



An important move. White must take a few moves to coordinate his pieces and then prepare d5. Now the c5-pawn will be defended.

**27...g5 28.h3**

Also winning was 28.d5!? cxd5 29.Rxd5 Rxd5 30.Bxd5 Be7 31.Rb7 Qxc5? 32.Qxc5 Bxc5 33.Rxf7+ Ke8 34.Rxf5+-.

**28...Bg6 29.d5 Qa5 30.Rbb1 cxd5 31.Rxd5 Rc8 32.c6 Qa4 33.Bb5 Qa2 34.Rbd1 h6 35.Rd6 Qb2 36.Ba6 Rc7 37.Bb7 Bf5?**

The final blunder, but Black's position was already lost.

**38.Qc5 1-0**

**Foisor, Sabina – Vigorito, David**

U.S. Chess League (1), 25.08.2010

*Notes by Vigorito*



[FEN "3r2k1/pp1r1pbp/2p1nqp1/2P1p3/1PN1Pn2/P3BN1P/5PP1/RQ2R1K1 b - - 0 23"]

**23...Nxb3+!**

This required some accurate calculation, but I was able to work it out.

**24.Kf1**

White's position comes undone after 24.Kh2 Nhf4 25.Ncxe5 Ng5!.

**24...Nd4! 25.Nfxe5 Qe6!-+**

This was the key move. Black's rook is loose and the h3-knight is still hanging, but White cannot take anything.

**26.f4**

It took some time for my opponent to accept that this was the only move. Instead 26.Nxd7 Qxc4+ mates; and 26.gxh3 Bxe5 wins routinely.

**26...f6!**

It seems as though the game is over, but with time pressure upon us, my opponent finds the best practical chance.

**27.f5 gxf5 28.gxh3 fxe5 29.Nd6 f4 30.Bxd4 Qxh3+ 31.Ke2 exd4 32.Qd3**

White finds the only practical chance. It is better to have a two pawn down endgame than be checkmated.

**32...Qe3+ 33.Qxe3 dxe3 34.Rad1 Be5**

At this point, the game seemed decided. If the knight moves, then ...f3+ decides. It's not over yet though.

**35.Rg1+ Kf8 36.Rg5!**

Suddenly Black's two pawn advantage does not give a trivial win.

**36...Bxd6 37.cxd6 Rxd6 38.Rxd6 Rxd6 39.Rf5+ Ke7 40.Rxf4 h5!**

Fortunately Black has this move, otherwise the soon to be one pawn advantage may not be enough.

**41.Kxe3 Rh6 42.Rh4 Ke6 43.Kf4 Rh8 44.e5?**

After conducting a stubborn defense, White folds. It was necessary to wait with 44.a4 Black should still win as White will run short of moves - retreating the rook allows ...h4, and retreating the king will allow the black monarch to advance. Still, it would not have been trivial.

**44...Rf8+ 45.Ke4 Rf5 0-1**

The rest is pretty easy, and Black went on to win.

### Week Two

In Week Two, we received a scare from the perpetually underrated Carolina Cobras. Vigorito hung a pawn early, but was able to fight back and win against FM Simpson. This, along with my win against NM Mabe, was enough to give us the victory.

#### **Vigorito, David – Simpson, Ron**

U.S. Chess League (2), 30.08.2010

*Notes by Riordan*



[FEN "r4n2/5k2/1p2pPb1/1Bp1P1Pr/  
P2p3p/7K/3B1R2/2R5 b - - 0 49"]

**49...Bf5+?**

The computer like this move at first, but it is careless, and almost anything else would have been better.

**50.Rxf5! exf5 51.Bc4+ Kg6 52.e6 Nxe6?**

In a tense position and with little time on the clock, Black understandably misses his last chance: 52..Rxc5!! 53.Bxc5 Kxc5 54.e7 Kxf6 55.Re1 Re8 56.ef+ Rxf8, and Black should be able to hold the endgame. In this line, the immediate 53.e7? (hoping for 53..Kxf6? 54.Bxc5+ Kxc5 55.Re1 Re8 56.Bf7) fails to the simple 53..Rg3+ 54.Kxh4 Rg4+.

**53.Bxe6 Rxa4 54.Rf1 Rh8 55.Bxf5+ Kf7 56.Be4 Ra3+ 57.Kh2 Rg3 58.Ra1 Ke6 59.Ra7 Re8 60.Bc6 Rf8 61.Bf4 Rc3 62.Be4 Rxf6**

62...Re8 63.f7 Rf8 64.g6.

**63.gxf6 Kxf6 64.Rh7** and Black was soon mated.

#### **Mabe, Chris – Riordan, Charles**

U.S. Chess League (2), 31.08.2010

*Notes by Riordan*



[FEN "2r3k1/3nbppp/b1q1pn2/r2p4/  
N2P1B2/5NPP/4PPB1/RR1Q2K1 b - - 0 23"]

**23...Bxe2 24.Qxe2 Rxa4 25.Rxa4 Qxa4 26.Qd1 Qxd1+ 27.Rxd1**

Both players were now in time pressure. I'm not sure if Black is objectively winning in this endgame, but I thought I had good practical chances to convert.

**27...Ne4 28.Nd2 Nc3 29.Re1 Bf6 30.Be3 Nb6 31.Kf1 Nc4 32.Nf3 h6 33.Rc1 Nb5 34.Ke2 Ra8 35.Rc2 Ra3 36.g4?! Nc3+ 37.Ke1? Ra1+**

The final cheapo. The following sequence is now forced, giving Black an easily winning endgame with two pieces and a pawn for a rook.

**38.Rc1 Nxe3 39.Rxa1 Nxc2+ 40.Kf1 Nh4+ and Black won.**

### Week Three

Our biggest test of the first three weeks came against the New Jersey Knockouts, who had won the Eastern Division in 2009. New Jersey's team featured up-and-coming juniors on the bottom boards, but in this match, the experience of Chris Chase and Alex Cherniack won out.

#### **Chase, Chris – Shen, Victor**

U.S. Chess League (3), 08.09.2010

*Notes by Chase*



[FEN "1rb2rk1/4npp1/1q1b3p/Np6/1n1p1N1P/  
3P2P1/1P1B1PB1/R2QR1K1 w - - 0 22"]

**22.Rxe7! Bxe7 23.Bxb4 Bxb4 24.Nc6**

Now where does the bishop go?

