

GOLD, SILVER, AND BRONZE AT THE WORLD CADETS

# CHESSLIFE

February 2020 | USChess.org

Is It Time  
To Bring Back  
Adjournments?



US CHESS



### IT'S AMATEUR TEAM TIME!

The Amateur Team East, North, South, and West will all be contested this month, and *CLO* will have coverage of all four—including on-site reporting from Parsippany, where Team East is celebrating its 50th anniversary!



### CAIRNS CUP

The Cairns Cup is back for its second edition this month in St. Louis and some of the best women players in the world will be in attendance, including last year's champion, GM Valentina Gunina, current Women's World Champion GM Wenjun Ju, and American players GM Irina Krush and WGM Carissa Yip. US Chess Women's Director Jennifer Shahade will be helming the livestreaming commentary on *YouTube*.

### DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Have you checked out the *Chess Life* Digital Archive? It features a complete digital archive of *Chess Life* and *Chess Review* magazines, save the most current 12 months of *Chess Life*, which are available only to US Chess members. Go to <https://new.uschess.org/chess-life-digital-archives/> to learn more about the initiative and to relive American chess history!



### SOCIALIZE!

Join us on **Instagram** @US\_Chess and **Twitter** @USChess as well as on our accounts @USChessWomen. Visit [uschess.org/clo](https://uschess.org/clo) to ensure you catch the latest news on our digital presence.

## CONTRIBUTORS

### DR. ALEXEY ROOT, WIM

(First Moves) is the author of seven books, including *Read, Write, Checkmate: Enrich Literacy with Chess Activities* (Libraries Unlimited, Santa Barbara, California, 2009). She teaches college credit courses, available worldwide via University of Texas at Dallas eLearning, about chess in education.

### FM ALEX DUNNE

(Golden Knights) has written "The Check is in the Mail" for US Chess since December 1981. A previous over-the-board champion of Pennsylvania and New York State, he now plays mainly by correspondence. He is the author of over a dozen chess books, the most recent on Fred Reinfeld.

### GM LEV ALBURT

(Cover Story) is a three-time U.S. champion and one of the world's most sought-after chess teachers. He has authored or co-authored over 20 best-selling books, and

his popular *Chess Life* column "Back to Basics" teaches essential chess knowledge to aspiring players. Lev was inducted into the U.S. Chess Hall of Fame in 2003.

### JON CRUMILLER

(Cover Story) is a national master in both over-the-board and correspondence chess. He was featured on the cover of *Chess Life* September 2013 with his world class collection of antique chess sets. Jon collaborated with GM Lev Albur on the award-winning book *Carlsen vs. Karjakin: World Chess Championship* New York, 2016.

### FM AVIV FRIEDMAN

(World Cadet) is based in New Jersey and is a globe-trotting chess coach/consultant/lecturer, and an occasional writer. For more than two decades, he has been leading/coaching for the U.S. youth teams in world events. He is a huge soccer fan and a grandmaster of food—especially carbohydrates!



## New to Podcasting? Don't know how to begin?

For some simple instructions, go to *YouTube* and search for "How Do I Listen to Podcasts?" The first video is a short and simple introduction.

**Be sure to subscribe to our family of US Chess podcasts on your favorite listening platform!**

Available on iTunes, Spotify & Google Podcasts







# Spanning Generations

Panda Chess Academy in Houston, originally created as a “kids only” club, is expanding its scope to include adults.

By DR. ALEXEY ROOT, WIM

National Master Jeff Ashton created Panda Chess Academy as a “kids only” club because he wanted an atmosphere that is safe and “rated G.” Ashton says, “I am very, very protective of kids.” He also believes that consistency is key. Offering tournaments, group classes, camps, and private lessons for children, Panda Chess Academy has been located in the same Houston, Texas building since 2008, and the club’s website promises a “consistent experience ... Our first tournament (about 12 years ago) looks identical to our most recent tournament.”

However, “consistent” could also become “stuck in a rut.” Therefore, in the fall of 2019, Ashton made two “First Moves” for attracting adults and making the club more multi-generational.

