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INTRODUCTION

Season's Greetings, fellow chess friends:

It is difficult to imagine another year in the rear-view mirror. It just seemed like yesterday when we were ringing in 2012 and saying goodbye to 2011. The past year, like many in recent memory, was another extraordinarily fantastic one for the New Britain Chess Club, with more new and exciting events held at the club and at venues throughout Connecticut.

Since 2005, I have published an annual newsletter for our club to capture the highlights of our organization's activities. In addition, I have included segments in my reports about our members' major accomplishments at the club and, if significant, at tournaments throughout the United States.

I hope that during your busy schedule this time of the year, you will read about the NBCC stories of the last twelve months. I am sure you will enjoy them. So, friends, sit back, relax, and bring along your favorite seasonal beverage as we begin our journey into the Year 2012 at the NBCC.

This chess cartoon was posted on
<http://www.chess.com/photos>.

THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

JANUARY

As the club bid a fond farewell to 2011, the momentum with which our organization has operated at in the last seven years continued at full steam in 2012, with the first highlight occurring just three days into the New Year. On January 3, the club organized a quick chess tournament in tribute to Hermann Zickfeld, one of our club's veteran members. Hermann began his membership with the club in 1970 and was very active until 2010. He was one of the most fervent club supporters, having participated in over one-hundred events since 1990. His most favorite club activity was the simultaneous chess exhibitions. He amusingly would always tell me that he would try to last at least forty moves against the master giving the simul. Hermann certainly enjoyed the competition at the club and further took pleasure in playing a few casual games of chess with his friends at his home on the weekends. Hermann was one of the most respectable people in our club, and it was an honor to play in his event. After four rounds of play, our club's president, USCF National Master Derek Meredith, won the Hermann Zickfeld Quick Chess event, which drew nineteen players.

The club would like to congratulate our immediate past president, Mike Pascetta, for becoming a USCF Local tournament director.

The format of the NBCC Championship has gone through numerous changes in recent years. Up until 2007, this annual tournament was held in May as a five-round Swiss-system in one section. When the Strazdins Cup took the place of this event in 2007, the Championship assumed the format of the New Britain City Chess Championship, an event that ran from 1951 until 2006. The former city event was a two-part tournament; there was a Qualifier and a Finals (Championship) event for the twelve qualifiers and a reserve event for the non-qualifiers and anyone else that did not play in the preliminaries. From 2007 to 2011, an additional modification to the Club Championship granted the top four or six rated members as the beginning of the Qualifiers to automatic seeding in the Finals. However, due to the long duration of the club's most prestigious event, the officers decided this year to forgo the Qualifiers (a first in club history) and shorten the length of the tournament from twelve to nine rounds - all in anticipation of attracting more participants who could not commit to four months of Tuesdays just for one tournament.

And although there would be two sections as in years past, there were a few other interesting changes to this event as USCF NM Derek Meredith noted below.

“The first seven rounds will be Swiss-system pairings to determine seeding (with conventional tie-breakers) of the final two rounds. The last two rounds will be mini-matches (one White, one Black) between the first and second in the cross table (for 1st place), between 3rd and 4th in the crosstable (for 3rd place), between 5th and 6th, etc. All rounds count equally to determine final place between the two players. The top total point-scorer from the championship's 1st-vs-2nd mini-match will be the new NBCC champion (conventional tie-breakers used to break ties). The top point-scorer from the reserve's 1st-vs-2nd mini-match will earn an automatic spot in next year's upper section.”

It should be mentioned that Joseph Mansigian, former club president, became the first member in club history to automatically qualify for a NBCC Championship for winning first place in a NBCC reserve tournament. Joe won first place in the 2012 NBCC Reserves on March 20 and will automatically be playing in the championship section in 2013. FIDE Master Nelson Castaneda once again took the title of Club Champion, an impressive record that he holds in the club.

FEBRUARY

For the past five years, members from the NBCC have participated in what has traditionally been the largest team chess tournament in the world, the World Amateur Team or United States Amateur Team East Chess Championship. Every year since 2007, at least two NBCC teams have competed with players of all ages and rankings throughout the globe at this exciting tournament held in the small town of Parsippany, New Jersey, over Presidents Day weekend. The club fielded two teams this year. After a very formal introductory ceremony with a full military salute, saying the pledge of allegiance, and a few brief announcements from the organizers, a record 1,230 chess players (almost 300 teams) began their games in this three-day ultimate team competition.

On the first NBCC team, Mayan National Team in Time Pressure, we had USCF NM Ted McHugh, USCF NM Derek Meredith, James Nitz, and Doug Fiske. This very strong team had one of the most incredible rises to stardom, winning its first four matches. Other NBCC teams have gone undefeated through four rounds, but none with a perfect 4-0 score. In the fifth round, the Mayan's were able to nick a draw against Forking with Tebows Knights. Unfortunately, that team would end up winning their final match and the tournament since our team lost their sixth match against a very high-rated team from the Boylston Chess Club.

Had the Mayans won that match, they would have tied for first place! Nevertheless, the fact that one of our teams went on this amazing run for five rounds, having played behind the ropes in rounds three through six, in the largest team tournament in the history of chess earns, at the very least, an honorable mention. Our players did receive a plaque, however, for winning the Top Connecticut Team title, a prestigious honor that our club has held at this event for the past five years. Our guys faced extreme competition in all six rounds, and every player on the Mayans performed exceptionally well. Individually, Ted earned three points (one of his wins was against Grandmaster Mikheil Kekelidze), Derek and James each scored 4.5, and Doug ended up with four points. Also of note, this team received an honorable mention for the best team name.

The second team from our club, Bin Laden Gambit Refuted, was comprised of Danny Pascetta, Mike Pascetta, Anthony Danese (Mike's cousin), and Bob Kozlowski. After struggling in the first few rounds, we were relegated to play in the smaller rooms in rounds two through five. The forces within us were determined to do whatever it took to play again in the grand ballroom. Such an achievement would prove to be a challenge, having faced teams who were easily at least one or more rating classes higher than what our actual rating was. By the final round, we managed, having won our matches in rounds three, four, and five, to play in the main hall. Overall, the Bin Laden team won three match points. Individually, Danny won 3.5 games, Mike earned four points, Anthony won three games, and Bob ended up with a score of 2.5. We came close to winning the U1800 class prize, but, unfortunately, we lost our final match. I do also want to mention that FM Richard Bauer "would have loved to have played for New Britain (on any team that [he] did not have to coordinate) but signed onto Hanon Russell's "Rustlers" when teams were being formed." Rick went undefeated with an impressive five points.

