

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

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IN CARE OF THE NEW BRITAIN QUARTETTE CLUB
225 WOOSTER STREET NEW BRITAIN, CONNECTICUT 06052

2007 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Kozlowski

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INTRODUCTION

Season's Greetings, fellow chess players:

Two-thousand-and-seven is sadly coming to a close. What a great year it has been at the New Britain Chess Club! With only a few weeks remaining in the year, it is time for me to write the annual club newsletter. Since I started writing the club newsletter in 2005, I have made it a point not to cover every event detail or mention every winner of tournaments held at the club during the year. Instead, the purpose of these newsletters is to highlight changes to club events, recognize members for achieving noteworthy personal chess goals, and reflect on the social events held by our members throughout the year. With that said, let us begin our journey down memory lane as I share the wonderful memories of the past twelve months at the NBCC with you.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The club started off 2007 with a monumental change. On January 2, club Tournament Directors Randy Shane, Marcus Komons, and I directed the first tournament at the club, the 2007 New Britain New Year's Open Blitz Chess Tournament, a non-rated event, utilizing SwissSys, one of the most popular chess tournament pairing software packages in the world. Much of the credit for purchasing the software went to Randy. However, some of our members suggested that it was definitely time to make the transition from manual to computerized pairings. There are many benefits of using SwissSys, even at the club level; the most obvious being that pairings can be made in a matter of seconds with great accuracy, thus making a TD's job much easier and less stressful. The days of referring to the rules on color equalization and alternation, transpositions, interchanges, tie-breaks, etc. are finally over. In addition, the software package allows tournament directors to submit tournaments for rating electronically to the United States Chess Federation. Even better, rating fees are 18 cents per game (currently 25 cents per game), compared to 40 cents per game when they are manually submitted (currently 60 cents per game).

The very low \$99 cost of the software has already paid for itself. Incidentally, the first club tournament submitted for rating using SwissSys was the 2007 New Britain Winter Open Quick Chess Tournament held on January 9. SwissSys is a very user-friendly software package and has the capability to run round-robin and Swiss-system tournaments and team matches. If you are a tournament or club director, and are considering purchasing pairing software, I would highly recommend buying SwissSys. Without doubt, that was the best investment the club has ever made.

FEBRUARY

On February 13, members Mike Pascetta and Owen Walsh tied for first place in the first 2007 New Britain City Chess Reserves, their first win in a major club tournament.

Eight members participated in the 2007 United States Amateur Team East Chess Championship held in Parsippany, New Jersey, from February 17 to February 19. Our two club teams were led by Captain Derek Meredith. And, after three days of intense competition, our Just Another NBCC Team A won the distinguished title of Top Connecticut Team based on this team's overall performance when compared to other teams in the state. The members on our two teams were: Team A: Doug Fiske, Derek Meredith, Andres Castaneda, and Yogesh Raghunathan, and Team B: John Nitz, James Nitz, Steve Sanabria, and Chris Jensen. Team A proudly brought home a beautifully engraved plaque for winning the title.

MARCH

A surprise 60th birthday party was held at the home of member and FIDE Master Nelson Castaneda for NBCC President Joseph Mansigian on March 31. About twenty of our members celebrated Joe's milestone birthday with food, refreshments, and, of course, chess. It was a spectacular evening. Besides Nelson and his wife Nancy, the club extends its appreciation to Derek Meredith and member Kevin Zimmerman for coordinating the awesome birthday party for "El Presidente."

MAY

The 1st Arkadijs Strazdins Cup began on May 1. Thirty players registered for this event. Formerly the official annual NBCC Championship, the Strazdins Cup was held in honor of Mr. Arkadijs Strazdins, who served the club for over fifty years. Sadly, Mr. Strazdins passed away a few weeks before that special tournament began. After the five-week tournament, Mr. Strazdins' son, Andris, presented the winner, FM Nelson Castaneda, with a rotating engraved trophy on June 5. According to the official rules passed by the membership at the 2006 club business meeting, the winner has possession of the trophy for one year, and the trophy will be passed from winner to winner of future Strazdins Cups.

