

The 130th New York State Championship took place from August 29 to September 1 at the Albany Marriott on Wolf Road in the Albany suburb of Colonie, the same site as the two previous years.

The Open section contained few surprises as the two top rated players tied for first. IM Alex Lenderman and IM Justin Sarkar both scored 5½-½ drawing each other in round four and winning all their other games. Although both players were New Yorkers, the New York State Chess Association tries to avoid co-champions so Lenderman was declared New York State Champion on tie-breaks because his opponents performed better than Sarkar's.

Tied for third with 4½-1½ were masters Yefim Treger and Michael Thaler. Tied for fifth with 4-2 were: FM Igor Nikolayev, Evan Rabin, FM Alec Getz, Steven Taylor, Yevgeni Nahutin and Ben Dean-Kawamura. It's interesting to note that, as opposed to previous years, all players named were New Yorkers, with the exception of Nahutin, who is from Ontario. Rabin won the prize for the best player under 2100.

The thing that caused the most comment at the event was not who was there, but rather who wasn't. This is the first New York State Championship that I can remember where there were no grandmasters playing. Nobody was quite sure of the reason for this – tournament director Steve Immitt thought that it might be because there was no "two day" option for the Open section this year. Perhaps the GMs who usually play had other commitments: for example that weekend defending champion GM Hikaru Nakamura was coming in second in an invitational tournament in Montreal.

However, the lack of strength at the top didn't seem to affect the tournament overall: about 194 players competed in the four sections, up slightly from last year despite a weak economy and high gas prices. The Albany area seems to be good for the tournament and it looks like it's going to be there again next year.

Steve Taylor did by far the best of any Capital District players in the Open, and his round two game against IM Lenderman seems to have been the closest that the new State champion came to a loss in this event. In a furious time scramble Taylor overstepped the time limit, but according to tournament director Steve Immitt, who was watching the game, this didn't necessarily mean Taylor was lost. When Taylor's flag fell he immediately conceded, even

though Lenderman didn't have a complete scoresheet. According to the USCF rules of chess, a win on time can't be claimed unless one of the players has a scoresheet with no more than two missing move pairs. As Immitt wryly pointed out it would actually make sense to call your own flag down, simply to stop your opponent from filling in his scoresheet.

The Under-2000 section finished in a two-way tie as Vitaliano Rafael and Marc Widmaier both scored 5-1. Both players were undefeated, with one of their draws being against each other. Tied for third with 4½-1½ were: David Masters, Karsten McVay, Terence Lamb, Thomas Levine and John Phillips. Lamb and Levine split the prize for best player under 1800. Tied for eighth with 4-2 were former NYSCA president Leonard Chipkin, David Kolb, Glen Gausewitz, Scott Strattnr, David Phelps, William Graif, Robert Wagner, Will Brooks and Christian Sbarro.

The Under-1600 section had a sole winner as Daniel Johnson won his first five games then drew his sixth to finish with 5½-½. Capital District player Kevin Brown tied with Brian Clark for second place at 5-1. Another local player, Michael Laccetti tied with German player Georg Mueller for fourth with 4½-1½. Tied for sixth with 4-2 were: Mark Nolan, Guy Colas, Walter Chesnut, John Hartnett, Matt Slomski, Joachim Zink, William Rich and Zubin Mukerjee. The last three named players split the prize for best player under 1400.

Capital District player Matthew Clough won the Under-1200 section with the tournament's only perfect 6-0 score. RPI student Maximilian Katz tied for second place with Sebastian Spitz at 5-1. Spitz got the lion's share of the prize money split because Katz, as an unrated, couldn't win more than \$100.

Nate Stevens tied for fourth with Jeffrey Young with 4½-1½. Tied for sixth with 4-2 were: Lucas Marciano, Dilip Aaron, Eric Stahl and Kyler McVay. McVay was top player rated under 1000, while Chen Qu with 3½-2½ was second under 1000. Maximilian Katz, mentioned above, was top unrated with Antonio Bustamante (3-3) being second unrated.

