

**World Youth Championship In Vietnam**  
by Anna R. Matlin



Half the world away and half awake, I was playing blitz with Sarah and Jonathan Chiang as well as Caroline Zhu while Darwin Yang (all from Texas) sat off to the side. We were on the cold, tiled floor of the airport in Ho Chi Minh City, trying to occupy ourselves as the visas were being granted to each family. A member of the Vietnamese organization had greeted us warmly with beautifully arranged flowers -- a bouquet for each player.

When each person received a visa, we were ushered into a coach bus and I fell asleep without any trouble. It was 2:00AM when we were woken up and led out to take pictures for the tournament ID cards (no offense, but the timing was not exactly perfect). I was really surprised upon receiving my ID that it actually looked like me in the photo and not just like some lethargic blob. Everyone was really tired and, I'm pretty sure, had no other desire than to climb into a bed and sleep for a day and a half. However, our hotel had overbooked and some of the coaches and members of the US delegation were denied a room. Did I mention that it was almost 4:00AM by now? Those without rooms were taken to a nearby hotel. My mom and I were really lucky to have obtained one of the first keys and I felt really bad for the people who had to go through so much red tape.

The next day we got up earlier than expected and went downstairs to the Mezzanine floor to eat some breakfast. It's weird—our perception of breakfast is so different from theirs. At home we get up every morning and eat cereals, or a biscuit, or oatmeal. The Vietnamese like to eat noodles, soups and other foods that we expect for dinner. Luckily, the hotel was made to accommodate tourists and the buffet was made up of a mix of Vietnamese and European cuisine. There was always a station with two professional Vietnamese cooks making omelet after omelet for a long line of people.

The tournament hall was about twenty minutes' walk from our hotel and we decided to visit it before the start of the tournament along with Daniel Naroditsky and his mom. I had expected it to be really hot but I had not realized it would also be extremely humid. After trekking the seemingly endless distance to the tournament hall, we hailed a cab back to the hotel and reveled in the lobby's air conditioning.

We decided not to attend the opening ceremony because we were still exhausted from the long trip and I needed a lot of rest before the first round. Instead, we watched about half an hour of it on the national TV channel (they had a variety of channels, including Disney and Cartoon Network), broadcasted live. I liked it better than the opening ceremony in Turkey last year because they mixed speeches in with performances. Among the celebrity visitors were Ms. USA 2005 and the cast of famous Vietnamese pop stars.

The day of the first round arrived with an unusual opponent for me: Iran. I was hoping for no hostility and it turned out that she was the "smilies" girl I played the entire tournament.

During the second round, I noticed that it smelled like smoke. Somehow, no one else was aware of it. I was really confused until the next day, when we all learned that the AC had broken down. The room was really hot, especially since it was the day of the double-round and we were playing in the morning. The hosts put in a huge effort, though, and the issue was fixed in a day.

Though the free day is designed for rest and relaxation, it always throws me off. Last year and this year I lost the seventh round badly because I just felt out of it. Anyway, we went souvenir shopping and had fun bargaining with the locals—who were pretty easy to talk to, actually.

I was somewhat frustrated by the fact that the majority of my games resulted in draws, even though they were still well-fought. I had four draws in a row between the second and sixth rounds. Finally, however, I pulled myself together and ended up winning rounds nine and ten. I drew the eleventh against Peru.

We attended the closing ceremony—all pressure was off and sleep wasn't really an object at that point. Again, they had a good mix: awarding of medals and performances. The USA won two individual medals and three team medals. Congrats to Sam Shankland from California and Darwin Yang from Texas on their bronze medals and to the winners of the team medals, in sections Girls U8, Boys U12, and Boys U18.

We spent our last day saying goodbye to everything: the little shops near our hotel, the South China Sea, the little market a block away. We visited the huge statue of Jesus Christ on their highest mountain. It's a lot like the Brazilian statue except larger, but it's perched on a smaller mountain. I met some Buddhist monks in their temple and rang this really cool bell plastered with people's wishes (on paper).

I'm looking forward to Turkey in 2009, which is going to take place in the same region as the *2007 World Youth*.

Here are some of my statistics and games:

Round	Opponent	Color I played with	Result
1	<i>Iran</i>	Black	0-1
2	<i>Israel</i>	White	0-1
3	<i>Armenia</i>	Black	1/2-1/2
4	<i>Philippines</i>	White	1/2-1/2
5	<i>Vietnam</i>	Black	1/2-1/2
6	<i>Singapore</i>	White	1/2-1/2
7	<i>Latvia</i>	Black	1-0
8	<i>Taiwan</i>	White	1/2-1/2
9	<i>Kazakhstan</i>	Black	0-1
10	<i>Sweden</i>	White	1-0
11	<i>Peru</i>	Black	1/2-1/2

You may notice that I ended up with 6 draws which is very unusual.

