

The Official Publication of the Alabama Chess Federation

Alabama Chess Antics

Fall 2022

Inside this issue:

The 69th Alabama State Championship: Play by Play

by Scott Varagona

State Championship 20 Crosstables

from uschess.org

Ilonze-Denton 2

Analysis by Tom Denton, Gerald Squires, Robert Foil, and Stockfish

Alabama Chess Hall of **26** Fame: Class of 2022

by Scott Varagona & Bill Melvin

National Chess Day '22 28

by various contributors

Fall Tournament Results

30

by various contributors



The 2022 Alabama State Chess Championship: Premier Section, Round 6.

(Photo from the ACF Facebook page.)

Page 2 **Alabama Chess Antics**

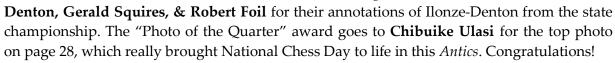
Greetings from the Editor

The Fall 2022 Alabama chess season has come to a close, so it's time for a new Antics.

Of course, in the fall, the Alabama State Championship always takes center stage, and this is reflected by the 22(!) pages of content about this tournament. This Antics contains my firsthand report on the action in the Premier Section as well as crosstables for all three sections, plus an extra annotated game (Ilonze-Denton) submitted by Tom Denton, Gerald Squires, and Robert Foil.

In addition, we have reports on the Alabama Chess Hall of Fame Class of 2022, Caesar Lawrence's National Chess Day scholastic event, and many other events from throughout the season.

The "Game of the Quarter" award for Fall 2022 goes to Tom

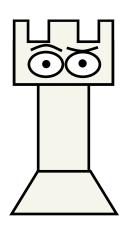


As announced at the ACF Business meeting in September, the winner of "Game of the Year" for Fall 2021-Summer 2022 is... Henry Hopson, annotator of DeCord-Hopson in the Winter 2022 Antics. (Yes, a player from outside the state won the ACF's contest. Alabama's own annotators had better step up their game!) "Photo of the Year" was won by Damien Bruni for his Spring 2022 cover photo. Congratulations, fellas. (By the way, new officers were elected at the ACF Business meeting during the state championship; see the updated list of officers on the last page of this *Antics* for more information.)

Finally, as always, the Antics is looking for content from ACF members like you. The deadline for submissions for the Winter 2023 issue is March 15. Please submit photos, games, and articles to the Antics via Alabama.Chess.Editor@gmail.com.

> -Scott Varagona November 29, 2022

P.S.: About that big controversy that's been going on in the chess world this year... You know the one. Yes, that one. The one you're sick and tired of hearing about. Good news: there is absolutely no mention of it whatsoever in this *Antics*. (You're welcome.)



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.

Alabama Chess Leaderboard

Top 50 Regular Ratings (retrieved from uschess.org on 11/25/2022)

1	IM STUART RACHELS	2605	26	XAVIER BRUNI	1934
2	MATTHEW PUCKETT	2282	27	MANH DUC DO JR.	1923
3	SCOTT VARAGONA	2281	28	CHRISTIAN FRIEDMAN	1887
4	YURY A BARNAKOV	2265	29	JEFF TOBIN	1881
5	KEVIN WANG	2206	30	BRIAN C WIGGIN	1862
6	BILL MELVIN	2203	31	MARK L LIATTI	1862
7	HENRY ROBINSON	2176	32	MICHAEL B GUTHRIE	1862
8	ZACHARY ISAAC SNOW II	2125	33	KENNETH W GOODMAN	1861
9	GORDON J RANDALL	2121	34	JOEL NICK FRIEDMAN	1840
10	STEPHEN J GRAVELING	2113	35	JOHN DAUGHERTY	1837
11	JOSEPH J JURJEVICH	2106	36	CAESAR W LAWRENCE	1821
12	CHIBUZO C ILONZE	2090	37	VICTOR LUNDY	1813
13	SHERWOOD DONG	2067	38	RANDY W COPE	1805
14	JONATHAN RASBERRY	2058	39	ROBERT LUBIN	1800
15	AARON DECORD	2047	40	SAMUEL G BASKARRAJ	1800
16	BRENT INMAN	2041	41	DANIEL J SIEGEL	1788
17	JOSIAH HEREFORD	2041	42	BIJAN KHALEGHI	1780
18	FARUK ESAT ERGIN	2024	43	RHODES PEELE	1777
19	THOMAS J DENTON	2023	44	VIKHRAM BALAGEE	1761
20	JEREMIAH F DONAHUE	2000	45	FREDERIC HOLWECK	1749
21	CHARLES L MEIDINGER	2000	46	YAN ZHU	1742
22	WILLIAM DANIEL FOX	1997	47	TOM W JOHNSTON	1738
23	MILES MELVIN	1980	48	SARVAGNA VELIDANDLA	1737
24	MICHAEL W PORCELLI	1975	49	SAMUEL JAY HUNT	1731
25	ASHISH ACHARYA	1975	50	ETHAN JOSIAH SMITH	1730

Page 4 Alabama Chess Antics

The 69th Alabama State Championship: Play by Play

by Scott Varagona

At last, Alabama's most prestigious tournament has made it through the dark days of the pandemic. On September 2-4, 2022, chess players from all over the state (and the whole Southeast) enjoyed an Alabama State Chess Championship with no COVID-19 restrictions in place. Ninety-seven players gathered in Troy to vie for the coveted state title in three sections: Premier, Reserve, and Amateur. The ACF, led by President Jonathan Rasberry, organized the tournament, and Chief TD Todd Guthrie ran things as smoothly as silk. By all accounts, this year's tournament was a smashing success.

I've played in so many state championships and not all of them really stand out, but this one certainly did. Various players commented on memorable this tournament would be: an exceptional amount of fighting spirit was on display, and there were many intense (and, in my case, *long*) battles. Not to mention, Troy University made for a very nice venue. The ACF is grateful to the Troy University Chess Club for their hospitality, and for making a beefed-up prize fund possible.

For me personally, of course I was thrilled to win the state title back



The Premier Championship plaque.

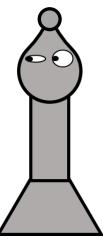
after being unable to play OTB much at all last year. However, what made me even happier was the quality and entertainment value of my games. Every game—even the one I lost—was fun to play and had interesting moments. I didn't realize how much I had missed the adrenaline rush of OTB competition during the pandemic until I finally got to play more regularly in 2022. How good it feels to be back!

Let's see how things unfolded round by round in the Premier Section.

ROUND 1 - THE BODYGUARD BISHOP

To my surprise, despite the big prize fund, no GMs or IMs from nearby states had shown up to try to run off with Alabama's money: I was the top seed. Therefore, in Round 1, I found myself on Board 1, playing Black in a Caro-Kann against Mark Liatti. Fun fact: I realized that the last time I played a Caro-Kann against Mark was

the final round of the 2002 Alabama State Championship, where I became a state co-champion for the first time. And that happened *twenty years ago*?! That just doesn't seem mathematically possible. Oh, the passage of time...