NYSCA president Bill Goichberg was chief organizer along with Brenda Goichberg. Steve Immitt was chief director.

Here is the last round "money game" that put IM

Justin Sarkar in the winner's circle, but, alas, did not make him state champion. His opponent, FM Igor Nikolayev, chose a violent opening, the little-used Albin Counter-Gambit. This harks back to the game that decided last year's championship when GM Hikaru Nakamura played the ancient Danish Gambit against GM Ildar Ibragimov. Here, however, Nikolayev's choice makes a little more sense: playing half a point down, his only hope for winning the event, or at worst coming in second, was to go all-out for a win.

This game ends with a nice tactical flourish as IM Sarkar found an unexpected winning shot on move 32.

IM Justin Sarkar (2487) – FM Igor Nikolayev (2321) [D08]
130th New York State Championship, Round 6
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 d4 4.a3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Nge7 6.b4 Ng6 7.Bb2 a5 8.b5 Nxe5 9.Qxd4 Qxd4 10.Bxd4 Nxc4 11.e3 Nd6

White has the advantage here because he controls more space and has a ready-made target in Black's backward c-pawn.

12.a4

This at last makes the game unique. Previously seen here was 12.Nbd2 and now the game Peralta-Perez Candelario, Ayamonte 2006 continued: 12...Bd7 13.a4 f6 14.Be2 Ne7 15.0-0 Nd5 16.Rfc1 c6 17.bxc6 Bxc6 18.Bc5 and White is better and went on to win. 12...Nf5 13.Bc3 Bc5 14.Nbd2 0-0 15.Nb3 Bb6 16.Nfd2 Nd6 17.Nc4 Nxc4 18.Bxc4 Re8 19.0-0

My analysis engine recommends 19.0-0-0 but White doesn't seem to be making much progress after 19...c6 20.bxc6 bxc6 21.Rd6 Ne7 22.Rd2 Bf5 23.Rhd1 Be4.

19...Ne5 20.Bd5 Be6!?

Struggling to get out of his passive position, black offers a pawn to shake things up. However white would only have a very small advantage after 20...c6 21.bxc6 bxc6.

21.Rfd1

White refuses the offered pawn, not wanting to go into the tactical exchanging variation: 21.Bxb7 Ra7 22.Nd2 Rxb7 23.Bxe5 and White is a pawn up, but black has the two Bishops.

21...f6 22.Bxe5 fxe5 23.Kf1 Kf7 24.Ke2 Bxd5 25.Rxd5 Ke6

Now is the time for Black to consider 25...c6 26.bxc6 bxc6 and the White rook has to retreat.

26.Rd2 Red8 27.Rc2 Rd5 28.Rac1 Rad8 29.Kf3 Rf8+ 30.Ke4 Rf6 31.f3 Kd6??

This sets up a very nice tactical shot for the first player, which Black obviously didn't see. White would still be better, but Black would be fighting after 31...Rh6 32.Nc5+ Bxc5 33.Rxc5 Rh4+ 34.g4 Rxc5 35.Rxc5 Rxh2 36.Rxe5+.

32.Rc6+! bxc6 33.Rxc6+ Kd7 34.Kxd5

White is winning: he has won an important pawn and his pieces are invading the Black position.

34...Bxe3 35.Nxa5 Bg1 36.Rc1!?

Rather provocative. There's absolutely nothing wrong with 36.h3.

36...Bxh2 37.Rh1 Bf4 38.Rxh7 Bh6 39.Rh8 Rf4?

Black was lost anyway, but this allows white to finish him quickly.

40.Nc6! 1-0

The threat of mate forces Black to give up more material: 40.Nc6 Bg5 41.Nxe5+ Ke7 42.Ng6+, etc.

