

NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

"THE HEART OF CONNECTICUT CHESS"

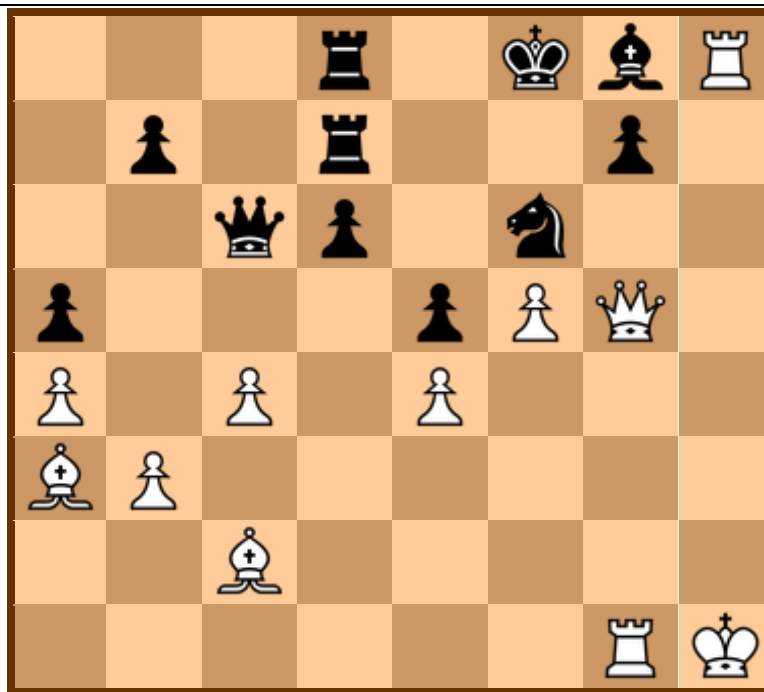
IN CARE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF THE HOLY RESURRECTION
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2015 NEWSLETTER

by Robert Cyr

WHITE TO MOVE AND MATE IN FOUR



Zsofia Polgar vs. Rumiana Gocheva: Novi Sad 1990

This chess puzzle was posted on www.wtharvey.com by Bill Harvey.

The solution is on page 28.

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INTRODUCTION

Season's Greetings, New Britain Chess Club family and friends:

The holiday season is rapidly approaching. It is difficult to imagine that another year has come and gone. For many, our lives have gotten busier in recent years due to the ever-changing technological world we live in. I have noticed that fewer people today have been able to devote the time for chess. In spite of a slight decline in membership and tournament participation, the NBCC has continued to expand in other areas and has remained a leading voice for the advancement of Connecticut chess.

For nearly eight decades, our organization has been a strong advocate for chess throughout the area. We are Connecticut's most historic chess organization, and we are proud of our involvement in and commitment to the enrichment of this historic game for players of all ages and levels in our community.

For the past eleven years, I have written over two-hundred pages of highlights about our great organization, focusing on membership achievements, new events, social activities, and the key role that the NBCC family has played in keeping chess alive and well in Connecticut. Our club's vibrant spirit, rich diversity, and enormous energy have been motivating forces behind my continued writings of these wonderful stories. Collectively, these memorable moments have captured the essence of our organization and have shown how our club has transformed over the years.

I hope you can take some time away from your busy schedule this holiday season and read about the incredible memories that made 2015 an amazing year for "The Heart of Connecticut Chess" and our extended family.



*"When you see a move,
look for a better one."*

Emmanuel Lasker

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

The NBCC kicked off its first meeting of 2015 in high gear by holding its 10th “What are the Odds Blitz Chess Tournament.” The exciting one-night event held on January 6 afforded the members with an evening of casual play. Historically, the club usually starts a new year with a blitz chess event to provide the members with a short break before the commencement of the long, multi-week Club Championship, where the competition is much more serious. Even though many of our members took advantage of this hiatus, twenty players showed up ready for battle. As expected, there were numerous upsets because of the significant time odds that the higher-ranked players were required to give to their lower-ranked opponents based on rating differences. Quite honestly, you just never know who is going to win these tournaments. Of the last nine “odds tournaments,” two of our club’s resident FIDE Masters, Richard Bauer and Nelson Castaneda, have each won three. That night, though, veteran member Jimi Wilkin, who registered for the tournament at the start of round two, appeared destined to win it all. After forfeiting round one, Jimi went on an incredible six-game winning streak, upsetting players of all levels despite the time odds, to clinch first place.

FEBRUARY

The first Saturday in February was a historic day for the club and Connecticut chess. That day at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, the new home of the NBCC, the club hosted the first Connecticut State Quick Chess Championship held since 1997. Our club president, USCF National Master Derek Meredith, proposed to the Connecticut State Chess Association that the NBCC host this new tournament. Since 2005, the club has sponsored dozens of quick chess tournaments, which have sparked much interest from members and non-members. Because these tournaments have grown in popularity at the club, and because this event would be a fantastic way to promote chess throughout the state, the CSCA of Directors approved Derek’s motion. Seventeen players from Connecticut, including six of our club’s masters and two players from Massachusetts, competed. After an afternoon of spirited games, USCF NM Ted McHugh etched his name in the CSCA history books for earning the title of 2015 Connecticut State Quick Chess Champion. Ted went undefeated with a score of 6.5/7. Thanks to those who supported the CSCA and the NBCC by playing and to NBCC Vice President Norman Burtness for performing the duties as chief tournament director.

In the last decade, about thirty of our members have participated at least once in the largest team tournament in chess history, the annual World/U.S. Amateur Team East Chess Championship, held every year in Parsippany, New Jersey, on Presidents Day weekend. This is one of the most anticipated chess events of the year. Former USCF President E. Steve Doyle has been the event's chief tournament director for decades. Each year, Steve and his dedicated staff do a phenomenal job with coordinating all aspects of this grand event, from the directing, the selecting of teams for the best team name contest, the awarding of various prizes, and the performing of many other duties. It takes a collaborative effort to make USATE one extraordinary event.

The NBCC was represented by two teams at the sapphire annual USATE. On the first star-studded team, Deflaterate to 2199, there was USCF NM Ted McHugh, USCF NM James Nitz, USCF NM Derek Meredith, and Doug Fiske. This team earned four match points and played behind the ropes, where the top boards compete, in five of the six rounds. Despite some difficult games, this team did very well overall and managed to accumulate enough points to attain the title of Top Connecticut Team, an award that the NBCC has achieved every year at USATE since 2007. Of particular note, Ted had a beautiful win against prominent grandmaster and chess author Larry Kaufman. This game is posted on the New Jersey State Chess Federation website - www.njscf.org.

