

Chess supporter sets the table on public displays of addiction



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ALL IN THE TIMING: Several places in Northeast Ohio — including Eton, Chagrin Boulevard — offer public areas for chess players.

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If more Cleveland school kids know their rook from their pawn, thank Mike Joelson.

He's president of Chess for Success, a nonprofit organization based in Cleveland Heights that provides chess instructors for more than 35 schools.

Northeast Ohio offers several places for aficionados to gather. Joelson explains why a public game is different from playing in your den.

Q: *What is the etiquette of a public chess game?*

A: Oftentimes, you can go up to a game and ask if it's OK if you have the winner. Also, sometimes these games are conducted with a chess timer, so they go fairly quickly. A standard speed chess period of time is five minutes per side.

Q: *Do you ever ask for the loser?*

A: (Laughs) That's not standard!

Q: *Is Cleveland considered a good chess town?*

A: Cleveland has a good chess tradition. There's different environments. Like at Dewey's, they like to do a lot of trash talking. That's kind of standard. So if you trash talk at Dewey's, it's no big deal; but if you did it some other places . . .

Q: *So other places are more conservative? You're supposed to be quiet?*

A: Not quiet but a little bit more formal. Crocker Park and Eton, oftentimes people come with their own partners. Those places are not always as open to having people approach them.

Q: *Are there places where it's not*

OK to go if you're an amateur?

A: Everybody that plays chess sort of understands that you've got to start somewhere. You can ask certain players where you went wrong in a game, and they'll offer their opinion.

Q: *Are there any chess grand masters in Cleveland?*

A: There's one. His name is Anatoly Lein. At one time, he was one of the top 20 players in the world, and he still plays competitively.

Q: *Can you give beginners a sure fire opening move?*

A: A simple way to start the game would be to move the pawn in front of the king two squares. Try to control the squares in the center of the board. Bring out your bishops and knights early.

Q: *Are there any places around town where someone could find players to play with?*

A: Sure, there are a number of places that you can go. Here are a few:

Eton, Chagrin Boulevard, near Barnes & Noble, 28601 Chagrin Blvd., Woodmere. Outdoor chess tables from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Edgewater Park, most evenings, bring your own board.

Dewey's Coffee House, 13201 Shaker Square, Cleveland. Most days 6-10:30 p.m.

Crocker Park, 25 Main St., Westlake. Outdoor chess tables, 10 a.m.-11 p.m.

Lakewood Chess Club, Lakewood Senior Center, 16024 Madison Ave., Lakewood. 7-10 p.m. Thursday.

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