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The **Lost** State Champions

Filling in Gaps—and Correcting Mistakes—in the Alabama State Champions List

1966 Milan Momic
1965 Gordon Bates
1964 Brad Gambrell
1963 Milan Momic
1962 Milan Momic
1961 Brad Gambrell

1960 Dr. Rodney Baine

1959 ??????????

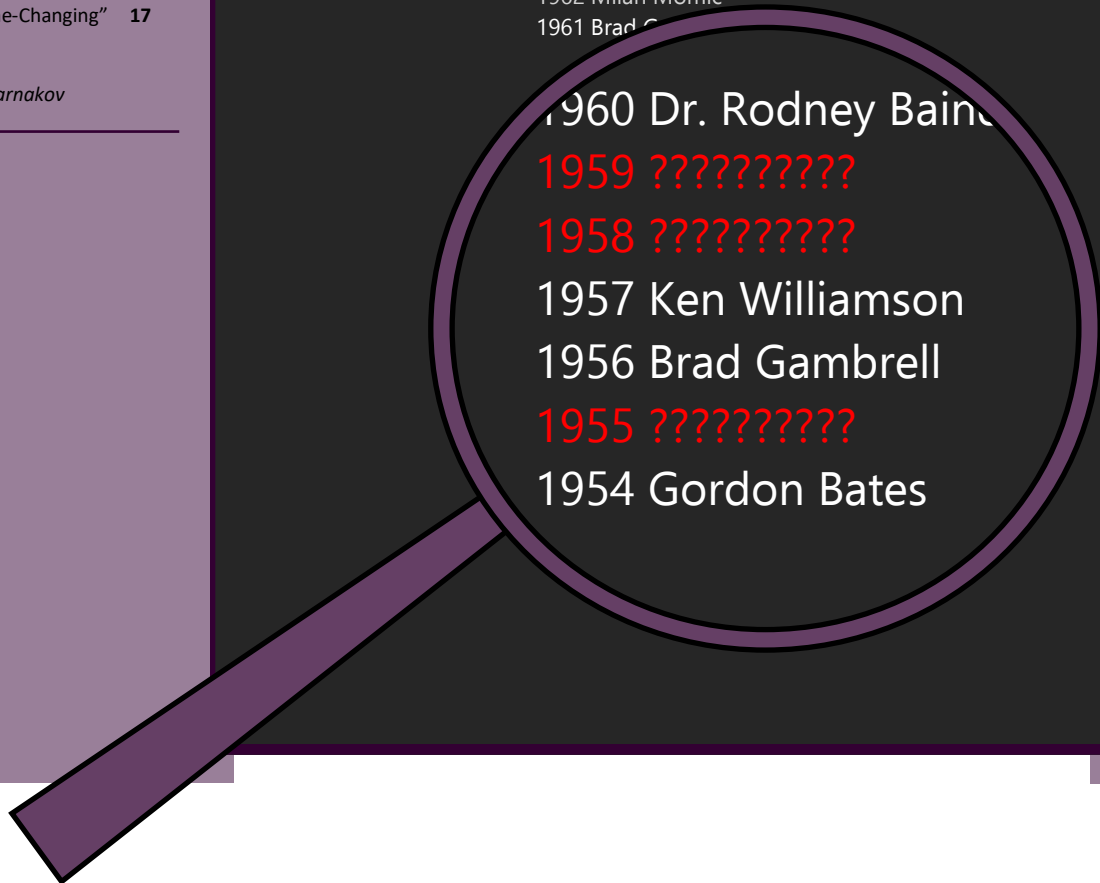
1958 ??????????

1957 Ken Williamson

1956 Brad Gambrell

1955 ??????????

1954 Gordon Bates



Greetings from the Editor

I sincerely hope that, as this *Antics* is published, all ACF members and their loved ones remain healthy and safe. Because of the pandemic, in-person chess tournaments have come to a halt for now; however, the Alabama chess community remains active in other forms this summer—such as through online chess competitions and online chess training camps. And, of course, we also have the *Antics*. I am glad we have found ways to continue chess activity in Alabama. After all, for many people, myself included, chess has always been a good friend in difficult times.

During the last few months, I have undertaken another massive Alabama chess history preservation project. The results may be found in this *Antics*, as we reexamine the Alabama state champions list. The new list that I am proposing is the product of tons of research and thought. I have tried to explain my whole odyssey in my article, “the Lost State Champions,” starting on page 4. The fruit of all this work—with detailed references included—can be found on page 13. To veteran players and anyone with an interest in Alabama chess history: I would deeply appreciate your feedback on my conclusions and the rationale behind them. If anyone catches a mistake I have made, or has any helpful suggestions at all, I would love to hear from you.

Many thanks to **Tom Denton** and **Yury Barnakov** for submitting articles for this *Antics*. The winner of the Game of the Quarter (“GoQ”) award this time is... Yury Barnakov! The game Barnakov-Puckett was important for the final standings of the 2019 Alabama State Championship, and Barnakov’s commentary helped capture the drama of the moment. The game was also a great display of fighting spirit, as Barnakov came back from a lost position to survive (and almost win) the game.

A new rule: the GoQ committee has

decided that, from now on, only games played within the last six months will be eligible for the GoQ award. By the way: due to the pandemic and the low number of Alabama tournaments in the foreseeable future, the ACF *may* temporarily suspend the Game of the Quarter competition, depending on the number and/or quality of submissions next time.

In other news: although the in-person Alabama State Scholastic Championships were cancelled, online chess competitions have produced Alabama’s new Denker and Barber representatives. **Om Badhe** is the new Denker representative, and **Parker Liu** is the new Barber representative. In addition, the ACF has selected **Constance Wang**, winner of the 2020 Alabama All-Girls State Chess Championship, to be the new Alabama representative at the Ruth Haring All Girls National Championship. Congratulations, one and all!

The deadline for submissions for the Summer 2020 issue of the *Antics* is July 31. Please submit photos, games, and articles to the *Antics* via Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com.

-Scott Varagona

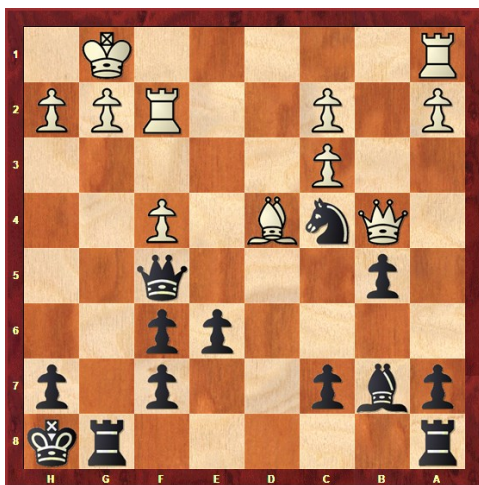
ACF Membership

Any individual may become a **Regular Member** upon the payment of annual dues of **\$15.00**. Regular members may enter ACF tournaments and receive special publications or notices from ACF as they are issued. Any chess club seeking to become an **Affiliate** is required to file the Affiliate Information Form with the Secretary of the ACF and pay annual dues of **\$35.00**. Benefits of becoming an affiliate include the right to bid to host ACF-sanctioned events, such as the Alabama State Championship, and to receive advertising through the ACF for your tournaments.

Big Fish

by Tom Denton

I think the chess world is ready for a series of self-deprecating articles. Who better to do it than a reasonably high-rated player that regularly blunders? A victory can cover up these errors, but there is much to learn from the ups and downs of a game. My first submission is from a 2019 event in Mobile where I was happily leading in a late middlegame. Of course, I wanted to win, but I was relaxed and thinking that I could cruise into the winner's circle. This is a bad thought to have, since it leads to missing knock-out blows and sometimes to draws and losses. In the position, I am a piece and a pawn up. I have an opportunity to play a move that removes all obstacles to victory.



Black to play.

