



# The Desert Knight



## 2023 NM SENIOR CHAMPIONSHIP

The New Mexico Senior Championship took place on January 21st and 22nd and registered 68 players from New Mexico and surrounding areas. The Texas Tech Chess team sent GM Victor Matviishen and a handful of others to test their skills against some of the best players in New Mexico. As expected GM Matviishen finished with a perfect 5/5, but not without some very hard fought fights from some of our top players. We featured the game between Viktor and JJ Scott in this issue to show how close the matches were. Current Rapid and Blitz State Champion, Abhishek Mallela, finished in clear second with 4/5 with his only loss coming from Viktor. Dennis Dyer finished in clear 3rd and also claimed the title of New Mexico Senior Champion. Dennis will represent New Mexico at the Irwin Tournament of Senior State Champions at the 2023 US Open.

## FROM THE EDITOR

It is my honor to release the 2nd volume of the 2023 Desert Knight. This is comes after a longer hiatus in chess schedule due to the focus on scholastic chess in the Spring. It's great to be back playing another major tournament in New Mexico. The 2023 Albuquerque/Rio Rancho Open and 2023 Class Championship are both happening in the next 30 days. There were changes made to the state title qualification and these two events will determine the first two qualifiers for the 2023 Closed State Championship. More details will be shared later in this issue so be sure to find out what you need to do to become the State Champion.

The main theme of this issue is "Openings". We go into a lot of discussion about openings and opening play, as well as history, examples, and more.

We have interviews with champions from the 2023 Senior Championship and the Sandia FIDE Open, articles to improve your chess game, history, and results from every event this year!

Thank you for this opportunity and I hope you enjoy the issue,

Daniel Serna

Interim Editor, The Desert Knight

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### CHESS NEWS AT A GLANCE

- Ding Liren defeats Ian Nepomniatchi for Classical World Championship
- Lei Tingjie wins Women's Candidates final to play for World Championship
- Hikaru Nakamura wins 2023 American Cup
- Hikaru Nakamura wins all-American final at Chessable Masters
- Levon Aronian wins 2023 WR Chess Masters
- Aleksandra Goryachkina wins Women's New Delhi Grand Prix on tiebreaks



# 2023 New Mexico Albuquerque Rio Rancho Open

June 24th - 25th, 2023

UNM Continuing Education Center, 1634 University Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87102

## Sections:

- **Open: USCF Rated and FIDE Rated**, 4 Round Swiss, G/90+30
  - Entry Fee: \$60 by 11:59pm on 6/3/23, \$70 by 11:59pm on 6/23/23, \$80 after 11:59pm on 6/23/23
  - **Registration for players without FIDE IDs intending to play in the Open section must register by 11:59pm, June 18th, 2023.** Players with FIDE IDs registering after June 18th must email [tournamentdirector@nmchess.org](mailto:tournamentdirector@nmchess.org) to register
- **Reserve (U1800)**: USCF Rated, 4 Round Swiss, G/90+30
  - Entry Fee: \$50 by 11:59pm on 6/3/23, \$60 by 11:59pm on 6/23/23, \$70 after 11:59pm on 6/23/23
- **Booster (U1400)**: USCF Rated, 4 Round Swiss, G/90+30
  - Entry Fee: \$40 by 11:59pm on 6/3/23, \$50 by 11:59pm on 6/23/23, \$60 after 11:59pm on 6/23/23
- **Novice (U900)**: USCF Rated, 4 Round Swiss, G/90+30
  - Entry Fee: \$30 by 11:59pm on 6/3/23, \$40 by 11:59pm on 6/23/23, \$50 after 11:59pm on 6/23/23
- **Scholastic (U900)**: USCF Rated, Single day 4 Round Swiss, G/25;d5
  - Entry Fee; \$15 by 11:59pm on 6/3/23, \$20 by 11:59pm on 6/23/23, \$30 after 11:59pm on 6/23/23
- **Players in Grades K-12 may receive a \$10 discount to play in the Reserve, Booster, or Novice Section using coupon code K12ABQRR23.** This coupon is not eligible for players in the Scholastic or Open section. Players must indicate grade when registering.
- Up to 1-half point bye available if requested prior to the start of the first round.
- This is not a norm event. The USCF Default time of 1 hour will be used in all sections

## Prizes:

- **Open**: 1st \$300, 2nd \$200, and 1st U1900 \$100
  - Top finishing NM Resident in the Open section will be invited to the New Mexico Closed Championship, if there is a tie there will be a blitz tiebreaker immediately after round 4; Prize money will be awarded based on finishing placement regardless of residency.
- **Reserve**: 1st \$250, 2nd \$150, and 1st U1600 \$75
- **Booster**: 1st \$200, 2nd \$100, and 1st U1100 \$50
- **Novice**: 1st \$150, 2nd \$75, and 1st U600 \$25
- **Unrated players** are eligible for half of the Reserve, Booster, and Novice section prizes.
- **Scholastic**: Medals for 1st - 3rd place finishers based on tiebreaks. Positive score medals to all finishers with at least 2.5 points.

## Schedule:

- **Open, Reserve, Booster, and Novice Schedule:**
  - Rounds 1-2 on Saturday, June 24: 10:00 AM, 3:00 PM
  - Rounds 3-4 on Sunday, June 25: 9:00 AM, 2:00PM
- **Scholastic Schedule:**
  - Rounds 1-4 on Saturday, June 24: 10:15AM, 11:15AM, 12:45AM, 1:45PM
- **Onsite Registration** from 9:00-9:30am, Saturday, June 24. Players who register after 9:30am may receive a 0 point bye for round 1. Players who register onsite without a valid USCF ID may receive a 0 point bye for round 1.

## Registration:

- USCF Membership required for all sections. FIDE IDs are only required when registering after June 18th in the Open section only. Online registration is open until 9:25 am on 6/24/23 at the following link or at [nmchess.org](http://nmchess.org)
- Open section registration for players without FIDE IDs closes at 11:59pm, June 18th, 2023. Players with FIDE IDs registering after June 18th must email [tournamentdirector@nmchess.org](mailto:tournamentdirector@nmchess.org) to register
- Online Registration: <https://www.kingregistration.com/event/2023ABQRR>
- Onsite Registration from 9:00-9:30am, Saturday, June 24th, 2023

## More Information for First Time FIDE Players:

- This event follows FIDE tournament rules, some of which differ from USCF Rules. You can review which rules have changed here: <https://new.uschess.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/uschess-fide-rules-comparison.pdf>
- Players without a FIDE ID who wish to register for the Open who register by June 18th will be given a FIDE ID by USCF at no extra cost to the player. Players without a FIDE ID who wish to register for the Open after June 18th may reach out to [tournamentdirector@nmchess.org](mailto:tournamentdirector@nmchess.org) to inquire about getting a FIDE ID in order to register. FIDE IDs are always free but must be set up by USCF and so we cannot guarantee you will receive a FIDE ID in time for the tournament after June 18th.

**For more information and direct registration, visit [nmchess.org](http://nmchess.org).**

**Questions can be sent to [tournamentdirector@nmchess.org](mailto:tournamentdirector@nmchess.org)**



# 2023 New Mexico Class Championship

July 15th - 16th  
Ramada Plaza Hotel  
2020 Menaul Blvd NE, Albuquerque, NM 87107

## Sections:

- 4 Round Swiss, G/90+30
- \$50 entry fee by 11:59pm, July 14th. \$60 entry fee after 11:59pm July 14th
- **Expert/Master (2000+), Class A (1800-1999), Class B (1600-1799), Class C (1400-1599), Class D (1200-1399), Class E (1000-1199), Class F (U1000)**
  - Sections with low turnout may be combined for pairing but will still receive separate prizes
  - Unrated players may play in any section except Expert/Master, but are limited to 50% of prizes awarded

## Prizes:

- In Each Class Section: 1st \$150
- In Each Class Section: Top finishing NM resident in each section, after a g/3+2 round robin blitz tiebreak, will be named their classes state champion and will receive a plaque.
  - Cash prizes available regardless of residency. Unrated players are eligible for half prizes.
- Top finishing NM Resident in the Expert/Master section will be invited to the New Mexico Closed Championship, if there is a tie there will be a blitz tiebreaker immediately after round 4

## Schedule:

- Saturday, July 15th: Round 1 - 10:00am, Round 2 - 3:00pm
- Sunday, July 16th: Round 3 - 9:00am, Round 4 - 2:00pm
- Onsite Registration: 9:00am-9:30am, Saturday, July 15th
- Up to 1 half point bye available if requested prior to 9:30am, July 15th

## Hotel Rooms:

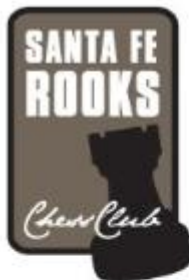
- Hotel rooms are available at a discounted price of \$75 per night for a single or double room at the venue on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night. You can book your room by following the link below or calling the hotel at (505) 884-2511

<http://www.wyndhamhotels.com/hotels/52598?checkInDate=07/13/2023&checkOutDate=07/17/2023&groupCode=071323SCH>

## Registration:

- USCF Membership required for all sections. Online registration is open until 9:25 am on Saturday, July 15th at the following link or at nmchess.org
- Online Registration: <https://www.kingregistration.com/event/NMClass2023>
- Onsite Registration closes 30 minutes before round 1. Players registering after that time or registering onsite without a valid USCF ID may result in a round one 0 point bye.

**For more information visit [nmchess.org](http://nmchess.org). Questions can be sent to [president@nmchess.org](mailto:president@nmchess.org)**



# SANTA FE ROOKS

*Chess Club*

**Saturday, July 15th, La Farge Library**

1730 Llano St, Santa Fe, NM 87505

**Santa Fe Rooks is running rated, 3 round quads on  
Saturday, July 15th at the La Farge Library on Llano St.**

3 Rounds, G/55 d5

Rounds at 10:10am, 1:10 pm, and 3:10 pm

Entry is \$20. Winner of each quad wins \$60

If you wish to play send Jim an email to book your spot and then  
pay at the door.

