



The Friendly Post

News from ICCF-US Friendly Matches from around the world - Issue 47, March 2024

Greetings from ICCF-US Friendly Match Central. This is the newsletter concerning everything related to ICCF-US Friendly Matches. Thanks to your ongoing interest in the Friendly Matches, this newsletter has been arriving at your email doorstep 4 times per year for over 11 years!

To explain to any new recipients, Friendly Matches are team versus team chess contests (involving teams affiliated with different nations) where the overall team outcomes do not matter beyond bragging rights. Everyone is eligible to play. The ICCF-US uses both a standing set of interested players and new participants in virtually every match. Each match participant plays two **rated** games, one with white and one with black, against a single opponent of nearly identical rating. The fee to participate is \$5 per match. You are invited to participate!

10,000!!!

YES, TEN THOUSAND COMPLETED GAMES!!!!

That's what the ICCF-US friendly matches have accomplished since server records have been kept (since 1/1/2007)! Thanks to everyone who participated in this magnificent worldwide demonstration in support of our motto: **amici sumus** (= we are friends)!

Noteworthy, **5,000 of those 10,000 games were completed in just the past 6 years** (as compared to the first 5,000 games taking 11 years to complete)! We went from fewer than 500 completed games per year to an average of over 850 completed games per year; better than a 70% increase on average during the past 6 years!

Acquainting You with What Else is Offered to USA Players

For years, this newsletter has listed the people behind the ICCF-US organization – the ones who make it all happen for you. You can (again) see that on page 16 of this newsletter. What you may not know is what else the ICCF-US offers its players on an ongoing basis. Here are the events we offer our players – besides what the international ICCF offers:

Bringing in the New Year (BITNY), in 5 sections (A, B, C, D, E) – offered annually.

Under-2000 Championship in 2 stages: Preliminaries and Finals – offered annually.

Open Class – started this year, anticipated to be offered annually.

US Correspondence Chess Championship (USCCC) Finals – offered biannually.

USA Invitational Tournament, in 4 sections (A, B, C, D) – offered annually.

Olympiad team participation – offered in keeping with Olympiad tournament schedule.

Nominations to WCCC Preliminary and Semi-final sections – offered annually.

Nominations to other federations' invitational events – offered as requests are received.

And of course: Friendly matches – offered about 12 times per year.

We also respond to lots of inquiries involving all sorts of questions, concerns, comments, suggestions, etc.

What you may not already know as well is that the USA has a high degree of representation on the international side of the ICCF. Specifically, the ICCF-US members who currently are ICCF officers include:

- (1) IA SIM Michael Millstone – General Secretary (and member of the Executive Board)
- (2) GM Jason Bokar – Marketing Director (and member of the Executive Board)
- (3) IA SIM Thomas Biedermann – Entry Commissioner
- (4) IM Dennis Doren – Rules Commissioner

Finally, to answer a question some of you have, we are all volunteers. None of us gets any payment for any of the time we give to the international or national branch of the ICCF. All your participation/entry fees go to running events.

Upcoming Friendly Matches

We are expecting to receive the team rosters any day now from (1) **Argentina**, (2) **Canada** and (3) **Italy**. Likewise, (4) **Poland** is expected to send us its team roster for a match to start in June. When any of those team lists are received, invitations for USA players with similar ratings will be emailed. *

***Please respond to each invitation, including if you need to decline it.** Please do not just ignore invitations as this causes Dennis more work and more delay in completing the organization of a match. If you need to decline, please just tell him that with a very quick reply email. You do not need to say why.

Please feel free to let us know if you have a particular interest in playing in a specific one of those matches (by writing to Dennis at dmdorenchess@gmail.com). There is no guarantee that we can find a proper place for you in any specific match, but we always try.

Matches can go from an idea to an active reality within any 90-day period – that is, between newsletters. So, if you have not already let it be known that you want to play, be sure to let us know by writing to Dennis at dmdorenchess@gmail.com!



Around the World a Third Time!!

The USA Friendly Match World Tour 3

Whether you want to “collect countries”, wish to have an opportunity to communicate with people from your ancestors’ home country, or just like the opportunity to meet people from around the world, the Friendly Matches bring you that opportunity. During our third World Tour (WT3), we are making offers for Friendly Matches to all ICCF member federations: all 53 of them (besides us). Come go around the world with US!

So far in WT3:

We are about 4/5 through our third World Tour! Come join us!