The bad news is, I miss it! My thinking was as follows. I have extra material and many of my pieces angling towards my opponent's king. The only

piece not doing much is my queen's rook. I looked briefly at sacrifices, but saw nothing great. I decided to get my rooks doubled on the g-file. The thing that I missed was the current inactivity of my opponent's queen and queen's rook. The time to break things open is now and the move is 21...Bxg2!. It is actually a mate in 11 according to analysis from Stockfish: 21...Bxg2 22.Bxf6+ Qxf6 23.Qc5 Bf3+ 24.Kf1 Qxc3 25.Rxf3 Qxa1+ 26.Ke2 Rad8 27.Rd3 Rg2+ 28.Qf2 Rxd3 29.cxd3 Qxa2+ 30.Kd1 Rxf2 31.h3 Qd2#. A possible human continuation may have looked more like this: 21...Bxg2 22.Rxg2 Rxg2+ 23.Kxg2 Qxf4 24.Bf2 Ne3+ 25.Kg1 Rg8+ 26.Bg3 Rxg3+ 27.hxg3 Qxg3+ 28.Kh1 Qg2#.

Here is what happens when you miss the winner: 21...Rg6 22.Qe7 Rg8 23.Kf1 c5 24.g4 Ne3+ 25.Bxe3 Rxg4 26.Rd2 Time for another miss (thanks again Stockfish)... I didn't see 26...Rg1+ 27.Bxg1 Qh3+ 28.Rg2 Qxg2+ 29.Ke1 Qxg1+ 30.Kd2 Rg2+ 31.Kd3 c4#. Instead, I played 26...Bd5 27.Ke1 Bc4 28.Rd8 Rxd8 29.Qxd8+ Kg7 30.Qd2 Qe4 31.Kd1 Rg2 32.Bf2 Qf3+ 33.Ke1 Rxh2.

At this point, my opponent decided that, even though I had missed several opportunities, I could navigate the remainder of the game.

I hope you enjoyed my blunders. Big fish out. ■

The Lost State Champions

by Scott Varagona

Has it ever bugged you that the Alabama State Champions list on the ACF website is incomplete? It always bugged me. Here is the list, as it currently stands:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 2019 Scott Varagona / Matthew Puckett | 1991 Hisham Sunna & Charles Meidinger |
| 2018 Scott Varagona / Tyler Freeman | 1990 Bill Melvin |
| 2017 Scott Varagona | 1989 Joe Jurjevich |
| 2016 Bill Melvin | 1988 Mark Walton |
| 2015 Scott Varagona | 1987 Kyle Therrell & Tom Denton |
| 2014 Stephen W. Adams | 1986 Stuart Rachels |
| 2013 Scott Varagona | 1985 Stuart Rachels |
| 2012 Bryan Tillis / Charles Meidinger | 1984 Stuart Rachels |
| 2011 Will Stevenson | 1983 Stuart Rachels & Tom Denton |
| 2010 Emory Tate | 1982 Stuart Rachels & Kyle Therrell |
| 2009 Bradley Denton / Will Stevenson | 1981 Kyle Therrell |
| 2008 Joe Jurjevich / Brent Inman /
Scott Varagona / Alex Weiner | 1980 Steve Hudson & Joe Jurjevich |
| 2007 Scott Varagona | 1979 Steve Hudson |
| 2006 Joe Jurjevich / Brent Inman / Calvin Bomar | 1978 Robert Jurjevich |
| 2005 Scott Varagona | 1977 Dr. Fredrich Bittner |
| 2004 Gerald Larson & Ozgur Aktunc | 1976 Steve Hudson |
| 2003 Joseph Marcrum | 1975 Elias Antonas |
| 2002 Charles Meidinger / Joe Jurjevich /
Scott Varagona | 1974 Charles Irvine |
| 2001 Bill Melvin | 1973 Charles Irvine |
| 2000 Bill Melvin | 1972 Ken Williamson |
| 1999 Matthew Puckett & Andy Reeder | 1971 Don L. Whaley |
| 1998 Bill Melvin | 1970 Charles Irvine |
| 1997 Bill Melvin & Andrew Whatley | 1969 Milan Momic & Charles Irvine |
| 1996 Brent Inman & Rhodes Peele | 1968 Charles Cleveland |
| 1995 Kyle Therrell / Bill Melvin /
Andrew Whatley | 1967 Marty Appleberry |
| 1994 Charles Meidinger | 1966 Milan Momic |
| 1993 Scott Godfrey | 1965 Gordon Bates |
| 1992 Kyle Therrell / Charles Meidinger /
Bill Melvin | 1964 Brad Gambrell |
| | 1963 Milan Momic |
| | 1962 Milan Momic |
| | 1961 Brad Gambrell |
| | 1960 Dr. Rodney Baine |
| | 1959 (unknown) |
| | 1958 (unknown) |
| | 1957 Ken Williamson |
| | 1956 Brad Gambrell |
| | 1955 (unknown) |
| | 1954 Gordon Bates |

First, we must set the record straight about where this list came from. On alabamachess.org, there is a note saying that the list was “provided by Jim Weiner 6/1/2007.” However, in truth, Jim Weiner had merely added the most recent names to an older list that appeared in the February 1997 *Antics*. The original list (up to 1996) was compiled by **Bobby Edwards**. Bobby was a Huntsville champion and long-time Huntsville Chess Club member; he did a lot of research on Alabama chess history and often published his findings in the *Antics*. How I wish I could have had an opportunity to speak with him about his research, but alas, according to uschess.org, he stopped playing in tournaments in the year 2000 and then passed away. Thank you, Bobby, for all the helpful information that you did give us!

Unfortunately, Bobby handed us the list “cold,” without citing his

sources. Many of the names obviously came from the *Antics* through the years; however, the *Antics* magazines only date back to the early 1970s. It was never clear to me where the earlier names came from.

Fast-forward to the year 2020. The USCF has created PDF copies of all the issues of *Chess Life* and *Chess Review* that ever existed, and made them freely accessible at <https://new.uschess.org/chess-life-digital-archives/>. Finally, a few months ago, I got around to browsing through the archive. “Maybe there will be *something* to learn about Alabama chess history in there,” was my thinking. To my shock, there was an overflowing wealth of information. I literally screamed with glee when I found a crosstable for the very first Alabama State Championship. (See *Chess Life* Vol. VIII, No. 24, a.k.a., the August 20, 1954 edition, page 7: http://uschf1-nyc1.aodhosting.com/CL-AND-CR-ALL/CL-ALL/1954/1954_08_2.pdf.)

1	G. C. Bates	W8	W25	W11	W12	D2	W4	5.5
2	H. B. Gambrell	W10	D9	W18	W3	D1	W5	5
3	C. Wingard	W26	W22	D4	L2	W18	W11	4.5
4	Tony L. Janes	W24	W7	D3	W9	W12	L1	4.5
5	J. H. Oliver	W19	W23	L12	W6	W14	L2	4
6	E. M. Cockrell	W15	L12	W7	L5	W23	W14	4
7	F. W. Kemp	W20	L4	L6	W25	W22	W13	4
8	F. J. Shippen	L1	W21	D10	W19	D13	W12	4
9	Jack Mallory	W16	D2	W22	L4	L11	W19	3.5
10	C. D. Swanson	L2	W17	D8	L11	W21	W18	3.5

The top ten lines of the crosstable from the first ever Alabama State Championship, which took place in 1954 in Birmingham.
(See *Chess Life* Vol. VIII, No. 24, a.k.a., the August 20, 1954 edition, page 7.)

Apparently, back in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, *Chess Life* was a much different animal than it is now. In those days, *Chess Life* printed not only stories on national events, but also brief stories on local events around the country. The same could be said for *Chess Review*, as well as the magazine that was formed in 1969 when the two publications merged: *Chess Life & Review*. Luckily for us, these magazines printed reports on the result of the Alabama State Championship (sometimes known as the "Alabama Open") almost every year. All it took was a little digging to find our missing names.

