



The Friendly Post

News from ICCF-US Friendly Matches from around the world - Issue 15, March 2016

Greetings again from ICCF-US Friendly Match Central! This issue continues our process of bringing you the news from our collective set of Friendly Matches.

To explain to any new recipients, Friendly Matches are national team versus national team chess contests where the overall team outcomes do not matter beyond bragging rights. Everyone is eligible to play. The ICCF-US uses both a standing set of interested players and new participants in virtually every match. Each match participant plays two **rated** games, one with white and one with black, against a single opponent of nearly identical rating. The regular fee to participate is \$5 per match.

Our World Tour: Completed!

Within the few days previous to the circulation of this issue, we completed the ICCF World Tour! Starting with our match versus Spain in 2008, the ICCF-US has challenged every one of the 55 other ICCF Member Federations (countries) to at least one Friendly Match. To be clear, we have played at least one Friendly Match against 41 of the 55 other countries, with 11 countries either not responding to or declining the invitation (Belarus, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Ireland, Luxembourg, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Tunisia), and 3 countries with invitations so recent that we do not yet know if they will play or not (Bulgaria, Estonia, and Hungary).

Our record during this world tour, including all matches that were completed since 2008, is **22 wins, 15 losses, and 1 tie; or 59.2%**. Quite impressive for matches where pairings are consistently made with essentially equally rated players, meaning the statistical expectation would have been a 50% record!

During this world tour, the USA was the first ever to play the then-new Member Federation of Panama. We are currently playing the second Friendly Match that country has ever had.

We are also currently participating in what may be the highest rated Friendly Match ever, this being between the USA and Turkey. The top 6 boards in Section A read like an Olympiad final, with average ratings for those 6 boards of 2518 and 2523 for Turkey and the USA, respectively.

About 340 different people have played on USA teams during this world tour. Some have played only once, but nearly 100 people have played at least 7 times. The three most frequent participants have played over 30 times.

Our nemesis over these 8 years has been Germany. We played 3 different matches against Germany, and lost all three. The most recent match, still with a few boards to be completed, is also our record setter for size (in recent history), with 162 boards.

We hope you have enjoyed your participation in our trip around the ICCF world. Let's do it again real soon...

Friendly Matches Now Being Organized

The following Friendly Matches are in process of being organized. If you have a special desire to play in one or more of these matches, please let me know:

- (1) **Scotland** (expected to start in April)
- (2) **Wales** (expected to start in April)
- (3) **Estonia** (their organizer is currently trying to find enough players for a team)

Additionally, invitations have just been sent to **Bulgaria** and **Hungary**, so those countries may be added to the above list any day now! Keep in mind that it is also common for new matches to be organized without prior advertisement. If you have not already done so, be sure to let Dennis know if you are interested in playing in the Friendly Matches!

Chess is a sea in which a gnat may drink and an elephant may bathe.

Russian proverb



How Do I Get On A Team?

Getting selected to play on a USA Team in a Friendly Match takes almost no effort. Just let me know you are interested! Send an email to dmdoren@yahoo.com and say you wish to play in a Friendly Match. When I have a team slot for you (meaning there is an opponent with about the same rating as your current one), I will let you know. You can also let me know of specific country you wish to play against, but you do not have to do that.

When I have a specific something to offer you, you will receive an email from me - sent to the same address you have listed on the ICCF server. (Don't forget to update any email address changes!) My email will offer you a position on a team in a Friendly Match against a specifically listed country. Please know that you need to respond to that email, and typically to do so within 3 days of my having sent it! I have a lot of positions to fill while all of the members of the opposing team simply wait for me to complete my task. That is why there is a time frame for your response. If I do not hear from you within the specified time, I will offer your slot to someone else. However, even if you do not want, or cannot take the offered position, I strongly request that you do me the courtesy of a quick reply saying so. In that way, I can make an offer of "your" team position to someone else right away.