**24...Bc5 25.Nd5 Qb7**

Taking the knight now looks better, as the white bishop ends up on c6 and not the white queen.

**26.Qc2! Qxc6**

Pretty much forced as 26...Bb6 27.Nxb8 Qxb8 28.Ne7+ Kh8 29.Ra8 wins a

piece or 26...Bd6 27.Ra7 traps Black's queen!

**27.Ne7+ Bxe7 28.Qxc6**

It seems to me that this position is winning for White.

**28...Bb7?!**

28...Be6 is somewhat better. 28...Be6 29.Ra7.

**29.Qd7 Bxg2 30.Kxg2+-** and White easily converted his material advantage.

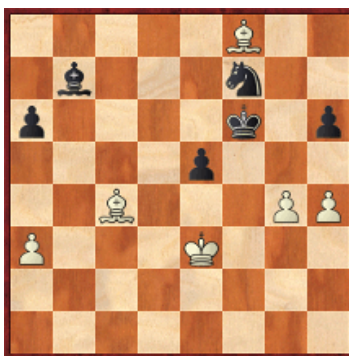
#### Week Four

We faced our cross-town rivals, the Boston Blitz, in Week Four. It was the match we had been waiting for, but we started poorly, losing on board one and barely drawing on board four. Only some last minute heroics from Robert Hungaski would allow us to salvage a drawn match.

**Hungaski, Robert – Shmelov, Denys**

U.S. Chess League (4), 15.09.2010

*Notes by Hungaski*



[FEN "5B2/1b3n2/p4k1p/4p3/2B3PP/  
P3K3/8/8 w - - 0 43"]

Robert plays a model endgame with the bishop-pair.

**43.a4 a5**

43...Bc8 44.Kf3 Bb7+ 45.Kg3 Bc8 46.a5+/-.

**44.Bc5 Bc8 45.Be2 Bd7 46.Bd1 Nd8 47.Bf8 Nf7 48.Kf3 Bc6+ 49.Kg3 Bd7  
50.Bc5 Nd8 51.Bb6 Nc6 52.Bc7 Ke6 53.Bb6 Kf6 54.Kf2 e4?**

Positional capitulation, but Black probably cannot hold the game anymore.

**55.Ke3 Ke5 56.h5!+- Nb4 57.Bc7+ Kf6 58.Bxa5 Nd3 59.Bb6 Ke7 60.a5  
Kd6 61.Kxe4** and White soon won.

#### Week Five

In Week Five, we beat the Philadelphia inventors, with a nice game from Braden Bournival providing the margin of victory.

**Bournival, Braden – Dehmelt, Karl**

U.S. Chess League (5), 20.09.2010

*Notes by Bournival*



[FEN "r1bq1rk1/2p1bppp/p1P2n2/1p4B1/3P4/1BP5/PP3PpP/RN1QR1K1 b - - 0 12"]

### 12...Be6?

This move simply loses another pawn and the game. Other moves don't exactly look promising, but they definitely offer more chances of survival.

### 13.Bxe6 fxe6 14.Qe2!

Perhaps Black missed this move, not only does White still win the e6 pawn but he's getting the queen to a very powerful square on e6.

### 14...Bd6 15.Qxe6+ Kh8 16.Nd2 h6

16...Re8 17.Bxf6! gxf6 (17...Rxe6 18.Bxd8 Rxe1+ 19.Rxe1 Rxd8 20.Re6+-) 18.Qxe8+ Qxe8 19.Rxe8+ Rxe8 20.Kxg2 Re2 21.Rd1 Bf4 22.Kf3 Rxd2 23.Rxd2 Bxd2 24.d5!+- And the threat of d6 is decisive. I had seen this during the game, but didn't think it was likely Black would go into it.

### 17.Bh4 g5 18.Bg3 Bxg3 19.hxg3 Qe8

It's hard to suggest anything else for Black, not only is he down material, but it's difficult for him to move his pieces.

### 20.Qxe8 Raxe8 21.Kxg2 and White won easily.

## Week Six

Week Six was "Interleague Week," and we were paired against an expansion team from the West, the St. Louis Arch-Bishops. Sam Shankland scored his first win of the season against GM Ben Finegold: it was to be the start of a monster four-game win streak that kept us undefeated heading into the playoffs.

### **Shankland, Sam – Finegold, Benjamin**

U.S. Chess League (6), 30.09.2010

*Notes by Shankland*



[FEN "3r4/ppr1ppkp/6p1/3PN3/8/1B4P1/P4P1P/4R1K1 w - - 0 23"]

### 23.Nxf7!+- Rdc8 (23...Kxf7 24.d6+) 24.Kg2 Rd7 25.Ba4! b5



This looks like a good try, but the tactics work out for White.

**26.Bxb5 Rxd5 27.Rxe7 Kf6**

27...Rxb5 28.Nd6+ Kf6 29.Nxc8 protects the white rook.

**28.Rb7 Rc2**

28...Rxb5 29.Rxb5 Kxf7 30.Rb7+ Luckily white picks up a second pawn for an easy win.

**29.Nh6 Rdd2 30.Ng4+ Ke6 31.Rxh7** Black doesn't even get to take a2, and he soon resigned.

**Week Seven**

Week Seven was a rematch with Philadelphia. This time we won the match 3-1, with key victories notched by Jan Van de Mortel and Alex Cherniack.

**Van de Mortel, Jan – Dehmelt, Karl**

U.S. Chess League (7), 06.10.2010

*Notes by Van de Mortel*



[FEN "2b1r1k1/p1p2pb1/1rN3pp/1P6/1NP1p3/1Qn1P1P1/3q1PBP/4RRK1 w - - 0 28"]

**28.Rd1!**

The knight on c3 is a thorn in the flesh begging to be removed.

**28...Nxd1 29.Rxd1 Qc3?**

29...Qb2 30.Qxb2 Bxb2 31.Nd5 is better than the game, as the dark-squared bishop isn't hanging; for example, 31...Bf5 32.Nxc7 Rxc6 33.bxc6 Rc8.

