



JAM CHESS

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REACHING FOR THE STARS

FM JADEN SHAW

What makes a Champion? Some say they are born not made.

It is true that in many endeavors there are genetic traits that may help success. For instance, it is rare to find a top basketball player under 6 feet tall. However, those basic genetics aside, much of being a champion seems to be more “nurture” than “nature”.

I would not describe myself as a champion, but I have observed a few over the many years. I will explore the topic today by focusing mainly on the progression of a young chess champion named Jaden Shaw.

Jaden now attends Wolmers Boys High School, and he is the reigning Absolute National, Under 16 (U16), U20 and National Chess Champion of Jamaica. He also plays U19 basketball for the school.

I first saw Jaden as he played chess in an U10 tournament and among the hundreds of kids involved he was one of many that stood out. Simply because of how focused he was on the game. He obviously enjoyed it and wanted to win. There was no noticeable gap in his skill level, compared to that of his peers, to my untrained eye, at

that time. He was one of several kids who seemed to love the game and wanted to take it seriously.

A lady who works at my office, and had a son who also did chess lessons, one day asked me if I knew Jaden. Jaden was in her son’s chess class. I said yes. I remember him. I had never played him so I could not comment much on his level of play then, but I told her he seemed very focused and looked like he really loved the game. She agreed. I pondered afterwards why did I remember him and why did this parent notice him also?

I think that is the first key. Once exposed to the area in which their talent can blossom. a champion has an intensity of focus that separates them from the crowd. Teachers, coaches, onlookers will notice it. The champion finds flow while doing that activity.

Innate talent is another key. In the more physical sports it may be some uniquely gifted ability due to special reflexes but in mind sports like chess the innate talent might show itself in an unusual calmness of disposition. Jaden at nine years of age seemed calm beyond his years. It was hard to tell if he was winning or losing, he had a poker face. Emotional control.

Around the time when Jaden was developing his chess talent I personally stepped away at times from the game. As a child I probably loved it as much as he did but Life had intervened in my dreams. I had talent but was lower in other requirements to be a Champion.

My love of the game could never die, even when it seemed to be unrequited, so I found myself at times watching various local chess events. It was at one such event that a young Jaden Shaw, who was also a spectator, asked me to play a few games.

The request seemed odd. Why would a child ask an adult he barely knew to play chess? I glanced around and saw Coach NM Geoffrey Byfield nearby, it suddenly made sense. Byfield was probably the one quietly urging young Shaw to play me, and he was hoping I would be soundly beaten by a student of NM Ryan Blackwood.



SubZonals 2018 -
Jaden Shaw versus Mark Bowen

I played him about six or seven blitz games and won all of them in impressive style. I was rusty but still had my old touch. Yet to my surprise this young man's intensity never flagged, never waned.

In chess, as you play, like warriors sparring in a gladiatorial sand pit, you at times enter the mind of the opponent. You feel their ego. When they lose some player's ego will crack or even break.

Not so with Jaden. I had reeled off vicious sacrificial attacks, subtle opening strategies and still he wanted more. He seemed to be growing stronger with each loss. Trying to absorb all my knowledge like a sponge.

I was impressed by his fighting spirit but did not feel like I had anything more to prove so I waved away his request to keep playing and instead I continued watching the tournament. Byfield looked a bit disappointed. I wondered if he was sad that I still had some skills, or did he really expect Jaden to beat me?

Anyway, fast forward a few years and while Jaden was continuously improving at chess, I was even more focused on non-chess activities like work, family and the many other curve balls that life can throw at us.

When my mom died, going into 2015, I lost all appetite for chess. It seemed like a pointless and frivolous waste of time and besides my concentration was shattered. I could no longer find flow while playing chess. My moves were disjointed, not coordinated. I was like a dancer who could no longer even hear the rhythm, much less catch it and be creative. Unable to catch a beat I had focused on my writing and photography more.

My chess friends did check in on me and some encouraged me to return but even when I began studying chess again, I had no strong desire to play tournaments anymore.



Wolmers Boys School Spirit of Excellence awardee
FM Jaden Shaw flanked by parents
Terry-Ann Graver & Richard Shaw

I was rusty but beat Jaden quite impressively I thought. It was just a blitz game I never thought much about it. Byfield looked a bit disappointed though. Did he really expect Jaden to beat one of the veterans in Jamaica's chess scene? I was once the most active chess player on the island, along with the great NM Humphrey Gayle of blessed memory, we would intimidate even titled players back in the ladder tournaments of the nineties. My ferocious style of play had sent many a promising star to the scrap heap before but to my surprise no sooner than I had beaten him than young Jaden was resetting the pieces for yet another game.