Mark Liatti - Scott Varagona (1898) (2273) Alabama State Ch. (Round 1) Troy, AL; 9-2-2022

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Nbd2 e6 7.Be2 Qb6 8.0–0 cxd4 9.cxd4 Nh6 10.Nb3 Nf5 11.Be3 Be7 12.h3 Nxe3 13.fxe3 Bh5



The game was just chugging along until 14.Nh4? appeared. When your opponent makes a strange move like that, it's worth taking extra time to see if "strange" equals "bad." 14...Bxe2 15.Qxe2 Bxh4 16.Qh5 This was White's idea: a double attack on f7 and h4 should allow him to win back the piece, and also retain some kingside pressure. However: 16...Nxe5! 17.dxe5 Qxe3+18.Kh1 Bf2!



Page 6 Alabama Chess Antics



Liatti-Varagona. (Photo by Gerald Squires.)

Most unusual: the bishop that was under attack uses its own body as a shield for the f7-pawn, and deep in enemy territory no less. After the game, Bill Melvin praised this whole combination (starting with ... Nxe5), but during the game it took me a long time to convince myself it was truly sound. 19.Rac1? This gives Black a free pass. I was much more afraid of 19.Rae1! Qxe1 20.Rxe1 Bxe1 21.Qe2!. Although Black won two rooks for the queen, after 21...Bh4 22.Qb5+ Kf8 23.Qxb7 Re8 24.Qxa7, should I really be smiling? Mark thought I would be able to "fianchetto my king" with ...g6 and ...Kg7 and I would be better. Nevertheless, in this line, my entire queenside has been obliterated, which gives me pause. 19...g6 Now Black consolidates and is simply ahead by two pawns. Stockfish found some hidden resources that White missed later in the game, but thankfully I kept control and eventually won on time. 20.Qg4 0-0 21.Rc2 h5 22.Qd1 Bh4 23.Nc5 Rac8 24.b4 b6 25.Re2 Qc3 26.Nd3 Rc4 27.Re3 Re4 28.Ref3 Qd4 29.Qd2 Rxe5 30.Nxe5 Qxd2 31.Nxg6 Rc8 32.Nxh4 Rc1 33.Rxf7 Rxf1+ 34.Rxf1 Kg7 35.a3 0-1

I got a little distracted—okay, very distracted—at one point during that game because of the pulsepounding action on the board beside me: Bill Melvin had misplayed a sharp double king pawn game against Jeff Byrd, and Jeff's attack on Bill's king was dangerously close to crashing through. However, in severe time pressure, **Jeff** missed the continuation and Bill managed to escape with a perpetual check. If I recall, Bill said the computer gave his opponent a double-digit evaluation edge at one point! Once again, Bill's reputation as an "escape artist" held true, although I'm sure he would have preferred to start the tournament with a win instead of a draw.

Most of the other rating favorites were able to win their Round 1 games, although Isaac Snow did encounter some difficulties on his way to defeating Joel Friedman. Upsets included Xavier Bruni holding NM Alexander Rutten of Georgia to a draw. Still, sometimes ill-fortune in the first round can turn into a successful "Swiss Gambit" later...

Round 2 – Trojan Horse

The games in Round 2 generally went as Mr. Elo would have predicted, with one notable exception: as White, defending champion Chibuzo Ilonze fell to Miles Melvin after a long and complicated struggle. Both of these players are uncompromising fighters but this time, when "diamond cut diamond," only Miles' diamond remained intact in the end. Although Black's center and queenside were in terrible distress, Miles just wouldn't give up on his kingside attack, and somehow it all paid off.

Meanwhile, I had my hands full once again on Board 1, this time facing five-time Alabama State Champion (and Alabama Chess Hall of Famer) Charles Meidinger. After trading various mistakes in a Classical Nimzo-Indian, we had reached one of my favorite things in chess: a bishopversus-knight battle.

Scott Varagona - Charles Meidinger (2273) (2009)

Alabama State Ch. (Round 2) Troy, AL; 9-3-2022

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 5.dxc5 0-0 6.a3 Bxc5 7.Nf3 b6 8.Bg5 Bb7 9.e3 h6 10.Bh4 Be7 11.Rd1 a6

12.Be2 d6 13.0-0 Nbd7 14.Rd2 Qc7 15.Rfd1 Rfd8 16.Bg3 Nc5 17.Rc1 Nce4 18.Rdd1 Nxc3 19.Qxc3 Ne4 20.Qc2 Nxg3 21.hxg3 Rac8 22.Qb1 Qc6 23.Bf1 Qa4 24.Bd3 d5 25.Bc2 Qe8 26.cxd5 Bxd5 27.Bh7+ Kh8 28.Be4 Rxc1 29.Rxc1 Qd7 30.Ne5 Qe8 31.Nc6 Bxe4 32.Qxe4 Rc8 33.Rc2 Bf6 34.b4 Qd7 35.f3 b5 36.Kh2 Kg8 37.Rc5 Kf8 38.Qc2 Re8 39.Qh7 g6 40.Qxh6+ Bg7 41.Qf4 Rc8 42.Qe4 Ke8 43.Qc2 Bf8 44.Ne5 Rxc5 45.bxc5 Qc7 46.c6 Bd6 47.Nd7 Bxg3+48.Kg1 Bd6



A knight with a support point on the 7th rank: you don't see that every day. They call a knight on the 6th rank an "octopus knight," so what is a knight on the 7th? In honor of our hosts at Troy, I'd call it a "Trojan Horse." Yes, technically a knight on the 6th rank controls more squares, but a knight on the 7th can be just as menacing—especially in tandem with

Page 8 Alabama Chess Antics

an attacking queen. **49.Qc3!** Now the threat of invasion on h8 convinces Charles to create new weaknesses. **49...e5 50.Nf6+ Kd8 51.Nd5**



It's clear which minor piece has the upper hand. 51...Qc8? Black's queen is too passive after this move, and now there is no hope. He had to try to stay at least a little bit active with the computer's 51...Qa7. 52.Qa5+ Ke8 53.Qb6 Bxa3 54.c7 Kd7 55.Qb8 1–0. Quite fittingly, the knight will decide the issue with Nb6+ or Nf6+. Knights rule!

Round 3 – The Bitter End

This round, I had the Black pieces against "El Presidente," the one and only Jonathan Rasberry. Jonathan played the Panov-Botvinnik Attack against my Caro-Kann, so an isolated pawn soon appeared on d4. After a lot of maneuvering and poking at the pawn, Black found the chance to flush White's king out to f2. White's kingside got looser and looser over the next few moves, and I soon broke through with a winning attack.

Jonathan Rasberry - Scott Varagona (2056) (2273)

Alabama State Ch. (Round 3) Troy, AL; 9-3-2022



These days, many of Alabama's elite competitors play all the way to the bitter end, seeking swindling chances until the last breath. **41.Qb4** White's attitude is, as they say in certain circles, "YOLO!" Thankfully, Black mates one move faster: **41...Re3**#

The tournament's other frontrunners finally appeared by the end of Round 3. As White, Isaac Snow managed to outplay Aaron DeCord in a hair-raising bishop-and-passed-pawns vs. rook-and-pawns ending, and thus moved up to 3-0. Also with 3-0 was Roy Weaver of Georgia, who had just defeated Tom Denton. NM Alex Rutten was right behind the leading pack with 2.5 points.

