

# King of the game

## Willoughby man competes for state title in checkers

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Growing up, it was often difficult for Richard Beckwith to find friends with whom to play his favorite game, checkers.

That's because Beckwith was so good, his opponents quickly learned they would never beat him.

"They always knew what was coming," the Willoughby resident says, laughing.

Today, the 38-year-old chemist at Ricerca Biosciences in Concord Township practices with a number of fellow champion checkers players to keep up his skills.

Beckwith is ranked 39th in the world at competitive checkers. He will be competing this weekend in the Ohio state title match at the Rodeway Inn in Medina.

His challenger will be three-moves-checkers world champion Alex Moiseyev of Dublin, Ohio.

The tournament is one of three being held at the Rodeway Inn in September and is a prelude to the world championship of checkers, to be held as part of the World Mind Games in Beijing, China, in October.

Growing up in central Illinois, Beckwith began playing checkers at age 9, after learning the game from his father, Gene.

A natural talent and love of the game had him playing in state tournaments by age 15.

He is now a representative for the 400-member American Checker Federation. The tournament in Medina, which he helped organize, will highlight the two variants of the game of

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checkers.

Go-as-you-please is the kind most people played when they were kids, Beckwith says.

The other format, three-move checkers, involves a set of cards that dictate opening three moves of the game. It is considered the more difficult of the two forms and will be the one in which Beckwith will compete.

The players will vie for cash prizes of between \$500 and \$1,000.

At the World Mind Games, Beckwith will join about 50 other top-ranked players from 20 countries who will compete for medals.

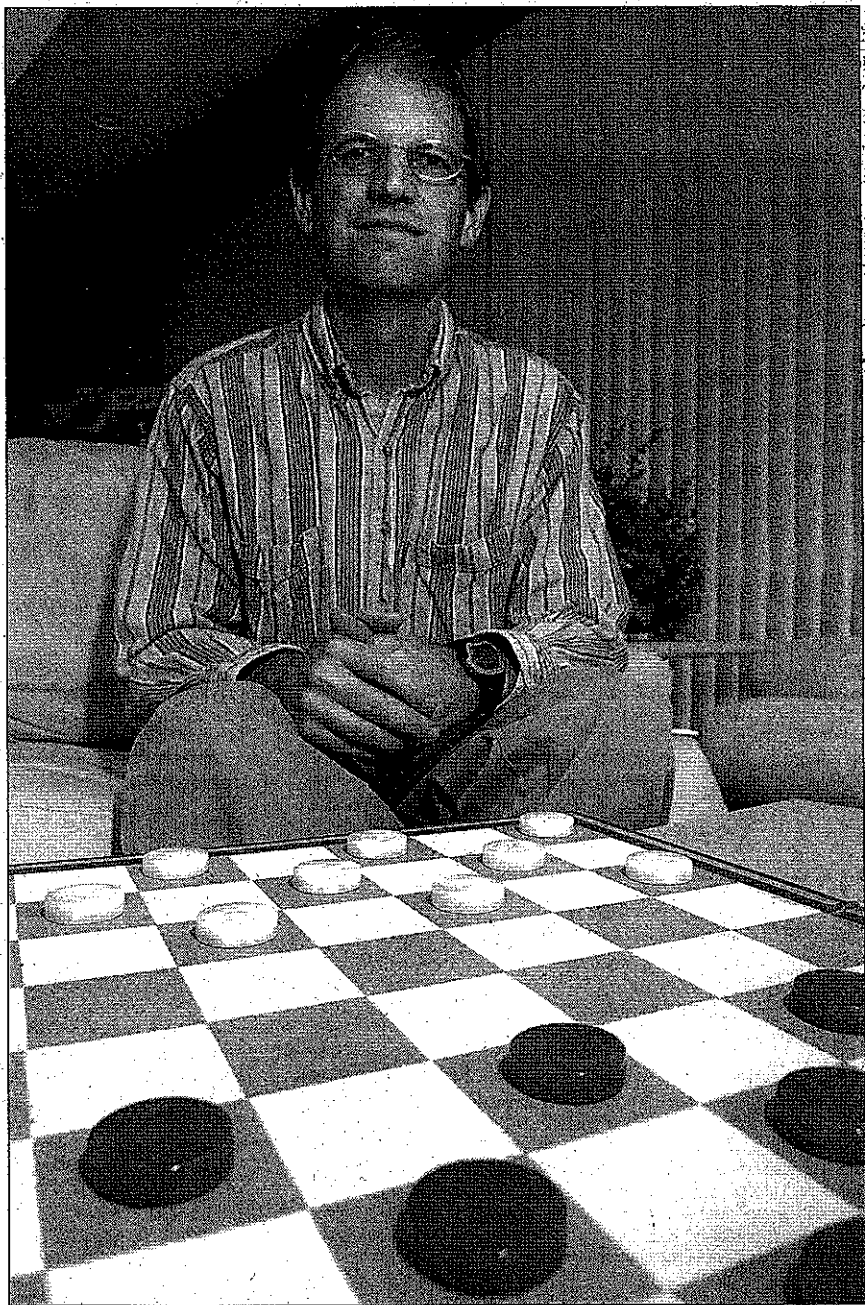
He hopes that checkers being part of that venue for the first time will show the world that it's a game to be taken seriously.

Checkers fans also hope it will prompt consideration for the game to become part of the Olympic Games.

"We're hoping to gain some recognition for checkers and draw more people to the game," Beckwith says.

"I think most people probably have no idea there's a tournament scene for checkers, like there is with chess. They think it's a game for little kids or old men at the park. But it's just as difficult a game to master as chess, if not more so."

The length of a tournament checkers game varies, depending



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Richard Beckwith will compete this weekend for the state checkers title.

on the venue and how many other games must be played on a given day.

In a past open-ended tournament, Beckwith and Moiseyev played a 6½-hour game.

To prepare for tournaments, Beckwith says getting adequate

sleep beforehand is most important.

"Rest is important because you do get mental fatigue," he says.

And one bad move could cost you the game."

When he's not playing check-

ers or reading up on strategies, Beckwith enjoys playing golf, the piano and other board games, including Scrabble and chess.

Though, obviously, he enjoys none as much as checkers.

"It's just a fun and enjoyable game," he says.