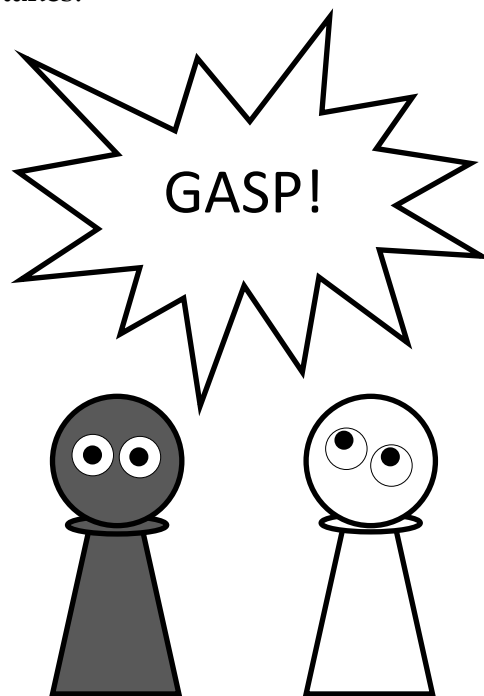
So, without further ado, it is my pleasure to reveal the names of **the lost Alabama State Champions**.

1955: **Lt. Edmund Godbold** of Fort McClellan became Alabama State Champion by scoring 5.5-1.5. (Godbold tied for first with three Tennessee players; James Wright of Tennessee came in first on tiebreaks, but he was ineligible for the title because he was not an Alabama resident.) See *Chess Life* Vol. X, no. 7, a.k.a., the December 5, 1955 edition, page 1.

1958: **Brad Wade** of Birmingham, Alabama came in clear first with 6.5-0.5 at the Alabama Open in Birmingham. See *Chess Life* Vol. XIII, no. 4, a.k.a., the October 20, 1958 edition, page 1.

1959: **Frank Di Paula** of Tuskegee won the Alabama Open with a score of 5.5-1.5. (Brad Gambrell of Birmingham also scored 5.5-1.5, but Di Paula won the tiebreaker. It appears that, in those days, co-champions were not recognized the same way they are now.) See *Chess Life*, Vol. XIV, No. 15, a.k.a., the April 5, 1960 edition, page 1.

At last, those three long-standing mysteries are solved. If only the story ended there, and we could all happily ride off into the sunset... However, as my review of the archives continued, I got way more than I bargained for, and not in a good way. It quickly became clear that our current State Champions list contains a few mistakes!



Allow me to explain. I am convinced that Bobby Edwards relied on old issues of *Chess Life* and *Chess Review* for much of his research. (I recently found an ad that he posted in the *Antics* asking for old *Chess Life* magazines, even offering to pay for them.) It seems he had access to many, but not all, of the old magazines that he needed. Now that we have access to *all* of them in 2020, we have a more complete picture of what was going on in Alabama during those early decades than Bobby did, at least in many cases. Sometimes the information in *Chess Life* was a little misleading (or downright incorrect) from the start, so it is no wonder that Bobby Edwards was sometimes led astray. Honestly, I am impressed that he was able to figure out as much as he did. But now, with the full archive in our hands, let us try to identify and correct the mistakes.

1. The entry for 1956, Brad Gambrell, is almost certainly incorrect. There are reports in both *Chess Life* (September 20, 1956 edition, page 1) and *Chess Review* (November 1956, p. 324) that name **Michael J. Deleanu** of Birmingham as the top-scoring Alabama resident at the 1956 Alabama Open Championship. (The overall tournament winner was Rea Hayes of Tennessee with 6.5-0.5; Deleanu scored 6-1.) *Chess Review* explicitly names

Deleanu as the new champion.

Why, then, did Bobby Edwards list Gambrell as the champion instead? In the report on the 1957 Alabama Open in the October 20, 1957 *Chess Life*, it was mentioned in passing that “Gambril” (typo) was the “defending 1956 champion.” I believe Bobby Edwards saw this report, and—having not seen the original reports from 1956 in *Chess Life* and *Chess Review*—he had no reason to doubt the note about Gambrell. However, the original reports from 1956 in both *Chess Life* and *Chess Review* independently verify that Deleanu was the real 1956 champion. (Gambrell came in sixth, according to *Chess Life*.) I have no idea why that 1957 note about Gambrell being the defending champion was ever there, but I believe it is mistaken. The original reports from 1956 look more plausible and seem to carry much more weight.

So, I propose that we change the 1956 entry to **Michael J. Deleanu** and include a footnote regarding the conflicting report about Brad Gambrell.

2. The entry for 1967, Marty Appleberry, is incorrect. I believe Bobby Edwards saw a report from the October 1968 *Chess Review* (page 291) that named Marty Appleberry as the winner of the previous *Birmingham*

Open, and he mistook that for the *Alabama* Open. (The report was phrased in a slightly misleading manner: “*Alabama*. The Open and Reserve Sections of the Birmingham Open were won...”.) But these were two different tournaments: the Birmingham Open, which was the precursor to the Vulcan Open, consisted only of 5 rounds, whereas the Alabama Open consisted of 7 rounds. (The tournament ads from *Chess Life* confirm this.) Since Appleberry’s score was given as 4.5-0.5, the tournament he won was certainly *not* that year’s Alabama State Championship.

There was a *very* long delay before a report on the 1967 Alabama State Championship was published in a national magazine, but it finally appeared in the November 1968 issue of *Chess Review*, page 325. **Charles Irvine** of Huntsville was the winner with a score of 4.5-2.5, ahead of Milan Momic and C. Edwards, who both scored 3.5-3.5. It is mysterious why the scores were so relatively low this year—especially for Milan Momic, who usually outclassed *everybody* in Alabama at the time. Of course, even the great legends have their off days. We do not have access to the full crosstable for this year, though, so that story may be lost in the sands of time forever...



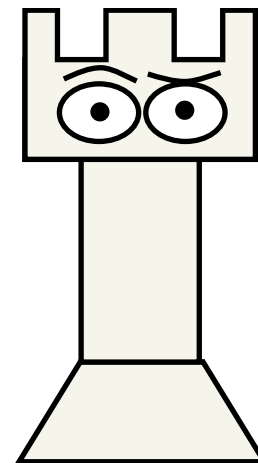
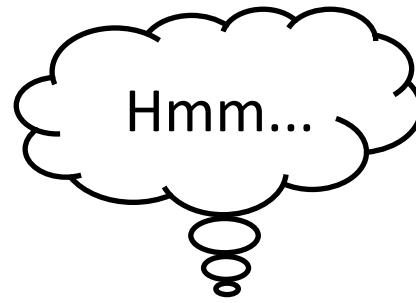
Charles Irvine: one of Alabama’s top two players of the 1960s and 1970s. (Photo from *Alabama State Chess Championship 1973-1987*.)

For those skeptics who wonder how we know this report from November 1968 is talking about the 1967 championship and not the 1968 one, take note: a report on another Alabama State Championship—presumably the one from 1968—appeared a few months later in *Chess Review* (January 1969, page 4), and Charles Cleveland was named as the winner, as we would expect. It seems that, in the late 1960s, somebody was getting really behind—either the folks in Alabama submitting the information, or the national magazines publishing it.

Based on the evidence in front of us, I believe the entry for 1967 should be changed to **Charles Irvine**.

3. Now we come to the early 1970s... and this is where things get complicated. By this point, *Chess Review* (which usually had the best reports on the Alabama State Championship) and *Chess Life* had merged to become *Chess Life & Review*, and reports on the Alabama State Championship became a bit more sporadic. Fortunately, *Chess Life & Review* started publishing a "State Champions" list and would add names to it several times through the year. However, this list is a double-edged sword. Why? If a state federation submitted the name of a state champion one year, but didn't update the name the following year, *Chess Life & Review* would (for some bizarre reason) print *the same name* the following year, whether they knew it was correct or not. So, if we see the same name listed two years in a row, we don't know if that is because this person was *really* champion two years in a row, or if the state federation just forgot to send *Chess Life & Review* a notice to update the name. (How I wish *Chess Life & Review* hadn't handled the list this way!)