We have at least started play against the following (32) countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cape Verde*, Croatia, Cuba (x 2), Denmark, Ecuador, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Mexico (x 2), Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Russia*, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and Wales [* No longer a member federation]*

Scheduled matches: (1) Canada (soon?), (2) Italy (tentatively in April), (3) Poland (June), (4) Argentina (no specific date yet).

Active invitations: (None – already waiting for team rosters from Argentina, Canada, and Italy, with Poland’s expected within the upcoming quarter)

Our **invitation was declined by, or we received no response** from the following (8) countries: Chile, Greece, Iceland, Lithuania, Panama, Portugal, Slovakia, South Africa.

Countries (10) **yet to be included in WT3:** Brazil, Bulgaria, Czechia, Ireland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, and Spain.



The Current Friendly Matches...

You can always find the current results from any of our Friendly Matches by visiting www.iccf.com, Tables and Results, Friendly Matches, but this newsletter continues to make it easy for you to stay up-to-date. Each new issue lists the friendly matches currently in progress. Previous issues of "The Friendly Post" can be found at www.iccfus.com. The current standings (through 3/13/2024) are as follows:

	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Server/Postal</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Result (USA v. other)</u>
1.	Slovenia	Server	6/6/2021	18.5 - 22.5 (1 ongoing game)
2.	Germany	Server	10/12/2022	149.5 - 176.5 (4 ongoing games)
3.	Hungary	Server	12/26/2022	31.5 - 42.5 (2 ongoing games)
4.	Sweden	Server	2/26/2023	50.0 - 44.0 (6 ongoing games)
5.	Switzerland	Server	4/14/2023	23.0 - 24.0 (3 ongoing games)
6.	Latvia	Server	4/18/2023	39.5 - 32.5 (4 ongoing games)
7.	Estonia	Server	4/27/2023	8.5 - 5.5 (2 ongoing games)
8.	Cuba	Server	5/1/2023	35.0 - 33.0 (4 ongoing games)
9.	Turkey	Server	5/10/2023	8.5 - 9.5 (2 ongoing games)
10.	Peru	Server	7/22/2023	27.0 - 29.0 (12 ongoing games)
11.	Norway	Server	10/21/2023	18.5 - 18.5 (27 ongoing games)
12.	India	Server	10/30/2023	8.5 - 9.5 (22 ongoing games)
13.	Croatia	Server	11/2/2023	10.5 - 9.5 (14 ongoing games)
14.	Mexico	Server	11/19/2023	13.0 - 14.0 (23 ongoing games)
15.	Netherlands	Server	11/21/2023	36.0 - 35.0 (57 ongoing games)
16.	England	Server	2/8/2024	6.5 - 10.5 (149 ongoing games)

TOTAL USA RESULTS

Currently (as of 3/13/2024) = **332** ongoing games

Completed games since 1/1/2007* = **10004** games

Total score since 1/1/2007* = **4951.5 – 5052.5 (49.5%)**

(* 1/1/2007 is the beginning of USA friendly match records on the ICCF server)



Highlights and Interesting Tidbits:

- (1) The USA won versus **Latvia**! That was a match where we took an early lead and never let go. Nice going!!
- (2) We have ALMOST won against **Sweden**. Six (6) games remain and the USA has maintained its 6 point lead. We can't lose. And unless we lose all 6 remaining games (not a chance!), we will win this match. An early congratulations!
- (3) **Cuba** has been a nemesis for us (our score in recent times being 0 – 4), but we are maintaining our slim lead. With only 4 remaining games, the USA leads by 2 points. We haven't won this match yet, but 1.5 points from those 4 will close the deal. GO USA!!
- (4) The **Ukraine** match got away from us. Although we kept it close, the USA lost that match. If you will permit me a statement beyond my usual realm, the loss did not feel so bad given what the Ukrainians are dealing with in their "real" life.
- (5) The match versus **Turkey** is too close for comfort. The USA caught up 1 point from its previous 2-point deficit. However, there are only 2 remaining games in this match, (both involving the same USA player – no pressure!!). Push on USA!!
- (6) **Peru** gained 1 point on us this past quarter. We are now down 2 points. With 12 games still ongoing, we have time to pull ahead. GO USA!
- (7) During this quarter, **Switzerland's** 3-point lead with 13 remaining games was cut down to a 1-point lead. However, there are only 3 remaining games. We need at least 1 win among those 3 games. Best of luck USA!
- (8) Among our very small number of tied matches, 5 among our 128 completed matches, is a tie with **Norway**. Well, we are starting along the same path again. The current score is 18.5 – 18.5. Of course, with 27 games to go, anything could happen. Still...
- (9) Four of our rather recently started matches show scores with a difference between the teams of only 1 point. This is true for the matches involving **India**, **Croatia**, **Mexico**, and the **Netherlands**. This is true despite 1/3 to 2/3 of all games in each of those matches have been completed. There are a lot of close matches!!



