

# Shankland Surprise Leader in Saint Louis

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by FM Mike Klein

With players beginning to eye a spot in the semifinals, two-thirds of the games produced winners in round three of the 2011 U.S. Championship and U.S. Women's Championship. The tournaments are being held concurrently from April 14-28 at the Chess Club and Scholastic Center of Saint Louis.

Group Two of the U.S. Championship offered a bounty of surprises, turned in mostly by the younger players. Late in the day, GM Robert Hess, still yet to take his first college course, ground down the nearly unbeatable GM Alexander Onischuk. Hess offered a draw in a balanced endgame, but after the 2006 champion declined, Hess marched his king into the action to win some of the few remaining pawns to earn the point.

Some players debated if Onischuk would have accepted the draw offer against a different player, but Hess did not view it as an insult. He cited Onischuk's premature pawn advance 39. f4 as too committal. Onischuk made the move shortly before the first time control ended. Later, facing a difficult defense, Hess said he declined Onischuk's counter-offer. The resulting rook endgame with f- and h-pawns is a theoretical draw, but "with no time it is very, very difficult to draw," Hess said.

For Onischuk, it is only his third U.S. Championship loss. He holds the second-longest unbeaten streak in championship history. The streak ended last year.

Although Hess's endgame alchemy pushed him to two points, he still trails GM-elect Sam Shankland by one-half point. Shankland (2.5/3) dethroned group leader Christiansen (2/3) in the longest game of the day.

## 2011 US Chess Championships, Saint Louis

**White:** Shankland, Samuel

**Black:** Christiansen, Larry

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 b6 5.a3 Bxd2+ 6.Qxd2 Bb7 7.e3 a5 8.b3 O-O 9.Be2 d6 10.Bb2 Nbd7 11.O-O Qe7 12.b4 Rfd8 13.Rfd1 axb4 14.axb4 Qe8 15.Qe1 h6 16.h3 Ne4 17.Nd2 Nxd2 18.Qxd2 Nf6 19.f3 Qe7 20.Qe1 Nh7 21.Qg3 Nf6 22.Qe1 Nd7 23.Qg3 Nf6 24.Kh2 Nh5 25.Qf2 f5 26.d5 f4 27.dxe6 Qxe6 28.exf4 Nxf4 29.Bf1 Qf7 30.Re1 Bc6 31.Kh1 Rxa1 32.Bxa1 Re8 33.Rxe8+ Bxe8 34.e5 bxc5 35.bxc5 Bd7 36.cxd6 cxd6 37.Qd4 d5 38.Bb2 Be6 39.Kg1 Nh5 40.Qe5 Nf4 41.Bb5 Ng6 42.Qd4 Nf4 43.Kf2 Qc7 44.Bc3 Bf5 45.Bc6 Be6 46.h4 Kh8 47.Bb5 Bf5 48.Bd2 Nh5 49.Bxh6 Qh2 50.Bg5 Ng3 51.Qxd5 Nh1+ 52.Kf1 Ng3+ 53.Kf2 Nh1+ 54.Ke3 Qg1+ 55.Kf4 Bg6 56.Bc4 Qh2+ 57.Ke3 Qb8 58.g4 Qa7+ 59.Kd2 Qb8 60.Qd8+ Qxd8+ 61.Bxd8 Be8 62.Ke3 Bc6 63.Bc7 1-0

In doing so, he joined his opponent as the only player in the U.S. Championship to win two games in a row. Shankland, who claimed he was close to quitting chess after the 2010 championship, said, "Today I thought I played extremely well. Last year it took me nine rounds to get 2.5 points."

Ivanov handed IM Daniel Naroditsky his first loss of the tournament.

## 2011 US Chess Championships, Saint Louis

**White:** Ivanov, Alexander

**Black:** Naroditsky, Daniel

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 Nbd7 8.Bg5 Nc5 9.f4 Be7 10.Qf3 Qc7 11.f5 Bd7 12.O-O O-O 13.Kh1 Kh8 14.a3 Qb6 15.Rad1 Rac8 16.Be3 Qc7 17.Ba2 b5 18.b4 Nb7 19.Rd3 d5 20.e5 Ng8 21.Bf4 Qb6 22.Nde2 Bc6 23.f6 Nxf6 24.exf6 Bxf6 25.Qh5 g6 26.Be5 Bxe5 27.Qxe5+ Kg8 28.Nd4 Bd7 29.Bxd5 Rxc3 30.Rxc3 exd5 31.Qxd5 Nd6 32.Nc6 Re8 33.Qxd6 Qf2 34.Qd1 1-0

Ivanov, known to be dangerous in the Open Sicilian, said his young opponent must have missed the thrust e5. "After this he is objectively lost," Ivanov said. He offered a candid assessment of his chances. "I would be happy to get to the semifinals. I have a return ticket before the finals! But of course I'm fighting."

Monday's games begin 2:00 local time, 3:00 Eastern Time. Visit [www.uschesschamps.com](http://www.uschesschamps.com) for live coverage and grandmaster commentary.