This changed in 2017 when I heard that the Sub Zonals were being hosted by Jamaica. I somehow realized this was my best chance to ever play, representing Jamaica, in an international chess event. Despite a hectic work schedule, I decided to enter.

I put in some training but realized that having not played for the last couple years my game would show extreme rustiness. The tournament rekindled my love of the game in general, however I lost my games against Mark Holness, Andre' Soares as well as Jaden Shaw.

In my game against Jaden at some point I grabbed some material in the middle of the board before noticing that my greedy knight would have difficulties finding safety. I gained a pawn but lost my knight. Jaden was then able to win the game easily without allowing much counter play.

I ended the tournament feeling a bit sorry for myself, knowing that I had played far from my best level. I was happy for those Jamaicans who did play well though. I was especially happy when Shane Matthews became Jamaica's 2nd International Master (IM) at this event.



Photo by David Llada (FENAMAC Ajedrez 2023)

FM Jaden Shaw

Jaden grew from strength to strength, indeed he collected many awards for his excellence at chess, while representing the country in various international events both at the junior and senior levels.

On collecting one award he said this, "To receive the award is great, as many people who were nominated didn't win. So, I am grateful. And it was a pleasure to meet and greet so many people. Allow me to thank my coaches, parents, sponsors, family, friends, and my church family for always encouraging me to be the best I can be at whatever I do. Above all, I would like to thank God for blessing me with all my talents. Without Him, who would I be?"

So, there we have it the keys of success, the ways to become a champion as outlined by the life of Jaden Shaw. Be exposed to a creative field of endeavor, Have a dream, Focus, Talent, Flow. Passion, Fearlessness, Willingness to learn, Humility, Coaching, God, and Gratitude.

I looked back happily at what I had discovered I even contrasted it with my own life. Then I suddenly realized the final key. One which made even this article possible. I remembered an important incident in Jaden's chess career.

When he represented Jamaica at the FIDE Chess Olympiad in Chennai, India in 2021, Jaden's opponent, Grand Master (GM) Meelis Kanep from Estonia, in one game had a heart attack during play. I immediately received a call from Jaden's dad, sharing what had happened, he was following every move, and this was shocking.

Jaden split the point with his opponent and was commended for the sportsmanship he had shown. I think this was the final key. Jaden was a good person and being guided by good people who cared about him and others. They realized that chess was just a game. Winning at Life was most important.

Jaden never plays unprepared. His personal coach and team Jamaica captain at the Olympiad IM Jomo Pitterson was feeding him great advice and his parents were always there for him.

I therefore leave the last word to Champion creator, father of Jaden, Richard Shaw. In one post after thanking the many "villages" that helped raise his son to greatness, like Chess Whiz Kidz Academy, Pitterson Chess Institute, Wolmers Boys school and the Bethel Baptist church community, among others, he said simply, "God knows the plans that he has in store for each of us, we just need to trust him."

Written by Mark J. B. Bowen.

WCM CLARKE, STEPHENSON SHINE IN CAC U20 CHESS

As the curtains came down on the Caribbean and Central American U20 Chess Championships 2023 in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, Jamaica's juniors secured (3) top three finishes across the female and Absolute sections. St Jago alum and Jamaica Chess Olympiad multiple times representative Woman Candidate Master (WCM) Adani Clarke secured silver while Wolmerian Amy Stephenson secured bronze behind her fellow country woman Clarke. Both competed in a very competitive field of 19 ladies which was won by Woman FIDE Master (WFM) Kristel Melissa Diaz Carpenter of Costa Rica. Valeria Viana of Honduras and Jaen Lourdes Lorena Vasquez of Panama round out the top 5 ladies.

In the Absolute section, Candidate Master (CM) Jaden Shaw tied for 3rd place along with FIDE Master (FM) Jose Nahum Espinoza Solano of Nicaragua and (FM) David Alejandro

Cabezas Solano of Costa Rica, however Shaw was relegated to 5th overall based on applied tiebreaks. The Absolute section was won by newly minted International Master, (FM) Jerzy Jesus Perez Leiva of Cuba who showed his class and maturity in chess at 19 years of age, second was another quality Cuban standout (FM) Kemel Antonio Gallo Garcia in the field of 45 young men. John Stephenson (8th) and Nathan Hare (11th) also competed on Jamaica Absolute team.