This was my first year participating in USATE. It was truly a pleasure to play on a team from our club, have the opportunity to connect with players from the area, and to see national and international chess celebrities. I had a blast. Close to thirty people from the NBCC and Connecticut chess community have played in this tournament, and I was so glad to be a part of this incredible experience. I just wish more of our members were there this year! The USATE is a unique event. If you have not played in it, I hope that you can experience the thrill of this tournament sometime in the near future. I know where I will be next Presidents Day - in Parsippany at the 2013 USATE. I hope to see you there for the action.

MARCH

On March 18, thirty-two humans gathered at the Rockledge Golf Course in West Hartford to compete in the ultimate chess competition - the 2012 Planet Earth Chess Championship. For the second year, the NBCC received the prestigious rights to host this coveted tournament. On that warm, May-like day, members and non-members from the area played their galactic battles over the chess board. Two of the amenities offered to our players at this tournament were a buffet lunch (the items on the grand menu were roast beef, baked salmon, chicken, pasta, mixed vegetables, salad, rolls, ice cream cake, and beverages) and the opportunity to play games on the deck overlooking a picturesque view of the golf course. After six hours of play, with many decisive games in the balance, one player emerged victorious in each section. In the open section, member and defending champion FM Nelson Castaneda became the Planet Earth chess champion 2012 on tie-breaks over USCF NM Derek Meredith. And Bob Kozlowski became the Planet Earth chess champion in the reserve section on tie-breaks over Mike Javier. Mike Pascetta presented both Nelson and Bob, along with the class-prize winners, with their beautiful Planet Earth trophies. Incidentally, that was Bob's first win in a major tournament sponsored by the club. Overall, despite a smaller turnout at this event than in 2012, the tournament was a success for our club. Thanks to Derek, Doug Fiske, and Mike for their involvement as the event's planners, promoters, and directors, and thanks to the participants for supporting the NBCC. If you have not had the opportunity to play in this world-class chess tournament, I hope you can be a part of the experience at the Planet Earth Chess Championship 2013.

APRIL

On the first meeting in April, the club continued its series of one-night quick chess tournaments that have been held in tribute to its senior members. The next member to have an event held in his honor was Peter Kloskowski. Peter joined the club in the late 1960s and was a fairly active member until 2003. During that span, he won or tied for first place in four major club tournaments and rose to the level of USCF expert. Unfortunately, Peter had to retire from the chess world in 2004 due to illness. It is also with deep sadness that, because of his health, Peter passed away last January. Many of his friends, like Dr. Tony Yablonski, John Baclawski, Andris Strazdins, and Joseph Mansigian, have expressed very fond and vivid memories of the many occasions they spent enjoying a casual or a more competitive game of chess with Peter. In short, Peter was one of our club's most personable members.

Twenty-six players competed in Peter's event, and the winners in the open and Under 1500 section, respectively, were USCF NM Derek Meredith and our club's treasurer, Andris Strazdins.

Over the years, many of our members have appeared in the local newspapers, chess magazines, and the internet. However, to my recollection, none of our members has ever been interviewed on the radio about chess. Well, it just so happens that the club was contacted earlier this year in regard to having one of our members appear on the Colin McEnroe show with local and national chess personalities to discuss the current state of the "game of kings." On April 10, our club's spiritual leader, USCF NM Derek Meredith, made his debut on National Public Radio (FM 90.5) with Rand Cooper (award-winning food and fiction writer and a chess player), GM Robert Hess, WGM Jennifer Shahade, and New York Times chess journalist Dylan McClain to engage in a very enlightening conversation about the significance of the game and its future. It was a most interesting broadcast indeed, more of which I hope will be conducted by the local media soon. You can listen to the interview at www.yourpublicmedia.org/content/wnpr/colin-mcenroe-show-considering-chess.

Joseph Mansigian was the next member to have a tournament held at the NBCC in his honor. His event was held on April 17. "Florida" Joe began his membership with the club in 1972 and has been one of the organization's most steadfast supporters. In the last six years alone, he has played in more rated club events (close to eighty) than anyone else, with the exception of Bob Kozlowski and USCF NM Derek Meredith. In addition to his five-decade spanning membership, Joe has served the NBCC in numerous capacities, from secretary to vice president to president. Joe presided over one of the most prosperous periods in our club's history (2003-2010) and, during that time, created wonderful ideas for new club tournaments, like the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup and the Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship. He worked constantly with his fellow officers and tournament directors to ensure that the plans for these events were implemented successfully. Like many of our veteran members, Joe relishes engaging in casual chess play with his friends at their homes or at Barnes and Noble in Farmington on the weekends. Joe is a very caring and compassionate person, a true friend. Twenty-four players played in Joe's event. Winning the event with a perfect score after five rounds of G/10 games was one of our club's former members and the recent founder and president of the Waterbury Chess Club, Will Torres.

MAY

In the history of the NBCC, there have been few occasions where a different person has won first place in a major tournament each year for a period of five or more consecutive years. I would like to take this opportunity to report that most recently, this rare event occurred. From 2007 to 2011, a different person won the Arkadijs Strazdins Cup. Perhaps the spirit of the legendary “Straz” resulted in this incredible succession of winners of his tributary tournament. The winners of the Strazdins Cup during that period were FM Nelson Castaneda (2007), USCF NM Ted McHugh (2008), FM Danny Rozovsky (2009), USCF NM Dennis Prawira (2010), and FM Richard Bauer (2011). However, the question posed only a few weeks ago was would a different member win the 2012 Strazdins Cup or would one of the prior champions reclaim the title. The competition was intense throughout the event. But, on May 22, that question was answered. On behalf of the club, I extend congratulations to Nelson, who now becomes the first person to receive the Strazdins Cup twice.