Friendly Match (versus game) win/loss record

(Since 1/1/07) 65 wins, 58 losses, 5 ties (= 52.7% for USA)

USA Won	USA Lost**	USA Tied
Argentina (2010)	Aruba (2020)	Argentina (2019)***
Argentina (2016)	Austria (2014)	Norway (2013)***
Australia/New Zealand (2012)	Austria (2021)	Peru (2021)***
Australia (2016)	Belarus (2016)	Slovakia (2020)***
Australia (2018)	Belgium (2015)	Wales (2019)***
Australia (2022)	BeNeLux (2020)	
Belarus (2021)	Canada (2019)	
Belgium (2022)	Croatia (2015)	
Brazil (2016)	Cuba (2013)	
Brazil (2020)	Cuba (2015)	
British CCA (2016)	Cuba (2018)	
Bulgaria (2016)	Cuba (2021)	
Bulgaria (2021)	Czech Republic (2011)	
Canada (2014)	Czech Republic (2013)	
Cape Verde (2013)	Czech Republic (2019)	
Denmark (2014)	Denmark (2018)	
England (2008)	Denmark (2021)	
England (2012)	England (2020)	
Estonia (2016)	Finland (2018)	
Estonia (2020)	France (2010)	
Estonia (2023)*	Germany (2008 – Women’s only)	
Finland (2009)	Germany (2011)	
Finland (2022)	Germany (2014)	
France (2009)	Germany (2020)	
France (2022)	Germany (2022)*	
Hong Kong (2010)	Hungary (2022)*	
India (2014)	Iceland (2014)	
India (2019)	Iceland (2019)	
Indonesia (2016)	Indonesia (2021)	

Israel (2016)
Israel (2021)
Japan (2013)
Japan (2017)
Japan (2021)
Latvia (2015)
Latvia (2020)
Latvia (2023)*
Lithuania (2015)
Mexico (2020)
NCA/ECU/GUA/CPV (2022)
Netherlands (2013)
Netherlands (2018)
New Zealand (2020)
Panama (2013)
Peru (2013)
Peru (2017)
Portugal (2013)
Portugal (2018)
Romania (2008)
Romania (2013)
Russia (2022)
SchemingMind (2018)
Scotland (2008)
Scotland (2016)
Scotland (2020)
Slovakia (2014)
Slovenia (2015)
Spain (2016)
Sweden (2016)
Sweden (2018)
Turkey (2015)
Venezuela (2013)
Wales (2013)
Wales (2022)
Yorkshire (2018)

Israel (2014)
Italy (2010)
Italy (2017)
Mexico (2017)
Mexico (2022)
Netherlands (2017)
Norway (2019)
Panama (2015)
Panama (2016)
Philippines (2021)
Philippines B (2021)
Poland (2015)
Romania (2021)
Russia (2013)
Russia (v. Zone 3) (2017)
Slovenia (2019)
Slovenia (2021)*
Spain (2008)
Spain (2021)
Sweden (2007)
Switzerland (2014)
Switzerland (2020)
Ukraine (2010)
Ukraine (2015)
Ukraine (2018)
Ukraine (2023)
Venezuela (2014)
Venezuela (2017)
Wales (2016)

* Still officially ongoing, but the final team outcome is already determined.

** Chess960 matches versus Germany and Russia are not included in this list because it is a different game coupled with the very large rating differences in these matches. The USA lost both matches.

*** After 128 completed matches, where pairings were made with as equal ratings as possible, there have been only 5 tied results.



FEATURED GAME

This quarter's featured game is from the still ongoing friendly match versus Latvia. All comments below are by IM Parsons unless noted as by Dennis.

IM Igors Rausis (2488) (Latvia) – **IM Larry Parsons** (2464) (USA)
[ICCF Game](#)

This was a key game in helping my ICCF rating go over 2500 for the first time.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 (The Trompowsky Attack)

2...g6 (More typical moves include 2...Ne4, 2...e6, 2...d5 and 2...c5, though the played move is also commonly played – comment by Dennis)

3.Bxf6 exf6 4.c4 b6 (Not in my limited Openings Book; but it's a reasonable move) (This was played previously only once in the ICCF, a game that ended 0 – 1 after only 5 moves – presumably an abandoned game and not meaningful as far as opening theory is concerned. The Mega Database shows 3 games with 4...b6, with their overall results being 1-1-1. – comment by Dennis)



Position after 4...b6

5.Nc3 Bb7 6.h4 (This is a new move. It is supported though not the first choice by multiple chess engines. Black has already equalized the position. The Mega database shows the favored move to be 6.e3, with 4 results, including through transposition, of 1-2-1. – comment by Dennis.)

