Mating Season Opens at Chess Club

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Whether you prefer to mate with fast tantalizing tactics or with slow positional play, the UMBC Chess Club has a lot to offer. At the weekly meetings you can always find a willing partner—from "wood-pushing" patzer to serious tournament player. This year, the club plans to hold introductory lectures, freestyle and simultaneous exhibitions, tournaments, and a student-faculty match. Check out the action every Friday afternoon 1–6pm in University Center Room 312.

Exhibitions Planned

To promote chess on campus, the club plans to hold two exhibitions this fall. The first, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday October 23 near University Center Plaza, will be a "freestyle" exhibition during which anyone may step up to challenge club members. The second, to be held sometime in November, will be a "simultaneous" exhibition during which a high-rated player will simultaneously play all challengers. Everyone is invited to participate.

Since many people feel intimidated to play chess against seasoned tournament competitors, the club plans to sponsor new events geared for the novice player. In late November, the club will begin a series of introductory lectures on how to play chess. Afterwards, the club plans to hold a low-key nonrated beginner's tournament. In addition, at the weekly meetings which currently attract approximately 15 people, it is always possible to get pointers from experienced players and to find a partner at practically any level.

For the serious player, the club plans to organize a tournament rated by the USCF (United States Chess Federation), to hold its annual championship restricted to UMBC students, to compete against nearby colleges in match play, and to send a team to the Pan-American Intercollegiate Chess Championships in Chicago. The rated tournament is tentatively scheduled for February, the UMBC Championship for December or January.

Kimani Stancil, Chess Expert

The primary chess force on campus is 19-year old Kimani A. Stancil, President of the UMBC Chess Club, Meyerhoff Scholar, and junior in Electrical Engineering/Applied Physics, who hopes someday to become World Chess Champion. Concisely describing himself as a "serious, analytical individual who reads a lot," Stancil explained that he first learned chess (at least some of the rules) from his father at age 4–5. But it was not until 10th grade that he developed a serious interest in the game. Since then, his official

USCF rating has skyrocketed to 2064, earning him the title of Chess Expert and placing him in the top 6% of all rated players. (National ratings are divided into the following 8 categories: Class E 1199 and below, Class D 1200–1399, Class C 1400–1599, Class B 1600–1799, Class A 1800–1999, Expert 2000–2199, Master 2200–2199, and Senior Master 2400 and above.)

Last year, Stancil split $2,200 in a 4-way tie for top Class A player at the 1990 U.S. Open in Jacksonville, Florida. He also played Board 1 on the UMBC team at the 1990–1991 Pan-American Intercollegiate Chess Championships. Although the UMBC team finished 26th out of 27 teams, Stancil compiled an impressive score of 3-wins, 2-draws, and 1-loss against strong competition. With soft-spoken self-confidence, he stated that next year he hopes "to win the 1992 U.S. Junior Open" to be held in Pennsylvania.

Explaining why he likes chess, Stancil abstracted rationally, "I enjoy the ability to draw upon resources and to manipulate those resources to achieve goals . . . to orchestrate different parts of a system to make the system work." Continuing philosophically he added, "In chess, controlling the center is one of the most important principles. In life, your foundation is a center which enables you to do anything you want." According to Stancil, "Your foundation is your career, spiritual—everything that makes you you." Stancil concluded that in chess and in life you must build from a strong foundation and "use resources to make things work for you."

In his personal life, Stancil has always taken advantage of resources at school, for example, by seeking out his teachers. Moreover, the spiritual bond with his family has given him the support, encouragement, assiduity, and self-confidence that has been the foundation of his academic success.

Although he has no favorite chess player, Stancil admires former World Champion Anatoly Karpov for his opening play and former Champion Robert (Bobby) Fischer for his tactics. He also admires Senior Master Emory Tate, who is an outstanding tactician and one of the leading African-American chess players.

Asked what advice he would pass on to aspiring chess players, Stancil gave a four-part answer. For interested novices, "Learn the rules and play." For those who know the rules but are at a loss for what to do, "Experiment." For competitive players who want to win, "Look at everything; be aware of the entire board." And for advanced players, "Keep studying!"

When not playing chess or studying physics, Stancil participates in the Black Men's Support Group and the professional leadership organization Black Visions. But for Stancil, family, school, friends, and his favorite sports—basketball and table tennis—will always come before chess, in that order. Asked how he finds time to balance chess, school, and his many other activities, he retorted, "I don't. I do what has to be done."

Working together with fellow officers James Sombke (Vice President), Titus Abraham (Treasurer), and Andrew Belenky (Secretary), Stancil hopes to make the UMBC Chess Club a "consistent and welcome forum where people can come and play and enjoy themselves . . . where people don't feel pressured."