Jamaica's coach (IM) Jomo Pitterson expressed his satisfaction for the team performances albeit he wanted four medals with at least one being golden, he shared his appreciation for the quality field of competitors and the kind way the Honduran federation received all athletes regardless of their domiciled federation. Seven Central American teams Cuba and Jamaica contested both the Absolute and female sections over 9 rounds.



L-R, Front Row- WCM Adani Clarke, Amy Stephenson, Back Row L-R, Richard Shaw, CM Jaden Shaw, John Stephenson, Nathan Hare, IM Jomo Pitterson



WCM Adani Clarke (2nd) and Amy Stephenson (3rd) at CAC U20 Chess championships in Honduras



Nathan Hare



John Stephenson

GRITTY PERFORMANCE BY JAMAICAN JUNIORS AS THEY PARTICIPATE IN THE XXXIII PAN-AMERICAN YOUTH CHESS FESTIVAL 2023



L-R, Liam Logan, Ronak Shergil, Kaleel Johnson-Bartlett, Rajvir Shergil, Leah Logan, Emilia-Rose Leake, Victoria Salazar



L-R- Gariella Watson, Kaia Gayle, Kaity Gayle, CM Jaden Shaw

Kingston, Jamaica – Despite fielding a team of Jamaica’s top chess juniors, none was able to finish on the podium in their respective categories. Head of Delegation, International Master (IM) Jomo Pitterson, along with coaches Woman International Master (WIM) Deborah Richards-Porter and FIDE Master (FM) Warren Elliott accompanied the team to the XXXIII Pan-Am Youth Chess Festival in Chicago, Illinois, USA, from August 11-18, 2023.

The event had six age categories for Open and Girls sections: Under-18, Under-16, Under-14, Under-12, Under-10, and Under-8 years old. Jamaica had reasonable performances in several sections and played against very strong competition from the western hemisphere over 9 rounds.

The players’ results are as follows from nine (9) combative rounds.

- **Under-18 Girls:** Kaity Gayle - 3 points
- **Under-16 Open:** Candidate Master (CM) Jaden Shaw - 5.5 points
- **Under-16 Girls:** Gabriella Watson – 4 points
- **Under-14 Girls:** Kaia Gayle – 3 points
- **Under-12 Open:** Ronak Shergil, Liam Logan & Khaleel Bartlett - 3.5 points
- **Under-12 Girls:** Victoria Salazar - 3.5 points
- **Under-10 Girls:** Emilia-Rose Leake – 4 points
- **Under- 8 Open:** Rajvir Shergil – 5 points
- **Under- 8 Girls:** Leah Logan – 3.5 points

THE JAMAICA CHESS FEDERATION

SUMMER'S OVER, TOURNAMENTS ARE BACK!

NOTE THE DATES...

SEPT 30
TO OCT 1
HAROLD CHAN OPEN
A two day tournament with 3 sections (U1300 1 day). Named after our legendary player DR. Harold Chan. (Nationa Master)

25
NOVEMBER
ROBERT WHEELER OPEN
The highly anticipated postponed event in honour of our past International Arbiter, CM, secretary and many times champion.

02
DECEMBER
DEBORAH RICHARDS-PORTER CHESS FESTIVAL
An all female tournament named after the 10 times champion WIM Deborah Richards-Porter!

OCT 28
TO OCT 29
JAMAICA CHESS OPEN 2023
The premiere Open tournament with international participation and a new online section.

16
DECEMBER
FREDERICK CAMERON OPEN
End the year in a bang, by participating in this timely event named after past president Frederick Cameron.

CHESS
END OF YEAR SCHEDULE
Jamaica Chess Federation tournaments for the remainder of 2023 - Get ready!

MORE INFO
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Jamaica dominates Central American & Caribbean Youth Chess Championships for 2023



Coaches holding up the winning trophies L-R, IM Jomo Pitterson, WIM Deborah Richards Porter (Head of Delegation) and FM Warren Elliott

Team Jamaica overcame 14 other countries, including the strength of host country Trinidad and Tobago (2nd place), and Cuba (3rd place) to become the 2023 champions of the recently concluded Central American & Caribbean Youth Chess Festival held in Port of Spain, Trinidad! There were strong performances from all of Jamaica's players to bring home the winners' trophy, and several players shone on the podium at the end of the 6-day tournament which had over 230 players, from 15 different countries across the region.

Candidate Master (CM) Jaden Shaw blew away the field in the U16 Open section with a perfect 9 out of 9 points for the gold trophy. At the time of writing this article, Jaden is poised to be named FIDE Master (FM) as he will reach the rating bar of 2100, as a result of this tournament. He also earns his second norm towards becoming an International Master (IM). This means there is only one norm left for Jaden to become Jamaica's third ever International Master, after IM Jomo Pitterson, and IM Shane Matthews.