**30.Qxc3 Bxc3 31.Nd5 Bg4**

31...Rxc6 doesn't save Black either: 32.bxc6 Be5 33.Bxe4 f5 34.f4 fxe4 35.fxe5.

**32.Rb1 Bg7 33.Nxc7 Rf8 34.Bxe4 Be2 35.c5 Rbb8 36.Nxa7 Rbd8 37.Nc6 Rd7 38.b6** and White won easily.

**Week Eight**

Although we were still undefeated to this point, many people thought we were a paper tiger. I can't say I blame them: the average rating of our opponents was more than fifty points lower than any other team. But in Week Eight, New York put forward one of the strongest lineups in league history in an attempt to gain ground in the playoff race. In response, we prepared a little surprise. In Sam Shankland's words:

At the time, we decided, as a team, not to reveal what happened so that our formula for success would not be known. Now that the season is over, I think it's a good time to do a proper report on the beginning phase of the match. The boards in question were boards one and three,

where FM Braden Bournival and myself had black against IM Irina Krush and GM Giorgi Kacheishvili, respectively. Kachi is a great player, and he has had very good results in the league. With him having the white pieces, he must have been expected to win. Likewise, IM Krush is quite strong on the third board, and Bournival was much lower rated and less experienced. These were the two boards where we seemed to be most vulnerable.

Enter IM Dave Vigorito, our manager, a renowned opening theoretician and author, the USCLs 2010 father of the year, and the brains behind the whole operation. His keen eye noted a key game from the last round of the 2010 World Open- the game Kacheishvili – Vallejo Pons. This game featured the piece sacrifice line of the mainline Slav, and Kachi played an interesting idea with 9...Nxf7!?. Vallejo, however, was up to the task and managed to force an equal endgame. This had not gone unnoticed by yours truly, but Dave took it one step further. He realized that Krush is Kachi's student, and he likely had shown her this line. As a result, he recommended that Braden play the piece sacrifice line, in hopes of surprising Krush's intended "surprise" move by following Vallejo's plan. She never could have suspected that he would know exactly what to do, and Braden held a draw without any difficulties on the board where our opponents were the most favored. Kachi naturally assumed that when I played the piece sac line I had prepared for Nxf7 (which I had), but I spent much more of my time preparing for the mainline, 9.fxe4. I found some interesting ideas, and Kachi erred at some point, leaving me with a slightly better endgame that I ground into a win. However, the most genius part of this operation was Dave's recommendation for me to stall a little so that the Krush-Bournival game reached the position after 8... Bxe4 first. While Kachi would know that I had prepared this line, there would be no way for Krush to know that we had heavily prepared Nxf7 - she has never played it before, so why would Brad even look at such a move? As a result, we got exactly what we wanted from the opening in these games, and we scored 1½/2 where we seemed to be underdogs on paper.

**Kacheishvili, Giorgi – Shankland, Sam**

U.S. Chess League (8), 26.10.2010

Slav Defense [D17]

Notes by Shankland

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5 e6 7.f3 Bb4 8.e4 Bxe4**



[FEN "r1qk2r/pp3ppp/2p1pn2/4N3/PbpPb3/2N2P2/1P4PP/R1BQKB1R w KQkq - 0 9"]

**9.fxe4**

Brad was well ready for Krush's "surprise" 9.Nxf7!? Kxf7 10.fxe4 c5 11.d5 exd5 12.exd5 Re8+ 13.Be2 Qe7 14.0-0 Bxc3 15.Bh5+ Kg8 16.bxc3 Nxb3 17.Qxh5 Nd7 18.Bg5 Qd6 19.Qf7+ Kh8 20.Bf4 Qe7





[FEN "r3r2k/pp1nqQpp/8/2pP4/P1p2B2/2P5/6PP/R4RK1 w - - 0 21"]

Vigorito and Bournival had this position on the board the evening before! 21. Qxe7 Rxe7 22.Rae1 Rxe1 23.Rxe1 Nf6 24.d6 Kg8 25.Bg5 Rd8 26.Re6 Kf7 27.Bxf6 gxf6 28.Re7+ Kg6 29.Rxb7 Rxd6 30.Rxa7 Rd3 31.Rc7 Rxc3 32. Rxc5 Rc2 ½-½, Krush,I-Bournival,B.

**9...Nxe4 10.Bd2 Qxd4 11.Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12.Qe2 Bxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Qd5+ 14. Kc2 Na6 15.Nxc4 0-0 16.Qe5 Rfd8!?**



[FEN "r2r2k1/pp3ppp/n1p1p3/3qQ3/P1N5/8/1PK3PP/R4B1R w - - 0 17"]

An uncommon move, which I think has clear merits. 16...Rab8 For better or for worse this is the mainline.

**17.Be2 Nc5 18.Qxd5?**

Black now has too strong a central pawn mass. 18.Rhd1 and 18.g4 are the two main moves. I won't divulge any more of my analysis here.

**18...cxd5**

Black has at least comfortably equalized.

**19.Nd2 Rac8 20.Rhc1!**

Not fearing the discovered check.

**20...e5**

20...Nxa4+? 21.Kb1 Rxc1+ 22.Kxc1 White gains the pawn back and activates his pieces.

**21.Kd1 f5!**



[FEN "2rr2k1/pp4pp/8/2nppp2/P7/8/1P1NB1PP/R1RK4 w - f6 0 22"]

Preemptively avoiding Bg4 as well as strengthening the central pawn mass. 21...e4 22.Bg4 Ne6 (22...Rc6 23.Ra3 The rook gets to c3 and white retains an edge) 23.Bxe6 Black's pawns will now be much less threatening 23...fxe6+/-.

### 22.Ra3 Ne6

The perfect square for the knight. Now after e4 there will be no blockading ideas on d4. 22...Kf7 23.Rac3 b6 24.b4; 22...a5 This move makes a lot of sense, trying to solidify the knight on c5. Unfortunately it fails 23.Rac3 (23.Nb3+/- is OK as well) 23...b6 24.Nb3 d4 25.Rxc5! Refuting Black's setup 25...bxc5 26.Bc4+ Kh8 27.Nxa5+/- despite what the computer initially says, with White's solid position and passed a-pawn he is clearly for preference.