On Bobby Edwards' list of state champions in the early '70s, we have:



1972 Ken Williamson
1971 Don L. Whaley
1970 Charles Irvine

The first few lists of State Champions printed in *Chess Life & Review* from 1969 through 1970 have no entry for Alabama at all. The first time a state champion for Alabama was listed was in 1971, when Don L. Whaley's name appeared. This explains why Bobby Edwards put Whaley in the 1971 slot. But hold on: Bobby missed something. Whaley's name had *first* appeared on *Chess Life & Review's* list in the June 1971 issue. That means

(according to the March 1971 issue) Whaley's name must have been submitted by Alabama chess officials to *Chess Life & Review* by April 15, 1971. That was over four months **before** the 1971 Alabama State Championship had even occurred!

So, I believe that there are mistakes in Bobby's list from the early '70s. Since Don Whaley was listed as state champion in *Chess Life & Review* months before the 1971 championship even took place, this is evidence that Whaley was actually the **1970** Alabama State Champion. (I do not know why Bobby Edwards put Charles Irvine in the 1970 slot. I searched high and low through all the magazines of 1970, 1971 & 1972, but I could find no report on the 1970 Alabama State Championship and no concrete evidence to suggest Irvine was the winner. I do not know if Bobby had a reliable written source, or if he just asked someone in the ACF and they remembered incorrectly, or if *he* remembered incorrectly, or if he just made an incorrect deduction, etc... If only Bobby had cited his sources!!)

What about 1971? Again, there is a problem: Don Whaley is still on the *Chess Life & Review* list of state champions as of January 1972, but that does not necessarily mean that he was the true 1971 champion. As I explained earlier, it is possible that the state champion's name in *Chess Life & Review* had not been updated by the ACF yet.

Indeed, later in the 1970s, there were years where we know for a fact (from *Antics* reports) that person X was the state champion, yet the *Chess Life & Review* champions list still shows person Y, who was champion in a previous year. For example, in the *Chess Life & Review* of December 1975, the list on p. 841 still shows Charles Irvine as champion, when in fact the new 1975 champion was Elias Antonas. Also, the *Chess Life & Review Annual* for 1977 listed Elias Antonas as champion on p. 41, when in fact there had been two other Alabama state champions since Elias. (Etc.) This is why we must be extremely cautious when using this *Chess Life & Review* state champions list. We cannot necessarily trust it to tell us the truth about 1971's champion.

What to do? As it turns out, like the *Antics* did, the *Tennessee Chess Newsletter (TCN)* has posted PDF copies of old issues on the Tennessee Chess Association website. Sometimes there is information in the *TCN* about Alabama players. We got a lucky break: in the January 1972 issue of *TCN* (volume 14, No. 1, p. 1), there is a report on a Tennessee vs. Alabama team match that took place on October 31, 1971. The report states: "Both State Champions, Doug Ralston for Tenn. and Ken Williamson For Ala. had minus score." Aha! This is evidence that Ken Williamson was in fact the 1971 Alabama State Champion. (Of course,

the 1972 Alabama State Championship had not happened yet when this article was published, so there can be no mistake: the writer must have been talking about 1971.)

What about 1972? There is a tournament report in *Chess Life & Review* (March 1973, p. 159) that says: "The 1973 Alabama State Champion is Ken Williamson." Again, it is obvious that *Chess Life & Review* made a mistake in labeling him as the 1973 champion: being that the report was printed in March 1973, the Alabama State Championship of September 1973 had not happened yet. They must have meant that Ken Williamson won the 1972 championship, and therefore he was still the reigning champion at the time of the report, in 1973. (We know from *Antics* reports that Charles Irvine was the real 1973 champion.)

So, if my thinking is correct, Ken Williamson was the champion of both 1971 and 1972. By the way, this would also make sense for a different reason: Ken Williamson's obituary (see www.arabheritagememorialchapel.com/obituaries/Kenneth-Williamson-3/#!/Obituary) states that he was a *three-time* Alabama State Champion. Bobby Edwards' list only gave him two wins (in '57 and '72), but if he also won in 1971, then that makes three.

Long story short: for these complicated but thoroughly-thought-out reasons, I propose we change the

1970 entry to **Don L. Whaley** and the 1971 entry to **Ken Williamson**.

The only other entry on the list that I cannot fully justify is 1969 (Momic and Irvine). These two players were the cream of the crop in Alabama at the time and both had won numerous other championships, so it is plausible that they won this one. However, there is no report on the 1969 championship in any magazine, at least none that I can find, and this tournament also predates the *Antics*. So, I am not certain where Bobby Edwards got this information. I know that he interviewed Milan Momic about his achievements at some point, then



Milan Momic. (Photo from May-July 1997 *Antics*.)

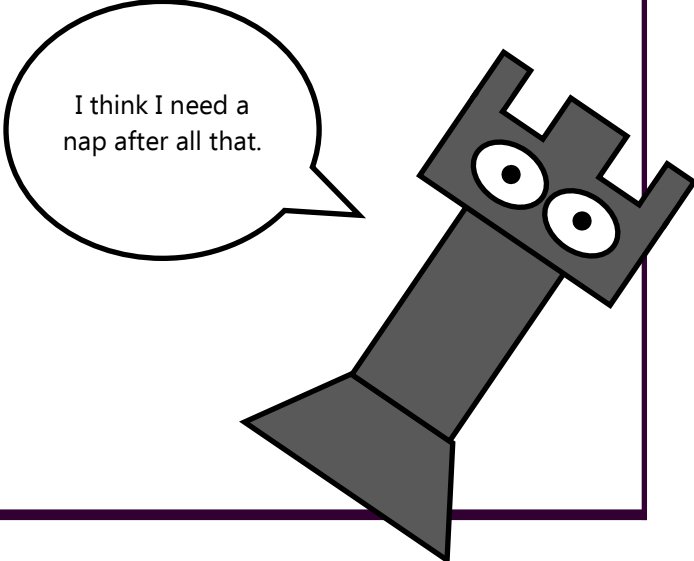
published an article about Momic in the May-July 1997 *Antics*, after the state champions list had been published in the previous issue. Bobby did not mention anything about the 1969 Alabama championship results in this article about Momic; however, if anyone would have known about Momic's biggest achievements in Alabama, surely it would have been Bobby. At any rate, I have found nothing that would directly contradict the entry for 1969 on the champions list. So, for now, we will just have to trust what Bobby said! Maybe more information will come to light someday—or maybe not...

Thankfully, because we have *Antics* reports dating back to 1973 and uschess.org tournament reports dating back to the early 1990s, all the names on the list from 1973 to the present are fully verified.

And so, if we make the changes that I recommend, here is how the new (complete!) list of Alabama State Champions would look. (See page 13.) For the sake of future researchers, I have included citations for every entry, as well as notes about possible anomalies. Of course, like Bobby Edwards, my work is not infallible, and my conclusions are only as valid as the original sources they are drawn from.

Although I am confident in the corrections I have made, and I have tried to be so careful, I still feel like I am "rewriting Alabama chess history"—which makes my skin crawl. That is why we must give a strong rationale for each entry, keep track of our sources, and recognize that future corrections might need to be made if new information comes to light.

I welcome input from ACF members, especially veteran players who may have memories or documentation of championships of the past. If you have old *Antics* magazines or local club newsletters that I have missed, or you think I've made a mistake somewhere in my reasoning, or you have ideas for how I could research further, etc., please let me know. I would really appreciate any help that you might be able to provide. After all, this list is our state championship's history: it is important that we get it right. ■



I think I need a nap after all that.

