



The Saint Louis Chess Conference

Education | Research | Community

October 22 - 24, 2026



KASPAROV
CHESS FOUNDATION



US CHESS



Saint Louis
CHESS CLUB



WORLD CHESS
HALL OF FAME
& GALLERIES

Conference Schedule

Thursday, Oct. 22 **5:30PM – 9:00PM** **U.S. Chess & U.S. Women's Champs Closing Ceremony**
Khorassan Ballroom

Friday, Oct. 23 **7:15AM – 8:15AM** **Breakfast Buffet Opens**
Khorassan Ballroom

8:15AM – 8:30AM **Conference Opening & Welcome**
Khorassan Ballroom

8:30AM – 9:15AM **Marquee Session: The Future of Women's Chess**
From Pipeline to Podium
Khorassan Ballroom

9:30AM – 10:45AM **Concurrent Sessions 1.1**
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

11:00AM – 12:15PM **Concurrent Sessions 1.2**
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

12:15PM **Lunch Buffet Opens**
Khorassan Ballroom

1:00PM – 1:45PM **Marquee Session - Mind & Body**
The Making of a Chess Athlete
Khorassan Ballroom

2:00PM – 3:30PM **Concurrent Sessions 1.3**
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

4:00PM - 5:15PM **Madwoman's Game Movie Screening**
Chase Park Plaza Cinema, Theaters 1 & 2

6:00PM - 7:00PM **World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries**
Cocktail Reception/Gallery Tours
World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries, 4652 Maryland Ave

8:00PM - 10:00PM **Kingside After Dark**
Kingside Diner, 236 N. Euclid Ave.

Saturday, Oct. 24 **7:15AM - 8:15AM** **Breakfast Buffet Opens**
Khorassan Ballroom

8:15AM - 8:30AM **Day Two Welcome**
Khorassan Ballroom

8:30AM – 9:15AM **Marquee Session: Madwoman's Game**
Filmmaker & Subject Panel
Khorassan Ballroom

9:30AM - 10:45AM **Concurrent Sessions 2.1**
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

11:00AM - 12:15PM **Concurrent Sessions 2.2**
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

12:15PM **Lunch Buffet Opens**
Khorassan Ballroom

1:00PM - 1:45PM **Keynote Address by Legendary World Champion**
Garry Kasparov
Khorassan Ballroom

Saturday, Oct. 24 2:00PM – 3:30PM Concurrent Sessions 2.3
Lindell A/B, C/D, and Regency Room

4:00PM - 5:45PM Chess Tournament (Sold Out)
Saint Louis Chess Club, 4663 Maryland Ave

5:30PM – 6:00PM Reception for World Chess Hall of Fame Inductions
Zodiac & Starlight Rooms, 11th Floor

6:00PM – 7:00PM World Chess Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony
Zodiac & Starlight Rooms, 11th Floor

7:00PM – 10:00PM Saint Louis Chess Conference Closing Reception
Zodiac & Starlight Rooms, 11th Floor

Saint Louis Chess Club Tours:

4pm, 5pm, 6pm & 7pm on Friday

4pm & 5pm on Saturday



The
Saint Louis
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Our Missions



US Chess uschess.org

It is the mission of US Chess to empower people, enrich lives, and enhance communities through chess.



Kasparov Chess Foundation kasparovchessfoundation.org

Founded by World Chess Champion Garry Kasparov, Kasparov Chess Foundation mission is to bring the many educational benefits of chess to children worldwide by providing a complete chess curriculum and enrichment programs. The Foundation promotes the study of chess as a cognitive learning tool in curricular classes and after-school programs for elementary, middle, and high schools, both in the public and private school sectors. The not-for-profit Foundation also organizes regional, national, and worldwide tournaments, programs for talented students, and promotional chess events.



Saint Louis Chess Club saintlouischessclub.org

It is the mission of the Saint Louis Chess Club, an educational organization, to maintain a formal program of instruction to teach the game of chess and to promote and support its educational program through community outreach and local and national partnerships to increase the awareness of the educational value of chess.

The Saint Louis Chess Club does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ancestry, citizenship, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, pregnancy, disability, and any other category protected by applicable federal, state, or local laws or regulations in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and grant programs, events, programs, or activities.



World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries worldchesshof.org

The mission of the World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries is to educate visitors, fans, players, and scholars by preserving, exhibiting and interpreting the game of chess and its continuing cultural and artistic significance.

The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries admits people of any gender, race, color, nationality and ethnic origin. The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries complies with the Internal Revenue Service's guidelines regarding publication of its non-discrimination policy in its brochures, catalogs, advertisements and otherwise making it known to the general community.

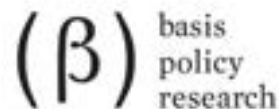
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CONFERENCE ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

Chase Park Plaza Hotel

Khorassan Ballroom

Located on the Main Level, the Khorassan Ballroom will host the Marquee and Keynote sessions, along with breakfast buffet and lunch on Friday and Saturday. The U.S. Chess & U.S. Women's Chess Championship Closing Ceremony will also be held here on Thursday evening.

Regency Room

Located next to the Khorassan Ballroom, the Regency Room will host concurrent sessions on both Friday and Saturday.

Lindell Lower Level

Located one floor below Khorassan Ballroom, the Lindell Lower Level will host concurrent sessions on both Friday and Saturday in breakout rooms A/B and C/D. Participants may access the lower level using the escalator outside of the Khorassan or the elevators.

Chase Park Plaza Cinemas

The Chase Park Plaza Cinemas, Theaters 1 & 2, will host the *Madwoman's Game* Movie Screening with popcorn and soda provided. The cinema is located off the main hallway between the hotel check-in desk and Khorassan Ballroom.