### 23.Rxc8 Rxc8 24.Rb3 b6 25.Rb5 Nc7 26.Rb3 Ne6 27.a5

27.Rb5 I was planning to play ...Rd8 here, declining the draw, but I wanted to see what my opponents intentions were first.

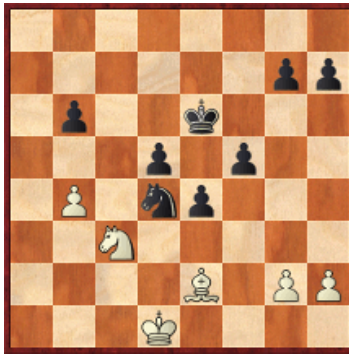
### 27...Nd4! 28.Ra3 e4

It would be exaggerated to speak of a clear black advantage here, but I would certainly prefer to be the second player.

### 29.axb6 axb6 30.Rc3 Rc5! 31.Nb1?! Kf7 32.b4 Rxc3

32...Rc6!? Computers are silly things. I saw here that after b5 Black has to abandon the c-file and thus rejected the line, but it looks like Black has some advantage here. 33.b5 Rh6 With a messy position, although Black looks to have better chances.

### 33.Nxc3 Ke6



[FEN "8/6pp/1p2k3/3p1p2/1P1np3/2N5/4B1PP/3K4 w - - 0 34"]

### 34.Ba6?

This was the decisive mistake. White could have forced a draw with b5. It's possible my opponent saw this resource but was still trying to play for an advantage. 34.b5 Kd6 35.Na4 Kc7 36.Nc3 Kd6 37.Na4=.

### 34...Nc6-/+ 35.b5

Or else White loses a pawn.

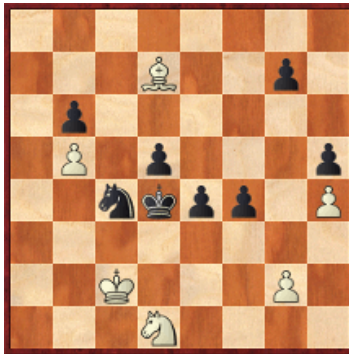
### 35...Na5!

White's bishop is somewhat entombed and Black's pawn center is rolling. 35... Ne5?? 36.Bc8+ e5 is now unavailable to the king, and White is close to winning.

### 36.Kc2 Ke5 37.Bc8 h5 38.h4

38.Bxf5 This was perhaps White's best chance, but its a pretty depressing position to play, down a pawn for nothing. 38...Kxf5 39.Nxd5 with fair drawing chances.

### 38...f4 39.Bd7 Nc4 40.Nd1 Kd4



[FEN "8/3B2p1/1p6/1P1p3p/2nkpp1P/8/2K3P1/3N4 w - - 0 41"]

### 41.Be8

41.Bc6 was more stubborn, preventing Ne3, but it is still losing 41...g6! zugzwang 42.Be8 a) 42.Kc1 e3; b) 42.Kb3 Nd6 going to f5 43.Nc3 (43.Bd7 Kd3 There is no way to even dream about stopping the pawns) 43...f3 White's king is too far away to stop the pawn; c) 42.Bb7 Nd6 Black gains a key tempo- white cannot play Nc3 43.Bc6 Nf5 Black takes all the pawns; 42...Ne3 + 43.Nxe3 Kxe3 44.Bxg6 Kf2+ Black wins the race 45.Bxh5 Kxg2 46.Be2 a) 46.Bd1 f3 47.h5 f2 48.Be2 d4 49.Kd2 d3; b) 46.Bf7 e3 47.Bxd5+ (47.Kd3 Kf2 48.Bh5 f3) 47...Kf2 48.Bc4 f3 49.h5 e2 50.h6 e1Q; 46...f3.

### 41...Ne3+ 42.Nxe3 Kxe3 43.Kd1 Kf2 44.Bc6

44.Bxh5 e3 45.Bg4 d4 46.Be2 Kxg2 The f-pawn decides the issue.

### 44...e3 0-1

## Week Nine

In Week Nine we again faced Carolina, who had just drawn consecutive matches against Boston and New York. We managed to pull off the sweep, with Robert Hungaski again leading the way.

### **Hungaski, Robert – Schroer, Jonathan**

U.S. Chess League (9), 20.10.2010

*Notes by Hungaski*



[FEN "r7/1p3pkp/p1n5/5q2/1P1Pn3/  
P3P3/2Q2P1N/R1B2K2 w - - 0 20"]

Sometimes the best thing to do when threatened with checks is to just move your king!

**20.Ke1!**

White is threatening to play f3 and trade queens, while also opening up the position thus exposing Black's king.

**20...Rc8 21.f3 Nxd4**

21...Nxb4 22.Qg2+ Kh8 23.axb4+/-; 21...Nd6 22.Qxf5 Nxf5 23.Bd2+/-.

**22.Qg2+! Ng5 (22...Kh8 23.fxe4) 23.exd4!**

Of course, not: 23.Bb2? Rc2! 24.Bxd4+ Kg6!—.

**23...Re8+**

23...f6 24.Bxg5 fxg5 25.Qg4 Re8+ 26.Kf2 Qc2+ 27.Kg3 Qc7+ 28.Kh3+/-.

**24.Kf2 Qc2+ 25.Kg1**

25.Kg3 Re2 26.Qg1 also wins.

**25...Qd1+ 26.Nf1 Qxd4+ 27.Be3!**

27.Kh1 Qh4+ 28.Qh2 Nxf3 29.Qxh4 Nxe4+/-.

**27...Qxa1 28.Qxg5+ Kh8 29.Qf4!** and the two minor pieces combined with Black's exposed king led to a quick white victory.

### Week Ten

The regular season ended with a match against the Manhattan Applesauce. Although we had clinched first place in the East, we wanted to keep momentum heading into the playoffs. Led by Sam Shankland and Carey Theil, we capped off our undefeated season with another win.

