



The Friendly Post

News from ICCF-US Friendly Matches from around the world - Issue 23, March 2018

Greetings from ICCF-US Friendly Match Central. To explain to any new recipients, Friendly Matches are team versus team chess contests (involving teams affiliated with different nations) 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. You're invited to participate!

1000 completed games in just over a year!!

We hit two thresholds this quarter. Since 1/1/2007, Team USA players completed more than 5000 games in ICCF-US Friendly Matches*. That averages about 6 completed games every 5 days over the past 11 years. More amazingly, Team USA players completed more than 1000 games in ICCF-US Friendly Matches during just the past 1.25 years!! That's an average of over 2 completed games each day, every day over the past 15 months.

(* When including games from the two currently ongoing Chess 960 matches.)

Thanks for your interest in the Friendly Matches!

Upcoming Friendly Matches

Here are the upcoming Friendly Matches that are currently planned:

(1) **Sweden** - scheduled to start early April 2018

(2) **Australia** - scheduled to start mid-May 2018

(3) Anticipated challenges to be extended in the near future: **Czech Republic, Finland, Norway, Portugal**

Please remember that Friendly Matches can be scheduled, organized, and started all in between the publication of these newsletters, and in fact often are. (The recently started SchemingMind and Yorkshire matches are examples of such.) Therefore, if you want to play in the Friendly Matches, make sure you let Dennis know (at dmdorenchess@gmail.com).

*All quotes in this issue are from Mikhail Tal. Why quote Tal?
Consider this quote statement of his:*

*Over-the-board chess is the favorite of mortals. Correspondence chess
is the favorite of the Gods.*

The US Friendly Match World Tour 2 (WT2): "Go Around the World with US"

Last year, we completed the ICCF World Tour by extending invitations to all of the 55 other ICCF Member Federations (MFs) and playing all takers. We are now in the midst of our second "Go Around the World with US" tour. To date, we engaged with 23 MFs (plus 4 non-MF teams), and have 32 MFs to go to complete "WT2":

(1) We have started play or at least scheduled a match versus Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico (a future ICCF Member Federation), Netherlands, Panama, Peru, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the Ukraine, and Venezuela. This is besides the British Correspondence Chess Association, SchemingMind, and Yorkshire; all being international CC clubs affiliated with member federations.

(2) Invitations were extended but declined (either actively or passively) by: Cape Verde, Chile, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, & Nicaragua.

Are you "Going Around the World with US"?



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 continues to 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 3/12/2018) are as follows:

	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Server/Email/Postal</u>	<u>Start Date</u>	<u>Result (USA v. other)</u>
1.	Panama (rematch 2)	Server	7/26/16	27.0 - 36.0 (1 ongoing game)
2.	Spain	Server	8/9/16	56.0 - 51.0 (3 ongoing games)
3.	Brazil	Server	9/13/16	45.5 - 30.5 (6 ongoing games)
4.	Argentina	Server	10/19/16	21.5 - 23.5 (9 ongoing games)
5.	Peru	Server	12/13/16	13.5 - 12.5 (6 ongoing games)
6.	Bulgaria	Server	12/25/16	17.5 - 17.5 (11 ongoing games)
7.	Russia (Chess960)	Server	2/10/17	13.0 - 24.0 (6 ongoing games)
8.	Germany (Chess960)	Server	2/12/17	6.0 - 20.0 (6 ongoing games)
9.	France	Server	3/31/17	33.5 - 24.5 (8 ongoing games)
10.	Japan	Server	6/15/17	22.0 - 5.0 (5 ongoing games)
11.	Russia v. Zone 3***	Server	8/31/17 (USA bds**)	55.5 - 67.5 (85 ongoing gms)
12.	Netherlands	Server	9/12/17	4.5 - 4.5 (11 ongoing games)
13.	Mexico	Server	11/12/17	10.5 - 17.5 (44 ongoing games)
14.	Italy***	Server	12/1/17	21.5 - 40.5 (134 ongoing games)
15.	Venezuela	Server	12/31/17	1.5 - 2.5 (32 ongoing games)
16.	Yorkshire	Server	1/19/18	2.5 - 2.5 (23 ongoing games)
17.	SchemingMind	Server	1/29/18	5.0 - 1.0 (26 ongoing games)
18.	Ukraine	Server	2/20/18	1.5 - 0.5 (58 ongoing games)

TOTAL USA RESULTS since 1/1/07*: 2455.5 - 2498.5 (49.6%)

* Not including the two Chess960 events, #'s 7 and 8 on the above list. The Chess960 events have far larger rating differences per board compared to regular Friendly Matches. The Chess960 results are therefore not considered comparable to those from regular Friendly Matches.