Starlight & Zodiac Rooms

Located on the 11th floor, the Zodiac & Starlight Rooms will be where the World Chess Hall of Fame Induction Reception & Ceremony will be held. Additionally, the Saint Louis Chess Conference Closing Reception will take place here. Participants can access these rooms by using the elevators in the main lobby or outside of the Khorassan Ballroom.

Special Events

World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries

4652 Maryland Avenue

Friday, October 23, 6:00PM - 7:00PM

The World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries will host a cocktail reception Friday evening. Come browse the exhibit, Game Plan: The Strategy of Chess & Sports and socialize with other conference attendees.

Kingside Diner

236 N. Euclid Avenue

Friday, October 23, 8:00PM - 10:00PM

Mix and mingle with other conference attendees at this chess-themed diner.

Chess Tournament (Sold Out)

Saint Louis Chess Club

4663 Maryland Avenue

Saturday, October 24, 4:00PM - 5:45PM

World Chess Hall of Fame Induction Reception and Ceremony

Zodiac & Starlight Rooms

Saturday, October 24, 5:30PM - 7:00PM.

The program begins at 6:00PM.

Chess Conference Closing Reception

Zodiac & Starlight Rooms

Saturday, October 24, 7:00PM - 10:00PM

Enjoy the conference closing reception that includes heavy appetizers, drinks, open chess play, live DJ, karaoke & more!

Come play chess! Show your conference name badge for membership access at the Saint Louis Chess Club on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

MARQUEE SESSIONS:

The Future of Women's Chess: From Pipeline to Podium

Friday, October 23 at 8:30AM

A conference-opening exploration of current research, practical efforts, and emerging insights on women in chess.

Moderator:



Kyla Zhao

Author

Panelists:



Alexandra Kosteniuk

Grandmaster & Women's World Champion



Alice Lee

International Master and Three-Time Women's American Cup Champion



Irene Sukandar

Woman Grandmaster and Two-Time Asian Women's Champion



Irina Krush

Grandmaster and Eight-Time U.S. Women's Champion

Mind & Body: The Making of a Chess Athlete

Friday, October 23 at 1:00PM

A cross-sport conversation about the mental preparation, physical discipline, competitive resilience, and sustained performance that shape elite athletes.

Moderator:



Maurice Ashley
Grandmaster

Panelists:



Fabiano Caruana
Grandmaster &
Five-Time U.S.
Chess
Champion



Aerial Powers
WNBA Star &
2019 WNBA
Champion



Cristian Chirila
Grandmaster
and Mizzou
Head Chess
Coach



Kellen Winslow
NFL Hall of
Famer



Seth Makowsky
Founder and
CEO of Poison
Pawn

***Madwoman's Game*: Filmmaker and Subject Panel**

Saturday, October 24 at 8:30AM

A conversation centered on *Madwoman's Game*, a documentary following young chess player Bianca Mitchell-Avila and her journey through chess, competition, and life.

Moderator:



Maurice Ashley
Grandmaster

Panelists:



Carla Berkowitz
Executive Producer



Angela Almeida

**Keynote Address by Legendary World Champion
Garry Kasparov**

Saturday, October 24 at 1:00PM
Khorassan Ballroom



Garry Kasparov

Legendary World Champion, Garry Kasparov is a chess icon renowned for his exceptional career. At just 22, he became the youngest world chess champion in 1985 and held the world championship title for 15 years. Beyond his chess accomplishments, Kasparov is a passionate advocate for chess in education. He founded the Kasparov Chess Foundation in 2002, a non-profit promoting the teaching of chess globally. The foundation's program, active in the United States and international centers, underscores Kasparov's commitment to leveraging chess for educational benefits.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Concurrent Sessions 1.1

Friday, 9:30 - 10:45AM

Chess Education: Learning Theory & Cognition

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Moderator: Beatriz Marinello

Visualizing a Fearless Future: Empowering the Next Generation of Women in Chess

Devanshi Chowdada

In this session, 15-year-old author, illustrator, and Arena Candidate Master Devanshi presents a creative, visual framework for expanding the youth chess pipeline. Highlighting her debut instructional graphic novel, *The Match That Captured the Chess World*—which has been integrated into public school gifted curriculum—she shares actionable insights on how combining storytelling and high-illustration art can remove traditional intimidation from the game. This approach bridges the gap between creative expression and deep STEM logic, showing how to engage young girls and build lifelong critical thinking, resilience, and community leadership skills.

Select Chess Program - Fostering Independent Learning

Caleb Denby, Saint Louis Chess Club

Excellence in chess has always been driven by significant self-study, and the Saint Louis Chess Club's Select Chess program uses this as a guiding principle in instruction. Learn how to motivate and support independent study in students with this successful, practical approach in use with students in Saint Louis.

Chess and Effective Learning Objectives

Elizabeth Feters, Harford County Public Schools

Approaching chess instruction from the side of educational psychology, this hands-on session shows coaches and teachers how to write lesson objectives that put the learner first. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, participants practice writing observable, assessable objectives that state what students will do, how they will learn it, and how it will be assessed, then link sample games, tactics, videos, and commentary back to those objectives.

Chess, Women & Belonging

Concurrent Session 1.1: Friday, 9:30 – 10:45AM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Christina Schweiss

Leveling the Board: Examining the Literature on Gender in Chess and Academic STEM Fields

Carolyn Barber, University of Missouri-Kansas City; Mark Barber, Raytown Quality Schools

Chess and STEM education share concerns about the underrepresentation of women and girls, yet the research literature rarely speaks to each other. This literature review compares explanations for gender differences in academic STEM with those offered for chess, asking which appear in both, which are unique to chess, which STEM explanations might hold promise for chess, and at what ages the literature suggests interventions to support girls' participation should occur.

