



**INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE CHESS FEDERATION**

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# Press Release

## John Ballow Earns Correspondence IM Title

The USA Federation is pleased to welcome the newest Correspondence Chess International Master (IM) to its list of titled players. International Correspondence Chess Federation (ICCF) Qualifications Commissioner, Neil Limbert, has confirmed that John Ballow has earned the IM title and that his certificate and medal will be issued at the 2012 (ICCF) Congress.

John's two IM norms were achieved in tournaments which total 24 games. He made his first qualifying norm in Chessfriends Rochade 5171 – 20 years board 9 (Rochade-20/TT). His total of 9.0 in that Category V tournament with 15 players equaled the IM Norm of 9.0 points. He still has one game unfinished. Mr. Ballow earned his second qualifying norm in Interzonal 2010 board 4 (Interzonal TT/6). His total to date of 5.0 in that double round-robin Category IX tournament with 6 players has equaled the SIM Norm of 5.0. The links to these tournaments are as follows:

<http://www.iccf-webchess.com/EventCrossTable.aspx?id=19633>

<http://www.iccf-webchess.com/EventCrossTable.aspx?id=24114>

John also just happens to be the reigning US Correspondence Champion (18th USCCC) so this latest honor should come as no surprise. What is a bit unusual is the path that he has taken to achieve this level. He learned the moves back in 1972 from his brother, Paul, but without pieces! Too poor to afford even a chess set, they played with cutout cardboard squares which, according to John, "was the best chess lesson I ever received, because it forced me to visualize the board and variations." John relates that he picked up correspondence chess in 1976 and eventually came to realize that "Correspondence chess [CC] is the art, science and soul of the game! . . . There are many advantages to playing CC which make it very attractive. There are no hotel, travel or food costs associated with CC, unlike in OTB [over the board] tourneys, plus you can carry on a conversation with your opponent!" He only recently returned to chess in 2007 after taking off more than a decade from the game. We at the ICCF-US are so glad he did return and would like to add our congratulations to John on his IM title as we wish him continued success.

The following games are examples of his creative play from the two tournaments which earned him the IM title.

For Immediate Release 8 a.m. EST, November 16, 2011 more

In this first game, John's IM opponent seems to be enjoying a lead in development when an enterprising exchange sacrifice on move 21 by John not only activates the Black pieces but puts White on the defensive. An ensuing ill-advised pawn grab costs White two more tempi and eventually John's opponent succumbs to the kingside onslaught.

[ELOCode: "A61"]

[Opening "Modern Benoni"]

[Event "Rochade-20/TT B09"]

[Site "ICCF Webserver"]

[StartDate "01.November.2009"]

[White "IM Offenborn,Heinz (GER)"]

[Black "Ballow, John (USA)"]

[Result "0-1"]

[WhiteElo "2382"]

[BlackElo "2355"]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.d5 d6 5.Nc3 exd5 6.cxd5 a6 7.a4 g6 8.Bf4 Bg7 9.h3 0-0 10.e3 Nh5 11.Bh2 Qe7 12.Be2 Nf6 13.0-0 Nbd7 14.Qb3 Rb8 15.Nd2 Rd8 16.Rfe1 b6 17.Nc4 Ne8 18.Bg4 h5 19.Be2 Ne5 20.Bxe5 Bxe5 21.Na5 bxa5 22.Qxb8 Bxh3 23.Qb6 Bf5 24.Bxa6 Nf6 25.Be2 Rd7 26.Ra2 Ne8 27.Rf1 Qh4 28.f4 Bxc3 29.bxc3 Nf6 30.Qb8+ Kg7 31.Qb2 Ng4 32.c4+ Kg8 33.Bxg4 hxg4 34.g3 Qxg3+ 35.Qg2 Qxe3+ 36.Qf2 Qc3 37.Re1 Rd8 38.Rae2 Qxc4 39.Re8+ Rxe8 40.Rxe8+ Kg7 41.Qh4 Qd4+ 42.Kh2 Qxf4+ 43.Kg1 Qd4+ 44.Kh2 g3+ 45.Kxg3 Qxh4+ 46.Kxh4 Kf6 0-1

Correspondence chess is very unforgiving, one small slip can lead to disaster. In this next game, John has an opponent who makes a speculative 32<sup>nd</sup> move in a position that appears about equal. John correctly judges that in the long run his King is less exposed to attack and that factor will eventually tip the balance in the favor of the White pieces.