## TWO “FIRST MOVES”

First, Panda Chess Academy hosted former world championship challenger Nigel Short. “I hadn’t thought about adults participating at Panda Chess Academy until I had the chance to host Grandmaster Nigel Short,” Ashton says. “I knew that I could not say ‘no’ to such an opportunity and that many of Short’s fans would be adults, because of when Short was ranked in the top 10 in the world.” So, for the first time ever at Panda Chess Academy, on September 25, 2019, Houston-area, master-strength adults participated alongside Panda Chess Academy students ages 5-18. Both the adults and children played in Short’s simultaneous chess exhibition and listened to Short’s lecture.

Second, two months after Short’s visit, Ashton created a special event targeting the parents of children who attend the Panda Chess Academy. After realizing that many of those parents simply wait for their children to finish tournaments and lessons, he arranged a visit from representatives of The University of

Texas at Dallas (UT Dallas). On November 25, 2019, International Master Emil Stefanov and I (a UT Dallas lecturer) answered questions from more than a dozen parents about our university, methods for improving at chess, and other topics. Meanwhile, in a different room, 12 of the parents’ children—grades one through 11—listened as Grandmaster Razvan Preotu lectured on five games from his book, *The Chess Attacker’s Handbook*.

Stefanov and Preotu are UT Dallas students and members of its chess team. After Preotu’s lecture finished, he and Stefanov gave a tandem simultaneous chess exhibition (“tandem simul”), which they won 12-0.

During the tandem simul for the children, I continued meeting with the parents. I organized my remarks around Panda Chess Academy’s themes of “focus, safety, and sportsmanship.”

## FOCUS, SAFETY, SPORTSMANSHIP

Also known as concentrating or “being in the zone,” **focus** is essential for developing skills and for personal growth. Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of “flow”—a state of complete immersion in an activity—encompasses focus. As I wrote in *Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators*, according to Csikszentmihalyi, “individual life appears to consist of a series of ‘games,’ with different goals and challenges, that change with time as a person matures.” Therefore, the flow that children experience through chess games can be translated to other areas of their lives, such as viewing their academic progress as a series of games. To take a narrow example: the SAT is a college entrance exam with a time limit and questions at different levels of difficulty. Chess players already know to play forced moves quickly and to devote more brain power to challenging positions. And chess players are used to time limits on their games. Thus,

the timed SAT has many familiar aspects for chess players. So, while the number of college scholarships for chess prowess are limited, chess players can apply their skills—and the flow experienced during those games—to earn other scholarships available to students with good grades and high SAT scores.

After conquering the SAT, children will continue to play new “games,” such as succeeding in college-level courses and managing their lives through college and beyond. Thus, focus developed through chess may be beneficial to children throughout their lives.

**Safety** is another important theme in chess and life. As I wrote in *Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators*, school counselor Fernando Moreno teaches children to listen to their own instincts rather than blindly follow others’ suggestions. Each chess move has consequences that a child must live with during the rest of that game, so each move must be considered carefully. Likewise, life moves have consequences. But making safe decisions is not something that children can handle alone. Children’s safety also is a responsibility of their parents, who should ensure that their children are in environments that allow for parental monitoring.

My favorite aspect of chess **sportsmanship** is post-mortems, where players analyze their just-finished games with their opponents. Tournament chess games provide opportunities for post-mortems with people of different ethnicities, ages, and backgrounds. Other school or extracurricular activities might limit the demographics of colleagues and opponents. The life-broadening aspects of chess make the game an ideal way to learn good sportsmanship, with the added bonus that it is an excellent subject for college application essays.

## RECRUITING

Recruiting for special events at most chess



clubs is two-pronged. The first step is to recruit knowledgeable, popular, or famous chess people to appear at one's club. Economically, that can be challenging. If grandmasters or other chess celebrities don't live nearby, your club may have to pay their travel costs. However, sometimes famous chess people pass through your state or city.