After you accept your offered position, you will get a reply email from me telling you what you need to pay and how to pay it. Please do NOT pay anything to anyone for a Friendly Match before you receive this email from me. "Pre-paying" only makes our administrative task more complicated, not easier. You will be asked to pay your fee before the match actually starts.

Finally, you will automatically receive your pairings, including an email from the ICCF server informing you that the match has begun and who you are paired against.

That's it! Let me know your interest, accept my invitation for you to play in a specific match, pay your fee, and enjoy your games!

The Friendly Matches that are Already Ongoing...

You can always find the current results from any of our Friendly Matches by visiting www.iccf.com, Tables and Results, Friendly Matches, but this newsletter will also make it easy for you to stay up-to-date. The first three issues of "*The Friendly Post*" listed all of our matches from 1/1/07 to the date of newsletter circulation. (You can find those 3, and all other issues of "*The Friendly Post*" at www.iccfus.com). There became too many Friendly Matches to keep doing that, so each issue now lists only those currently in progress or just completed since the last newsletter. The current standings (through 3/5/2016) are as follows:

	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Server/Email/Postal</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Result (USA v. other)</u>
1.	Canada	Server & Post	1/17/14	55.0 - 39.0 (6 postal games ongoing)
2.	Germany	Server	3/22/14	131.0 - 191.0 (2 games still ongoing)
3.	Austria	Server	7/14/14	57.0 - 62.0 (1 game still ongoing)
4.	Switzerland	Server	8/1/14	55.0 - 57.0 (2 games still ongoing)
5.	Slovakia	Server	11/18/14	51.0 - 45.0 (12 games still ongoing)
6.	Venezuela (rematch)	Server	12/8/14	17.5 - 21.5 (1 game still ongoing)
7.	Latvia	Server	2/13/15	42.5 - 28.5 (9 games still ongoing)
8.	Ukraine	Server	3/14/15	28.5 - 29.5 (6 games still ongoing)
9.	Poland	Server	5/1/15	28.5 - 29.5 (22 games still ongoing)
10.	Croatia	Server	6/25/15	14.0 - 20.0 (12 games still ongoing)
11.	Turkey	Server	6/30/15	23.0 - 20.0 (31 games still ongoing)
12.	Lithuania	Server	8/1/15	10.5 - 10.5 (21 games still ongoing)
13.	Slovenia	Server	8/1/15	15.5 - 13.5 (35 games still ongoing)
14.	Cuba (rematch)	Server	9/1/15	13.5 - 14.5 (24 games still ongoing)
15.	Panama (rematch)	Server	10/15/15	12.5 - 17.5 (30 games still ongoing)
16.	Belgium	Server	10/20/15	11.5 - 10.5 (30 games still ongoing)
17.	Scotland	Server	1/14/16	6.5 - 4.5 (39 games still ongoing)
18.	Australia	Server	3/1/16	0.0 - 0.0 (80 games still ongoing)

TOTAL USA RESULTS since 1/1/07: 1766.5 - 1817.5 **(49.3%)**



Highlights and Interesting Tidbits:

(1) Nice going USA! We just had a large surge, 9 - 3 in points during the past 3 months, in our match versus Latvia. And this was enough to bring us the win! With 9 games still remaining, we are ahead by an overwhelming 14 points. We are scoring at a rate of 60% in this match (that is, 3 points for every one of their 2)!

(2) We are also pulling ahead significantly in our match versus Slovakia. With only 12 games remaining, we are ahead by 6 points.

(3) Unfortunately, we are on the other side of this same situation in our match versus Croatia. With only 12 games remaining, we are behind by 6 points.

(4) The back and forth match with Switzerland is coming down to the last two remaining games. The USA needs two wins from those games to tie the match, or the Swiss will have eked out a win. Go USA!!