For some reason this year I got a lot fewer scoresheets from the players – I blame all those nice hardcover books that many people seem to be using now. An unhappy corollary of this was that I got no games at all from new state champion Lenderman. Luckily Jennifer Shahade was able to get some games from him for her article on the USCF website and I was able to get them from her.

Here is Lenderman's last round win, a lot less fiery than Sarkar's – a straight ahead positional crush.

Louie Jiang (2266) – IM Alex Lenderman (2499) [B38]

130th New York State Championship, Round 6
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Bg7 5.c4 Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 0-0 8.f3 Qb6 9.Ncb5 Qa5+ 10.Qd2 Qxd2+ 11.Kxd2 d6 12.Nc2 Bd7 13.Rc1 Rfc8 14.Nbd4 Ne8 15.b3 Nc7 16.Be2 a5 17.a4 Na6 18.Rhd1 Nc5 19.Rb1 Nxd4 20.Bxd4 f5 21.exf5 gxf5 22.Bxg7 Kxg7 23.Ne3 Be6 24.g3 Kf6 25.f4 h5 26.Bf3 Rh8 27.Ng2 Bd7 28.Ke2 Ra6 29.Rd5 Bc6 30.Rxc5?

This sacrifice briefly gives white the initiative, at the cost of a lost game. However, the more reasonable 30.Rd2 Rb6 31.Rdb2 looks like totally no fun for the first player.

30...dxc5 31.Rd1 Rb6 32.Rd3 Be4 33.Bxe4 fxe4 34.Re3 Rd8 35.Rxe4 Rxb3 36.Ne3 e6 37.Re5 Rd4 38.Kf3 Rxc4 39.Rxh5 Rxa4 40.f5 Raa3 41.Rh6+ Kf7 42.Rxe6 a4 0-1

At the end of round four, FM Igor Nikolayev was the only player with 4-0, but in rounds five and six he ran up against IMs Lenderman and Sarkar. His game against Lenderman in round five was even more catastrophic than the one above against Sarkar. Here he tries the double-edged Schliemann defense to the Ruy Lopez and ends up resigning on move 20.

IM Alex Lenderman (2499) – FM Igor Nikolayev (2321) [C63]
130th New York State Championship, Round 5
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 f5 4.Qe2 fxe4 5.Bxc6 dxc6 6.Qxe4 Nf6 7.Qe2 e4 8.d3 Qe7 9.dxe4 Qxe4 10.Qxe4+ Nxe4 11.0-0 Bc5 12.Nbd2 Nxd2 13.Re1+ Be6?

After this, black is just lost. White would have a slight advantage after 13...Kf7 14.Bxd2.

14.Bxd2 Kd7 15.Ne5+! Kd6 16.Bf4 Rhf8 17.Nd3+ Rxf4 18.Nxf4 Bd5 19.Nxd5 cxd5 20.Re2 1-0

Ben Dean-Kawamura, one of the players who tied for fifth in the Open with 4-2, was nice enough to copy a couple of games out of his scorebook for me, both of them tactical barn-burners. I don't know why but somehow the twists and turns in his game reminded me of the slapstick violence of a Tom and Jerry cartoon. You run the cat over with a steamroller, and he pops back up again!

Matt Parry (2276) – Ben Dean-Kawamura (2111) [B52]
130th New York State Championship, Round 5
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+

The Moscow Variation, a favorite of Parry's, with him even playing it against GM Larry Christiansen at the 2007 Amateur Teams.

3...Bd7 4.Bxd7+ Qxd7 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 g6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bg7 9.f3 0-0 10.Be3 Rc8 11.b3 a6 12.0-0 Qd8

This makes the game unique. Previously seen here was 12...b5 and now the internet game Milat-Wheeler, ICC 2007 continued 13.Nd5 Qb7 14.a4 e5 15.Ne2 Nxd5 16.Qxd5 Qxd5 17.cxd5 bxa4 18.Rxa4 Nd7 19.Rfa1 and white is very much better and won shortly.