** Only the results involving USA players are shown or counted in the summary totals.

*** These matches often included pairings with a larger than usual rating difference, for reasons beyond Dennis's control, and usually in favor of our opponents. Hence, these matches are likely to show disproportionate losses for the USA.

There are two types of sacrifices: correct ones and mine.

Highlights and Interesting Tidbits:

This was a very interesting quarter for the USA Teams. We finalized wins in 3 Friendly Matches, including in one (vs. Japan) that essentially went from start to finish in 3 months. Unfortunately, we also demonstrated how much effect consistent rating differences can make in a match. Here are the details:

(1) We won our match versus **Spain**. We took the lead early on, and never let go. With 3 games still in play, the outcome is a win for the USA. Very nicely done!

(2) All I can say about the match with **Japan** is WOW! Three months ago, there were only 4 finished games, with a score of 2.5 - 1.5 in favor of the USA. Three months later, the team score is 22.0 - 5.0. With only 8 games still to be completed, the USA has already won the match! This past quarter saw the USA score 19.5 - 3.5 in this match. This degree of lopsided scoring is probably a record for any quarter in any US Friendly Match to date. Very impressive!

(3) Our performance versus **France** was very similar to what we showed versus Spain. We started out by taking the lead, and just continued to make the lead grow throughout the match. After already being up by 6 points (with 28 games to go), the USA just scored 12.5 - 9.5 to add 3 points to that lead. More importantly, with only 8 games remaining and a 9 point lead, the USA is finishing this match with room to spare.

(4) When I put the **Italy** match on the list of active matches, I specifically included an asterisked qualifying note. That note referred to this match as unlike others in that pairings were made with both larger rating differences from usual and regularly in favor of the Italian team (for reasons beyond my control). Sure enough, in just this past quarter, the Italian team scored 40.5 points to our 21.5. Given it was so easy to predict this type of outcome that I actually did so in writing (where I stated in the last issue "...likely to show disproportionate losses for the USA". I hope the USA players are enjoying the competition, but in any case you can be assured I will work to avoid this type of unequal pairing in the future.

(5) The **Russia vs. Zone 3** match involved the same larger than usual rating differences as the Italy match did, though not quite as large or as regularly in favor of the other team. These factors are reflected in the current score, with Russia leading by 12 points after 123 games have finished, with 87 games still in play. My final comment from #4 applies here as well.

(6) **Argentina** had been proving itself hard to catch, but things may be changing just in time! They were leading for almost the whole match, though only were ahead by 4 points as of last quarter. Now that lead is down to 2. With 9 games still being played, that lead could be shaky. Go USA!!

(7) After 8 more games finished, we have maintained our 1 point lead versus **Peru**. This is in contrast to our having fallen behind early in this match. Now, with 6 games left in this match, we just need to continue this momentum a little bit longer! GO USA!

(8) The **Bulgaria** match has remained very close since it began, and continues to do so. We gave up our 1 point lead from last quarter's report, with the score now again tied. With 11 games still remaining, every point matters! Go Team!!

(9) **Mexico** may still be working to become a Member Federation, but its players are already showing they can more than just hold their own in international Friendly Match play. The USA took a hit from Mexico's performance this past quarter. With 44 games remaining, the USA has a 7 point deficit in this match. There is time to catch up, but 7 points is a lot to make up.

(10) Finally, a quick note about the **Netherlands** match. The 10-board match included only players rated 2300+, with pairings being matched well. Not surprisingly then, the score so far is tied with 4.5's. Only 11 games are left to this match, so any win may decide this match. Go Team!