Tipping the King: Challenging Chess Masculinities in the Streaming Era

Carlos Nicolas Gómez Marchant and Andrew Schleisman, The University of Texas at Austin

Since 2020, online streaming and chess's recognition as an esports have changed how the game is played and watched. The authors argue that the collision of chess's long history of exclusionary masculinities with the masculine culture of online gaming has created new obstacles for women. Portraits of Judit Polgár, Anna Cramling, and Divya Deshmukh show how women have challenged these norms as chess moved from the board to the screen.

Queen's Hearts: An Animated Chess Journey for All, Through a Girl's Eyes

Diego Garrido Prats (Presenter), Volusia County Chess Club; Mariel Lares Martiz, Researcher

Queen's Hearts is a short-form animated series that introduces chess through Danielle, a nine-year-old beginner, with the goal of making the game more accessible and appealing to girls. The presenters propose a chess approach that favors engagement, relatability, and emotional connection over memorization. The presentation will explore examples of this drawing on clips from the series.

New Research on the Impact of Chess

Concurrent Session 1.1: Friday, 9:30 - 10:45AM

Regency Room

Moderator: Ben Underwood

Examining the Effect of Chess Participation on Cognitive Functioning in Older Adults

Caton Tsao, Aman Sreshta, and Kaileigh Byrne, Clemson University

Few studies have examined whether chess is linked to cognitive functioning in later life. In this cross-sectional study, 60 adults aged 65 and older, half with chess experience and half without, completed online measures of working memory capacity and global cognitive functioning. The presentation reports the findings and what they suggest about cognitively stimulating activities as a modifiable factor in reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

Can Chess Improve Math Skills in Title I Schools?

Jenny Ingber, Chess in the Schools; Susanne Harnett, Metis Associates

This randomized, controlled trial tested whether chess instruction taught during the school day, with intentional connections to math concepts, improves the math skills of low-income students. The study took place in third- and fourth-grade classes at four Title I elementary schools during 2024-25. The presentation reports pre- to post-assessment results, including differences between treatment and control students in specific skills such as pattern recognition and graphing.

Escaping the Prison of the Mind: The Impacts of Chess on Incarcerated and At-Risk Populations

Jade Oldfield, Robbin Gibb, and Lance Grigg, University of Lethbridge

Chess for Life began at the University of Lethbridge in 2016 as a program for justice-involved youth and has grown to adult and youth correctional centers, schools, and senior centers. This presentation covers the program's origins and research methods and early quantitative and qualitative results, exploring chess's potential to improve executive functioning and social-emotional well-being.

Concurrent Sessions 1.2

Friday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Chess and Global Community Impact

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Moderator: Jenny Ingber

FIDE Chess for Protection Project (Chess for Refugees)

Anastasiya Karlovich, FIDE Chess for Protection; Anastasia Sorokina, Chair of the Asian Social Commission

Chess for Protection, a collaboration of FIDE, UNHCR, the Lutheran World Federation, and Kenyan partners, has brought chess to Kakuma Refugee Camp and the Kaloboyei settlement in Kenya since 2021. The project gives displaced youth a constructive outlet to build confidence, social connection, and life skills. The presenters describe its growth, including clubs, trained facilitators, and thousands of participants, and its focus on empowering girls.

Developing Chess in Impoverished Communities and Turning Waste Into Opportunity

Kenneth Kaplan, Crossing Thresholds / Kibera Knights Chess Club

The Kibera Knights Chess Club began with fifty donated sets and twenty students in one of Africa's largest informal settlements and now reaches over 300 students. The talk traces how chess has shaped identity and opportunity in Kibera, including the team's qualification for the African Junior Championships, and describes a local factory that makes chess sets from recycled plastic and repurposed grain sacks.

Free as in Freedom: Building Digital Chess Infrastructure as a Global Public Good

Theo Wait, Director of Operations, Lichess.org

Paywalls, downloads, and data requirements restrict access to chess in emerging countries. Through global case studies, Lichess demonstrates how an open-source, open-data, and lightweight architecture empowers grassroots communities - while being a top 300 website in the world by traffic. By providing localized features, APIs, and a non-profit model to remove technical and financial friction, we illustrate how Lichess increases the growth of chess around the world and acts as an understated catalyst for the sport.

Chess in the Public Eye: Media, Technology & Visibility

Concurrent Session 1.2: Friday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Bryan Tillis

The Chess Entrepreneur's Unfair Advantage: Applied AI for Coaches, Authors, and Organizers

Vishnu Warriar, AlphaBetChess

Most chess entrepreneurs run their businesses with little staff or budget. Drawing on his experience building AlphaBetChess, a nationally distributed children's chess education brand, as a two-person operation, Vishnu Warriar gives a practitioner's account of how AI supports content and social media, operations and workflow, and brand building. Attendees leave with a way to identify what to automate, tools to start with, and a realistic view of what AI cannot replace.

Give Chess Education the Stage It Deserves

Josip Asik, American Chess Magazine

This paper makes the case for chess publishing as an active partner in education, community building, and the broader recognition of chess as a serious cultural pursuit. Drawing on a move from mainstream TV sports journalism to chess publishing and a decade of building American Chess Magazine, it proposes ways publishers and educators can work together, including awards, institutional partnerships, and formats that reach beyond the existing chess audience.

Putting Chess in the Public Eye Through Community Partnerships

Christina Schweiss, Hampton Roads Chess Association

Chess events are often known only to people already plugged into the local chess community. This talk shows how the Hampton Roads Chess Association has spread chess across seven cities through partnerships with community organizations, including classes and camps at recreation centers, churches, and police departments, and tournaments in public places such as malls and tourist attractions.

