

Grandmaster and motivator

Chess expert a hit at Bryant School

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The international grandmaster stood over the chessboard Thursday and blinked. Two Cleveland public school students had trapped his queen.

Only they didn't know it, and the grandmaster wriggled free.

"You should have taken my queen!" Maurice Ashley told a sixth-grader and an eighth-grader afterward at William Cullen



Trey Modlin

Bryant School. "I would still have had more stuff, but you would have had a real chance."

Ashley played 31 simultaneous games at Bryant and won them all. Then he leaned against a wall and said, "Whew! A couple good players."

A top player and promoter of the game, Ashley was starting two days of matches and pep talks in Cleveland and Shaker Heights. The only black chess player to achieve the top rank — international grandmaster — particularly likes to encourage other black players like Trey Modlin, 14, a rising star from Shaker Heights.

In March, Ashley watched Trey win his age group in a nationwide tournament in Cincinnati. Then he accepted an invitation from Trey's family to promote the game in Cleveland.

"A smart kid, a nice kid, tough mentally," Ashley said of Trey.

To youngsters, Ashley stresses that the



Maurice Ashley shakes hands with his opponents before playing chess with them Thursday during a visit to William Cullen Bryant School in Cleveland.

Ashley on Ashley

You can hear Ashley's City Club speech at 12:30 p.m. today at WCPN FM/90.3 For more information about him, see mauriceashley.com.

game is fun.

"People actually give me money to play," he told Bryant pupils. Actress Jada Pinkett once paid him to take on her husband, actor Will Smith, on Valentine's Day.

To grownups, Ashley stresses that chess will give their children great mental train-

ing for school and life. It rewards good decisions and punishes bad ones quickly and dramatically. It teaches planning and flexibility.

"It's the kind of thinking that makes great companies, great football teams and great societies," Ashley said.

Ashley is scheduled to speak today at the City Club about motivating urban students.

Ashley has coached teams of black youths to several national titles. Some of the players have graduated from the Ivy League, and, Ashley said, "They're doing fabulously in the areas they've chosen."

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