Bill Nye Double Checks Belchick's Deflaterate Discovery was the name of our second team, which consisted of superstars Danny Pascetta, Mike Pascetta, Norman Burtness, and Bob Cyr. This was Norman's first USATE experience. Despite facing opponents of various levels, this team rose up to the challenge and ended up with 3.5 out of six match points. This team earned wins and draws against players from class A to master. Some of these intense battles, especially Norman's, lasted nearly five hours. Because of their impressive results throughout the tournament, this team was fortunate to play in the grand ballroom nearly every round.

Joe Bihlmeyer from our club also competed in USATE for the first time. Since he was unable to form an all-NBCC team, Joe found three players from New Jersey. In short, our members had a blast at this annual three-day chess retreat. I imagine that they will be counting the days until USATE 2016. If you have never played in USATE, you should definitely add it to your bucket list!

MARCH

The first Saturday in March was another momentous day for the NBCC and Connecticut chess family. On this day, the NBCC hosted the annual Connecticut State Chess Championship at the Chess Club of Fairfield County. The event was directed by Norman Burtness, and he was assisted by Melvin Patrick from the CCFC and Tom Hartmayer from the University of Connecticut Chess Club. Thirty-five players from Connecticut and New York, including three prior champions and ten masters, competed in the four-round, two-section tournament. For those chess enthusiasts who did not attend but still wanted to be a part of the action, the CCFC broadcasted, utilizing their DGT technology, the top four games of each round of the tournament on the internet. After nearly eight hours of intense competition, USCF NM and 2013 Connecticut State Chess Champion Ian Harris clinched first place. Not far behind were USCF NMs Derek Meredith and James Nitz, who finished in second and third place, respectively. Thomas Ewald won first place in the candidates section, and he will be seeded into next year's championship section. The NBCC extends its appreciation to the CCFC for allowing us to host this major state-sanctioned event at their state-of-the-art facility.

Two-thousand-and-fifteen marked the 65th anniversary of the annual NBCC Championship. This tournament, which started in mid-January and was on target to end in early March, finished three weeks late because of the postponement of rounds due to relentless winter weather. For nine weeks, thirty members committed and placed themselves on the line in the most important club event of the year. Obviously, there is quite an endurance factor to play in such a tournament. The format of this heritage tournament did not change much from 2014. The only minor modification was the reduction of the number of mini-match playoff rounds from two to one. In the event that the players in the mini-match previously faced each other in the tournament, their colors were reversed so they would not play the same opponent twice with the same color. Going into the ninth and final round, USCF NM Dennis Prawira and USCF NM James Nitz were tied for first place in the championship section. These masters faced off in the one-round mini-match, which was won by Dennis, thus making him the NBCC champion for the first time. Meanwhile, strong class A players Bob McDaniel and Norman Burtness battled it out in the final round of the candidates section for first place. In the end, Bob edged out Norman by just one-half point. For winning this section, Bob will be automatically paired in the championship section in 2016.

APRIL

Our journey down memory lane continues with the second quarter NBCC highlights of 2015. On that pleasantly mild second Saturday in April, the club hosted the Planet Earth Chess Championship at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection in New Britain. Traditionally, the club holds its major annual tournaments at its home venue. This prestigious event, however, has been held at a different venue each year since 2011. What is even more impressive historically is the fact that the club has been this event's sponsor for all five years! In spite of the lower than anticipated turnout, two prior champions (FM Nelson Castaneda and Mike Pascetta) and the defending champion (FM Richard Bauer) participated in the tournament. They, along with the eleven other humans who competed, had aspirations of earning the coveted title of Planet Earth Chess Champion 2015. After round one, the players were treated to a bountiful lunch: world-famous Capital Lunch hot dogs, chicken marsala from the Taste of India restaurant, and Dunkin' donuts and coffee. USCF NM Derek Meredith took a half-point bye in the first round so that he could pick up the food. Besides Derek, Allen Mo, one of the club's newly minted experts, assisted him with the food detail by purchasing soda and other beverages. Throughout the mid-afternoon, as the temperatures rose into the upper-60s and the battles on the chess boards intensified, some of the players decided to play their galactic games outside. At around six, after a day of serious but spirited competition, FM Nelson Castaneda reclaimed the title of Planet Earth Chess Champion, the third time he has been the holder of this amazing title. In the Under 1600 section, Jonathan Needham went undefeated and was awarded the title of Reserve Planet Earth Chess Champion. Overall, it was a nice day for our club. Lastly, the club extends its appreciation to Doug Fiske for collecting pre-registrations and to Bob Cyr for directing the tournament.

MAY

James "Jimi" Wilkin was the next member in succession, based on years of membership, to have a tournament held in his honor by the club. Jimi joined the club in 1998, and he will probably be the last of the senior members the club will be organizing honorary events for who joined prior to the start of the millennium. Early on in his chess career, Jimi was a class B player; however, he quickly climbed up the ranks to class A, which he has consistently maintained over the last decade. As in the case with the majority of our members, Jimi's strength exceeds his actual rating. Over the years, he has upset many strong experts.

I believe that his most momentous club achievement was winning the 2002 New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship. Although, his automatic qualification for the 2015 NBCC Championship for his first place finish in the 2014 NBCC Championship candidates section certainly deserves an honorable mention. For those of you, like me, who have had the pleasure of playing Jimi know that he has a unique opening repertoire. At times, his sharp tactical moves can create cramped positions that can be virtually impenetrable to his opponents, leaving them with less than favorable opening positions. Twenty-one members participated along with Jimi in his special tournament held on the night of May 5. Clinching first place in five-round Swiss-system quick chess event was the club's leader in quick chess tournament wins, FM Nelson Castaneda.

JUNE

In 2007, the NBCC started a new annual tradition with the holding of the 1st Arkadijs Strazdins Cup, a major tournament that has since then preserved the memory of this kind and caring man who devoted over five decades of tireless service to the club. Besides receiving a cash prize, each of the prior eight winners has had his name engraved on the rotating "Strazdins Cup." Prior to 2015, FM Nelson Castaneda was the member to receive the Cup three times. Well, my friends, on June 9, a historic milestone occurred at the club as USCF NM Dennis Prawira won the 2015 Strazdins Cup, joining Nelson for being the only other member to clinch first place in this honorary event three times. So, the eager question is, will Castaneda and Prawira battle it out next year at Strazdins Cup X for their fourth title, or will someone else lay claim to it?

