

Ancient board game relieves summer doldrums

Players lining up for outdoor chess games at Willows Beach

Vivian Moreau
News staff

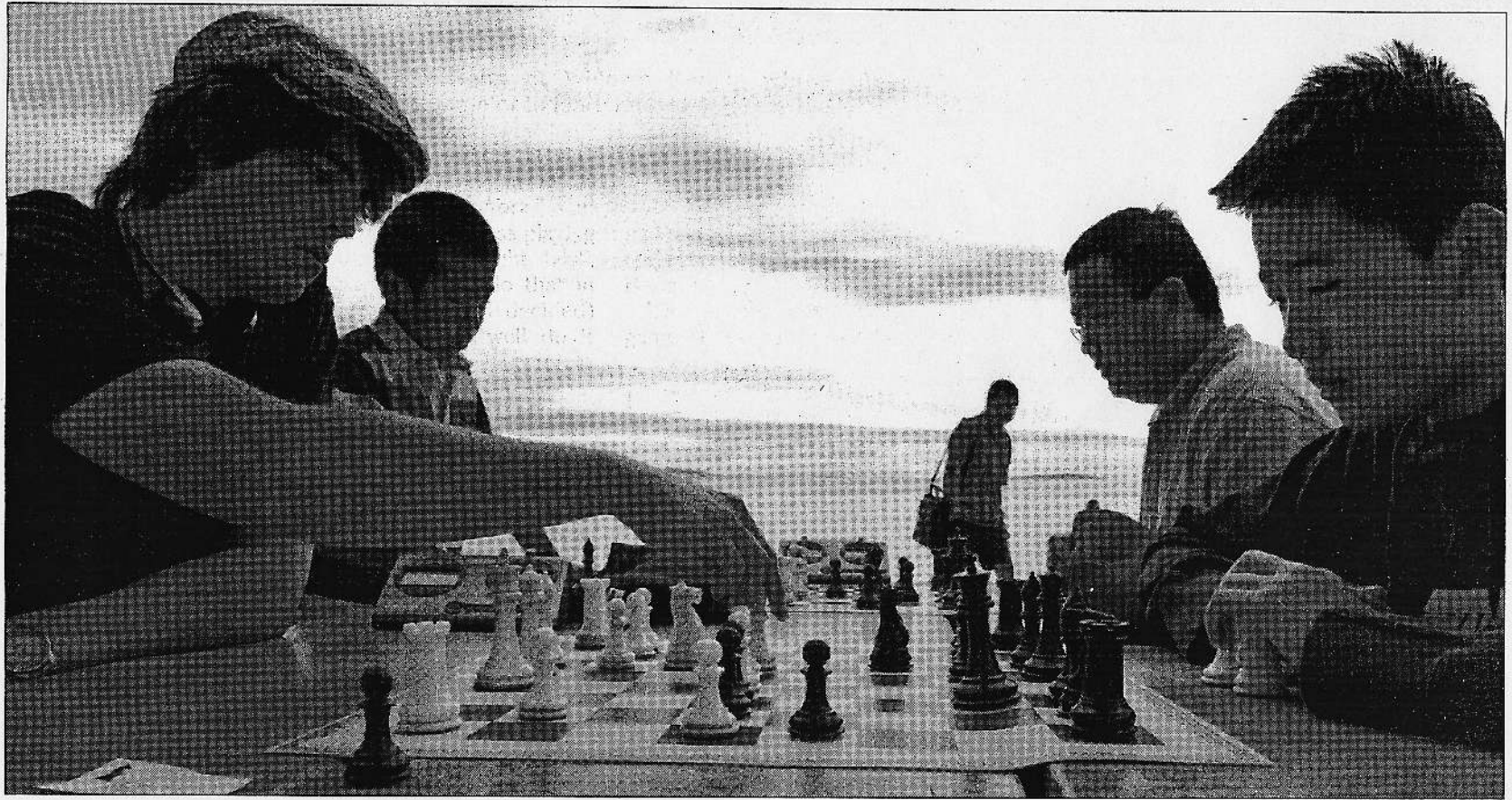
Five years ago, as an 11-year-old chess player, Evan Raymer represented Canada at the world junior chess championships in Greece. For three weekends this summer, Raymer played in another gorgeous setting – Willows Beach.

A member of the Victoria Junior Chess Society, Raymer volunteers to supervise the outdoor chess games that started three years ago at the beach.

Five chess sets are set up and Raymer helps introduce newcomers to the game but also fields questions from passersby.

"I'm surprised how many people know about chess," Raymer said from his Oak Bay home. "It doesn't seem like something most people would be interested in, but lots of people do."

Now in its third year of summer play at Willows, the gathering of chess players was instigated by Brian Raymer, Evan's father.



Sharon Tiffin/News staff

Evan Raymer takes on Tian Tian Geng at Willows Beach, where the Victoria junior chess club meets every Saturday. Everyone is welcome to drop by for a game or to learn how to play, say the club's members.

At first it was a way for Evan, a Grade 11 student at Mount Douglas secondary school, and his 13-year-old brother to keep playing after their chess club wrapped up its winter schedule of tournaments.

"We had seen people play chess outdoors in other cities, like New York," said the boys' non-chess playing dad, "and I thought, 'well, where do they do that in Victoria?' and (I decided) they might as well do it

right at the beach where it is beautiful."

Last weekend, Evan supervised three youths and seven adults at Willows Beach.

It's the creativity of the game, the beauty of the

moves, that keeps Evan intrigued with chess.

"There is a debate in the chess world whether chess is an art or a science and I think it's a bit of both, but it's the art that interests me."

From September to June, the Victoria Junior Chess Club hosts monthly tournaments at the University of Victoria for kids from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

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