Round 4 – Darn Whippersnappers

Well, it turned out that the two Alabama residents with perfect scores thus far—Isaac Snow and myself—had been on a collision course, fated to meet in Round 4.

I won't beat around the bush: Isaac has become a pain in the neck for me at the chessboard. Sure, I defeated him convincingly the first time we played, but that was way back in 2018. After that, I kept getting one annoying draw after another, usually after squandering a better—or completely winning—position. Then disaster struck at the Falcon Chess Invitational in 2022, when Isaac played into one of my favorite lines of the Classical Nimzo-Indian... and I blundered my queen. Let's just say: after that, I was mighty eager to see how our next classical game would go.



Isaac Snow, co-winner of the 2022 Queen of Hearts, became a serious contender for the state title this year. (Photo by Caesar Lawrence at the 2022 Queen of Hearts.)

For me, this was the game of the tournament. It was a clash of chess philosophies with lots tense moments, missed chances, and a grand finale I'll never forget. I'll show all the highlights from the beginning to the with minimal computer end. interference in the annotations; the real key to appreciating this game is the human element.

> Scott Varagona - Isaac Snow (2273) (2127) Alabama State Ch. (Round 4) Troy, AL; 9-3-2022

1.d4 e6 2.c4 b6

The first surprise: I had never seen Isaac stray from his favorite Nimzo-Indian starting with 2...Nf6. It seemed I should not give him a second chance to get the bishop to b4.

3.a3! Bb7 4.Nc3 Nf6 5.Bg5 h6 6.Bh4 Be7

Page 10 Alabama Chess Antics

7.Qc2 c5 8.dxc5 bxc5 9.e3 0–0 10.Nf3 d5 11.cxd5 Nxd5?!



When I played 11.cxd5, I was expecting the immediate 11...exd5, with chances for both sides in a hanging pawn position. In my eyes, that was just automatic. However, instead of recapturing instantly, Isaac stared at the position for a good long while. I began to wonder: is he *really* considering taking with a piece? And then came 11...Nxd5.

I found myself staring into Isaac's face, and at the knight on d5, and thinking: "Why would you do that? Why?" Maybe Black is getting some vague compensation in terms of "piece activity" or other nonsense like that, but seriously, folks: for no concrete gain, he just compromised his pawn structure, saddling himself with two isolated queenside pawns,

probably forever. And it wasn't forced at all; he voluntarily chose to do it. Isaac, my dude: *why* would you do that?!

Despite the great respect I have for Mr. Snow's abilities, I guess he and I see the game of chess quite differently. It was time to teach this darn whippersnapper a lesson about positional play!

12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Be2 Nd7 14.0-0 N7b6 15.Rac1 Rac8 16.Rfd1 f5

Aggressive, but also very committal. Now White can plan to play e3-e4 sometime soon, giving Black even more weaknesses.

17.Nd2 Kh8 18.Bf3 e5 19.e4?!



I soon felt that, with this move, I'd goofed. If I had anticipated Isaac's

next move, I would have probably played 19.Nxd5 before going for e3-e4, and then I still much prefer White. Trading minor pieces when your opponent has isolated pawns on open files can be a good thing to do, in theory. The pawn weaknesses become accentuated in the late game, when they can be attacked by rooks and queens but can no longer be defended by knights or bishops.

19...Nb4!

Very opportunistic. Here, I didn't like the look of 20.axb4 cxb4 followed by ...bxc3, which will allow Black to solve the problem of his weak c-pawn. But instead...

20.Qb1 Nc6

...Black's knight gets rerouted to d4, and his compensation in the form of dynamic piece play is starting to seem a lot more real.

21.exf5 Nd4 22.Bxb7 Qxb7 23.Re1 Rxf5 24.Nce4 Qd5 25.Ng3 Rf4 26.Nde4 c4 27.f3



After a lot of maneuvering, White has solidified an outpost on e4 and has some potential for good play on the light squares. That stupid knight on d4 is a real fly in the ointment, though. I suddenly got a lucky break:

27...Na4? 28.Nc3! Nxc3 29.bxc3!

"The turns have tabled," as I like to say. Despite my rant about pawn weaknesses earlier, I'm more than happy to split my queenside pawns if it means evicting the knight from d4. White soon takes the initiative, thanks to the open d-file.

29...Nb3 30.Rcd1 Qe6 31.Ne4 Rff8 32.Rd6 Qe7 33.Qd1 Rfd8 34.Qd5 Rxd6 35.Nxd6 Rc5

Page 12 Alabama Chess Antics



36.Qa8+! Kh7 37.Qe4+ Kg8 38.Nxc4 Qc7 39.Nxe5 Rxc3 40.Ng6



Yes, Isaac is in big trouble—but, according to the computer, it's only after Black's next move that the wheels really come off:

40...Qc5+?? 41.Kh1 Rc1



my clock kept ticking mercilessly, I stared at this position and then froze. My intention had been to play 42.Qe8+ Kh7 43.Nf8+ Kg8 44.Nd7+, winning the queen. However, to my shock, I realized Black can play 43...Qxf8! and it's all ruined, thanks to Isaac's back rank mate threat. (This was the reason he threw in ...Qc5+ before playing ...Rc1.) Since I could not get this line to work, I reluctantly abandoned it and played 42.h4? instead.

This was a bad case of attacker's tunnel vision. If only I had found the line Isaac mentioned in his chess.com* annotations, namely, 42.Ne7+! Kf8 (or 42...Kh8 43.Qa8+ and White either mates or wins material) 43.Qa8+ Kf7 44.Qg8+ Kf6 45.Qe6+, with mate soon. Then again, if I had found this simple route to victory, the end of this game would not have been so memorable...

^{*} https://www.chess.com/blog/Lightning/journey-to-nm-alabama-state-championship

42.h4? Rxe1+ 43.Qxe1 Qc1! 44.Qxc1 Nxc1

Now I'm up by only one pawn in a knight endgame; it's probably just a draw. Still, knights are sneaky pieces. Maybe I could trick him in our mutual time pressure—assuming I don't accidentally trick myself.

45.Ne7+ Kf7 46.Nc6 a6 47.Nb4 a5 48.Nc6 a4 49.Ne5+ Ke6 50.Nc4



I had hope: although Black's king is very active, Isaac would lose the a-pawn to a knight fork if he goes 50...Kd5. His own knight is on the worst possible square if he wants to counterattack White's a-pawn.

50...Nd3 51.g4?

Uh-oh. "There are no heroes in time trouble," said Viktor Korchnoi. I

wanted to activate my king, but not like this!

51...g5?!

Best is 51...Ne1! and the computer shows all zeros. We were both down to just a handful of minutes; I think over these next few moves we were both panicking.