Jim Johnston, [jdjohnston100@gmail.com](mailto:jdjohnston100@gmail.com)

# 2023 AIMS OPEN

August 25th\* - 27th

AIMS@UNM, 933 Bradbury SE, 87106

OPEN SECTION, 5-SS

G/90+30, \$50 entry fee

1st - \$500, 2nd - \$250, 3rd - \$150

U1900 - \$100

Schedule: 8/25 - 3:30pm

8/26 - 10am, 3:30pm

8/27 - 10am, 3:30pm

RESERVE (U1800), 5-SS

G/90d5, \$40 entry fee

1st - \$400, 2nd - \$200, 3rd - \$125

U1500 - \$100

Schedule:

8/26 - 10am, 2pm, 6pm

8/27 - 10am, 2pm

BOOSTER (U1200), 5-SS

G/90d5, \$30 entry fee

1st - \$300, 2nd - \$125, 3rd - \$75

U900 - \$50

Schedule:

8/26 - 10am, 2pm, 6pm

8/27 - 10am, 2pm

RISING STARS (U600), 5-SS

G/90d5, \$20 entry fee

1st - \$200, 2nd - \$100, 3rd - \$50

Schedule:

8/26 - 10am, 2pm, 6pm

8/27 - 10am, 2pm

Biggest upset(all sections): ChessNoteR N6

\*Open section plays first round on Friday. All other sections on Saturday.

All military veterans may enter for free. Contact Steve Perea to qualify.

Online Registration: [www.nmchess.com](http://www.nmchess.com)

On-site registration starts 1 hour before first round. \$5 extra for on-site reg.

All bye requests must be made 2 hours before the round.

Second half bye requests must be made before end of round 3.

For any questions, email [chess.coach.steve@gmail.com](mailto:chess.coach.steve@gmail.com)



## WHAT IS A CHESS OPENING?

Chess is a game of strategy that requires players to think several moves ahead. While there are three phases to a chess game - the opening, middlegame, and endgame - the opening phase is particularly important as it sets the foundation for the rest of the game. In this article, we will explore the purpose, ideas, and importance of the opening phase of a chess game, particularly for young chess players.

The opening phase of a chess game is the first 10 to 15 moves of a game, where both players are trying to control the center of the board and develop their pieces. The purpose of the opening phase is to create a strong position for the rest of the game. The opening sets the stage for the rest of the game, with the moves made during this phase having a significant impact on the remainder of the game.

The opening phase is not just about memorizing a set of moves, but it is also about understanding the underlying ideas behind each move. One of the key ideas in the opening is controlling the center of the board.

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*“Play the opening like a book, the middle game like a magician, and the endgame like a machine.”  
– Rudolf Spielmann*

### REASONS TO STUDY OPENINGS

1. **Gain Control of the Center:** The opening phase of a chess game is where players aim to control the center of the board. This is important as controlling the center provides more space for the pieces to move and increases their mobility and attacking options.

2. **Develop Pieces Efficiently:** The opening phase is also where players aim to develop their pieces quickly and efficiently. Developing pieces means moving them from their starting squares to more active squares on the board, which can create threats and attack their opponent's pieces.

3. **Avoid Mistakes:** Mistakes in the opening can lead to a weaker position and can make it difficult to recover later in the game. It is important to study chess openings to avoid common mistakes such as moving the same piece multiple times or neglecting to develop pieces.

4. **Plan Ahead:** Chess is a game of strategy, and the opening phase is where players start to plan their strategy for the rest of the game. By studying chess openings, players can learn different strategies and tactics that they can employ in their own games.

5. **Improve Decision Making:** The opening phase is where players make crucial decisions that can have a significant impact on the rest of the game. By studying chess openings, players can improve their decision-making skills and make more informed decisions during the game.

The center of the board is the most important area of the board, and controlling it gives a player an advantage in terms of mobility and attacking options. In the opening, players will try to control the center of the board by moving their pawns and pieces to occupy the central squares.

Another key idea in the opening is developing pieces. Developing pieces means moving them from their starting squares to more active squares on the board. By developing pieces, players can create threats and attack their opponent's pieces. It is important to develop pieces quickly and efficiently, so as not to fall behind in development, which can be difficult to recover from.

While it is important to control the center and develop pieces, it is also important to avoid making mistakes in the opening. Mistakes in the opening can result in a weaker position and can make it difficult to recover later in the game. Some common mistakes in the opening include moving the same piece multiple times or neglecting to develop pieces.

The importance of the opening phase cannot be overstated, as it can set the tone for the rest of the game. A strong opening can put a player in a favorable position, while a weak opening can make it difficult to recover. Therefore, it is important for young chess players to study and understand the opening phase of the game.

In conclusion, the opening phase of a chess game is crucial, as it sets the foundation for the rest of the game. Young chess players should focus on understanding the underlying ideas behind the opening moves, such as controlling the center of the board and developing pieces. By studying and mastering the opening phase, young players can set themselves up for success in the rest of the game.



## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN

Interview with Viktor by Daniel Serna

### **1. When did you learn chess and who taught you?**

“I learned how to play chess at the age of six when I got into a chess school in addition to elementary school. Although, before getting into the chess school, I played with my father at home, so I would say that my father was my first teacher.”

### **2. When did you begin playing chess tournament and how did you do?**

“I think I played my first tournament when I was seven, it was a regional chess tournament among kids under eight years old, held at the chess school I was going to. I won the tournament, and that boosted and motivated me to keep working on chess.”

### **3. When did you begin making legitimate progress in your game and How?**

“I made significant process between the ages of 10-14. It was due to a coaching change. My first coach in the chess school was a good teacher and he taught me the basics well, but at some point, I started beating him and there was not much he could teach me. My second coach was a director of the chess school Mykola Bodnar, an IM and an honored chess coach of Ukraine. His most famous students are Nyzhnyk Illia (GM), Fedorchuk Sergey(GM), and Yulia Shvayger (WGM). I believe his teaching approach was really good and I would have never achieved what I achieved without him. He was going with me almost to every tournament, and under his coaching, my rating went from 2000 ELO to 2400 in a matter of years. I won European Youth Chess Championship in a U12 category twice.”

### **4. What are your top book recommendations for beginner to intermediate players? (<2000)**

“A series of chess-steps books is pretty good for beginner to intermediate level, some tactics books like Woodpecker Method are also good.”

### **5. What are your top book recommendations for advanced players? (2000+)**

“A series of Kasparov’s book “My great predecessors”, and Boris Gelfand’s series of books about making decisions like “Making technical decisions in chess”, “Endgame Manual” by Dvoretsky, “My 60 most memorable games” by Fischer, Aagaard “GM Preparation” series of books, “Perfect your chess” by Volokitin and Grabinsky, Neishtadt books.”

### VIKTOR'S BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Players BELOW 2000 USCF -

“Chess-Steps books”

[www.chess-steps.com](http://www.chess-steps.com)

“Woodpecker Method” By Axel Smith & Hans Tikkanen

#### Players ABOVE 2000 USCF -

“My Great Predecessors 1-5” By Gary Kasparov

“Decision Making” series by Boris Gelfand

“Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual”

“My 60 Most Memorable Games” by Bobby Fischer

“Grandmaster Preparation” series by Jacob Aagaard

“Perfect Your Chess” by Andrei Volokitin & Vladimir Grabinsky

Various books by Yakov Neishtadt



## VIKTOR'S FIDE RATING HISTORY

### **First rated event -**

Jan. 2010—1775 starting rating

### **Broke 2000 FIDE -**

Mar. 2013—2032 rating

### **Earned FM title -**

Sept. 2014—2404 rating

### **Earned IM title -**

88th FIDE Congress  
2017, Oct. 7-15

### **Earned GM title -**

2022 4th FIDE Council

### **Current FIDE Rating—**

**2538** as of Feb. 2023

### **Current USCF Rating—**

**2616** as of Mar. 2023

### **Follow Viktor online!**

**Chess.com—**  
Viktor\_Matviishen

**Lichess.org—**ViktorMMs

**Email—**vmatviis@ttu.edu

## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN

Interview with Viktor by Daniel Serna (continued...)

### **6. How did you become a Grandmaster? (What tournaments, did you have a trainer, etc.)**

“I got my first GM norm in Poland in 2019 and crossed 2500 at that time but was struggling to get my 2 norms before coming to the United States. When I came to the US, I became a player on the Texas Tech Chess Team coached by Alex Onischuk a famous GM and the former US champion. My first year (2021) in the US wasn't successful as I was getting used to the tournaments here because they differ from the ones that I used to play in Europe. In May 2022 when the college semester ended, I decided that it was time to become a GM and I was going to do whatever it takes to get my norms. I went to almost all big opens as well as other tournaments in 2022, and fortunately, I got my second norm in the World Open and the last one in a Los Angeles round-robin tournament. It took a lot of time and effort to achieve that and I counted I played more than 110 classical games in 2022.”

### **7. What was your exact study regimen while working towards Grandmaster?**

“I was mostly analyzing openings and practice. We were also having our team training sessions where we would analyze and discuss top players' games from the most recent top tournaments played.”

### **8. What is your study routine now?**

“My studying routine hasn't changed since then.”

### **9. What is next in your chess career?**

“I want to cross a 2600 milestone. I feel like it's going to be super hard but achievable.”

### **10. Nature or Nurture: Do you think top chess players are born with natural ability or do they become talented through hard work?**

“I think you can't become talented through hard work but you can outwork a lazy talented person. I think a majority of top chess players are both gifted and hard-working. I genuinely believe that it's almost impossible to get to the top 20 ranked chess players if you are not naturally talented just because a chess path is hard in a way that it's money-consuming. It's costly to have a coach and to go to different tournaments because you have to pay for all kinds of expenses like fees, tickets, hotels, etc. At the same time going to different tournaments and playing a lot of them is essential for chess-level growth. Usually, all costs are on the kids' parents and if a kid doesn't show...