On May 29, the NBCC held its first match with the Waterbury Chess Club. This organization has been growing steadily and has attracted many strong players from central and western Connecticut. The WCC fielded five players to challenge the warriors of the NBCC. Many of the games were close. However, in the end, the NBCC won all of its games. We would like to thank the Waterbury players for extending their warmth and hospitality to our club and to USCF NM Derek Meredith and vice president of the WCC, Matt Faille, for making this match possible. Incidentally, the WCC meets informally most afternoons and evenings at the Brass Mills Center Mall in the food court area.

JUNE

The first memorable event at the club in June occurred on June 5 and 12. On those evenings, the officers held the 1st NBCC Unrated Quick Chess Tournament. Recently, the club has had a slight surge in new members, and it was wonderful to see many of our newcomers, as well as our core members, partaking in this four-round, G/30 tournament. We had close to forty players in the event, making it one of the highest turnouts for multi-week club activities in recent years. After lively competition, with many of the battles down to the wire, FM Nelson Castaneda won first place. Besides the tournament being non-rated, no entry fees were collected, and no prizes were awarded. Of note, member Jerry Aiyathurai began his training as a tournament director, assisting Doug Fiske with making the pairings and collecting the entry fees for the event.

The club's annual business meeting took place on June 19. The only significant matter that was discussed and called for a referendum was the topic of raising dues. The officers presented a very compelling case that our current dues structure is not sustainable based on our rent coupled with our existing membership level. They outlined their proposals for a revamped dues structure. The members unanimously approved this motion. Listed below are the annual dues rates for the club's fiscal year beginning September 1.

Regular: \$50

Full-time student (regardless of age): \$25

Hardship: \$25 *

** If the four officers mutually consent not to grant this discounted rate to a member, he or she will have to pay the regular rate. The granting of hardship memberships will be determined on a case-by-case basis.*

The rest of the business meeting was devoted to new business. Most of the discussion focused on ways to advertise the club beyond the club website and e-mail communications. At the end of the meeting, the officers spent a few minutes recognizing those members who have had peaks in rating in the last year, as well as those who have contributed to the club during that time.

Following the meeting, the club held its First Rated Blitz Chess Championship. Yes, you read right - this is not a typo! According to the current United States Chess Federation blitz chess rules, all five-minute games with a five-second delay are considered quick chess games and can be rated as such. Even though the turnout was decent, I had anticipated that more of our top guns would get in the action in the six-round event. The winner of this first event of its kind at the club was FM Nelson Castaneda.

The club ended June with another incredible highlight, the Richard "Lookout" Lee Quick Chess Tournament. Rick is the only member, to my knowledge, who has paid for two memberships every year since joining the club in the 1970s. Even for his own event, he displayed generosity by purchasing fruit platters for the players! Besides his kindness, Rick is known famously as the club's resident expert observer of games. You can often find Rick engaging in post-mortem analysis with his friends at the club and at the weekend chess sessions at the Farmington Barnes and Noble. As with the other tournaments held in honor of our veteran members, the turnout was excellent, with thirty-four people in the one-section event. After four rounds of spirited competition, USCF NM Derek Meredith took first place.

JULY

One of the most exciting club activities over the years has been the simultaneous chess exhibitions. On July 3, one of the NBCC's resident USCF NMs and a resident of Simsbury, Ted McHugh, hosted a simul at the club. Ted has been known to win many games with amazing speed in his simuls, which usually means that most, if not all, of the games end by 11:00 p.m. Even though our higher-rated players normally do not participate in these events, historically, many of our amateur and/or younger members greatly enjoy the experience to play against a master. One of our most loyal members, Gert Hilhorst, recruited students from the Simsbury Public Library Chess Club to take on Master Ted. As most of you know, Gert is one of the directors of that club and is one of the most fervent promoters of scholastic chess in Connecticut. Throughout the evening, twenty-two players put the pressure on the master and gave it their all. The only player to defeat the master was Tournament Director Jozef Madej. Draws were earned by Gert, Eric Farmer from the SLCC, and by members Dennis Himes and John Logus. So it was definitely a good night for the master! And all of the games were finished by 10:45 p.m. Lastly, it should be mentioned that Ted made a very nice gesture by donating all of the fees he received for hosting his simul to the club.

One of the main reasons the NBCC is a wonderful organization to belong to is because of the social functions that some of our members hold throughout the year. Most years since 2005, USCF NM Derek Meredith has held an annual sporting/chess day for our members and the chess community. This year, the event was held on July 22. The fun began on that warm, slightly humid summer day at Beachland Park in West Hartford. Our superstar athletes, Brian Kosnoff and Derek, each formed a team for soccer and then later for ultimate frisbee. During the matches, they each provided strategic battle plans to their teammates. As in years past, there were some incredible displays of talent and coordination on the field. This year, one of the goalies in soccer, Nicole Pascetta, blocked nearly every goal attempt. However, when she kicked the ball back in play, it was amusing to note that her brother, Danny, (on the opposing team) usually got possession of it! What I have come to realize from Derek's sporting events is that it does not matter who wins or who is a better athlete. What is important is that our friends have the opportunity to get involved in some sportsman-like competition besides chess and have a pleasurable time in the process, even if it is out of their comfort zone.

After the physical recreation, most of our guys gathered at Derek's house to play some chess on his Ultimate chess board, eat some grilled hot dogs and bratwurst, and watch a video of FM Danny Rozovsky's brilliancy win over USCF Lifetime Master John Curdo be annotated by International Master David Vigorito. After the video, a few consultation games were played on the Ultimate chess board until dusk. Overall, it was another fantastic day for our chess friends, and the club extends its appreciation to Derek for holding another great social event for the club and its extended family.