52.hxg5 hxg5 53.Kh2 Ne1 54.Kg3 Nc2



Here, amid the frenzy, inspiration suddenly hit me. There was a trap that seemed like my only practical chance to win, and I went for it:

55.Kf2 Kd5 56.Ne3+!? Nxe3 57.Kxe3 Kc4??

Black takes the bait! At first, we seem to be heading for a "queen versus

Page 14 Alabama Chess Antics

a-pawn" ending that should be drawn, e.g., 58.f4 gxf4+ 59.Kxf4 Kb3 60.g5 Kxa3 61.g6 Kb2 62.g7 a3 63.g8Q a2 64.Qb8+ Ka1!, when Black threatens stalemate and White can't make progress. However, partway through this line, White has a stunning resource—like of something out an endgame composition. When I noticed it back on move 55, I almost couldn't believe my eyes.

The real joke is, in my zeal for this beautiful trap, I failed to realize that the computer's simple 57...Ke5! gives Black an easy draw. Ignorance is bliss.



58.f4 gxf4+ 59.Kf3!! Kb3 60.g5 Kxa3 61.g6 Kb2 62.g7 a3 63.g8Q a2 64.Qb8+ Ka1



65.Ke4!

Isaac's jaw dropped. He then made such a funny face at me that I could not help but start laughing. It was just one of those surreal state championship moments that you'd never forget.

65...f3 66.Kd3 f2 67.Kc2 f1Q 68.Qb2# 1–0



As Isaac said, in the final position, "The important thing is that I'm up material." To lose such a critical game is hard to take—I've lost many such games in painful fashion myself—but, to his credit, Isaac took it in stride and with good humor. Especially considering this unbelievable Kf3 idea: "I can't even be mad about losing that," he said. I must admit, Isaac has improved a lot over the last several years and he plays with real heart. It took everything I had to beat him.

So, after yet another four-hour struggle, I found myself in the sole lead with 4 points. I was so consumed by my game with Isaac that I barely watched anything that happened on the other boards in Round 4. As it turned out, Alex Rutten had reached second place with 3.5 points after defeating his fellow Georgian, Roy Weaver. Meanwhile, Ionathan Rasberry, Brent Inman, and Tom Denton had bounced back from earlier losses to reach 3 points each and stay in the fight for the title. Particularly noteworthy was the way Tom Denton defeated Chibuzo Ilonze, knocking the defending champion out of contention in a real barnburner of a game (see page 23).

Round 5 – Darn Whippersnappers, <u>Part Deux</u>

On Sunday morning, it was my turn to face the most threatening "invader" from outside the state, namely, Georgia's NM Alex Rutten. I had (barely) beaten Alex once before, but that was back in 2018 when he was not yet a master; now, he had grown into a much more serious player. Well, after being so fortunate in the previous rounds, my luck finally ran out in Round 5. Alex gradually outplayed me in my favorite 3...Na6!? sideline of the Caro-Kann Advance Variation. The remarkable thing was, near the very end of the game, I felt sure I was absolutely winning. Turns out: computer analysis confirmed I was dead lost.



Page 16 Alabama Chess Antics

Alexander Rutten - Scott Varagona (2235) (2273)

Alabama State Ch. (Round 5) Troy, AL; 9-4-2022

We join the game right after I had played 36...Bc4. White must be careful, since right now I am threatening ...Ra1+! followed by ...Ba2 mate. 37.f4! He stops the threat. I didn't have any better ideas than simply taking the pawn. Then there was a long forcing line that seemed to be great for me: 37...Bxf4 38.Rh7+ Ke8 39.Bg6+ Kd8 40.Nxe6+ Kc8 41.Rc7+ Kb8 I'd seen this far and predicted his next move: 42.Rxc4 dxc4



I thought I was just up an exchange and soon I could take on either b3 or e5, with a big advantage. A shock awaited me. **43.Be4!!** Unbelievable—this retreat, which was *impossible* for me



Rutten-Varagona, Round 5. (Photo by Jonathan Rasberry.)

to predict on my way to this position, just wins for White. The threat of Rd8+ followed by Rxa8 mate, as well as Nxf4, is all just too much. 43...Ne7 44.Rd8+ Nc8 45.Bxa8 Bxe5 46.Bd5 cxb3 47.Bxb3 b5 48.Nc5 Rh6 49.Be6 Soon, Black resigned (1–0).

Alex admitted after the game that he had been lucky that this Be4 idea was there; he only found it when move 43 had arrived. But he found it. I was astounded by how much he'd improved in four years' time. There is no telling how far this kid can go if he keeps on playing. I bet he'd be able to hit 2300, at least.

For my part, this game was yet another four-hour marathon that left me completely drained, but sadly I was still stuck at 4 points. Isaac Snow had caught up to me by defeating Jonathan

Rasberry (in yet another blow to the Caro-Kann's pride). Brent Inman and Tom Denton, who had just drawn a monstrously tense queen-and-bishop vs. queen-and-rook battle, were still in the mix with 3.5 points each. With one round to go, the state title remained up for grabs.

Round 6 – If Carlsen Were Here

At last, the final round had arrived. Having been booted off the top board by that troublemaker Alex Rutten, I found myself with White against Roy Weaver on Board 2. Meanwhile, Isaac Snow, who had Black against Alex Rutten on Board 1, still had everything to hope for. If Isaac won his game, he would be assured of a state co-championship, at the very least...

As it turned out, the final round lost much of its drama early on: Isaac got outplayed in a closed position resulting from a French Defense, and he quickly resigned. That took a lot of pressure off me, yet my own game was far from over: on Board 2, I was still duking it out with Roy Weaver in a sharp Benoni. I eventually reached an endgame with a sizable advantage—but then an interesting psychological moment arose.

Scott Varagona - Roy Weaver (2273) (2084)

Alabama State Ch. (Round 6) Troy, AL; 9-4-2022



White's connected passed pawns in the center look fantastic, whereas Black's queenside majority is stymied. However, right now Black is threatening ...Rf3+.

29.Ke2 Re8 30.Kd3 Rf8 31.Ke2 Re8

Ah, so my opponent would be willing to allow a draw by repetition. If I took the draw, I would get at least a state co-championship. I thought for a long while about this.

Several rounds back, Tom Denton had asked me to impart some chess masterly wisdom to him. I said: "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush." Don't try to go for glory unnecessarily; if all you need to achieve Page 18 Alabama Chess Antics

your goals is a draw, and a draw is right in front of you, then grab that However, looking position, I suddenly felt driven to go against my own advice! After all, it was the principle of the thing: I believed that White was completely winning. If Carlsen were here, he would have played on. Not to mention, a few boards away, William Wu was likely to win and reach 4.5 points; if I drew my game, I would tie him with 4.5 points, and I really didn't want to share the state title when I had a chance to win it outright. So, after arguing with myself for a bit, I broke out of the repetition:

32.Kf3 Rf8+ 33.Kg2 Re8 34.Re1 Ne5??



Trading down into a rook-andpawn ending leaves Black dead lost. Lucky me: in this case, continuing the game paid off right away.