Students Checkmate Professors

Last spring, in an outdoor exhibition chess match held Saturday April 27, 1991, representatives of the UMBC Chess Team defeated an *ad hoc* team of professors. Although I had not played tournament chess for over seven years, I could not turn down the opportunity when Jeffrey Greenebaum (senior, English) challenged me "to defend the honor of the Faculty." Leading the student victory, Stancil beat former USCF Chess Master Slobodan (Slo) Petrovich (Director, Interdisciplinary Studies; and Associate Professor, Psychology). I scored the only Faculty point by putting away Greenebaum in 24 moves with a kingside attack. Playing Black, William Tittle (senior, Geography) clinched the decisive game after James Mayfield (Assistant Professor, Computer Science) blundered away a rook for a knight. The final score: Students-2, Professors-1, with an upset victory for the students. All enjoyed the event, which was part of the Quadmania spring carnival.

Quadmania provided an unlikely setting for a chess match and challenged the players' ability to concentrate. Intense sunlight beamed on the players and loud music blared from a nearby reggae band. Periodically the crowd roared when a customer hit the red bull's-eye, splashing a willing victim into a barrel of water at the adjacent baseball-throwing booth. Twice, an errant Frisbee razed the pieces in the Tittle-Mayfield bout.

Each game was played at the breakneck pace of 45-minutes "sudden-death." That is, each player was given 45 minutes to complete his entire game—or lose by time forfeiture. Special clocks measured the time spent by each contestant. By contrast, during the 1990–1991 World Chess Championship, Anatoly Karpov and Gary Kasparov each trudged along at the sluggish rate of 40 moves in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours (a typical game lasts about 60 moves).

On Board 1 in command of the White pieces, Petrovich opened the game by boldly advancing his king pawn two squares. Stancil had intended to arrange his forces in the Modern defense, but the opening drifted into the related Pirc. Both of these hypermodern defenses allow White initially to build up a strong center, which Black attempts to undermine from the flank. Soon Stancil found himself defending against the aggressive Austrian attack. After misplacing his king bishop, however, White lost the initiative and wound up in a lost endgame. Stancil skillfully exploited subtle positional weaknesses created from White's misplaced bishop to win the game.

On Board 2 playing Black, I entered the sharp Najdorf variation of the Sicilian defense, a favorite of Fischer and current World Champion Kasparov. When Greenebaum advanced his king knight prematurely (see move 9 in game below), I drove it back and used the resulting gain in time to launch a combative counterattack. Later, Greenebaum gave up the knight thinking he would be able to capture my knight with advantage. But I prevented this capture by threatening checkmate. Overlooking further gain of material I sacrificed two pawns, mobilizing my remaining forces into battle. I finished off the game with a combination that took advantage of White's weak kingside pawn structure (see Figure 1).

Sherman (Black)

Greenebaum (White)

Figure 1: Position after 23 ... Ne4–d2!. Only by giving up his queen can White stop the dual threats of 24 ... Bb7×Bf3 25 ... Qh3–g2 mate and 24 ... Nf6–g4 25 ... Qh3×h2 mate.

On Board 3, both players were new to chess. Friday evening I had coached my teammate, showing him the basic moves of the English opening—a solid opening popularized by the Englishman Howard Stauton in the 1851 London Tournament. As planned, Mayfield began by thrusting his queen bishop pawn. Occasionally looking up from my board, I was happy to see that Mayfield had gained an advantage by penetrating into Black's queenside. Even after misplacing his queen, White still had the upper hand. But the tables turned. Mayfield blundered, giving up a rook for a knight and allowing his queen bishop to be trapped by pawns. Although down decisive material, and with less than five minutes remaining on the clock, Mayfield bravely fought on until Tittle checkmated him on move 43.

For the Faculty, the match had a bitter-sweet outcome: although we lost, we enjoyed playing and were happy to see our students perform well. Nevertheless, we hope this match will stimulate other professors to join our ranks to avenge the Faculty loss.

Anyone interested in learning more about chess activities at UMBC is encouraged to contact Kimani A. Stancil, President, UMBC Chess Club, at (301) 455–1659.

Editor's note: Sherman is Faculty advisor to the Chess Club. He would like to thank Jeffrey Greenebaum and James Mayfield for helpful editorial comments.