The NBCC has historically scheduled a meeting in late June for the membership to discuss business-related matters and to nominate and elect officers for the upcoming club year in September. The officers typically deliver various reports regarding the overall state of the club at these meetings. There have been some lively and engaging business meetings in recent club history, but this year's business session on June 16 was uneventful. Club Treasurer Andris Strazdins noted that the membership is slightly down, Vice President Norman Burtness stressed the need for more assistance with tournament directing, and President USCF NM Derek Meredith stated that the club continues to organize a variety of activities for the benefit of all current and prospective members. Club Secretary Luis Delgado recorded the minutes of the meeting, and all of the officers were unanimously re-elected to another term.

JULY

A week after the club conducted its annual business meeting, the officers released the summer schedule, which commenced on July 7 with a blitz chess event (with a time control of 3, 7 - something different than the usual 5, 2). Historically, the club has hosted more casual tournaments during July, August, and early September in order to give our members a nice break from the serious competition. There have been occasions throughout our club's history, however, when the schedule has had to be changed at a moment's notice. Such was the case on July 21, when the officers organized the first of a two-week memorial tournament for our former long-time treasurer and dear friend, Andy Strazdins, who suddenly passed away on July 16. A one-page eulogy - a tribute to the life of Andris Strazdins - is published later in this newsletter. Andy was well-known and liked by many in the chess community, and it was so wonderful to see many of his fellow members and chess friends participate in his tributary event. Others who were unable to play decided to pay their last respects to Andy by attending his wake and/or funeral. In total, over fifty chess players (and hundreds of his friends beyond the club) took time to say a mournful goodbye and wish eternal, everlasting peace to one of the most caring, considerate, and compassionate members in NBCC history. Due to the large turnout, the Andy Strazdins Memorial Tournament was divided into three sections. After the conclusion of Andy's event, it dawned on me that something of historic significance in our club just occurred. That is, each of the section winners (Andrew Colwell - Open, Sriniva Ramanujam - U1800, and Luis Delgado - U1500) clinched first place for their first time in a section of a G/30 or longer club tournament, a rare event in NBCC history. It should be noted for the club archives that USCF NM Derek Meredith, who delivered a beautiful eulogy about Andy prior to the start of the event, and Joe Hricko tied for first place with Andrew in the open section. There are plans to make the Andy Strazdins Memorial Tournament an annual club tradition.

On July 28, before the start of the second week of the Andy Strazdins Memorial Tournament, a very brief business meeting was held by the officers to nominate a new NBCC treasurer. Gert Hilhorst, one of Connecticut's strongest advocates for scholastic chess, had expressed a desire to fulfill this role. The membership unanimously appointed Gert to this position, one that he has to hold until 2058 in order to break Andy's record as the longest-serving NBCC treasurer!

AUGUST

The club resumed its busy summer schedule in August, which featured many fun and unique one-week tournaments. A few of the events included a French thematic event (an especially favorite opening of members Dennis Himes, Bob McDaniel, and Marcus Komons), a round-robin bullet chess tournament (which drew over twenty players and which FM Nelson Castaneda and USCF NM Derek Meredith each went 21-1!), and another “What are the Odds Blitz Chess Tournament.” Alexander Ruth dominated the “Odds Tournament” ahead of four masters, and he has won two of these cool events so far.

The most popular event of the summer season that most players in the Connecticut chess community eagerly look forward to is the annual New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship. This year, the club hosted its golden annual outing on the last Sunday in August at Wickham Park in Manchester. The history of the New Britain Summer Open began with the first event held at the General Haller Post in New Britain in 1966. In 1975, when the club relocated to the New Britain Quartette Club, the club started holding this event under the QC pavilion as a one-day tournament. The tournament remained an open-air event until 1992. For financial reasons, though, the club chose to hold the Summer Open at the QC on Tuesdays as a four-week tournament from 1993 until 2004. In 2005, the beginnings of major changes to all aspects of this event were underway, as this event transitioned from being a multi-week event to being a weekend tournament once again. Future modifications to the Summer Open - barbeque-style lunch (2006) and adding multiple sections (2008) - ultimately led to much increased interest and participation. One year later, seventy-eight players competed in the event, which remains the largest turnout in NBCC tournament history. Because the club relocated to the New Britain Assyrian Club Hall in 2010, this tournament had to change venues in 2010 and 2011 (Hawk’s Landing and Rockledge Country Club, respectively). Finally, in 2012, the club found a new permanent site for this event at beautiful, historic Wickham Park.

A fair amount of work is required to ensure that the NBCC’s largest annual social event runs smoothly. Thanks go to USCF NM Derek Meredith for promoting the event and securing the site, Bob Cyr and Doug Fiske for directing, Gert and Holly Hilhorst for ordering the trophies, Jeff and his wife (friends of Derek) for catering the BBQ lunch, and the other volunteers for assisting with setup and cleanup.

The New Britain Summer Open has no doubt become the NBCC's grandest social event of the year. Players of all ages and levels have had the opportunity to connect and reconnect every year at this incredible event. Over the last decade, this heritage tournament has truly become Connecticut's largest open-air chess outing, attracting players locally, regionally, nationally, and even internationally - as far away as Amsterdam and Mexico City. Arkadijs Strazdins, one of the club's patriarchs, holds the prestigious record for the most wins or ties for first place (ten) in the New Britain Summer Open. However, there have many other strong players who have notably taken first place, either solo or on tie-breaks, in this tournament more than once (USCF NM James Bolton, FM Richard Bauer, FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Dennis Prawira, Doug Fiske, Scott Gunderman, and USCF NM Eric Godin).

After a day of chess in the beautiful outdoors, with ideal weather conditions, the friendly battles came to a close with FM Richard Bauer winning the golden New Britain Summer Open. This was Bauer's eighth New Britain Summer Open win or tie for first place, which places him second in ranking behind Mr. Strazdins. Eric Hilhorst and James Kolega each earned perfect scores in their respective sections (Under 1815 and Under 1315), making it their first time winning a major NBCC event. Overall, it was a glorious day for the NBCC and Connecticut chess family.

