I am a chess commentator. That is a sentence I write with pride.

For more than twenty years, I have been blessed with a front row seat watching the game’s greatest players spend hour after hour in pitched battles trying to rip each other to shreds. I was there, in 1994, in a small booth overlooking the stage inside the Kremlin in Moscow during the epic Intel World Chess Grand Prix tournament. It was the first time a major chess event had ever been held inside that grand complex, and I was bellowing so loudly from the excitement of the game that Klara Kasparova, the then World Champion’s mother, shook her headphones from the speaker. I was, as I often feel like an over-enthused fan getting paid to whoop and holler in a stadium while watching the game’s geniuses as they suffer devastation. While we may use engines as partners as they spit out lines of often brilliant analysis with compelling story lines, it is up to the human expert to reveal the hidden excitement of the game’s geniuses as they suffer losses, and moments of pure psychological intrigue, intense mood swings, and moments of pure devastation. While we may use engines as partners as they spit out lines of often brilliant analysis, it is up to the human expert to tell the tale behind the reams of code, to artfully infuse dry variations with compelling story lines. Commentators bring their contrasting opinions and personalities into the mix all the while keeping track of multiple games that build in tension toward the almost inevitable pulse-racing moments of acute time pressure. In the post-game interviews, commentators gently coax players who have just stumbled out of the heat of battle to reveal something of their innermost thoughts and feelings they had during a game they may have just lost. We ride the waves of emotion as we recall how we feel when we play, and we empathize with our favorite players. Why is a commentator important? Well, it’s the commentator’s task to pull back the curtain to reveal the hidden excitement of chess games full of dramatic twists and turns, hidden subplots, psychological intrigue, intense mood swings, and moments of pure devastation. While we may use engines as partners as they spit out lines of often brilliant analysis, we are the ones who live to promote our royal game and who wish to see it become more mainstream, to reveal the hidden excitement of the game’s geniuses as they suffer losses, and moments of pure psychological intrigue, intense mood swings, and moments of pure devastation. While we may use engines as partners as they spit out lines of often brilliant analysis, it is up to the human expert to tell the tale behind the reams of code, to artfully infuse dry variations with compelling story lines. Commentators bring their contrasting opinions and personalities into the mix all the while keeping track of multiple games that build in tension toward the almost inevitable pulse-racing moments of acute time pressure. In the post-game interviews, commentators gently coax players who have just stumbled out of the heat of battle to reveal something of their innermost thoughts and feelings they had during a game they may have just lost. We ride the waves of emotion as we recall how we feel when we play, and we empathize with our favorite players.

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The Pro Chess League Returns

The inaugural Pro Chess League season ended with a surprising victory by the Saint Louis Arch Bishops last year. The Pro Chess League, originally the U.S. Chess League, used to be an elite chess tournament where American chess teams, from different states and cities, competed for first place. Chess.com, the founder of the Pro Chess League, decided to innovate and expand on this league by bringing players from other cities, countries, and continents. The first event was a great success, as teams from all over the world joined to play. The tournament we cover feels like a supreme evil, but with less despair and more excitement. It's a game renowned for long, protracted mental battles with the frantic, fast-paced format.

The Pro Chess League Returns with a New Look

The 2018 season began on January 2700 FIDE, reigning supreme for the third highest rated player in the world. With a rating of 2700, Caruana has emerged as the top American chess player. He has played an integral role in the growth of chess in the United States and has become a mainstay on the world stage. His success has paved the way for other American players to shine on the world stage.

Caruana and Nakamura, both former World Champions, are playing in the Pro Chess League. Caruana, the reigning World Champion, has been a shining light for American chess. He has won numerous tournaments and has been a consistent performer in international competitions. Nakamura, the former World Champion, has shown a lot of promise and has the potential to win more titles in the future.

So, both of whom are also firmly entrenched among the world’s top players. Caruana and Nakamura are playing for the STLCC, which has a strong team history. The STLCC has won the Pro Chess League title twice and is a mainstay in American chess. Caruana and Nakamura have been pivotal in the success of the STLCC. They have been playing together for several years and have developed a strong partnership.

