

## One Move

It was a cold, early morning when I woke up on the pullout couch. It was the most important day of my life...pretty much. It was the day of the Scholastic Chess of Indiana Tournament (or SCIT, for short)! I had been preparing for this day for years, participating in the chess club, other smaller chess tournaments, and even private chess lessons. I went over to the hotel bed where my grandpa was sleeping and woke him up. He didn't seem as excited as I was, but we both got ready to go, stopped by the cafe in the hotel lobby, and set off for the tournament!

This year, the SCIT was held at Pike High School. This is where it was a few years back, so I knew a little bit about where things were. We finally arrived after a very long car ride, and got out. At first, we were a little bit confused on where to get in, because we didn't remember. We spotted a family going in, and followed them in. At every chess tournament, you always sit and wait between rounds in the cafeteria. So, we went to the cafeteria, sat down, and played a game. I was still a little tired, so I wasn't focusing as much as I should have.

"Brady, focus," my grandpa said sternly.

I was easily sidetracked, which is probably a bad quality to have for a chess player. However, the year before I got 26th, so I was aiming for top 15. I am a much better chess player now than I was, so I thought it could be possible.

"I know, I know," I mumbled, making my last move. "See, I just beat you, so I must be focused!" We both laughed as the chess official announced the first round.

"Attention!," he yelled, "Round 1 is starting for all ages."

My grandpa and I hurried to the big high school gymnasium, where I saw hundreds of chess boards each filled with pieces right where they should be. It was like a dinner table, with all the plates set out, each equipped with silverware in their perfect place.

Everyone rushed to a paper posted on the wall. This particular paper is called "the pairings" and it tells you where you're going to play, at what row, and what seat number for that

round. It also gives you their rating (which means how good they are), and their name, as well as what color you will be starting as. I found my opponent, found my row, found my seat number, and waited patiently.

The emptiness of the room must have made it look bigger, because once we all got situated, it didn't look as big. Once my opponent sat down however, I didn't feel as nervous for the first round. His name was Kam Stash, and his rating was much lower than mine so I knew I should win this round.

It was a very short match where I ended up winning, and was 1-0 for the first round. It was a good start, but my opponents will only get harder as I win more matches.

While I'm not playing, I might do one of four things. Play a game of chess with my grandpa, read my book, play on my iPod, or go and look around. I guess I just wandered off looking for the restroom, because I had forgotten where they were. When I came back, almost nobody was there! I knew this could only mean one thing. The announcer must have called for the second round. I ran like my pants were on fire, as fast as I could to the gymnasium, where everyone already was, found my opponent, and rushed to my seat.

"Sorry I'm late," I blurted, very out of breath.

"You're fine," she replied.

I didn't have time to read her name, or her rating, so I didn't know anything about my opponent. I won after twenty very long minutes. I checked right after the round and her name was Attalia Wolf and her rating was 301, also lower than mine. She hadn't won any games so far, but that doesn't surprise me looking at how she plays.

Once I got back to the cafeteria, I made sure that I stayed there so I wouldn't be late to my next round. I got something for lunch, and my grandpa and I talked. The next two rounds went very smoothly, one being short and the other incredibly long. I won both of them which meant that I was 4-0!

“Grandpa, grandpa, I won!” I exclaimed. I was so happy and proud of myself. I had never gone 4-0 in a state tournament before.

“Good job Brady. You are doing very well since last year's tournament,” he mentioned.

“I might even get 1st place. I could actually win the tournament. I could be a state champion!” I blurted very excitedly. Now I know that I can get top 15. But could I get 1st?

“That would be very impressive, but very far-fetched. Let's just focus on right now, and wait til' the time comes,” he replied.

We played another game of chess, me coming out on top again. Round 5 was coming up, and I decided to wait by the gymnasium and wait for when all the kids came pouring in. I found who I was playing and just waited until they opened the doors.

The round started, and I was kind of nervous. I had a streak going, and I didn't want to lose it. It was an intense match, going all over the board. He was winning, then me, then him, but I got him with a surprise move and won.

As we were shaking hands, I saw that the players to my left were just getting done as well.

“Checkmate, good game,” he chuckled, as if it were one word. He almost seemed a bit cocky. I checked right after we had finished, and I saw who he was. His name was Collin Nunez, and his rating was much higher than mine.

I did still run straight to my grandpa to tell him the wonderful news.

“Fantastic job,” he whispered, “I know you can win this next round!”

I sure hoped so, because the person I was going to play was also 5-0. So the person I'd be playing is just as good as me, if not better. I knew it was going to be a challenge, but I knew I could overcome this. The announcer said that it was time for round 6, the last round. I rushed to the pairings, and was shocked. His rating was 621, and his name was Collin Nunez.

He was the same cocky kid from before. But what if he wasn't actually that cocky, but confident? What if it was just to make people think he was just cocky, but he was actually very good!?

"Brady, calm down. You're getting paranoid," I said to myself. I walked in, sat down, we shook hands, and started playing. Once I did, I didn't feel as nervous. I felt happy, and determined to win!

I was making mistakes left and right, but he didn't see any of them. While I was waiting for him to move, I dropped my pencil, and when I sat back up, he had already moved without me looking.

"Where did you move?" I asked, very worried. We had to do what's called "notation" and in order to do that, I have to know where he moved. We do notation so that after the game, we can look over what we had played, and analyze the good moves and the bad ones. It's like the most complex diary you've ever seen. You would have to write down every little thing that happened, but I almost couldn't now because I wasn't paying attention.

"If you weren't watching, I don't have to tell you," he protested. He was right. Technichly, he didn't have to tell me. He was out for the win, and the win only. He didn't care about sportsmanship. So, I decided to step it up on the offense.

I got him in a position where his king was trapped in a 3x2 chunk on the board. Once I could align my queen and bishop without going through his king, I would win. There was nothing he could do except stall. If I did it at the wrong time, I would stalemate, and have a 50/50 shot at 1st place. I didn't like those odds, so I made sure not to make any mistakes. He moved one of his other pieces, which was just the move I was hoping for. I grabbed the queen, plopped it down on the correct square and whispered "Mate." He looked shocked, frantically trying to prove that it wasn't mate, but deep down he knew it was. He sighed, we shook hands, and I went skipping along to the table to turn in our results.

I was as happy as a little boy on Christmas day. I was so proud of myself. I was proud of the one move that gave me success, the one move that led me to victory. I almost couldn't believe it, but I was the happiest in the world. I had won the tournament, and will forever cherish that one move.