

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

# Talking with a Chess Master

BY CHAD JONES

This afternoon I had the pleasure of talking with Jacek Stopa, an international chess master and a fellow UTD student. In the interview below, he talks about himself, about the 2006 UT Dallas Grandmaster Invitational tournament currently underway, and about what's up with Britney Spears.

**CHAD JONES:** All righty, I am here with Jacek Stopa, pronounced ‘yah-seck stoh-pah.’

**JACEK STOPA:** Yes, Jacek Stopa.

**CJ:** So the 2006 UT Dallas Grandmaster Chess Invitational is an annual tournament between the UTD chess team members, correct?

**JS:** Yeah, the tournament is amongst the team. We’re just playing with each other.

**CJ:** And it’s twelve guys, right?

**JS**

## Grandmaster Chess Invitational

- **Where:** First Bank of Canyon Creek, 429 Belle Grove Drive, Richardson
- **Cost:** Free
- **Age limit:** All ages

[Full event details](#)

: Yes. It’s going to be eleven rounds. Everybody plays everybody in about nine days. It started yesterday and ends next Wednesday, the 13th.

**CJ:** Tell me about yourself a bit. You're from Poland. You're a criminal justice major. What kind of things do you do when you're not playing chess or studying?

**JS:** Um, chillin' with my roommates. I also run races. I used to run in Poland, not professionally, but for fun. Pretty regularly.

**CJ:** How long have you been in America?

**JS:** Uh, since the beginning of this . . .

**CJ:** This semester?

**JS:** . . . Uh, actually, since the fall. Yeah, I've been here four months.

**CJ:** I know some of the guys in the tournament have the title of "grandmaster." Do you have a title?



Jacek Stopa plots his upcoming victory.

**JS:** I'm an **international master**.

**CJ:** What does it take to get that title?

**JS:** I have to make three norms ['norm' roughly meaning a certain quality performance]. Basically, I need to score, like, seven out of eleven—or seven and a half points out of eleven—then I could

make a norm for grandmaster. Last year in Poland I was pretty close to getting the norm, but I lost it in the last round.

**CJ:** So right now your **FIDE ranking** is 2465. What does this mean?

**JS:** The points are calculated after the game. It depends on what your opponent's rating is and what the result of the match is. Like, if I win against

someone with a high rating, I get more points than if I win with someone with my ranking.

**CJ:** Is there a factor of how fast you win?

**JS:** No, if I win in three moves or three hundred, it doesn't matter.

**CJ:** If you had to guess, how many chess tournaments would you say you've played in your life?

**JS:** Ah, I have no idea. Uh, probably a lot.

**CJ:** Cool, cool. How many of them have ended in fist fights?

**JS:** Uh. . . . none. I have good sportsmanship.

**CJ:** Good to know. So your next match is 3:00pm today. Who are you playing?

**JS:** A freshman at UTD who's here from New York on a scholarship. [**Igor Shneider**]

**CJ:** Cool. Best of luck to you.

**JS:** Yes, thank you.

**CJ:** So, why do you think foreign people tend to be better at chess? Are American-born people dumber? Is it the McDonald's?

**JS:** Uh, I haven't been here long enough to notice that, I think. Actually, Bobby Fischer was, like, the best player in the world.

**CJ:** Yeah, but he's **crazier than Mel Gibson**, so let's not count him.

**CJ:** Do you know any of the grandmasters that will be in the tournament? There's **Yuri Shulman**, **Magesh Panchanathan**, and **Alejandro Ramirez**. Are you friends with them?

**JS:** Yeah, yeah, of course.

**CJ:** Are there any of them you would like to see lose?

**JS:** Um, yes. To me.

**CJ:** Ha, naturally.

**JS:** If they lose to me, that's OK.

**CJ:** All right, so, last question. Britney hangin' with Paris: a good idea or a bad idea?

**JS:** Um . . . what?

**CJ:** Nah, nevermind. Let's play a game right now. How many moves will it take for you to slaughter me?

**JS:** Well, you really have to assess the situation. It depends on where you move. Lots of times people ask me that question, "*how many moves? how many moves?*" But, really, it depends.

Seven moves later (four for him, three for me) Jacek calls checkmate.



**DEFEND THE TAVERN**



## Comments

**potsy** ANONYMOUS

Mr.Jones: Enjoyed your interview with Grandmaster Flash: sorry I mean Grandmaster Stopa. So did he really say "um....what" to your last question or did he have a sly grin on his face when he answered the question? Now I have a question for you. After reading your bio you must share more about your Mexican heritage. A train conductor once hijacked by Pancho Villa?

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**potsy** **ANONYMOUS**

Mr. Jones: Received your email. I am already a registered user. I am proud to say I am not a member of your family. Keep up the good work. And there is no shame in having Mexican heritage.

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