SEPTEMBER

The most popular event during the summer season of 2015 at the club was the 10th annual NBCC Quick Chess Championship, which took place on the last Tuesday of August and the first Tuesday in September. As some of our veteran members might recall, former NBCC Secretary Marcus Komons created the idea back in 2005 to incorporate quick chess tournaments in the club's schedule, especially during the slower summer season. Over the last decade, these events, on average, have drawn about twenty-five players. I realize that there are some players who do not prefer these faster time-controlled events, but the majority of our members do like having the opportunity to compete in many games in one night at a slightly slower pace than blitz chess. Commanding the field in the open section throughout the tournament were two of our veteran club FMs, Nelson Castaneda and Richard Bauer, both of whom ended up as co-champions. In the Under 1600 section, Bill Campbell, one of our members who has performed exceptionally well in tournaments at the club recently, clinched the gold.

Nearly every year since 2007, Kevin Zimmerman and his fiancée, Marie Juergens, have hosted the annual Zimmerman Games Day at their home. On September 12, ten people attended their big party of 2015. The chess fans competed in a G/15 quick chess tournament while the non-chess fans watched as the sixty-four-square warriors played until there were only six victorious to claim their prizes. The 2015 “Z” Games champion was FM Nelson Castaneda. Nelson has won this event three times now. A very special thanks to Bill Campbell for single-handedly saving the day when the software failed and the pairings had to be done manually. The BBQ fans made mention that the food was once again stellar. Thanks to Kevin and Marie for holding this event. It was a fantastic way to cap the sensational NBCC summer season of 2015!

OCTOBER

The club reached its fourth major tournament milestone in 2015 with the holding of its 10th annual Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. This festive tournament, which was introduced to the membership in 2006 to recognize and celebrate the NBCC’s significant German heritage, has become a permanent addition to the club’s schedule of activities. Keeping with this event’s tradition, the club held its annual Oktoberfest dinner party at a local restaurant a week after the final round of the tournament. This year, the club held its Oktoberfest dinner party on October 18 at J. Timothy’s Taverne in Plainville, making this the first time the club has held this social event at this restaurant. The turnout for NBCC Oktoberfest 2015 was somewhat greater than expected, with thirty members of various rating levels competing for a chance at first place in their respective sections. Many of the games played in the tournament were spirited in nature, but there were some that got intense, especially in the later rounds. No player in either section of the tournament managed to get a clear win by October 13, the evening of the fifth and final round. The winners, therefore, would not be known until the final moments of competition that night. In the end, FM Nelson Castaneda and Mark Bourque tied for first place in NBCC Oktoberfest X. Ybelka Granger, one of our newest NBCC family members, earned the gold alone in the Under 1600 section.

A week after the Oktoberfest Tournament, the NBCC hosted the next in its series of honorary member events, which started in September 2010, for Kevin Zimmerman. Kevin, who joined the NBCC family in 2001, has been one of the club’s greatest contributors and advocates. For nearly a decade, Kevin - better known as “Z” by many of his friends - has hosted numerous chess tournaments and barbeques at his home.

A gracious and welcoming host, “Z” has treated many in our chess family to his delicious down-home, Southern-style cooking. Kevin has also catered many of our New Britain Summer Open lunches and a few of the NBCC Christmas parties. For his work in this regard for the club, “Z” has earned the distinct reputation as NBCC chef. Besides enriching the social fabric of the club as chef, Kevin has worked for Connecticut Scholastic Chess Director David Aldi as an assistant tournament organizer and as a staunch supporter of chess among today’s youth. Another interesting fact about Kevin that some of you might not know is that he, like a few of our members, belongs to two Connecticut chess clubs - the NBCC and the UConn CC. Kevin is one of the nicest and most outgoing members in our club, and he has been quite instrumental in bringing our chess family closer together. USCF NM Dennis Prawira clinched first place in the open section with a perfect score in the four-round, G/20 with no time delay (the zero delay was a tiny request made by “Z”!) Kevin Zimmerman Quick Chess Tournament. In the reserve section, however, there was an incredible (almost club record!) five-way tie for first place, with Alexander Ruth, Bill Campbell, Ryan Wantroba and Shmaya Ron (two of our newest members), and the one-and-only “Z” each sharing in the pool with a score of 3-1.

NOVEMBER

In addition to the tournaments the club has held for its veteran members, the club has hosted one event each year since 2011 to immortalize a deceased chess player who has been influential in the promotion of chess in our community. This year’s tributary double quads event was held from November 3 to 17 in memory of Nicholas “Nick” Stevens. Nick’s major contribution to the enrichment of Connecticut chess can be directly attributed to his role as president and tournament director of the Hartford Chess Club in the 1970s and 1980s. The tremendous work that Mr. Stevens did for the HCC during this most prosperous period in Connecticut chess history can be compared to the work that Arkadijs Strazdins did for the NBCC for over fifty years. Without either of them, the Connecticut chess scene would probably not have thrived in our area for so long. Unfortunately, when Mr. Stevens left the helm as leader of the HCC in the 1980s, many of its members left. Fortunately, many of them joined the NBCC. Beyond the HCC, Mr. Stevens also organized many scholastic and adult chess tournaments in Connecticut, especially in his home town of Willimantic, and was a promoter of big events. A few of the major tournaments that Nick directed included the 1978 Hartford Open Chess Championship (which drew 240 players), the 1978 Connecticut State Chess Championship (which drew 140 players), and the 1976 U.S. Junior Open Chess Championship at the UConn CC (which drew 350 players).

In the 1990s, Nick joined the UConn CC, where he was a member until his unexpected passing in 2000 at the age of sixty-one. Each year since Mr. Stevens' passing, Tom Hartmayer of the UConn CC has organized a memorial tournament for this gentleman who made so many remarkable contributions for the betterment of Connecticut chess.

One of chess tournaments that has brought many of our folks together are the team events. On the second Saturday in November, two NBCC teams - NBCC Officers (USCF NM Derek Meredith, Doug Fiske, Norman Burtness, and Bob Cyr) and NBCC Gentlemen (FM Richard Bauer, Suhas Kodali, Andrew Cowell, and Kevin Zimmerman) - participated in the Fairfield County Fall Team Chess Championship hosted by the CCFC. The CCFC staff is always welcoming to the NBCC family when we come down to play in these events at their beautiful, state-of-the-art facility. Overall, the NBCC teams fared quite well with the other four teams. After six hours of battles on the chess board, with a relaxing one-hour break for lunch, the NBCC Officers and the NBCC Gentlemen teams proudly took home second and third place, respectively. Unfortunately, because there were only six teams, both NBCC teams had to play each other in final match, which ended, unsurprisingly, in a draw. Thanks to USCF NM Ian Harris and Melvin Patrick for the great job they did as tournament directors. Our club eagerly looks forward to more of these events at the CCFC in 2016.