JUNE

After receiving "The Strazdins Cup" on June 5, FM Nelson Castaneda gave a simultaneous chess exhibition against thirteen players. The only person to win against Nelson was member Danny Rozovsky. Danny was awarded a chess book for his victory against the master.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we approach the half-way point of the year, it is apparent that the club is doing quite well. That assessment is further evidenced by the events unfolding at the club in the coming months. The club is just getting into second gear as we approach summer. However, before we cross this junction, it is time to recap another productive business meeting at the club, setting the stage for the club's future.

Many issues were on slate for discussion at this year's business meeting on June 12. And, after one-hour and thirty-five minutes, amazingly longer than the 2006 stimulating business meeting, the membership voted on the following after much spirited discussion:

1. To purchase twenty-five Club Special chess sets and vinyl boards from the USCF and individual plastic containers for storage of the equipment. *Most of the old sets and boards were donated to member Luis Delgado, who teaches chess to students in the Hartford school system. A few sets were also donated to Farmington Borders.*
2. To purchase six additional GameTime II digital chess clocks from the USCF.

3. To sponsor teams from the club at the 2008 United States Amateur East Chess Championship. *The agreement was for the club to pay half the entry fees for the teams. FM Richard Bauer volunteered as team captain and would be responsible for registration.*
4. To keep the existing time control of 40/85, SD/30 the standard for most major club tournaments.
5. To change the start time for all club events from 7:00 p.m. back to 7:30 p.m.
6. To explore the possibility of holding the following chess events:
 - a. A simultaneous chess exhibition and lecture by Grandmaster Ildar Ibragimov.
 - b. An international chess match with the Amsterdam Chess Club, of which member Gert Hilhorst is a member. *Plans for a match would be contingent on airfares, time of year, etc.*
 - c. A match with the Boylston or Marshall Chess Club.

The reason the club was able to set aside funds to sponsor a team to the 2008 United States Amateur East Chess Championship and acquire new chess equipment was because of an extraordinary increase in net income for the 2006-2007 year. According to Treasurer Andris Strazdins, the club's cash balance as of June 12, 2007, was \$4,050, representing an increase in net income of \$1,223 for the year, unprecedented in club history. The remarkable surge in the club treasury was attributed to \$335 in additional revenue received from the sale of donated chess equipment in 2006, the success of the 2006 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship, and an increase in membership. Now that is what I call progress!

On June 30, Derek Meredith held another social function for the club at his house. People had the opportunity to play on his giant chess set with the weighted pieces. Later in the day, our guys were treated to some delicious summertime food on the grill, capping another great day for the NBCC.

JULY

Our team of officers and tournament directors, along with assistance from Kevin Zimmerman and members David Aldi and Roy Beavers, spent weeks planning for the 2007 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship. Keeping with the theme of the previous year's tournament, this was an open-air event. Nevertheless, the committee wanted to do even more this year to enhance the social element of the one-day tournament. So, after weeks of preparation, the NBCC held its annual Summer Open event under the Quartette Club pavilion on July 22. And, as an added feature, lunch was offered free of charge. Food consisted of hot dogs, hamburgers, chicken, salads, and watermelon. Grilling and serving the food were the event's master chefs, Marcus Komons and my uncle, Joe Kozlowski. During the lunch break, some of the participants played frisbee. The weather conditions were ideal for an outdoor tournament, with temperatures in the 70s with partly cloudy skies and a light breeze. The 2007 New Britain Summer Open attracted thirty-seven players from Connecticut. Even though that was not a club record for tournament participation (fifty-six is the record), the club has not seen that large of a turnout in any event since the 2003 New Britain City Chess Championship Qualifying Tournament held in September 2002 with thirty-eight players. Even with efforts to make the tournament flawless, a few minor mistakes were made. The greatest disappointment, by far, was the USCF's failure to publish our advertisement in *Chess Life*. Just imagine if they did, we could have easily attracted over fifty players. Regardless, I am confident that we will learn from the errors and ensure that future New Britain Summer Open tournaments will be better. In all frankness, this tournament has the distinct possibility of soon becoming one of Connecticut's premier chess events.

