



Innovation Checkmate

South Jersey Innovation Center Chess Newsletter



Upcoming Tournaments

SEPT 2 **SJIC Booster Tournament**

Format: Mock tourney; start at 6PM

Location: SJ Innovation Center

SEPT 13 **SJIC Scholastic Play'n Go**

Format: 3 rounds; start at 10AM

Location: SJ Innovation Center

SEPT 13 **SJIC Super Quads**

Format: 3 rounds; start at 1PM

Location: SJ Innovation Center

SEPT 20 **SJIC Rapid Marathon**

Format: 3 rounds; start at 1PM

Location: SJ Innovation Center

SEPT 27 **12th Annual Leon Shulman Cup**

Format: 5 rounds; start at 10AM

Location: SJ Innovation Center

Visit <https://incntr.com/tournaments/>
and

<https://new.uschess.org/upcoming-tournaments> for more information

Recurring Events

● **Friday Night Chess Club**

When: Every Friday at 7PM

Location: SJ Innovation Center



Upcoming at SJIC



Fall Session '26: Registration Open!

Classes offered:

Youth Chess*

- + Beginner M & W 6PM
- + Adv. Beginner M & F 5PM, Th 6PM
- + Intermediate M 7PM, W 7PM
- + Adv. Intermediate W 5PM, F 6PM
- + Elite W 6PM
- + Teens Th 7PM

*Coaches evaluate students prior to registration

Adult Chess

- + Adv. Beginner M 6PM
- + Intermediate M 7PM

Champions

T & Th 7PM
>1700+ USCF; led by
IM Nikoloz Managadze

Private lessons:

Ideal for fast improvement & avoiding scheduling conflicts

Ask front desk for more info!



Student Spotlight Chase Liu



Meet 13-year-old Chase Liu, whose six-year chess journey has been shaped by persistence, steady growth, and countless memories at SJIC. Chase continues to develop as a player through friendships and tournaments, learning from both successes and setbacks and setting ambitious goals for the future.

Read more on page 3!



Chase in Summer 2024

Puzzle Challenge



1. Black to Move

Find the best moves!



2. White to Move

Chess Trivia: What was the longest official chess game?

*Answers on pg. 2



Major Current Events



Magnus Carlsen won the 2026 Esports World Cup in Paris, successfully defending his title from 2025. The tournament featured 16 top-level Grandmasters competing in a fast 10-minute format for a \$1.5 million chess prize pool. Carlsen, currently rated 2823 and ranked No. 1 in the world, went undefeated throughout the event. His success began at a young age, becoming a Grandmaster at just 13 and later winning his first World Championship at 22. Carlsen is now a five-time World Chess Champion, the highest-rated player in chess history, and has remained at the top of the chess world for more than a decade.

At 17 years old, Grandmaster Shreyas Royal became the youngest British Chess Champion ever this August, breaking a record held by Michael Adams since 1989. Royal went undefeated throughout the British Chess Championship, finishing with an impressive score of 7.5/9. His performance earned him the £10,000 first prize and added to his growing list of achievements, which includes becoming England's youngest-ever Grandmaster at age 15.



Mini-Lesson: Opening Principles

Take a look at this position:
Who has gotten off to a better start?

Your answer: likely the black pieces.

A chess game can be broken into 3 stages: the opening, middlegame, and endgame. Studying opening theory takes time, but there are a few general key points to keep in mind so that so you don't fall behind and start off with a positional disadvantage:



1. *Control the center* with your pawns and pieces.
2. *Develop your pieces* early, especially knights and bishops.
3. *Castle early* to protect your king.
4. Avoid moving the same piece repeatedly.
5. Be careful with moving the f-pawn, which can expose your king.
6. Don't bring your queen out too early.
7. Connect your rooks by castling and completing development.

2026 National K-12 Grade Championships (Orlando, December 11-13)

Come join our SJIC team! It will offer students more than the chance to compete in a major national chess tournament. They will face strong players from across the country, receive coaching and tournament support, and develop skills such as concentration, resilience, sportsmanship, and confidence.

The experience also gives students a chance to travel together, build friendships, support their teammates, and create lasting memories. Regardless of the final results, students return home with valuable tournament experience and a stronger connection to the SJIC chess community.

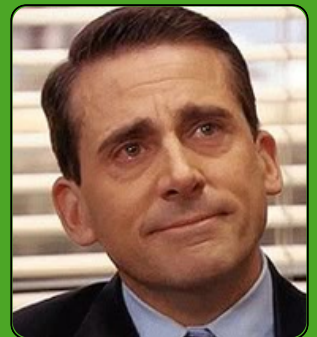
Please contact SJIC for Dov Gorman or one of the chess coaches for more information!