In the case of Panda Chess Academy, Grandmaster Nigel Short happened to be on a tour of Texas in September of 2019, so fortunately, his travel costs to the Academy were minimal. Panda Chess' second event came about partially because several UT Dallas chess team members played in the 2019 Houston Open-Troendle Memorial, held November 22-24 and organized and directed by NTD Franc Guadalupe. Stefanov and Preotu were able to remain in Houston the day after the tournament ended so they could participate in the Panda Chess special event that evening.

On the day of the special event, Stefanov, Preotu, and I toured the Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center, NASA's center for human spaceflight. The tour was particularly meaningful for us, since the school mascot for UT Dallas is "Temoc" ("comet" spelled backward) and UT Dallas will celebrate its 50th anniversary in academic year 2019-2020. Coincidentally, through April 26, 2020, the World Chess Hall of Fame is hosting "Ground Control: A Journey through Chess and Space," which celebrates the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. After touring NASA for several hours, we drove to Panda Chess Academy for the special event, scheduled for 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

The other part of recruiting is getting participants to come to a special event. Although Ashton usually relies on word-of-mouth recommendations, for these events he "got out of his comfort zone" and created targeted emails,

texts, and tweets that promoted the Short and the UT Dallas visits. Ashton also asked for help. For example, Guadalupe graciously announced, both in-person and via email, the "UT Dallas at Panda Chess Academy" event to record-breaking crowds at both the Houston Open and its Saturday scholastic side event.

## REFLECTIONS

As a "proud UT Dallas alum" of the class of 2003 and former member of its chess team, Ashton was inspired by meeting Stefanov (class of 2022) and Preotu (class of 2021) and by how well the "UT Dallas at Panda Chess Academy" special event went. After the event, Ashton emailed: "I was impressed by how charismatic, entertaining, and friendly the two UT Dallas chess team members were and how easily they engaged the parents."

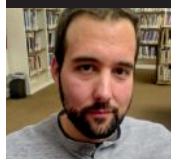
"Also, the November 25 parent-oriented event reminded me how lucky I am to be around classy and friendly chess parents. I have hosted almost 800 chess tournaments. While their children play chess, the parents are nice to each other and make great friends. But I've never before had an event directed at parents. The success of this special parent-oriented event encourages me to think of new ways to involve parents."

Ashton added, "The UT Dallas chess team members also were great role models. They earn good grades while progressing at chess, which is exactly what their parents and I expect from children who attend Panda Chess Academy."

As for the future of blending generations at Panda Chess Academy, Ashton is taking a slow and cautious approach, saying, simply, "In the future, I would like to invite more speakers and invite adults to be guests." ♠

# FACES ACROSS THE BOARD

By AL LAWRENCE



**JUSTIN PAUL**

DANBURY, CT

*Getting good, one day at a time*

Chess started out as a family tradition. Justin's father taught him when he was six. He played regularly with his father, grandfather and cousin and went on to play with friends in high school. Then he got busy with the big things in life. He married his wife Zipporah, who plays chess occasionally. He stayed busy learning his job as a state of Connecticut transportation engineer, surveying roads and bridges for design improvements.

"Glenn Budzinski was the one who encouraged me in 2013 to play rated games as my best road toward improvement."

Modern US Chess time controls make it possible for busy people to play rated events in an afternoon and get home for the rest of the weekend. Justin began playing in Budzinski's Newtown Chess Club tournaments and at Melvin Patrick's quads at the Chess Club of Fairfield County. All of Justin's 40 or so competitions have been within 45 minutes of his home, and all one-day affairs.

He's recently made some big strides. "He's won the last two events, six games, with a perfect 6-0 record," Budzinski said. Justin considers himself a positional player at heart, calculating only when he has to. "I've been focusing on improving my weaknesses. For me, this means solving tactics puzzles every day and studying openings that I have poor results against."

**"Chess has given me an enjoyable way to learn more about myself and disconnect from everyday life."**

Chess has repaid the time he's devoted to it. "I have been able to better other areas of my life over the past few years because of the lessons I have learned over the board. Chess is a rich, rewarding art that can teach self-discipline, humility, risk management and critical thinking."

And it's all in a day's play.

**Write to [Faces@uschess.org](mailto:Faces@uschess.org).**