## VIKTOR'S TOURNAMENT RESULTS

2022– Kasparov Chess Foundation University Cup Team Championship –1st place

2022- Pan American Intercollegiate Team Championship-2nd place.

2018- World Youth Chess Championship U16 - 2nd place.

2018- Irena Warakomska Memorial-A - 3rd place.

2018- Ukrainian Youth Chess Championship U16 - 2nd place.

2016- Ukrainian Youth Chess Championship U14- 1st place.

2014 European Youth Chess Championship U12- 1st place.

2013 European Youth Chess Championship U12 - 1st place.

## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—GM VIKTOR MATVIISHEN

Interview with Viktor by Daniel Serna (continued...)

### **10. Nature or Nurture: Do you think top chess players are born with natural ability or do they become talented through hard work? (continued from previous page)**

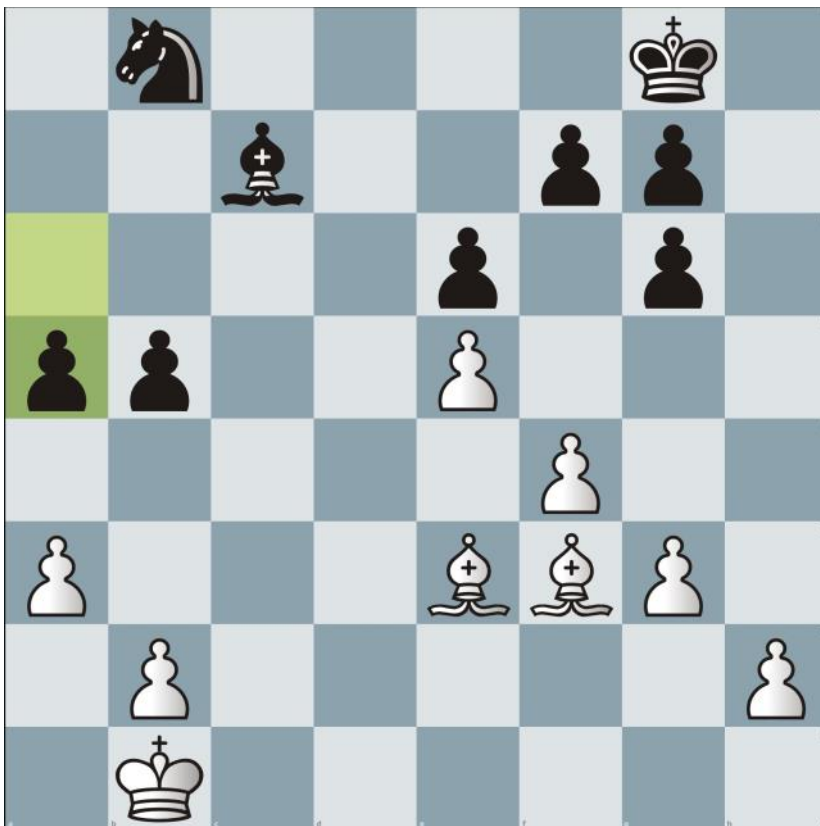
“(continued...) results, then parents might think that their investments don't pay off therefore, a kid will not reach his/her potential and might even quit. This is why a chess carrier is like a snowball you either keep rolling, or you will melt. If you are a non-talented hard worker then it might take you more time to flourish and you might quit before reaching your potential because of factors that you might not even have control over.”

### **11. How do you feel about cheating in chess?**

“It's a big issue in online chess, but I don't think it's a big deal in OTB chess, at least right now. I believe it's just easy to catch a cheater in real life which is proved by (Igor) Rausis's case. Even before he got caught, top GMs suspected him so it's relatively hard to show an outstanding performance and not be suspected or detected by other players. A chess world is a small world and everyone knows each other, thus a potential cheater will be quickly suspected.”

### **12. Who is your favorite player and why?**

“My favorite player is Bobby Fischer. There is definitely a lot to learn from his game and I find his history very tragic and yet romantic. I admire his dedication to chess and his sacrifice for chess. His impact on chess can not be forgotten and even these days we play his version of chess and use his time controls.”



Black has just played a5 to advance the pawns on the queenside. What to play as white?

## MATVIISHEN VS. SCOTT—RD 3—SENIOR OPEN

D12 Slav Defense: Quiet Variation, Schallop Defense

1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 Bf5 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nh4 Be4 7.f3 Bg6 8.Qb3 Qc7 9.Bd2 Be7 10.O-O-O dxc4 11.Bxc4 b5 12.Be2 a6 13.Nxg6 hxg6 14.e4 c5 15.dxc5 Nbd7 16.Kb1 Nxc5 17.Qc2 Rc8 18.Rc1 O-O 19.Be3 Rfd8 20.g3 Qb7 21.Rhd1 Na4?! (Inaccuracy. Nfd7 was best.)

22.Rxd8+ Bxd8 23.Qd3 Nxc3+ 24.Rxc3 Nd7 25.Rxc8 Qxc8 26.Qd6 Nb8 27.f4 Bc7 28.Qc5 Qd7 29.a3 Qd6?! (Inaccuracy. Nc6 was best.)

30.Qxd6 Bxd6 31.e5 Bc7 32.Bf3 a5?? (Blunder. f6 was best.)

33.Be2 b4 34.axb4 axb4 35.Bb5 g5 36.Bc5 f6?! (Inaccuracy. gxf4 was best.)

37.Bd6?! (Inaccuracy. f5 was best.)

(37.f5 Kf7 38.Bc4 Bd8 39.fxe6+ Kg6 40.Bd3+ Kh5 41.e7 Bxe7 42.Bxe7 fxe5 43.Be2+ Kg6)

37...Bxd6 38.exd6 Kf7 39.Kc2 g6 40.Kb3 e5 41.fxe5 fxe5 42.Kxb4 Ke6 43.Kc5 e4 44.d7

1-0 (Black resigns)

## SLAV DEFENSE—QUIET, SCHALLOPP DEFENSE

### 2...c6

Originally considered a less-orthodox defence in the Queen's Gambit, this opening has stood as an entire opening system in its own right for decades.

The idea behind this defence is straightforward: instead of locking in the light squared bishop on c8, why not support the center with the c-pawn instead? Black tends to be more active in this variation than the QGD.

### White's main lines:

**3. Nf3** - The main line. As with the QGD, white makes a useful developing move while maintaining some flexibility: will they play for e4, play cxd5, or play for the minority attack?

**3. Nc3** - Sometimes provocative, this move may lead to variations where black overextends by trying to hold on to the pawn on c4.

**3. cxd5** - The exchange variation. This relieves the central tension perhaps too early on and tends to allow black equality. One of the main drawbacks of having the Slav as a main opening repertoire is that it is hard for Black (or White) to win in the exchange variation. According to chess365, 83% of Masters games ended in a draw after this move. Even so, it is important for both sides to know that there is an opening novelty called the Boor attack to sharpen up the game.

The Schalopp Variation is the simplest to learn and still very effective. The credibility of the Schalopp Variation is enhanced by its regular use at the top level by Super-GMs Alexey Shirov, Boris Gelfand, and Alexey Dreev. The Schalopp Variation is distinguished from other lines in the Slav Defense because it thematically involves the deployment of the light-squared bishop to f5 where it will be active and outside of the pawn chain (e6, d5, c6).

### Model Game:

Emanuel Lasker vs Max Euwe

Nottingham (1936)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 Bf5 5.Bd3 e6 6.cxd5 Bxd3 7.Qxd3 exd5 8.Nc3 Bd6 9.O-O O-O 10.Re1 Nbd7 11.e4 dxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Qxe4 Re8 14.Qxe8+ Qxe8 15.Rxe8+ Rxe8 16.Kf1 Nb6 17.Bd2 f6 18.Re1 Rxe1+ 19.Nxe1 Kf7 20.Ke2 Ke6 21.h3 Nc4 22.Bc1 Bc7 23.Kd3 Ba5?? 24.b4! Bxb4 25.Nc2 Bd2 26.Bxd2 Nb2+ 27.Ke3 Kd5 28.Bc1 Nc4+ 29.Kd3 Nb6 30.Ne3+ Ke6 31.Nc4 Nc8 32.Na5 Nd6 33.Bf4

1-0 (Black resigns)



### BEN'S BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Players BELOW 2000 USCF -

“Morphy’s Games of Chess” by Philip Sergeant

“Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953”  
By David Bronstein

“The Puzzle King” by Sam Loyd

“The Art of Checkmate”  
by Georges Renaud and Victor Kahn

“The Art of Attack in Chess” by Vladimir Vukovic

“Dvoretsky’s Endgame Manual” by Mark Dvoretsky

#### Players ABOVE 2000 USCF -

“Sacking the Citadel” by John Edwards

“Zlotnik’s Middlegame Manual” by Boris Zlotnik

## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—NM BEN CORARETTI

Interview with Ben by Daniel Serna

### **1. When did you learn chess and who taught you?**

“As an infant, I learned chess and algebraic notation from watching my father study and play over the phone. My mother got the idea to set me up in the highchair in front of the board. Proper command of the game came in stages, but from what I’m told, with the exception of en passant, I could play at the age of two. I learned that rule when I was seven. Remaining notation and rules questions were cleared up shortly before my first tournament.”

### **2. When did you begin playing chess tournament and how did you do?**

“I played my first tournament in June of 1997 and it was unlike any tournament I’ve played since. There were a couple of shacks in the woods. You could play outdoors. There were no board numbers. You just found your opponent and picked a place to play. I played only ten tournaments before the new millennium and without much progress to speak of regarding my rating.”

### **3. When did you begin making legitimate progress in your game and How?**

“I got better in chess when I started putting actual work into the game (shocker, right?). It coincided with my father’s choice to sacrifice his own study time and work more with me. We took a historical approach to chess study, but we only accomplished a couple chapters in a few books before my first major test at the 2001 World Open in Philadelphia. After success there and in a couple follow up events, that was the green light for further adventures.”