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The Pro Chess League: A Global Phenomenon

The Pro Chess League has grown exponentially since its inception. It has attracted players from around the world and has become a major chess tournament on the international chess circuit. The Pro Chess League has been a catalyst for the growth of chess in the United States and has helped to bring chess to new audiences.

The Pro Chess League has been played in several countries and has attracted players from all over the world. The STLCC team has played in several tournaments and has established itself as a major force in the Pro Chess League.

The STLCC team has been successful in several tournaments and has won several titles. They have played against some of the best teams in the world and have emerged victorious. The STLCC team has been a shining light for American chess and has been a catalyst for the growth of chess in the United States.

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Key Games Played in Saint Louis

BY TATEV ABRAHAMYAN
Woman Grandmaster

Countless memorable games have unfolded at the Saint Louis Chess Club, many of which have become hallmarks in chess history or have set the bar for the competitive elite. A glance at the archives of Saint Louis’ major tournaments reveals a wealth of chess brilliance and a rich history of tournaments hosted in Saint Louis that helped shape the modern game. The Saint Louis Chess Club has hosted several key tournaments, including the U.S. Junior and U.S. Women’s Championships, the U.S. Women’s Championship, and the Sinquefield Cup. Some players have experienced the biggest heartbreaks of their careers during these events, while other have set records and reached career milestones.

In 2019, Anna Zatonskih scored an incredible 8.5/9 to clinch the title of U.S. Women’s Champion for the second year in a row. She secured the title with one round to spare with a win over future U.S. Women’s Champion Sabina Foisor, with an idea reminiscent of the legendary games between Tigran Petrosian and Shwave in 1964.

*CASCADE*[
6.16.21] IM Anna Zatonskih (2462) — WGM Sabina Foisor (2320)

The players enter a sharp variation with an idea reminiscent of the famous games between Tigran Petrosian and Shwave in 1964.


The knight will land on either e6 or f5, devastating the Black king.

9.exd5 Nxd5 10.Qb3 Qc8 11.Qd1 0–0 9.Ba4 h6 10.Nbd2 Re8 11.h3 a5

The position is closed, so the play will center on the kingside.


15...Nd7 is more accurate. Black needs a way to handle this position.

16.Qc4 Ne6 17.f4 Bxb2 18.Rb1 Qd4

The pawns fall, one by one.


22...hxg5 and the Black king is stuck.

23.Kh2 Qc8 24.Ng1 g5

The knight will dominate the board.

25.g3 Ng6 26.Nc4 f5

Exploiting the weaknesses of the Black pawns.

27.exf5 Bxf5 28.Qd2 Nd7

28...Nh5 29.Qh6 Nf6 30.g4 Nfg8 31.Qf4 Ne8

Defending the h3 pawns while positioning the rook to attack the back pawns.

32.Bg2 Rh8 33.f4 Bd8 34.Bf3 Be7 35.Kh3 b5

Gaining the upper hand to ensure the knight doesn’t land on d4. Now both of Black’s Bishops are exchanged while the White knights will dominate the board.

36... Rh8 37.Bh5 Rb8 38.Bf7 Ra8 39.Kh2 Rb8 40.Nf4 Nf6 41.Nh5

1–0

By Yasser Seirawan for commentary, 2021.

**MAJOR TOURNAMENT MOMENTS**

The Saint Louis Chess Club has hosted a vital part of its community and the chess world at large since its inception in 2004. From local events for children to world-class events, the Chess Club has welcomed players of all levels. Here are some photos from a few of these memorable events.

- Magnus Carlsen wins the 2014 Sinquefield Cup.
- Fabiano Caruana wins the 2016 Sinquefield Cup after a record-setting 7-game streak.
- Fabiano Caruana and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov win their first Grand Chess Tour, 2014.
- Karanja Kasparov joins Sotheby’s and Van Aerden for commentary, 2018.
- The “World” team wins the match of the Millennials, 2018.
- Karanja Kasparov returns to competitive chess at the 2017 Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz Tournaments.
Magnus Carlsen, 2013
“I’d like to thank Rex and Jeanne again, and if everything goes well, I’ll be back.”

