

“Getting Ready for Vietnam”

By Jennifer Shahade

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Luke Harmon-Vellotti, preparing to give a chess lesson to a local sponsor.

[The motivated, rising 9-year-old star Luke Harmon-Vellotti \(currently 1960 USCF\)](#) was featured this summer in the [Idaho Statesman](#), [Chess Life 4 Kids](#) and a CLO article on the [San Diego U.S. Chess School](#). You can also follow Luke's progress on his website, [sponsorluke.com](#) as he prepares for top flight competition including, pending funds, the [World Youth in Vietnam \(October 19-31.\)](#) Even if he doesn't make it to Vietnam, watch out for Luke in major American Opens such as the Western States (Reno), the Washington Class Champs (Seattle) and the North American Open (Vegas.) There are few major tournaments in Luke's hometown, Boise, Idaho, so he'll need to travel to improve.

Luke's mother, Ava sent CLO a typical two-day self-study schedule for Luke. Luke's father, Daniel also teaches him for about six hours a week. Ava said, "It is easy to get Luke to study, as he truly believes that hard work will help him improve. He is especially motivated to do well at the [US Chess School](#) camp next January. He knows that he will be the youngest, lowest rated student there, and he wants to make a good impression."

Luke's typical two-day self-study schedule

to be done in any order

(12) Imagination in Chess puzzles w/ a goal of 90% correct

(60) Ct-Art puzzles w/ a goal of 95% correct

(8) Studies 2.0

(2) "Guess the Mess" challenges

(2 hrs) of Opening study

(2 hrs)- any chess materials that he would like- usually read in the car. Right now Luke is poring through old Chess Life Magazines.

(1 hour) G/30 w/his brother, Carl (Luke has time odds w/20 minutes)

(2) Two miles on the treadmill (Gregory Kaidanov emphasized the importance of physical fitness during the [US Chess School](#) that Luke attended)

Luke's disciplined approach has allowed him to do something few so young can: coach! Luke gave a private lesson to a [local sponsor](#) and the 4th grader structured the hour carefully. Ava said, "The one-hour lesson consisted of two G/5 games, two analyses of his student's recent tournament games, and a challenge where Luke printed out a game featuring his student's favorite opening and had him guess the best moves. He even got a candy bowl together to give out when the student made a good move, although I suspect that he ate some of the candy himself. And he loved it- you have never seen a happier chess instructor giving a lesson!"