Explaining Differences in Male-Female Chess Ratings

Concurrent Session 1.2: Friday, 11:00AM – 12:15PM

Regency Room

Moderator: Takako Naomi

Chess Ratings: Deconstructing the Gender Gap

Richard L. Smith, University of North Carolina; György Barabás, Linköping University; Nikos I. Bosse, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; Jose Camacho-Collados, Cardiff University; David Smerdon, The University of Queensland; Hou Yifan, Peking University; Wei Ji Ma, New York University

Using data on more than 340,000 internationally rated players from 99 national federations, the authors apply a nonparametric method to measure how much of the rating gender gap is explained by participation rates, age, and playing experience. These factors reduce but do not eliminate the gap; the remainder reflects an overrepresentation of lower-rated women, consistent with higher early dropout. The authors conclude that attrition, rather than innate differences, more plausibly explains the gap.

The Incorporation Problem: Structural Measurement Error in Dynamic Rating Systems with an Application to Male-Female Performance Ratings Gaps in Chess

Guangli Zhang, Washington University in St. Louis; Michael Podgursky, University of Missouri; Michelle Wickman, Saint Louis University

Rating systems such as Elo infer ability from results, but results also reflect effort, which varies with context. The authors show that when an environment raises the cost of effort, recursive rating systems misattribute lower performance to lower ability, and that the distortion persists as ratings update. They apply the framework to male-female rating gaps in the USCF system and use simulation to show how modest context effects become embedded in ratings.

Player Performance: Are Women Really Worse at Chess?

Sofia Doroshenko, Macalester College / Scientist

For decades, the gender gap in competitive chess has been misattributed to innate biological deficits. Drawing on long-term US Chess Federation cohort data alongside research on mentor bias and stereotype threat, this presentation explores how structural entry conditions and environmental friction drive female dropout rates. Attendees will gain an evidence-based framework for why the deficit lies in early support rather than capability and how to build an ecosystem that retains talent.

Concurrent Sessions 1.3

Friday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Chess Education: Curriculum & Platforms

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Moderator: DeVaughn Croxton

Chess for Everyone: Applying the Duolingo Method to Chess Teaching

Elisa Camps Troncoso and Matt Rathkey, Duolingo

This presentation examines how the Duolingo Chess course was designed for learners with no prior background, applying the principles of learning by doing, motivation, and delight to create short, interactive lessons. It describes the human-and-AI pipeline used to scale lesson creation and shares learner insights, including the fast growth to millions of users and how fine-tuning lesson difficulty can drive learner engagement.

Teaching Chess at Renert School and Using the Chessworld Curriculum

Vlad Rekhson, Renert School / Chessworld

Renert School in Calgary teaches chess to every student in Kindergarten through Grade 3 and offers electives for older students, serving learners from beginners to national-level competitors. The talk describes how the program combines the Chessworld online curriculum, with its worksheets, lesson plans, and videos, with movement-based games and differentiated instruction to build enjoyment, confidence, and broader cognitive skills.

Re-Wired: Adapting High School Chess Curriculum in Baltimore

Christopher Baron, Patterson High School, Baltimore, Maryland

Chess can build social-emotional learning, deep thinking, metacognition, and executive functioning in high school students. This presentation shares curriculum design, sample assignments, student work, best practices, and data from teaching chess as a class in Baltimore, including student-driven projects in history research, game design, and peer teaching.

Chess and Underserved Communities

Concurrent Session 1.3: Friday, 2:00 – 3:30PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Nick Mueller

Breaking Barriers: How Chess Fosters Rehabilitation, Transformation, and Social Change

Abel Talamantez, RISE Scholars / San Quentin Skunkworks

At San Quentin, the yard is still divided by race after 80 years, but the chess club is one of the few places where people of different backgrounds sit together with hopes of rehabilitation and community through chess. In schools, chess can be a powerful tool for transformation, preparing students for the challenges ahead. Drawing on his work as Chess Director at Hamilton K-8 School in Novato and as Director of Chess and Community Impact at San Quentin, the presenter discusses how chess is more than a game. It can be an educational tool that impacts children and adults, and a tool for rehabilitation, transformation, and social change.

Beyond the Board: Using Competitive Chess to Build Cognitive, Social, and Emotional Skills in At-Risk Youth at Boys Town

Dmitriy Khots, Boys Town

This practitioner case study describes the Boys Town Chess Club, which serves middle and high school students living on campus, many of whom have faced social, behavioral, or academic challenges. Practices mirror tournament conditions, and post-game reflection is used to build resilience, accountability, and emotional regulation. The club's mascot, a canine companion named Charlotte, attends every club meeting providing a calming presence during stressful games. The club's first USCF-rated scholastic tournament in February 2026 marked a milestone for the program, and the USCF-rated scholastic tournament in September 2026 resulted in another milestone - first and second place trophies (first ever for the club!) for High School section.

Chess and Underserved Communities (cont.)

Concurrent Session 1.3: Friday, 2:00 – 3:30PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Anastasia Sorokina

Where Strategy Meets Social Justice: How Chess Became a Tool for Equity and Belonging

Qiana Spellman, New York City Department of Education / St. John's University

This presentation documents an equity-centered chess initiative at an urban Title I high school serving mostly Black and Latinx students, created and led by a school counselor. It argues that the demographic gap in competitive chess reflects barriers to access rather than interest or aptitude, and offers a replicable framework moving students from exposure to competition to peer leadership.

FIDE Infinite Chess Project (Chess for Kids with Autism Spectrum)

Ala Mishchanka, FIDE Infinite Chess Project Ambassador

The FIDE Infinite Chess project makes chess accessible to children with autism and other special needs. Active in 33 countries and supporting more than 290 children, the project aims to increase knowledge and awareness of chess for children with autism spectrum, give practical advice to teachers and parents, study the benefits of introducing to chess and develop various teaching methods. The presentation shows the audience how to begin, whether or not they play chess themselves.

