

New Mexico Chess Champions

Corbin Gustafson

Corbin Gustafson culminated a string of outstanding tournaments in 2108 by winning the New Mexico Championship in November. His undefeated 5.5-0.5 record put him 1.5 points ahead of the field. It reminds me of the way Bobby Fischer used to blow away the field in the U.S. Championship. Going into the last round he only needed a draw to clinch first. After achieving a winning position, he offered a draw, which was gladly accepted by Eddie Wyckoff.

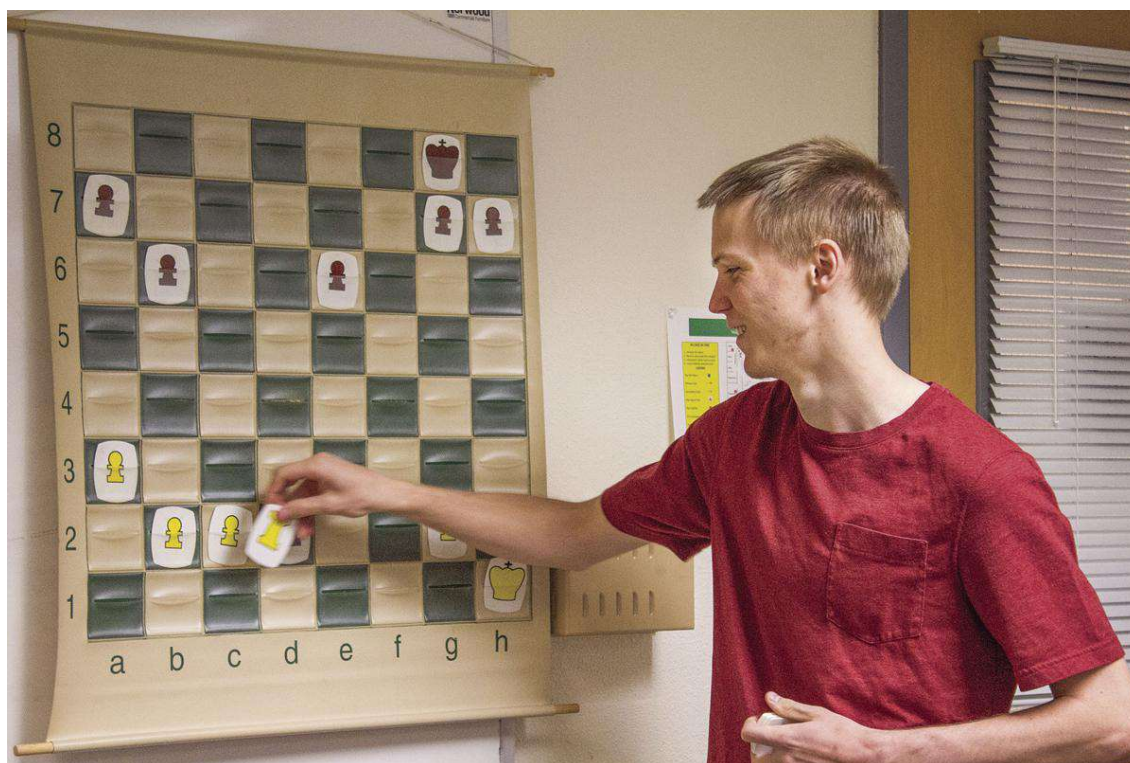
Corbin has won the last six rated tournaments he played in - all five this year and one in 2016. During 2018 he played 29 USCF rated games with an astounding record of 25 wins, 3 draws and just one loss. In the process he raised his rating from 2024 to 2144. Prior to 2018 he had not played for almost two years. I suspect he has been playing online.

If Corbin keeps playing in New Mexico, I am sure there will be many more New Mexico Championships and a Master rating right around the corner. There is no telling how much higher he might go.

Corbin kindly sent to me the photo and game below along with the following comments.

"I thoroughly enjoyed reading all of the articles you sent me. None of my games from the NM Open were crushing victories like the ones showcased in your articles so I sent you one that I played in the Class Championship. I was White and played against Doug Thigpen.

"As for information about myself I'm currently pursuing a Master's in Statistics at UNM. I've been in New Mexico since 2009 and was first introduced to chess in 2012. I represented NM in the Denker Tournament in 2014. I've attached a photo taken when I was at the Meadowlark Senior Center presenting one of my games."



Gustafson, Corbin - Thigpen, Doug, 1-0
New Mexico Class Championship - Master/Expert, Round 3
Albuquerque, New Mexico, 8/25/2018

Queen's Gambit, Slav Defense

1. Nf3 d5 2. c4 c6 3. d4 At this point the game has transposed to the Slav Defense. 3... Nf6 4. e3 a6 5. Nbd2 This is a conservative move.

[A more ambitious continuation is 5. Nc3 b5 6. b3 Bg4 7. Be2 e6 8. O-O Nbd7 White's better center gives him a small edge]

5... Bf5 6. Nh4 Bg4 7. Qc2!? Again this is solid but conservative. White no longer has an opening advantage. But I have noticed this is typical of Corbin's games. He calmly develops his pieces in the opening without pressing his opponent. But then he quietly sneaks up on you and before you know what hit you, you are lost!

