

Ferocious Berkeley Chess Players Square Off Saturday

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As chess towns go, Berkeley is about the toughest around, harboring an international grandmaster who could probably beat you in five moves, and several plain old ordinary masters, who might take ten moves to do the job.

The chess cartel of Berkeley got together Sunday at their Dwight Way hang-out to fly through a couple of five minute chess games, complain about the lighting, and psych themselves up for the \$5000 People's Chess Tournament this weekend.

None of them were people you'd want to see on the other side of a chess board if there was money on the table.

Anything?

"The difference between chess and other games is that in chess, you can do anything you want, as long as you understand it," said Walter Browne, one of fewer than 100 International Grandmasters in the world. "There's no luck. In other games, it depends on the roll of the dice, or your physical execution, like tennis. But anyone can *move* chess pieces.

How you move them has something to do with it, too. And like any other artist, each chess master has his own style, easily recognized by students of the game.

Browne, for instance, plays the sharp, aggressive style favored by World Champion Bobby Fischer.

Mixing It Up

"I like to play very sharp positions because I figure I'm better than the next guy," he said. "The more tension, the sharper the position, the more chances that he's going to fold."

"The kid's a slugger," explained Jim McCormick, another master, "He likes to mix it up."

"I do everything that Walter does, except that Walter does it better," added Alan Benson, chess expert and manager of Gambit, a Berkeley

chess store. "I'm more of a romantic about chess."

Fooling Around

Like Fischer, Grandmaster Brone can be mighty picky about his chess. He knows what he likes.

"The lighting has to be very good. I like a good board, good pieces. Some boards are very bad, the pieces are very cummy. This is a regulation set, this isn't bad," said Brone, picking up Dennis Fritzing's black bishop and rolling it between his fingers.

"I don't like the board too much, though," he added. "I like green and white squares for a serious game. This is all right for fooling around."

Logic of Chess

"Hey Fritzie, he doesn't like your board," someone called out. Fritzing, another Berkeley master, shrugged. It's all part of the psych-out.

Fritzing also teaches a logic class at San Francisco State University. Uncoincidentally, the course is titled "The Logic of Chess." After his first few weeks as a professor, he readily admits playing chess is a lot more logical than teaching it.

Johne Grefe, 26, another Berkeley master, was busy meditating with 15 year-old Indian Guru Maharaj-Ji, and couldn't make it to the psych session.

"I have learned in my faith," he said, "that winning is nice, of course, but that losing is also part of life's plan. It's all before us to experience and see."

Eye on the Prize

Brone, Fritzing, McCormick, and Grefe will all be on hand when the People's tournament opens in Hayward Saturday morning. The event will be held at Chabot College student center, 25555 Hesperian Blvd., on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Browne, the favorite to win the tournament, already has his eyes set on the \$750 top prize, although several of his competitors cautioned him not to spend it yet.



MOVING MEN . . . Chess master Dennis Fritzing, left, takes his best shot against International Grandmaster Walter Browne, right, as Browne's wife Raquel looks on. "Walter is very competitive," says Raquel, a clinical psychologist. "He needs love all the time." For tournament information, call 843-2875.

Photo by Tony Wilde

On Sunday, everyone was full of pointers for beginners. You have to have the ability to think, to visualize, they said. You must be able to see in your mind what the position will be several moves ahead. Easier said than done.

Free Advice

The motives were not completely altruistic, however. The more players who pay the \$25 entry fee, the sweeter the pot for the pros. Advice was free-flowing.

With authority, Browne barked out his pointers, like a marine sergeant drilling the grubs.

"You've got to have a good imagination, you've got to fight hard, you've got to constantly come up with new ideas. You've got to keep creating."

And Gladly Teach

Besides tournaments, chess masters make ends meet by giving private lessons, lecturing, and holding simultaneous exhibitions, colossal chess slugfests where one master may take on fifty amateur



hour — when he feels like teaching. "I don't give private lessons too much," he said. "There's not too many people who can afford it."

In tournaments, psychological strength can be more important than physical stamina. Browne described

one way he can get the edge on an opponent: "You're in a tense position and you're not sure yourself what's going on. And then he sort of gives up. He shows some weakening signs. He may say 'Gee, I didn't see that.' So now you know he doesn't know what's going on, either. But he doesn't know whether *you* know what's going on. That gives you a big edge."

Raquel Browne, Walter's Argentine born wife, looked at her husband and sighed.

"All chess players wives get the same thing," she said. "They get aggravated, they suffer, they get nervous. We worry all the time. Sometimes it's better if we don't go to the tournaments. Spassky's wife, Petrosian's wife, they're all the same."

"He's very competitive, always trying to prove himself, always trying to be better than someone else." Mrs. Browne, a clinical psychologist, took her husband's hand. "Walter needs love all the time. Love, love, love."