Meme of the Month

Coach: "take your time, you have 30 minutes."

Student: makes moves in 0.7 seconds.

Coach:



Puzzle Challenge Answers:

- 1... Ng3, checkmate.
2. Ng2, trapping the queen.

Chess Trivia Answer:

A 1989 game between GMs Ivan Nikolić and Goran Arsović lasting 269 moves and 20 hours (ended in a draw) 🤔



Student Spotlight: Chase Liu & His Chess Journey



Chess classes, summer camps, online tournaments, movies with friends, and even games of Red Light, Green Light—13-year-old Chase Liu has collected plenty of memories during his years at SJIC. Chase, who lives in Cherry Hill, began playing chess about six years ago and has trained at SJIC under FM Dov Gorman ever since. What started as learning the game has grown into something that has been a big part of his childhood.

Chase remembers that his progress started slowly before picking up once he reached around a 1300 USCF rating. Since then, years of practice and tournament games have helped him continue improving. He eventually passed 1500 in June 2025 and currently sits around 1550. He also fondly remembers finishing fourth in



2024 Amateur Team East (War and Piece)

his section at a Harrisburg tournament in 2023—and, of course, getting to take home a trophy.

But ask Chase about SJIC, and he talks just as much about the people as the chess. During online classes a few years ago, he remembers playing Chess.com tournaments with his friends and the spirited competition. At summer camp, some of his favorite moments included playing outside with friends and gathering around the TV to watch Searching for Bobby Fischer. Chase has also taken math classes and participated in other programs at SJIC over the years. After spending so much time there, he says the center feels “like family” and remembers the friendships just as fondly as the chess itself.



Chase, his mother, father, & sister near Princeton, NJ

Chase stays busy outside of chess as well. He competes in swimming at a local club, plays trumpet at school, and enjoys making comic-style artwork. Family is also an important part of his life. Chase lives with his mom, dad, and sister in Cherry Hill, while some of his extended family, including his grandmother, live in China. In his free time, he enjoys playing Minecraft-style games and chatting with friends. Chase believes in “working hard and playing hard too,” an attitude that carries over into his many interests.

Looking ahead, his next chess goal is reaching 1800, something he plans to work toward “brick-by-brick.” He hopes to continue playing and being part of SJIC along the way. Eventually, Chase would also like to try teaching chess himself and, in his words, “ignite another kid’s passion for chess one day.”



Chase & his sister in Pittsburgh



Student Spotlight: Chase Liu's Featured Games



1. Chase Liu vs. John Kennedy (1-0)

1. ...Be5
2. Rg4+
Kh8
3. Bd4
Bxd4
4. Rgxd4



His opponent moved his bishop from g7 to e5, forking Chase's queen and rook. Chase responded with 35. Rg4+!, breaking the fork with check and allowing White to continue the attack. To remove Black's well-placed bishop, he used a pin with 36. Bd4. After trading bishops, his opponent erred with 37... Re2, and Chase immediately seized the opportunity as seen below.

- 5...Re2?
6. Qf6+
Kg8
7. Rg1+
Kf8
8. Qd6+
Ke8
9. Rg8#



Earlier in the game, Chase launched a tactical pawn storm along the f- through h-files, breaking open his opponent's kingside. He traded his opponent's knight and bishop, removing key defenders while strengthening his rooks and building a decisive advantage. This analysis demonstrates the importance of coordinating pieces to control the position and build an attack.

2. Chase Liu vs. Aanav Karn (1-0)



White to move.
How can White ensure he can control the open file?

If you read the mini-lesson in our June newsletter, you would have learned about the importance of open files, especially for rooks. They have long-range powers and like to be positioned where they have sights down the board. Chase took control of the open e-file by playing 1. Bxf4. After his opponent recaptured with 1... Qxf4, Chase doubled his rooks, controlling the position.



What is the winning plan for White?

Chase soon reached this position and played 1. d6! If his opponent takes his queen, he takes back with the pawn, and Black cannot prevent White from promoting. Thus, Black is essentially "frozen" and cannot stop White from improving his position and then advancing the pawn. This shows the power of advanced passed pawns, which can tie down an opponent's pieces.



Student Spotlight: Chase Liu's Featured Games Contd.



3. Vihaan Agarwal vs. Chase Liu (0-1)



The game continued:

- | | |
|-------------|------------|
| 1. ...fxg4 | 4. Bd5 Be6 |
| 2. Bxd5 Kd7 | 5. Be4 b3 |
| 3. Bxf7 Ke7 | 6. Kc3 h5 |

At this point in the game, Chase was up two pawns. How does he convert this material advantage into a win?