### **4. Can you recall a specific turning point? (a game, event, working with a chess coach, etc.) ?**

“I was gaining rating points in chunks, but things really took off when my father hired a long time friend of the family, IM Calvin Blocker, to analyze my tournament games. Calvin is an extraordinarily gifted player and teacher. Most of our lessons took place over the phone since my family had since moved away. Within two years of working with Calvin I had gained 600 rating points and by April of 2005 I was a rated expert.”

### **5. What are your top book recommendations for beginner to intermediate players? (<2000)?**

“I took the long historical approach by studying the games of world champions and other critical players and tournaments of the eras. I don’t recommend this if you are trying to improve quickly. (continued)”



## BEN'S USCF RATING HISTORY

### **First rated event -**

Jun. 1997—765 starting  
rating

### **Broke 1000 USCF -**

Oct. 2000

### **Broke 1600 USCF -**

Jan 2003

### **Broke 2000 USCF -**

Mar. 2005

### **Earned NM title -**

Jul. 2012

### **Peak FIDE Rating—**

**2189** in August 2013

### **Peak USCF Rating—**

**2285** in June 2013

### **Current USCF Rating—**

**2216** as of Feb. 2023

## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—NM BEN CORARETTI

Interview with Ben by Daniel Serna (continued...)

“(continued) Eventually history becomes too long and must be truncated. I still believe strongly in Morphy's Games of Chess by Sergeant. The Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953 by Bronstein is a classic.

For tactics I did chess problems and approached them historically too by starting with Sam Loyd. The Art of the Checkmate by Renaud and Kahn is a nice book for learning checkmate patterns. The Art of Attack In Chess by Vukovic and revised by Nunn is a higher level book in the same vein. Lastly, I couldn't imagine learning the endgame without Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual by Dvoretsky. I think most chess books offer value and it's more about how you study than what you study.”

### **6. What are your top book recommendations for advanced players? (2000+)**

“Sacking the Citadel by Edwards and Zlotnik's Middlegame Manual by Zlotnik are some recent titles that I've found to be quite useful.”

### **7. How did you become a National Master? (What tournaments, did you have a trainer, etc.)**

“I didn't study much and played even less during my college years. At this point, lessons with Calvin were few and far between. Regardless of that, the study and high level tournament experience I accumulated beforehand carried me to the door of 2200 by the time of my graduation in the spring of 2012. A few tournaments into the summer put me over.”

### **8. What was your exact study regimen while working towards National Master?**

“I don't remember exactly where I was along in my process when I crossed. I think I was near the end of Alekhine's games. You'd think I would have been much further along by then, but I had a lot of setbacks. The biggest one was that prior to reaching 2000 I had largely neglected opening study. I was surprised to discover the difference in opening knowledge between expert and master. A large portion of my work thenceforth went into openings.”

### **9. What is your study routine now?**

“I'm over halfway through Bobby Fischer's games! I'll tackle a new book every now and then like the two I mentioned in the answer to question 6. I spend a ton of time with my chess engines and databases developing new opening ideas for when I decide to go out and try to earn titles again. For local chess I have subroutines I go through to be ready for familiar opponents.”



## BEN'S TOURNAMENT RESULTS

Highest rated player beaten in Regular -

IM Dionisio Aldama (2528) - Rd 3—Autumn Breeze (9/23/2017)

Lifetime Records -

1076 Regular rated games

596 wins/174 draws/306 losses

63.5% win rate across all games

Last 12 months -

32 Regular rated games

21 wins/5 draws/6 losses

73.4% win rate across all games

## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—NM BEN CORARETTI

Interview with Ben by Daniel Serna (continued...)

### **10. What is next in your chess career?**

“I’m 33 years old and my career in regard to pushing for FIDE titles has been dormant for nearly a decade. A few of those years of dormancy were due to personal health problems and also a certain infamous worldwide health crisis. I do think I have one last push for greatness in me.”

### **11. Nature or Nurture: Do you think top chess players are born with natural ability or do they become talented through hard work? (continued from previous page)**

“It is a fantastic question and one on which my position has evolved over the years. Ten years ago, I’d have confidently said it was an equal combination of the two. Maybe I’ll think differently after another ten years, but the evidence clearly favors the contributions of Nurture.

Consider the youngest GM record which seems to get broken on a regular basis these days. Are chess players really more talented than in past generations? Nature might argue that the population increase makes for a larger gene pool but the correlation curve does not support that theory. The far more compelling Nurture argument is the unprecedented access to relevant information and competition. This is the greatest effect the strong engine has had on chess! Everyone can have a tactically infallible Super GM in their home.

Where Nature makes its case is not so much in the chess itself but some of the supporting skills which comprise a strong chess player. The biggest natural factor seems to be memory. I had the pleasure of meeting and playing IM Justin Sarkar on a few occasions. His memory is perfect. I know because my memory is also unusually good and it’s not something I ever put work into. I didn’t ask but I doubt Justin puts any work into it either.

### **12. How do you feel about cheating in chess?**

“Like many chess fans, I was somewhat captured by the Carlsen-Niemann drama. For what it’s worth as a data point, I noticed nothing suspicious in my encounter with Hans Niemann back in 2016. I think organizers and directors do their best to prevent what they can. The bottom line is that you are your own best policeman. I caught an opponent on his phone in the bathroom at a tournament in Las Cruces several years ago.

Unfortunately there are so many ways to abuse the system and they aren’t all preventable. Additionally, there’s all sorts of things players will do intentionally or otherwise to get an edge during the game. Cheating is an obstacle to all competitive endeavors, but it’s not epidemic in chess”



## CHAMPION SPOTLIGHT—NM BEN CORARETTI

Interview with Ben by Daniel Serna (continued...)

“(continued) like it was, for example, in contract bridge.”

### **13. Who is your favorite player and why?**

“Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian and only because I believe he is the most important chess player to study that has yet graced this earth. A close second is Mikhail Tal and special mention goes to Akiba Rubinstein. Let it be known that Petrosian was no less proficient in calculation power or combination prowess than Mikhail Tal. Petrosian simply played as if he faced an opponent of equal skill and therefore restrained himself from unleashing mayhem on the board.

Petrosian's famous cumbersome positional style has already outlived any other from his period and likely will outlive ours too. I'd invite any doubters to take a look at modern correspondence chess or computer matches from this new generation of chess engines. They are not all draws! How do you defeat what never falters tactically? Python strategy is the best chance.”



White checks black. Three options for the king to move. Which draws and which loses?

## CORARETTI VS. SALGADO—RD 5—SANDIA FIDE OPEN

B90 Sicilian Defense: Najdorf Variation, Adams Attack

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 b5 7.g4?!** (Inaccuracy. a4 was best.)

(7.a4 b4 8.Nd5 e6 9.Nxf6+ Qxf6 10.Bd3 Be7 11.Nf3 Nc6)

**7...Bb7 8.Bg2 b4 9.Nd5 e6 10.Nxf6+ gxf6 11.Be3 Nd7 12.Qd2 Rb8 13.O-O-O Nc5 14.f3 d5 15.Qf2 Qa5 16.Kb1 Na4 17.Nb3 Qc7 18.exd5 Bxd5 19.f4 Bxg2 20.Qxg2 Be7 21.g5 fvg5?!** (Inaccuracy. Nxb2 was best.)

(21...Nxb2 22.Kxb2 Qc3+ 23.Kb1 Qxe3 24.Nd4 fvg5 25.Rd3 Qxf4 26.Qc6+ Kf8 27.Nxe6+ fxe6 28.Rf3)

**22.Bd4 O-O?** (Mistake. Rg8 was best) (.22...Rg8 23.h4) **23.Be5?** (Mistake. h4 was best.)

(23.h4 Rfd8 24.hxg5 Qxf4 25.Rdf1 Rxd4 26.Rxf4 Rxf4 27.Qh3 Bd6 28.g6 Be5 29.Qxh7+ Kf8)

**23...Qb7 24.Qg4?!** (Inaccuracy. Qe2 was best.)

(24.Qe2 Rbd8 25.Rdg1 f6 26.Bd4 e5 27.fxe5 f5 28.h4 Qe4 29.Qxa6 Rxd4 30.Nxd4 Qxd4)

**24...Rbd8 25.fvg5 Rd5 26.Bf6 Rfd8?!** (Inaccuracy. Nb6 was best.) **27.Rdg1?!** (Inaccuracy. Rde1 was best.)

(27.Rde1 a5 28.h4 Nb6 29.h5 Qd7 30.Nc1 e5 31.Qe4 Na4 32.Qg2 Nc5 33.Rxe5 Rxe5)

**27...Rc8 28.Rh2 Nb6 29.Re2?!** (Inaccuracy. Rf2 was best.) **29...Rc4 30.Qg2 a5 31.Nxa5 Qd7**

**32.Nb3 Rd1+ 33.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 34.Nc1 Qd8?!** (Inaccuracy. Bf8 was best.) (34...Bf8 35.Rd2)

**35.Nd3 Nd5 36.Bxe7 Nxe7 37.Rf2 Nf5 38.Qf3 Qa5 39.Qb7 Rd4??** (Blunder. Qd8 was best.)

**40.Rf4 Rxf4 41.Qb8+ Kg7 42.Qxf4 Qd5 43.Qe5+?** (Mistake. Qxb4 was best.)

(43.Qxb4 e5 44.a4 e4 45.Qc3+ Kg8 46.Qe5 Qc6 47.Qxf5 exd3 48.Qxd3 Qxa4 49.Qe3 Qh4)

**43...Qxe5 44.Nxe5 Nd4?!** (Inaccuracy. f6 was best.) **45.a4??** (Blunder. Kc1 was best.)

(45.Kc1 f6 46.gxf6+ Kxf6 47.Nd3 Nc6 48.Kd2 e5 49.c3 bxc3+ 50.Kxc3 Ke6 51.Kc4 e4)

**45...bxa3 46.bxa3 f6 47.gxf6+ Kxf6 48.Nc4 e5?!** (Inaccuracy. Kg5 was best.) **49.c3?!** (Inaccuracy. Kb2 was best.)

(49.Kb2 Ke6 50.Ne3 Kd6 51.Kc3 Nf3 52.Kc4 Kc6 53.Ng2 h5 54.h4 Nd4 55.c3 Nf5)

**49...Ne2 50.Kc2 Ke6 51.a4 Kd5 52.a5 Nf4 53.a6 Kc6 54.Nxe5+ Kb6 55.h4 h5 56.c4 Kxa6**

**57.Kc3 Ng2 58.Ng6 Kb6 59.Kd4 Kc6 60.c5 Kb5 61.Kd5 Ne3+ 62.Ke4 Ng2 63.Kd4 Kc6 64.Ne7+ Kd7 65.Nf5 Kc6 66.Kc4 Nf4 67.Nd4+ Kd7??** (Blunder. Kc7 was best. The other two king moves would both draw the game.)