AUGUST

Can you believe that another club record is set? This time the record occurred at the 2007 Bradley Open Chess Championship held from August 11 to August 13 in Windsor. As many of you probably remember reading about in the 2006 NBCC newsletter, at the 2006 Bradley Open, twenty past or present members participated, establishing a new record for most membership participation at a non-club tournament. Well, my friends, this year, twenty-three of our people played in the Bradley Open.

Members from our club were represented in almost every section. The following past or present members who participated in that annual tournament were:

Open section: FM Richard Bauer, Andres Castaneda, Matthew Davey,
Yogesh Raghunathan, and Derek Meredith

U2100 section: Doug Fiske and Danny Rozovsky

U1900 section: David Aldi, Yuval Shemesh, Kevin Zimmerman,
and Joseph Mansigian

U1700 section: Julio Echevarria, Mike Pascetta, Owen Gomez, Peter Galazan,
Hermann Zickfeld, Kevin Berry, and Robert Kozlowski

U1500 section: Sofia Leja, Miki Shemesh, and Richard Chang

U1200 section: Danny Pascetta and Roy Beavers

SEPTEMBER

On September 1, Kevin Zimmerman and his fiancée Marie Juergens hosted the 1st Zimmerman Games Day at their home. Kevin and Marie invited members from the club, along with other friends, and held one of the greatest outdoor events of the year. Performing their multiple duties masterfully as chefs, game coordinators, music directors, etc., Kevin and Marie put on a wonderful event. At the party, there were various tournaments held in sporting events from chess to horseshoes to frisbee football to table tennis. Ten players from the club participated in the 1st Zimmerman Games Chess Tournament. Andres Castaneda won the round-robin blitz chess tournament. Besides the games, there were a few musicians playing West African and Caribbean music during the late afternoon. These talented artists definitely put everyone in a festive mood. I even joined the musician ensemble and played a spirited drum recital. It was indeed an enjoyable day to end the summer season.

On September 11, FM Richard Bauer gave a simultaneous chess exhibition at the club. Before his simul, Rick gave a lecture on one of the games he played in the 2007 Bradley Open. Eighteen players competed against the master, but only two defeated him, Marcus Komons and Danny Rozovsky. Normally, the first winner to win against the master in one of our club simuls is presented with a chess book. However, since the timing between Rick's resignation against Marcus and Danny was literally seconds apart (actually, less than one minute!), they each received a prize. It should be pointed out that for winning against Richard, Danny became the first player, in recorded club history, to defeat three of our club masters consecutively in simuls. Danny's previous wins against our other club masters were USCF National Master Ted McHugh on September 11, 2006, and FM Nelson Castaneda on June 5, 2007.

OCTOBER

One of our newest members, Dennis Prawira, won the 2nd annual Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship with a perfect score. That was an amazing accomplishment. What made Dennis's performance in the tournament particularly impressive was that, in order to achieve his 5-0 score, he defeated three of our club's strongest players - two FMs and a USCF expert. After the tournament was submitted for rating, Dennis earned the highest provisional rating the USCF can assign to a player - 2700, a magnificent accomplishment. The tournament ended on October 16.

Keeping with the tradition started last year with the 1st Oktoberfest Open, Joseph Mansigian arranged a dinner party at the famous German restaurant, the East Side in New Britain, on October 19. Eleven members attended the festive social gathering and enjoyed the authentic German cuisine and drinks while listening to German songs played by an accordionist.

On October 23, the officers called a special business meeting to address a few topics not previously discussed at the annual business meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to accomplish the following:

1. Finalize the format of the 2008 New Britain City Chess Championship Qualifying Tournament.
2. Finalize the venue for the 2007 Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship.

3. Finalize the date for the simultaneous chess exhibition and lecture by GM Ildar Ibragimov.

In summation, here was the outcome of the short meeting.