(5) There are a number of other very close matches:

(a) versus Ukraine: they are ahead by 1, with 6 games to go

(b) versus Poland: they are ahead by 1, with 22 games to go

(c) versus Lithuania: the score is tied at the halfway point, with 21 games to go

(6) Panama, in only their second Friendly Match ever (the first also being against the USA), is showing signs of getting its first win. Panama leads by 5 points. However, with 30 games to go, there still is plenty of time for the USA to catch up.

(7) In the match versus Turkey, the overall results show the USA is maintaining its small lead (3 points, with 31 games still to be completed). For those interested in the results from the two different sections (A and B), the score for Section A currently stands at 6.5 - 7.5, while the score for Section B currently stands at 16.5 - 12.5.

**Match (versus game) win/loss record since 1/1/07: 22 wins, 16 losses, 1 tie
(57.7%)**

<u>USA Won</u>	<u>USA Lost</u>	<u>USA Tied</u>
Argentina (2010)	Austria (2014)	Norway (2013)
Australia/New Zealand (2012)	Cuba (2013)	
Canada (2014)*	Czech Republic (2011)	
Cape Verde (2013)	Czech Republic (2013)	
Denmark (2014)	France (2010)	
England (2008)	Germany (2011)	
England (2012)	Germany (2008 - Women's only)	
Finland (2009)	Germany (2014)*	
Hong Kong (2010)	Iceland (2014)	
India (2014)	Israel (2014)	
Japan (2013)	Italy (2010)	
Latvia (2015)*	Russia (2013)	
Netherlands (2013)	Spain (2008)	
Panama (2013)	Sweden (2007)	
Peru (2013)	Ukraine (2010)	
Portugal (2013)	Venezuela (2014)*	
Romania (2008)		
Romania (2013)		
Scotland (2008)		
Sweden (2012)		
Venezuela (2013)		
Wales (2013)		

* Still officially ongoing, but the final team outcome is already determined.



He is a poet who creates a work of art out of something which would hardly inspire another man to send home a picture postcard. Max Euwe

OUR FEATURED GAME

In this issue, we feature a game from one of our top-rated regular Friendly Match participants, SIM Kenneth Holroyd. This game, a win with the Black pieces, was played in the still ongoing Slovakia - USA match. All annotations were written by SIM Holroyd. The game can be found at <https://www.iccf.com/game?id=758566>.

SIM Alexej Lelenko (2478) - SIM Kenneth Holroyd (2480)

SVK - USA (2014) (C65)

1.e4 e5

I follow my usual preference to select a defense that my opponent does not play himself with the Black pieces.

2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6

The Berlin Defense to the Ruy Lopez began to rise in popularity 20 years ago after Vladimir Kramnik used the solid continuation to unseat Garry Kasparov as World Champion. It continues to be regularly contested by elite FIDE and ICCF players.

4.d3

The most popular continuation is 4.0-0 Nxe4 5.d4 Nd6 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.dxe5 Nf5 8.Qxd8+ Kxd8, reaching a complex Queenless middlegame. All of my ICCF games in this ending have been draws. I believe the systems with 9...Bd7 allow Black fairly easy full equality. The game continuation of 4.d3 allows a more complex game, with Queens remaining on the board.

4...Bc5

An alternative is 4...d6.

5.Bxc6

The idea of this exchange is to decrease the flexibility of Black's pawn structure, as well as to prevent the simplification that can occur after 5.O-O Nd4.

5...dxc6 6.O-O

A blunder would be 6.Nxe5??, allowing 6...Qd4.

6...Nd7 7.Nbd2 O-O 8.Nc4 Re8

I preferred this move to 8...f6, which is the more common move, as it allows White to play 9.Nh4 and mobilize his Queen to the Kingside. I think Black is OK, but the play is straightforward for White. The text has the possibility to lead to more interesting positions.

9.Be3 Bf8 10.a4 b6

I spent a considerable amount of time on this flexible move.