For the first time in NBCC history, the officers held a thematic quick chess event. The rules for this first-ever club tournament were quite simple. After the pairings were made for each round, one person chose a card out of a deck of cards. On the face of each card, there were a few lines of a chess opening, along with the position after a certain number of moves. It was from that position then that all of the games in that round were started. So, for example, if the Caro-Kann Defense was chosen, the first move in the game started with White's third move after playing 1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5. To be fair, a different person was chosen to select a card every round. After each round, USCF NM Derek Meredith gave a brief lecture about the main lines and/or general theory of that opening. It was an instructional learning opportunity for all. The following were the openings played by all in the one-section, five-round unrated event: Round 1 (Trompowsky Attack), Round 2 (Goring Gambit - with White's double-sacrifice!), Round 3 (Ruy Lopez), Round 4 (Benoni Defense), and Round 5 (Modern Defense). I am sorry to report the disappointing news to all of those French Defense aficionados who were anticipating playing this opening in the tournament. The card was in the deck, and I can assure you that no one was engaging in legerdemain that night! Anyway, the turnout for the unique tournament was impressive. Close to thirty people competed. And, after three hours of spirited play, one of our club's experts, Yogesh Raghunathan, won the tournament with a perfect 5-0.

Here is another late-breaking NBCC news flash - Another club record has been broken! The record, which was in jeopardy prior to the 2012 Bradley Open Chess Championship, was for the most past or present members who have participated in a non-club sponsored tournament. As of July 27, that record stood at twenty-four. You might recall that this record was set at the 2009 USATE and at the 1st Hartford Open Chess Championship. Friends, I am so thrilled to report that at the 2012 Bradley Open, held from July 27 to 29, twenty-seven current or former members competed, thus breaking this monumental record by three!

I want to take this opportunity, as done with this milestone in the past, to recognize the players who made this historic (almost Olympic-like!) achievement for our club possible. The twenty-seven players were:

Alberto Angeles, Andres Castaneda, Bill Campbell, Danny Pascetta, Doug Pence, Eric Hilhorst, Gert Hilhorst, Jamal Baig, John Twombly, Jonathan Aiyathurai, Kevin Berry, Kevin Zimmerman, Leonid Stolov, Martin Garcia, Matt Faille, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Mike Cebrik, Mike Pascetta, FM Nelson Castaneda, Peter Korzeb, Richard Chang, Bob McDaniel, Sarathi Ray, Sofia Leja, Sydney Faria, William Torres, and Yogesh Raghunathan.

AUGUST

Since 2008, all of the major tournaments sponsored by the club have been sectioned. This format has given our players a greater opportunity to win a prize in their section and has generally provided them with a more enjoyable playing experience. The most sections in one of these tournaments have been three. Well, that record was broken when the 2012 New Britain Summer Games Chess Tournament, a four-section event, was held from July 31 to August 21. Even though there were only six players in three of the sections, and ten players in the fourth, this was still a major club tournament. Therefore, I am recognizing the following members who won or tied for first place for the first time in a major club tournament: Section 2: Marcus Komons, who tied for first place with members Andres Montiel and Anthony Diaz. Section 4: Allen Mo, one of our newest members, who took clear first place with a perfect score.

On a warm and gorgeous, sunny August 26, the club held its grandest event of 2012 - the annual New Britain Summer Open Chess Championship. This year's tournament was held at Wickham Park in Manchester. In the years following our move from the New Britain Quartette Club (our former weekly meeting place), the officers have been trying to find a new permanent location to hold our club's blockbuster summer outing. In 2011 and 2010, two different country clubs were the venues of this tournament. And even though their facilities were beautiful, our players were not afforded many opportunities to play their games outside at these locations, which was a major attraction when these events were held under the QC pavilion.

This year, however, the vivid memories of those open-air events at the QC from 2007-2009, with a barbeque lunch and casual time during rounds to play frisbee or engage in social interaction, were brought back to life as sixty-one players (third-highest turnout for an event held by the club) throughout the Nutmeg State and beyond gathered under the pavilion at Wickham Park to be a part of one of the most successful tournaments in the club's history. The credit for finding such a gem of a venue go to USCF NM Derek Meredith. Keeping with the tradition of this tournament, a BBQ lunch was included as part of the event. And who else better to cater the lunch for our hungry crew other than NBCC Chef Kevin Zimmerman, Marie Juergens, and Mitch Daniels. This professional food staff prepared all of the famous summertime culinary delights from cheeseburgers, hot dogs, corn on the cob, antipasto salad, fresh garden salad, and baked beans, and they provided plenty of soda and water throughout the afternoon. After lunch, our players were treated to cake to celebrate the marriage of our members Mike Fries and Bethany Sonstrom on September 1. Thanks to member Laurent Lafosse for his fine job in selecting the cake and delivering it to the event. One of main reasons the tournament was so successful this year was attributed to Gert Hilhorst. As a result of his efforts to recruit members from the Simsbury Library Chess Club, a historic twenty-four scholastic (under 18) players participated in our tournament, shattering the old record of sixteen established at the "Andy Strazdins Over/Under 15 Quick Chess Tournament" in 2010. The youth alone represented an impressive forty percent of the total turnout. In addition, I want to extend appreciation to Rob Roy, former Connecticut State Chess Association president, for advertising our tournament on numerous social media websites. Our tournament directors that day, Doug Fiske and Bob Kozlowski, also deserve credit for doing a superb job with the handling of on-site registrations, making the pairings, being available for questions, and awarding of the prizes. The following people also deserve recognition for making this tournament one for the NBCC record books: Andy Strazdins, Brian Kosnoff, and Jerry Aiyathurai. It is obvious that an event of this magnitude requires many hours of planning, but our volunteer staff was up to the challenge. Because of their hard work and dedication, we had another fantastic Summer Open. Before closing, I do want to mention that a significant milestone occurred for FM Nelson Castaneda at this event. For tying for first place with FM Richard Bauer, Nelson has earned an honorable place, with Arkadijs Strazdins and Rick, in NBCC history for attaining twenty ties or wins for first place (even if non-cash prizes were awarded) in our club's major tournaments.

So, friends, if you have never been a part of this extraordinary chess experience, or played in this event in recent years and could not this year, I really hope that you can join us at this event in 2013. I guarantee you will not want to miss it! Photos from the event are posted on the club website and on Rob Roy's website at www.backgammonchess.net/new_britain_summer_open_2012/index.html.

