



INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE CHESS FEDERATION

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Press Release

Stephen Ham Earns ICCF GM Title

Stephen E. Ham has earned the title of Correspondence Grand Master (GM), as confirmed via email from International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF) Qualifications Commissioner, Neil Limbert. Steve's Certificate and Medal will be awarded at the 2011 ICCF Congress to be held next autumn, however, his title becomes effective immediately. He is the eleventh correspondence GM from the USA Federation. After a drought of many years the US has now produced seven GMs since 2004.

Steve achieved his two norms in the 50 Israeli Championship – Jubilee (ISR/C50) and in BdF-Silber 2008 (BdFS08). In the first he met the GM standard and in the latter he surpassed the GM norm by ½-point. He also won the BdF-Silber tournament by a clear ½-point over the field. In all he completed 27 games undefeated, winning 8 and drawing 19, while achieving a combined performance rating of 2638. He faced 8 GMs, 9 SIMs and 1 IM, far surpassing the titled opponents requirement (rule 3i) for the GM title. The crosstables of those tournaments can be located via the following links:

www.iccf-webchess.com/EventCrossTable.aspx?id=19767

and

www.iccf-webchess.com/EventCrossTable.aspx?id=18357

Steve offers up the following game as an example of his outstanding technique and creative genius at the board. It is taken from the BdF-Silber 2008 event where he made his second GM norm. It has added significance as it was the tournament's deciding game. His Russian opponent, Boris Mikhailovich Zhak, currently rated 2653, finished second ½-point behind Steve (and in doing so also earned a GM Norm and the GM title). For the sake of space, the game below is presented without annotations. Steve was gracious enough to provide us with his copious game notes. For those who are interested in understanding the depth and breadth that one needs to explore in order to attain the GM level (assuming one also has the requisite talent), the fully annotated version can be found at:

<http://www.iccfus.com/gameofthemonth/games/ham.htm>

The game is characterized by three sacrifices and perhaps introduces a new chess theorem - *he who sacs last wins!* Eerily reminiscent of Fischer's "pry open the KR file, sac, sac, mate," (although not necessarily in that order) Steve borrows from that recipe and cooks up a gem.

For Immediate Release 9 a.m. EDT, November 29, 2010 more

[ECOCode "A29"]
[Opening "English: Four Knights Variation"]
[Event "BdFS08"]
[Site "ICCF Webserver"]
[StartDate "01.Apr.2009"]
[White "Zhak, Boris Milhailovich (RUS)"]
[Black "Ham, Stephen Edward (USA) SIM"]
[Result "0-1"]
[WhiteElo "2500"]
[BlackElo "2521"]

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.cxd5 Nxd5 4.g3 e5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.0-0 Be7 8.a3 0-0 9.d3 Be6 10.Be3 f5 11.Rc1 Kh8 12.b4 a6 13.Qd2 Nd5 14.Bg5 Bxg5 15.Nxg5 Bg8 16.Nf3 Qf6 17.Na4 b6 18.Nc3 Rad8 19.Qc2 Rd6 20.Rfe1 Rfd8 21.Nd2 Nde7 22.Qa4 Nb8 23.Ncb1 b5 24.Qd1 Nbc6 25.Rc5 h6 26.Qc1 Nd4 27.Rxc7 Bd5 28.Bxd5 Nxd5 29.Rc5 Ne7 30.Kg2 Ne6 31.Rc2 Nd4 32.Rc5 h5 33.Nc3 Ne6 34.Nb3 Nxc5 35.Nxc5 Rc6 36.h4 Rd4 37.e3 Rg4 38.f3 Rxh4 39.Kf2 e4 40.gxh4 Qxh4+ 41.Ke2 exf3+ 42.Kd1 Qg3 43.Qd2 h4 44.e4 h3 45.exf5 f2 46.Rf1 h2 47.N5e4 Qf3+ 48.Kc2 Nxf5 49.Kb2 h1Q 50.Rxh1+ Qxh1 51.Qxf2 Qh5 52.a4 bxa4 53.Nxa4 Kg8 54.Nac5 Rh6 55.Ka3 Nd6 56.Nxd6 Rxd6 57.Qd2 Qe5 58.Qc2 Qd5 59.Qe2 a5 0-1