

~ En Passant ~

Newsletter of the North Penn Chess Club, Lansdale, PA – Summer 2017, Part 5

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This issue features games from the
118th U. S. Open from NPCC Presi-
dent Joseph Mucerino:

118th U.S. Open

By Joseph Mucerino

This year's U.S. Open was fairly close to home in Norfolk, VA. Having missed the 2006 event in Cherry Hill, NJ, I decided to go this year. Virginia is also a state that I have never played in before. The defending champion (who won the last two years) is Pennsylvania's own GM Alexander Shabalov. I have played *many* people all over Pennsylvania, but I have never played against our state's strongest player. A few times I missed being paired with him by only one board! This year, he returned to try to defend his title and earn a spot in next year's U.S. Championship.

Norfolk is about 290 miles from Douglassville (about the same distance as Pittsburgh.) I got up at 2:30 AM, arrived at 9:00 AM (an accident backed traffic up in Norfolk), and woke up my roommate, Matt O'Brien. After moving in, I entered the 10:00 AM quad, where I scored fifty percent again all 2000+ players. The winner of my quad was Francisco Guadalupe II, who is the son of the chief organizer of the U.S. Open.

My first round of the main tournament was at 7:00 PM. I entered the six-day schedule, because Shabalov usually plays in the shortest schedule where all of the games are played at the slowest time control. O'Brien entered the "traditional" nine-day schedule, and there was also a four-day schedule available. I had black in the first round, Shabalov had white, and if we both won, there was a reasonable chance that we would be paired in round two!

My first round opponent, however, decided not to give me an easy game!

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(Cont. from prev.col.)

Round: 1

Submitted by Joe with his comments and selected Fritz/Stockfish comments [shown thusly].

White: Jose De La Colina [FL] (1545)

Black: Joseph Mucerino (2073)

Date: 8/1/2017

[D53: Queen's Gambit Declined: 4

Bg5 Be7: Early deviations] **1.d4 d5**

2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Nc3 Nf6

5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 Nbd7 7.Bd3 dxc4

8.Bxc4 b5 9.Be2 [D]



(Joe - Although this move is fine, 9.Bd3 is more common.) [9.Bd3 a6 (9...Bb7 10.0-0 a6 11.a4 b4 12, etc...Atalik,S (2570)-Hertneck,G (2524) Bad Wiessee 2003 ½-½ (47)) 10.Rc1 (10.0-0 c5 11.dxc5 (11.Qe2 0-0, etc...Marshall,F-Lasker,E St Petersburg 1914 ½-½ (46)) 11...Nxc5 12.Bc2 Bb7 13.b4 Ncd7, etc...Bersamina,P (2318)-Abelgas,R (2319) Manila 2014 ½-½ (59)) 10...Bb7 11.0-0 Rc8 12.a4 0-0, etc...Schlechter,C-Bernstein,O Coburg 1904 ½-½ (39)]

9...a6 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Bxf6 Nxf6

(Joe - This is the better way to recapture, because now white cannot play 12.Ne4.) **12.a3 [D]**



(Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev.col.) (Joe - The idea is to try to clamp black with 13.b4. Well, Black is not going to fall for that. Better is 12.Ne5 or 12.Rc1.) **12...c5 13.dxc5 Bxc5 14.Qxd8+ Rxd8** (Joe - Trading queens did not make me happy against a lower rated opponent, because it will make winning must more difficult. Black has the bishop pair and has equalized without even trying, but the position is equal.) **15.Rfd1 Ke7** (Joe - With the queens off the board, it is better to keep the king in the center than to castle.) **16.b4?!** (Joe - Probably the first detectable error that white has made. The knight on c3 is now loose. 16.Rac1 would have been a better choice.) **16...Bd6** (Joe - Trying to avoid the trade of rooks, and hoping to play ...Be5 one day.) **17.Rac1 Rc8 18.Nb1?!** (Joe - Another small error, giving up control of d5 and e4. 18.Nd4 would have been better.) **18...Bd5 [D]**