OCTOBER

Throughout the course of at least the last four years, there have been many members who have won (or tied, in the case of cash prizes) for first place in one of our club's major (time control of greater than G/30) events. This has been attributed to the sectioning of all of our club's major tournaments. With that said, I am recognizing Jason Homiak, one of our newest members, who tied for first place in the Under 1700 section of the 2012 Oktoberfest Open Chess Championship with Brian Kosnoff on October 2 and am noting that was his first win in a major NBCC tournament.

About ten members and ten people of the club's extended family gathered at the Corner Pug in Elmwood on October 6 to partake in the NBCC's 7th annual Oktoberfest dinner party. As in years past, it was great to see some of our friends attend this social event for the first time. We were disappointed, however, that our club's harmonica player, Andy Strazdins, who has entertained our crew at these annual functions since 2006, was unable to attend. Nevertheless, everyone had a fantastic time engaging in lively conversation while enjoying delicious meals and German beer - all in celebration of the festive season of Oktoberfest.

FM Richard Bauer was the next of our members to have a tournament held in his tribute. Rick, who joined the NBCC in 1985, has one of the most impressive chess resumes. Specifically, his greatest achievement in the club has been his twenty-one wins or ties (even if non-cash prizes were awarded) for first place in major tournaments. Currently, this places Rick at the top of this superlative list, only second to the legendary Arkadijs Strazdins. Besides his accomplishments in the club and being a former state chess champion, Rick has provided chess lessons to many students and adults, has devoted hours to annotating games of his peers, has been a strong advocate of chess in Connecticut via his involvement in the state's chess governing body, and was an editor of *Chess Horizons* magazine.

Unfortunately, due to work commitments, Rick could not compete in his own tournament, but his spirit was very present on October 9 at the club as close to thirty of his friends played in the Richard Bauer Quick Chess Tournament. After four rounds of competitive games, with many upsets and close endings, FM Nelson Castaneda emerged victorious and took first place.

NOVEMBER

Brought back by popular demand, the NBCC held another one of its thematic quick chess events. The second tournament in this series was held on Election Night, November 6. Even though some people stayed home to watch the results of the election, close to twenty players participated in this exciting event. The following were the openings chosen out of the Doer deck of cards in the five-round tournament: Round 1 (Sicilian Defense), Round 2 (French Defense), Round 3 (Pirc Defense), Round 4 (Catalan Opening), and Round 5 (Budapest Gambit - a Bob Milardo favorite!). Despite some humorous grumbles from the participants about the opening selections, it was an evening that I think most, if not all, players enjoyed. And I hope that our guys learned a few things about these openings and look forward to the next of these unique tournaments.

From November 13 to 27, the club held a double quads event in tribute to Dave Reynolds, a member of the Hartford Chess Club in the 1970s. From accounts from his peers, Dave was a chess player of amateur stature and had a very mild-mannered and quiet disposition, perhaps someone who might not be as easily remembered by people today who were in the chess community then. Tragically, while working at the Suisse Chalet hotel in Hartford one night in the spring of 1979, he was robbed and murdered. There were no witnesses, and no one was charged with the crime. What makes the death of Dave Reynolds so bizarre, and frankly almost unbelievable, is that when he was asked in college to write a story about the specifics of when, where, and how he would die, he stated (his composition was reprinted in a *Hartford Courant* article after his passing) that he would be fatally shot while working at night at that very same hotel in the spring of that year. Eerily, Dave's prediction of his horrific death occurred within only ten minutes on the day when and at the place where it actually happened. Although Dave died over three decades ago, the club decided to organize this event in his memory to honor a fellow chess friend who shall never be forgotten.

DECEMBER

On December 4, the club kicked off the final month of the year with the Doug Fiske Quick Chess Tournament. Doug was the next member in seniority to have a tournament organized in his tribute by the club. Doug joined our organization in 1986 and has been an active member throughout most of his membership. As most of you know, in 2010, Doug began serving the club as a tournament director and was elected NBCC vice president in 2011. However, what you may not know is that, besides devoting his time to the club, Doug has been very generous by donating many chess books to our club's silent auctions and paying twice his membership dues for many years in recent memory. A historic record occurred at Doug's event when seven players tied for second place, the most who have ever tied for a place or a class prize in our club's history (the previous record was six, which happened at the 2007 New Britain Fall Open Quick Chess Tournament). The players sharing the second-place prize were USCF NM Derek Meredith, Joseph Mansigian, Martin Garcia, Joe Bihlmeyer, Dennis Himes, and members Joe Hricko and Jimi Wilkin. But only one person took first place, and that was FM Nelson Castaneda. Twenty-five people played in Doug's tournament.

As in many years past, the club was voted by the Connecticut State Chess Association to hold the annual State Open Blitz Chess Championship. This year, the state-sanctioned tournament was held at the club on December 12. The format of the event was planned to be a seven-round Swiss-system. But, unfortunately, due to computer malfunction, a decision was made by the tournament directors to group the participants into two sections and make the pairings manually as a round-robin. I have to say that this wise decision saved the TDs a lot of time! Even though the number of players in the event was less than expected, it was still a decent turnout. After three hours of spirited competition, USCF NM Ted McHugh reclaimed the title as State Blitz Champion. Dennis Himes and member Norman Burtness shared first place in the reserve section.

Keeping with the tradition started in 2005, on December 18, the club held its annual Christmas party for its members and friends of the local chess community. Now in its eighth year, this festive holiday celebration has become the NBCC's most exciting and entertaining meeting of the year. Keeping with the tradition started in 2006, the club organized a silent auction in conjunction with the party. At this year's social function, the officers also held a Quartette Club-style bullet chess tournament, which drew an impressive twenty-eight players. As you can imagine, the games were wild and crazy. Footage is still being reviewed to determine the results of some of those games!

The club was very fortunate to have an outpouring of volunteers and contributions to its big year-end gala. Not only did our organization do well from donations in the silent (or not so silent) auction, but many people brought food as well. The following contributors to the silent auction were Jimi Wilkin, Jozef Madej, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Jonathan Aiyathurai, members Mark Bourque and John Nitz, and special guest Tom Hartmayer. Andris Strazdins and Joseph Mansigian did a great job with selecting the food and delivering it to the club earlier that day. Besides Andy and Joe on the food committee, John and James Nitz, Norman Burtness, Bob Kozlowski, and members Jonathan and Heeja Needham and Terry Golden prepared special side dishes. The club also appreciates the awesome tournament director work of Emily Pond and Mike Shea, who entered the results of the numerous games on the huge crosstable. Lastly, the club thanks Mike Fries for his generous donation of a gift card to the club to purchase a new printer. Overall, it was one of the most successful and memorable evenings for our club. As always at these events, it was wonderful to reconnect with fellow chess friends.