The New State Champions List: 1954-2019

by Scott Varagona
(Building upon the original list by Bobby Edwards)

Currently, all issues of *Chess Life* (CL), *Chess Review* (CR), and *Chess Life & Review* (CL&R) are at:
<https://new.uschess.org/chess-life-digital-archives/>

Back issues of *Alabama Chess Antics* may be found at:
<https://alabamachess.org/cmsms/index.php?page=magazine>

Back issues of the *Tennessee Chess Newsletter* may be found at:
http://tnchess.us/?page_id=688

Starting from 1992, tournament crosstables may be found by searching for players' names at:
<http://www.uschess.org/msa/Index.php>

Any names that have changed since the previous version of the list have an asterisk. *

In years with multiple winners, the trophy winner is now listed first, unless otherwise specified.

Year & Champion(s)	Sources
2019 Scott Varagona / Matthew Puckett	Fall 2019 <i>Antics</i> , p. 6, p. 15-16
2018 Scott Varagona / Tyler Freeman	Fall 2018 <i>Antics</i> , p. 14-15
2017 Scott Varagona	Fall 2017 <i>Antics</i> , p. 8-9
2016 Bill Melvin	Fall 2016 <i>Antics</i> , p. 4-6
2015 Scott Varagona	Fall 2015 <i>Antics</i> , p. 4-9
2014 Stephen W. Adams	Winter 2014 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2; Spring 2015 <i>Antics</i> , p. 4. (Adams was the top Alabama resident, behind Ron Burnett of TN. See crosstable online.)
2013 Scott Varagona	Fall 2013 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2, p. 8-10
2012 Bryan Tillis / Charles Meidinger	Fall 2012 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2. (Both players finished behind Ron Burnett of TN. See crosstable online.)
2011 Will Stevenson	Fall 2011 Winter 2012 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2-3
2010 Emory Tate	Fall 2010 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2-3
2009 Bradley Denton / Will Stevenson	Fall 2009 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2-3. (Bradley Denton won the trophy on tiebreaks according to Will Stevenson.)
2008 Scott Varagona / Joe Jurjevich / Brent Inman / Alex Weiner	Fall 2008 Winter 2009 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2-4. (A blitz round-robin tournament was used for tiebreaks to determine the trophy winner; see http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?200809218481.4 for the tiebreaker crosstable.)

2007 Scott Varagona	Fall 2007 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 4. (Varagona tied for first with two out-of-state residents, Stephen Muhammad of GA and Bradley Denton of MS. Although Bradley Denton would later become an AL resident, he was listed as a MS player when this tournament was played. -Varagona)
2006 Joe Jurjevich / Brent Inman / Calvin Bomar	Fall 2006 <i>Antics</i> , p. 13.
2005 Scott Varagona	Fall 2005 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2, p. 13. (Varagona was top Alabama resident, finishing behind Stephen Muhammad of GA.)
2004 Gerald Larson / Ozgur Aktunc	Fall 2004 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2
2003 Joseph Marcrum	Fall 2003 <i>Antics</i> , p. 2.
2002 Joe Jurjevich / Charles Meidinger / Scott Varagona	Fall 2002 <i>Antics</i> , p. 8-9. (These players finished behind Ziatdinov of AZ, who came in first, and S. Muhammad of GA who came in second. Although Jurjevich is listed in the crosstable as being from NC, he had recently moved back to Alabama and was deemed eligible. -Varagona)
2001 Bill Melvin	November 2001 <i>Antics</i> , p. 3
2000 Bill Melvin	November 2000 <i>Antics</i> , p. 5-9.
1999 Andy Reeder / Matthew Puckett	November 1999 - January 2000 <i>Antics</i> . (Reeder won the trophy on tiebreaks according to Matthew Puckett.)
1998 Bill Melvin	November 1998 - January 1999 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 15.
1997 Bill Melvin / Andrew Whatley	November 1997 - January 1998 <i>Antics</i> , p. 15. (Bill Melvin won the tiebreaks, according to Bill.)
1996 Brent Inman / Rhodes Peele	November 1996 <i>Antics</i> , p. 9, p. 14. (Brent Inman won the trophy, according to Brent.)
1995 Kyle Therrell / Bill Melvin / Andrew Whatley	Crosstable: http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?199509047980.1 (Note: Although he is now listed as a TN player, Andrew Whatley was an Alabama resident at the time. Kyle Therrell won the speed chess tiebreaker, but Bill Melvin says he now has the trophy because Kyle sold it to Bill(!) for \$20.)
1994 Charles Meidinger	November 1994 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 10
1993 Scott Godfrey	Crosstable: http://www.uschess.org/msa/XtblMain.php?199309062480.1 (Note: Although he is now listed as a VA player, Scott Godfrey must have been eligible for the Alabama state title at the time.)
1992 Kyle Therrell / Charles Meidinger / Bill Melvin	Unlabeled (Fall) 1992 <i>Antics</i> , p. 4
1991 Hisham Sunna / Charles Meidinger	volume 1, 1992 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 14
1990 Bill Melvin	volume 1, 1991 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 6
1989 Joe Jurjevich	November 1989 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 12

1988 Mark Walton	December 1988 <i>Antics</i> , p. 6-7
1987 Kyle Therrell / Tom Denton	May 1988 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 10. (Kyle Therrell received the trophy on tiebreaks according to Tom Denton.)
1986 Stuart Rachels	December 1986 <i>Antics</i> , p. 6
1985 Stuart Rachels	November 1985 <i>Antics</i> , p. 3
1984 Stuart Rachels	November 1984 <i>Antics</i> , p. 3
1983 Stuart Rachels / Tom Denton	November 1983 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 4
1982 Stuart Rachels / Kyle Therrell	November 1982 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 3. (Tiebreak order unknown)
1981 Kyle Therrell	November 1981 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 16
1980 Steve Hudson / Joe Jurjevich	November 1980 <i>Antics</i> , p. 4
1979 Steve Hudson	November 1979 <i>Antics</i> , p. 1, p. 6
1978 Robert Jurjevich	November 1978 <i>Antics</i> , p. 9-10
1977 Dr. Fredrich Bittner	December 1977 <i>Antics</i> , p. 11
1976 Steve Hudson	<i>Alabama State Chess Championships 1973-1987</i> (a magazine containing reprints of old <i>Antics</i> state championship reports; this magazine is available in the <i>Antics</i> archive), p. 16
1975 Elias Antonas	<i>Alabama State Chess Championships 1973-1987</i> , p. 13-14
1974 Charles Irvine	<i>Alabama State Chess Championships 1973-1987</i> , p. 10
1973 Charles Irvine	<i>Alabama State Chess Championships 1973-1987</i> , p. 8
1972 Ken Williamson	<i>CL&R</i> , March 1973, p. 159. (<u>Note</u> : this source states that "The 1973 Alabama State Champion is Ken Williamson." However, since this report was printed in March 1973--and the 1973 championship would not happen until September-- <i>CL&R</i> must have meant that Williamson won the 1972 championship and he was still the reigning champion at the time of the report, in 1973.)
1971 Ken Williamson*	<i>Tennessee Chess Newsletter</i> , January 1972, p. 1. (<u>Note</u> : Bobby Edwards' previous state champions list had Don L. Whaley in the 1971 slot, but now that seems incorrect based on our new source for this entry and the rationale for the 1970 entry below. It is true that Don L. Whaley was still listed in <i>CL&R</i> on the state champions list in January 1972, p. 36; however, in the 1970s, Alabama chess officials would sometimes neglect to send <i>CL&R</i> an update on who was the new state champion, in which case <i>CL&R</i> 's policy was to automatically reprint the previous winner's name. I believe that is what happened in this case, based on all the evidence in front of us.)