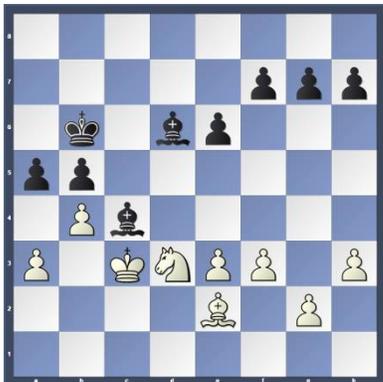


(Joe - "What did your opponent's move allow you to do?" It allowed me to improve my bishop. The computer, though, preferred 18...Ne4 or 18...Rad8.) **19.Nbd2 Rhd8 20.h3 Ne4 21.Nxe4 Bxe4** (Joe - Trading down should help me, because his pawns on a3 and b4 are on dark squares and I have a dark squared bishop and he does not.) **22.Ne1** (Joe - Again, white allows black to creep forward.) **22...Be5** (Joe - Black now has a clear advantage, although the win is still far away.) **23.Rxc8 Rxc8 24.f3 Bb7 [D]** (p.2) (Text cont. p.2)

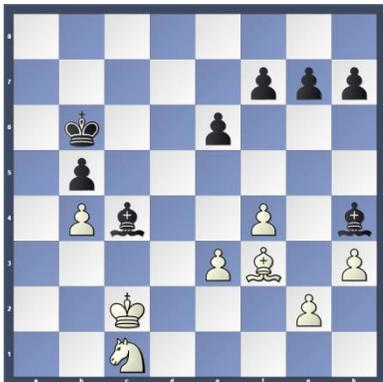
Position after 24...Bb7 (From p.1)



(Cont. from p.1) (Joe - I lost a good chunk of my advantage on this move. Stockfish 7 chose 24...Bg6. I rejected that move because after 25.e4 I would have to play ...f6 and later ...e5 to free the bishop. Now I see that is the better way to go, because then the bishop can choose to move along either the a2-g8 diagonal or the b1-h7 diagonal.) [24...Bg6!?!] **25.Nd3 Bd6 26.Rc1 Rxc1+ 27.Nxc1** [A minor pieces endgame occurred] **27...Kd7** (Joe - It is time for Plan B.) **28.Kf1 Kc7 29.Ke1 Kb6 30.Kd2 a5 31.Nd3 Bd5 32.Kc3 Bc4?! [D]**

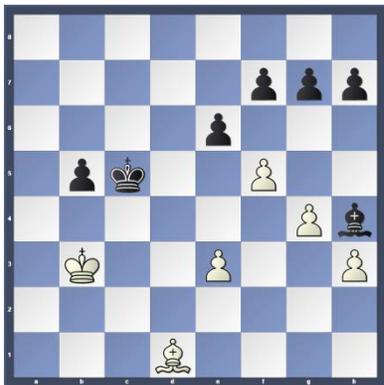


[The black bishop on an outpost] (Joe - This allows white to force an opposite color ending with 33.bxa5+ Kxa5 34.a4. 34...bxa4 drops the bishop on c4, 34...Kxa4 allows 35.Nb2+, and the best move, 34...Bxd3 35.Bxd3 also enters into a bishop of opposite color endgame.) **33.f4 Be7 34.Nc1 Bf6+ 35.Kc2 axb4 36.axb4 Bh4 37.Bf3?! [D]**

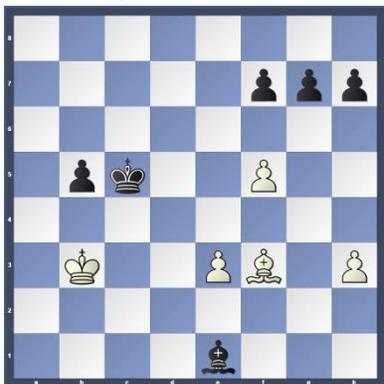


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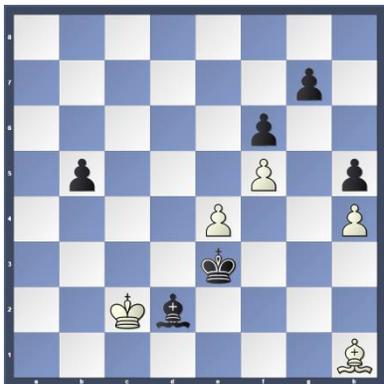
(Cont. from prev. col.) (Joe - Losing a pawn but entering the bishop of opposite color ending.) **37...Be1 38.Nd3 Bxd3+ 39.Kxd3 Bxb4 40.g4 Be7 41.Bd1 Kc5 42.Kc3 Bf6+ 43.Kb3 Bh4 44.f5? [D]**