Earlier in the year, the officers sent an e-mail to the membership in hopes to recruit more tournament directors for the club. On December 22, a special training session, led by USCF NM Derek Meredith, was held at Panera Bread in Farmington to have our soon-to-be newest TDs, Mike Fries, Norman Burtness, Kevin Zimmerman, and members Bill Campbell and Jason Stange become familiar with and exchange ideas on some of the more important rules of the game. As I have said before, it is nice to see more of our members get involved in this capacity.

The NBCC's final highlight of the year occurred just hours before we rang in 2013. In the late afternoon on December 31, the club hosted a blitz chess tournament as part of the 2013 Midnight on Main Street in Middletown New Year's Eve celebrations. First, the club thanks the organizers of the MOM event for selecting us to host this tournament for the second year. Next, USCF NM Derek Meredith, Kevin Zimmerman, Emily Pond, Mike Shea, and Bob Kozlowski should be recognized for volunteering at the event. And last, since this was a major event held beyond the club but by the club, I want to note the first place and city of Middletown winners of this tournament: 1st Place (co-champions): Eduard Gershkovich and Derek. Ed also won the Top Middletown resident prize. It was nice to see new people from the community participate, and we hope that they will join our organization. Wow! That was a fantastic end to what has been another extraordinary year for the NBCC. It is now time for my long-deserved vacation!

HISTORIC MOMENT IN NBCC HISTORY



WHO IS THIS CONNECTICUT CHESS LEGEND RECEIVING HIS
NEW MARBLE CHESS BOARD IN RECOGNITION FOR HIS
DECADES OF SERVICE TO NBCC CHESS?

This photo was copied with permission from Rob Roy, editor of Connecticut Chess magazine.

The answer can be found on page 28.

NBCC MEMBERS' MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

The following major achievements were earned by our members at non-club tournaments and in the USCF in 2012.

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
Danny Pascetta	Age 13	1996	24th
Jonathan Aiyathurai	Age 13	1819	74th

NBCC MEMBER ATTAINING THE LEVEL OF USCF EXPERT

Mike Pascetta became a USCF expert in June.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT NBCC MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

- As mentioned earlier in the newsletter, USCF NM Ted McHugh defeated GM Mikheil Kekelidze in round three of the 2012 USATE Chess Championship.
- FM Danny Rozovsky was crowned the Connecticut state high school champion on March 31.
- Mike and Danny Pascetta became the first two members of the same family to tie for first place in a major USCF tournament or section of a tournament held beyond the NBCC. They earned this incredible achievement (tie for first place in the Under 2050 section) at the 18th annual Northeast Open Chess Championship held in Stamford from June 8 to 10. Also at the Northeast Open, in the final round, FM Nelson Castaneda won his game against GM Mikheil Kekelidze.

CHESS TRIVIA

Perhaps the most studied part of the game of chess is the opening. Over the last century, thousands of books have been written on chess opening theories, with many of these publications geared toward specific opening lines. For those new to chess, the opening is the most important part of the game. Based on personal experiences, however, I think it is important that a beginner develop a general opening repertoire rather than memorize hundreds of chess openings.

The 2012 chess trivia section of the club newsletter is focused on chess openings. These questions are challenging, but I hope you will attempt to answer them without breaking a mental sweat. The answers are on page 28.

1. The Fegatello Attack is an opening sequence that arises out of what chess defense?

A: Two Knights
B: French
C: Caro-Kann
D: Center-Counter

2. 1. e4 e5 2. Ne2 is the standard move sequence of what chess opening?

A: Alapin's
B: Anderson's
C: Portuguese
D: Parham Attack

3. What is the main positional drawback for Black in the Dutch Defense against the Queen's Pawn chess opening?

A: Queenside weakness
B: Dark-squared weakness
C: White-squared weakness
D: Knight weakness

BONUS QUESTION

1. What is the Encyclopedia of Chess Opening code for the Sicilian Defense: Scheveningen - Keres Attack?

A: B66
B: B75
C: B81
D: B94

NBCC PICTURE GALLERY

The following photos were taken by Robert Kozlowski and Rob Roy.

2012 NEW BRITAIN SUMMER OPEN **NBCC'S BIGGEST SOCIAL EVENT OF THE YEAR**



Back: Art Nagel vs. Bob McDaniel
Front: Dustin Huguenin vs. Martin Garcia



Jonathan Needham vs. Alexander Ruth



PLAYERS OF ALL AGES COMPETE IN CONNECTICUT'S LARGEST ANNUAL SUMMER CHESS OUTING



Master Chef Kevin "Z" Zimmerman



Norman Burtness vs. Jonathan Aiyathurai

PHOTOS OF OUR NBCC FAMILY AT OTHER NBCC SOCIAL FUNCTIONS



NBCC TEAMS MAKING HISTORY AT THE 2012 WORLD AMATEUR TEAM CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

NBCC Team Mayan National Team in Time Pressure (right)
Front to back: USCF NM Ted McHugh, USCF NM Derek Meredith,
James Nitz, and Doug Fiske



NBCC Team Bin Laden Gambit Refuted
Mike Pascetta, Danny Pascetta, Bob Kozlowski, and Anthony Danese



The Madejs and the Pascettas celebrating at the
2012 NBCC OKTOBERFEST DINNER PARTY



George "Good Knight" Himes takes on his dad, Dennis "Bad Bishop" Himes
2012 NBCC CHRISTMAS PARTY



FELLOW CHESS FRIENDS, PAST AND PRESENT, HAVING A BLAST AT THE 2012 NBCC CHRISTMAS PARTY

Front to back: Yogesh Raghunathan vs. James Nitz
Jonathan Needham vs. Allen Mo
Jonathan Aiyathurai vs. Ruthvik Ayyagari



