



Chess player calculates how to share his love of the game

By Vince Pierri | Daily Herald Columnist

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There's a section at Libertyville's Cook Memorial Library called the "Quiet Area," but it's not completely silent.

The tapping of computer keys; a student ripping paper from a notebook; a middle-aged woman zipping her parka. Typical sounds.

But an odd noise, the clicking of plastic against plastic, comes from one of the tables. The delicate pounding of chess pieces as they conquer each other on a green-and-white board.

It's a frigid night in February. As freezing rain pelts the windows, two men are locked in a silent, but intense, competition.

Their body language is aggressive. Leaning forward, arms pressed hard against the table, their eyes scan left then right, up then down, contemplating the next move.

Rob Krause comes here every Thursday night. The 33-year-old from Buffalo Grove sets up his board and waits for opponents.

He's been coming weekly for the past five years, a member of the Renaissance Knights Chess organization; Krause spends the better part of his days promoting the ancient game.

He loves chess and wants others to love it too.

Krause gives lessons to kids in the Chicago Public Schools, adults with disabilities and home-school groups. He's also a chess coach at Stevenson High School. They were state champs this year.

Slanomir Borkowski, a mechanical engineer from Mundelein, is the challenger tonight.

Plotting, planning, and second-guessing, Borkowski's thumb is pressed against his temple. Death is in the air, and he knows it.

Krause's moves are unexpectedly swift now. His black bishop streaks diagonally and flattens Borkowski's white knight. Krause scoops it up placing it among his other captives.

"I like playing fast," Krause says. "It's like a choreographed dance."

There's no smug pleasure in vanquishing an opponent. Krause is way past that.

"Chess is a playhouse for philosophy," he said. "You make judgment calls and learn the value of sacrifice. It's a beautiful game."