(67...Kc7 68.Kb5 Nd3 69.Ne6+ Kd7 70.Ng7 Ne5 71.Nxh5 Nf3 72.Nf6+ Ke6 73.h5 Kxf6 74.Kc4)

**68.Kb5 Ke7?** (Mistake. Nd5 was best.) (68...Nd5 69.c6+) **69.Kb6 Nd5+ 70.Kb7 Nb4?** (Mistake. Kf6 was best.)

(70...Kf6 71.c6 Ke5 72.Ne2 Ke4 73.Ng3+ Kf4 74.Nxh5+ Kg4 75.Nf6+ Nxf6 76.c7 Kxh4 77.c8=Q)

**71.Nc6+ (Black resigns)**

### SICILIAN DEFENSE—NAJDORF, ADAMS ATTACK

5...a6 is the characteristic move of the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defense, the most popular variation of the entire Sicilian Defense. The variation is named after the Polish-Argentinian Grandmaster Miguel Najdorf. In one sense, 5...a6 is a waiting move; White has no immediate threats, so Black delays developing their minor pieces until they know where they will be best placed. Flexibility is the key to this opening: depending on White's choices, Black may develop their queen's knight to c6 or d7 and their light-squared bishop to b7 or d7. Additionally, Black retains the option of playing ...e6 or ...e5, depending primarily on White's deployment of the bishops: 6.Bc4 and 6.Bg5 are both moves that directly control d5 and so ...e7-e5 in those cases cannot be recommended. It is, however, this flexibility that makes the Najdorf a hot favorite with the world's chess elite.

5...a6 is not without its own purposes, however. On a6 the pawn prevents a White piece from coming to b5. It also supports the advance of the b-pawn, ...b5. If Black achieves this thrust, they will gain space on the queenside, further restrict Whites pieces, and create the option to fianchetto the light-squared bishop with ...Bb7. White should be ready to counter a minority attack on the queenside. One idea, however, is to allow ...b7-b5, and then counter with a2-a4, hoping to prove that the pawn thrust has only weakened Black's queenside.

The most aggressive move for White is 6. Bg5, threatening to exchange the knight, giving Black doubled pawns. 6. Be2 is the classical main line, in which White hopes to impose their greater positional understanding. 6. Be3 is clearly the main line today, the English Attack, in which White has a simple plan of playing Qd2, castling queenside, playing f3 to secure e4 and g4 and pushing forward the kingside pawns and mating Black. There are also some deeper, more subtle positional ideas behind this move, but that is the basic outline of White's plan. Today, the variation with 6. Bc4 is considered unpromising for White, but was a Fischer favorite in the early 1960s and can lead to a brutal piece attack if Black is not careful. 6. f3 is mainly a transpositional tool for the English attack (to avoid the annoying line 6.Be3 Ng4). 6. f4 was favored by Tal and the Hungarian players Leko and Judit Polgar, hoping to directly pressure e5 and in some cases attack along the f-file. Fischer's other contribution to Najdorf theory, 6. h3, is rarely seen, preparing g2-g4 to fianchetto the bishop, while the immediate fianchetto, 6. g3, is out of favor now. 6. a4, preventing ...b7-b5, is considered innocuous, as it leaves a hole on b4 for Black's knight.

#### Model Game:

Robert James Fischer vs. Miguel Najdorf

Varna Olympiad Final-A (1962)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.h3 b5 7.Nd5 Bb7 8.Nxf6+ gxf6 9.c4 bxc4 10.Bxc4 Bxe4 11.O-O d5 12.Re1 e5 13.Qa4+ Nd7 14.Rxe4 dxe4 15.Nf5 Bc5 16.Ng7+ Ke7 17.Nf5+ Ke8 18.Be3 Bxe3 19.fxe3 Qb6 20.Rd1 Ra7 21.Rd6 Qd8 22.Qb3 Qc7 23.Bxf7+ Kd8 24.Be6

(Black resigns)

## HOW DO YOU STUDY CHESS OPENINGS?

Most people hate to memorize the countless opening variations published in chess books and magazines, and yet, this is unfortunately the most common way amongst chess players to master openings. Leaving aside the fact that it is a very boring thing to do it is also counterproductive. First of all your memory can easily play some little tricks and you can mix something up. If you are playing, say, the sharp Dragon variation of the Sicilian, you may immediately lose the game as a result. But even if you have a perfect memory and are able to reproduce any variation you ever read about, there is still a danger. After you have played the last 'book' move, you are on your own. What use is the book's evaluation "White is better" if you have no idea what you are supposed to do next?

Studying chess openings is an essential part of improving your chess game. While it can seem daunting at first, with the right approach, anyone can learn to study chess openings effectively. In this article, we will explore the steps to take when studying chess openings.



*"A thorough knowledge of the openings enables the player to start out with the game...already in his favor." - Siegbert Tarrasch*

### **Step 1: Choose an Opening**

The first step is to choose an opening that you want to study. There are countless chess openings to choose from, and it's important to choose one that suits your playing style. You can start with a popular opening like the Sicilian Defense or the French Defense, or choose an opening that you have been struggling against.

### **Step 2: Learn the Basic Principles**

Once you have chosen an opening, it's important to learn the basic principles behind it. This includes understanding the key moves, the ideas behind the opening, and the typical pawn structures that arise. You can find this information in books, online resources, or by studying master games that use the opening.

### **Step 3: Play Through Master Games**

One of the most effective ways to study chess openings is to play through master games that use the opening. By doing so, you can see how the opening is played in practice and learn from the strategies and tactics employed by strong players.

### **Step 4: Analyze Your Own Games**

Another way to study chess openings is to analyze your own games. Look for patterns in your opening play and identify areas where you can improve. This will help you to identify common mistakes that you make and to develop a deeper understanding of the opening.

### **Step 5: Practice, Practice, Practice**

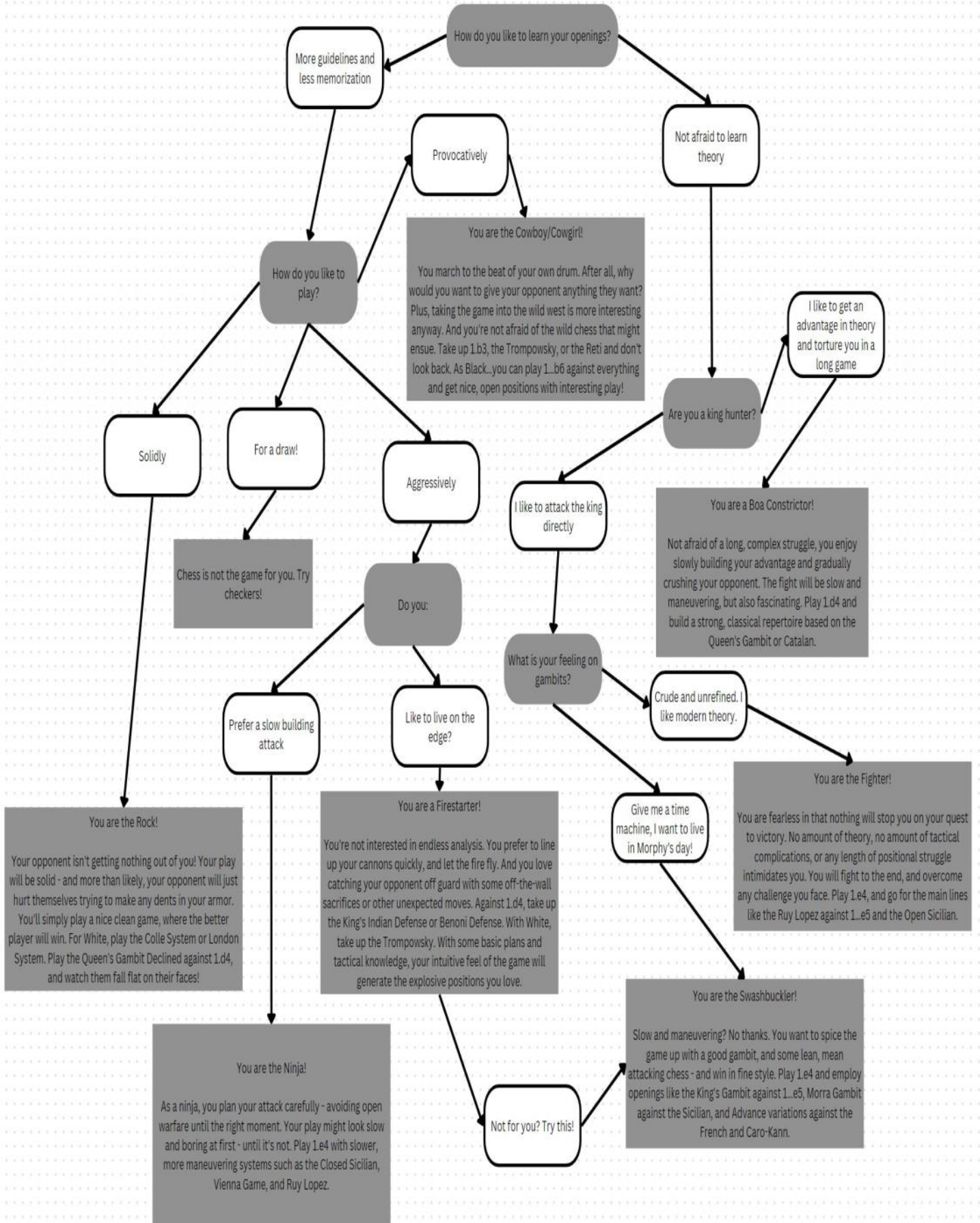
Finally, it's important to practice the opening as much as possible. Play games against opponents who use the same opening and try out different variations to see what works best for you. By practicing the opening, you will develop a deeper understanding of the key moves and be better prepared for future games.