DECEMBER

The final month of 2015 at the NBCC commenced with its twenty-fifth honorary member tournament, this one held for veteran member Tom Sullivan. Tom joined our club in 2001, and he has been a regular participant in NBCC tournaments in the last decade. In the last six years alone, he ranks as the thirteenth most active club tournament player. Being a player of amateur stature, Tom has particularly enjoyed competing in the club's sectioned tournaments, which the administration started organizing about eight years ago. Historically, Tom has played in the club's slower events, preferring the more classical time controls instead of quick or blitz chess. Well, this might explain why he decided not to play in his own event, a G/20! One more noteworthy fact about Tom is that he ranks probably as one of club's Top 10 biggest upset earners for his victory against two players rated between 700 and 750 points higher than him. The Tom Sullivan Quick Chess Tournament was a three-round Swiss-system divided into two sections. Three players tied for first place in the open section (FM Nelson Castaneda, USCF NM Dennis Prawira, and newcomer Alex Guziak). Nelson won the blitz chess playoff. Ryan Wantroba took clear first place in the reserve section.

A major event in Connecticut chess history occurred at the club on December 15. There were twenty-six players participating in the 2015 Connecticut State Open Blitz Chess Championship, including seven masters and six prior champions. Member Will Torres, who came to play with such earnest and “will” power, rose to the challenge and defied all odds to become the first expert since James Nitz in 2007 to earn the coveted title of Connecticut State Blitz Chess Champion. Nitz is currently a NM. The NBCC again hosted this annual state-sanctioned chess tournament. It was amazing to see many of our old friends and new ones joining for this incredible event, which was the first that I can recall in many years in which everyone completed all of their games. Because Will won this tournament, he will receive free entry into the 2016 Connecticut State Chess Championship.

The club’s last hurrah of 2015 occurred on December 22 with its 11th annual Christmas party and 5th annual Bullet Chess Championship. This year, the main entrée was a taco bar from Moe’s Southwest Grill. In addition, a number of our members volunteered by either bringing prepared food or assisting with the delivery of the main entrée and/or beverages. The following members should be recognized for their efforts in this regard: USCF NM Derek Meredith, Norman Burtness, John Nitz, Marcus Komons, Joseph Mansigian, Tom Sullivan, and Bob Cyr. Historically, Andy Strazdins used to enliven the atmosphere at the Christmas parties with his harmonica. Andy is irreplaceable in this respect; however, Bob brought his CD player and played traditional Christmas music to put everyone a festive mood. The NBCC Bullet Chess Championship was won by USCF NM James Nitz “Kramnitz” and new member Ian Lomeli. Overall, it was a joy to see long-time friends, regular members, and newcomers all together for this incredible social event, which capped another glorious year for the NBCC family.

“Chess helps you to concentrate, improve your logic. It teaches you to play by the rules and take responsibility for your actions, how to problem solve in an uncertain environment.”



Garry Kasparov

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2015.

NBCC MEMBERS RANKING IN THE TOP 100 LISTS IN THE USCF AS OF THE DECEMBER (ANNUAL) 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.

NBCC MEMBER	USCF TOP PLAYER LIST	USCF RATING	USCF RANKING
FM Nelson Castaneda	Age 50 or Older	2367	36 th tie
	Quick Age 50 or Older	2284	44 th tie
	Blitz Overall	2385	79 th
	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2385	10 th
FM Richard Bauer	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2201	46 th tie
USCF NM Dennis Prawira	Blitz Overall	2383	80 th
USCF NM Derek Meredith	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2166	54 th
Martin Garcia	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2098	70 th
Danny Pascetta	Age 16	2034	58 th
Joe Hricko	Blitz Age 50 or Older	2037	95 th tie
Joseph Mansigian	Blitz Age 65 or Older	1745	58 th tie

NBCC MEMBERS ATTAINING THE LEVEL OF USCF EXPERT

Allen Mo and Gaetano Bompastore attained expert level in 2015.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

USCF NM Derek Meredith won the 90th annual Western Massachusetts/Connecticut Valley Chess Championship held in Amherst, Massachusetts, on February 11 and 12.

FM Nelson Castaneda tied for second place in the 6th annual Hartford Open Chess Championship held at the Sheraton Hotel at Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks on September 25 to 27.

Eric Hilhorst, one of our club's talented scholastic players, became the 2015 Connecticut state high school chess champion on April 25.

CHESS TRIVIA

One of the sections of the annual club newsletter that I enjoy writing the most is the chess trivia. Over the last decade, I have compiled hundreds of chess trivia questions. Many of my quizzes in past reports have been geared toward specific subject matters about the game, such as world champions, famous quotes, opening names, and historic events. This year's chess trivia, however, consists of a variety of general knowledge questions.

It is time to test your chess trivia skills once again, my friends. Good luck! You can find the answers on page 28.

1. In what century was the en passant chess rule universally accepted?
 - a) 13th
 - b) 15th
 - c) 17th
 - d) 19th
2. On an empty chess board, what is the minimum number of moves required to place a knight on a1 to h8?
 - a) 5
 - b) 6
 - c) 7
 - d) 8
3. In what city was the first Swiss-system chess tournament held?
 - a) Zurich
 - b) London
 - c) Moscow
 - d) New York
4. In what year did the FIDE first award the title of International Grandmaster?
 - a) 1940
 - b) 1945
 - c) 1950
 - d) 1955
5. The Greco Variation is an opening sequence that arises out of what chess opening?
 - a) Giuoco Piano
 - b) English Opening
 - c) Reti Opening
 - d) Queen's Gambit

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by Luis Delgado, Richard Bauer, Ian Harris, Jasper Stone, and Bob Cyr.



NBCC Legends Through the Years

Andris Strazdins, Luis Delgado, Bob Cyr, and Richard Lee
65th annual NBCC Championship



Simsbury Scholastic Chess Crew (directed by Gert Hilhorst)

Back row: Jasper Stone, Jake Wang, and Eric Hilhorst
Front row: Daniel Fryer, Nicholas Ratajczek, and Gert Hilhorst
50th annual New Britain Summer Open

NBCC FAMILY PHOTOS FROM THE GOLDEN NEW BRITAIN SUMMER OPEN

PRE-GAME CONVERSATION



John Sentilles and Shayamal Datta



Joe Bihlmeyer and Gaetano Bompastore



Kevin Berry and Rob Roy

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!