13.Qd2 Nc6 14.a4 Rab8 15.Nde2 Nd7 16.Rab1 Qf8
Black has set up a "hedgehog" position where he curls up on the first three ranks and waits for white to try something. Notice that Black doesn't sit still for long...

17.f4 f5!? 18.exf5 gxf5 19.Nd4 Qf6 20.Nd5 Qf7 21.Nf3 b5!?

Having partially opened up the kingside, Black now proceeds to open the queenside. Things are about to get crazy.

22.Ng5 Qg6 23.cxb5 axb5 24.Rbc1

Stronger seems to be 24.axb5 Rxb5 25.Qd3 Rbb8 (25...Rcb8? 26.Qc4! wins.) 26.b4 and White may be winning.

24...Kf8 25.axb5 Rxb5 26.Qd3 Rbb8 27.Qa6?!
Gives away nearly all of White's advantage and allows Black to seize the initiative. Instead after 27.b4 h6 28.Qa6! white looks very strong.

27...Nc5! 28.Bxc5 dxc5 29.Rfe1 Bd4+ 30.Kh1 e5 31.b4

31.Nf6! looks promising: 31...Kg7 32.Nd7 Ra8 33.Qc4 and there doesn't seem to be any way for Black to prevent 34.Nxc5.

31...h6 32.Nf3 e4 33.Nh4?

It seems that White had to play 33.Nxd4 cxd4 34.Rc5 Ne7.

33...Qf7 34.Ne3 Ra8 35.Qe2 Ra2

White's attack has been pushed back and now black dominates.

36.Qd1 Rd8?!

Lets White back in the game. Instead Black had 36...Nxb4! with the threat of 37...Nd3.

37.Nexf5 Bf2 38.Qg4!

Giving up the exchange, but it's the only way White can keep fighting.

38...Bxe1 39.Ng6+ Ke8 40.Rxe1 Rdd2?! 41.b5?

This is very difficult to see, but White's winning attempt here is 41.bxc5! the point being that after 41...Qf6 42.h3 Black now can't play 42...Rxc2 because of 43.Nd6+! Qxd6 44.Rxe4+ Kf7 45.Nh8+ Kf6 46.cxd6 Rxc2 47.hxc4 and White is two pawns up.

41...Qf6 42.Ngh4? Ra1!

Starts a tactical sequence that gives black a won game. On his previous turn White had to play something like 42.Ne3.

43.Qg8+ Kd7 44.bxc6+ Kc7 45.Qh7+ Kxc6 46.Ne7+ Qxe7! 47.Qg6+

Of course White can't play 47.Qxe7 because of 47...Rxe1, mate

47...Rd6 48.Rxa1 Rxc6 49.Nxc6

White now has two pieces for a queen. In some situations the two pieces can hold a draw, but this isn't one of them: the rook and knight are not well coordinated and Black's passed pawns are too far advanced.

49...Qb7 50.Ne5+ Kd5 51.Rd1+ Ke6 52.h3 Kf5 53.g3 Qb3 54.Rg1 e3 55.Rc1 Qd5+ 56.Kg1 Qd2 0-1

Here is an interesting game from the Under-2000 section featuring up-and-coming Capital District player Phil Thomas versus Bob Campbell of Massachusetts. Campbell is an experienced player with a lot of endgame skill so this game has the feel of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. While getting the full game I got analysis from Thomas, Campbell and expert Steve Taylor. All three players assumed the game was drawn after a certain point, but my computer had a different opinion.

Robert Campbell (1921) – Phil Thomas (1678) [D47]
130th New York State Championship, U2000, Round 5
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.c4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.e4 b4 10.Ne2?! 10.Na4 is the main line move.