(Joe - Now white will have two pawn islands instead of one.) **44...exf5 45.gxf5 Be1** (Joe - Trying to cut off white's king.) **46.Bf3? [D]**

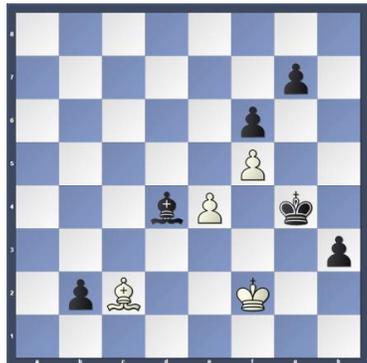


(Joe - Possibly the decisive error.) [46.Kc2!?!] **46...Bd2 47.e4 Kd4** (Joe - Black's king and bishop are both stronger than their white counterparts.) **48.Bh1?** [Better is 48.Bd1!?!] **48...f6** (Joe - Trying to prevent e5.) **49.Kc2 [49.h4 b4] 49...Ke3 50.h4?** [50.Bg2 is still a small chance 50...Kf2 51.Bh1] **50...h5! [D]**



(Joe - Although black's pawn is on the same color as white's bishop, white's bishop will never be able to defend it.) **51.Kd1 b4 52.Bg2 Bc3?** (Joe - This is still winning, (Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev. col.) but stronger is 52...Kd3, 32...Kc3 and push the b pawn.) **53.Kc2 [53.e5 what else? 53...Bxe5 54.Bc6] 53...Kf2 54.Bh1 Kg3 55.Kd3 Kxh4 56.Bf3 Kg5 57.Ke3 [57.Bd1 Be5 58.Kc2] 57...b3 58.Bd1 b2 59.Bc2 Kg4 60.Kf2 h4 61.Kg2 h3+ 62.Kf2 Bd4+ [D]**



(Joe - After 62.Kf1 Kg3, the h pawn promotes.) **0-1**

Round: 2

Submitted by Joe with his comments and selected Fritz/Stockfish comments [shown thusly].

In round 2, I almost played Shabalov, but missed him by two boards. I still got a good "consolation prize" though with this awesome pairing:

White: Joseph Mucerino (2073)
Black: GM Joel Benjamin (2644)
[NJ]

Date: 8/2/2017

(Joe - GM Benjamin is a three-time U.S. Champion, and was ranked #20 in the United States when this game was played. We played in the roped off area, which was reserved for the top six boards. We were on board 4, which was in the center of the room.) [Benjamin was ranked #20 in the country and #469 in the world when this game was played. His FIDE rating was 25 [A48: 1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6: Torre, London and Colle Systems]

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bg5 Bg7 4.Nbd2 0-0 5.e4 d5 [D]



(Text cont. p.3)

(Cont. from p.2) **6.exd5 Nxd5** (Joe - Up until now, both sides just whipped out their moves. Black's sixth move is the first move that any player spent any real amount of time on.) **7.Bc4?!** (Joe - Perhaps a slight error. The computer prefers the solid 7.c3.) [7.c3 Nd7 8.Bc4 N7b6 9.Bb3 a5 10.a4 h6 11.Bh4 f5 12.0-0 g5, etc...Sambuev,B (2528)-Howell,D (2650) Tromso 2014 0-1 (60); 7.Nb3 Nd7 8.c3 h6 9.Bd2 Kh7 10.c4 N5f6 11.Be2 c5 12.dxc5 a5, etc...Javakhishvili,L (2481) -Papp,P (2303) Montpellier 2015 ½-½] **7...h6** **8.Bh4 Nb6** (Joe - Sharper is 8...c5 right away.) **9.c3 [D]**