John Fikiet, Tom Hartmayer,
Andris Strazdins, and Terrence Foster
Indeed, a NBCC Kodak moment! ☺

SELECTED GAME FROM OUR MEMBERS

A game from Strazdins Cup 2012

□ Mark Bourque (2036)

2012 Strazdins Cup

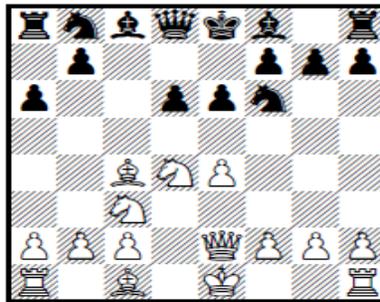
■ Nelson Castaneda (2385)

Sicilian: Najdorf – B 87

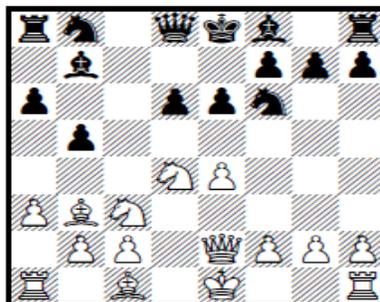
Time control: 40/85, SD/30 with a five-second delay

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4
4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 a6 6. ♘c4 e6
7. ♕e2

Mark and I have played several interesting games of the Najdorf Sicilian with his white-squared bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal. After 6...e6, the most common move is Bb3. I have often opposed this bishop with the standard maneuver Nbd7 - c5. This time Mark played Qe2, which is a Norman al, flexible, developing move.

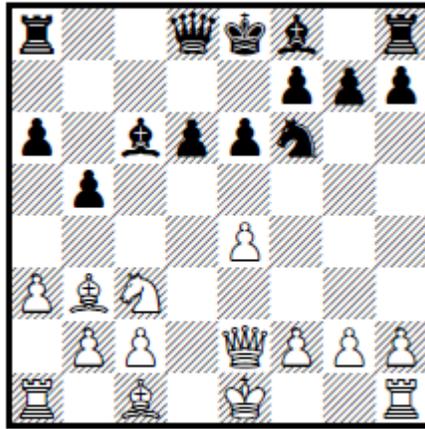


7... b5 8. ♘b3 ♘b7 9. a3



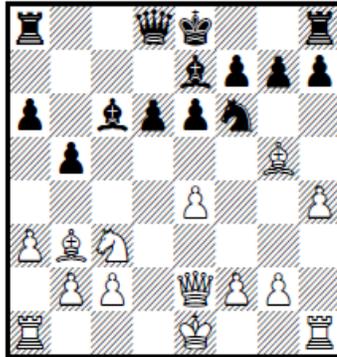
Black puts early pressure on e4 but has to be careful with the point that e6 is weak. For example, Nbd7 followed by Be7 can be met with Be6, Nxe6, Nxg7, and then White gets three pawns for a piece at the same time he deprives Black's king of a safe refuge. It is more reasonable to use the knight from b8 to challenge White's knight on d4.

9... ♖c6 10. ♗xc6 ♘xc6



In some games, White has played Nd5, which is an apparent knight sacrifice (but not really). Any capture on d5 favors White because it damages Black's pawn structure. However, simply by retreating the bishop to b7, Black obtains a satisfactory position.

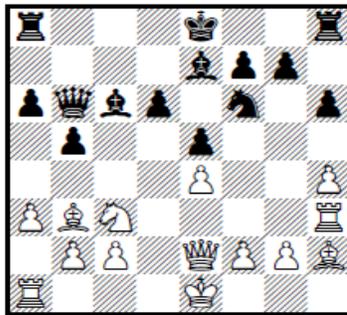
11. ♗g5 ♘e7 12. h4



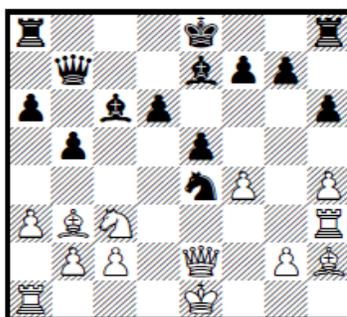
Mark shows that he wants to attack on the kingside even before I have committed to castle. He also has in mind activating the rook along the third rank. My response creates unnecessary weakness on my kingside.

12... h6 13. ♗f4 ♖b6 14. ♖h3 e5 15. ♗h2

This move took me by surprise. Strategically, it is very interesting. It aims at attacking the center with f4. Black should have taken the king away from the center right now.



15... ♖b7 16. f4 ♘e4

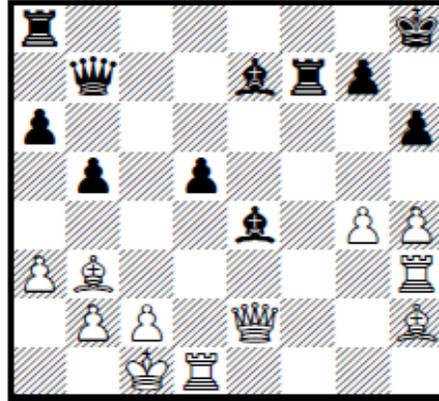


This was a crucial moment in the game. Now, White could have gained an advantage by castling. Instead, White will allow Black to establish a strong bishop on e4.

17. ♘e4 ♗e4 18. fxe5 d5 19. e6

This is another interesting move. White is giving away the central pawn to activate the black-squared bishop. I was worried that if I took the e6 pawn, my king would have been too exposed after 20. Qh5+ because I would have had to play 20... g6. However, Fritz 13 evaluates the resulting position as much better for Black. For example, 21. Qe5 Rf8 22. Qe6, and a key move in this position is 22... Qc8. Now, if White exchanges queens, Black is better because of his better piece activity. If White avoids the exchange of queens with 23. Qe5, then Black has a strong move 23. ... Qg4. Neither king is safe, but Black's pieces coordinate better.

19... 0-0 20. exf7+ ♖xf7 21. 0-0-0
 ♔h8 22. g4



White is launching a pawn attack on the kingside, and Black will penetrate to the second rank with a rook. The position required extreme caution from both sides, and there was not much time left on the clock. That affected the quality of the remaining part of the game. Fritz 13 prefers 22. Re3, challenging the bishop on e4, with about equal position.

