Wilshire Chess Society Newsletter

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Can Taking Lessons From a Chess Coach Improve Your Game?

I remember reading in *Chess Life* in GM Andy Soltis' column where he said that you have about 7 years to reach your potential in chess. In other words, after 7 years you're about as good as you're ever going to get. This is bad news for me, as I have been playing chess for 10 years! When I first started I took a few lessons from a senior master. While he was a good player himself, every time I would ask him to teach me an opening, he would say, "I don't teach openings, you have to find one on your own." Needless to say, this did not sit well with me and I stopped going to him. I think you should teach whatever your students ask you to teach them, after all, they are paying the bill. For the next several years I tried teaching myself. I bought tons of chess books (can you relate?), video tapes, computer "And on move 31 of your game programs, and even chess lessons on audio tapes! However, try as I might to improve my



you missed Ng4! winning."

rating, I was only able to get myself into the low 1700's. And even that didn't last long as I soon found myself back in the high 1600's. Life is tough for the part time club player.

I realized that I had taken myself as far as I could on my own. However, and this is where I disagree with Solits, I felt that with a good teacher I could still improve. After all, I loved the game, and to me this is the most important quality a player must possess if he is going to get better. I took one lesson with IM Jeremy Silman, and while I enjoyed it, his hefty \$75.00 per hour fee was a little too rich for my blood. A little while after that I began taking lessons from IM Varuzhan Akobian. Although he is the strongest player in the country for his age (over 2500 elo and he's only 18!), the drive out to Glendale was a little far, although certainly doable. More recently, I began studying with FM Carsten Hansen. First of all, he comes to my house which is a big plus. Secondly, his rates are extremely modest, only \$25.00

per hour. Thirdly, he is not fussy about the clock and always gives me extra time. Fourthly, he is often hired to write chess books and so is extremely knowledgeable about chess and has a lot to teach me. And fifth and most importantly, we get along extremely well and genuinely enjoy each others company. This is no small point. For whatever reason if you do not like/respect whomever you are taking lessons from, this will definitely effect how much you get out of the lesson. For my part, I always try to be prepared before our lessons, both mentally and physically. By mentally I mean that I am looking forward to our lesson and clear my mind of worries from my day so I can concentrate 100% and get the most out of our time together. By physically, I mean I set up the room and get everything ready for his arrival. I always have coffee, tea, cookies and other refreshments ready for us. I make sure my wooden chess board and pieces have been cleaned. I have a little table next to the board where our drinks go as well as any material we are going to cover that evening, such as any new games I might have played. Finally, when he arrives (often from having just given another lesson), I always great him with a big smile and a handshake to let him know I'm glad to see him and I'm excited about our lesson. (Continued on Back)

Congrats! to the winners of our May 12 Tourn.: Quad 1: Richard Henderson, Nicanor Navarro, Ilya Malinskiy (3 way tie); Ouad 2: Eric Leung; Swiss: Kevin Gerson •

See you June 23! Note: 1) We are back in room C. 2) Entry fees & dues are going up slightly in June, but the prize fund is larger (see below) -Michael Jeffreys

Next W.C.S. G/45 Tournament June 23, 2002 - Sunday

Westside Pavilion, Community Room "C" 10850 W. Pico Blvd., West Los Angeles (3rd Flr., West of Barnes & Noble, next to the SPCA pet adoption center) Registration 10:30 am Games from 11:00 am - 4:30 pm, 3-rounds Round robin quads (groups of 4) by rating

Time control: G/45 mins. Entry fee: \$20.00 Prizes: \$50.00 per quad (35.00 1st, 15.00 2nd) WCS Membership required (\$15.00/year) as well as U.S.C.F. Membership (\$40.00/year).

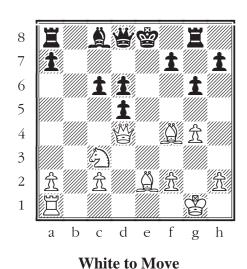
(Continued from Front) The answer to the question of whether *you* should take lessons from a chess coach depends on your answers to the following: 1) Has your rating basically stayed the same (or dropped!?) over the past 3 years (or longer!?). 2) Do your study habits seems unorganized and random? 3) Are you simply not sure what you should be studying? 4) Would you work harder if you knew somebody was going to be going over your games? 5) Are you open to new ideas? 6) Are you willing to admit you have weaknesses in your game? 7) Is chess important enough to you that you would be willing to spend hard earned cash to improve?

Obviously, only you can decide if hiring a coach is right for you. If you are interested, I suggest asking around and getting feedback from other players. They will tell you which coaches really care about their students and which are just doing it for the extra income. One final thought: be patient. Taking lessons is not an instant cure for what ails your game. Instead, it's more of a tearing down and rebuilding process that takes time. Remember, Rome wasn't built in a day. However, if you are willing to put in the time, money, and effort, you *will* be rewarded with a much stronger game, more rating points, and the satisfaction of having set a goal and achieved it.

Game of The Month

Bashi, Ped (1619) - Hamer, Greg (1731) 2001 American Open Sicilian Defense

1. e4 c5 2. 公f3 公c6 3. d4 c×d4 4. 公×d4 g6 5. Qc4 Qg7 6. 公×c6 b×c6 7.0-0 公f6 8. e5 公g8 9. Qf4 公h6 10. 皆d2! 公f5? 11. g4! d5 12. Qe2 公d6 13. e×d6 Q×b2 14. 公c3 Q×a1 15. 互×a1 e×d6 16. 皆d4 互g8? I suspect Black didn't like 16....0-0 because of 17. Bh6 f6 18. Bxf8. (See Diagram)



17. **公b5!** c×b5 18. **②**×b5+ **②**d7 19. **冯e1+ 曾e7** If Kf8 20. Bh6+ Rg7 Qxg7# 20. **冯**×e7+ **曾**×e7 21. **②g5+ 曾f8 22. ③**×d7 Resigns 1-0

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