1. With regard to the 2008 New Britain City Chess Championship Qualifying Tournament:

The format of the event would remain a round-robin. However, unlike in 2007, the NBCC would make an invitation to the highest four rated members to automatically advance to the finals and bypass the preliminaries. More importantly, these players, unlike in the previous year, would have the option to play in the Qualifying Tournament with the caveat that if they do not score enough points in the preliminaries to advance, they will not be eligible to play in the finals. The name of this longest and most prestigious club tournament would be changed from the New Britain City Chess Championship to the official NBCC Championship. Since the club already held the Arkadijs Cup, which used to be the official NBCC Championship prior to 2007, there was absolutely no problem with changing the event name.

2. With regard to the 2007 Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship:

The majority of the members present approved to hold this state-sanctioned event at the Church of Christ in Manchester. This event would be scheduled for Saturday, December 15. Traditionally, this event was held on a Tuesday at the club. The NBCC would co-sponsor the event with the South Windsor Chess Club, thanks to its president Richard Chang for securing the venue and to the Connecticut State Chess Association for voting to have the club host the event. This would be the first Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship held since 2004.

3. With regard to the simultaneous chess exhibition and lecture by GM Ildar Ibragimov:

Marcus Komons, along with the assistance of Scott Cameron, or “The “Milford Morphy” as he often refers himself as, would negotiate with the GM to finalize plans to have him give a lecture and simul at the club which, as of the writing of this newsletter, is scheduled for the first club meeting of 2008, January 8.

After our special business meeting, the club held the 2007 New Britain Fall Open Quick Chess Tournament. With sixteen players and four rounds, theoretically it would be possible for two or three players to tie for first place. Amazingly, six players tied for first place: FM Richard Bauer, USCF NM Ted McHugh, Matthew Davey, Dennis Prawira, Yogesh Raghunathan, and Derek Meredith.

DECEMBER

On December 15, the 2007 Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship was held at the Church of Christ in Manchester. There were two sections, an open and an U1600, in the ten double-round Swiss-system tournament. Pizza and antipasto were served to the participants for lunch. The turnout for the event was good. The venue was very spacious, and the ambience of the facility was perfect for the event. I directed the tournament, with assistance from Marcus Komons, Richard Chang, and CSCA President Jim Celone. Thanks to Kevin Zimmerman and Andris Strazdins, who assisted the event directors with the food arrangements and overall set up. Of note, James Nitz and Julio Echevarria won their respective sections (open and Under 1600), their first win in a Connecticut Blitz Chess Championship.

On December 18, the last meeting of the year, the officers invited all players of the chess community to the 3rd annual NBCC Christmas party from 6:00 p.m. until midnight. At the year-end celebration, capping the most successful year in club history, by far, the club held the 2007/2008 New Britain Christmas/New Year’s Open Blitz Chess Tournament, raffled off a few decorative chess sets and a lovely fruit basket, and auctioned the remaining chess books in the club library. Fifty people attended our club’s party. Much appreciation went to our officers and the following members for their contributions to the party, raffle, and auction: John Nitz, James Nitz, Kevin Zimmerman, Andris Strazdins, Bill Montross, and Hesham Belal. Bill was the winner of the annual club raffle.

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2007.

NBCC MEMBERS RANKING IN THE TOP 100 LISTS IN THE USCF AS OF THE DECEMBER 2007 USCF RATING SUPPLEMENT

Please note that only ratings of USCF members who have been active within the last year were used in compiling the Top 100 listings.

<u>NBCC MEMBER</u>	<u>USCF TOP PLAYER LIST</u>	<u>USCF RATING</u>	<u>USCF RANKING</u>
GM Gildardo Garcia	Overall	2512	56th
FM Richard Bauer	Overall Quick	2253	90th
USCF NM Ted McHugh	Overall Quick	2248	93rd
James Nitz	Age 17	1952	43rd
	Quick Under Age 21	1996	74th
Danny Rozovsky	Age 11	1936	5th
	Quick Under Age 13	1631	73rd
Danny Pascetta	Age 8	1204	39th