Bob Campbell gets ready to take on George Himes while Gary Caruso eagerly waits for his opponent



Andrew Cowell strategizes his game plan against Danny Pascetta



Ybelka Granger and Eric Hilhorst



Richard Bauer and Gert Hilhorst

HISTORIC NBCC FAMILY PHOTOS



Eighty-two-year-old Andre Saint Louis plays a friendly game with eleven-year-old Manav Ramprasad
50th New Britain Summer Open



PLAYERS OF ALL AGES ARE WELL REPRESENTED AT THE 50TH NEW BRITAIN SUMMER OPEN

Back row: Bob Cyr, Jake Wang, Nicholas Ratajczek, Danny Pascetta, Eric Hilhorst, and Jasper Stone
Middle row: Rob Roy, Manav Ramprasad, Daniel Fryer, and USCF NM Derek Meredith
Front row: Akhil Kokkula, Sudhiksha Kokkula, Jay Srivastava, and Alexander Yeung

MORE NBCC MEMORABLE MOMENTS CAPTURED ON CAMERA

NICK STEVENS MEMORIAL CHESS TOURNAMENT



Bob McDaniel and Jimi Wilkin



Ryan Wantroba and Bill Campbell

2015 CHESS CLUB OF FAIRFIELD COUNTY FALL TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP



Second to front row: Suhas Kodali vs. Alex Eydelman
Front row: Richard Bauer vs. Daniel Lowinger



Second to front row: Norman Burtness vs. Leo Bykhovsky
Front row: Bob Cyr vs. Melvin Patrick

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF ANDRIS STRAZDINS

It is with a sad and somber heart to inform you about the passing of veteran member and treasurer, Andris (Andy) Strazdins. Andy left this world on July 16 at the age of sixty-five after a brief battle with cancer.

Andy had a very long and rich history with the NBCC. He joined the club as a teenager, and his involvement in its management started when he was elected treasurer at the age of twenty-three. At that time, he was the youngest member to be elected as an officer. Besides the normal treasurer duties that he performed throughout his forty-two years of devoted service, the longest of any club officer, Andy carried out many other unpaid volunteer tasks. What made Andy's work for the club most impressionable was the fact that he was always enthusiastic and passionate in whatever he did. Furthermore, he could constantly be relied upon to assist his fellow officers with anything and always put the best interests of the membership in mind first. Because of the enormous amount of time and effort that Andy dedicated to the club, the membership honored him with a lifetime membership in June 2011. Andy's compassionate and selfless attitude and approach to life was also evident beyond the club, as he spent much of his free time, especially during retirement, providing financial support and spiritual comfort to the less fortunate.

Andy enjoyed competing in the slower time-controlled events at the club. However, you just never knew how long a chess game with him would last! Regardless of who you were, he treated everyone with dignity and respect. During the club's social gatherings, Andy would display his comical side by playing songs on his harmonica and regaling his friends with tales and stories about the good old days. It was such a delight to see his boyish charm and to hear his infectious sense of humor enliven the atmosphere at those events. He truly loved the club in every way possible. The annual business meeting held on June 16 was the last time Andy attended the club.

During his adult life, Andy was also an avid traveler and hiker. He frequently visited his favorite historical attractions in New York City and Washington D.C. and spent days with his friends climbing the highest mountains throughout the Northeast. He was an adventurous man who lived life to the fullest. Knowing how Andy was so active for many years made it very difficult to see him decline so quickly in the last few months of his life.

Let us take a moment to reflect on the life of Major Andris Strazdins. Andy was an asset to the NBCC and a dear friend to many of our members. He was also highly respected and loved by many whom he associated with at his church and the other organizations to which he belonged.

Andy was an all-around wonderful person. His sudden death was a shock, and he will be deeply missed. May he never be forgotten, and may he rest in eternal peace in heaven.



NBCC BEST GAME OF 2015

In 2013, NBCC Judge FM Richard Bauer created the ideas for the 1st NBCC Best Game of the Year contest. This year, according to Richard, "there were some fine endgames by USCF NM Dennis Prawira and Norman Burtness, 'Fire on Board' from Mark Bourque with a spectacular mate, and a brilliant destruction of the super solid London System by USCF NM Derek Meredith. Still, one game stood above all as a complete positional and tactical masterpiece. That game was Doug Fiske - FM Nelson Castaneda, which featured a beautiful minority attack that magically transformed itself into an attack on Black's king. Honorable mention goes to the USCF NM Ian Harris - USCF NM Derek Meredith game, which was another brilliancy."

Rick presented the best game prize to Doug and Nelson at the NBCC Christmas party. Once again, the club extends its utmost gratitude to Bauer for his fine and exceptional work as contest judge and for his extreme generosity by awarding prizes to the winners with his own funds!

[Event "2015 Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship"]

[Date "2015.09.29"]

[Round "3"]

[White "Doug Fiske"]

[Black "FM Nelson Castaneda"]

[Result "1-0"]

[Annotator "FM Richard Bauer"]

[Game in 100 minutes with a 5-second delay]

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Nf6 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Bg5 Be7 6. e3 O-O 7. Bd3 Nbd7 8. Nf3 c6 9. O-O Nh5?

White normally plays 9. Qc2 to prevent 9... Ne4. Black's king knight heads another way.

10. Bxe7 Qxe7 11. Qc2 Nh6

If 11... g6 12. e4 would be possible.

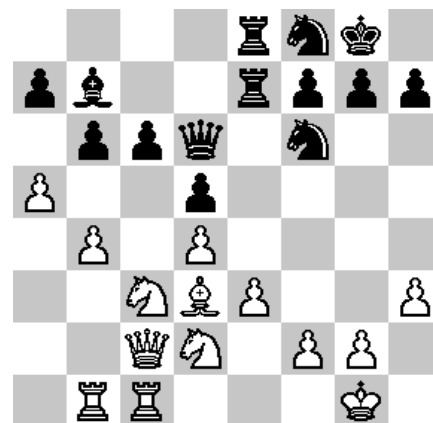
12. Rae1 Qd6 13. Rb1

White switches from preparing a central/kingside break to the classic minority attack. The loss of time does not hurt because Black's queen has been moved to a worse square.