To play for a draw, at any rate with white, is to some degree a crime against chess.

Later, I began to succeed in decisive games. Perhaps because I realized a very simple truth: not only was I worried but also my opponent.

Match (versus game) win/loss record since 1/1/07: 35 wins, 26 losses, 1 tie (57.3%)

USA Won	USA Lost	USA Tied
Argentina (2010)	Austria (2014)	Norway (2013)
Australia/New Zealand (2012)	Belarus (2016)	
Australia (2016)	Belgium (2015)	
Brazil (2016)*	Croatia (2015)	
British CCA (2016)	Cuba (2013)	
Canada (2014)	Cuba (2015)	
Cape Verde (2013)	Czech Republic (2011)	
Denmark (2014)	Czech Republic (2013)	
England (2008)	France (2010)	
England (2012)	Germany (2008 - Women's only)	
Estonia (2016)	Germany (2011)	
Finland (2009)	Germany (2014)	
France (2017)*	Iceland (2014)	

Hong Kong (2010)
India (2014)
Indonesia (2016)
Japan (2013)
Japan (2017)*
Latvia (2015)
Lithuania (2015)
Netherlands (2013)
Panama (2013)
Peru (2013)
Portugal (2013)
Romania (2008)
Romania (2013)
Scotland (2008)
Scotland (2016)
Slovakia (2014)
Slovenia (2015)
Spain (2016)*
Sweden (2012)
Turkey (2015)
Venezuela (2013)
Wales (2013)

Israel (2014)
Italy (2010)
Panama (2015)
Panama (2016)*
Poland (2015)
Russia (2013)
Spain (2008)
Sweden (2007)
Switzerland (2014)
Ukraine (2010)
Ukraine (2015)
Venezuela (2014)
Wales (2016)

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

You must take your opponent into a deep dark forest where $2+2=5$, and the path leading out is only wide enough for one.



Our Featured Game

This issue's featured game is from the 2015 Lithuania - USA Friendly Match. One of our regular players in Friendly Matches, SIM Wolff Morrow, shows how he uses an imbalanced pawn structure with the black pieces to press home an advantage, and ultimately how he wins an ending that without the same effort could have been drawn. All annotations are by SIM Morrow.

GM Petraitis Gintautas (2485) - IM Wolff Morrow (2469)

Lithuania - USA Friendly Match (2015)

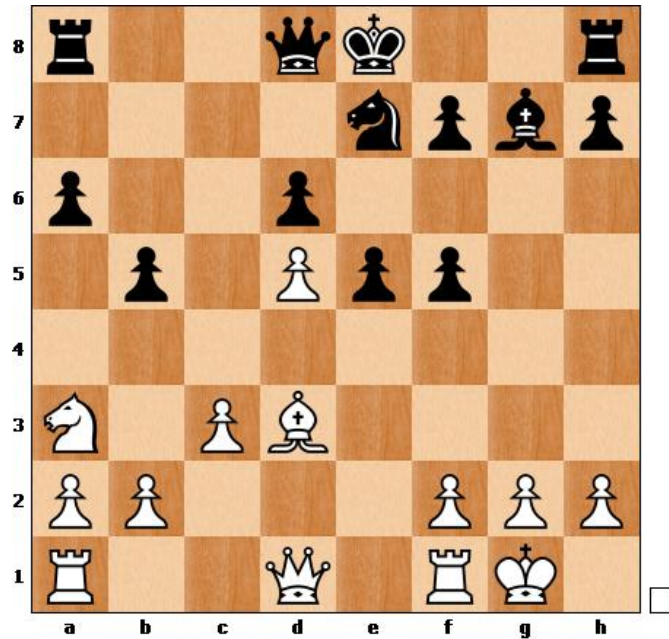
(This game can be found at www.iccf.com/game?id=801371.)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 { White allows my favorite defense in ICCF of the Sveshnikov Sicilian. It provides just the right balance of solidity and counterplay, and I've never lost a game with it. Stronger players I have faced typically opt for anti-Sicilians like 3. Bb5 or c3 or Nc3, probably in view of how well the Sveshnikov performs for black in ICCF play. }