35.Bxe5 Bxe5 36.Nxe5 Rxe5 37.Kf3 Re8 38.e5 Kf7 39.Ke4 Ke7 40.Rf1 Rf8 41.d6+ 1-0

There's an embarrassing postscript to this game. Bill Melvin, Tom Denton, and Gerald Squires congratulated me on winning, and I explained to them my reasons for avoiding the draw. Then somebody politely informed me that William Wu was from Florida, and therefore wasn't eligible for the Alabama state title in the first place. Oops! Maybe I should take a closer look at the ol' crosstable once in a while... Seriously, I wonder: if I'd known that a draw was enough to win the title outright, would I have chickened out and drawn that instant? Or would I still have channeled my inner Carlsen and continued the game? I guess I'll never know...

Now that I'd won that game, I reached 5/6 and could no longer be caught by any other Alabama resident, so I became the 69th Alabama State Champion. I couldn't believe how well my tournament had gone, especially considering I had no chance to prepare much this year, and I had to face some opponents I've had grave difficulties defeating in the past. Could it be that the chess gods had smiled on me yet again? Eventually I bet they will stop

being so kind to me, but for now, I will just be grateful and enjoy the moment...

Alex Rutten had reached the impressive score of 5.5/6 and took the \$750 first prize (but of course, since Alex was from Georgia, he could not become Alabama State Champion). who ended Other players tournament on a positive note include William Wu of Florida, who got clear third place with 4.5/6 by defeating Brent Inman in the final round, and Bill Melvin, who overcame Tom Denton to finish with a very respectable 4 points. (Despite getting into one lost position after another, Bill had somehow scraped by with 2 wins, 4 draws, and not even a single loss. How does he do it?!) Remarkably, there were four Alabama players who finished with 4 points—Bill Melvin, Isaac Snow. Ionathan Rasberry, and Samuel Baskarraj-which meant that if I had lost my final game, there would have been a record-setting five-way tie for the state co-championship. A few players were disappointed that I hadn't allowed this to happen. "Why didn't you lose?" said Jonathan Rasberry. Sorry, fellas...

* *

One last thing: I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the winners of the other two sections. The Reserve Championship title was won by Manh Duc Do Jr., an unrated player who achieved a commanding 6/6 score. (It looks like someone's about to be ready to move up to the Premier section...) The Amateur Championship title was won by Mason Williams with 5.5/6. Congratulations to these two players, and congratulations to all the prizewinners across all three sections. (See the next few pages for crosstable information from uschess.org.)

Such a great tournament, and such a great chess community to be part of! What more can I say? ■







Alabama State Champions of the Premier, Amateur, and Reserve sections, with Chief TD Todd Guthrie. (Photos by Jonathan Rasberry.)

2022 ALABAMA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

PREMIER SECTION

		1 -	<u> </u>	<u> </u>		1 -	
Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Total
1 Alexander Rutten (GA)	D 13	W 16	W 15	W 6	W 2	W 5	5.5
2 Scott Varagona	W 27	W 14	W 7	W 5	L 1	W 6	5
3 William Wu (FL)	L 23	W 9	W 28	D 4	W 16	W 10	4.5
4 Bill Melvin	D 16	D 29	W 13	D 3	D 8	W 11	4
5 Isaac Snow	W 17	W 26	W 20	L 2	W 7	L 1	4
6 Roy Weaver (GA)	W 33	W 12	W 11	L 1	W 19	L 2	4
7 Jonathan Rasberry	W 9	W 21	L 2	W 12	L 5	В	4
8 Chris Chambers (GA)	Н	L 13	W 24	W 22	D 4	W 19	4
9 Samuel Baskarraj	L 7	L 3	В	W 31	W 26	W 14	4
10 Brent Inman	L 21	W 32	W 29	W 15	D 11	L 3	3.5
11 Thomas Denton	W 19	W 23	L 6	W 25	D 10	L 4	3.5
12 Gerald Squires (GA)	В	L 6	W 31	L 7	D 20	W 22	3.5
13 Xavier Bruni	D 1	W 8	L 4	D 26	W 15	D 16	3.5
14 Charles Meidinger	W 31	L 2	L 22	W 29	W 17	L 9	3
15 Miles Melvin	W 24	W 25	L 1	L 10	L 13	W 21	3
16 Jeffrey Byrd	D 4	L 1	W 32	W 23	L 3	D 13	3
17 Joel Nick Friedman	L 5	L 19	W 33	W 30	L 14	W 27	3
18 Victor Lundy	L 25	L 31	D 27	W 24	D 22	W 29	3
19 Ethan Josiah Smith	L 11	W 17	W 21	W 20	L 6	L8	3
20 Aaron DeCord	W 28	W 30	L 5	L 19	D 12	U	2.5
21 Anmay Chaudhury (GA)	W 10	L 7	L 19	D 28	W 23	L 15	2.5
22 Cody Smith	L 26	W 33	W 14	L8	D 18	L 12	2.5
23 Shawn Choi	W 3	L 11	D 26	L 16	L 21	W 32	2.5
24 William Savoie	L 15	В	L8	L 18	W 32	D 30	2.5
25 Chibuzo Ilonze	W 18	L 15	W 30	L 11	U	U	2
26 Jeremiah Donahue	W 22	L 5	D 23	D 13	L 9	U	2
27 Mark Liatti	L 2	L 28	D 18	W 32	Н	L 17	2
28 Karthikeyan Jayapriya (GA)	L 20	W 27	L 3	D 21	D 30	U	2
29 Saikarunya Kesireddy	Н	D 4	L 10	L 14	W 31	L 18	2
30 Steven Pan	В	L 20	L 25	L 17	D 28	D 24	2
31 Jacob Sperber (FL)	L 14	W 18	L 12	L 9	L 29	В	2
32 Valerie Hodgson	Н	L 10	L 16	L 27	L 24	L 23	0.5
33 Yan Zhu	L 6	L 22	L 17	U	U	U	0