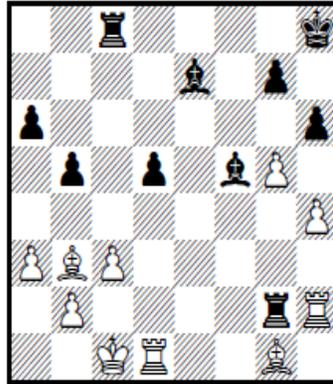
22. . . ♖af8 23. g5 ♖f2 24. ♕g4 ♕c8

Fritz 13 recommends 24... Rg2, with a big advantage for Black. This move forces the exchange of queens and leaves Black in a comfortable position.



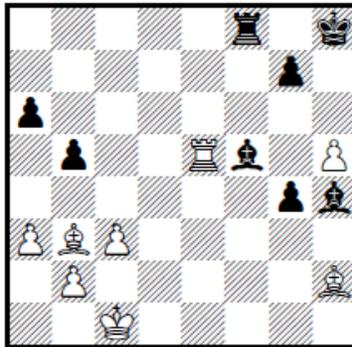
25. ♕xc8 ♖xc8 26. c3

26... ♘f5 27. ♗g1 ♖g2 28. ♜h2



Black missed a mate in a few moves with 28... Rxc3. The last part of the game was full of errors made in blitz mode.

28... ♜h2 29. ♗h2 h×g5 30. ♜×d5
 ♜f8 31. h5 g4 32. ♜e5 ♗h4



33. ♔d2 g3 34. ♗g1 ♗g5 35. ♔e1
 ♗h4 36. ♗d5 ♗h3 37. ♗e4 ♗f6

White resigned here after moving his bishop to f4, realizing that big material losses were unavoidable. 0 - 1.

BOB KOZLOWSKI'S COMMENTARY

Sadly, we have arrived at the final segment in our journey. In the last part of our trip down memory lane, I will recap about the NBCC's major highlights of the year and leave you with a few final thoughts about the future of our club.

It is without any debate that the New Britain Summer Open was the greatest event of the 2012 NBCC year. This tournament, although not a record-breaker for overall attendance, attracted more scholastic players than in any other tournament in our club's history. In addition, the club, for the first time since 2009, held its grandest social event of the year at a new, and hopefully permanent, open-air venue (Wickham Park). Besides the Summer Open, our club organized new tournaments, like the thematic quick chess events and a rated blitz chess tournament, to continue to add variety to the schedule of activities in 2012. Based on the level of support for these and other unique tournaments, participation among our membership has increased by about ten percent in the last year.

Last year, I had expressed some concern about the decline in membership in recent years. Because of a continued sluggish economy, and consequently the fact that some people prefer the convenience of playing chess online in the comfort of their homes, membership has been slow to rise to the levels that existed in the mid-to-late 2000s. However, since last January, we have seen a surge in new members to our organization. Our officers and tournament directors, who work very hard to keep the engine of our club running smoothly, have welcomed our newest friends to the NBCC family. It is because of this team's persistent passion and deepest devotion to the betterment of the club that our organization's social network, which has transformed the NBCC into one of the greatest chess clubs in America, will continue to be strong and vibrant in the years to come.

The officers wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

President:	Derek Meredith
Vice President:	Doug Fiske
Treasurer:	Major Andris Strazdins
Secretary/Webmaster:	Brian Kosnoff



The membership currently stands at sixty-one. If you are not a member, I hope you will join or rejoin the club. I wish you peace, health, and happiness in 2013.

Bob Kozlowski ("Dr. K")

SOLUTION AND ANSWERS TO CHESS PUZZLE AND TRIVIA

CHESS PUZZLE (FROM COVER PAGE)

1. Rxb7 Rxb7
2. Qxc6 Rxb6
3. cxb6 Bf7
4. Qe6 wins

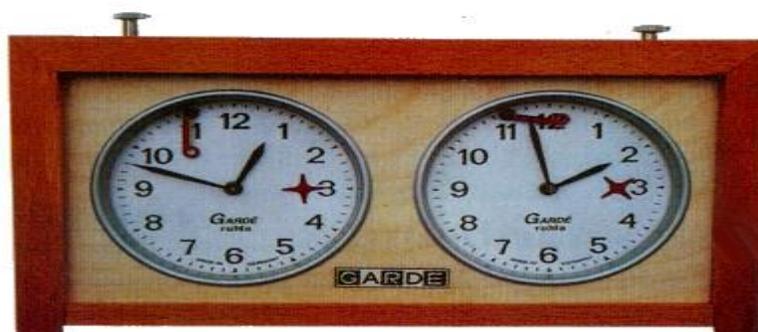
HISTORIC MOMENT IN NBCC HISTORY (FROM PAGE 17)

The person in this photo is Mr. Arkadijs Strazdins, the greatest contributor to the NBCC. Mr. Strazdins received this special award at a ceremony held in his honor in 1997. Also in the photo (left to right) are David Aldi and USCF NMs Ted McHugh and Kerry Leahy.

CHESS TRIVIA (FROM PAGE 19)

1. a (This chess opening is also commonly referred to as the Fried Liver Attack. In this attack, according to Wikipedia, “White sacrifices his knight for a superficially impressive attack on Black's king.”)
2. b (According to Wikipedia, Alapin's Opening is offbeat but perfectly playable for White. It is mainly used by players who want to avoid highly theoretical lines such as the Ruy Lopez or those who wish to surprise their opponents.”)
3. b (In this opening, according to Wikipedia, Black's 1... f5 “stakes a serious claim to the e4 square and looks toward an attack on White's kingside in the middle game. However, it weakens Black's own kingside somewhat, and it does nothing to contribute to Black's development.”)

BONUS QUESTION: c (The main line of the Sicilian Defense: Scheveningen - Keres Attack is 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 e6 6. g4 h6)



DO NOT LET TIME GET IN THE WAY OF IMPROVING YOUR CHESS GAME!
STUDY HARD AND PLAY WELL!