6...f5 7.h5 Bg7 8.Nf3 (An obvious-looking move, but 8.h6 was probably better. AlphaZero showed the utility of an early pushing of a pawn to h6, a move in this case supported by other chess engines. – comment by Dennis)



Position after 8.Nf3

8...O-O 9.Qd2 (The push 9.h6 is less useful now given Black has 9...Bh8. On the previous move, Black's B move to f6 would leave the dark square B, and hence Black's dark squares more exposed to attack. – comment by Dennis)

9...c5 10.d5 d6 11.hxg6 hxg6 (The tempting 11...fxg6 would be shown bad after 12.Ng5 and 13.Ne6. – comment by Dennis)

12.Qf4 Nd7 13.Qxd6? (I already have a small edge as black, but 13.Qxd6 is not the best move to keep a minimal disadvantage.) (This seems to be a case where White saw engine support for a move, Qxd6, based on analysis for move 12. When multiple engines are each given significant time to analyze this specific position, after Black's 12th move, they all found Qxd6 to be problematic due to Black's response. – comment by Dennis)



Position after 13.Qxd6

13...Re8! 14.Qh2? (Not the best square for his Queen. White's attack on the h-file is an illusion.)

14...b5! (Opening up the center and Q-side where black is much better developed.)

15.e3 Qa5 (Black is now significantly ahead in development, and with White's K still in the center of the board. – comment by Dennis)

16.Nd2 bxc4 17.Bxc4 Ne5



Position after 17...Ne5

18.Be2 (White probably does not have time enough to save this B from a trade. Either 18.0-0 or 18.Qh7+ were likely marginally better, though White's position would still be difficult. – comment by Dennis)

18...Ba6!? (My computer suggested 18...Rad8 as slightly stronger but it leads to an opposite-colored bishops middlegame.)

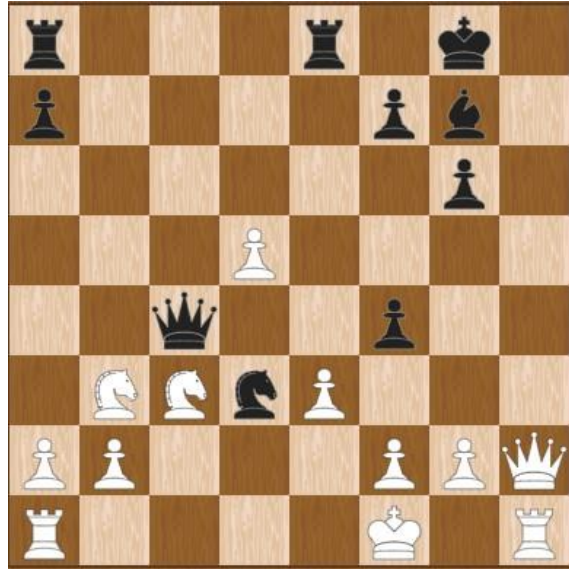
19.Nb3 Qb6



Position after 19...Qb6

20.Bxa6? (White missed his only chance to stay in the game with 20.Qh7+ Kf8 21.O-O. After the bishop trade White's King is stuck in the center with Black clearly winning.)

20...Qxa6 21.Nxc5 Qc4 22.Nb3 Nd3+ 23.Kf1 f4



Position after 23...f4

24.Kg1 (This move, clearly to avoid the discovered check, seems to make sense, but White had to be more active. Relatively speaking, 24.Qh4 was a better try, though White should lose anyway. Then if 24...Qa6, 25.d6 Qxd6 26.Ne2 fxe3 27.Rd1 Qa6 28.Rh3 making Black's path to victory a little harder to find. – comment by Dennis)

24...Nxb2 25.Rc1 Nd3 26.Nd2 Qb4 27.Rc2 fxe3 28.fxe3 Rxe3 29.Nf3 Qb6 30.Qh7+ Kf8
31.Kh2 Qd6+ 0-1



Final position

(Stockfish indicates:

- A) if 32.g3, Rxf3 with an evaluation rating beyond -10.0;
- B) if 32.Kg1, Rxf3 leads to a mate in 34; and
- C) if 32.Kh3, Nf4+ 33.Kg3 Rxc3 leads to a mate in 24. – comment by Dennis)

Igors resigned here and graciously sent the following note: “It is time to thank you for the game played, an excellent example of how to punish a hazardous and completely unprepared white attack. Bravo! Best wishes from Riga.”