[9.Qe2 Nxc4 10.Nxc4 Be6 11.Bg3 c5 12.Nce5 Bd5, etc...Krumpacnik,D (2385)-Tratar,M (2420) Grize 1996 ½-½ (41)] **9...c5 10.dxc5 Nxc4 11.Nxc4 [D]**



11... Qxd1+ (Joe - I was surprised by this move. Similar to my previous game, I would not be too quick to trade queens in a roughly even position against a lower rated player. Stockfish 7 prefers 11...Nc6, but the text is its second choice, and by less than a tenth of a pawn. If I were black, I may have played 11...Qc7, but GM Benjamin perhaps thought white was fine after 12.Qe2.) **12.Rxd1 Nc6?!** (Joe - This is another move that surprised me, and I think Benjamin spent a decent amount of time thinking about it. First of all, white is threatening to capture on e7 if he wants, because of 13...Re8 14.Rd8 or even 14.Ne3 Rxe7 15.Rd8+ and 16.Rxc8. So, I suppose the text is designed to (Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev. col.) protect e7. But black has other good choices. If 12...Nd7, then white no longer has 14. Rd8 after 13.Bxe7 Re8. Perhaps Benjamin did not like 13.c6, which would split his pawns? The computer's top choice is 12...Be6, attacking the knight on c4 and eyeballing the pawn on a2.) [12...Be6!? looks like a viable alternative 13.Nce5 Bxa2=] **13.Nd4!** (Joe - I'm going to award myself with an exclamation because Stockfish 7 says my position is half a pawn stronger than it was a move ago.) (Joe - It was in this position that Jim Doyle took a photo of the game. That can be viewed at <https://new.uschess.org/news/aboar-d-us-open/>. I was walking around, waiting for Benjamin's next move when Doyle began taking shots of the whole playing hall. Then, he came over to the top boards. Although Benjamin was still thinking, I sat back down, not wanting to miss out on a possible photo with the great man!



Photo by Jim Doyle, used with permission of US Chess

(See page 7 for a larger picture) It turned out to be a great decision! You will notice that there are wires attached to the clock. The top six games were using touch sensory boards, with the positions projected onto a screen in the hallway outside.) **13...Bd7 14.0-0? [D]**



(Joe - Whatever advantage I had went out the window with this move. I needed to play 14.f3 or 14.f4 so I could drop my bishop back to f2 if I wind up with (Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev. col.) a pawn on d4.) **14...Nxd4 15.cxd4 Bb5 16.b3 [D]**



16...g5 17.Bg3 Rfd8 18.d5?! (Joe - Another error; 18.Be5 needed to be played.) **18...Rac8 19.Rfe1 [D]**



19...Rxc5 20.Rxe7 Rcxd5 [D]



21.Rxd5 Rxd5 22.Kf1?! (Joe - After the game, Benjamin told me that he thought I should play 22.h3 and hide my king on h2. I thought my king would be stronger in the center during an endgame, so I chose the text.) **22...Rd7? [D]** (p.4) (Joe - Now Benjamin loses his advantage. The computer says 22...Rd1+.) **23.Rxd7 Bxd7 24.Ke2 b5 25.Nd2?!** (Joe - Although it may not look like a huge error, this might be the losing move of the game. I wanted to prevent black's bishop from landing on b1 to attack my a2 pawn, but this move is (Text cont. p.4)

Position after 22...Rd7? (From p.3)



(Cont. from p.3) simply too passive. 25.Ne5 or 25.Nd6 were better.) 25...f5 26.Bb8 a6 27.Kd3 Kf7 [D]



28.Bc7 Ke6 29.Bb8 Kd5 30.Ba7 Be5 31.h3 Be8 32.Bb6 Bg6 33.f3 Bd6 34.Bd4 Bf8 35.Bb6 Be7 36.Bd4 h5 37.Bb6 Bf6 38.Ba7 [D]



38...Bd8 39.Bd4 Be7 40.Bb6 Bf6 [D]



[Two-fold repetition] (Joe - I have been trying to set up a fortress. Benjamin, who had about twenty minutes left on his clock, wisely shuffled his pieces round until he reached time (Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev. col.) control so he could have another hour of thinking time if he wanted a deep think.)