In conclusion, studying chess openings is an important part of improving your chess game. By choosing an opening, learning the basic principles, playing through master games, analyzing your own games, and practicing as much as possible, you can develop a deeper understanding of the opening and improve your overall game.

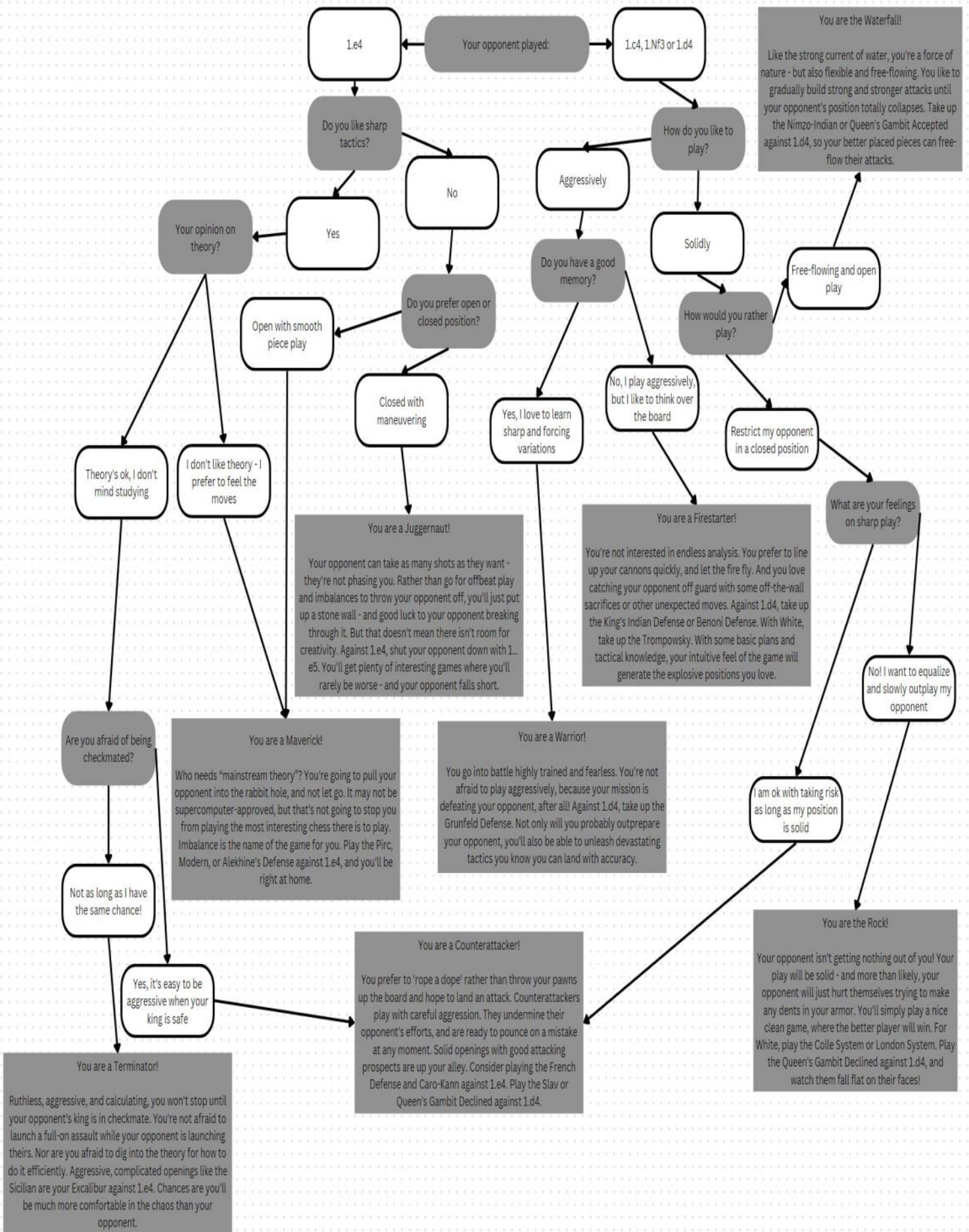




# Picking an opening with White



# Picking an opening with Black





## HOW DO YOU ANALYZE YOUR CHESS GAMES?

Analyzing your own chess games is a critical component of improving as a chess player. By reviewing your games, you can identify mistakes, develop a deeper understanding of the game, and improve your future play. In this article, we will explore the steps to take when analyzing your own chess games.

### Step 1: Record Your Games

The first step in analyzing your own games is to record them. This can be done using a notebook, a chess app, or by using a chessboard and pieces. Recording your games allows you to go back and review your play in detail.

### Step 2: Review the Game

Once you have recorded your game, it's time to review it. Start by playing through the game, move by move, and try to identify any mistakes or missed opportunities. Look for moves that could have been stronger, missed tactics, or

*"The analysis of one's own mistakes is the most effective method to improve at chess." - Garry Kasparov*

### BENEFITS OF ANALYSIS

There are numerous ways in which we benefit from the analysis of our own chess games. Among other things, it allows us to:

- Recheck our calculations and the quality of our tactical skills;
- Check the quality of our evaluation of the position;
- Examine the quality of the plan chosen during the game;
- Search for new possibilities and moves that didn't cross our mind during the actual game;
- Determine the critical point of the game;
- Determine the reasons behind your mistakes;
- Analyze the opening in greater detail.

Analysis of our own games is also an excellent way of learning because it is universal – we study all phases of the chess game – the opening, the mid-game, and the endgame, both strategy and tactics. There is no doubt that through analysis of our own games, we increase our general chess understanding and overall, become better players.

positional errors.

### Step 3: Identify Key Moments

Once you have played through the game, identify key moments in the game where the outcome may have changed. This could be a blunder that allowed your opponent to gain a significant advantage or a missed opportunity where you could have made a stronger move.

### Step 4: Analyze the Position

For each key moment, analyze the position to identify what went wrong and how you could have played better. This may involve looking at different variations or trying out different moves to see what works best.

### Step 5: Make a Plan for Improvement

Once you have analyzed the game and identified key areas for improvement, make a plan for how to improve. This may involve studying specific openings, tactics, or positional concepts, or working on specific weaknesses in your game.

### Step 6: Practice

Finally, it's important to practice what you have learned. Incorporate your new knowledge into your future games and look for opportunities to apply what you have learned. By practicing what you have learned, you will develop a deeper understanding of the game and continue to improve as a player.

In conclusion, analyzing your own chess games is an essential component of improving as a chess player. By recording your games, reviewing them, identifying key moments, analyzing the position, making a plan for improvement, and practicing, you can develop a deeper understanding of the game and continue to improve your play.



*The starting position of the Ruy Lopez*

## COMMON OPENINGS: RUY LOPEZ

The Ruy Lopez is one of the oldest and most popular chess openings. Also known as the Spanish Opening, it is named after the 16th-century Spanish bishop Ruy López de Segura, who wrote one of the earliest known books on chess. In this article, we will explore the history, common variations, and key information about the Ruy Lopez chess opening.

### History

The Ruy Lopez opening has a long and rich history. It is believed to have been played as early as the 15th century, and was popularized by Ruy López de Segura in his book "Libro de la Invención Liberal y Arte del Juego del Ajedrez" in 1561. The opening became particularly popular in the 19th century, when it was played by many of the strongest chess players of the time.

### Common Variations

The Ruy Lopez opening is characterized by the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5. From this position, there are many variations that can arise, depending on the moves played by both players. Some of the most common variations include:

- The Berlin Defense (3...Nf6): This is a sharp variation that often leads to tactical complications. It was famously played by Vladimir Kramnik in his World Championship match against Garry Kasparov in 2000.
- The Morphy Defense (3...a6): This is a popular variation that aims to drive the bishop away from its strong position on b5. It was favored by the great American chess player Paul Morphy in the 19th century.
- The Closed Ruy Lopez (3.d3): This is a more positional variation that often leads to closed positions with a lot of maneuvering. It has been played by many top-level chess players, including Bobby Fischer and Anatoly Karpov.

### Key Information

The Ruy Lopez opening is known for its strategic complexity and its ability to lead to a wide variety of positions. Some of the key ideas behind the opening include:

- Control of the center: The opening aims to control the center of the board with pawns and pieces, in order to gain an advantage in space and mobility.
- Pressure on the black knight: The move 3.Bb5 puts pressure on the black knight on c6, which can limit black's options and force them to make concessions.
- Development of the bishop: The bishop on b5 is developed to an active square, where it exerts pressure on the black position and helps control key squares.
- Possibility of a kingside attack: Depending on the variation played, the Ruy Lopez can lead to a kingside attack by white, often supported by the pawn on f2 and the queen's bishop.

In conclusion, the Ruy Lopez chess opening is a classic and highly respected opening that has been played by many of the greatest chess players in history. Its strategic complexity and flexibility make it a popular choice at all levels of play, and its many variations ensure that it remains a rich and rewarding opening to study and play.