2022 Alabama State Championship

RESERVE SECTION

Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Total
1 Manh Duc Do Jr.	W 26	W 4	W 16	W 7	W 8	W 6	6
2 Siddharth Santosh (GA)	Н	D 21	W 5	W 16	D 7	W 4	4.5
3 Winston Wu (FL)	L 12	W 27	D 23	W 19	D 13	W 8	4
4 Hartwell Forstman	W 28	L 1	W 14	W 12	W 10	L 2	4
5 Edward Xiao	L 20	W 9	L 2	W 21	W 23	W 12	4
6 Saharsh Santosh (GA)	Н	W 25	L 7	W 20	W 11	L 1	3.5
7 Doug Strout	Н	W 19	W 6	L 1	D 2	D 10	3.5
8 Blake Owen Fowler (FL)	D 25	W 24	W 20	W 13	L 1	L 3	3.5
9 Joseph Crump II (FL)	L 17	L 5	W 26	W 22	D 16	W 13	3.5
10 Roger Ruiz	D 16	D 14	W 21	W 23	L 4	D 7	3.5
11 Alexander Allison (LA)	Н	L 18	W 25	W 17	L 6	W 19	3.5
12 Sean Franklin Brown (PA)	W 3	D 13	D 18	L 4	W 14	L 5	3
13 Atindrah Harishankar	W 27	D 12	W 17	L 8	D 3	L 9	3
14 Kristian Jordan	Н	D 10	L 4	W 15	L 12	W 22	3
15 Jason Zhang (TN)	В	L 16	D 22	L 14	D 17	W 23	3
16 John Kirk Laning Jr. (FL)	D 10	W 15	L 1	L 2	D 9	D 17	2.5
17 Muhammad Amin (FL)	W 9	D 20	L 13	L 11	D 15	D 16	2.5
18 Shannon Baker	D 23	W 11	D 12	Н	U	U	2.5
19 Raymond Zeyuan Tu (GA)	D 22	L 7	W 24	L 3	W 20	L 11	2.5
20 William D Owens III (FL)	W 5	D 17	L 8	L 6	L 19	W 26	2.5
21 Charles Bankston	Н	D 2	L 10	L 5	W 27	U	2
22 Aaditya Saxena	D 19	L 23	D 15	L 9	W 24	L 14	2
23 Jasmaan Banipal (MS)	D 18	W 22	D 3	L 10	L 5	L 15	2
24 Andrew Yang	Н	L 8	L 19	D 26	L 22	W 27	2
25 Daniel Benji Yang (FL)	D 8	L 6	L 11	D 27	L 26	В	2
26 Jill Zabrina Rennie (GA)	L 1	L 28	L 9	D 24	W 25	L 20	1.5
27 Justin Sly	L 13	L 3	В	D 25	L 21	L 24	1.5
28 John Lewis	L 4	W 26	U	U	U	U	1

2022 ALABAMA STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

AMATEUR SECTION

		T	T	1			
Player	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Total
1 Mason L Williams	W 20	W 18	W 3	W 12	W 4	D 2	5.5
2 Ashish Vyas	W 36	D 6	W 23	W 14	W 11	D 1	5
3 Jimmy Bedsole	W 30	W 17	L 1	D 15	W 13	W 5	4.5
4 Cooper Chambers (GA)	Н	W 13	W 33	W 7	L 1	W 15	4.5
5 Esteban C Jerez	L 9	W 35	W 22	W 17	W 12	L 3	4
6 Jacob New	W 31	D 2	L 7	W 33	D 14	W 17	4
7 Sarah E Peter	W 19	W 15	W 6	L 4	D 10	D 11	4
8 Jaiden Trawick	W 28	L 12	W 9	L 10	W 20	W 22	4
9 Aidan Saldanha	W 5	L 11	L 8	W 35	W 18	W 10	4
10 Golden Z Reeves	L 18	W 20	W 30	W 8	D 7	L 9	3.5
11 Sophia Lin Jerez	W 35	W 9	L 12	W 18	L 2	D 7	3.5
12 Sammi J Alsaleh	W 29	W 8	W 11	L1	L 5	D 14	3.5
13 Sahana Santosh (GA)	Н	L 4	W 26	W 21	L3	W 25	3.5
14 M. Adedoyin	Н	W 26	W 21	L 2	D 6	D 12	3.5
15 Martin M Poynter	W 24	L 7	W 29	D 3	W 25	L 4	3.5
16 Fouad Hujier	Н	L 23	W 34	L 25	W 33	W 24	3.5
17 Tyler Ebert	W 27	L3	W 31	L 5	W 29	L 6	3
18 Ryan Zhu Wu	W 10	L 1	W 19	L 11	L 9	W 31	3
19 William G Patrick	L 7	W 24	L 18	L 20	W 35	W 29	3
20 Shruti Agnihotri	L 1	L 10	W 27	W 19	L 8	W 32	3
21 Kaamil Meghani	Н	W 32	L 14	L 13	W 34	D 23	3
22 Ethan J Arpad (GA)	Н	W 25	L 5	W 23	D 24	L 8	3
23 Christina Yang	Н	W 16	L 2	L 22	W 32	D 21	3
24 Harisankar Sivakumaran	L 15	L 19	W 36	W 30	D 22	L 16	2.5
25 Benjamin Lindmark	Н	L 22	W 32	W 16	L 15	L 13	2.5
26 Aritra Biswas	Н	L 14	L 13	L 32	W 30	W 34	2.5
27 Garry Williams	L 17	L 30	L 20	Н	D 28	W 33	2
28 Alberto Arteta	L8	F	Н	U	D 27	W 35	2
29 Leon Zeng	L 12	Χ	L 15	W 31	L 17	L 19	2
30 Aashka Vyas	L3	W 27	L 10	L 24	L 26	В	2
31 Margaret A Lin	L 6	W 36	L 17	L 29	В	L 18	2
32 Ved Raval	В	L 21	L 25	W 26	L 23	L 20	2
33 Abhinav A Parupalli	Н	W 34	L 4	L 6	L 16	L 27	1.5
34 Arion Biswas	Н	L 33	L 16	В	L 21	L 26	1.5
35 Varun Raval	L 11	L 5	В	L 9	L 19	L 28	1
36 Randall Tew	L 2	L 31	L 24	U	U	U	0

Ilonze-Denton

Analysis by Tom Denton, Gerald Squires, Robert Foil, and Stockfish

GAME OF THE QUARTER:

Chibuzo Ilonze – Tom Denton (2112) (2016)

Alabama State Ch. (Round 4) Troy, AL; 9-3-2022

In this game, I played against the defending champion – 5 wins and no losses last year. Chibuzo is a genuinely nice guy and dressed for success. I had just lost to an expert from Georgia and was expecting an easier pairing. Oh well, they say life is not fair. I tried to make the most of the opportunity in any case. 1.d4 b6 This move surprised my opponent and he took five minutes to reply. That gave me a confidence boost. 2.e4 Bb7 3.Nc3 **e6 4.f3** I haven't played against this move, so I took my time here. I could play Qh4+ to weaken White's kingside. White is forced to play g3 and Black retreats to d8. I decided against it. 4...Bb4 5.Nge2 d5 6.exd5 After white's capture, I can recapture three ways. Taking with the pawn locks my b7 bishop in. Taking with the queen gives up a tempo after a3 Bxc3, Nxc3. Taking with the bishop maintains the options for it and offers interesting future choices. 6...Bxd5 7.Bf4 Nf6 8.Qd2



I see that White is leaning to the queenside for castling, but I am not upset with that. I decided to limit him to that side with my next move. 8...Bc4!? 9.a3 White wisely avoids this backfiring piece trap: 9.0-0-0 Bxa2 10. b3 Ba3#. 9...Bxc3?! My computer friend, Stockfish 14, wanted Be7, but I continued with my plan. 10.Nxc3 I was concerned about the capture 10.Qxc3, but White cannot safely take c7 in the following variation: 10...Bxe2 11.Bxc7 Qc8 12.Bxe2 Nd5 13.Bb5+ Nd7 14.Bxd7+ Oxd7 – Stockfish. 10...Bxf1 11.Rxf1 0-0 **12.0–0–0** Here we are with kings on opposite sides. I like this type of game since it usually calls for an attack. 12...Nd5 I offered a trade here and that is unusual for me. If he accepts, though, we will have B vs N with seven pawns.