Chess as a Research Laboratory: Causal Evidence on Cognition, Society, and Behavior (Panel)

Concurrent Session 1.3: Friday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Regency Room

Moderator: Michael Podgursky

Overconfidence and the Dunning-Kruger Effect in Tournament Chess Players

Patrick R. Heck, Daniel J. Benjamin, Daniel J. Simons, & Christopher F. Chabris (Presenter)

Overconfidence is thought to be a fundamental cognitive bias, but it is typically studied in environments where people lack accurate information about their abilities. We studied whether overconfidence exists among tournament chess players, who receive objective, precise, and public feedback about their skill. We surveyed 3,388 OTB-rated players aged 5 to 88 years from 22 countries with an average of 18.8 years of tournament experience. On average, players asserted that their ability was 89 Elo points higher than their published ratings indicated—expecting to outscore an equally rated opponent by nearly 2 to 1. One year later, only 11.3% of overconfident players achieved their claimed ability rating. Low-rated players overestimated their skill the most, and top-rated players were calibrated, a pattern consistent with the “Dunning-Kruger Effect.” Evidence of overconfidence emerged in every sociodemographic subgroup we studied. We conclude that overconfidence is substantial in tournament chess, an information ecosystem that should be inhospitable to it.

Thinking Time Versus Quality of Play: A Review of Results

Kenneth Regan, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

Several research groups have obtained and published results to the effect that moves made after longer thinking times have markedly lower relative quality, across all rating levels of play and time controls. Among them are: Anderson-Kleinberg-Mullainathan (2016), Sunde-Zegners-Strittmatter (2022, PNAS 2026), McIlroyYoung-Sen-Kleinberg-Anderson (ICLR 2024), Vidulich-Tsang (Cognitive Research 2026), and Albert Hamood (ChessDS 2026). This talk will reproduce their main findings using my "Intrinsic Performance Rating" framework and show the staggering range and magnitude of the phenomenon, including at the recent Samarkand Olympiad. Then it will seek common ground among their various ancillary findings and interpretations.

Chess as a Research Laboratory: Causal Evidence on Cognition, Society, and Behavior (Panel) (cont.)

Concurrent Session 1.3: Friday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Regency Room

Moderator: Michael Podgursky

Refusing to concede? War and everyday rivalry online

Eren Bilen, Nino Doghonadze, Robizon Khubulashvili, David Smerdon

How far does war reach into everyday life? We study 32.4 million online chess games played by 33,687 players from the belligerent countries of three conflicts: Armenia-Azerbaijan (2020), Russia-Ukraine (2022), and Israel-Palestine (2023). Following conflict onset, players became less likely to resign against hostile-country opponents relative to their other games: their probability of resigning fell by 0.46 percentage points, 2.1% of the pre-conflict rate. An independently constructed, engine-analyzed subsample reproduces this estimate almost exactly. When players are weighted equally, the decline for the typical player is roughly three times as large. Fewer concessions meant more checkmates and more losses on time, and players persisted longer in positions that were already objectively lost, without playing worse. No such change appears in Armenia-Azerbaijan. War changes everyday behaviour: individuals become reluctant to concede to the other side, even in contests far removed from the fighting.

Sleep, lifestyle and decision quality: a wearable-chess research programme

David Smerdon, The University of Queensland

How do sleep, diet, exercise, and environmental conditions affect decision-making in real life? This talk presents the design of a new research programme, in partnership with WHOOP and Chess.com and funded by the Australian Research Council, that links continuous biometric data from wearable devices to millions of engine-scored chess decisions. The first study launches in March 2027: a recruitment event inviting people who use both platforms to share de-identified data and receive a personalized chess-performance-maximizing report. The collection window is placed around the US 'spring forward' daylight-saving transition as a natural experiment in sleep disruption. I will present the research questions, the analysis strategy and its main threats, and early pilot work on my own data. The work is at the design stage, and I am hoping for the audience's criticism and ideas while both can still shape the study. Later stages of the programme will run experiments with top and professional players, who will receive WHOOP devices for the duration of the study. The longer-term aim is causal evidence on cognitive performance at scale, and personalized guidance for better decision-making.

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Concurrent Sessions 2.1

Saturday, 9:30 - 10:45AM

Chess Philosophy & the Human Condition (Roundtable)

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Chess and the Human Condition

Jarrold Brown, Franklin College; Jeff Day, Texas Tech University; Zackary Davis, Saint Louis University; Benjamin Defromont, University of Lille

Chess is often celebrated as a game of reason and logic, yet its 1,500-year history is intertwined with philosophy, psychology, and culture, and it has served as a metaphor for war, free will, and even love. This roundtable asks why the game captivates players and what it can teach us about being human, including the question of whether chess is a game, a sport, an art, or a science.

Chess and Life Skills

Concurrent Session 2.1: Saturday, 9:30 - 10:45AM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Victor Lopez

The Appeal and Utility of Online Chess Sites in Teaching Chess

William Bart, University of Minnesota

Three case studies support the role of group-based activity in chess instruction using digital technology. Pairs of participants clearly enjoyed playing against chess bots when the participants were either children or young adult university students.

Elderly participants preferred playing against chess bots in groups of six or seven. The elderly participants seemed to enjoy the social camaraderie of learning and studying together as a team. The cooperative learning framework is used to explain the results.

Decision Quality Under Pressure: A Practical Framework for Chess Performance

Saloni Sapale and John Coumbe-Lilley, Mind Over Moves Psychology

Performance breakdowns in chess often come not from lack of knowledge but from difficulty applying it in critical moments. This session offers a sport psychology-informed framework addressing cognitive load, time pressure, and emotional residue after mistakes, with practical tools such as reset routines and focus cues that help players and coaches stabilize decision-making under pressure.