1970 Don L. Whaley*	<i>CL&R</i> , June 1971, p. 327. (<u>Note</u> : Since this source listed Whaley as Alabama State Champion in June 1971, i.e., before the 1971 Alabama State Championship happened in September, this source indicates that Whaley was the 1970 state champion. In Bobby Edwards' previous list, Charles Irvine was in the 1970 slot, but no supporting evidence for that has been found.)
1969 Milan Momic / Charles Irvine	State Champions list by Bobby Edwards, February 1997 <i>Antics</i> , p. 29-30. (Original source unknown. Tiebreak order unknown.)
1968 Charles Cleveland	<i>CR</i> , January 1969, p. 4
1967 Charles Irvine*	<i>CR</i> , November 1968, p. 325. (<u>Note</u> : in the original state champions list, Bobby Edwards put Marty Appleberry in this slot, but that was incorrect. We believe Bobby Edwards misinterpreted a report on the Birmingham Open in <i>CR</i> October 1968, p. 291, and this led to the error.)
1966 Milan Momic	<i>CR</i> , February 1967, p. 35
1965 Gordon Bates	<i>CL</i> , November 1965, p. 247; <i>CL</i> , December 1965, p. 261; <i>CR</i> , December 1965, p. 356
1964 Brad Gambrell	<i>CL</i> , October 1964, p. 248; <i>CR</i> , December 1964, p. 356
1963 Milan Momic	December 1988 <i>Antics</i> , p. 13; <i>CL</i> , October 1963, p. 260; <i>CR</i> , November 1963, p. 324
1962 Milan Momic	May-July 1997 <i>Antics</i> , p. 25; <i>CL</i> , February 1963, p. 44
1961 Brad Gambrell	<i>CL</i> , October 1961, p. 284; <i>CR</i> , November 1961, p. 325
1960 Dr. Rodney Baine	<i>CL</i> , Vol. XV, No. 4 (October 20, 1960 edition), p. 8; <i>CR</i> , November 1960, p. 323
1959 Frank Di Paula*	<i>CL</i> , Vol. XIV, No. 15 (April 5, 1960 edition), p. 1. (<u>Note</u> : Brad Gambrell tied for first, but Di Paula won the tiebreaker. It seems co-champions were not recognized then the same way they are now.)
1958 Brad Wade*	<i>CL</i> , Vol. XIII, No. 4 (October 20, 1958 edition), p. 1; <i>CR</i> , November 1958, p. 324
1957 Ken Williamson	<i>CL</i> , Vol. XII, No. 4 (October 20, 1957 edition), p. 1; <i>CR</i> , November 1957, p. 324
1956 Michael J. Deleanu*	<i>CL</i> , Vol. XI, No. 2 (September 20, 1956 edition), p. 1; <i>CR</i> , November 1956, p. 324. (<u>Note</u> : in the previous state champions list, Bobby Edwards placed Brad Gambrell in this slot--probably because <i>CL</i> 's report on the 1957 AL State Championship mentions in passing that Gambrell was the "defending 1956 champion." However, this note from 1957 seems incorrect; the original 1956 sources cited here seem more plausible, and they name Deleanu as top Alabama resident.)
1955 Lt. Edmund Godbold*	<i>CL</i> , Vol. X, No. 7 (December 5, 1955 edition), p. 1; <i>CR</i> , November 1955, p. 325
1954 Gordon Bates	<i>CL</i> , Vol. VIII, No. 23 (August 5, 1954 edition), p. 1; <i>CL</i> , Vol. VIII, No. 24 (August 20, 1954 edition), p. 7; <i>CR</i> , May 1954, p. 133; <i>CR</i> , August 1954, p. 227

The “Game-Changing” Game

by Yury Barnakov

Being away from “in-person-over-the-board” chess due to the well-known reason of a worldwide virus outbreak, I believe it was a good idea to revisit some of my old games from past tournaments to sense a spirit of the tournament fight and beauty of the played games.

In the life of every chess player there is a moment or game, which is the defining game for the fate of the tournament, i.e., final results, ratings, places, prizes – all that we compete for. Those games become either our most favorite or most hated ones.

Herein, I would like to share some of those games from three major Alabama events of the last year – the Queen of Hearts, Falcon Chess Invitational and Alabama State Championship.

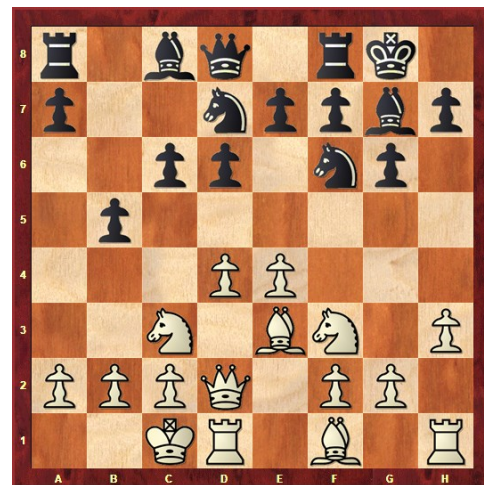
The Queen of Hearts:

Michael Porcelli – NM Yury Barnakov
(1937) (2272)

Queen of Hearts (Round 5), February 2019

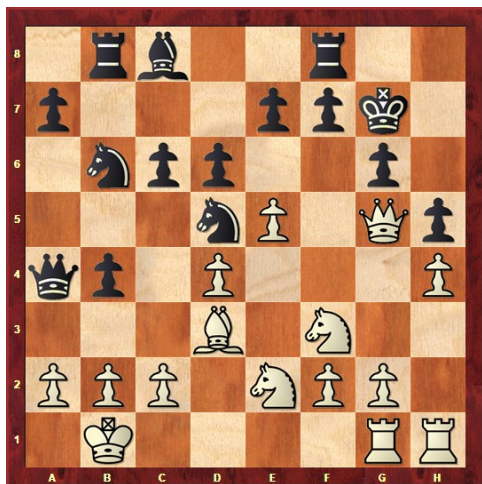
1.e4 g6 The choice of the opening is dictated by the tournament situation. Before the last round there was only the sole leader, Michael Porcelli (1937) with a perfect 4/4. There were several players with a point below, 3/4, including James Hargrove (2024) from Louisiana, Alabama chess veteran Kirk Petty (1900) and myself.

By the sequential wins over strong NM Scott Varagona and young Faruk Ergin (who, with the provisional USCF rating 1898 (P18), outplayed me with sharp tactics), Michael only needed a half-point to clinch success. The last round pairing determined Michael as my opponent. It is a tough job – to win a game on demand with the black pieces against a player on a hot streak. Thus 1...g6. It is ensured there will be an uncompromised, complex game. **2.d4 Bg7 3.Nf3 d6 4.h3** The prophylaxis move. **4...Nd7 5.Nc3 c6** (5...e5? 6.Bg5! creates a problem for black: 6...f6 7.Be3 and white is better.) **6.Be3 Ngf6 7.Qd2** White intends to do long-side castling and have a pawn storm to attack the black king. **7...0-0** Black accepts the challenge; the race has started. **8.0-0 b5**

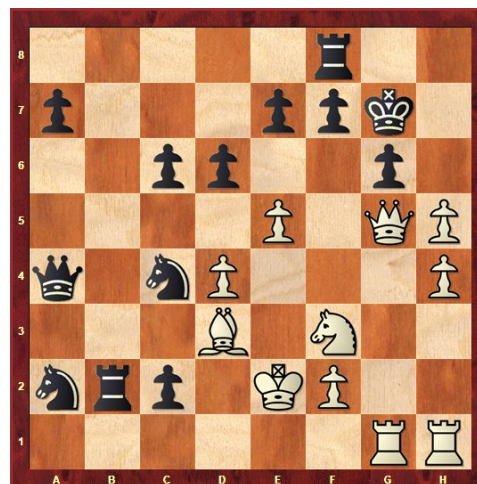


Black is a tempo up; the threat is 8...b4 to win the e4 pawn. **9.Bd3** If 9.e5 b4 10.Na4

Nd5 with black's advantage. 9...b4 10.Ne2 Qa5 Another tempo. 11.Kb1 Nb6 Piling up the pieces closer to the opponent's king. 12.Bh6 Rb8 13.Bxg7 Kxg7 14.Qg5? It would serve white to bring in the white knight, Nc1 and Nb3, to defend the king. 14...Qa4? The mutual exchange of mistakes. It would be better to play 14...Qxg5 15.Nxg5 c5 16.dxc5 dxc5 17.e5 Nfd5 18.Be4 e6 19.h4 h6 20.Nh3 a5 with advantage. 15.e5 Nfd5 16.h4? The wrong plan; the game could be saved with the following: 16.exd6 exd6 17.Ng3 h6 18.Nh5+ Kh7 19.Nf6+ Kg7 20.Nh5+ Kh7=. 16...h5? 17.Rdg1? Losing the game.