3...cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e5 6.Ndb5 d6 7.Bg5 a6 8.Na3 b5 9.Bxf6 ?! { The immediate capture on f6 can only be concluded as 'not optimal'. In over the board play, white has practical chances due to the human factor of not handling doubled pawns with perfect accuracy. In ICCF play, the doubled pawns have proven to be an advantage for black with an aim to attack and control the center, where white's practical chances are significantly reduced. }

9...gxf6 10.Nd5 f5 { Bg7 is also viable, and in fact the game transposes into a Bg7 line. }

11.Bd3 Be6 12.O-O Bxd5 13.exd5 Ne7 14.c3 Bg7 { Black's extra f-pawn is doing a fine job controlling the lion's share of the center, which is why 9. Bxf6?! is what I believe to be an inferior opening move. }

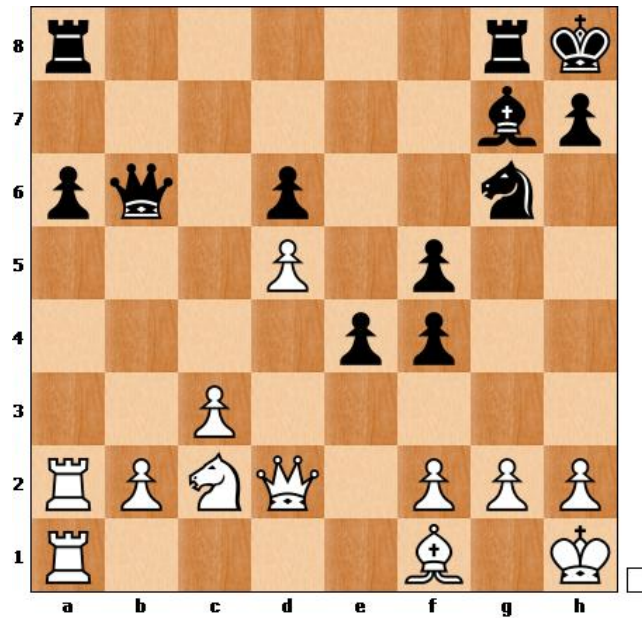


Position after 14...Bg7

15.Nc2 (15.Qh5 e4 16.Be2 O-O 17.Nc2 Rc8 { Black is objectively better. White's lack of dark square bishop makes it difficult to mount any sort of attack, and instead white must try to avoid losing the game rather than pressing for a win. } 18.Ne3 ?! f4 ! 19.Nf5 Re8 20.a4 Ng6 21.axb5 axb5 22.Ra6 Bf8 23.Bxb5 Re5 24.Qh3 f3 with attack) (15.Re1 Qd7 16.Nc2 O-O { Here the position is equal. White can try to start chipping at the center, but has no real dangerous attack to mount. A safe bet would be to attack b5 with a4 and open the queenside for counterplay. } 17.g3 f4 18.a4=)

15...e4 16.Be2 O-O 17.a4 bxa4 18.Rxa4 Qb6 19.Ra2 ?! (19.Rb4 Qc5 20.g3 Qxd5 21.Qxd5 Nxd5 22.Rb7 =)

19...f4 ! 20.Qd2 Ng6 21.Rfa1 Kh8 22.Bf1 Rg8 23.Kh1 f5 { Black's pawns are a menace in the center of the board. White can only hope for a draw at this point, and must play precisely to hold it. }