**Milman, Lev – Shankland, Sam**

U.S. Chess League (10), 25.10.2010

*Notes by Shankland*



[FEN "r5k1/pp1nbp1/2pqp2p/5p1P/2QP2n1/2N2N2/PPPB1P2/1K1RR3 b - - 0 19"]

**19...Nxf2!**

Time to go down a queen.

**20.Rxe6 Nxd1 21.Rxd6 Nxc3+ 22.Bxc3 Bxd6=/+**

I think White should hold a draw here with best play, but it's hardly a pleasant task.

**23.Qe6?! Bc7 24.Nh4 Nf8? 25.Qb3 Rd8 26.Nxf5? Rd5 27.Ne3 Rxe5+ 28.a4 Bf4!**

Dominating the white knight. White's only possible counterplay is to try to somehow make the white knight attack the f7 rook.

**29.Nc4**

The knight is cut off from the kingside.

**29...Rd5 30.Na5 h5! 31.Nxb7 h4 32.Na5 h3 33.Nxc6**

White almost gets counterplay, but after the accurate next move he is hopelessly lost.

**33...Rdd7 (Only move) 34.Bb4 h2 35.Qh3 Rf6 36.Bxf8 Kxf8 37.Qh8+ Kf7 38.Qh5+ Kg8 39.d5 g6 40.Qh3 Rh7 0-1**

This game sealed our 9½-½ record setting regular season record.

**Theil, Carey – Black, James**

U.S. Chess League (10), 25.10.2010

*Notes by Vigorito*



[FEN "3r2n1/pr2bqpk/1p3p1p/n1pNp3/P1P1P1B1/1PP3P1/3R3P/2BQ1RK1 w - - 0 32"]

**32.Nxf6+ Nxf6 33.Rxd8 Bxd8 34.Qxd8 Nxb3 35.Bf5+**

**35.Rxf6! gxf6 (35...Qxf6 36.Bf5+) 36.Bf5+ Kg7 37.Bxe6+! Kxe6 38.Qh8+ Kg5 39.h4#.**

35...g6 36.Bc8 Re7 (36...Qe7!) 37.Qd6 Qg7 38.Rxf6 Nxc1 39.Rxg6 1-0

Black forfeited on time.

### Quarterfinals

New York had finished in fourth place in the East, and so were paired with us in the first round of the playoffs. This was quite a test: despite underperforming slightly in the regular season, New York had one of the strongest rosters in the league. The key to this match was the play of our top boards, Sam Shankland and Robert Hungaski, who triumphed despite being outrated by their grandmaster opponents.

#### **Shankland, Sam – Lenderman, Alex**

U.S. Chess League (11), 01.11.2010

*Notes by Shankland*



[FEN "1Q4R1/4q2p/1p4pk/p2nN3/P2rpP2/1P6/5P1P/6K1 w - - 0 40"]

#### **40.Rxg6+!+- Kh5**

40...hxg6 41.Qh8+ Qh7 42.Nf7+ Kh5 43.Qxh7+.

#### **41.Nc6?**

Instead, 41.Rg4 is a winner, and no I did not manage to correctly evaluate it. It can be harder playing a game than just turning on your computers. The obvious 41.Rg5+ allows a draw with 41...Qxg5+! 42.fxg5 Rd1+ 43.Kg2 Nf4+ 44.Kg3 Ne2+ 45.Kh3 Nf4+=. 41.Rg4! is winning, with the idea of swinging the queen to g8 or c8, but it looked very complicated (I don't even have a threat yet, while my king is still open) and I thought Nc6 forced the pawn up ending we reached in the game 41...Rd1+ (41...e3 42.Qe8+) 42.Kg2 Rd2 43.Kg3+-.

#### **41...Rd1+ 42.Kg2 Qc5?**

42...Ne3+ 43.fxe3 Rd2+ 44.Kf1 Qa3=.

#### **43.Qe5+!+-**

43.Rg8 Rg1+ 44.Kxg1 Qc1+ 45.Kg2 Nxf4+ 46.Kg3 Ne2+.

#### **43...Kxg6 44.Qg5+ Kf7 45.Ne5+ Ke8 46.Qh5+ Kd8**

46...Ke7 47.Qf7+ Kd6 48.Qd7#.

**47.Qxd1 Kc7 48.Qg4 Kb7 49.Qf5 e3 50.Qxh7+ Ka6 51.Qd3+ Kb7 52.fxe3 Nxe3+ 53.Kf3** and White converted his two extra pawns.

Here Robert takes down a former USCL MVP with the black pieces.

#### **Charbonneau, Pascal – Hungaski, Robert**

U.S. Chess League (11), 01.11.2010

*Notes by Hungaski*





[FEN "2k2b2/2p3pp/p1p2p2/2Pn4/1P6/P1r1B2P/3NKPP1/R7 b - - 0 28"]

**28...a5! 29.Ne4**

29.g3 Nxe3! 30.fxe3 f5 (30...a4) 31.Nf3 g6=/+.

**29...Rb3!? 30.bxa5 Nxe3 31.fxe3 f5 32.Rf1 g6 33.Nd2**

33.g4 Bh6 34.g5 Bf8!

**33...Rxa3 34.e4 Bh6 35.Nc4**

35.exf5 Ra2 36.Rd1 gxf5 37.Kd3 Rxa5 38.Nb3 Ra3 39.Kc4 Ra4+ 40.Kd3 Bg7-/+.

**35...Rc3 36.Ne5 Rxc5?**

The e-pawn is worth much more. After this move, White can seriously damage Black's kingside pawn structure, which should give him decent drawing chances. 36...Re3+! 37.Kf2 Rxe4 38.Nxc6 Be3+ (38...Kb7 39.Nd8+ Ka6 40.Re1) 39.Kf3 Kb7 40.Nd8+ Ka6—+.

**37.Nf7 Bg7 38.a6**

38.exf5 Rxf5? 39.Rxf5 gxf5 40.Ng5.

**38...Ra5 39.exf5 gxf5 40.Ng5 h6 41.Ne6??**

41.Nf3 Rxa6 (41...Ra2+ 42.Kd3 Rxc2 43.Nh4 Rg3+ 44.Ke2 Rxh3 45.Nxf5 Be5 46.Rc1) 42.Nh4 Ra2+ 43.Kf3 f4 44.Ng6 (44.Kxf4 Ra4+) 44...c5=/+.