From Chessboard to Operating Room: The Neuroscience of Elite Decision-Making

Cristóbal Blanco Acevedo, Reina Sofía University Hospital of Córdoba / University of Córdoba / Maimonides Institute of Biomedicine of Córdoba; Carolina Blanco

A neurosurgeon and international chess master explore the brain networks behind elite decision-making. Introducing a framework called "Mode 3 Thinking," which integrates pattern recognition, prediction, emotional regulation, and executive control, the talk compares decision-making in chess and neurosurgery and argues that these abilities are trainable.

Chess and Women: Access, Retention & Culture

Concurrent Session 2.1: Saturday, 9:30 - 10:45AM

Regency Room

Moderator: Michelle Wickman

From Entry to Endgame: Structural Barriers and Actionable Pathways to Keep Girls in Chess

Luciana Morales, Women in Chess Foundation / Chessable

Programs have succeeded in bringing girls to chess, but participation drops sharply as they move into the teenage years and adulthood. Drawing on qualitative data from the Women in Chess Foundation-Chessable Scholars program, this talk showcases structural and cultural barriers, including isolation, few role models, and negative environments that hinder talented girls in chess, and closes with recommendations for federations and clubs.

Girls Who Check: Exploring Gender Disparities in Scholastic Chess

Andrew Schleisman and Carlos Nicolas Gómez Marchant, The University of Texas at Austin

Many studies have noted the gender disparities in tournament-level chess, but little research examines the experiences of girls in scholastic chess. This exploratory qualitative study draws on interviews with seven girls and seven boys, ages 7-12, in a large school-district chess program. Students of both genders described chess as requiring stereotypically masculine behaviors, a finding the authors use to question entrenched assumptions about who is capable of playing chess.

Why We Play: Exploring Male-Female Motivations, Engagement and Competitiveness in Elementary School Scholastics Chess

Matthew Pepper, Basis Policy Research; Brian Kisida, University of Missouri; Jean Hoffman and Ben Underwood, Saint Louis Chess Club

This study draws on a spring 2026 survey of roughly 800 students in Saint Louis area schools, exploring how demographics, competitiveness, and chess intersect. The survey asks what students like most about chess and includes validated scales separating developmental competitiveness (competing to improve) from hypercompetitiveness (competing to beat an opponent). The authors examine differences between boys and girls to inform efforts to increase female participation.

Concurrent Sessions 2.2

Saturday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Chess and Essential Skills (Panel)

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Aligning Chess with the Skills Educators Value Most

National Scholastic Chess Foundation: Robert McLellan, co-author of Great Moves: Learning Chess Through History; NM Ian Harris, Executive Director; Robert McKenzie, Math Teacher/Chess Coach; FM Sunil Weeramantry, Founding Director.

This session explores how chess supports the skills educators value most, including literacy, social-emotional learning, executive function, and mathematical reasoning. Presenters from the National Scholastic Chess Foundation share practical strategies for integrating chess into classrooms, drawing on teacher training, STEM education, and gifted instruction. Attendees will gain concrete approaches and a standards-aligned rationale for using chess to advance existing educational priorities.

Chess History & Biography

Concurrent Session 2.2: Saturday, 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Sofia Doroshenko

The Milwaukee Playground Chess Program: 1934-1975

Michael Wierzbicki, Marquette University

In 1934, Milwaukee began teaching chess to children on city playgrounds, using a curriculum written by Arpad Elo. The program became a model for a national effort to grow chess participation and, over its run, taught about 260,000 children to play. This talk tells the program's history, from its fun-first approach and citywide tournaments to the accomplished players it produced.

The Pawn Who Would Be Queen: The Story of Alabama's First National Champions

Eric M. Nager (Presenter), U.S. Chess Federation-certified National Chess Coach; John O. Woods, filmmaker / President of Indie TV

A small school in a state not known for chess went from no chess program to a national championship in five years, and has sustained excellence for 25 years. The author tells that story and offers practical advice for parents, coaches, and administrators on starting and maintaining a competitive program, including the case for getting more girls to play.

Chess Cognition & Decision-Making

Concurrent Session 2.2: Saturday, 11:00AM – 12:15PM

Regency Room

Moderator: Jean Hoffman

Irrational Attention: Timing Out in Online Chess

Aleksei Chernulich (Presenter), Durham University; John Wooders, New York University Abu Dhabi

Using millions of online chess games and Stockfish analysis, the authors show that players often lose on time even with a good position and enough time to move. They conclude that players devote irrational levels of attention to choosing a move, and rule out explanations such as being behind on the clock, misjudging the position, or low stakes.

The Mechanics of Mastery: Quantifying Metrics to Reveal What Elo Cannot

Ben Underwood, Saint Louis Chess Club

Two players can share the same rating, but are they really the same player? Elo says who's stronger – but not why. This talk breaks down the rating we've trusted for years into measurable pieces, like time difference versus opponent and accuracy under material differences. Mini-studies on elite-player data show these components predict outcomes that Elo alone misses.

How Much Can a Few Engine Moves Help? Quantifying Limited Cheating in Chess

Daniel Keren, University of Haifa, Israel

Cheaters don't consult an engine on every move, only at the right moments. How much does that buy? In millions of engine-vs-engine games, a 1500-level player advised by full-strength Stockfish raised its average score from 0.51 to 0.71 with a single assisted move, and to 0.82 with two: a performance gain of roughly 150 and 260 rating points. Random help barely matters; timing is everything. We discuss what this means for human play and fair-play detection.

Concurrent Sessions 2.3

Saturday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Building & Growing Chess Programs

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Moderator: Jade Oldfield

Columbus Chess Academy: Rebuilding a Chess Community Through Schools and Service

Katherine Lin, Columbus Chess Academy

When school stipends ended, chess clubs across Columbus City Schools faded. Four former students founded Columbus Chess Academy to bring chess back, growing from one summer camp into a network of coaches serving over 25 schools. The talk shares strategies for building and revitalizing a community, including sponsorships for students in need, pay-what-you-can camps, and training student leaders as coaches, tournament directors, and stewards of community service.