13...Re8 14. Rfc1 b6?

The fianchetto of the queen's bishop both shortens its diagonal and weakens the queenside. 14...Nf8 would be much better.

15. b4 Bb7 16. a4 Re7 17. h3 Rae8 18. Nd2 Nf8 19. a5! {SEE DIAGRAM}



AFTER 19. a5



AFTER 22... dxe4

Black must now allow the opening of the queenside or cripple his pawn structure with ... b5.

19...Ng6 20. Ne2 Ne4 21. axb6 axb6 22. Bxe4! dxe4 {SEE DIAGRAM}

The knight is much more threatening than the bishop here.

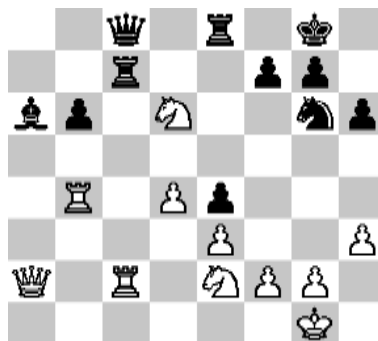
23. Nc4 Qd8 24. b5 cxb5 25. Rxb5 Ba6 26. Rb4 Rc7 27. Qa2 Qc8

With the queenside weak and nothing much happening on the kingside, Black resorts to a pin to hold things together, but White finds an unpin that works brilliantly.

28. Rc2!

Mysterious. Isn't the knight still pinned?

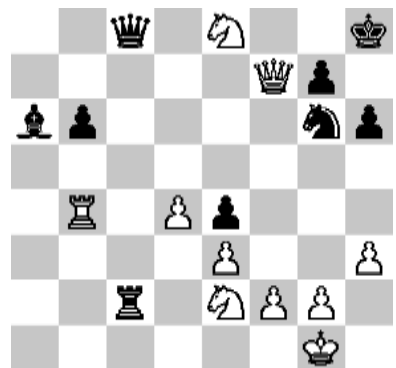
28... h6 29. Nd6!! {SEE DIAGRAM}



AFTER 29. Nd6

There is no longer a check to the king, and the queen check is just an illusion.

29... Rxc2 30. Qxf7+ Kh7 31. Nxe8!



AFTER 31. Nxe8

The threat of mate will also win the queen and a rook!

31... Qxe8 32. Qxe8 Bxe2

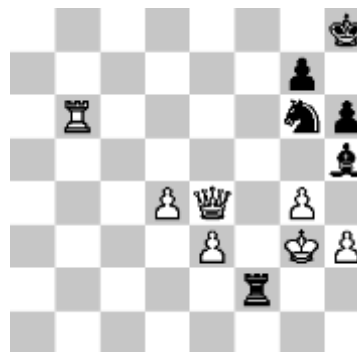
(32... Rxe2 33. Rxb6)

33. Rxb6 Rc1+ 34. Kh2 Bh5 35. Qxe4 Rf1 36. g4 Rxf2+ 37. Kg3 1-0

An incredible final position. {SEE DIAGRAM}

All of Black's pieces are hanging, including the king!

A very well-played game, both positionally and tactically.



WHY CHESS WITH THE NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB

A FILM PRODUCED BY CCSU STUDENT ISMAEL RODRIGUEZ

During the spring and summer months of 2015, Ismael Rodriguez, a Central Connecticut State University student majoring in journalism, interviewed six of our members (Joe Bihlmeyer, Matt Faille, Allan Vega, Norman Burtness, FM Nelson Castaneda, and FM Richard Bauer) for a film about the NBCC for his class project. Each of the members interviewed gave his reasons on why someone interested in chess should join our organization. Simply stated, the NBCC's mission has always been to provide and foster a social environment where players of all ages and levels are encouraged to improve their game by learning from their peers and by competing in the wide variety of activities that are offered by our club.

The video is published on the club website and on YouTube. A very special thanks to Ismael for the excellent job he did in producing this film about the club.



Home of the NBCC
Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection

THE NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB STORY **PUBLISHED IN CHESS LIFE**

In early August, our club's treasurer, Gert Hilhorst, contacted Andy Strazdins' executor to obtain all NBCC-related items from Andy's estate. In the many boxes of documents, trophies, and chess books, the church ladies found six binders of club records containing newspaper articles, tournament results, photos, and letters dating from 1938 to 2004.

On the evening of the New Britain Summer Open, I went to Gert's place of business to pick up the binders. A few days later, I began one of the largest and most ambitious projects in the history of our club. My mission was to scan and catalogue about three hundred or so selected pages in these binders for a new book titled, "NBCC Historical Highlights: 1938 - 2004." Initially, I figured that this assignment would take about three months to complete. Once I began diving into the myriad of records that Andy's father, Arkadijs Strazdins, kept so well preserved, however, I accelerated my deadline to the end of September. Going through these club records was truly awe-inspiring, and it was fascinating to read about how our club flourished for so many decades.

I finished the book by October 1 and brought it to the club, where it is permanently kept and prominently displayed at every meeting, along with the two other club history books, "NBCC Newsletters: 2005 - Present" and "NBCC Archives."

A few weeks later, Marcus Komons and Joseph Mansigian approached me about the possibility of utilizing the wealth of data in the 489-page book and condensing it into a very high level one or two-page story about the history of the NBCC. I knew this would be a challenging task, but I was up to it. Before writing this executive report, I reached out to the United States Chess Federation marketing department to see if they would publish my article in an issue of *Chess Life*. The editor, Daniel Lucas, said that I should send my materials to him first, and then he would make a decision.

After the officers and a few members reviewed the NBCC story that I wrote in late October, I e-mailed it to Mr. Lucas. A week later, Mr. Lucas said that he would publish the article, and include a few photos that Webmaster Brian Kosnoff posted on the club website, in an issue of *Chess Life* in early 2016. I was so elated and ecstatic because my hard work paid off. After all of this effort, the NBCC story will get published in a nationally renowned chess magazine!

BOB CYR'S COMMENTARY

Our journey down memory lane with the NBCC highlights and more of 2015 has unfortunately ended. Overall, 2015 was another exhilarating and fabulous year for the NBCC family. Two-thousand-and-fifteen was also the first full year the club held meetings at the Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection. I am optimistic that the club will be holding meetings at this lovely location for a very long time.

