

Paying It Forward

Angel (Josh) Hernandez-Camen and Shrey Gandhi are using chess to give back to the world



Angel (Josh) Hernandez-Camen and Shrey Gandhi have been creative and energetic in bringing chess to underdeveloped parts of the globe. Josh tells *Chess Life*, “The morning after the 2014 World Youth chess tournament ended, we rented a small car, bought some groceries, and drove 218 kilometers to Himeville, a small town in the Drakensberg mountains [of South Africa]. In our trunk were a dozen chess sets donated by Dewain Barber, and other chess equipment, souvenirs, and photos from Coach El Mekki and the Paul Robeson Chess Club in Philadelphia.

“[On our second day] I showed them a game and notation on the chalkboard as they followed along over their own boards. I stopped the play every now and then and explained the important moves in more detail. I feel like maybe they got a better feel for how the pieces move and some basic ideas. But really they just loved to play and that was good. It was enough to just instill the love of the game in them. Later they could learn to play better, and better, and better.

“On this day a chess player who is a member of the local Zulu community and who offered to be the team’s coach came and taught along with me, translating some of the more complicated concepts into Zulu. I think he’ll do a good job continuing the program, though I hope other chess players will come through and help also.”

Shrey Gandhi’s story is equally inspiring: “I decided to do something special for my 10th birthday, to play and teach chess to the disabled underprivileged kids in India. During my visit to Ahmedabad, this summer, in India, I visited a place called Pearl Special Needs Foundation.

“I went to talk with some teachers that work at the school. After that, one of the teachers took me to the class to play chess. When I reached there, I first asked, “Does anybody want to play chess?” Only one person named

Nilesh raised his hand and we played a game of chess. I taught him that you are supposed to shake hands during the beginning of a game and at the ending of a game and we started playing a game.

“While everybody gathered around Nilesh to watch us play, I quickly finished the game and then taught the other people how to play chess. Two of the people started playing chess and I guided them while they were playing. I had a lot of fun and I hope to go there again because it was so fun and had an incredible and stupendous time. I donated chess sets that Mr. Dewain Barber had given me to take to the school.

“I also went to a place called SEWA Rural where they run a charity hospital to serve the medical needs of the poor people and played chess for two rounds. After that we decided to have some fun and we played a couple of games of suicide chess.

“The third place I visited is Apang Manav Mandar. Here, they have an all-day hostel for kids who have diseases, are disabled, or arrive when their families are not able to care for them. Since the kids understood only the local language Gujarati, I had to first learn what the pieces are called in Gujarati. I had played and explained some good chess moves in their language so they could understand. There I played with two people and I won the first time and then when they had a chance to checkmate I asked if they could recognize it. We donated multiple chess sets here as well. Teaching chess to others not only taught me to play better but has increased my respect for the game and given me the immense joy of helping somebody else learn.

Above: Students at the Kwapitela Primary School in Pitela, South Africa holding some of their chess key rings that Paul Robeson Chess Club students in Philadelphia sent as mementos; the club, where Josh is a member, sponsored the trip.

FACES ACROSS THE BOARD

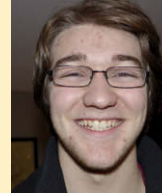
AT THE PAN AMs!

By AL LAWRENCE

WALKER GRIGGS

OBERLIN COLLEGE, OHIO

16 PanAm games without a loss



Life Master Walker Griggs not only helped put together this year's PanAms, he sang the National Anthem a cappella at its opening—and then led host-school Oberlin College to the best small college award, as he's done for three years in a row. "We have a small program, but an amazing and enthusiastic coach, Constantine Ananiadis," he said. "We'll only continue to grow." A junior, Walker doesn't get much opportunity to play but makes the most out of the December college championships. "I have a small streak going"—stretching back to the second round in 2013. Although Walker plays a variety of instruments and has performed in concerts and musicals, his main interest is language. After his team took the trophy in Cleveland, Walker headed to Russia, to stay with a host family before beginning the academic year at Saint Petersburg State University. "Chess fostered my love of Russian culture, and now I'm a Russian major living in Petersburg!"

KALIND PARISH

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Wasn't sure about en passant but started the club



Now a JD-Ph.D. student at Penn State, Kalind founded the Oberlin College Chess Clubs four years ago. Parish admits he "didn't even know all the rules of chess or notation," but that didn't stop him. "I walked into The Slow Train Café and found Constantine Ananiadis, the college women's tennis coach, sitting at a chess board," Kalind said. "I asked him if there was a chess team." There wasn't, but Kalish had bumped into the man who would help him make things happen. "He spends so much free time developing the club ... he teaches chess and spearheaded the 2015 PanAm. He's an amazing man." The club has competed in the last four PanAms, hosted the Ohio State Championships, runs two after-school chess programs, and brought the first PanAm to Cleveland since 1958. "We were hosting the biggest collegiate tournament less than four years after starting the club. During the first round, Mr. Ananiadis and I sat there in a state of shock."



The Pearl Special Needs Foundation was Gandhi's first stop during his Indian chess journey. Shrey is in the striped shirt.



Gandhi's visit included Apang Manav Mandar, an all-day hostel for disabled children.



Josh (standing) demonstrating a Paul Morphy game for the Kwapitela students. "I examined my chess databases for a game that would be suitable for beginners, as I wanted to show them an example of an actual game and notation," explained Josh.

PHOTOS: SOUTH AFRICA BY CELYNE CAMEN; INDIA COURTESY OF GANDHI FAMILY