White had just moved his bishop from c2 to b3 with the idea of attacking Black's pawn on d5. However, this seemingly reasonable move was a mistake (shifting the computer evaluation from -2.3 to -4.5), and Chase jumped on the opportunity.

In this position, Chase played 1... fxg4! Calculating through the position, he determined that he could give up his d5 pawn to create a pawn majority on the kingside, and with his one protected passed pawn on the queenside, his opponent ultimately had no effective way to prevent promotion. Black distracted the White king with the b-pawn before storming the g- and h-files.

Chase went on to trade bishops, promote his g-pawn, and smoothly win the game. The key lesson is to not simply protect an advantage, but find the best way to turn it into a winning plan.

Chase is already up an extra knight. His opponent just moved his pawn from a2 to a4. How can Black continue gaining the edge?..... Bxb3!

Black can take advantage of the position by using the bishop on e6 to capture White's knight on b3. If White recaptures with the c2-pawn, Black's rook on d8 is then free to capture the undefended bishop on d3.

This position demonstrates the tactical idea of an overloaded piece. White's c2-pawn has too many responsibilities, as it must defend both the knight on b3 and bishop on d3. By attacking one defender, Black forces the pawn to abandon the other. This position shows how recognizing tactical patterns can help players find hidden opportunities.

4. Ariel Onai Omari vs. Chase Liu (0-1)



Chase's story shows how chess can become much more than competition and rating points. Over six years, the game has given him opportunities to grow, build friendships, and create lasting memories. His steady commitment to improvement reflects the patience and persistence that chess often requires. SJIC is proud to have been part of Chase's journey and looks forward to seeing where his passion for the game takes him next.





SJIC's Founding Story



South Jersey Innovation Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2016 by Dov Gorman, with the help of two concerned mothers who shared his belief that bright, motivated students were reaching the ceiling of what their school classrooms could offer them. Traditional curricula, designed to meet the needs of an entire classroom, often left ambitious kids without anywhere further to go. SJIC was created to fill that gap — giving students access to advanced engineering, mathematics, and critical thinking well beyond grade-level expectations, and challenging them in ways a standard school day rarely can.

We started small, renting rooms once a week at the Indian Culture Center in Marlton to teach classes in math, robotics, financial literacy, and chess. As demand grew, it became clear that the only way to truly develop our initiative was to have a home of our own, and we moved into 2003 Lincoln Drive in Marlton. With our own space, we expanded our programs into coding, AI, and virtual reality, and went deeper into each of our existing subject areas.

Then COVID hit. We closed our physical location but kept teaching without interruption, moving our classes online. When it was time to return in person, we relocated to a second location in Mt. Laurel, where we spent two years before moving to our current location three years ago.

Alongside our own campus, we began bringing our programs directly into local schools. Today, SJIC teaches in 10 different schools across Marlton, Voorhees, Haddonfield, and Moorestown — extending the same rigor and curiosity that started in a rented room to students across South Jersey.

Building a Chess Powerhouse

Chess has been part of SJIC's identity since its earliest days, and over time we built it into one of the most active tournament programs in the country. SJIC has hosted more than 1,000 rated tournaments, placing us among the most active tournament organizers in the United States.

We have hosted the New Jersey state championships for youth, women, and seniors, and more recently launched the South Jersey Chess League. Our events have attracted many of the nation's top players, including U.S. grandmasters — among them Abhimanyu Mishra, the youngest grandmaster in chess history.

For years, we funded the Philadelphia Inventors, a team in the U.S. Chess League and PRO Chess League. At its peak, the team was a playoff contender, featuring four grandmasters and three International Masters on its roster.

Join our SJ Chess League!

South Jersey Chess League is a competitive team league organized by the SJIC, featuring 10 teams of four players competing in Friday-night matches. Team captains manage weekly lineups and results, providing South Jersey players with regular tournament-level team competition close to home.

Please contact SJIC for Dov Gorman for more information



Parent Corner



These are some particularly useful resources for players looking to practice and improve outside of chess lessons:

- *Chess.com*: Play live practice games and analyze them, reviewing mistakes.
- *ChessTempo.com*: Practice tactics, calculation, and endgames.
- *YouTube*: Many free lessons on openings, tactics, strategy, and famous games. Channels include Remote Chess Academy, GothamChess, Daniel Naroditsky, and more



Puzzle Prize!



Find white's best continuation to win a prize!
(See front desk)

Questions, feedback, or suggestions?

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