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Play Like Ray!



By Alexey Root/Jennifer Shahade

December 10, 2007



UTD student GM Magesh Panchanathan and Ray Robson.
Photo Alexey Root.

In The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) GM Invitational (December 6-14) Ray Robson shares the lead with 4.5/6 along with GM Alejandro Ramirez and IM Davorin Kuljasevic. With just over half the tournament over, Ray has already earned his final IM norm! Can he get a GM norm? According to tournament organizer Luis Salinas' preliminary calculations, Ray needs 6.5 for nine round norm, 7 for a ten round norm and 7.5 for an 11 round norm. Be sure to follow the action via [CLO's coverage and by watching the games live on Monroi.com.](#)

Ray's play impressed GM Magesh Panchanathan so much that he decided to wear a red hat just like Ray's! (See the photo on the left.) Magesh's explanation: "Ray is my inspiration."

Want to play like Ray Robson too? Try your hand at the following three tactical puzzles, all from Robson games at this tournament.

1.



Robson-Panchanathan, Position after 27...Bd7. White to Move.

[Show Solution](#)

2.



Robson-Boskovic, Position after 26...0-0-0. White to Play

[Show Solution](#)

3.



Zhao Jun- Ray Robson, Position after 35.e5. Black to Play

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Robson won four in a row, but lost in the fifth round in a thrilling game against Davorin Kuljasevic, which allowed Davorin and Alejandro Ramirez to catch up to Robson.

UTD GM Invitat
White: Kuljasevic
Black: Robson, R

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.f3
 5.Nxe4 Bb4+ 6.Bd3
 8.Be2 Na6 9.Bd6
 12.O-O-O e5 13.Bc2
 15.Qe3 Nb4 16.Nc3
 18.Ke2 Rxd4 19.Rd2



Alejandro Ramirez. Photo Alexey Root.

The other 4/5, Alejandro Ramirez, had an interesting win in round one against IM Salvijus Bercys. Bercys chose the razor sharp 19.Qxd7, but if he wanted to avoid the psychologically difficult task of defending against two center passed pawns, he could have simply played 19. cxd4.

UTD GM Invitat
White: Bercys, Sa
Black: Ramirez, A

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5
 6.h3 Bxf3 7.Qxf3
 10.cxd5 Bxc3 11.Bc2
 13.Qe2 Ne4 14.Be3
 17.Bb5 Nxb5 18.Qd2
 20.Bg3 d4 21.Rfd1

What's it like to be the father of a rising chess star? Alexey Root got a chance to ask Ray Robson's father, Gary, a few related questions. (*Ed. Note- Alexey interviewed Gary after round four, before Ray clinched his third norm.*)

Alexey Root: How old is Ray?

Gary Robson: He turned 13 on October 25th.

AR: I know Ray is home-schooled. What is his day like back home, and how do you fit in his travels for chess?

GR: At home Ray studies chess 3-5 hours a day. He studies Mandarin with his mom, Yee-chen. Ray loves all sports, particularly ping-pong, basketball, soccer, and he's just starting tennis. He attended public school for kindergarten, then a public school for the gifted in first grade, then from grades 2-5 he was at a private Montessori school. We started home-schooling in grade 6, and he's in 7th grade now. My work as a professor at the college of education (applied linguistics) at St. Petersburg College is flexible. For example, I'm giving my final online while I'm here with Ray. His mom was with him Thursday and Friday, and returned to Florida today to finish her semester as a public school teacher. I got here yesterday (Saturday) and will stay with Ray until the tournament ends this coming Saturday.

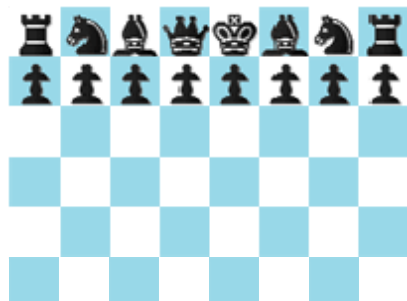
AR: Tell me your impression of Ray's performance in rounds 1-4.

GR: Ray is doing well, 4-0 after playing 2 GMs and 2 IMs. By my calculations, if he scores one more half-point before round nine he will have his third and final IM norm. His first IM norm was in Chicago in October at the 6th North American FIDE Invitational (Oct.28- Nov.3, 2007, Chicago), and his second IM norm was in Turkey at the World Youth(Nov.17-29, 2007) He only had 4-5 days after returning from Turkey before coming to Texas for the UTD GM Invitational. It's nice to see someone succeed, especially if he's your son. He really loves chess!

AR: How does Ray prepare for the games here?

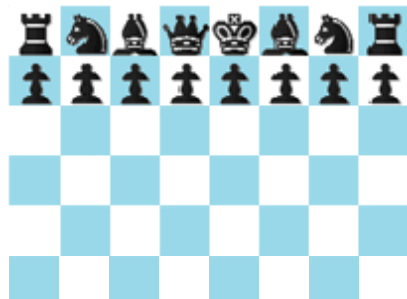
GR: Ray works on his own; his last GM instruction was back in June. The nearest GM to us geographically is Julio Beccera in Miami, which is 6 hours away. So working in person with a GM isn't possible. Ray looks over the games of his next opponent, searching for where he might play differently from what their previous opponents played. Most of the games at this tournament last 4-5 hours, then everyone carools from the playing site in downtown Richardson back to the UT-Dallas campus. We are fortunate to have been given an apartment on the campus to use for free for the duration of the tournament. Also, I want to emphasize that the UTD players have been very welcoming to Ray.

Here are the full games from Ray's winning combos shown above:



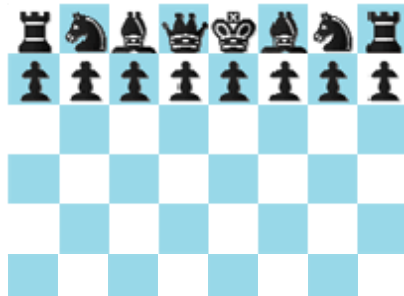
UTD GM Invitat
White: Robson, F
Black: Panchanat

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6
5.O-O Be7 6.Re1 b
9.h3 Na5 10.Bc2 c
13.cxd4 Bb7 14.d5
17.Ng3 f4 18.Nf5 l
21.Ng4 h5 22.Ngh



UTD GM Invitat
White: Robson, F
Black: Boskovic, I

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6
5.Nc3 e6 6.Be3 a6
10.Qf3 Nf6 11.O-C
14.fxe6 fxe6 15.Bc
18.Kh1 Nxd4 19.N
21.bxc3 Bc8 22.e5



UTD GM Invitat

White: Zhao, Jun

Black: Robson, R

1.d4 d5 **2.**c4 e6 **3.**l

6.Qc2 Bd6 **7.**b3 O-

10.Nb5 Bb4+ **11.**B

13.dxe5 Nxe5 **14.**l

16.O-O Rc8 **17.**Qf

20.Qg5 Nc6 **21.**N

University of Texas GM Invitational

Standings after 6 Rounds

1-3- IM Davorin Kuljasevic, GM Alejandro Ramirez, FM Ray Robson-4.5/6

4-5 GM Zviad Izoria and IM Jacek Stopa-3.5

6-7-IM John Bartholomew and GM Jun Zhao- 3

8-9- Dmitry Schneider and WGM Chunhong Ning-2.5

10-IM Salvijus Bercys-2

11- IM Drasko Boskovic-1.5

12- GM Magesh Panchanathan- 1

The UTD Invitational is organized by Luis Salinas. WIM Alexey Root, who contributed interviews and photos to this article, is the author of [Children and Chess: A Guide for Educators](#).

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