[More aggressive is 7. Qb3 as in the following game. 7... Qc7 8. h3 Bc8 9. Bd3 e6 10. O-O c5 11. dxc5 Nbd7 12. Qa4 Bxc5 13. Nb3 Be7 14. Bd2 O-O 15. Rac1 Qb8 16. cxd5 Nxd5 17. Nf3 h6 18. Bb1 N7f6 19. e4 Bd7 20. Qd4 Nf4 21. Rfe1 Ng6 22. e5 Nd5 23. Qg4 Qd8 24. Bxh6 gxh6 25. Bxg6 Kh8 26. Bb1 Rg8 27. Qe4 Rg7 28. Nbd4 Qb6 29. Re2 Rag8 30. g3 Qd8 31. Kh2 Rf8 32. Qc2 Bg5 33. Rd1 f5 34. exf6 Qxf6 35. Ne5 Rc8 36. Qe4 Ba4 37. Rg1 Bb5 38. Nxb5 axb5 39. Ng4 Qf8 40. f4 Nf6 41. Nxf6 Bxf6 42. Qxe6 Re7 43. Qg4 Rxe2 44. Qxe2 b4 45. Rg2 Qg7 46. b3 Bd4 47. Qe4 Rd8 48. Re2 Rg8 49. Qd3 Rd8 50. Kg2 b6 51. Qg6 Qxg6 52. Bxg6 Kg7 53. Bf5 Bc3 54. Re6 h5 55. g4 hxg4 56. hxg4 Rd2 57. Kf3 Rxa2 58. Rxb6 Rb2 59. Be6 Be1 60. Rb7 Kf6 61. Bc4 Rf2 62. Ke4 Bd2 63. g5 Kg6 64. Bf7 Kg7 65. Bh5 Kg8 66. Bf3 Rf1 67. Rd7 Rf2 68. g6 Bc1 69. f5

Bg5 70. Rb7 Rh2 71. Ke5 Rh5 72. Rxb4 1-0, Burmakin, Vladimir (RUS) 2508 - Kobalia, Mikhail (RUS) 2634, Dubai (United Arab Emirates) 2005.04.06]



7... e6 8. h3 Bh5 9. g4 Bg6 10. Nxc6 hxc6 11. Bg2 g5N!?

I understand the idea - Black wants to restrain White's kingside pawns, but the g-pawn is now weak and it is not clear what the advance of White's kingside pawns would achieve unless Black castles kingside, which he obviously is not going to do unless White castles kingside first.

[Either of following is better. 11... Nbd7 12. O-O Rc8 13. c5 e5 14. dxe5 Nxe5 15. b4 g5 16. f4 Ng6 17. fxg5 Nd7 18. Nf3 Qc7 19. e4 Qg3 20. e5 Rxh3 21. Qf5 Ne7 22. Qf4 Ng6 23. Qf5 Ne7 24. Qf4 Ng6 1/2-1/2, Laznicka, Viktor (CZE) 2677 - Erenburg, Sergey (USA) 2625 , Arlington 7/ 6/2013 It "World Open"; or 11... a5 12. g5 Nfd7 13. h4 Bd6 14. Nf1 Nf8 15. Bd2 Qd7 16. c5 Bc7 White's pawns look impressive, but Black will easily break them up exposing the weakness of White's position. Black is better]

12. O-O Nbd7 13. e4! White plays to break up Black's solid center and open lines for his bishops. 13... dxe4 14. Nxe4 Nxe4 15. Qxe4 Be7 16. Be3 O-O!?

Black decides that there is nothing to be gained by keeping his rook on the half open h-file.

[But keeping the rook there and aiming for queenside castling may be better. 16... Qc7 17. f4 gxf4 18. Qxf4 Qxf4 19. Bxf4 O-O-O=]

17. Rfd1 Re8



18. Qc2! The queen begins a quiet sneaky redeployment to the queenside which ultimately

proves to be decisive. 18... Rc8 19. Qd2 Bf6 20. Qb4 b5 21. Rac1 Nb6!? Putting the knight on the line of White's dark square bishop is dubious, plus it blocks Black's queen thus making Qa5 possible for White.

[Better is 21... Qe7 22. Qxe7 (22. Qa5!? is now pointless because after 22... Nb8 Black has everything covered or off of White's lines of attack) 22... Bxe7 White is better due to his bishop pair and Black's doubled g-pawn]

22. b3 Be7? An attack is not good if it forces your opponent to do what he wants to do.

[It is not too late for Black to back off of his previous move. 22... Nd7 Now Black really does threaten Be7. 23. Qd2 Nb8 Again White is better due to his bishop pair and Black's doubled g-pawn, but Black has a decent position]



23. Qa5! White's queen triumphantly enters Black's position winning at least a pawn. Black can't deal with all the threats on a6, b6, c6, d5, and d8. 23... Nd7 24. Qxa6 With an extra pawn, the bishop pair, more space, more mobility and better pawn structure, White is winning. 24... Nb8 25. Qa7 Bb4?! Black hopes to trap White's queen, but his pieces are too cramped and unorganized to make it work. Furthermore, this weakens his hold on the g5-pawn.

[A better try is 25... bxc4 26. Rxc4 f6 27. Rdc1 but Black will not be able to hold out for long]

26. d5!?! The pawn crashes through opening lines for White's pieces.

[But simpler is winning a second pawn with 26. cxb5 cxb5 27. Rxc8 Qxc8 28. Bxg5]

26... Rc7? Black is still trying to go after White's queen, but this meets with a tactical refutation.

[After 26... cxd5 27. cxb5 Qd6 28. Rxc8 Rxc8 29. Bxg5 Black is two pawns down, but has some practical chances due to his better pawn center]

