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The Art of Chess

When you think of chess what is the first thing you think of? The pawns, horses, kings or queens? The checkered board? Checkmate? Boring? How difficult it is? I'd argue chess is a manifestation of the best parts of sports, created hundreds of years before these sports and video games ever existed. From someone who has played sports since 4th grade, I believe chess is the culmination of the competitiveness of sports and skill. Chess is a sport that is usually not appreciated on the same tier as more common sports, as it's understandably hard to do so. That over the years I've grown to appreciate.

Sports like football, basketball, and soccer take great skill and determination to play, which is an important aspect of chess. I know this because I played sports myself growing up and still do. I played Basketball, Soccer and ran track and field, throughout elementary school, middle school, high school and college too. Each of these sports comes with its own skills and creativity and challenges. Basketball requires so much mental and skillful requirements from dribbling, shooting, passing, defense, rebounding. All these skills require mental work to back it up, basketball has many concepts and sets and tactics that these skills need help to apply to. Many players have skills without the mentality and vice versa. But unlike chess there is a big X factor that separates hard working people from making the NBA. Physical attributes cause people to either have a chance or not. Under 6'0ft... that's tough. Not fast? Can't jump high? Not laterally quick? These things make sports great, but unattainable at the same time. For

context, a personal experience of mine is, Track and Field. I ran track from 10th grade to 12th grade of high school. I wish I had started sooner, but track was the one sport I worked the hardest for until that point. I did hurdles, and during the summer between 10th and 11th grade and 11th grade, and 12th grade which was Covid summer. I was on the track as many days as possible and it was true genuine passion and I wanted to get better, and I did. I hit most of my goals in my senior years and felt good. But at the same time, I had a hard ceiling as track is the most unforgiving of sports. Doing hurdles was a great event as the technicality it requires makes improvement very noticeable, but at the end of the day. Speed is the only thing that matters and having 10 hurdles in the way doesn't change much at the end of the day. This was how I gained vision about the limits of sports. That despite the narrative of hard work. They're barriers in the way. Chess, however, is very different to these sports. Despite chess being considered a sport, athletes that I know and interacted with, views chess with respect for its difficulty. But never give it a real comparison to more conventional sports. Chess is the perfect environment to achieve a peak competitive environment. With the ability to work hard, and achieve true results, disregarding other barriers. I originally did not give chess too much thought of mind. I first played chess against friends in 10th grade. During that time though I only played it in class when we were bored. I didn't play much in the meantime. But during Covid-19 is when I picked up chess again. Ever since, I have played though the common *chess.com* website.

Now, Basketball and Track field are cruel sports in their own way physically and the feeling of lack of control despite hard work. But chess is cruel in the opposite way. The game of chess, every move you make on board matters and every great thing and bad thing you do is entirely your fault. This makes the game of chess so rewarding but at the same time so unforgiving. The only factor out of your control is who makes the first move, in the game of

chess the white pieces always start first. This is the only advantage in the game of chess, so players take turns starting with the black pieces or white pieces. The way you start a game is with an opening, in which players look to gain an advantage early in the game in a multitude of ways. With 16 pieces on each side and pieces like the knight, bishop, rook, king and queen moving in their own respective ways. A chess game can go about in an endless number of ways, making the game basically impossible to master. Chess is a hyper competitive game compared to sports because you have to be focused on every move. For example, one day at ARCC, I went to the lounge area. Usually, I don't go to this lounge area, but I decided to go with some friends.

When we get there, they head over to the console to play a soccer video game. I recognize a friend from a different class playing chess versus a random guy over the board. So I went over the chess board and watched. My friend was new to the game, and the random guy was playing/teaching him. So I sat and watched, and the random guy killed my friend in chess, but was teaching him things the whole time. Now during this whole encounter, I was getting very excited. Seeing someone with skill, got my competitive juices flowing. So after they play, it was my turn. We chat for a bit, and I learn he is about 1500 elo, on chess.com. Now I'm 1200 elo, which is a massive difference. But I asked him to guess what he thought of me after we played, as I didn't tell him right away. So, the game goes along, and I'm playing well. There were moments I panicked because playing over the board is much different than online. But luckily despite that, I played quite well, and found myself in an advantage. In chess everyone starts with

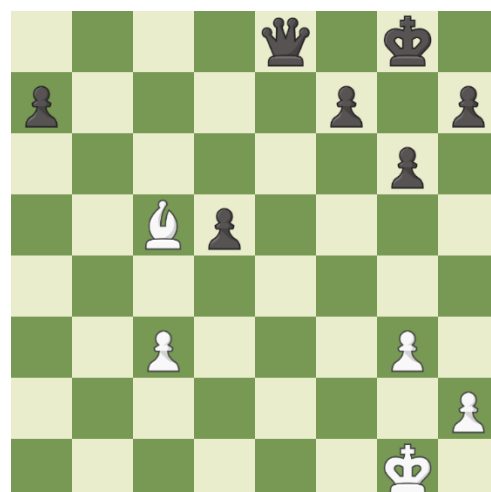
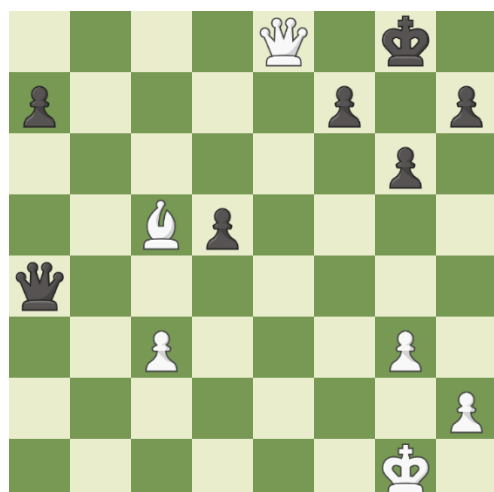
the same number of pieces, and in the photo. Me with the white pieces are up a bishop, which is



big, especially towards the end of the game. As the less pieces on the board the more weight each piece has. But in that moment, I really didn't want to mess up and I panicked.



The very next move, In a moment of being flustered. I thought I had an opportunity to win the game. But I rather lost it entirely on the spot.



I immediately resigned and left in defeat. I entirely lost the game, nothing about the other guy affected the moves I made. They're no glitches or lag like a video game or being out muscled or outran. The result was completely my fault. In Sports your physical advantage can take away the mental or skillful aspect of situations for the aggressor and the person on the receiving end. The aggressor can default to their move that flexes their physical superiority and all the losing party can do is try their best. They're many moments in sports where you must hold your hands up like I tried my best and my opposition did better. But in chess this is not the case. Chess was invented hundreds of years ago and is still evolving and changing despite the rules haven't changing in years. Openings from the beginning of chess to openings that have been recently created are used interchangeably. The constant studying and attention to detail is what separates great players from bad ones and professionals from normal players. This is what I fell in love with chess. There is an argument that smarter people have an easier time with chess, and they do. But just like in real life a dyslexic person can still be a best-selling author. But no matter how hard you work you'll never be the fastest person in the world. Chess allows people to learn and understand and get good at the game. This is why little 10-year-old kids can have extraordinary abilities when it comes to chess.

Chess is a special game that I enjoy and appreciate because of the complete control I have and as a competitive person I feel like every win is me completely beating my opponent with no excuses. But when I lose, I deserve it in every aspect because there is no other factors. Sports are things I enjoy but have factors out of my control. Which loses the competitive edge for. Chess Is a misunderstood sport that applies competitiveness of sports into one misunderstood activity. I think any competitive person needs to experience the tragic loss of a chess game, to then in turn understand the incredible high winning a chess game brings.