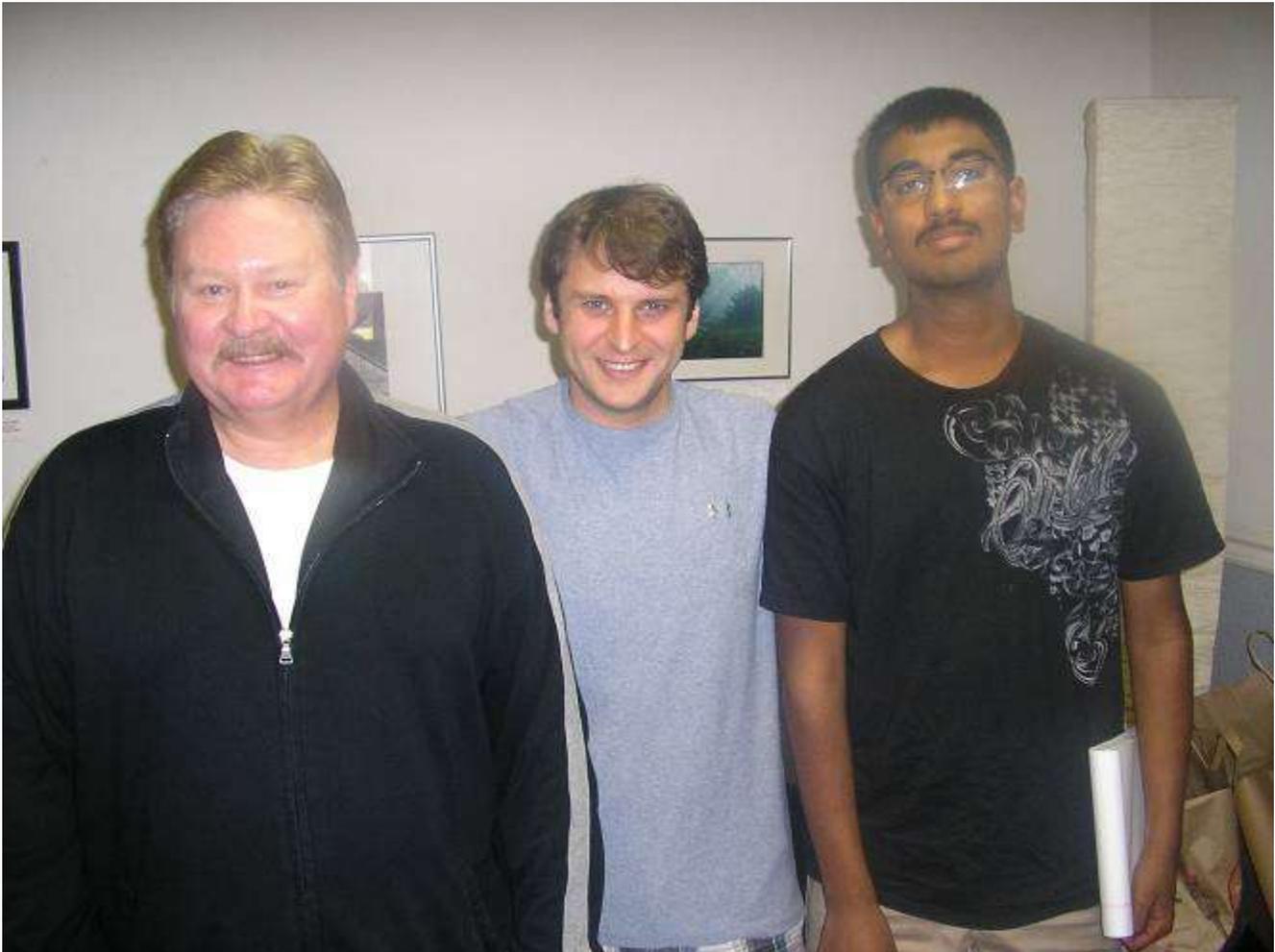


Interview with GM Yuri Shulman

July 24, 2010

by Aditya Kumar



The Fremont Chess Club has hosted many reputed players in the past, notably GM Gregory Kaidanov, IM Emory Tate, and IM Andranik Matikozyan. During the past week (July 19th to the 23rd) it was GM Yuri Shulman's turn to do the honors. Shulman conducted a grueling five-day chess camp for up-and-coming Bay area scholastic chess players at the Fremont Chess Club. Aditya Kumar was privileged to interview the prolific player and chess coach! The following is a transcript from the interview.

Tell us a little bit about your childhood and how you got interested in chess

My dad introduced me to chess when I was almost six years old. Both my parents were checkers players and they initially taught me how to play checkers. Since I didn't enjoy checkers that much, my dad taught me chess instead. And ever since, I never looked back.

Did you think when you began chess that you would one day compete and win in the US championship?

First of all, I never imagined that I would be living in America – let alone winning the US Championship. I only realized that I had serious potential to be a good player when I was around 17 years old and that is when I started to take things more seriously towards becoming a GM.

Who was your favorite chess player as a child?

As a child I loved studying Alekhine's games and his games have influenced me. Over the years I also studied many games of great chess players. Chess players need to study different games from different players in order to really improve in all aspects of the game.

Tell us about the chess camp you are conducting at the Fremont Chess club.

In the camp the students go over problems with their peers, play solitaire chess and do analysis on their own as well as in groups. The objective of my chess camp is to boost the students's desire to study on their own. So you can say, my teaching philosophy is "help students teach themselves"

What is the most important piece of advice for younger players?

This goes back to my previous point. My philosophy is to teach them to study on their own and encourage them to devote the time needed to succeed. You cannot become a great chess player based on talent alone, you need to put in the effort required to become a great chess player.

How did you prepare for the US Championship?

I studied for 2 months with my friend and fellow GM Mesgen Amanov. We analyzed and solved lot of problems. We also studied openings of famous players and practiced with open positions. Finally, we focused on aspects such as ability to defend as well as successfully convert advantages; working on time trouble, which was a big issue for me. You need to make sure to study every aspect of game, not just concentrate on a few aspects. Studying a lot is the bottom line for preparation

Do you have a favorite game that you have played?

I played a lot of interesting games in my career and the notables ones that come to mind are with Mark Ginsburg and David Marciano as White. My recent game in 2010 with Hikaru Nakamura is one of my favorites and perhaps the most well know one too. For the US Championship, I put my pieces on good squares and tactics came on their own!

Tell us about your philanthropic organization, Chess Without Borders.

Chess without borders is a non-profit organization, which was started by a friend and past student Rishi Sethi in Barrington, IL. Initially it was getting small local scholastic chess clubs to get together to play each other. Later on he started combining chess with a few philanthropic programs. At that time Rishi asked me come on board as well help out with the teaching. Our recent project involved helping a 4-year-old Indian girl who suffered severe burns on her hands and face. We did a fundraiser to cover the cost of her surgery and good news is that she is now back to normal and able to attend school like everyone else. Such projects start with a small ideas and then branch off to have a big impact.

How is chess useful in every day life?

There has been a lot of research has been made in this regard. For instance, playing chess helps in preserving memory. None of the famous players is known to have had Alzheimer's. Chess is known to increase logical thinking - talking to yourself when you are analyzing chess positions helps in building this. Playing chess is

known to help in mathematics and developing a logical mind. You will notice that chess players have different approaches and playing styles. Some have strong memory and some have strong intuitive capability. Regardless of their differences, the ability to study and play chess helps all of them in their pursuits.