Gracious indeed! – Dennis



The Triple Block time control system has come to the ICCF!

Have you heard about the "Triple Block" time control system? The Triple Block system, most often abbreviated as "TB", was developed by an ICCF work group specifically appointed during the 2015 Congress to address a variety of complaints about the standard time control system. (There were 6 different proposals during the 2015 Congress alone for changes in the ICCF time control system.) The new system was approved for trials by the 2016 Congress, and officially approved by the 2020 Congress. Since then, hundreds of events have used the system without significant problem.

Some of our recently started Friendly Matches are using this system. Some of our as-yet-to-be scheduled Friendly Matches will also use this new time control system.

In brief, the Triple Block system gives you your reflection time, your leave time, and some additional time right from the beginning. The time keeping is simplified in that there is no doubling of reflection time (as there is currently after 20 days without a move), no 40+ day loss by default and therefore no registering to be allowed to go beyond that time limit, no watching your time at each 10-move interval, and no recording of leave time. Instead, each player has far more control of his/her reflection time. Problematic play related to the "dead man's defense" is also lessened. And you will typically have more reflection time per move available to you than you currently do!

The rules and procedures for the TB system are incorporated as Appendix 3 in the document "ICCF Rules".



Where to Find Us

The ICCF-US home website is at www.iccfus.com. You can always find copies of "*The Friendly Post*" at that site, with a link on the top in the home page. The server for playing games is at www.iccf.com.

Contact Dennis Doren at dmdorenchess@gmail.com concerning anything related to the Friendly Matches.



The People Behind the Organization

Thanks to the people who keep it all running, the ICCF-US Administrators:

Grandmaster Jason Bokar, Director

Senior International Master Tom Biedermann, Deputy Director & Treasurer

International Master Corky Schakel, Registrations Director

Senior International Master Dan Perry, Webmaster

International Master Bob Rizzo, Norms and Communications Organizer

Yours truly, **IM Dennis Doren**, Friendly Matches Organizer (dmdorenchess@gmail.com)

How Do I Get On A Team?

Getting selected to play on a USA Team in a Friendly Match takes almost no effort. Just let me know you are interested! Send an email to dmdorenchess@gmail.com and say you wish to play in a Friendly Match. When I have a team slot for you (meaning there is an opponent with about the same rating as your current one), I will let you know. You can also let me know of any specific country you wish to play against, but you do not have to do that.

When I have a specific team placement to offer you, you will receive an email from me - sent to the same address you have listed on the ICCF server. (Don't forget to update any email address changes!) My email will offer you a position on a team in a Friendly Match against a specifically listed country.

Please know that you need to respond to that email, and typically to do so **within 3 days** of my having sent it! I have a lot of positions to fill while all the members of the opposing team simply wait for me to complete my task. That is why there is a time frame for your response. If I do not hear from you within the specified time, I will offer your slot to someone else. However, even if you do not want, or cannot take the offered position, I strongly request that you do me the courtesy of a quick reply saying so. In that way, I can make an offer of "your" team position to someone else right away.

After you accept your offered position, you will get a reply email from me telling you what you need to pay and how to pay it. Please do NOT pay anything to anyone for a Friendly Match before you receive this email from me. "Pre-paying" only makes our administrative task more complicated, not easier. You will be asked to pay your fee before the match starts.

Finally, you will automatically receive your pairings, including an email from the ICCF server informing you that the match has begun and who you are paired against.

That is it! Let me know your interest, accept my invitation for you to play in a specific match, pay your fee, and enjoy your games!



You Can Play on the USA Team in a Friendly Match!

You, too, can play in a Friendly Match, no matter the degree to which you have played in an ICCF-US event of any kind previously. Each match consists of two **rated** games (one white, one black) against the same opponent who is very close in rating to yours. The total fee is \$5 for your participation per match. Just contact Dennis Doren, the ICCF-US Friendly Match Organizer, at dmdorenchess@gmail.com and tell him your specific interest in playing.

Do **NOT** send any money to Dennis or anyone else at this point to pay for your participation! You will only need to pay (through Paypal, money order, or by check) when your placement on a USA team in a specific Friendly Match has been confirmed by Dennis. Dennis will tell you when that is.