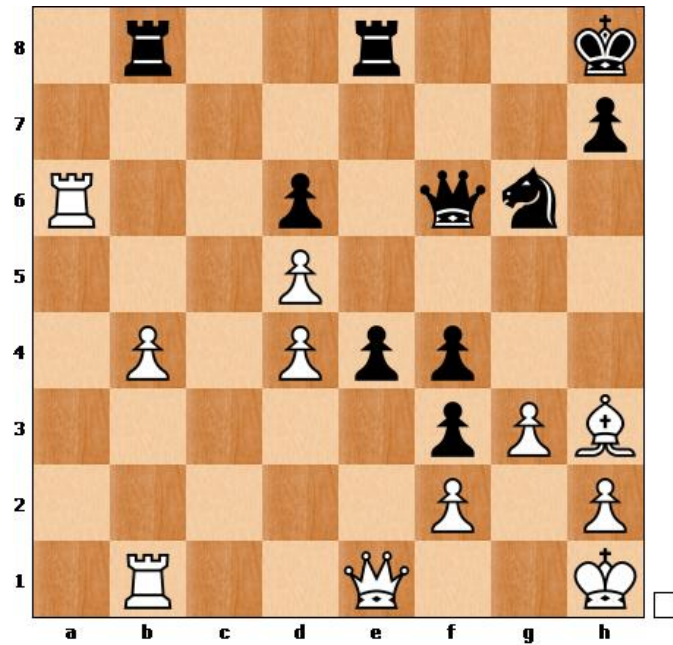


Position after 23...f5

24.b4 f3 25.g3 { White probably didn't like the idea of 25. gxf3 Nh4, which will land on f3 and loom a constant threat of Rg1# }

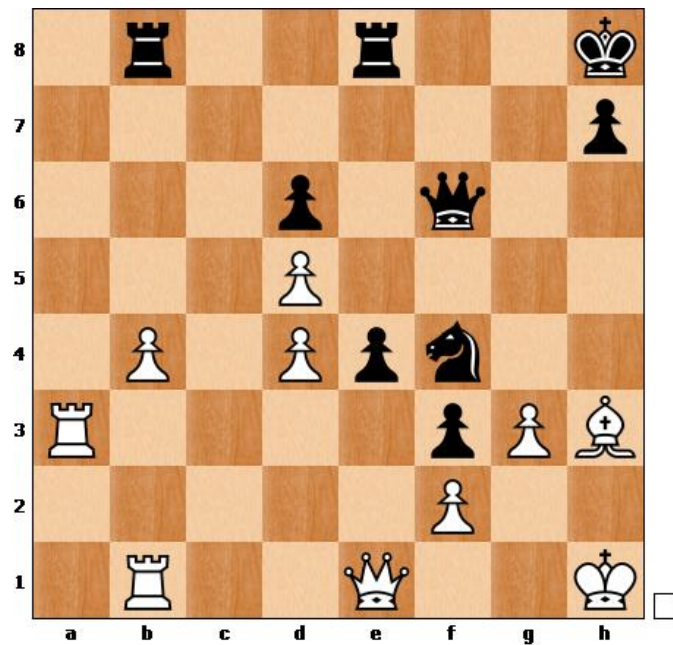
25...Rac8 26.Nd4 Bxd4 27.cxd4 Rb8 28.Rb1 ? { White plays a bad move hoping to retain some complication in the position, but it just speeds up my attack on the kingside. } (28.Rxa6 Qxb4 29.Qe3 ∞ { And white holds the fort from any forcing attack. })

28...f4 29.Rxa6 Qd8 30.Qe1 Re8 31.Bh3 Qf6 ! { The strongest continuation. 31...e3 may also be winning, but was more risky in exposing my king to possible perpetual checks. I wanted to make absolutely certain the best chance for a win was taken, and Qf6 was it. The move eyes d4, holds d6, and more importantly allows for the coming sacrifice on f4 to work... }



Position after 31...Qf6

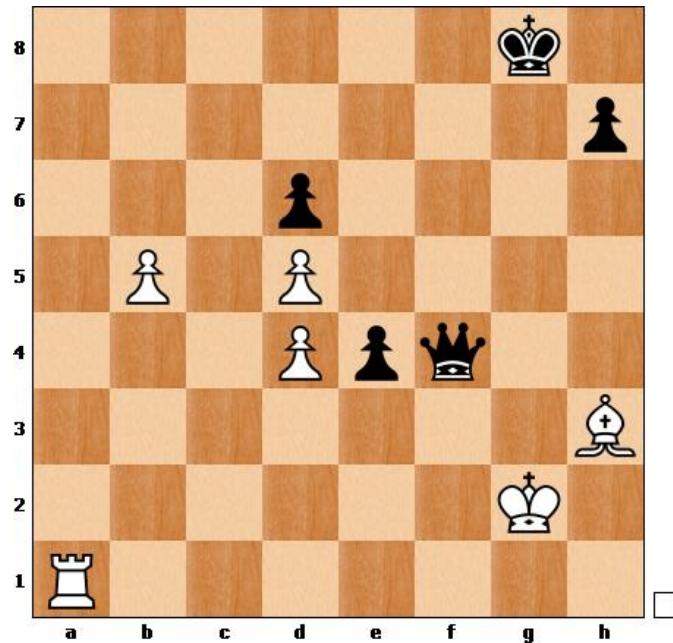
32.Ra3 fxg3 33.hxg3 Nf4 !