**41...Re5+ 42.Kd3 Rxe6 0-1**

42...Rxe6 43.Rb1 Rd6+ and 44...Bd4.

### Semifinals

In many ways this was our toughest match of the season. Boston had put together a stacked lineup, with 2500+ players on boards one through three, and a strong junior on board four. To make matters worse, Robert's car had broken down on his way to the match, and we had to pick him up on the side of the road. A lesser player might have been distracted, but Robert came through with a huge victory against SM Jorge Sammour-Hasbun. Meanwhile, on board four, Alex Cherniack played one of his best games of the season, beating Grant Xu quickly and confidently. This gave us the two points we needed to advance – Boston later won the other two games, but the match had already been decided.

**Cherniack, Alex – Xu, Grant**

U.S. Chess League (12), 10.11.2010

*Notes by Vigorito*



[FEN "1k5r/np1rn1b1/1qb1p2p/p1ppP1pP/2P3P1/PP1B1NB1/3NQP2/1RR3K1 w - - 0 22"]

**22.b4! axb4 23.axb4 dxc4**

Really bad is 23...cxb4 24.c5 Qd8 25.Nd4 Qg8 26.Rxb4, and White's positional advantage is crushing.

**24.Nxc4 Qd8 25.Nd6 Rf8**

Or 25...cxb4 26.Nd4 Bd5 27.Bc4 and Black's position collapses.

**26.Be4 Bxe4 27.Qxe4 cxb4 28.Nd4** and Black could have resigned here, but he played it out to mate.

### Championship

Unfortunately, the championship match was marred by a forfeit on board three – Miami's player had car trouble and could not make it to their playing site. For a time, it looked like Miami might be able to overcome this disaster, as their fourth board, Nicholas Rosenthal, beat Alex in a nicely-played game. Fittingly, the match was saved by Sam and Robert. Sam beat the league MVP, GM Julio Becerra, while Robert defeated FM Marcel Martinez in a very complicated game. Together, they finished with a combined postseason score of 5/6, and carried us to the championship.

**Shankland, Sam – Becerra, Julio**

USCL Finals, 20.11.2010

Caro-Kann Defense [B15]

*Notes by Shankland*

**1.d4 g6?!**

Something of a surprise. I never quite believed in just giving White the center without a fight.

**2.e4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c6 4.Nf3 d5 5.Be3 dxe4 6.Nxe4 Nf6 7.Nxf6+ exf6!?**



[FEN "rnbqk2r/pp3pbp/2p2pp1/8/3P4/4BN2/PPP2PPP/R2QKB1R w KQkq - 0 8"]

An interesting plan, which my opponent used very effectively in a previous league game against GM Lenderman. Black's idea is to blockade the d5-square to make White's pawn majority immobile, while then advancing his

own to gain space on the kingside. Though the drawbacks of a crippled kingside pawn structure and passive dark-squared bishop are clear.

**8.Be2 0-0 9.0-0 Re8 10.Qd2 Na6 11.c4+/=**

White can certainly be satisfied with the result of the opening.

**11...Bf8 12.Rfd1 Bf5 13.a3 (13.Rac1? Bb4-/+)** **13...Nc7 14.Rac1 Be4 15. Ne1!?**

I'm still not sure how good (or not good) this move is. White prevents f5 and can think about trying to exchange light-squared bishops, and every step towards a king and pawn ending is a good one. However, the knight does look rather passive here for the moment.

**15...b5?**



[FEN"r2qrbk1/p1n2p1p/2p2pp1/1p6/2PPb3/P3B3/1P1QBPPP/2RRN1K1 w - b6 0 16"]

Strategically speaking, this move has its merits. If Black can permanently conquer the d5-square, he should have a fine position. Unfortunately, the pawn play favors White.

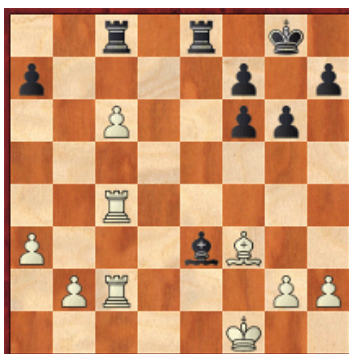
**16.d5! bxc4**

The alternative 16...cxd5 is hardly a bed of flowers, but perhaps it was better. Black has some degree of counterplay: 17.cxb5 Ne6 18.Nc2 Bd6 (18...Bxc2 19.Rxc2 d4 20.Bxd4 Qxd4 21.Qxd4 Nxd4 22.Rxd4) 19.Nb4, White has a clear advantage.

**17.dxc6 Qxd2**

After this move, a forcing sequence occurs until move 17...Bxc6 18.Qxd8 Rxd8 19.Rxd8 Rxd8 20.Bxc4+/-.

**18.Rxd2 Nd5 19.Rxc4 Nxe3 20.fxe3 Bh6 21.Nc2 Rac8 22.Bf3 Bxc2 23. Rdx2 Bxe3+ 24.Kf1**



[FEN"2r1r1k1/p4p1p/2P2pp1/8/2R5/P3bB2/1PR3PP/5K2 b - - 0 24"]

I am going to refrain from giving an evaluation to this position; +/- seems too optimistic, but this feels like more than a standard +=. Black's kingside

majority will be largely ineffective because the pawns are doubled and opposite-colored bishops will thwart the creation of a passer, but White already has a powerful passer on c6. In any case, it is clear that only White can play for a win.

**24...Bb6 25.Rd2 Red8 26.Ke2 f5 27.a4 Kf8 28.b4 Rxd2+ 29.Kxd2 Rd8+ 30.Kc2 Bc7 31.h3 h5 32.a5 Ke7 33.Kb3 Rd3+**



[FEN"8/p1b1kp2/2P3p1/P4p1p/1PR5/1K1r1B1P/6P1/8 w - - 0 34"]

Until now, White has slowly been advancing on the queenside while Black is trying to set up a proper defense. However, at this point White decides to change the character of the position.

