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Dispatch from the All Girls Nationals: "I am Here to Fight the Chess Wars"

By [Sarina Motwani](#) | May 1, 2019 | [News, Women](#)



"I'm here to fight the chess wars."

-Keyla Acevedo Hernandez, Age 7

Keyla entered her first Kasparov Chess Foundation All Girl's Nationals ready to fight the chess wars, make friends, and improve her chess skills. As we walked into the opening ceremony, I saw both nervousness and excitement in her eyes. The energy from the rest of the girls was contagious and within seconds her nervousness seemed to subside.

<https://new.uschess.org/women/coaching-keyla-fight-chess-wars/>

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The National Anthem finished and all the girls made their way to their boards. With determination in her eyes and a smile on her face, Keyla began the first round.

When Keyla came out with her ChessNoteR in her hands and a bigger smile on her face, we knew that this may be the perfect tournament for her. Not only had she won her round, she also made a friend.

She had five games ahead of her and there was a look of sheer excitement on her face to play the next round. It seemed like Keyla's love for chess had been reignited. Surrounded by girls between age six and eighteen, Keyla found herself involved in a greater community.

The result of the first round motivated Keyla and we spent time reviewing tactics and endgame ideas. She had a full day of chess ahead of her, and was amped up with confidence and stamina.

As we walked between the convention center and the hotel rooms, we were greeted by many people in Star Wars attire. Keyla was surprised to see the elaborate costumes and passion for Star Wars both adults and children had. The Star Wars costumes inspired Keyla and led us to get her her own chess apparel. Her sweatshirt would not only serve as a memento for her special experience at All Girls' Nationals but also would be a way for her to show her passion for the game. She entered her second round wearing a chess sweatshirt customized with her name on the back, "witness the power" on the front, and "queen" and All Girls' Nationals on the sleeve.



Keyla Acevedo & chessplayer, writer and coach Sarina Motwani

Keyla won her second round and finished quickly, but her third round took longer. She played the third-highest rated player, and despite a hard round, she played her best. She lost in the end but came out happy. She primarily lost the round because of weaknesses in her pawn structure. We had not spent much time reviewing that before, so her loss became a learning experience. She is now more conscious of her pawn structure when she plays.

With three rounds left of the tournament, Keyla was determined to continue fighting the chess wars.

Her determination led her to win the next three rounds and finish with 5/6 points. Keyla said that the following "is my favorite game because I won and I made a friend."

Keyla's effort, concentration, and motivation resulted in her bringing home a fourth-place trophy.

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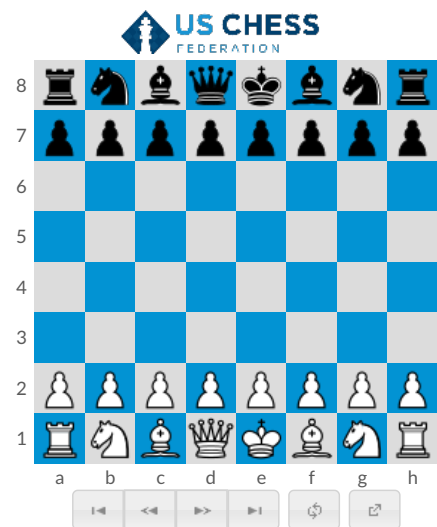
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April 14, 2019

☐ Acevedo, Keyla

♣ Hu, Angela (542)



1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♗f3
 c4 6.♙e3 ♙e7 7.♙e2 b5 8.b3 cxb3 9.axb3
 b4 10.c4 dxc4 11.♙xc4 ♙h4 12.O-O ♙b7
 13.♗bd2 ♙e7 14.♙c1 ♗c7 15.♙e1 ♗a5
 16.♙xe6 ♗d8 17.♙g4 ♗d5 18.♗c4 ♙c8
 19.♙xc8 ♙xc8 20.♗xa5 ♗xa5 21.♙xc8+
 ♗d7 22.♗c1 ♗b6 23.d5 ♗a5 24.e6+ fxe6
 25.dxe6+ ♗xe6 26.♙b6+ ♗d6 27.♗c6# 1-0

The KCF All Girl's Nationals fosters an environment where girls from all ages and backgrounds can thrive. Girls with a passion for chess can come together and forge friendships. Keyla's first girl's nationals experience was filled with smiles, new friends, and success.



Keyla at a recent Girls to Grandmasters event

The Kasparov Chess Foundation All-Girls Nationals is presented by Renaissance Chess and KCF in association with US Chess. Find the CLO wrap-up by Betsy Zacate here. and our official video from last year's event here.

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Peter Thau | [May 1, 2019 at 8:46 pm](#)

Another player from this event who would have been an interesting subject for an interview would have been Katsi Bengoa. She could have contrasted her experiences in the continental United States with her experiences as a member of the Puerto Rico women's team in the 2018 Chess Olympiad.

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