

HOBBIES/GAMES

CHESS

Shirazi begins year with winning attitude

By Kevin Burnett
Special to The Register

International Master Kamran Shirazi of Los Angeles was the most successful tournament player in Southern California in 1981. In the "Cal-point" tally kept by David Argall's "Chess Newsette," he finished with nearly 600 points. His closest rival pulled in at 225. But despite this obvious dominance, Shirazi failed to come through in the big tournaments, such as the U.S. Open and the American Open. He confessed to having a mental block about winning the big ones. Surprisingly, this "self-hex" also extended to the monthly tournaments of Labate's Chess Centre in Downey. Always the top-rated player, his best finish in four previous attempts was a dismal four-way tie for first.

Well, last weekend Shirazi shattered the Downey "hex" by winning Labate's fifth monthly event with a clean 5-0 score. After the victory, Shirazi said he brought a new attitude to this, the first tournament of the new year. "I looked at my rating, (2605, fifth-highest in the U.S.) and said to myself, 'I should win these things easily.'"

The field of 102 players was the largest at Labate's yet, and the strongest too, with three IMs and 12 other masters. But Shirazi was true to his word as he trounced two of the four top-rated players en route to the \$250 first prize. His final-round win, over IM John Watson, was especially meaningful. The two repeated the variation they played in the decisive last round of the American Open. In that game, Watson played a surprising piece sacrifice and won — tying for first place in the tournament. But in last weekend's encore, Shirazi took charge from start to finish and kicked off the new year by settling an old score.

Second place, a full point back at 4-1, was shared by Watson, IM David Strauss, and Senior Master Larry Remlinger. They each won \$83. Anthony Miller came all the way from Santa Barbara to win \$50 as the top Expert with 3½ points.

In the Reserve section, Ken Anderson and W. Leigh Hunt shared the top honors, and \$225, with identical 4½-½ totals. Due to the large field, the two never met over the board, but took their draws elsewhere. Tied for third at 4-1 and winning \$50 each were Ralph Beckerman, George Shahin and Robert Atwell.

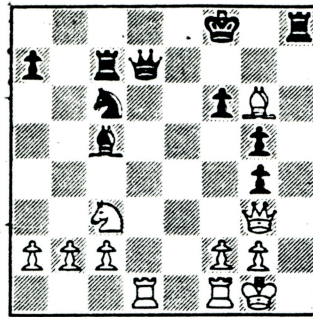
The Amateur section produced a three-way tie. Stewart Balfour, Michael Mayhew and Curtis Frank Gadd, USMC, all scored 4-1 and shared \$200. Jim Thomason finished fourth with 3½ points, worth \$30.

Note: Former World Champion Tigran Petrosian will be giving a simultaneous exhibition at Labate's Chess Centre in March. Call Ed Labate at 213-861-3371 and sign up early to play a game with a living legend.

Scholastic tourney

The Orange County Chess Association (OCCA) will hold its annual Piatigorsky Elementary Championship Saturday at Sterling School, 7791 Cerritos Ave., Stanton

(½-block from Beach Blvd.) The tournament is open to all students, grades 1-6. Trophies will be awarded to the best individual in each grade and also to the top teams (four or more players from one school constitute a team). Registration is from 9-10 a.m. on Saturday. Play will commence at 10 a.m. and continue until 3 p.m. with a break for lunch (a bag lunch is recommended.) OCCA membership is required and may be obtained at the site. Call Dewain Barber at 998-5508 for further details.