NBCC MEMBER ATTAINING THE LEVEL OF USCF MASTER

As previously mentioned, Dennis Prawira reached the level of USCF NM in October.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ USCF expert Andres Castaneda drew GM Mark Paragua in the final round of the 2007 Bradley Open. GM Mark Paragua was rated 2478 at the time. Andres' game against the GM is posted on the club website.
- ❖ James Nitz, whose USCF rating is currently only 48 points below expert level, defeated GM Sergey Kudrin in the first round of the 2007 New Haven Fall Open Chess Championship held November 2. GM Kudrin was rated 2629 at the time and currently ranks 16th overall in the USCF.
- ❖ In the final round of the 2007 Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship, member Emily Pond, who has a current USCF quick chess rating of 206, defeated Julio Echevarria, who has a current USCF quick chess rating of 1573, a difference of 1,367 rating points. That was a new club record, perhaps even a Connecticut chess or USCF record.



THE PASSING OF MR. ARKADIJS STRAZDINS (“STRAZ”)

On April 22, after a long battle with heart failure and related complications, NBCC President Emeritus Mr. Arkadijs Strazdins passed away at the age of eighty-four. If you never had the privilege of knowing such a wonderful person, Mr. Strazdins, or “Straz” as many of his beloved friends and family called him, was one of the most altruistic people I was honored to know.



Mr. Strazdins had a very long history with the club, having been a member since 1951, a tournament director since the mid-1950s, and club president from 1970 to 2001. This gentleman devoted over half of his life to the club in his numerous capacities. He was also a steadfast supporter of chess throughout Connecticut for many decades. Whether you were a chess master, an amateur, or a beginner, Mr. Strazdins would greet you with his charm and old-world gentility. I still remember the day I joined the NBCC in 1987 and being warmly welcomed by Mr. Strazdins. Although Mr. Strazdins had assistance in running the club, he was involved in all aspects of club management. I have never seen someone more loyal to a non-for-profit organization. In all honesty, if Mr. Strazdins did not tirelessly volunteer to keep the club thriving, I am almost certain that the NBCC would not exist today.

Mr. Strazdins achieved the level of chess master as a young man and, early in his chess career, drew a game with Efim Bogoljubov, a challenger in the 1929 and 1934 World Chess Championship matches. Mr. Strazdins was also the winner of countless chess tournaments throughout Connecticut and the NBCC from the 1950s until the late 1990s.

Because of severe pain throughout his body, Mr. Strazdins took a leave of absence from the club in 2003. I visited Mr. Strazdins frequently in the final years of his life. During our visits, we would chat about the club, world issues, or simply life in general. I, as many others would absolutely agree, enjoyed Mr. Strazdins’ company. It was truly heartbreaking to see Mr. Strazdins’ health slowly fail as he struggled to walk, speak, and, at times, breathe. And even though Mr. Strazdins endured excruciating pain and prolonged suffering, he always remained cheerful and optimistic about life.

My fellow chess players, on April 22, the NBCC and the Connecticut chess community lost a legendary man. Mr. Strazdins cannot be replaced. And although Mr. Strazdins has left this world, his spirit lives on in each and every one of us. And the legacy he has left shall never be forgotten.

BOB KOZLOWSKI'S COMMENTARY

My friends, it was with pleasure that I was able to share the wonderful memories of 2007 at the NBCC with you. So much has happened at the club in the past year, even more than in the previous two years, thanks to the efforts of the club leadership. The following is a brief summation on the modifications made to the club's major tournaments in recent years:

1. New formats for the New Britain City Chess Championship (again, now the official NBCC Championship).
2. New formats for the New Britain Summer Open.
3. Formation of the Oktoberfest Open.
4. Introduction of quick chess tournaments.
5. The renaming of the former official NBCC Championship to the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup (again, now a separate tournament).

Besides the major changes in club activities, the club has ascended to new social heights. Between the parties and the other events held at members' homes for birthdays or other social occasions, our membership has formed one of the most impressive social networks, probably non-existent in many other chess clubs in the United States. I want to extend my deepest appreciation to the following persons for organizing these social events outside the club over the past few years. The persons deserving the utmost recognition for enhancing our club are Derek Meredith, Joseph Mansigian, Nelson and Nancy Castaneda, Sofia Leja, Kevin Zimmerman, Marie Juergens, Yogesh Raghunathan, Andres and Karin Montiel, and Yuval and Miki Shemesh.