[ELOCode: "D45"]

[Opening "Semi Slav"]

[Event "Rochade-20/TT B09"]

[Site "ICCF Webserver"]

[StartDate "01.November.2009"]

[White "Ballow, John (USA)"]

[Black "IM Myakutin,Valery Igorevich (RUS)"]

[Result "1-0"]

[WhiteElo "2355"]

[BlackElo "2382"]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Qc2 Bd6 7.g4 h6 8.Rg1 e5 9.cxd5 cxd5 10.Nb5 Bb8 11.g5 hxg5 12.Nxg5 e4 13.Bd2 Nb6 14.h3 a6 15.Ba5 Bf5 16.Nc3 Bh2 17.Rg2 Bc7 18.Qb3 Rc8 19.Bb4 (19.Rg1 Pauwels,C-Vayser,V ISR-50ch email, 2009 drawn in 35 moves) Qd7 20.Bc5 Qc6 21.a4 Nbd7 22.Bb4 Nf8 23.0-0-0 g6 24.Kb1 Ne6 25.Nxe6 Qxe6 26.Rg1 Bd8 27.Rh1 Qd7 28.a5 Qc6 29.Be2 Qd7 30.Na4 Rc6 31.Rc1 Rxh3 32.Rcg1 g5 33.Nc5 Qc8 34.Rxh3 Bxh3 35.Rxg5 Be7 36.Rg1 Qf5 37.Rh1 Qxf2 38.Rxh3 Bxc5 39.Bxc5 Qxe2 40.Qxb7 Qe1+ 41.Kc2 Rxc5+ 42.dxc5 Qe2+ 43.Kc3 Kf8 44.Qb8+ Ne8 45.Rh8+ Kg7 46.Rh1 Qd3+ 47.Kb4 Qc4+ 48.Ka3 Qxc5+ 49.Ka2 Qc6 50.Qe5+ Nf6 51.Kb1 1-0

This final example of John's wonderful imaginative play reveals that exciting chess can occur at any time during the game. Here John's 39<sup>th</sup> move forces his opponent, a Senior International Master, to win a piece but at the expense of allowing John three connected passed pawns. The endgame proves to be dynamically balanced as Black's own passer is stopped in the nick of time. As Black dare not risk letting the White pawns to steamroll into Black's territory, a truce is reached via repetition.

For Immediate Release 8 a.m. EST, November 16, 2011 more

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[ELOCode: "A60"]

[Opening "Modern Benoni"]

[Event " Interzonal TT/6 B04"]

[Site "ICCF Webserver"]

[StartDate "27.December.2010"]

[White "Ballow, John (USA)"]

[Black "SIM Staniszewski, Jerzy (POL)"]

[Result "1/2"]

[WhiteElo "2418"]

[BlackElo "2509"]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 b5 6.Bg2 d6 7.Nf3 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.Re1 Nbd7 10.e4 Bb7 11.a4 b4  
12.Bf1 a5 13.Nbd2 Nb6 14.Nc4 Nxc4 15.Bxc4 Nd7 16.Bf4 g5 17.Be3 Bf6 18.Rb1 Qe7 19.Bb5 Rfd8 20.Nd2 Ne5  
21.f4 gxf4 22.gxf4 Ng6 23.Kh1 Kh8 24.Qe2 Rg8 25.Rg1 Nh4 26.Bf2 Nf5 27.Nf3 Ng7 28.Qe3 Nh5 29.b3 Bc3  
30.Bc4 Rae8 31.Rxg8+ Rxg8 32.Rg1 Rxg1+ 33.Kxg1 Qf6 34.f5 Qg7+ 35.Kf1 Qg4 36.Ng5 Qd1+ 37.Kg2 Qg4+  
38.Kh1 Bd4 39.Be2 Bxe3 40.Bxg4 Bxf2 41.Nxf7+ Kg7 42.Bxh5 c4 43.Nxd6 cxb3 44.Bd1 b2 45.Bc2 Ba6 46.e5  
Bd4 47.e6 Kf8 48.Ne4 Bc4 49.d6 Ba2 50.Nd2 Bd5+ 51.Ne4 Ba2 52.Nd2 ½-½