**34.Rc3?**

It's hard to criticize this move, seeing that it gets to an opposite-colored bishop ending with excellent winning chances and zero chances to lose, but with concrete calculation, it seems that after 34.Ka4! Black's counterplay is not as scarce as it initially seemed and White is winning. 34...Rd2 35.Kb5 g5 36.Bxh5 (36.Ka6 g4 also seemed to give black play) 36...Rxc3 37.Ka6 Rg3 38.Kxa7 Rxh3 Here black looks to have counterplay with three passed pawns, so I avoided this line. Of course, Rybka is giving me plus five.

**34...Rxc3+ 35.Kxc3 Bg3!**

Black finds the best defensive setup. 35...Kd6 36.Kc4 Bd8 (36...a6 37.Kb3! h4 38.Be2 Kxc6 39.Bxa6+-) 37.Kb5 Bc7 38.Ka6+- The bishop on c7 is clearly misplaced.

**36.Kc4 Kd6 37.b5 Bf2**

37...Kc7 38.Bd5 f6 39.Bf7 g5 40.Bxh5 is similar to the game continuation.

**38.Bd5 g5 39.Bxf7**



[FEN"8/p4B2/2Pk4/PP3ppp/2K5/7P/5bP1/8 b - - 0 39"]

**39...h4**

39...Be1? may look tempting, but it loses immediately: 40.b6! axb6 41.a6! (41. axb6 Kxc6=) 41...b5+ (41...Bf2 42.Kb5; 41...Kxc6 42.Bd5+ Kc7 43.a7) 42.

Kxb5 Bf2 43.Bxh5 This leads to the same kind of position as the game, but with one less pawn for Black and more pawns left on the board to attack. Black is lost.

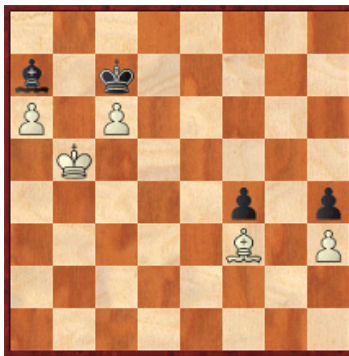
#### 40.Bd5

40.Bg6? It'd be nice to play this move - trading pawns will be in Black's favor, so provoking the pawn to f4 would be great. Unfortunately, after 40...Be1!, Black now draws because of a blockade: 41.Bxf5 (41.b6 axb6 42.a6 Kxc6 White no longer has a convenient check on d5; 41.a6 Kc7 42.Bxf5 Bd2 There is no way that black will lose here.) 41...Bxa5 42.Be4 Bb6=.

#### 40...g4 41.b6 axb6 42.a6 b5+ 43.Kxb5 Ba7 44.Bb3 Kc7

44...f4 This move looks fun, but it doesn't work. 45.hxg4! (45.Bd1 gxf3 (45...f3 46.Bxf3! gxf3 47.gxf3+- Black can't stop all three pawns) 46.gxf3 transposes to the game) 45...f3 46.gxf3 h3 47.f4 h2 48.c7 This computer-like variation wins for White, but even if it didn't, white could play 45.Bd1.

#### 45.Bd1 gxf3 46.gxf3 f4 47.Bf3



[FEN"8/b1k5/P1P5/1K6/5p1p/5B1P/8/8 b - - 0 47"]

Now it becomes a race - White will win Black's two remaining pawns, then the only question is whether Black can get his king to h8 in time to draw. The variations are very complex and I'm not entirely sure what the objective evaluation is (although my instinct is that White is winning). But with my opponent's time trouble, I felt nearly certain that I would win the game.

#### 47...Bf2 48.Kc4 Kd6 49.Kd3 Kc7 50.Bd5 Bb6

50...Ba7 This was the last chance to keep drawing chances alive, although it seems to fall short 51.Ke4 Kb6 52.Kf3! The f-pawn is not important (sorry Michael!), capturing it would give Black an important tempo to reorganize his pieces (52.Kxf4 Bb8+ 53.Kg4 Bg3 White can't break through) 52...Bb8 53.Kg4 f3 (53...Kxa6 54.Kxh4+-) 54.Kxh4 f2 55.Bc4 Kxc6 56.Kg5 Kd7 57.Kg6 (57.h4? Ke7 58.Kg6 Kf8 59.h5 f1Q 60.Bxf1 Kg8 Draw!) 57...Ke8 58.Kg7 Be5 + 59.Kg8 Bd4 60.h4 It seems White wins anyway, but at least Black came close to getting to the corner and would have drawing chances if White erred.

#### 51.Ke4 Bc5 52.Kxf4 Bd6+ 53.Kg4 Kb6 54.Kxh4 Kxa6 55.Kg5

According to the tablebase, my attempt to gain a tempo here, by forcing the bishop to later return to a square that guards c7, actually loses time, and Kg4 was the fastest mate.

#### 55...Be7+ 56.Kg4 Kb6 57.h4 Bd8 58.h5 Kc5 59.Kf5 1-0

Black lost on time here, but White is queening by force in any case.

#### Martinez, Marcel – Hungaski, Robert

USCL Finals (13), 20.11.2010

Sicilian Defense [B42]

Notes by Hungaski

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 Nf6 6.0-0 Qc7 7.Qe2 d6 8.f4

g6 9.c4 Bg7 10.Nc3 0-0 11.Kh1 b6 12.Nf3 Nc6



[FEN"r1b2rk1/2q2pbp/ppnpnp1/8/2P1PP2/2NB1N2/PP2Q1PP/R1B2R1K w - - 0 13"]

Usually Black will put this knight on d7, so that he may pile up his artillery on the c-file in hopes of achieving the b5-break. However, I wanted to keep d7 free for my other knight in case of an e4-e5 advance by White. Moreover, with the knights on c6 and d7, Black can sometimes play a timely f5.

**13.Bd2 Bb7 14.Rae1**

14.Rae1 0-1 in sixty-eight moves, Garcia Martinez-Karpov, Madrid 1973.