Fabiano Caruana, 2014
“In terms of this tournament, it’s probably one of the best I’ve ever played.”

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, 2017
“Saint Louis is more than the Sinquefield Cup. There is so much going on. The Club is expanding and the Hall of Fame... I think it goes to show their dedication to bring chess to the highest levels.”

Levon Aronian, 2015
“I want to say that in the history of chess, I don’t know anybody who sponsors chess with so much love and with the feeling that they don’t really want anything back from chess. So I want to thank Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield for their support, and I want to say that for me, every time I come here, and I see them, I’m very happy. I know that our game is respected and loved, and will flourish as long as their work continues.”

Wesley So, 2016
“I can’t really describe how I feel. It’s like a dream. This is definitely my biggest win ever so far.”

Tournament Winners
2009–2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>U.S. Championship</th>
<th>U.S. Women’s Championship</th>
<th>U.S. Junior Championship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
<td>Anna Zatonskih</td>
<td>Marc Arnold</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Gata Kamsky</td>
<td>Irina Krush</td>
<td>Kayden Troff</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Gregory Young</td>
<td>Kings vs. Queens</td>
<td>Sam Shankland</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
<td>Ben Finegold</td>
<td>Marc Arnold</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>U.S. Junior Match</td>
<td>Anish Giri</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
<td>Kevin Cao</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
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<td>2016</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
<td>Ray Robson</td>
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<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Hikaru Nakamura</td>
<td>Magnus Carlsen</td>
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</table>
Saint Louis University (SLU) has added another sport to its elite roster: chess. Coached by Grandmaster (GM) Alejandro Ramirez, the Billikens made their first major appearance in a collegiate team tournament by taking second place in the 2016 Pan-American Intercollegiate Chess Championship. 60 teams participated in the competition, including elite universities such as Princeton, Columbia, and Carnegie Mellon. The Saint Louis region had a strong representation, including Saint Louis University, Washington University, Indiana University, and the overall winners, Webster University, who are coached by GM Susan Polgar.

Improvement in the SLU squad has been apparent based on the good results that they have had since this tournament. SLU chess team members have represented the Billikens in competitions worldwide. Dariusz performed in the 2016 Chess Olympiad in the Polish squad, and had a strong showing in the Aeroflot Open in Moscow. Yaro scored an excellent 50 percent in the 2017 U.S. Championship and hopes to improve that score in the 2018 edition. Cemil Can has played in numerous events, elevating his ranking from International Master to Grandmaster.

The SLU team strengthened its ranks by recruiting IM Dorsa Derakhshani and GM Alexander Ipatov in the Fall of 2017.

Saint Louis has attracted some of the brightest chess minds in the world. With Webster University and SLU, the two highest rated chess teams are now in this city. The Webster team, which was brought here from Texas Tech by Susan Polgar in 2012, has been amazingly successful, winning all of the Final Fours that it has participated in. One of their top players, GM Ray Robson, was part of the 2016 American Olympiad team that took the gold medal in Azerbaijan. The move from Texas Tech to Webster was controversial, as Polgar uprooted her students to the suburban college. “The program grew rapidly, and Texas Tech wasn’t ready to grow with the speed of the program,” said the coach, who founded the Susan Polgar Institute for Chess Excellence, known as SPICE, in 2007. “Saint Louis today is the center of chess in America. It just seemed like a perfect fit.”

Texas Tech has since hired former U.S. Champion and 2018 U.S. Chess Hall of Fame Inductee Alexander Onischuk to be their new coach, and their program is also rapidly progressing. As collegiate chess competition gets tighter and tighter, the Gorlocks and Billikens will be looking to recruit and strengthen their ranks with grandmasters from around the globe.

GM Alejandro Ramirez coaching at SLU.

The Saint Louis Chess Club wishes the St. Louis Cardinals and Mike Matheny Good Luck in the 2018 Season.

Making All The Right Moves