The NBCC has always been a central venue for Connecticut chess. Many might claim that New Britain is the "chess capital" of Connecticut. Because New Britain is centrally located in the state, the club is most fortunate to attract players from Danbury to Stafford Springs to Torrington to New London. Our club has a very long-established history in New Britain, dating back to the late 1890s. The club should be very thankful, though, that other people in the chess community have been involved in promoting the game in Connecticut over the decades.

I was pleased to see that Rob Roy, promoter and director of hundreds of chess events throughout New England in the 70s, 80s, and early 90s, returned to the chess scene this year after a long hiatus. Rob spearheaded a few chess projects in the state this past year. Specifically, he formed the Norwich Chess Club and directed the 2007 New London ChessFest on July 28, a very well-organized open-air event. Also, I want to thank one of the longest-standing tournament directors in Connecticut, Tom Hartmayer, for devoting so much of his time to organizing events at the University of Connecticut Chess Club and for getting college students involved in the game over the years. Tom has been directing tournaments at his club at the Storrs campus since the 1970s. Besides Rob and Tom, one of the people in the Connecticut chess community who has demonstrated great potential for promoting chess in the state by forming the SWCC and getting involved with the CSCA is Richard Chang. Lastly, a very special token of appreciation must be sent to CSCA President Jim Celone, who has been a beacon for Connecticut chess.

Over the last few years at the NBCC, we have seen a rise in the number of scholastic players. Personally, I am glad to see that more of our youth are getting involved in the game. I have distinctly observed that the parents, some of whom are players themselves, have been very supportive of their children's chess endeavors. Besides the parents, I take this opportunity to recognize the chess coaches who devote their time teaching this intellectual game to their students. One of Connecticut's prominent chess coaches is David Aldi. Incidentally, the 1st Manchester Fall Scholastic Chess Tournament held on December 8 was the first scholastic tournament that David directed. Richard Chang assisted David, and they did an outstanding job co-directing the event.

August 2008 will mark the end of my tenth year as a NBCC tournament director. Having directed or co-directed over sixty club tournaments, I can honestly state that club events have undergone major changes in the last decade. In the past few years, the club has seen a slight increase in tournament participation. Like my fellow TDs in Connecticut, I strive to get everyone involved in the game. Getting commitment from everyone is not an easy task period. It can be very discouraging to see low turnouts at chess events. Alas, my fellow TDs and I have accepted the fact that not everyone can devote the time or make a commitment to the game regardless of how much we try to encourage participation. This problem is not local to our club; tournament directors throughout the state and the across the country are facing this obstacle in their own tournaments.

Regardless of whether or not I get more involved with organizing and directing state-sanctioned chess tournaments, I wholeheartedly promise and assure you that I will never give up my passion for and devotion to the club. If it were not for the NBCC, chess would not be the same in the Constitution State. As I have stated countless times before, it is always a pleasure to be of service to the members of the club. I personally take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my fellow officers and tournament directors, Joseph Mansigian, Andris Strazdins, Marcus Komons, Randy Shane, and Brian Kosnoff for their continued dedication and leadership over the last four years. Lastly, thanks to all who have supported the NBCC. Remember, as Mr. Strazdins often said, “Your support for the club shows your support for U.S. chess.”

The officers and tournament directors of the NBCC wish you and your family a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

President: Joseph Mansigian
Vice President: Robert Kozlowski
Treasurer: Major Andris Strazdins
Secretary: Marcus Komons
Webmaster: Brian Kosnoff
Tournament Directors: Marcus Komons, Randy Shane,
and Robert Kozlowski



The membership currently stands at sixty. If you have not already renewed your membership, I hope you will in 2008. I look forward to seeing you very soon. Take care.

Yours in chess,
Robert Kozlowski