

ALABAMA CHESS HALL OF FAME

Class of 2023



Valerie Hodgson

Alabama Chess Hall of Fame 2023

With a chess career that spans 45 years and counting, Valerie Hodgson is surely the most prominent female player in Alabama chess history. For many decades, Valerie was in fact the only woman participating in Alabama tournaments on a regular basis. She was listed among the Top 50 Women in the United States in the January 1986 *Chess Life*, being #37. At the time of writing, Valerie is #10 in the nation among Top Women Seniors and #24 in the nation among Top Women Age 50 and Over. Her peak rating is approximately 1854.

Valerie's chess career began in the late 1970s and continues to the present day. She has been most active in the southern Alabama tournament circuit and in the Mobile Chess Club, but she has also been a frequent competitor in Alabama State Championships. Even when her rating qualified her to play in the Reserve Section of these championships, she would often choose to play in the Open Section instead. In terms of rating, her peak was in the years 1983-1986; it was during this period that she had her finest performance in a major Alabama tournament, namely, the 1985 Alabama State Championship. At this championship, she faced five Experts and one strong Class A player; she defeated two of the Experts (one of whom was a former state champion), drew another Expert, and drew the Class A player to score 3/6 and gain nearly 100 rating points. (Valerie's sensational performance in this tournament earned her the nickname "Vicious Val" in the *Antics*.) In later years, her most memorable tournament result was at the 1995 Mobile Chess Club Championship, where she tied for first place and won the playoff game.

Several players have noted that Valerie is a difficult opponent to face, and she has had various upset victories in her Alabama chess career. Here is a list of notable players, all at least Expert strength, who Valerie defeated in a regular rated tournament game:

Joe Jurjevich (2028) – Gulf Coast Turkey Shoot, 1980

Tom Denton (2011) – Sunday Sunfish, 1982

A.J. Goldsby (2105) – Gulf Coast Turkey Shoot, 1984

Gerald Squires (2056) – Alabama State Championship, 1985

Tom Denton (2083) – Alabama State Championship, 1985

David Kittinger (2096) – Mobile Chess Club Championship playoff, 1995

Jere Roland (2000) – Pensacola Open, 1995



Brent Inman

Alabama Chess Hall of Fame 2023

Immortalized in *Alabama Chess Antics* as “The Great American,” Brent Inman is one of the most colorful personalities in Alabama chess history. In a chess career lasting over 45 years, Brent has attained the National Master title, three Alabama State Champion titles, the Alabama Senior Champion title, and multiple Mobile Championship titles. His peak rating is in the 2200s.

Brent began playing in rated chess tournaments in the year 1977. His notable early triumphs include ties for first at the 1980 Pensacola Open and the 1981 Queen of Hearts. He also came in second place at the strong 1984 Alabama State Championship with 5.5/7, finishing only half a point behind Stuart Rachels (who he drew in their individual game). Several years later, thanks to an excellent performance at the U.S. Open, Brent crossed the 2200 rating mark to become a National Master.

His successes continued through the 1990s. After tying for first at the 1992 Louisiana State Championship, he won the 1995 Pensacola Open outright. Then, at the 1996 Alabama State Championship, Brent scored 4.5/6 with no losses to become Alabama State Champion for the first time.

In the new millennium, Brent became Alabama State Co-Champion twice more: in 2006 (with 4/5) and in 2008 (again with 4/5). He won other memorable tournaments in the early 2000s as well, such as the 2008 Louisiana G/30 Championship. More recently, Brent won the inaugural Alabama Senior Championship in 2019 (with 3.5/4, ahead of Charles Meidinger and Tom Denton) and earned the distinction of being the first ever Alabama Senior Champion. He continues to be active as a chess player, coach, and mentor.

Brent is one of the few players ever to win three or more Alabama State Champion titles in addition to the NM title. Moreover, his tricky and daring style of play has produced some of the most memorable and entertaining games ever to be published in the *Antics*. For these reasons, Brent is featured as one of the eight greatest Alabama State Champions of the 20th century in Scott Varagona’s *Kings of My Home State*.



Rhodes Peele

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As a tournament organizer, *Antics* Editor, and longtime chess competitor, Rhodes Peele has made a tremendous impact on Alabama chess culture. Rhodes began playing in tournaments in Alabama in the year 1984 and has continued to do so ever since; over the course of his long career, he has been an active member of the chess clubs and communities of both Mobile and Montgomery. In recognition for his contributions to chess in the state, the ACF awarded him a lifetime membership. His peak rating is approximately 2042.

For countless years, Rhodes was instrumental in the hosting and organization of major chess tournaments at Auburn University at Montgomery (AUM), where he worked as a mathematics professor. Of particular importance was the Queen of Hearts, Montgomery's flagship tournament, which took place at AUM every year for decades.

One of Rhodes' greatest contributions to Alabama chess was his work as Editor of *Alabama Chess Antics* in the period 1996-2000. Previously, in the early 1990s, production of the ACF's chess magazine had been somewhat inconsistent, with too much editor turnover. However, when Rhodes took over as Editor, a new day dawned for the *Antics*. From August 1996 to October 2000, Rhodes unflinchingly produced an *Antics* magazine on a quarterly basis; moreover, the *Antics* always contained a variety of high-quality content, and the overall look and feel of the magazine was more professional and polished than it had ever been. Rhodes' *Antics* set the new standard for what the state's chess magazine could be in the modern era of desktop publishing. (His *Antics* also received Honorable Mentions from Chess Journalists of America.)

Although his main chess interest is in solving composed problems and endgame studies, Rhodes has also had some notable triumphs in regular over-the-board play. His competitive successes in Alabama include winning the 1986 Mobile City Championship with a 5-0 score (ahead of Mercon Weeks, Tom Denton, and Brent Inman) and then winning the 1993 Montgomery Championship with a 3-0 score. However, his finest tournament ever was the 1996 Alabama State Championship, in which he scored 4.5/6 in a very strong field and became Alabama State Co-Champion. Rhodes went undefeated in this tournament, scoring 3 wins and 3 draws; two of these wins were against Experts, and two of the draws were against National Masters. His performance rating was 2236.