10...c5 11.e5 Nd5 12.0-0 Be7 13.Bc2 cxd4 14.Nexd4 Qb6 15.Re1 Ba6 16.Be4

Here Taylor suggested 16.Ba4! with White having a strong game after 16...Rd8 17.Nc6.

16...Bb7 17.Bxd5 Bxd5 18.Be3 Qa6 19.Nf5 Bf8 20.Nd6+?

The beginning of a lot of White's problems. Trading his bad Bishop on f8 for this Knight is a great deal for Black, and he gets a pawn in the bargain.

20...Bxd6 21.exd6 0-0 22.a3 Qxd6 23.axb4 Qxb4 24.Bxa7 Qxb2 25.Bd4 Qb3 26.Qxb3 Bxb3 27.Ne5 Nf6 28.h3 h6 29.Rxa8 Rxa8 30.Ra1 Rxa1+ 31.Bxa1 Bd5 32.Ng4 Nh5 33.f3 Nf4 34.Be5 Ng6 35.Bg3 f6 36.Ne3 Kf7 37.f4 f5 38.Kf2 Ke7 39.Ke2 Kd7 40.Kf2 Kc6 41.Bh2 Kc5 42.g4 Be4 43.gxf5 Bxf5 44.Nxf5 exf5 45.Kf3

What the rest of this game is about, all 42 moves of it, is: can Black force the win of a second pawn? If he can, he's got a straightforward win, if not, White can hold a draw.

45...Kc4 46.Bg1 Kd3 47.Bc5 Kc4 48.Ba3 Kd5 49.Bb4?

After the game Campbell couldn't understand why he just didn't play 49.Bb2 winning the pawn on g7.

49...Ke6 50.Bc3 Kf7 51.Kg3 Nf8 52.h4 h5?!

Taylor thought that locking up the pawns was a dreadful idea and made the game a lot harder for Black to win. Instead he suggested 52...g6.

53.Kf3 Ng6 54.Kg3 Ne7 55.Kf3 Nd5 56.Be5 g6 57.Ke2 Ke6 58.Kf3 Nb4 59.Bg7 Kd5 60.Bh6? Kd4 61.Bg5 Kd3 62.Bh6 Nc2 63.Bg5 Nd4+ 64.Kf2 Ke4 65.Bh6 Nf3?

Taylor pointed out that after 65...Ne6! 66.Kg3 Ke3

White is in zugzwang and must lose material: 67.Kg2 Nd4! (Black must still be careful: 67...Nxf4+?? 68.Kg3! and he loses his Knight) 68.Kg3 Ne2+ 69.Kg2 Ke4 70.Kf2 Nxf4, etc.)

66.Kg3 Ke3 67.Bf8 Nd2?

Black wins after 67...Nd4 68.Bc5 Ke4 69.Kf2 Ne6 70.Bd6 Nxf4.

68.Bc5+ Ke2 69.Ba7 Ne4+ 70.Kg2 Nf6 71.Bc5 Nd5 72.Kg3 Kf1 73.Ba7 Ke2 74.Bc5 Ne3 75.Ba7 Nc2 76.Bc5 Kd3 77.Kf3 Nd4+ 78.Kf2 Ke4 79.Bd6 Nb5

Using the theory that you need two weaknesses to win an ending, Taylor and Campbell were certain this was drawn, but my analysis engine finds the winning method: 79...Nf3 80.Kg3 Ke3 81.Ba3 (81.Bb8 Nd4 82.Ba7 Ke4) 81...Nd4 82.Bc1+ Kd3 83.Kf2 Ke4 84.Bb2 Ne6+.

80.Bb8 Nc3 81.Bd6 Nd1+ 82.Kg3 Nc3 83.Kf2 Nb5 84.Bb8 Nd4 85.Bd6 Nf3 86.Kg3 Ng1

Believe it or not, Black is STILL winning: 86...Ke3 87.Ba3 (87.Bc5+ Nd4 88.Kg2 Ke4 89.Bd6 Ne2) 87...Nd4 88.Bc1+ Kd3 89.Kf2 Ke4 90.Bb2 Ne6+ 87.Kf2 ½-½

With his time running out, and the win still eluding him, Thomas finally conceded the draw.

