

UMBC falls to UT Dallas in Chess Final Four

By [Brian Whippo](#)

Editorial Staff

When the last move was made in last weekend's chess tournament, one word punctuated the chatter in the Game Room. The tournament was the Intercollegiate Chess Final Four, and the word was "luck."

UMBC's chess team, which won the tournament four times from 2003-2007, lost to their rival team from [University of Texas at Dallas](#) for the second year in a row.

The outcome of the tournament was up in the air all the way to the end, but two UMBC players were at a disadvantage due to losing coin flips that determined which player moves first. In casual play, the first move may not be so important, but in high-level chess, it could affect a team's score.

Sam Palatnik, a chess International Grandmaster who commentated the matches, explained, "You need to be strong, but you need to have luck, too. UMBC was still competitive for first place."

Timur "The Uzbekdragon" Gareev, who finished the tournament undefeated and was named Most Valuable Player, agreed that luck was a factor. "We were close, but we didn't get lucky," he said.

UMBC led the three-round tournament by half a point after Round 1 on Saturday, but there were still many games to be played. UT Dallas reversed that lead in Round 2, when they played New York University's team but won more points than UMBC did against Miami Dade College, and clenched the victory with more wins in Round 3. President Freeman Hrabowski, who is perhaps the chess team's biggest fan, asserted, "I'm so proud of our students. It could have gone either way, and success is never final. The cup will be back."



UMBC hosted this year's Final Four of Intercollegiate Chess. Students play casual games of chess in the Commons during Chess Week (above).

Pawel "The Polish Magician" Blehm, had a different perspective. "It's a disappointment, especially because this was my last tournament with UMBC chess," he said. "We shouldn't blame luck though. It was a close battle, and that's how it is at the highest level."

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