41.Ba7 Be5 42.Bf2 g4 [D]



43.hxg4 [43.fxg4 hxg4 44.hxg4 fxg4+ 45.Ke2 a5] 43...fxg4+ 44.Ne4?? [Another bit of territory lost.] (Joe - Putting myself in a pin is no good. Better is 44.Ke2, but black still should be winning.) 44...Bf6 45.Be1 [D]



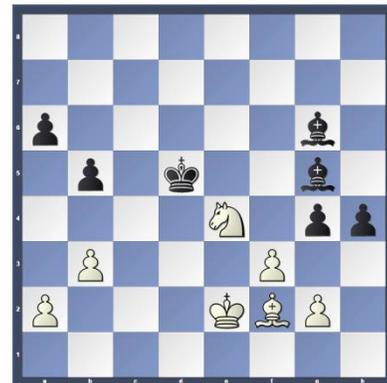
[45.Ke3 no good, but what else? 45...Bd4+ 46.Kf4 Bxf2 47.Nxf2 gxf3 48.Kxf3] 45...Bg5 46.Bf2 [46.Ke2 gxf3+ 47.gxf3 Bxe4 48.fxe4+ Kxe4 49.Kf1] 45...h4! (Joe - I knew I was sunk now. The idea is 47...h3 48.gxh3 gxf3, and I lose my pinned knight.) 47.Ke2 [D] (Next col.) 47...gxf3+ 48.gxf3 Bxe4 49.fxe4+ Kxe4 [D] (p.3) 0-1 (Joe - White must give up his bishop to stop the h-pawn. This game lasted about four and half hours. We were the last of the top six boards to finish, and there were about ten other games in the playing hall still in progress. In the hallway outside, I saw that the game was being shown full screen on the demo board, since all of the other top games had finished.)

Round: 3

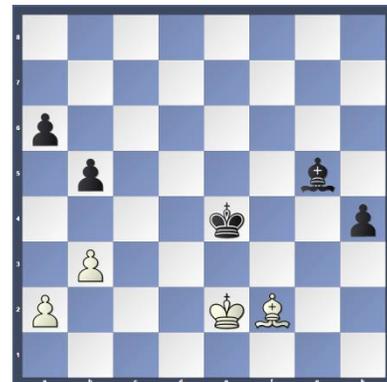
Submitted by Joe with his comments and selected Fritz/Stockfish comments [shown thusly].

(Text cont. next col.)

Position after 47.Ke2 (From prev. col.)



Position after 49...Kxe4 (From prev. col.)



(Cont. from prev. col.)

White: Dexter Wright (1855) [VA]

Black: Joseph Mucerino (2073)

Date: 8/2/2017

(Joe - This was my easiest win of the tournament.) [B02: Alekhine's Defence: Chase Variation and lines with early Nc3] 1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.Nc3 Nxd5 4.d4 Bf5 5.Nf3 e6 [D]



6.Nxd5 Qxd5 7.Be2 Nc6 8.c3 0-0-0 9.0-0 h6 10.Qa4 g5 [D] (p.5) 11.Be3 g4 12.Nd2 h5 13.Bc4 Qd6 14.Bb5?! (Joe - A waste of time. 14.Bg5 would have been better.) 14...a6 15.Bxc6? [D] (p.5) (Joe - White throws away his advantage. (Text cont. p.5)

Position after 10...g5 (From p.4)



Position after 15.Bxc6? (From p.4)



(Cont. from p.4) White can gain a tempo with 15.Nc4 Qd5 16.Bxc6 Qxc6 17.Qxc6 bxc6 18.Ne5 with advantage.)

