

# On the National and International “Senior Circuit”

By NM Mikhail Koganov

*(Below at FIDE World Senior Championship 2022. Photo courtesy of Andreas Kantokanis/FIDE)*



A few months ago, I participated in the 2023 Connecticut Senior Championship. While my full-time job and coaching gigs do not leave much time for competitive chess, the Senior Championship is a special event, to which I always look forward. In addition to the prestigious State Title, it is an opportunity to represent the state at the Irwin National Tournament of Senior State Champions, an invitational event that is held annually along side the US Open.

The 2023 Senior Championship and Irwin nomination was secured convincingly by GM Sergey Kudrin. Master Kudrin won 3 games and allowed a draw to NM Derek Meredith in Round 3. Yours truly finished second with 3 points, losing only to GM Kudrin in Round 2. NM

Meredith finished third with 2.5 points. In all, twelve players participated at the Connecticut Senior, a fifty percent increase from 2022. A number of class trophies were also awarded.

The Connecticut event caused me to reflect on my experiences at the U.S. and World Senior tournaments. It motivated me to encourage Connecticut seniors to do more in chess and engage in the national and international experiences offered and available to the older generations.

Opportunities to play senior—50 years and older—players only are not plentiful. However, they exist and can be explored and taken advantage of. In the U.S., it is your Senior State Championship and Irwin Invitational, if you qualify, which lead all event options. In addition, as part of its World Open festival in Philadelphia at the end of June or beginning of July, the Continental Chess Association offers the Senior Amateur event. At that competition, your rating must be below 2210 to be eligible to participate.

Also, toward the end of July, there is the annual U.S. Senior Open tournament. In 2023 it will be held at Elmhurst University in Illinois. Interested seniors are directed to check <https://www.kingregistration.com> for more information.

International events for seniors mostly take place in Europe. Your humble reporter participated in two World Chess Events for Seniors in 2022: the Team and Individual events. It is worth mentioning that since those are official international events, FIDE ratings are used, if participants

have them. At the conclusion of those events, players without FIDE ratings will have one calculated and assigned to them, provided they scored at least one half point in the competition.

The team event is a 9-round tournament available in two categories: (1) 50 years and older players and (2) 65 years and older players. Four players make a team, and one substitute player is permitted but not necessary. Typically, the level of competition is high; many countries sending teams of strong grandmasters. For example in 2022, the winning team from England featured top Grandmasters Michael Adams and Nigel Short on Boards 1 and 2.

Regardless, there is still room for amateur teams. For instance, in Prague in 2020, I captained a team consisting of IM Leonid Sokolin, FM Bruce Leverett, FM Konstantin Dolgitsers and myself. The competition took place right at the beginning of the pandemic and, despite all efforts of the organizers to complete it, was cut short after Round 7. My teammate FM Bruce Leverett wrote an article summarizing the experience of our team for Chessbase magazine: *A remarkable event: the World Senior Team Championship 2020* | ChessBase.

For future international team events, I informally act as a point of contact for all interested players. If you would like to organize an amateur team or play on a team, please feel free to reach out and get connected with other prospective players.

The venue for the World Senior Team 2023 is Ohrid, Macedonia to be held September 18th to September 29<sup>th</sup>.

In November of 2022, I also participated in World Senior Individual Championship held in Assisi, Italy. World Senior Individual Championship is held annually, typically in November to December. There are four sections: two open sections for players age 50+ and 65+ and two women's sections for female players age 50+ and 65+. In 2022, however, there were no separate women's sections. Instead, women players competed in Open events but had separate prizes allocated to top scoring women.

Legendary World Champion GM Nona Gaprindashvili won her prize convincingly in 65+ category. Another chess legend : GM John Nunn from England captured open prize in 65+ category. In 50+ category, GM Zurab Sturua and WGM Elvira Berend came victorious as top man and women.

The World Senior Individual is a long tournament played at classical time control, eleven rounds of a single game per day with a free day after Round 6. On the free day, organizers usually offer a guided tour. There are also blitz tournaments with time control of 3 minutes plus a 2 seconds increment from move one.

My result in Assisi was 6.5 out of 11, very solid, but nothing to brag about. My most memorable moments were actually in blitz, where I got prizes in the under 2100 category. Unfortunately, my FIDE blitz rating was pushed over 2100, so I will have to work harder next time I play this event.

The venue for the 2023 Individual Edition is Terrasini on the island of Sicily, Italy and it will be held from October 24<sup>th</sup> to November 6<sup>th</sup>.

To conclude: Although not many, there are some notable tournaments for seniors to compete against their peers. I wholeheartedly encourage Connecticut seniors to explore these national and international opportunities.