

## **Kings of the local chess scene (chess clubs in Chicago, Illinois, area)**

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Playing chess may not be everyone's idea of a vigorous workout, but winter-weary minds can flex their gray matter at a growing number of area chess clubs and tournaments. Last year, local chess club membership rose 10%, according to the Illinois Chess Assn., with online play the newest twist. But at about 35 local chess clubs, in-person matches and tournaments are still the rule.

"Chess is becoming more popular," says Kevin Bachler, president of the Illinois Chess Assn. He points out that chess is one of the few sports in which players can compete with others of different abilities and ages.

The Wicker Park Chess Club (312/899-7452) meets at 7 p.m. Wednesdays at Myopic Book Store, 1468 N. Milwaukee Ave. Anyone can drop by and play for free; the annual membership fee is \$20. Because of their popularity, the club's tournaments this year will be held monthly instead of quarterly. In a typical contest, club President Patrick Jones serves as director. He watches the clock (players get two hours to make 40 moves). He also pairs the players, issues prizes and makes everyone behave.

At a recent tournament, he penalized a player who wouldn't stay quiet during his opponent's think time, an offense more serious than shouting near a putting green. The last tournament winner got a \$27 cash prize and a trophy. His name was engraved on the "hall of heroes" wall plaque, which carries the club's Latin motto, "Et rex laboratus est." (Loosely translated: "The king piece works.") Players who compete in tournaments are rated, which allows them to enter regional and national matches. Beginners start with a rating of 500. World champion Garry Kasparov, beaten by IBM computer Deep Blue, has a rating of about 2800. Computers are rated, too. Corporate types might consider the Chicago Industrial Chess League (847/506-9302). This organization of about 25 teams has been sponsoring games and tournaments since 1957 among the city's business elite. Groups in the league-some include Leo Burnett, Motorola and the Cook County Department of Corrections-take turns hosting matches. Corporations or groups that want to join need six players to form a team. The Knight Moves Chess Club (312/ 746-4329) meets at 6 p.m. Wednesdays at the Rudy Lozano Branch of the Chicago Public Library, 1805 S. Loomis St. Meetings are free and last about two hours. The first hour includes a lesson on smart openings and winning patterns. About 50 participants attend quarterly tournaments. In the suburbs, the St. Charles Chess Club has about 50 regulars, according to member Jim Oberweis, chairman of North Aurora-based Oberweis Dairy Inc. Meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays at the Baker Community Center, Walnut Street and Route 31. Mr. Oberweis likes speed chess, an entire game played in five minutes. It requires razor-sharp mental skills and lots of luck. Clubs are a good place to start, but even beginners can participate in regional and national competitions, notes Alan Losoff, a local tournament director: "It's no different from bowlers who join a league." Online chess enthusiasts can play in real time at [www.uschesslive.org](http://www.uschesslive.org). For information about local clubs, visit the Illinois Chess Assn. at [www.illinoischess.org](http://www.illinoischess.org), or the U.S. Chess Federation at [www.uschess.org](http://www.uschess.org). Volume: 24 Publication number: 11

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