Page 24 Alabama Chess Antics

I choose the knight in this scenario. 13.Bg5 Qd7 14.Ne4?! He declines the trade. Now, I was getting concerned about White playing c4, making my knight retreat, and then sacrificing his knight on f6 to expose my king. 14...f6 15.Bh4 Nc6! 16.c4? When I played 15...Nc6, I saw that c4 was not good. I was so excited when he played it that I played Na5 immediately. (Better was 16.Rfe1 Qf7 17.Qe2 Rad8 18.Bf2 h6 19.Kb1 Rd7 20.Ng3 Nd8 21.Qb5 Nb7 22.Ne4 Rfd8 – Stockfish.) 16...Na5



This leaves the attacked knight on d5 but threatens to fork the king and queen on b3. 17.Qd3 Nf4?! Better was 17...Qc6 18.c5 b5 19.Nc3 Rab8 20.Be1 Nf4 21.Qe4 Qxe4 22.Nxe4 Nc6 23.Bg3 Ne2+ 24.Kb1 – Stockfish. 18.Qc2 Qc6? Mistake. Better was 18...f5 19.Ng5 (19.Nf2 e5 20.dxe5 Qc6 21.Kb1 Qxc4 22.Qxc4+ Nxc4 23.Bg5 Ne6 24.Bc1) 19...h6 20.Nh3 Nxh3 21.gxh3 b5 22.cxb5 Qxb5 23.Rfe1 Nc4 24.Rxe6 Rfe8

25.Rxe8+ (Stockfish). **19.Bg3 Nh5 20.b3?!** Better was 20.Be1 Nxc4 21.b3 Na5 22.Bxa5 Qxc2+ 23.Kxc2 bxa5 24.g3 Rad8 25.Rd2 Rfe8 26.Re1 Rd5 – Stockfish. **20...Nxg3 21.hxg3 f5!** Setting up the next move.



22.Nc3 Qd6 A long range double attack on g3 and a3. 23.Kb2 Qxg3 24.Qe2?! Inaccuracy. White does however put pressure on e6. Better is 24.Rfe1 Rae8 25.Re2 h6 26.Rde1 Rd8 27.d5 exd5 28.Nxd5 Nc6 29.Qc3 Rf7 30.f4 Qg6 -Stockfish. 24...Rae8 25.f4 c5? Mistake. 25...Re7 26.Rf3 Qg4 27.Re3 Qxe2+ 28.Nxe2 Nb7 29.b4 Rd8 30.Kb3 c5 31.Rdd3 cxd4 32.Rxd4 OR 25...Qg4 26.Qxg4 fxg4 27.g3 c5 28.Ne2. **26.Rf3** Qg4 27.dxc5 bxc5 28.Ka2?! Inaccuracy. White was concerned about the threats on b3 and c4 that come about if Black plays Rb8. 28...Nc6 Finally getting my knight back to the center.



29.Qf2 Nd4 30.Rg3 Qh5 Not Qh4, because white has Rxg7+ winning the queen. 31.Rg5?? Blunder. Rh3 was best. 31...Qf7 32.Na4?! Inaccuracy. 32.Ne2 was best. 32...Nxe2 33.Qxe2 Qc7 34.Qf2 Rd8 35.Re1 Rd6 36.Re2 Rfd8 37.Qe3 g6 38.a4 Qa5. 32...h6?? Blunder. e5 was best – opening the e-file immediately. 32...e5 33.Nxc5 h6 34.fxe5 Rxe5 35.Qxd4 Re2+ 36.Rd2 Rxd2+ 37.Qxd2 hxg5 38.Qxg5 Qf6 39.Qe3 – Stockfish. 33.Rg3 e5 34.fxe5 Rxe5 35.Re3 Rxe3 36.Qxe3 Re8



37.Qd3 Re2+ 38.Rd2 Rxd2+ 39.Qxd2 Qe7 Holding the c-pawn and controlling the e-file. 40.b4 Qe6 Attacking the unprotected c-pawn. 41.Qd3 Qc6 Another long-range double attack. 42.Nxc5 Qxg2+ 43.Kb1 Qg1+ 44.Kb2 Qf2+ 45.Kb1



Here I did not see any way to checkmate or win material directly. On the good side, my king is almost unapproachable and White's king is out in the open. My queen, knight, and f5 pawn make up an unusual fortress for my king. So, I pushed. 45...h5 46.Nd7 Stockfish prefers Nb3, trying to trade knights and going to a Q&P ending. 46...h4 47.c5 h3 and White resigns (0−1). If White plays Qxh3, I reply Qc2+, Ka1 Nb3+ winning the queen. If White doesn't take the h3 pawn, I will promote. ■

Page 26 Alabama Chess Antics

Alabama Chess Hall of Fame: Class of 2022

by Scott Varagona & Bill Melvin

Milan Momic was the most dominant player in Alabama during the 1960s and early 1970s. He is known as Alabama's first National Master. After immigrating from Yugoslavia to the United States and finally settling in Alabama in the early 1960s, Momic took the Southeastern chess scene by storm. He won the Alabama State Championship three times, including back-to-back wins with perfect scores in 1962 and 1963, and he won the Tennessee Open several times. With a peak rating in the 2300s, he stood head and shoulders above every other player in Alabama—and, when playing in high-profile tournaments, he could go toe-to-toe with grandmasters. (In his most famous game, Momic even defeated GM Walter Browne with a sacrificial attack.) brilliant Momic retired from chess in 1975 after a accident impacted workplace playing ability, and he passed away in 1997. However, his achievements are still remembered and celebrated by Alabama's chess players today.

Kyle Therrell is a five-time Alabama State Champion and a Birmingham chess legend of the 1980s and 1990s. He became state champion or co-champion



The Class of 2022 Hall of Fame plaques for Milan Momic and Kyle Therrell. (Photo by Antics Editor.)

in 1981, 1982, 1987, 1992, and 1995. He also won several Oueen of Hearts other tournaments and notable tournaments in Alabama before he retired in the early 2000s. Kyle will be remembered as being a key mentor of the great Stuart Rachels. He will also be remembered for winning more Birmingham City Championships than anyone else in recorded history. (Records of some tournaments have been lost, but I estimate that he won the city title about ten times.) His style was steady and solid, and at his best, his opening knowledge was practically impeccable.

Bill Melvin of Huntsville, Alabama, is (so far) an eight-time Alabama State Champion. He is a National Master, an Original Life Master, a Norm-Based Life Master, and an all-around

Alabama chess legend. With a fiery excelled irrational style that in positions and showed great resourcefulness in difficult situations. Bill became Alabama's most dominant player of the 1990s. He won five state championship titles between 1990 and 1998 as well as numerous other tournaments. In the new millennium, he has won the state championship three times: in 2000, 2001, and 2016. For many years, Bill held the record for the most state titles. Although his peak rating of 2334 was achieved in 1996, in recent years Bill seemed to enter his "second prime," with many strong tournament performances in Alabama and beyond. Bill has also contributed to Alabama chess in many other ways, from serving as ACF president, to writing more than 60 articles for the Alabama Chess Antics magazine. With his constant participation in chess tournaments in Alabama, Bill has helped mentor the next generation of great Alabama players.

