Nxf6 7. Bd3 c5 8. Bg5 This is not bad, but it is rarely played.
 [8. dxc5 Bxc5 9. O-O O-O 10. Bg5 b6 11. Qe2 Bb7 White's position is a little freer;
 8. O-O cxd4 9. Nxd4 Bc5 10. Nb3 Be7 11. Qf3 O-O Ditto]

8... cxd4 9. Nxd4 Qa5

[9... Qxd4?? 10. Bb5 Qd7 11. Bxd7 White wins]

10. Bd2 Qe5 11. Be3 Bc5N 12. O-O O-O 13. Nf3 Qc7 White has a slight lead in development, but Black has a center pawn and White doesn't. If I were to guess the continuation of this game I'd say that, with the open position, there would be massive exchanges and an eventual draw. Boy, I am way off the mark! 14. Bg5 Be7 15. c4 b6 16. Qe2 Bb7 17. Ne5 Rfe8 18. Rae1



18... Nd7?? Oh no! Black is trying to follow my plan, but he stumbles into the dreaded "Greek Gift." In spite of Chris' 1700 rating and 2300 talent, this demonstrates his lack of experience and knowledge. I cannot imagine any experienced player making this move.

[Simply developing his rook equalizes. 18... Rad8]

19. Bxh7! This differs slightly from the normal Greek Gift position, but it still works. For more on the Greek Gift, see this site - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_gift_sacrifice - or the newsletter article I published 11/5/2013. 19... Kf8

[19... Kxh7 20. Qh5 Kg8 21. Qxf7 Kh8 22. Re3 Bxg5 23. Rh3 Bh6 24. Rxh6 gxh6 25. Ng6#;

19... Kh8 20. Qh5 There is no defense to the twin threats of 21. Nxf7# and 21. Bg6+ Kg8, 22. Qh7+ Kf8, 23. Qh8#.]



20. Nxf7?? Oh no!! He misses the forced mate.

[20. Ng6 fxc6 21. Qxe6 Nf6 22. Bxf6 Bd5 23. cxd5 Qxh2 24. Kxh2 Bd6 25. Qxd6 Kf7 26. Re7 Rxe7 27. Qxe7#]

20... Qc6

[20... Kxf7 21. Qxe6 Kf8 22. Qg8#]

21. f4 Kxf7 22. f5? This certainly looks strong, but it in fact turns the advantage over to Black. Once he has the better game, Chris never gives Steve a chance to recover.

[White still has the better game after 22. Qh5 Kf8 23. Qh3 Nf6 24. Bg6 Ng8 (Trying to save the rook leads to disaster. 24... Red8?? 25. Qh8 Ng8 26. Bxe7 Kxe7 27. Qxg7 Kd6 28. Rxe6 Kxe6 29. Qe5 Kd7 30. Rd1 Kc8 31. Bf5 Qd7 32. Rxd7 Rxd7 33. Qe8 Kc7 34. Qxd7 Kb8 35. Qd6#) 25. Bxe8 Bc5 26. Kh1 Rxe8]

22... Bc5! Even with his own king exposed, Black starts a counter attack against White's king.

[White wins easily after 22... Bxg5?? 23. fxe6 Ke7 24. exd7 Kd6 25. Qd3 Kc7 26. dxe8=N! Rxe8 27. Qg3]

23. Kh1 exf5 24. Qh5 Kf8 25. Qh3?! The threats to g2 cause White to balk.

[The obvious 25. Rxf5 is best, but then White also has to deal with back rank problems. 25... Nf6 26. Rxf6 Exchanging off is the only good way to deal with the mate threats on g2 and e1. 26... Qxf6 27. Qxe8 Rxe8 28. Rxe8 Kxe8 29. Bxf6 gxf6 With two pawns for a bishop, White has some drawing chances]

25... Rxe1 26. Rxe1 Re8 27. Rxe8 Kxe8 28. Bxf5 White gets a second pawn for the knight, but it is not enough. 28... g6 29. Be6 Nf8 30. Bd5 Qa4 31. Qf3 Bxd5 32. Qxd5 Qd7 33. Qe5 Qe6 34. Qb8 White goes after a tainted pawn. 34... Kf7



35. Qxa7?? Oh no!!! He restores material equality, but at the same time leaves his king helpless. [If he plays defensively, he might still hold a draw with two pawns for the knight. 35. Qf4 Kg8 36. Qf1]

35... Nd7 Good enough to win...

[but mate is even better. 35... Kg8 36. h4 Qe1 37. Kh2 Bd6 38. Bf4 Bxf4 39. g3 Qxg3 40. Kh1 Qh2#]

36. h4

[He can avoid the quick mate with 36. Be3 Bxe3 37. Qa8 Bd4 38. Qf3 Kg7 39. Qf1 Bxb2, but obviously White is lost anyway]

36... Qe1 37. Kh2 Bd6 38. g3 Qxg3 White resigned. [...]

[39. Kh1 Qh2#]

[0:1]

Matt Grinberg, 7/22/2016