11.Nfd2 Nc5 12.Qh5 f6 13.f4 exf4 14.Rxf4 Qe7 15.d4 g6 16.Qf3 Nd7

The game has developed so that White controls the center and has some lead in development. Black has the two bishops and the potential to hit back at the center from the flanks, with pawn breaks of ...c5 and ...f5. The position has some strategic resemblance to the Gruenfeld Defense, which is one of my favorite openings as Black.

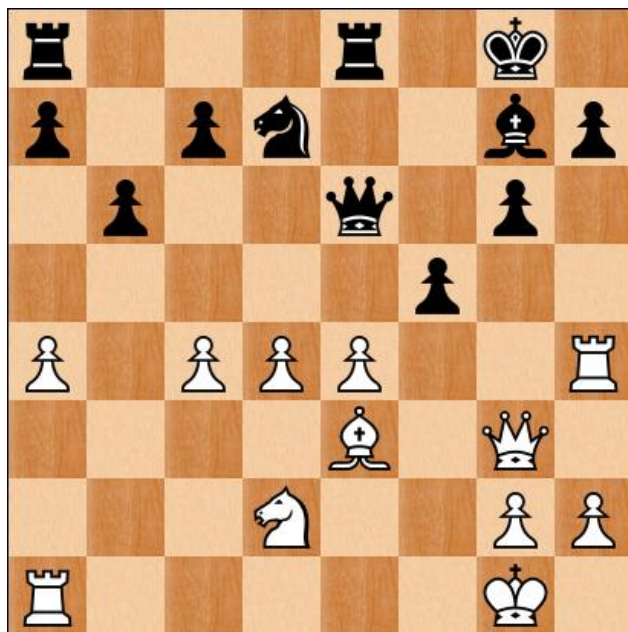
17.c3 Ba6 18.b3 c5

Striking back at the center, and preparing to eliminate the doubled pawns.

19.Qg3 cxd4 20.cxd4 Bxc4 21.bxc4 Qe6

I evaluated this dynamic position as fully equal.

22.Rg4 f5 23.Rh4 Bg7



Position after 23...Bg7

24.Qxc7 ?

Better is 24. Re1 or 24.Rf1. As it turns out, this move is a mistake. Black is able to develop threats to trap the White Queen, while expanding space on the Kingside.

24...g5 25.Rh3 f4 26.Bf2 Nc5 27.d5

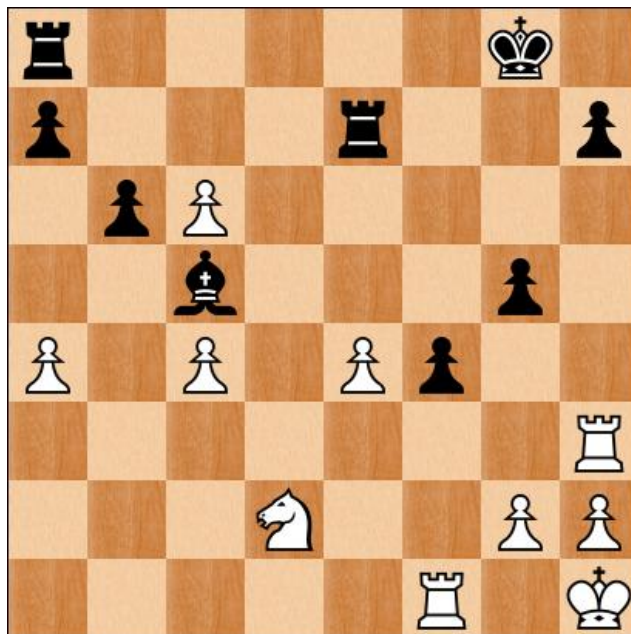
The alternative 27.dxc5 Re7 28.Qd6 Bxa1 does not help White.

27...Qg6

This continuation is stronger than 27...Re7 28.dxe6 Rxc7. Perhaps White was counting on that sequence of moves.