Woman Candidate Master (WCM) Raehanna Brown also had a phenomenal tournament, winning gold with 7 points and 2 draws for a total of 8 points. With this excellent performance she now qualifies for the Woman International Master title, subject to a rating of 2000. She also gained a massive 60 rating points from this tournament towards this goal. This would make Raehanna the third woman in Jamaica's history to achieve this title, after WIM Deborah Richards-Porter, and WIM Rachel Miller.

Another amazing performance for gold, was that of Emilia Rose-Leake in the Under 10 Female section. She had no losses and won her age group with a score of 8.5 out of 9 points. Going forward she will be working on gaining rating points to gain the WCM or CM titles that she is already entitled to, subject to an 1800 rating for the WCM title, and 2000 rating for the CM title.

Newcomer Rajvir Shergil also had an excellent performance in the U08 Open section with 8 points overall, suffering only one loss to Bahamian Caerwyn Turnquest in the 6th round. Rajvir who entered the tournament unrated, will now qualify for the Candidate Master title subject to achievement of a rating of 2000.

Other noteworthy performances include those of Gabriella Watson in the Under 16 Female section, Aaron McKoy in the Under 12 Open section, and Dayna-Simone Swasey and Leah Logan in the Under 08 Female section. Gabriella scored 6.5 points, beating top seed, Bajan Hannah Wilson, but suffering two losses and a draw to come out with the silver medal, behind Wilson. This performance entitles Gabriella to the WCM title for a second time, subject to achievement of the 1800 rating bar. Aaron McKoy also placed second with 6.5 points, losing only to the 2 highest rated players in the section – Cuban Osiel Alberto Alonso Orta and Sahiean Polanco Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, and having a draw with the 3rd rated seed for the section. This performance entitles Aaron to a Candidate Master title, subject to achievement of the 2000 rating bar. Dayna-Simone Swasey and Leah Logan competed in the Under 08 Open section based on a merging of the boys and girls for Under 08. Overall, Dayna-Simone had 5 points which made her second among the Under 08 Females, just ahead of Leah Logan, who also had 5 points, and placed third on tiebreak.

The success of the team would not have been possible without the support of the individual sponsors, parents, coaches IM Jomo Pitterson, FM Warren Elliott, Troy McKoy and the Jamaica Chess Federation head of delegation WIM Deborah Richards-Porter, who was also coach to several students.

The results for the talented and hard-working Jamaican team of 29 players is as follows:

- **Under18 Open (20 players)** – Darren McKennis (6th with 5 points), Aayush Jain (7th with 5 points) John Stephenson (13th with 3.5 points)
- **Under18 Female (11 players)** – WCM Raehanna Brown (1st with 8 points), Amy Stephenson (5th with 5.5 points), Kaity Gayle (9th with 3 points)
- **Under16 Open (29 players)** – CM Jaden Shaw (1st with 9 points), JLoy Chin (6th with 5.5 points)
- **Under16 Female (18 players)** – Gabriella Watson (2nd with 6.5 points), Suraiya Matandara-Clarke 8th with 5 points)
- **Under14 Open (33 players)** – Cameron Coe (8th with 5.5 points), Corbin Harvey (9th with 5 points)
- **Under14 Female (13 players)** – Kaia Gayle (7th with 5 points)
- **Under12 Open (29 players)** – Aaron McKoy (2nd with 6.5 points), Ronak Shergil (5th with 6 points), Vaishnav Gali (9th with 5 points), Khaleel Bartlett (12th with 5 points), Liam Logan (13th with 5 points)
- **Under12 Female (11 players)** – Victoria Salazar (4th with 5.5 points), Tsahai Clarke (6th with 4 points), Kayla Moses (7th with 4 points)
- **Under10 Female (15 players)** – Emilia Rose-Leake (1st with 8.5 points), Elisha Patel (4th with 6 points), Esther Mullings (9th with 4.5 points)
- **Under08 Open (23 players)** – Rajvir Shergil (1st with 8 points)
- **Under08 Female (8 players)** – Dayna-Simone Swasey (2nd with 5 points), Leah Logan (3rd with 5 points), Rhea Gardener (6th with 4 points)

ABOUT THE JAMAICA CHESS FEDERATION

The Jamaica Chess Federation (JCF) was founded in 1969 and has been affiliated with FIDE, the governing body for chess, since 1972. In its capacity as the governing body for chess in Jamaica, the JCF is devoted to extending the role of chess in the Jamaican society.

JAMAICA CHESS FEDERATION



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