Heather Har-Zvi, the wife of **GM Ronen Har-Zvi** usually plays better than her rating, especially at fast time controls, but here she succumbs to John Hartnett of Greenwich, NY. In a very complicated position with attacks on opposite wings, Heather resigned in a position that wasn't lost, even though white had just missed a clear win. All of this was discovered by Hartnett after the game and much of the analysis is his.

John Hartnett (1481) – Heather Har-Zvi (1353) [B18]
130th New York State Championship, U1600, Round 6
Colonie, NY, Sept. 1, 2008

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Bf5 5.Ng3 Bg6 6.Nf3 Nf6 7.Bd3 e6 8.Bxg6 hxd6 9.Bg5 Nbd7 10.0-0? Qc7 11.c4 b6 12.Re1 0-0-0 13.Ne4 Be7 14.Qa4 Kb7 15.b4 Rh5 16.b5 cxb5 17.cxb5 Rdh8

Although trying to counterattack, Black's position is becoming critical.

18.Rac1 Qb8 19.g3 Nxe4 20.Bf4?

A mistake, as Hartnett pointed out. After 20.Qc2! Nc3 (20...Nxc5?? 21.Qc6, mate.) 21.Qxc3 Rc8 22.Qxc8+ Qxc8 23.Rxc8 Bxg5 White is winning. 20...Nd6 21.Rc6 g5 22.Bxd6 Bxd6 23.Rec1 Nf6??

By deserting the b6 square this Knight allows White a

winning shot. After 23...g4! there's a lot of complicated tactics, but they seem to favor Black. A sample line: 24.h4 Ka8 25.Qa6 Bxg3 26.Rc8 Bf4 27.Rxb8+ Kxb8 28.Rc3 gxf3 29.Ra3 Rxh4 30.Qxa7+ Kc8 31.Qa8+ Bb8 32.Qxf3.

24.Qa6+? 1-0

Here White resigned, assuming the coming rook incursion on c8 was fatal, but in fact she isn't lost! Hartnett gives the line: 24.Qa6+ Ka8 25.Rc8 g4! (25...Rxc8? 26.Rxc8 Qxc8?? (Better is 26...g4±) 27.Qxc8+ Bb8 28.Qc6, mate.) 26.Rxb8+ Kxb8 27.Nd2 Rxh2 28.Nf1 Rh1+ 29.Kg2 Nd5 and Black is better but 27.Rc4 is an improvement for White. All that being said, instead of the text White has a pretty win with: 24.Rxb6+! Ka8 25.Rxb8+ Kxb8 26.Qa6, etc.

In the Under-1200 section RPI student **Maximilian Katz** won his last five games to tie for second, but got miniaturized in his first round game against Nate Stevens.

Nate Stevens (1166) – Maximilian Katz (UNR)
[D02]
130th New York State Championship, U1200,
Round 1
Colonie, NY, Aug. 30, 2008

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.e3 a6 4.b3 e6 5.a3 Nf6 6.Bd3
Bd6 7.Bb2 Qe7 8.Ne5 Bd7 9.Nd2 0-0-0 10.Qe2 Ne8
11.Bxa6! bxa6??

This loses. After 11...Bxe5! 12.dxe5 bxa6 13.Qxa6+ Kb8 White could force a draw with 14.Qb5 or try to keep playing for a win with 14.b4 f6 15.b5 Na7 16.Bd4.*

12.Qxa6+ Kb8 13.Nxc6+ Bxc6 14.Qxc6 Kc8 15.c4
dx4 16.Nxc4 f5

This allows a mate in two, but Black was doomed anyhow.

17.Nb6+ Kb8 18.Qa8, mate. 1-0