Sicilian Defense

	White Greenebaum	Black Sherman		White Greenebaum	Black Sherman
1	e2–e4	c7–c5	13	Nd5×Be7+	Qd8×Ne7
2	Ng1–f3	d7–d6	14	Nf3–h4?[5]	Qe7×Nh4
3	Nb1–c3	Ng8–f6	15	Qd1–d5	Ra8–a7
4	d2–d4	c5×d4	16	g2–g3?[6]	Qh4–h3!
5	Nf3×d4	a7–a6	17	Qd5–c4[7]	a6–a5[8]
6	Bf1–e2	e7–e5	18	Be2–f3?	d6–d5!?[9]
7	Nd4–f3[1]	Bf8–e7[2]	19	Qc4×d5	Bc8–b7
8	O–O[3]	O–O	20	Qd5×e5	Nb8–d7[10]
9	Nf3–g5?[4]	h7–h6	21	Qe5–f4[11]	Nd7–f6
10	Ng5–f3	b7–b5	22	Bc1–e3	g7–g5
11	a2–a4	b5–b4	23	Qf4–c7	Ne4–d2![12]
12	Nc3–d5	Nf6×e4	24	Bg2×Bb7	Nf6–g4
				resigns	

[1] Better is 7 Nd4–b3 followed by 8 f2–f4.

[2] The *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* recommends 7 ... h7–h6 as the main variation.

[3] Better is 8 Bc1–g5.

[4] Loses time. After 9 Nf3–g5? h7–h6 10 Ng5–f3, Black returns to the main variation two moves ahead.

[5] White had counted on 14 Qd1–d5 but overlooked 14 Qd1–d5 Bc8–b7.

[6] Seriously weakens the white squares.

[7] Not 17 Qd5×Ne4? Bc8–b7, threatening 18 ... Qh3–g2 mate.

[8] With the idea of 18 ... Bc8–a6. Also good for Black is 17 ... Bc8–b7 18 f2–f3 (not 18 Bc1–e3 Ne4–d2! winning the queen, nor 18 Qc4×b4 Ne4×g3! 19 f2–f3 Ng3×Be2+ with devastating attack) Rf8–c8.

[9] Incredibly, I did not play my intended 18 ... Bc8–a6, winning more material. For example, 18 ... Bc8–a6 19 Bf3–g2 (not 19 Qc4×Ne4?? Qh3×Rf1 mate) Qh3×Bg2+ 20 Kg1×Qg2 Ba6×Qc4.

[10] As pointed out by Milton Smith, 20 ... Ne4–f6! (threatening Nf6–g4) would have ended the game in a similar but quicker fashion.

[11] Threatening 22 Bf3–g4. Better is 21 Qd5–h5, which eliminates the mate threat but still leaves Black a piece ahead.

[12] See Figure 1.

How to Read Algebraic Chess Notation

Chess players refer to squares on the chessboard using a 2-dimensional coordinate system of *files* and *ranks*. As shown in Figure 1, the board consists of 8 vertical files (lettered a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h) and 8 horizontal ranks (numbered 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8). Any square can be specified by giving its file and rank. For example, the lower-left corner square is a1 and the upper-right corner square is h8. The coordinate system is always oriented from White's point of view in the sense that White's pieces are initially on rank 1. Both White and Black use the same White-centric coordinate system. This coordinate system is the basis of *algebraic chess notation.*

In algebraic chess notation, each move is described by specifying the source and destination squares for the move. For example, Greenbaum's first move was e2–e4, which means that Greenbaum moved his chessman at square e2 to square e4; that is, Greenbaum advanced his king pawn two squares. My response was c7–c5; that is, I moved my queen bishop pawn from square c7 to square c5, entering the Sicilian Defense.

To assist the reader, I have added the following redundant descriptive information to each move. First, each check is denoted by "+". Second, if a piece is moved, the type of the moved piece is specified by a single capital letter: K–king, Q–queen, R–rook, B–bishop, N–knight. Third, if a piece is captured, the capture is denoted by "×" and the type of the captured piece is specified by a captial letter immediately following the "×". For example, Greenbaum's 13th move was Nd5×Be7+, which means that Greenbaum's knight at square d5 captured my bishop at square e7 giving check. If no piece type information is written, it is implied that the move involves a pawn (technically, a pawn is not considered a piece). Thus, because my 4th move c5×d4 mentions no piece types, the implied meaning is that my pawn on square c5 captured Greenbaum's pawn on square d4.

In addition, there are a few special notations for special moves. For example, O–O denotes castling on the kingside and O–O–O denotes queenside castling. Castling is a single move that simultaneously moves the king and one rook. For example, when White castles on the kingside, White simultaneously moves Ke1–g1 and Rh1–f1.

Finally, unusual moves are highlighted by the following subjective symbols: ?–bad move, ??–very bad move, !–good move, !!–very good move, !?–enterprising move, ?!–dubious move.

Although most tournament players use an abbreviated form of algebraic notation (*e.g.* "Ne7" rather than "Nd5×Be7+"), I prefer to use the long form of algebraic notation so that it is easier to detect and correct typographical errors and so that the game can be played forward and backward.

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Students Checkmate Professors (supplement)
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