The NBCC news of 2015 was not all bright and rosy, though. The sudden passing of club treasurer Andy Strazdins in July was quite tragic. Andy was a dear friend to many of our members, and he worked passionately for the betterment of our organization for over four decades, enriching it in many ways. The club was quite fortunate, though, to find a replacement treasurer very quickly. Gert Hilhorst, who has continued the great work that Andy did for the club, has already done a phenomenal job as the new treasurer. The club is truly lucky to have such a devoted and caring member and friend like Gert.

After completing the new club history book earlier this year, I concluded that there have been three main factors attributing to our club's existence for so many generations: 1) strong leaders, 2) supportive members, and 3) secure venues. Of course, there have been tumultuous periods throughout our club's history. During challenging times, our elected officials have always swiftly dealt with problems. Simply stated, this is why the NBCC has endured for over seventy-five years and why the NBCC is prominently known today as "The Heart of Connecticut Chess."

The club administrators wish you and your family a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

President: Derek Meredith
Vice President: Norman Burtness
Treasurer: Gert Hilhorst
Secretary: Luis Delgado
Webmaster: Brian Kosnoff
Historian: Bob Cyr



I hope you have enjoyed reading the 2015 NBCC newsletter. If you are not a member of our wonderful organization, I hope you will join or rejoin.

Wishing you peace, health, and happiness in 2016,

Bob Cyr

SPECIAL ADDITION!
THE NEW BRITAIN CHESS CLUB
HISTORY TRIVIA CHALLENGE OF ALL-TIME

The NBCC is the most historic chess club in Connecticut. Our club was founded sometime around 1930. Unfortunately, most of the club records prior to 1951 were destroyed in a fire. Over the last eleven years, many efforts have been made to ensure that the wealth of records since our club's inception are preserved and secured on computerized files. With seventy-five years of data now digitally catalogued, I decided that it would be a perfect idea to create the NBCC History Trivia Challenge of All-Time.

Regardless of how long you have been a member of the NBCC, I hope you take this challenge. The questions were written in order of difficulty. The answers can be found on page 28.

1. Who holds the record for being the youngest member to win the New Britain Chess Club Championship?
 - a) Danny Rozovsky
 - b) Eric Godin
 - c) James Nitz
 - d) Mike Casella

2. In what year did the Greater Hartford Chess Club host a special banquet to honor Arkadijs Strazdins for his decades of devoted service to Connecticut chess?
 - a) 1989
 - b) 1993
 - c) 1997
 - d) 2002

3. Which of these USCF National Masters gave a simultaneous chess exhibition at the New Britain Chess Club in 1979?
 - a) Kerry Leahy
 - b) Dr. Joseph Platz
 - c) James Bolton
 - d) Richard Bauer

4. Which of these New Britain Chess Club memorable events occurred during the 1960s?
 - a) First New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship
 - b) Membership reached all-time high of 119
 - c) Club moved to New Britain Quartette Club
 - d) Arkadijs Strazdins elected club president

5. Who was the only New Britain Chess Club member to hold each of the four officer positions at different times throughout his membership?
 - a) Edmund Roman
 - b) Jan Cendrowski
 - c) Robert Corr
 - d) Arkadijs Strazdins

6. How many matches have been held between the New Britain Chess Club and the Springfield Chess Club of Massachusetts?
 - a) 12
 - b) 18
 - c) 22
 - d) 28

7. What college team did the New Britain Chess Club team tie for first place with in the class B tournament of the 1952 Connecticut Chess League?
 - a) Central Connecticut State College
 - b) Wesleyan
 - c) University of Connecticut
 - d) Yale

8. Who served the most consecutive years as secretary of the New Britain Chess Club?
 - a) Boleslaw Gryboski
 - b) Peter Kloskowski
 - c) Daniel Lechowicz
 - d) Robert Milardo

9. What was the score of Super Match I held between the Boylston Chess Club and the combined forces of the New Britain Chess Club and the Hartford Chess Club?
 - a) $14 \frac{1}{2}$ - $16 \frac{1}{2}$
 - b) 17 - 19
 - c) $24 \frac{1}{2}$ - $12 \frac{1}{2}$
 - d) 15 - 15

10. Which of these milestones in New Britain Chess Club history occurred third?
 - a) First use of computerized pairing software
 - b) First Planet Earth Chess Championship
 - c) First appearance on television
 - d) First lecture and simultaneous exhibition by a GM

BONUS QUESTION

How many New Britain Chess Club members defeated Grandmaster Samuel Reshewsky in his simultaneous chess exhibition at Trinity College in Hartford on March 9, 1986?

SOLUTIONS AND ANSWERS TO CHESS PUZZLE AND TRIVIA

CHESS PUZZLE (FROM COVER PAGE)

1. Qxf6+ Rf7
2. Rxc7 Qxe4+
3. Bxe4 Rxf6
4. Rhxg8#

CHESS TRIVIA (FROM PAGE 15)

1. d
2. b
3. a
4. c
5. a

THE NBCC HISTORY TRIVIA CHALLENGE OF ALL-TIME (FROM PAGES 26 – 27)

1. a (FM Danny Rozovsky became club champion in 2010 at the age of fourteen.)
2. c (Arkadijs Strazdins' decades of service to the club began in 1951.)
3. b (Dr. Platz, one of New England's greatest chess players, competed against twenty-two players at the club on May 21, 1979. His score was 13.5 – 8.5.)
4. a (The first New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship was held in 1966.)
5. b (Jan Cendrowski held all four club officer positions at some point during his many years as a member in the 1950s and 1960s. The club president passed away of a stroke on November 22, 1969.)
6. c (The NBCC and the SCC played many matches during the 1990s.)
7. d (There were many college chess teams that competed in Connecticut chess leagues from as early as the 1940s.)
8. a (Boleslaw Gryboski served as our club's first-known secretary from 1934 until 1945.)
9. b (After five hours of play, the match was tied at 17. The final two games, which were won by Andris Strazdins and Mary Conlon, pulled the NBCC/HCC team over the top. Incidentally, this historic match was held on October 10, 1976, to celebrate the first National Chess Day.)
10. c (In April 2009, Rob Roy contacted the officers about arranging for a reporter from Connecticut Public Television to film a documentary on our club for a new series on PBS titled, "All Things Connecticut." Our club's first debut on television became a reality on May 14.)

BONUS QUESTION: 1 (Joseph Mansigian was the only NBCC member to defeat GM Samuel Reshewsky in his simultaneous chess exhibition at Trinity College that day.)