The team was trained by six awesome coaches: Michael Khodarkovsky (head of delegation), Sam Palatnik, Aviv Friedman, John Federowicz, Dmitry Gurevich, and Armen Ambartsumian. The kids on the team came from all over the United States. Here is a list:

**Don't Forget To Play In The  
*World Amateur Team* Which Is  
Being Held In Parsippany, NJ!!  
February 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>**

<b>Name</b>	<b>State</b>
Jonathan Chiang, <i>Boys U8</i>	Texas
Tommy He, <i>Boys U8</i>	Texas
Raymond Sun, <i>Boys U8</i>	Texas
Jeevan Karamsetty, <i>Boys U10</i>	Texas
Christopher Wu, <i>Boys U10</i>	New Jersey
Darwin Yang, <i>Boys U12</i>	Texas
Alex Ostrovskiy, <i>Boys U12</i>	New York
Alexander Velikanov, <i>Boys U12</i>	Wisconsin
Jarod Pamatmat, <i>Boys U12</i>	Texas
David Adelberg, <i>Boys U12</i>	Arizona
Atulya Shetty, <i>Boys U12</i>	Michigan
Daniel Naroditsky, <i>Boys U14</i>	California
Sam Shankland, <i>Boys U18</i>	California
Daniel Ludwig, <i>Boys U18</i>	Florida
Matt Parry, <i>Boys U18</i>	New York
Alisha Chawla, <i>Girls U8</i>	California
Sarai Guillen, <i>Girls U8</i>	Texas
Reva Singh, <i>Girls U8</i>	New York
Hannah Liu, <i>Girls U8</i>	Texas
Simone Liao, <i>Girls U10</i>	California
Margaret Hua, <i>Girls U10</i>	Missouri
Caroline Zhu, <i>Girls U12</i>	Texas
Sarah Chiang, <i>Girls U12</i>	Texas
Alena Kats, <i>Girls U14</i>	New York
Anna R. Matlin, <i>Girls U14</i>	New Jersey
Katherine Wu, <i>Girls U14</i>	Virginia
Jennie S. Liu, <i>Girls U16</i>	New Jersey
Karsten McVay, <i>Girls U16</i>	New Jersey

advancing in the center. After that, I tried attacking the h2 pawn, but I couldn't break through and offered a draw.  
**35...Rb6 36.Bc1 Bd6 37.Rb3 Kf7 38.e3 d3 39.f3 f5 40.Rf1 Ke6 41.Bd2 Be5 42.Bc3 Bxc3 43.Rxc3 Ra7 44.f4 Kd7 45.Kf2 Kc7 46.Ke1 Rh6 47.Rh1 Rh3 48.Rb3 Kb6 49.Rb2 Rd7 50.Rg2 Rd6 51.Kd2 Rg6 52.Kc3 Kc7 53.Kd2 Kd7 54.Kc3 Ke7 55.Rb1 Rb6 56.Rbb2 Kf6 57.Kd2 Kg6 58.Rb1 Kh5 59.Rbg1 Kg4 60.Rf1 Rbh6 61.Rff2 Rb6 62.Rg1 1/2-1/2**

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Here is one of my games from the tournament:

**Khalikyan Astghik (Armenia)**

**Anna R. Matlin (USA)**

*11ss World Youth Championship, Vung Tau, Vietnam, Rd. 3, TL 40/90 SD/30 + 30sec Inc., Oct. 23, 2008, ECO A05*

**Reti Opening**

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 b6 3.Bg2 Bb7 4.0-0 e6 5.c4 Be7 6.b3 d6 7.Bb2 0-0 8.d3 Nbd7 9.Nbd2 c5 10.Rc1 Rc8 11.Qc2 Qc7 12.Qb1 Qb8** No, I wasn't playing copycat with her. This opening doesn't really generate action naturally, and I didn't want to blow up my position, so I ended up waiting for her to trade white-squared bishops so I could play d5. Playing d5 right away results in a bad bishop on b7.  
**13.Qa1 Rfd8 14.Rfd1 Bf8 15.a3 a5 16.d4 Qa7 17.dxc5 bxc5** this move was correct. It opened the b-file to attack white's pawn and also opened b6 for other pieces. [worse is 17...dxc5 leads to a symmetrical pawn structure. Black wants to have a pawn on the d-file to advance if white trades light-squared bishops.; worse is 17...Nxc5?? 18.Bxf6±] **18.Nb1 Ne8 19.Nc3 Nc7 20.a4 Ra8 21.Nb5 Nxb5 22.cxb5** this was a critical moment for white because it determined her pawn structure for the coming endgame. Either pawn was fine but this gave me an open center. **22...Be4** Awesome bishop! **23.Nd2 Bxg2** \*sigh of relief\* finally! **24.Kxg2 Qb7+ 25.Kg1 d5 26.Nf3 f6** this really doesn't weaken black's position. **27.Qb1 Nb6 28.Qd3 d4?!** not the best move. It weakens c4 and e4. **29.Nd2 e5 30.Nc4 e4 31.Qc2 Nxc4 32.Qxc4+ Qd5?!** Kh8 or Qf7 were better. **33.Ba3 Qxc4?!** **34.bxc4** [better is 34.Rxc4 Rd5 35.Rdc1 Rad8!? 36.Kf1±] **34...Rdb8** now black's slightly better, but not enough to win. **35.Rb1** my first plan was to blockade the b-pawn with a rook and try