**14...Nd7 15.Bb1 Rae8 16.b3**



[FEN"4rrk1/1bqn1pbp/ppnp1p1/8/2P1PP2/1PN2N2/P2BQ1PP/1B2RR1K b - - 0 16"]

**16...Qb8?!**

I had a long think at this point, since I was at a crossroads. I knew my next move would define the tone of the game for if I intend to play the f7-f5 idea, I would be well advised to trade off White's f3-knight to avoid any unpleasant Ng5 ideas, while also clearing the diagonal for my b7-bishop. In hindsight, the trade seems to alleviate Black's position regardless of my commitment to f7-f5, so I should have played: 16...Nd4!? 17.Nxd4 Bxd4 18.Qg4 (18.f5? exf5 19.Qd3 Bxc3 20.Bxc3 fxe4 21.Qd4 Ne5-/+ ) 18...Bg7 19.Qh4 (19.f5 Nf6 20.Qh4 exf5 21.exf5 Qc6=/+ ) 19...f5!?!=/+.

**17.Qf2!**

White correctly takes control over d4, avoiding any form of piece trade, while also targeting b6. Moreover, White now has a concrete attacking plan (Qh4, f5, Bh6 and Ng5). Black must react accordingly.

**17...b5 18.exb5 axb5 19.Bd3**





[FEN"1q2rrk1/1b1n1pbp/2npp1p1/1p6/4PP2/1PNB1N2/P2B1QPP/4RR1K b - - 0 19"]

White is again correct to try to force Black's hand on the queenside, since a b5-b4 advance would expose his many weaknesses there. 19.Qh4?! b4 20.Na4 Ba6 (20...f5?! 21.exf5 exf5 22.Ng5 Nf6 23.Ne6) 21.Rf2 Nd4 22.Be3 Nxf3 23.Rxf3 f5!?!=/+ once again this move proves to be quite effective once the f3-knight has been eliminated.

### 19...Ba6!

I was counting on this move when I sought to justify my b6-b5 advance. In many lines, White is now faced with the uncomfortable b5-b4 advance, which would end up giving Black a powerful pawn at c3. 19...b4? 20.Na4+/-.

### 20.Qe2

20.a4? b4 21.Nb5 (21.Bxa6 bxc3=+) 21...Nc5 22.Bc4 Nxe4! 23.Rxe4 d5 24.Ree1 dxc4 25.bxc4 Rd8=/+ was my main idea.

### 20...Nb4

20...b4 21.Na4! (21.Bxa6 bxc3=+) 21...Bxd3 22.Qxd3+/- the d6 and light square weaknesses give White a serious edge.

### 21.Bb1

21.Bxb5 Bxc3? (21...Nxa2! is best, but not my intention during the game.) 22.Bxa6 Bxd2 23.Nxd2 Nxa2 24.Ra1! (24.Bb5? Nc3+!) 24...Nb4 25.Bb5+/- looks very strong for White given the pin on d7 and the threat of Ra4.

### 21...Nc6

I felt the inclusion of rook moves would only favor White. 21...Rc8 22.Rc1 Nc5 23.Nd1 (23.a3? Nc6 24.b4 Nb3 25.Rcd1 Nxd2 26.Qxd2 Nxb4!-/+ 23...Nc6 24.b4! Na4 25.Bd3+/-).

### 22.Bd3

22.a3 Na5! 23.Bc2 (23.b4 Nc4=+) 23...Qb7 24.Qf2 b4 25.axb4 Bxf1 26.Qxf1 Nc6-/+.

### 22...Nb4 23.Bb1 Nc6 24.Bd3



[FEN"1q2rrk1/3n1pbp/b1npp1p1/1p6/4PP2/  
1PNB1N2/P2BQ1PP/4RR1K b - - 0 24"]

At this point, I was unsure of what had happened on board three. Amidst the confusion I realized that my opponent could claim a draw by "three-fold repetition," so I "pre-moved" my next move.

**24...Nc5!** (24...Nb4=) **25.Bxb5 Bxc3 26.Bxa6 Bxd2 27.Nxd2 Qa8!** (27...Qb4 28.Nf3+/-) **28.Bc4**

28.Bb5 Nd4 29.Qc4 Nxb5 30.Qxb5 Qxa2 31.Nc4 Rb8!-/+=.

**28...d5 29.Qf2!**

I was counting on this move and thought the complications would favor me. However, as many have indicated, Rybka has found White's saving grace: 29. Bb5 Nd4 30.Qf2 Nxb5 31.Qxc5 Qxa2! 32.Qxb5 Qxd2 33.exd5 Qxd5 34.Qxd5 exd5 35.Rd1 Rb8=.

**29...Qa5! 30.exd5 exd5 31.Rxe8 Rxe8 32.Bxd5?**

32.f5! is the only move according to Rybka.

**32...Nd3 33.Qf3 Qxd2!**

Pressed by the clock I had started to type ...Ne1 on the ICC console and was about to hit enter, yet I knew there had to be something better. I liked the position after 33...Qxd2. I knew I had a draw (I hadn't seen Qe3 yet), but I felt there had to be something better. I decided to go for it. 33...Ne1? 34.Nc4!+- would have been a sad turn of events.(34.Qd1 Qxd5 35.Rxe1 Rd8 36.Re2 Nd4 37.Rf2+/-).

**34.Bxc6?**

Now the back-rank weakness proves to be fatal. 34.Bc4 Ndb4 35.f5 was the last chance, although after 35...Ne5 White does not have enough for the piece.

**34...Re3 35.Qd5 Re1 36.Qf3**

36.Qxd3 Qxd3 37.Rxe1 Qc3 38.Re8+ Kg7-+.

**36...Re3 37.Qd5 Re1 38.Qf3**



[FEN"6k1/5p1p/2B3p1/8/5P2/  
1P1n1Q2/P2q2PP/4rR1K b - - 0 38"]

**38...Qe3! 0-1**

Later on my teammates indicated that I could have also won in style with 38... Qc1 39.Kg1 Qc5+ 40.Kh1 Nf2+ 41.Kg1 Nh3+ 42.Kh1 Qg1+ 43.Rxg1 Rxg1#.

### Postscript

We couldn't be more pleased with our performance this year, and none of it would have happened without the support of our sponsors. We would like to thank [ChessCafe.com](http://ChessCafe.com), Firejel, the Massachusetts Chess Association, and the

Boylston Chess Foundation for all their help. We would also like to recognize everyone who showed up at the playing venue to support the team. Thanks, and we'll see you again next year!

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