Operating a Chess Club as a Teal Organization: Leadership through Wholeness

Nick Mueller, Cochise Chess

Cochise Chess has grown from one member in 2022 to over 800 members across rural Cochise County, Arizona. The presenter attributes the growth in part to a new organizational model, the Teal organization, a flat, adaptive structure that flexes to community needs. He explains what Teal leadership means and how other chess organizations can design adaptive structures of their own.

Building & Growing Chess Programs (cont.)

Concurrent Sessions 2.3: Saturday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms A/B

Moderator: Jade Oldfield

The Gold Standard: A Data-Driven Analysis of Best Practices for State Scholastic Chess Championships

Adam Weissbarth, Silver Knights Chess Academy

Why do some states see record attendance at their scholastic championships while other states do not? This talk analyzes participation at every state's K-12 championship from 2023 to 2026, both in raw numbers and adjusted for population, and pairs the data with interviews of leading state organizers to identify what works to grow these events and build future generations of chess players.

Team Chess as a Leadership Lab: A Program Development Case Study

Victor F. Lopez, Learners Chess

Chess is credited with cognitive and social-emotional benefits, but teamwork, communication, and leadership are rarely mentioned. Using examples from Learners Chess in Albuquerque, the presenter shows how coaches can intentionally build these skills through bughouse and other team variants, junior leader programs where students teach one another, and team-focused tournament preparation.

Chess Organizations & Nonprofits

Concurrent Sessions 2.3: Saturday, 2:00 – 3:30PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Cristóbal Blanco Acevedo

Building and Growing an Impactful Chess Program

Cyrus Hayat, Coram Deo Academy, Collin County, TX

Drawing on four years building a program at a Christian classical school, the presenter describes how to involve parents and the community, create a school-wide scholarship program for college chess, connect students across grade levels, work with administration for support, bring in outside speakers, raise funds, and use music and humor to make chess lessons memorable.

Beyond the Board: Leadership, Governance, and Sustainability in Collegiate Chess

Jeremy Alexander, University of California, Riverside

College chess clubs often struggle not from a lack of talent, but from weak organizational design, including officer burnout, high turnover, and “founder syndrome.” Drawing on a decade of experience developing an award-winning collegiate chess organization, this session introduces an Eight-Domain framework for collegiate chess sustainability, emphasizing distributed leadership, adaptive governance, and institutional continuity. Participants will explore how student-run clubs can become resilient communities and incubators for future leaders.

Chess Organizations & Nonprofits (cont.)

Concurrent Sessions 2.3: Saturday, 2:00 - 3:30PM

Lindell Ballroom Breakout Rooms C/D

Moderator: Cristóbal Blanco Acevedo

Civic Chess: Building Connected, Thriving Communities Through Play, Reflection, and Shared Attention

Brandon Barnes, Rhetorician and Educator

Civic Chess frames the game as a practice that fosters community, intergenerational friendship, and civic flourishing. Drawing on Aristotelian rhetoric and Franklin's "The Morals of Chess," civic chess imagines chess woven into daily life in libraries, parks, and coffee shops. The presenter shares accounts of friendships formed through chess and argues for building community one small, friendly node at a time.

Navigating 501(c)(3) Status for Chess Organizations

Christina Schweiss, Hampton Roads Chess Association

Chess organizations can open doors to partnerships and resources by becoming 501(c)(3) nonprofits. This session walks through the steps to becoming a legally compliant nonprofit, including application forms, bylaws, board of directors, articles of incorporation, and fundraising approval, plus insurance and background checks, and tells how one affiliate grew from a weekly club to a Tier 1 nonprofit in 12 years.

The Preservation of Chess Data in Support of Research and Education (Panel)

Concurrent Sessions 2.3: Saturday, 2:00 - 3:30PM
Regency Room

Introducing the American Chess Archive Platform

Joshua Anderson, President of Chess Journalists of America (CJA)

The American Chess Archive aims to preserve and freely share all U.S. chess periodicals. Joshua Anderson demonstrates the platform, designed to work like a newspaper archive, and reports on progress since the project was introduced at this conference two years ago, including cloud storage, state chess association partnerships, and a page for chess research projects.

The American Chess Archive Use Cases

Jon Edwards, Vice President of Chess Journalists of America and the 32nd World Correspondence Chess Champion

Jon Edwards summarizes the main uses of the archive: researchers who can find material without traveling to distant libraries, players who can locate obscure opening and endgame articles and their opponents' games, and a wider chess community who can enjoy historical photographs and articles from obscure publications.

Chess Database, Game Archival, and Book Collecting

Andy Ansel, Chess game preservationist

Everyone uses chess databases, but how are they built? Andy Ansel describes his ongoing effort to preserve American game scores, covering why saving games matters, the difficulty of adding obscure historical games to databases that already hold millions, the entry process, whether AI will help, and how databases have changed chess book pricing.

The American Chess Archive Scanning Effort

Mark Capron, Secretary-Treasurer of Chess Journalists of America

Mark Capron explains the scanning work behind the archive: how printed material becomes digital, what scanning resolution is required, why optical character recognition matters, and how to handle fragile, older, oversized, and undersized publications.



Saint Louis Chess Club's Scholastic Chess Initiative

We champion chess as a vital component to children's development. Chess brings countless benefits, especially when introduced through school programs. It fosters: **Positive and Stimulating Friendships, Exciting Tournament and Team Opportunities, College Scholarships, Enhanced Brain Function, and Intellectual Confidence.** By nurturing a love for the game and its educational and social aspects, chess becomes a powerful tool for children's personal and academic success.

Research shows that the Scholastic Chess Initiative is reaching kids who have never played chess, demystifying the game, and giving kids confidence with the experience of successfully completing a difficult task through hard work.