In just over 20 years, Scott Varagona already holds nearly every record for Alabama tournament success. current rating peak is 2293 and has been consistently above 2250 since earning the Master title in 2012. He earned the Original Life Master title (300 Games as a Master) in 2019. Scott has a solid and tenacious style of play

with an opening repertoire that he understands and suits his style. game has no real weaknesses and has proven to be dominant within Alabama for two decades and counting.

Scott's contributions go far beyond playing chess. He took over as Editor of the Alabama Chess Antics in 2008. Using modern tools to publish to the internet, the quality of the Antics met or exceeded any of his predecessors. He has authored many historical articles about Alabama chess and instructively annotated dozens of chess games. His biggest contribution may be his quest to obtain and digitize issues of the Antics that existed before the computer age. Surviving copies of many of these issues have proven elusive. Scott has been relentless in his pursuit and has had many long-time players digging through the back of their closets searching for lost gems. This initiative has paid off handsomely with only a handful of remaining gaps. ■





Left: Hall of Fame plaques for Bill Melvin & Scott Varagona. (Photo by Antics Editor.) Right: Bill & Scott with their plaques. (Photo by Jonathan Rasberry.)

Page 28 Alabama Chess Antics

National Chess Day 2022

by various contributors

The Alabama chess community celebrated National Chess Day (October 8) with a rated Quick chess scholastic tournament at the Galleria mall in Hoover. Caesar Lawrence was the organizer and Chief TD.

Zach Simmons of Georgia, the top seed, won convincingly with a perfect 5/5 score. Tied for second were **Dev Patel** and **Raj R Patel**, each with 3.5 points. See uschess.org for the full crosstable. *-Editor*





Photos submitted by Chibuike Ulasi.









Top two photos submitted by Chibuike Ulasi; bottom row of photos submitted by Renee Linwood. ■

Page 30 Alabama Chess Antics

Fall Tournament Results

by various contributors

Oxford Classic

Oxford; August 20, 2022 TD: Caesar Lawrence (Caesar Chess)

Premier winner: **Alexander Rutten**, 3.5/4 Reserve winner: **Sean Franklin Brown**, 3.5/4

Amateur winners: Kylie Zou &

Zach Simmons, 3.5/4





<u>Left</u>: Kylie Zou. <u>Right</u>: a group photo at Oxford. (Photos by Caesar Lawrence.)

Birmingham Challenge

Helena; September 24, 2022 TD: Caesar Lawrence (Caesar Chess)

Premier winner: Gordon Randall, 3.5/4 Reserve winner: Aladdin Lateef, 4/4 Amateur winners: Matthew Logan Woods, Justin Tarbox & Ansel Smith, 3.5/4





<u>Left</u>: Gordon Randall. <u>Right</u>: Aladdin Lateef. (Photos by Caesar Lawrence.)

Mobile Open

Mobile; October 22, 2022 TD: Eric Nager (Bayside Academy)

Premier winner: **Jeff Tobin**, 4/4

 $U1400\ winners: \textbf{Nicklaus\ Allen\ Thomas}$

& Aritra Biswas, 4/4



Shawn Choi (left) receives the Alabama Online Grand Prix Challenger Section Finals trophy from ACF President Jonathan Rasberry at the ACF's September meeting. (Photo by Bill Melvin.)



Halloween Classic

Huntsville; October 29, 2022 TD: Caesar Lawrence (Caesar Chess)

Premier winner: Xavier Bruni, 4/4

Reserve winner: Yashoda Sarathchandra, 4/4

Amateur winner: Mike Ward, 4/4

Dancing Knights Scholastic

Pelham; November 5, 2022 TD: Caesar Lawrence (Caesar Chess)

Rook Section winners: **Arush Reddy Batchu &**

Andrew James Wales, 4.5/5

Primary Section winner: Lilah Garrido, 4/5

Novice Section winner: Anvika Haradanahalli, 5/5



Dothan Open

Dothan; November 19, 2022 TD: Caesar Lawrence (Caesar Chess)

Premier winners: **Kevin Thompson & Winston Wu**, 3/4

Reserve winner: Wendell Whitaker, 3.5/4



Counterclockwise from top: Yashoda Sarathchandra at the Halloween Classic; at the Dothan Open, Premier winners Kevin Thompson & Winston Wu; Dothan Reserve winner Wendell Whitaker, 2nd place finisher Nelson Marchant, UI 200 winners Preston Helms and Randall Tew. (Photos submitted by Caesar Lawrence.)

Page 32 Alabama Chess Antics

2022 Promoting Pawns Scholastic

Montgomery; September 17, 2022 TD: Jonathan Rasberry (Rasberry Chess Academy)

Rated K-12 winner: **Timothy Lee Taylor**, 4.5/5

Unrated 4-12 winner: **Aritra Biswas**, 6/6 Unrated K-3 winner: **Ethan Arteta**, 5/5

2022 Pike Road Scholastic

Pike Road, AL; October 22, 2022 TD: Jonathan Rasberry (Rasberry Chess Academy)

Rated K-12 winner: **Timothy Lee Taylor**, 4.5/5

Unrated K-12 winner: **Mark Taylor**, 6/6 Unrated K-3 winner: **Marcus Penn**, 5/6

2022 Knockout Knights Scholastic

Montgomery; November 12, 2022 TD: Jonathan Rasberry (Rasberry Chess Academy)

Rated K-12 winner: **Indigo Daniels**, 5/5 Unrated K-12 winner: **Zachary Brown**, 5.5/6 Unrated K-3 winner: **Yejoon Shin**, 5.5/6. ■

ALABAMA CHESS ANTICS

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Alabama Chess Federation

Upcoming Tournaments

See www.alabamachess.org for updates on these and other events.

December 3	Pushing Pawns Scholastic	Helena, AL
December 6	River Region Team Championships	Pike Road, AL
January 21	2023 Evangel Open	Montgomery, AL
February 4	Alabama State Team Chess Ch.	Huntsville, AL
February 18	Alabama All-Girls Chess Ch.	Huntsville, AL
February 25	Tom Nard Memorial IX	Montgomery, AL
March 11-12	Alabama State Scholastic Ch.	Alabaster, AL

The **Alabama Chess Federation** (ACF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and the United States Chess Federation affiliate for the state of Alabama. Our goal is to promote chess in this area for the benefit of all Alabama players. Toward that end, we provide advertising and other assistance for rated tournaments, as well as support for scholastic chess programs around the state.

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
jonathan.rasberry@alabamachess.org
if you are interested in helping with the
Alabama Chess Federation.

Chess diagrams in this issue were produced using Fritz, a program by ChessBase.

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