Crawford - Thacker (1960)
Black's Q must move, but where? (solution below)

Drawing card

White-Karpov ... Black-Larsen ... Tilburg 1980 ... Petroff's Defense ... 1 P-K4 P-K4 2 N-KB3 N-KB3 (Petroff's Defense. A drawing line by reputation, but very much in vogue recently.) 3 P-Q4 NxP 4 B-Q3 P-Q4 5 NxP N-Q2 (More common is 5 ... B-Q3. The text move involves a pawn sacrifice which Larsen feels is justified.) 6 Q-K2 NxN 7 BxN PxB 8 QxP B-K3 9 QxN (White used to play 9 PxN but after 9 ... B-Q4 10 Q-KN4 P-KR4 11 Q-R3 Q-K2 12 P-KB4 Larsen found the move 12 ... Q-K3! — offering to trade Qs a pawn down. After 13 QxQ PxQ 14 0-0 B-B4+ 15 K-R1 0-0-0, Black has two active Bs and open lines for his Rs and stands better.) 9 ... Q-Q2 10 0-0 0-0 11 B-K3 B-QN5? (Larsen avoids 11 ... B-Q3 12 Q-QR5. Now White's Q is boxed in, in the center! If 12 P-QR3, then 12 ... P-KB3 13 Q-N3 B-Q3 14 Q-B3 B-KN5 etc. So, just four moves after taking the pawn, White makes a move that is like a feeble draw offer.) 12 N-B3 P-KB3 13 Q-N3 BxN 14 PxB P-KR4! (But Black is not content to draw. He'll use the opposite-colored Bs to attack.) 15 P-KR4 P-KN4! 16 P-B3 QR-N1 17 R-B2 Q-B3 18 B-Q2 P-N5 19 P-KB4 B-B5! (White's B and KR are locked in. Black will now invade on the K-file.) 20 P-Q5 BxQP 21 P-B5 R-K1 22 P-R3 R-K5 23 R-K1 KR-K1 24 RxR RxR 25 K-R2 Q-B4 26 B-B4 R-K8 27 B-Q2 R-QR8 28 Q-K3 Q-Q3+! (A finesse. If 28 ... QxQ, then 29 BxQ RxP 30 B-Q4 and White's B is in good shape on the long diagonal. Now, not 29 P-N3?? R-R8 mate.) 29 R-B4 P-N3 30 P-B4 (If 30 Q-K8+ K-N2 31 QxP B-B6!! and wins.) 30 ... BxP 31 Q-Q4 QxQ 32 RxQ B-N4 33 B-R6 RxP 34 B-N7 B-Q2 35 R-B4 R-R4 36 BxP BxP 37 P-B3 B-K3 38 K-N3 R-Q4 (With a pair of Rs on the board and an unbalanced pawn structure, the opposite-colored Bs don't really help White in his efforts to hold the draw.) 39 R-K4 K-Q2 40 B-K5 R-Q7 41 K-B4 (The NP, standing on a white square, is doomed. 41 ... RxP+! 42 KxR B-Q4 was threatened. So White activates his K and goes after Black's KRP.) 41 ... RxP 42 K-N5 R-QB7 (The KRP is also defenseless. If 42 ... B-B2, then 43 B-B6! and 44 R-K7 will force the B away.) 43 KxRP P-N6 44 BxNP RxP 45 B-K5 R-B5 (It's a three-on-one fast break. White's game is hopeless.) 46 R-K3 B-Q4 47 R-QR3 K-K3 48 B-N3 K-B4 49 K-R6 (49 RxP would be a quick way to end the misery: 49 ... R-B3! and mate with the B next move.) 49 ... P-R4 50 K-N7 (If 50 P-R5, then 50 ... K-N5 and the RP is lost.) 50 ... K-N5 51 K-B6 P-R5 52 R-K3 B-B6 53 B-K1 R-B8 54 R-K7 K-R6 55 B-Q2 R-B5 56 R-K3 K-N7 57 B-K1 R-B8 58 B-Q2 R-Q8 59 B-B3 P-B4 60 R-K7 P-N4 61 B-K5 P-R6 62 R-KR7 P-N5 63 P-R5 P-N6 64 P-R6 P-N7 65 R-KN7+ K-B7 66 B-N6+ K-K6 and, with those spite checks out of the way, White resigns. White's pawn can be stopped, but Black's cannot.

Solution: Black played a shocker with 1 ... Q-R2!! Take the Q or leave her be, the mate on the R-file can't be stopped: 2 BxQ QRxB 3 Q-R2 RxQ 4 P-N3 R-R8+ 5 K-N2 R1-R7 mate, is stretching it out as far as possible.