



As the U. S. Chess Open got under way at the Sheraton-Palace, 196 players were locked in play

A Backward Look at the Chess Open

By George Koltanowski

Chess Correspondent

This is the time for recapitulation, and I must say that Californians, with a second prize winner — Zeltam Kovacs of Los Angeles — did quite well in the 1961 U. S. Open chess championship at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel.

They say that the Hungarians took over the U. S. Open this year, and in a way it's true. Kovacs and the new crown holder, Paul Benko of New York, are Hungarian refugees.

It's lucky we had a Master like Kovacs in there, because he upheld in good measure my theory that California players are better than rated.

DISAPPOINTED

Still, to me as tournament director, it was a bit disappointing that the first four managed to get away from the rest after nine rounds of play. It was evident that one of the four would be first, unless we were in for some big surprises, but there were no surprises—no big upsets.

This was my sixth in a row as director, and we've always had it closer. This one was just a matter whether Benko would make it or not—and a Benko does not slip up.

Benko's style of play is highly theoretical, bolstered by a great amount of practical experience in tournament play. A pleasing factor this time was the lack of any visible sign of stress or sense of nervousness.

SOOTHED

Benko explained that he fell in love with San Francisco and that tended to soothe his nerves. That may have helped, but I discovered the real secret. An hour before each round, he sat in the lobby and listened to a string ensemble. From experience, I know nothing soothes a wild Hungarian more than soft music. This time Benko did not come in as if with a chip on his shoulder—he was tamed, not wild.

Arthur Bisguier of New York, an International Grand Master, who tied with Robert Byrne of Indianapolis, the 1960 champ, for third place, was disappointing. His excuse was that he had caught a cold the last couple of days and was not at his best. Byrne played steady chess but lacked that fighting spirit he displayed last year in St. Louis.

CALIFORNIAN

Of the local element, William Addison took highest honors with a fifth tie with Jerry Sullivan of Oak Ridge, Tenn. Addison definitely has the making of a strong chess Master if he could only ease up on his nervous disposition. He has a very pleasing style.

Of California youth, players like John Blackstone of Saratoga, Rex Wilcox of Salinas, Tome Mesa of Walnut Creek and a number of others showed that the future of Northern California's strength is assured. And the score made by young George Kane of Redwood City (6 out of 12) convinces me he will be a Grand Master in a short time. He has the walk and talk of a chess Master.

Eva Aronson of Chicago, top women's competitor, has style too. She sits there as quiet as an old lady at the chess board, never moves away, setting traps for her



FLORENCE STEVENS
With their help . . .



WILLIAM STEVENS
. . . a 24-hour vigil

wily opponents. She won the women's championship for the first time and her greatest victory was her defeat in the 11th round of Ronnie Gross of Glendale, a rated chess Master.

EXCUSES

Chess players are like fishermen in a way — always ready with an excuse. One said to me: "Know why I played so badly in the second half? I had a birthday just then, and I got too old for the game." (He's now 31.)

I certainly appreciate the help of my two assistants, Bill and Florence Stevens. Without it, I couldn't have accomplished this impossible task of a 24-hour-a-day vigil over the fortunes and miseries of all the players.

I want to thank too the hundreds and hundreds of chess friends who congratulated me on the reports on the tournament—congratulations that are due, not to me, but to The Chronicle.

For years, at the close of each tournament, I've said it would be my last as a director, and I'd love to say this is my swan song, but . . . well, San Antonio has asked me to direct the U. S. Open there next year. I ask you, how can I say no?

Here Are Complete, Final Chess Tourney Standings

Here are the complete final standings of players competing in the two-week U.S. open chess tournament which ended Saturday night at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel in San Francisco:

11 POINTS

Paul Benko.

10 POINTS

Zoltan Koxacs.

9½ POINTS

Arthur Bisguier, Robert Byrne.

9 POINTS

William Addison, Joseph G. Sullivan.

8½ POINTS

Martin Harrow, Irving Rivise, Charles Henin, Jack Witeczek, James Schmitt, Rex Wilcox.

8 POINTS

Dr. Peter Lapiken, Louis Levy, Milton Otterson, Walter R. Cunningham, Henry Gross, Ivars Dalberg, Lee Hyder, Charles Morgan, James McCormick, Stephen Matzner, Hyman Gordon, Wade Hendricks.

7½ POINTS

Charles Gersch, Julius Loftsson, James Barry, Erik Osbun, Tibor Weinberger, Neil Falconer, Robert Burger, Paul Binns, Edgar McCormick, Roderick A. Freeman, Jerome Hanken, Laurence Young, Daniel Fischheimer, Glenn Hartleb, Richard Fauber, George Pipiringos, Norris Weaver, Tom Maser, Harold Edelstein.

7 POINTS

Eva Aronsen, Miguel Colon, Michael Franett, Kenneth Grant, Walter Grombacher, Andrew Kraus, John Nowak, S. M. Poulsen Jr., Vitaley M. Radaiken, Gene Rubin, Ronald S. Thacker.

6½ POINTS

Leighton Allen, Kurt Bendit, John Blackstone Jr., Anthony H. Buczko, Max Burkett, Anthony Cantone, Ben Carter, Fred Cramer, Walter Dorce, Harry Fajans, Dr. David Groenig, Robert J. Henry, Robert L. Henry, Peter Hildebrandt, Roy Hoppe, George Hunnex, Thomas Jenkins, William E. Kaiser, John R. Motz, Alan W. Bourke, Richard Plock, Nahtan Robinson, Richard A. Schultz, Jack F. Shaw, Adam Smith, William Slater, Dr. I. Spector, Jack Spence, Don Sutherland, Charles Svobberg, Robert W. Walker, David Weamer, Max Wilkerson, Curtis R. Wilson.

6 POINTS

Sven Almgren, Dale Baker, Edgar Bogas, Richard Castle, Ojars Celle, Ray-

mond J. Cuneo, Russell Freeman, Ronald Gross, Carl Huneke, George F. Kane, Eugene Lien, Robert S. Moore, Paul Nielsen, Gunner Rasmussen, Richard Roth, Sidney J. Rubin, William A. Ruth, Mary Salensky, Willard Sprague, Donald Thompson, Dr. Sandor Tresz.

5½ POINTS

Ninus Aronson, Mabel Burlingame, A. Evdal, George Farly, Kyle Forrest, Dr. Benjamin Gross, Dr. A. Janushkowsky, John B. Kelly, Siegfried Langer, A. W. Markus, M. E. Mattingly, Jim McIlrath, Dan McLeod, Norman Nielsen, John Oberg, Dr. Max Schlosser, Ronald B. Shelburn, Kathryn Slater, Leland Vandendale, Spencer Van Gelder, James Wahstrom.

4 POINTS

Fred J. Brown, Murray Crow, Robert S. Henderson, John L. Marks, Marshall McLennan, D. Mortz, Henry Rock, Selma Sturges, George Tessaro, William R. Trinks, Ben Wong, Paul Ligtuoek.

3½ POINTS

Art C. Chenoweth, William Currie, Zoltan Kocsis, Fred Lutz, Walter Otterson, Kenneth Smith.

3 POINTS

Fred Abarno, Greta Fuchs, Richard Heidrick, George McMahon, James B. Reynolds, Leslie Simon.

2½ POINTS

Lowell Tullis.

2 POINTS

Marjorie Spence.

1 POINT

Herbert C. Brueckner, James Dacus, Jim Trembois.

0 POINTS

Teddy Cohen, Rodney Dame, Ben Figueroa.