15...Qxc6 16.Qxc6 bxc6 17.Rfe1 Be7 18.Nc4 f6 19.b4 Kd7 20.Na5 Rb8 21.Nb3 Rhd8 22.Nc5+ [D]

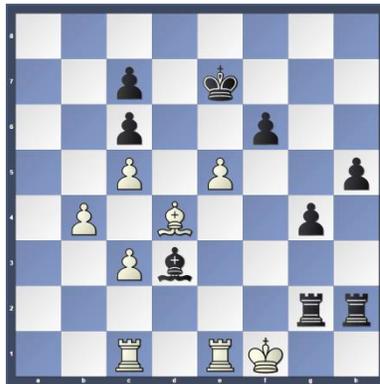


22...Bxc5 (Joe - Again I have bishops of opposite colors, but this time rooks are on the board. In such situations, it is better to be the attacker, since the defender's bishop might be on the wrong color to defend.) 23.dxc5 Ke7 24.f3 Rd3 25.Rac1 a5 26.a3 axb4 27.axb4 Ra8 28.Kf2 Ra3 29.Bd4 e5 (Joe - Even stronger is 29...gxf3 30.gxf3 Ra2+ 31.Re2 Rxf3+! 32.Kxf3 Bg4+.) 30.f4?? [D] (Next col.) 30...Ra2+ 31.Kg1 Rdd2 32.fxe5 Rxc2+ 33.Kh1 Rxc2+ 34.Kg1 Rg2+ 35.Kf1 Bd3+ [D] (Next col.) 0-1

Position after 30.f4?? (From prev. col.)



Position after 35...Bd3+ (From prev. col.)



Round: 4

Submitted by Joe with his comments and selected Fritz/Stockfish comments [shown thusly].

White: Joseph Mucerino (2073)
Black: Harish Vemuri [FL] (1863)

Date: 8/3/2017

[D11: Slav Defence: 3 Nf3 sidelines and 3...Nf6 4 e3 Bg4] 1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.e3 Bg4 4.c4 c6 5.Qb3 Qb6 6.Ne5 Be6? (Joe - Blocking the e-pawn cannot be good. Try 6...Bf5.) 7.c5?! (Joe - Not good either. I wanted to avoid doubled b pawns, but that would not be too bad in this case, since it opens the a-file for my rook.) [D]



(Text cont. next col.)

(Cont. from prev. col.) [7.Nc3 g6 8.Na4 Qxb3 9.axb3 Nbd7 10.Nxd7 Nxd7, etc... Perez Ponsa,F (2536)-Leitao,R (2636) Praia da Pipa 2014 ½-½] 7...Qc7 8.Qc2 (Joe - Now if black plays ...b6, I can play b4.) [8.Bd3 g6 (8...b6 9.cxb6 axb6 10.0-0 Nbd7 11.f4 Nxe5, etc... Rotstein,J (2393)-Drabke,L (2448) Germany 2004 ½-½ (57)) 9.Nc3 Bg7 10.Qc2 Nbd7 11.f4 0-0 12.Bd2 Nxe5 13.fxe5 Nd7 14.0-0 f6, etc... Demarchi,O (2165)-Van Dongen,P (2278) Avoine 2000 0-1 (39); 8.Qa4 Nbd7 9.Nxd7 Bxd7 10.f4 g6 11.Bd3 ½-½ (11) Csiszar,C (2364)-Bagonyai,A (2279) Hungary 2002] 8...a5 (Joe - This does prevent b4, but he never played ...b6 in the game!) [Better is 8...Nbd7!? is noteworthy 9.Nxd7 Bxd7] 9.Bd3 g6 10.0-0 Bg7 11.Nc3 0-0 12.f4 Ng4 13.Bd2 [13.Nxcg4 Bxcg4 14.h3 Be6±] 13...Nh6 [13...Nxe5 14.fxe5 f6 15.exf6 exf6 16.Be1=] 14.e4? [D]



[Better is 14.h3!?!] (Joe - I wanted to open up the c1-h6 diagonal, but instead I just opened up lines for his pieces.) 14...dxe4 15.Bxe4 Rd8 16.Ne2 Bf5 17.Bc3 Nd7 18.Rad1 Nf6 19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Rf3 Nd5 21.Qe4? [D]



(Joe - Missing black's next move.) 21...Nxf4! (Joe - Exploiting the fact that the rook on d1 is loose.)



GM Joel Benjamin (2644) vs. NPCC President Joseph Mucerino (2073) at the 118th U. S. Open, Round 2

Photo by Jim Doyle, used with permission of US Chess