17...Bg4? The following would win: 17...Nc3+ 18.bxc3 bxc3 19.Kc1 Nd5 20.Ng3 (20.Kd1 Rb1+ 21.Nc1 Ba6 22.Ne1 Bxd3 23.Nexd3 Rb2 24.Ne1 f6) 20...Qxa2+-. 18.Ng3 Nc3+! Finally! Black found this move. 19.Kc1 Nxa2+ 20.Kd2 b3 21.Nxh5+ Bxh5 22.g4 bxc2 23.gxh5 Nc4+ 24.Ke2 Rxb2? This allows white to hold the position by: 25.Rc1 Nc3+ 26.Kf1 Nd5 27.Bxg6 f6 28.Qg3 Kh8=.



25.Bxg6?? Returning the favor, white forgot that c1Q is attacking the queen on g5. 25...c1Q+ 26.Bc2+ Qxg5 0-1 What a messy game!

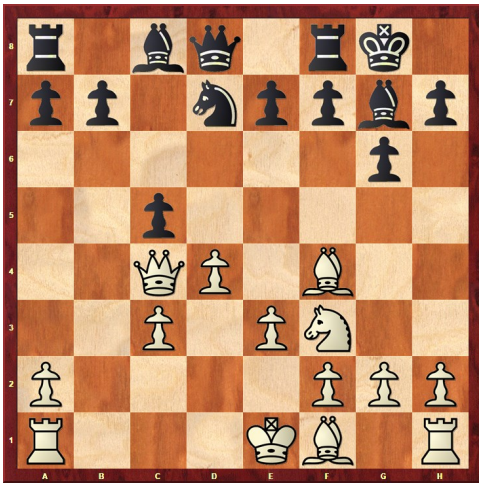
Meantime, Faruk won against Kirk and we got three players with 4/5 sharing 1st place. An additional coefficient was higher for Faruk; thus, he got the champion's title.

The Falcon Chess Invitational:

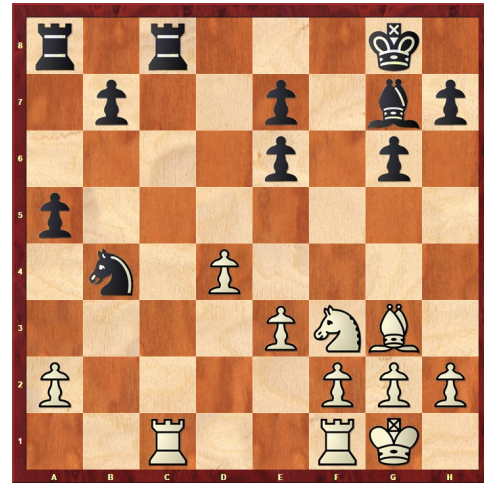
NM Scott Varagona – NM Yury Barnakov
(2263) (2277)
Falcon Chess Invitational (Round 3),
June 8, 2019

1.d4 Before round 3, which proved to be decisive, we had only three players with a perfect 2/2 score: Tejas Thorat (2055), NM Scott Varagona (2263) and myself. The pairing resulted in me playing against Scott with the black pieces. Beforehand we

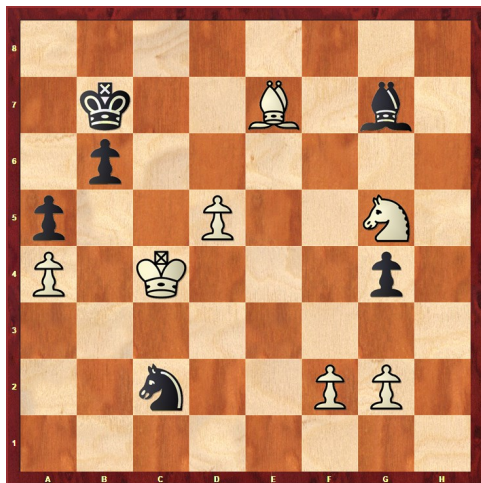
had played a couple of games, which were both won by him. Considering this fact and him having the white pieces, the advantage was on his side. Thus, the Grunfeld is chosen once again... 1...Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bg5 Ne4 6.Bf4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.Qa4+ Nd7 9.e3 0-0 10.Qxc4 c5



This is a known line. The position is even. 11.Qa4 A slight inaccuracy; better is 11.Qb5 a6 12.Qb2 b5 13.Be2 Nb6 14.0-0 Na4 15.Qa3 Bb7 16.Rac1 Rc8=. 11...Nb6 12.Qa3 cxd4 13.cxd4 Nd5 Returning an inaccuracy; it would be better to play 13...Bf5 14.Be2 Nd5 15.Bg3 Qb6 16.Rc1 Qb4+ 17.Qxb4 Nxb4 18.Bc4 Be6 19.Bxe6 Nd3+ 20.Kd2 Nxc1 21.Bd5 Rad8 22.Bxb7 Nxa2 23.Rb1 a5 24.Ra1 Nb4 25.Rxa5 with complications. 14.Bg3 a5 The wrong plan; it would be better to place pieces like this: Bf5, Qb6 and Rc8. 15.Rc1 Qb6 16.Bc4 Nb4 17.0-0 White missed 17.Bc7 with positional domination! 17...Be6 18.Qb3 Rfc8 19.Bxe6 Qxe6 20.Qxe6 fxe6



The opening has ended with white's position easy to play, and the black bishop locked up. 21.a4 h6 22.Nd2 Nd5 23.Ne4 b6 24.Rfd1 Kf7 25.Kf1 Ke8 This is the wrong direction for the black king; it would equalize the position to make a pawn sacrifice: 25...e5 26.Bxe5 Bxe5 27.dxe5 Ke6=. 26.Ke1 Kd7 27.Kd2 Rxc1 28.Rxc1 Rc8 29.Rxc8 Kxc8 Black conducted the wrong plan: the rook exchange is not equalizing the position. White has a technical win in this ending due to the bad position of the black bishop. 30.Nc3 Kd7 31.Nb5 h5 32.Kd3 g5 33.h3 Kc6 34.Kc4 Bf6 35.e4 Nb4 36.Bc7 Bg7 37.Bd8 Bf8 White has completely outplayed black. 38.Nc3 g4 39.hxg4 hxg4 40.d5+ exd5+ 41.exd5+ Kb7 42.Ne4 Nc2 43.Ng5 Bg7 44.Bxe7 Time pressure was already on for both sides.



44...g3! The game-saving move! 45.fxg3 Ne3+ 46.Kd3 Nxd5 47.Ba3 Kc6 48.Ne4 Be5 49.g4 Nf4+ 50.Kd2 Nxc2 ½-½

It was another messy fighting game. It turned out to be the critical “game-changing” game. In the final round, I won against Tejas with white and Scott lost to Jonathan Rasberry (2104) with black, which helped me to win the tournament. It is interesting to notice that this game became “the turning point” in our further chess duel with Scott. In the next three games played, I won 2.5-0.5.