72%

of students report that chess has taught them that they can complete difficult tasks if they work hard

55%

of students look forward to school more on days when they have chess class

67%

of students report that chess has made them more confident that they can learn difficult material

53%

of students report that their experience with chess makes them want to challenge themselves more in the future

FALL 2025

83 2350

Total Schools Hours of Classes

2400

Students Served

SPRING 2026

77 2950

Total Schools Hours of Classes

2680

Students Served





World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries

At the World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries, our mission explores the profound connection between chess, culture, and creative expression. We believe chess is more than a game; it is a high-stakes arena of strategy, a wellspring of inspiration, and a canvas where art and athletic discipline meet. Since 2011, we have shared this magnificent game with a vibrant, growing audience and through innovative exhibitions like *Game Plan: The Strategy of Chess & Sports* and dynamic programming, we illuminate the parallel worlds of tactical mastery, physical drive, and artistic expression. We inspire creators, thinkers, and competitors alike to explore the rich legacy and cultural impact of this enduring game. Your support helps us continue building this unique bridge—fostering a deeper appreciation for the beauty, art, and competitive spirit of chess while inspiring generations to come.

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100+

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60

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350+

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132

World Chess & U.S.
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US CHESS GRADE (K-12) NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Welcome players, families, coaches, and supporters to Orlando! The US Chess Grade (K-12) National Championships bring together young players from across the country for a weekend of competition and camaraderie. Join us for one of the nation's premier scholastic chess events, welcoming players of all skill levels.

REGISTRATION & EVENT INFORMATION

Scan the QR code below to register for the 2026 US Chess Grade (K-12) National Championships and access event details, including the schedule, hotel information and travel resources.



A LONG-TERM SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITY

US Chess is seeking long-term sponsors and Orlando-area partners for the US Chess Grade (K-12) National Championships from 2026 through 2033. This multi-year opportunity provides sustained brand visibility and engagement, with the potential to develop marketing initiatives that deliver value throughout the partnership.

PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS INCLUDE

EVENT VISIBILITY

Brand exposure to thousands of players, families, coaches and championship attendees.

LOCAL MARKET ENGAGEMENT

Connect with Florida families and visitors traveling to Orlando from across the country.

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSURE

Sponsor recognition through US Chess communications and digital content promoting the championships.

FAMILY AND HOLIDAY MARKETING

Association with a major youth chess championship during the December holiday travel season.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION SUPPORT

Support the US Chess mission to empower people, enrich lives and enhance communities through chess.

PARTNER WITH US IN ORLANDO

From 2026 through 2033, Orlando will host the US Chess Grade (K-12) National Championships each year. Build a long-term partnership that supports the event and engages its growing audience.



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- Everything in the Basic plan, plus:
- KCF Masterclass: 24 insightful lectures led by world-class Trainers



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by Jeanne Cairns Sinuefield

Dr. Jeanne Cairns Sinuefield's instructional booklet about chess notation, "Learn to Read and Write Chess," helps players of all ages learn the basics of chess notation.

For her work on this booklet and her ongoing support of chess, Dr. Sinuefield received a **Meritorious Services Award** from US Chess!

"Learn to Read and Write Chess" is available for purchase at the World Chess Hall of Fame & Galleries, the Saint Louis Chess Club, and online at qboutquestl.com.

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WHAT WE DO

We ask questions, collaborate with our clients, collect data, and analyze information to test and design solutions. Our research delivers the knowledge our clients need to make sound decisions.



WHO WE ARE

We are a team of committed data scientists and researchers working to build knowledge and disseminate information to understand what works.



WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU

- Program evaluation
- Implementation studies
- Pilot testing and field experiments
- Data auditing, management & standardization (Ed-Fi)
- Data visualization & dashboard design
- User engagement analytics
- Measurement design & alignment
- Logic modeling
- Survey research
- Iterative feedback loops for continuous improvement
- Predictive modeling
- Impact analysis



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MEMBER AND GUEST CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis (“STLCC”) is dedicated to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all its employees, members, contractors, and guests. As such, all members and guests of the STLCC are required to abide by this Code of Conduct. The STLCC reserves the right to remove any individual who violates the Code or any other STLCC policy. Members who violate this Code will be subject to suspension and/or termination of their membership and such members as well as guests violating this Code may be precluded from returning to STLCC property.

Safety

To promote the safety of members and guests at the STLCC, individuals must act appropriately while on STLCC premises or participating in STLCC activities. The STLCC has a zero-tolerance policy regarding violence or bullying. Smoking is not allowed anywhere in the STLCC facilities at any time.

Respect

Harassment or discrimination of any kind is prohibited at the STLCC. All members and guests are expected to behave in a respectful and a responsible manner. Any language or action that is threatening, offensive, or that otherwise falls below a generally acceptable standard of conduct will not be tolerated.

Bystander Intervention

Any individual who witnesses harassment and wants to help may do so by:

- Engaging with the individual being harassed and distracting them from the harassing behavior;
- Asking a third party to help intervene;
- Recording or taking notes of the incident;
- Checking on the person who has been harassed after the incident; and/or
- Confronting the harasser and telling them the behavior is inappropriate.

A bystander is encouraged to report an incident of harassment or any other violation of this Code by using any of the methods described below.

Reporting

If a member or guest feels unsafe or uncomfortable while on site at the STLCC or while engaging in STLCC activities, they are encouraged to report the circumstances to any member of STLCC management.

If a member or guest would prefer to keep their report anonymous, the STLCC has partnered with a third party, Navex, to provide confidential, anonymous reporting. This service can be accessed by calling (833) 221-3624. Concerns may also be reported anonymously by scanning the QR Code Below. The STLCC will investigate all reported incidents consistent with STLCC policies, procedures, and practices.





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