## RUY LOPEZ BASICS

At the most basic level, White's third move attacks the knight that defends the e5-pawn from the attack by the f3-knight. White's apparent threat to win Black's e-pawn with 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.Nxe5 is illusory—Black can respond 5...Qd4, forking the knight and e4-pawn, winning back the material with a good position.[6] White's 3.Bb5 is still a good move, however; it develops a piece, prepares castling, and sets up a potential pin against Black's king. Since White's third move carries no immediate threat, Black can respond in a wide variety of ways.

Traditionally, White's objective in playing the Ruy Lopez is to spoil Black's pawn structure; either way Black recaptures following the exchange on c6 will have negative features, although recapturing gains the bishop pair.[7] In modern practice, however, White does not always exchange bishop for knight on c6, preferring the retreat 4.Ba4 if chased by 3...a6.

The theory of the Ruy Lopez is the most extensively developed of all Open Games, with some lines having been analysed well beyond move thirty. At nearly every move there are many reasonable alternatives, and most have been deeply explored. It is convenient to divide the possibilities into two groups based on whether or not Black responds with 3...a6, the Morphy Defence, named after Paul Morphy, although he was not the originator of the line.[8] The variations with Black moves other than 3...a6 are older and generally simpler, but the Morphy Defence lines are more commonly played.

### Model Game:

Ian Nepomniachtchi vs. Ding Liren

World Championship 2023—RD 1

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.O-O Be7 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.Re1 Nd7 8.d4 exd4 9.Qxd4 O-O 10.Bf4 Nc5 11.Qe3 Bg4 12.Nd4 Qd7 13.Nc3 Rad8 14.Nf5 Ne6 15.Nxe7+ Qxe7 16.Bg3 Bh5 17.f3 f6 18.h3 h6 19.Kh2 Bf7 20.Rad1 b6 21.a3 a5 22.Ne2 Rxd1 23.Rxd1 Rd8 24.Rd3 c5 25.Qd 2 c6 26.Rxd8+ Nxd8 27.Qf4 b5 28.Qb8 Kh7 29.Bd6 Qd7 30.Ng3 Ne6 31.f4 h5 32.c3 c4 33.h4 Qd8 34.Qb7 Be8 35.Nf5 Qd7 36.Qb8 Qd8 37.Qxd8 Nxd8 38.Nd4 Nb7 39.e5 Kg8 40.Kg3 Bd7 41.Bc7 Nc5 42.Bxa5 Kf7 43.Bb4 Nd3 44.e6+ Bxe6 45.Nxc6 Bd7 46.Nd4 Nxb2 47.Kf3 Nd3 48.g3 Nc1 49.Ke3

1/2-1/2



*The starting position of the Italian Game*

## COMMON OPENINGS: ITALIAN GAME

The Italian Opening is a classic chess opening that is popular among players of all levels. In this article, we will explore the history, common variations, and key information about the Italian Opening.

### History

The Italian Opening is one of the oldest chess openings, dating back to the 16th century. It is believed to have been named after Italian players who used it in the 16th century. The opening gained popularity in the 19th century and has been a favorite of many of the world's greatest chess players.

### Common Variations

The Italian Opening is characterized by the moves 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4. From this position, there are many variations that can arise, depending on the moves played by both players. Some of the most common variations include:

- The Giuoco Piano (3...Bc5): This is a popular variation that leads to open positions with plenty of tactical possibilities. It is often used by attacking players who enjoy aggressive play.
- The Evans Gambit (4.b4): This is a sharp and aggressive gambit that aims to gain control of the center and put pressure on the black position. It has been used by many top-level players, including Paul Morphy and Garry Kasparov.
- The Two Knights Defense (3...Nf6): This is a solid variation that aims to control the center and develop the knights. It can lead to a wide variety of positions, depending on the moves played by both players.

### Key Information

The Italian Opening is known for its ability to lead to open and aggressive positions, with many tactical possibilities for both players. Some of the key ideas behind the opening include:

- Control of the center: The opening aims to control the center of the board with pawns and pieces, in order to gain an advantage in space and mobility.
- Development of the pieces: The opening focuses on developing the pieces quickly and efficiently, in order to gain an advantage in activity and coordination.
- Possibility of a kingside attack: Depending on the variation played, the Italian Opening can lead to a kingside attack by white, often supported by the pawn on f2 and the queen's bishop.
- Tactical possibilities: The Italian Opening often leads to positions with plenty of tactical possibilities, including sacrifices, forks, and pins.

In conclusion, the Italian Opening is a classic and highly respected opening that has been played by many of the greatest chess players in history. Its open and aggressive nature make it a popular choice among attacking players, while its solid variations provide a reliable option for those who prefer more positional play. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced player, the Italian Opening is a rich and rewarding opening to study and play.

## ITALIAN GAME BASICS

This simple scheme of development leads to a complex of systems that form one of the oldest chess openings, the Italian Game. Perhaps because it is straightforward and logical - both sides quickly develop their pieces to good squares - it has always been popular with beginners and novices. Although traditionally considered inferior to the Ruy Lopez as a way for White to press for an advantage after 1.e4 e5, it still contains the potential for rich mid-games full of strategic and tactical subtleties, and has still had its grandmaster adherents. It may be due for a revival at the highest level, as top grandmasters looking to avoid the Berlin Defense in the Ruy Lopez may turn to the Giuoco Pianissimo to outplay their opponents in the slow maneuvering games that can develop, and the opening has recently featured in the 2016 World Championship match between Magnus Carlsen and Sergei Karjakin.

### Model Game:

Wesley So vs. Hikaru Nakamura

Chessable Masters 2023

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 Bc5  
5.O-O d6 6.c3 a6 7.a4 Ba7 8.Re1 O-O  
9.h3 h6 10.Nbd2 Re8 11.b4 Be6  
12.Bxe6 Rxe6 13.Bb2 Ne7 14.Nf1 Ng6  
15.Ng3 c6 16.c4 a5 17.b5 d5 18.Qc2  
d4 19.Ba3 Nd7 20.bxc6 Rxc6 21.Reb1  
Qc7 22.Rb5 Bc5 23.Bc1 Bb4 24.Nf5  
Nc5 25.Rb1 Nf8 26.Bd2 Bxd2 27.Nxd2  
Nfe6 28.Nb3 h5 29.Ng3 Nxa4 30.Ra1  
Nc3 31.Rbxa5 Rxa5 32.Rxa5 Ra6  
33.Rxa6 bxa6 34.Ne2 a5 35.Nxc3  
dxc3 36.Qxc3 a4 37.Nc1 Qb6 38.Qxe5  
a3 39.Qb5 Qd4 40.Qe8+ Nf8 41.Qa4  
Qa1 42.Qc2 Qb2 43.Qd1 Ne6 44.Qe1  
Nd4 45.Kh2 Ne2 46.Nxe2 a2 47.Ng3  
g6 48.Qe3 a1=Q 49.Nxh5 gxh5

0-1



*The starting position of the Sicilian Defense*

## COMMON OPENINGS: SICILIAN DEFENSE

The Sicilian Defense is one of the most popular and aggressive openings in chess. In this article, we will explore the history, common variations, and key information about the Sicilian Defense.

### History

The Sicilian Defense is named after the Italian island of Sicily, where it is said to have originated. It is believed to have been played as early as the 16th century, but it was not until the 20th century that it became a popular choice among top-level players. Today, it is one of the most common responses to the move 1.e4.

### Common Variations

The Sicilian Defense is characterized by the moves 1.e4 c5. From this position, there are many variations that can arise, depending on the moves played by both players. Some of the most common variations include:

- The Najdorf Variation (2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6): This is a sharp and aggressive variation that aims to control the center and put pressure on the white position. It is named after the great Polish-Argentine player Miguel Najdorf, who used it to great effect in the 1950s and 1960s.
- The Dragon Variation (2...d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6): This is a more positional variation that aims to create a strong pawn structure on the kingside and launch an attack against the white position. It is named after the resemblance of the pawn structure to a dragon's head.
- The Scheveningen Variation (2...e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6): This is a solid and flexible variation that aims to control the center and develop the pieces quickly. It is named after the Dutch fishing village where it was first played in a tournament in 1923.

### Key Information

The Sicilian Defense is known for its aggressive and dynamic play, with many tactical and strategic possibilities for both players. Some of the key ideas behind the opening include:

- Control of the center: The opening aims to control the center of the board with pawns and pieces, in order to gain an advantage in space and mobility.
- Delayed development of the knight: Black delays the development of the knight on c6, in order to avoid the possibility of a fork by a white pawn on d5.
- Strong pawn structure: The Sicilian Defense often leads to a strong pawn structure for black, with pawns on c5, d6, and e6 providing a solid foundation for the pieces.
- Possibility of a kingside attack: Depending on the variation played, the Sicilian Defense can lead to a kingside attack by black, often supported by the pawn on g6 and the bishop on the long diagonal.

In conclusion, the Sicilian Defense is a dynamic and aggressive opening that has been played by many of the greatest chess players in history. Its tactical and strategic possibilities make it a popular choice among attacking players, while its solid and flexible variations provide a reliable option for those who prefer more positional play. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced player, the Sicilian Defense is a challenging and rewarding opening to study and play.