Position after 33...Nf4

34.gxf4 Qh4 35.Qf1 Rbc8 ! { Forcing white to keep a Rook on the back rank, and Rc2 is coming. If white were to play Rb2 for example, Rc1 deflects the queen and wins on the spot. }

36.Rba1 Rg8 37.b5 Rc2 38.Ra8 Rxf2 39.Rxg8+ Kxg8 40.Qg1+ Rg2 41.Qxg2+ fxg2+ 42.Kxg2 Qxf4



Position after 42...Qxf4

{ One of the hardest things to do on ICCF is win an endgame that 'should' be winning, but requires deeply calculated precision moves. Computer evals can often lead you to a dead end here, so I spent a long time investigating this endgame position to make sure I had the right track. }

43.Be6+ Kg7 44.Rg1 Kh6 45.b6 Qf3+ 46.Kh2 Qb3 47.Bf5 e3 ! { And the point I found. Holding onto the pawn will reach the win. } (47...Qxb6 ? 48.Bxe4 Qxd4 { And white creates a fortress draw. })

48.Rb1 Qa2+ 49.Kh3 Qxd5 50.Bg4 Qa2 51.Bf5 Qf7 ! { The final nail in the coffin. White is forced to try and protect the bishop, as retreating allows the queen to invade the lower ranks of the f-file. }

52.Kg4 Qg7+ { And white resigned in view of 53. Kf3 Qf6 54. Rb5 Qh4!, where white cannot take the e3 pawn due to forking threats on the king and rook from the back rank. } 0-1

Young man, consider that the train has left, and all you can do is loudly slam the door in farewell.

RULES PERTAINING TO FRIENDLY MATCHES

Since 1/1/17, Friendly Matches are viewed like any other ICCF-approved event, meaning a couple different things of possible relevance to you.

For players, it means that a player withdrawal (of any type, accepted, unaccepted, or silent) from a Friendly Match will also be considered a withdrawal (of the same type) from all other ICCF events; and a withdrawal from any other ICCF-approved event will also mean a withdrawal of the same type from all Friendly Matches. Until 1/1/17, Friendly Matches were exempt from ICCF rules that governed that "withdrawal from one event means withdrawal from all events". That exemption no longer applies. If you have dire need to stop playing, ask the Tournament Director for an accepted withdrawal. If you simply wish to stop playing, it is recommended you resign your Friendly Match games rather than simply abandon them. The latter comes losses in all of your other ICCF games and a 2 year suspension during which you will not be allowed to register for any other ICCF event.

For Tournament Directors interested in working towards the International Arbiter title, directing Friendly Matches now counts towards the required number of directed games to earn the title of International Arbiter. Before 1/1/17, that was not true.

The pieces must breathe deeply and with a full chest!



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 dmdorenchess@gmail.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, Director

Senior International Master Tom Biedermann, Deputy Director & Treasurer

International Master Corky Schakel, Registrations Director

Grandmaster 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

Yours truly, CCM Dennis Doren, Friendly Matches Organizer (dmdorenchess@gmail.com)

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 dmdorenchess@gmail.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!

Brief Note

If you wish to contact me, Dennis Doren, please use my current email address: dmdorenchess@gmail.com; not my old yahoo address.

The Friendly Match Elite

The Elite program has been phased out in keeping with the reduced participation fee for everyone. The regular fee, until 1/1/16, was \$6 per match. It became \$5 per match on that date. Elite members who still had credit were given two years to use that credit.

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 dmdorenchess@gmail.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.