The 2019 Alabama State Championship:

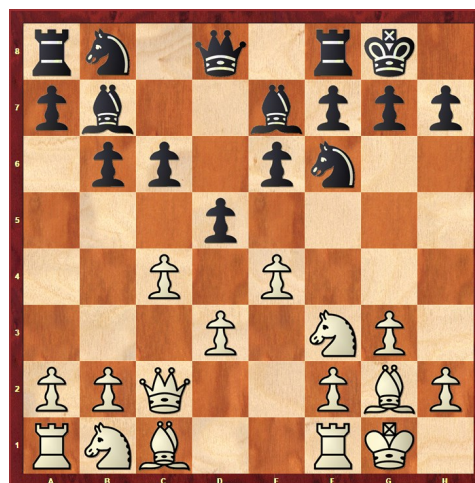
Game of the Quarter award winner

NM Y. Barnakov – NM Matthew Puckett
(2310) (2267)

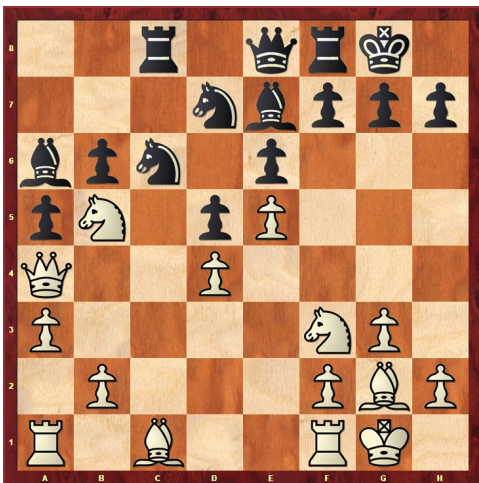
Alabama State Championship (Round 5),
September 1, 2019

1.c4 The 2019 Alabama State Championship was very nicely described by Scott Varagona in the fall issue of

Antics. Herein, I will touch on the moment of the tournament, which as I think led to the “game-changing game” situation. Before round 5, there were three players with a 3.5/4 score: NM Scott Varagona, NM Matthew Puckett and the very talented young Zachary Snow (1967). Michael Guthrie (1881) and Adam Steed (1764) from Nashville, TN and myself had 3/4 points. FM Todd Andrews from Nashville had unsuccessfully started by losing against Zachary in round 3. The pairing ended up with games between Scott and Zachary, Michael and Adam and me with the white pieces against Matthew. To increase my chances to win the tournament, I needed to win this game. The Trompowsky opening, which I employed in previous games, seemed to be a rather simple opening to play against an NM, so the English... 1...e6 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 d5 4.Nf3 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 After 6.d4 it will lead to the Catalan; 6.d3 doesn’t look good. 6.Qc2 c6 7.d3 Better would be 7.d4, since it will bring this to the closed Catalan. 7...b6 8.e4 Bb7

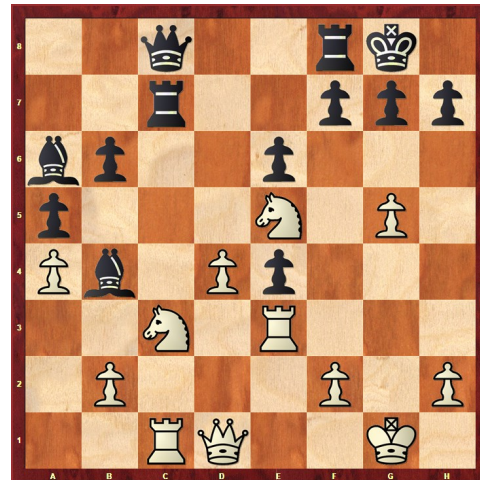


9.cxd5 A dubious decision; it would be better to keep tension with **9.Nc3**. **9...cxd5** **10.e5** **Nfd7** **11.d4** **Nc6** **12.a3** White underestimated black's play on the queen flank. **12...Rc8** **13.Nc3** **a5** An interesting move; the resource of **Ba6** and **Nb4** can give black good play, for instance, **14.Qe2** **Ndb8** **15.Rd1** **Ba6** **16.Qc2** **b5** with initiative. **14.Qa4?** The wrong plan; white cannot occupy the **b5** square. **14...Ba6** **15.Nb5** **Qe8!** Winning a pawn and possibly the game.



16.Re1 **Nxe5** **17.Nc3** I overlooked **Qe8** with **Nxe5** following. White's position is so bad, so it is no shame to resign at this moment. However, why not try to put up more resistance and check out the opponent's technique. :) (**17.Nxe5** **Nxe5** **18.dxe5** **Bxb5** with a completely winning position.) **17...Nd3** **18.Re3** **Nxc1** **19.Rxc1** **Nf6** **20.Qd1** **Rc7** Black's plan is quite obvious: to double the heavy pieces on the c-line and open it with **b5-b4** or **Bb4** once white plays **a4**. **21.Ne5** **Qc8** **22.a4** Good move, postponing black's attack. **22...Bb4**

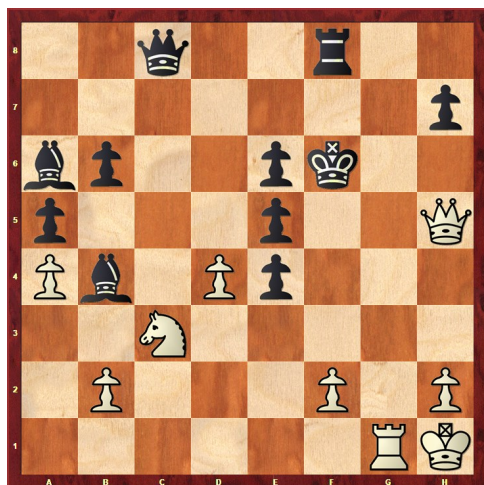
23.g4! The signal to attack! **23...Ne4** **24.Bxe4** **dxe4** **25.g5!**



It is amazing: just a few moves back, white was very hopeless, but now there appear to be some practical chances to save the game. The threat is **Qh5** and **Rh3**. **25...f6?** Careless... **26.gxf6** **gxf6?** **27.Rg3+** **Kh8** **28.Qh5!** Nice tactical shot! It is impossible to take the knight on **e5** for reasons such as **Qe5** mate; the threat is **Ng6** winning the exchange with a continuous attack. **28...Rg7** **29.Rxg7** **Kxg7** **30.Kh1!** Another good move; the threat is **Rg1+** and **Ng6**. **30...fxe5** **31.Rg1+** **Kf6**



The arrival of NM Yury Barnakov has been a "game-changer" for Alabama chess!
Photo by Antics Editor.



game was rather poor. So, what if I saw Qxh7?! The story could be different. :) ■

32.dxe5? Now it is time for white's mistakes!! As it can be seen, after Qxh7, white checkmates by force. [32.Qxh7 Bxc3 (32...Bb7 33.Rg6+ Kf5 34.Qh5+ Kf4 35.Qg4#; 32...e3 33.Ne4#; 32...exd4 33.Qg7+ Kf5 34.Qg5#) 33.Rg6+ Kf5 34.Qh5+ Kf4 35.Qg4#] **32...Ke7 33.Rg7+ Kd8 34.Qg5+** White has completely overlooked that the black king can move from d8 to e8 and there is no mate... so, draw. **34...Ke8 35.Qh5+ Kd8**
1/2-1/2

With this draw, Matthew reached 4/5. Scott and Zachary drew. Adam won over Michael. They joined Matthew, and it became unreachable for me to join the rest of the players. It became clear that the champion's title will be played off between these four players. The final 6th round: Scott won over Adam and Matthew won over Zachary. NMs Varagona and Puckett shared 1st place!

Regarding myself: after the dramatic game with Matthew, I was an "easy" opponent for Todd Andrews. The

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Tentative Tournaments

Important Note: Any tournaments listed here (or on the ACF website) are very tentative, and may be subject to change or cancellation due to coronavirus concerns. See www.alabamachess.org for updates on these and other events.

June 13	Evangel Online Blitz	Alabama Chess Club
July 11	Alabama Dual Chess Championship	Montgomery, AL

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To submit articles, pictures and games to the *Antics*, email the *Antics* editor at

Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com

Games in .pgn format are strongly preferred.

Please contact president@alabamachess.org if you are interested in helping with the Alabama Chess Federation.

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