### SICILIAN DEFENSE BASICS

The Sicilian Defense is the most popular opening from Black. It has caused a fair share of troubles and victories in some of the most remarkable games in the world. The Sicilian Defense begins with white playing e4 followed by black playing c5. The basic idea of c5 is to gain control over the d4 square. c5 is the most popular response to white's e4 and is considered to break the symmetry of the board, unlike the e5 opening, which is the second most common response to e4. It is the best scoring response to e4 according to computer analysis. Usually, the black's c5 pawn is exchanged with white's d4 pawn. Sicilian is the most complex opening because both sides have a lot of variety, unlike the Italian game with e4-e5 where at some points both players are a bit short of ideas. From Black's point of view, it is very flexible because he can choose between many pawn structures if white goes for the main lines with d4. White can try the closed line with Nc3 and g3 or with Nc3,f4, and Bc4 or Bb5. This is the only chance to get some initiative without d4. He could play 2.c3 to prepare d4 but black has many good moves and he should attack the center and to not allow white to take control there. If white goes for the main lines he can choose where to put the bishops, g5 or e3 and e2 or c4. Apart from it, if he is to attack with the pawns later either he has to go for f3,g4,h4 setup or for f4 then to seek the e5 or f5 break. Black has plenty of options. If he wants to get a more solid game he can go to the setups with d6 and e5, where the game is more closed. If he prefers a more sharp game and is ready to take the risk to allow white to attack him, then he can go for the Dragon or Najdorf with e6. The Sozin's attack was the favorite line of Bobby Fischer.

### Model Game:

Istvan Bilek vs. Bobby Fischer

Stockholm Interzonal 1962

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Qb6 8.Qd2 Qxb2 9.Rb1 Qa3 10.e5 dxe5 11.fxe5 Nfd7 12.Bc4 Be7 13.Bxe6 O-O 14.O-O Bxg5 15.Qxg5 h6 16.Qh4 Qxc3 17.Rxf7 Rxf7 18.Qd8+ Nf8 19.Bxf7+ Kxf7 20.Rf1+ Kg6 21.Rxf8 Bd7 22.Nf3 Qe3+ 23.Kh1 Qc1+ 24.Ng1 Qxc2 25.Rg8 Qf2 26.Rf8 Qxa2 27.Rf3 Kh7

0-1 (white resigns)

## RECENT TOURNAMENT RESULTS

### January G60—01/15/2023

Open  
1st—John Jules Scott  
2nd—Abhishek Mallela

Reserve  
1st—Bradley Austin Emmett  
2nd—Jaime Magallanes Jr.

### 2023 NM Senior Championship—01/21/2023-01/22/2023

Open  
1st—Viktor Matviishen  
2nd—Abhishek Mallela

Reserve  
1st—Christopher Cruz  
2nd—Preston Herrington, Corey Babcock

Booster  
1st—Noah Phillips, Jackson Greener

Novice  
1st—Jaime Magallanes Jr.  
2nd—Liam Fetherlin, Aariv Agrawal, Brandon Escobedo

Scholastic U900  
1st—Benjamin Cogan  
2nd—Mark Goldman, Ethan Fu, Miles Casillas

### February G60—02/11/2023

Open  
1st—Justin Skliar  
2nd—Aravind Chary

### Sandia FIDE Open—02/11/2023-02/12/2023

Open  
1st—Benjamin Coraretti  
2nd—Daniel Herman, Juan Salgado, Abhishek Mallela, Nestor Sosa, JJ Scott, Sara Herman

### NMCO All-Girls Scholastic—02/12/2023

Open  
1st—Kayla Higgins  
2nd—Makayla Taylor, Mysha Ahmad

### 2023 NM Grade Level Championships—02/25/2023

12th Grade  
1st—Wilson White  
2nd—Ian Evans, Christopher Martinez

8th Grade  
1st—Daiwik Devanand, Liam Fetherlin

6th Grade  
1st—Zoltan Szekely, Nash LeTard, Krish Sathish, Mark Goldman, Johnny Spann

4th Grade  
1st—Mysha Ahmad, Miles Casillas, Logan Birkey

3rd Grade  
1st—Akaansh Bhandari  
2nd—Aariv Agrawal, Aarush Samudrala, Jacob Littlewood, Vaasak Munaga

### March G60—03/04/2023

Open  
1st—Christopher Ong, Preston Herrington

U900  
1st—Makayla Taylor  
2nd—Akaansh Bhandari, Yokesh Ilango, Agastya Bhandari, Urijah Medina

### 2023 NM K-12 State Championship—04/01/2023

K-12th  
1st—Wilson White  
2nd—Daiwik Devanand, Joseph Wang, Ezekiel Ortega

K-8th  
1st—Manuel Castillo, Liam Fetherlin

K-5th  
1st—Mysha Ahmad  
2nd—Leo Hill, Desmond Ramirez, Johnny Spann, Leo Luan, Miles Casillas, Ilijah Horcasitas

K-3rd  
1st—Callan Rosandich  
2nd—Copal Barthelemy

K-1st  
1st—Anaya Ahmad  
2nd—Josiah Garcia, Thiago Castillo, Polina McCready

### April G60—04/15/2023

Open  
1st—Abhishek Mallela, John Jules Scott

U900  
1st—Johnny Spann  
2nd—Henry Dinin

### Girls Closed Championship—04/15/2023

Open  
1st—Kayla Higgins, Makayla Taylor

### 2023 Women's State Championship—04/23/2023

Open  
1st—Valerie Barker  
2nd—Willow LeTard

Scholastic U900  
1st—Camylle Hubbard  
2nd—Anaya Ahmad

### NM Scholastic Championship—04/29/2023

High School  
1st—Wilson White, Aarush Tutiki

Middle School  
1st—Manuel Castillo  
2nd—Daiwik Devanand, Lucas Reyes, Arjun Grandhe

Elementary School  
1st—Harshin Jagirapu  
2nd—Johnny Spann

### 2023 NM Rapid Championship—05/06/2023

Open  
1st—Abhishek Mallela  
2nd—Justin Gomez

### 2023 NM Blitz Championship—05/07/2023

Open  
1st—Abhishek Mallela  
2nd—Justin Gomez

### May G60—05/21/2023

Open  
1st—John Jules Scott  
2nd—Justin Skliar, Brad Langer, Daiwik Devana and, Stephen Aarons

U900  
1st—Agastya Bhandari  
2nd—Yokesh Ilango, Susheer Paladugu, Zsolt Schwabedissen, Charmik Devanand

### June G60—06/17/2023

Open  
1st—Antonio Bornot, Abhishek Mallela

U1300  
1st—Bill Goldman  
2nd—Johnny Spann, Halden Sjostrom, Mysha Ahmad, Tyler Dockstader, Laasya Tutiki

U600  
1st—Andres Salinas  
2nd—Sarvin Saiju, Ethan Sanchez

## UPCOMING EVENTS

2023 NM Class Championship (Albuquerque)— 7/15-7/16, 4-SS, \$50 entry before 7/14, \$60 after 7/14, class sections. No playing up allowed.

Santa Fe Rooks Quads (Santa Fe) - 7/15, 3-RR, G/55d5, \$20 entry, \$60 for winning quad, Rd 1 @ 10:10am, La Farge Library in Santa Fe. [jdjohnston100@gmail.com](mailto:jdjohnston100@gmail.com)

2023 AIMS Open (Albuquerque) - 8/25-8/27, 5-SS, Four sections, G/90+30 for Open, G/90d5 for other sections. Veterans receive free entry. [chess.coach.steve@gmail.com](mailto:chess.coach.steve@gmail.com)

2023 NM Open (Albuquerque) - September likely

**More information can be found at: [www.nmchess.org/tournament-events](http://www.nmchess.org/tournament-events)**



*“Every chess master was once a beginner.” - Irving Chernev*

## CHESS CLUBS AROUND THE STATE

### **Alamogordo Chess Club—**

Mondays, 4pm-7pm at Plateau Espresso

575-415-3628 or  
[matt.grinberg@erols.com](mailto:matt.grinberg@erols.com)

### **Coronado Chess Club—**

Wednesdays, 6:45pm at Frontier Restaurant

Two unrated rounds weekly, G/30

### **Diamondback Chess Club—**

Mondays, 6pm-9pm at Fuddruckers (Pan American)

RATED games, \$5 entry w/ cash prizes

[Chess.coachwillow@gmail.com](mailto:Chess.coachwillow@gmail.com)

### **Empire Chess Club—**

Sundays (except holidays), 5pm-9pm at Jason's Deli (Holly Ave)

No charge to play, \$0.25 for rated games

505-315-8709 or  
[chess.coach.steve@gmail.com](mailto:chess.coach.steve@gmail.com)

### **Four Corners Chess Club—**

Tuesdays, 5pm-7pm at San Juan College  
(student lounge above Mary's Kitchen,  
next to SJC Library)

505-330-2923 (Steve Marquez)

505-486-1197 (Preston Herrington)

### **Santa Fe Rooks—**

Monthly Tournaments

Mondays, 6pm-9pm at Violet Crown on  
Alcaldesa Street

### **Cruces Chess Club—**

Wednesdays, Rotating breweries and  
wineries

“Cruces Chess Club” on Facebook





## NEW MEXICO CHESS ORGANIZATION

The purpose of the organization shall be to promote chess in the state of New Mexico by conducting chess tournaments and by cooperating with chess clubs, schools, and chess associations throughout New Mexico whose aim is to broaden and develop chess as an educational, competitive, and cultural activity. NMCO is affiliated with the United States Chess Federation (USCF) and is the official state affiliate representative to USCF with the privileges and obligations pertaining thereto.



## NEW MEXICO CHESS EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: Willow LeTard

Vice-President: Daniel Serna

Treasurer: Christian Von Huene (Assistant Treasurer: Dean Brunton)

Secretary: Kevin Zemko

Tournament Organizer: Chris Thé

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Southern NM Regional Scholastic Director: Manuel Castillo, Sr.

Desert Knight Editor: OPEN (Interim Editor: Daniel Serna)

Webmaster: Joseph Cutchall (Social Media Coordinator: Omar Reyes)

Member-At-Large: Wil Barela, Southern New Mexico

Member-At-Large: Heidi Fleck, Women's Chess

Member-At-Large: Preston Herrington, Northern New Mexico

Member-At-Large: Steve Perea, Central New Mexico

### New Mexico Chess Organization

P.O. Box 4215  
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87196-4215

Website: [www.nmchess.org](http://www.nmchess.org)

Facebook: New Mexico Chess  
Organization

E-mail: [board@nmchess.org](mailto:board@nmchess.org)



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