

Inside Ricerca:

A look at the people around you

Doctor Richard Beckwith was born in Decatur, Illinois. He grew up with 2 brothers and 2 sisters. He is mild mannered and intelligent, educated at Milliken University and on to Purdue for his Ph.D. But don't let his gentle ways or his quiet mannerisms put you off guard. Set in front of 64 squares on an 8 x 8 board, he is, well, he is still rather politely calm even as he steals your pieces one, two, or three at a time. You see, Rich is not only a member of the Analytical team (since '97), he is also a world class Checkers player.

He has been working diligently at the same desk for a little over 12 years now. As his first choice when he was fresh out of Purdue, Ricerca continues to satisfy his intellectual needs. He says this job offers him a variety of projects that give him the opportunity to solve complex problems, which is very appealing to him. Just sitting and talking with him, you can see his brain working the whole time (a good quality for a scientist to have). I would imagine it is this quality, along with the ability to see 20-30 moves ahead, which also makes him the Checkers player that he is.

That and years of practice.

Rich has been playing since he was very young, his father being the first opponent to show him the ropes. From there he went on to play at a local club, joining local tournaments at the age of nine and moving on to state tournaments at 15. Since then his games have taken him all over the world. Prague, Barbados, Russia, England, and Spain are a few of the countries where Rich has competed. He was a competitor at the first World Mind Sports Games in Beijing in 2008 where he competed against 42 of the world's best players, placing 7th.

In his 30 plus years of playing it has been the challenging simplicity that keeps him engaged. Much like the problem solving challenges he faces here, Checkers offers a constant variety of obstacles to overcome. "The game is a challenge, but it is simple at the same time as it is complex," he says, which is the reason he has been at it as long as he has. He also says, "There is always something to learn." Even amateur players can offer a logistical scenario that he may not have encountered before.



I'm not sure how to say this, but he's kind of a big deal. People know him.

Beyond participating in events around the country and the world, Rich is extremely active in the other parts of the Checkers community. He is a player representative for the American Checkers Federation and is Vice President of the World Checkers and Draughts Federation. He helped to write and edit Alex Moiseyev's book "Sixth," has written his own book "The Ohioan Yearbook – Analysis," and has been featured in Cleveland Magazine (Sept. '08 "King Me"). If you Google him, you will also find that his analysis of the game can be found on USACheckers.com and on the Online Museum of Checker's History. ABC news also quoted him in its article on the Checkers program Chinook. On top of all of this, Rich is ranked 35 in the world and 18 in the US (these rankings are a few years old) and he placed 2nd in the 2005 US Nationals. In other words, he is kind of a big deal. Will he have a shot at being World Champion? Possibly, his next chance is in September in England.

When he isn't playing or writing about his favorite game, Dr. Beckwith is involved in the Ricerca Golf League or can be found bird watching or playing the piano. He is also known for a mean game of miniature golf and will probably take your money at the billiards table. There are also a couple of original board games that he has concocted over the years.

When I asked him for some advice to improve my own Checkers skills he responded with "practice." Playing as many people as you can makes your game better as you learn from your losses and your wins. He also recommends controlling the center of the board. Stay away from the sides, a common mistake among amateurs, and guard your weak corner (the right one). He then proceeded to beat me rather soundly at a friendly game.

If you are looking for a game, let him know as he is more than willing to play with anyone. You could also join him at St. Noel's annual picnic where he can school you on a giant sized Checkers board where he dishes out defeat as politely as he can.

Rich Beckwith can be found on:

<http://online-museum-of-checkers-history.com/>

<http://www.usacheckers.com/repcorner.php?id=14>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/story?id=3394382&page=1>

<http://www.clevelandmagazine.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=E73ABD6180B44874871A91F6BA5C249C&nm=&type=Publishing&mod=Publications%3A%3AArticle&mid=1578600D80804596A222593669321019&tier=4&id=EE2FF08B1C984D7AB0F9D0ACF8B40A97>