28.Rf1 Bf8 29.Bxc5 Bxc5+ 30.Kh1 Re7 31.Qc6 Qxc6 32.dxc6

Now comes a long sequence of seemingly best moves by both sides. White pieces are a bit misplaced, his pawns are weak, and there is a need to defend against back rank mating threats. Black can dominate the d file. I could not find a defense for White from this point on, Black always seems to have a move to increase his advantage and gradually squeeze out the win.



Position after 32. dxc6

32...Rd8 33.Nb3 Be3 34.Rh5 h6 35.Rxh6 Kg7 36.Rh5 Kg6 37.g4 fxg3 38.Rh3 Rxe4 39.Rxg3 Bf4 40.Rc3 Re2 41.h3 Be5 42.Rcf3 g4

Black has good luck that he has a series of moves to further increase his advantage.

43.hxg4 Rh8+ 44.Kg1 Bh2+ 45.Kh1 Bf4+ 46.Kg1 Be3+ 47.Rxe3 Rxe3 48.Nd2 Rg3+ 49.Kf2 Rxg4 50.Ke2 Rg2+ 51.Ke3 Re8+ 52.Ne4 Rg4 53.Rf6+ Kg7 54.Rf4 Rxf4 55.Kxf4 Rc8 56.Ke5 Rxc6 57.Kd5 Rc8 58.c5 bxc5 [From Dennis: 7-piece tablebase says Black now mates within 46 moves] 59.Kc4 Rh8 60.Kxc5 Rh4

The position is a tablebase win for Black. This was my first victory with the Berlin Defense.

0-1



Where to Find Us

The ICCF-US home website is at www.iccfus.com. You can always find copies of "The Friendly Post" at that site, with a link on the left in the home page. The server for playing games is at www.iccf.com. Contact Dennis Doren at dmdoren@yahoo.com concerning anything related to Friendly Matches.



The People Behind the Organization

Thanks to the people who keep it all running, the ICCF-US Administrators:

Grandmaster Jason Bokar, ICCF-US Director starting mid-August 2015
Senior International Master Tom Biedermann, Deputy Director & Treasurer
International Master Corky Schakel, Registrations Director
Senior International Master Carl Siefring, Tournament Organizer
Senior International Master Dan Perry, Webmaster
Senior International Master Kenneth Holroyd, Tournament Facilitator
Senior International Master Kristo Miettinen, Tournament Organizer
International Master Bob Rizzo, Norms and Communications Organizer
International Master Anthony Kain, Technical Advisor
International Arbiter Franklin Campbell, Tournament Organizer

Yours truly,
Dennis Doren, Friendly Matches Organizer (dmdoren@yahoo.com)

Chess is a great game. No matter how good one is, there is always someone better. No matter how bad one is, there is always someone worse. I.A. Horowitz



REDUCED PARTICIPATION FEE!!

In case you did not catch the news from the last issue, the old fee of \$6 per match has been reduced to \$5 per match: a 16.7% reduction!! We hope you enjoy your games all the more!



The FRIENDLY MATCH ELITE

The Elite program is being phased out in keeping with the reduced participation fee for everyone. If you already earned Elite status, your reduced fee for up to 3 remaining matches will still be honored. There will be no new members of the Elite program starting 1/1/2016.

You Can Play on the USA Team in a Friendly Match!

You, too, can play in a Friendly Match, no matter the degree to which you have played in an ICCF-US event of any kind previously. Each match consists of two **rated** games (one white, one black) against the same opponent who is very close in rating to yours. The total fee is \$5 for your participation per match. Just contact Dennis Doren, the ICCF-US Friendly Match Organizer, at dmdoren@yahoo.com and tell him your specific interest in playing.

Do **NOT** send any money to Dennis or anyone else at this point to pay for your participation in either of the listed FMs! You will only need to pay (through Paypal, money order, or by check) when your placement on a USA team in a specific Friendly Match has been confirmed by Dennis. Dennis will tell you when that is.