

New Mexico Champions – Spencer Lucas

Spencer Lucas was the shooting star of New Mexico chess. He came out of nowhere to win the 1973 and 1974 New Mexico Championships. Then he stunned the world by winning the 1974 U.S. Junior Open Championship and raising his rating to over 2300! But then he disappeared, at least from the chess scene. According to Wikipedia "He gave up chess, for the most part, in the mid-1970s to focus on his academic career." What has he been up to since then? Again borrowing from Wikipedia:

"**Spencer George Lucas** is an American [paleontologist](#) and stratigrapher, and curator of [paleontology](#) at the [New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science](#). His main areas of study are late [Paleozoic](#), [Mesozoic](#) and early [Cenozoic](#) vertebrate fossils, [stratigraphy](#), and continental deposits, particularly in the American Southwest. His research has taken him on field trips to northern Mexico, [Costa Rica](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Jamaica](#), [Kazakhstan](#), and [Georgia](#), and he conducted extensive field and museum research in [China](#) in the 1980s and 1990s. He has written more than 500 scientific contributions (about 25-percent are articles in peer-reviewed journals), three books, and has co-edited 14 books. In 2012, he co-authored a paper describing the world's smallest [tetrapod](#) footprints, found at Joggins, Nova Scotia."

Sounds interesting, but unless those tetrapod footprints were on a chess board, it has nothing to do with chess. For a recent article from the Albuquerque Journal on what he is up to, see this web site - <http://www.abqjournal.com/467852/news/new-mexicos-newest-dinosaur-unveiled.html>

I was hoping to find at least one game played by Spencer, but no luck. However, I did find an article from the November, 1974 "Chess Life and Review" on the 1974 U.S. Junior Open Chess Championship. Not only was Spencer a surprise winner, but there was an unusual complication to the event.

LUCAS WINS JUNIOR OPEN

by Dr. Leroy Dubeck

Spencer Lucas of Albuquerque, New Mexico scored an impressive $7\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ result to triumph in the 201-player 1974 U.S. Junior Open Championship held August 5-9 at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His only draw was with second-place winner Charles Brenner of Montclair, New Jersey. Brenner also drew with third-place winner Karl Dehmelt of Philadelphia to

score 7-1. Each of the top three winners received a trophy, a free entry to the 1974 U.S. Open, and substantial educational grants.

Tied with Dehmelt at $6\frac{1}{2}$ - $1\frac{1}{2}$ were Yasser Seirawan of Seattle, Rick Costigan of Philadelphia, Mark Ginsburg of Bethesda, Maryland and Shahid Khan of Wilmette, Illinois. Dehmelt was the highest-scoring A player on tie breaks and



Front row, left to right: Karl Dehmelt, Spencer Lucas, Charles Brenner; rear, left to right: Tim Costigan, Marty Frank, Stan Robertson, Phil Goulding, David Crouthamel, Duane Polich.

Costigan the highest-scoring B player.

Duane Polich of Seattle won the first C prize with a score of $5\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$. David Crouthamel of Easton, Pennsylvania was first D with a 5-3 score. Rachel Crotto of New York City was the highest-scoring girl with 5-3. The trophy for second girl went to Sheila Gaunt of Cockeysville, Maryland. The top Junior Age 15 was Phil Goulding of Bethesda, Maryland (6-2). The top Junior Age 14 was Tom Costigan of Philadelphia (6-2). The highest-scoring age 13 was Stan Robertson, Philadelphia (4-4). The highest-scoring 12 and under was Marty Frank of New Providence, Pennsylvania ($4\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{1}{2}$).

The playing site was excellent and the hospitality provided by Franklin and Marshall was superb. It included all-you-could-eat meals which insured against starvation of either the players or the tournament directing staff. The relaxed atmosphere of a university campus is certainly an ideal one for playing chess.

A most memorable event during the tournament was the resignation of President Nixon. After consultation with my assistant directors, I decided to allow the players to stop their clocks at 9 PM in order to hear the resignation address. While this was approved by the majority of the players, there were a few die-hards who questioned whether they could be forced to cease playing if only their opponent wanted to hear the Nixon address. I guess one can call that attitude either enthusiasm for chess or unenthusiasm for politics. It's the first and only time I have ever allowed all the players to stop their clocks during a round. Perhaps we should modify tournament regulations to cover resignations by U.S. Presidents.

I was ably assisted as tournament director by Glenn Bidel of Pennsylvania and by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gardner of Maryland.

Matt Grinberg, 3/29/2016