

THINKING SEVERAL MOVES AHEAD

By Matthew Garrett



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW REIER

A world-champion chess player explains how youth of the Church, like chess players, should plan for the future before they make their move.

In his own words, 15-year-old Kayden T. is “just a regular kid who happens to love an occasional four-hour chess match.” While he enjoys playing video games, biking, and going to Church dances like many other youth, Kayden can also claim that he is a world-champion chess player.

Though Kayden won the world chess title for his age group at the Youth World Chess Championship in Slovenia, he knows that he, like any other youth in the Church, has a purpose that is far greater than being able to say “check-mate” at the end of an epic match.

Kayden understands that by being a positive example and a caring friend, he can leave a legacy that lasts long after he’s achieved his final checkmate to end a chess match. By living Church standards and using his talents to share the gospel and inspire others, Kayden has been preparing for his future, demonstrating that in life, like in chess, it’s always better to plan several moves ahead.

Serving Friends and Family

Kayden was introduced to chess at a young age by his father. Playing with his father taught Kayden not only how to be a great chess player but also the importance of family. In his home, family comes first. Whether it’s attending a play, a clogging performance, a cross-country meet, or another activity that Kayden and his siblings are participating in, they all try to support one another.

In addition to knowing that the support and sacrifice of his family has helped him reach his chess goals, Kayden also recognizes that his family members help him become a better person and prepare for the future.

“Family helps keep your whole life in control,” he says. Family is also a place to strengthen your weaknesses. Although he may excel at chess, Kayden admits he isn’t the greatest cook and wishes he were better at public speaking.

He tries to learn from his brother Zac—who enjoys drama and performing arts—to overcome his shyness.

Kayden’s family life has also taught him to serve and care for others. During one tournament, a friend of Kayden’s became really upset about the competition. Kayden was in the middle of a match, though, so he couldn’t stop playing to help his friend. As he saw his friend storm away from the tournament with tears in his eyes, Kayden knew that the only thing he could do if he didn’t want to forfeit his game was to pray. So, during the middle of his chess match, Kayden silently prayed that the friend would find Kayden’s mom. Immediately the friend walked right by her, and she was able to help. By serving and praying for the well-being of his friend during a critical moment, Kayden realized that helping others is the true victory. This has helped him prepare to serve and learn that “the worth of souls is great in the sight of God” (D&C 18:10).

Sharing the Gospel

“I use chess as a way to get the gospel out there,” says Kayden. When not moving his bishop on the chessboard, Kayden can be found serving with his bishop and inviting non-LDS friends and less-active members to teachers quorum activities. His advice for sharing the gospel with others is simple: think about how it blesses your life and share your experiences. As a future missionary, Kayden is preparing now by befriending new people and talking to them about his beliefs and faith.

Kayden also shares the gospel through social media. He posts links to Church websites on his blog and Facebook profile to give others the chance to learn more and ask questions about the Church. After a chess-playing friend of Kayden’s heard about the Church from other friends, he turned to Kayden and asked him questions online. Eventually the friend was baptized.

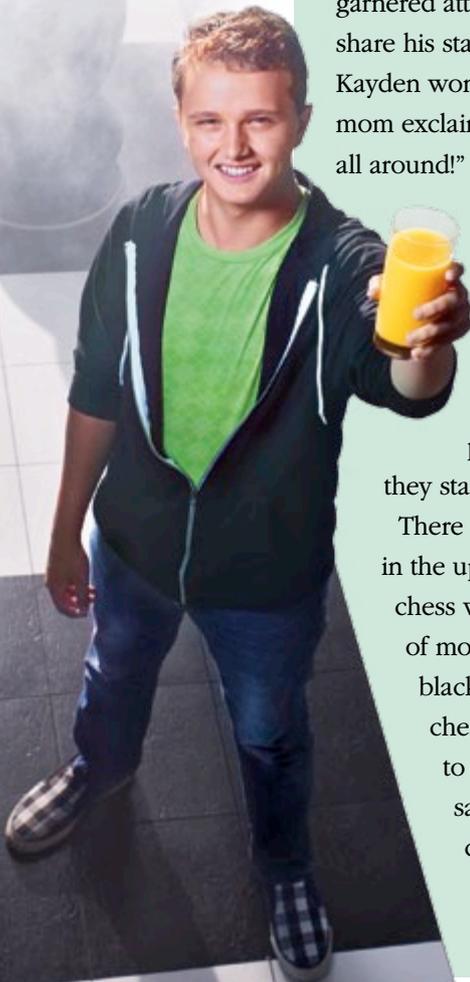
Sharing the gospel can be scary, but Kayden’s family makes it a goal to stand up for who and what they are as members of the Church. They try to use their talents to teach others about their beliefs. Hearing the spiritual



PLAN YOUR LIFE WITH PURPOSE

“Perhaps no generation of youth has faced such far-reaching decisions as the youth of today. Provision must be made for school, mission, and marriage. . . . Whatever your age, whatever your circumstance, I admonish you to plan your life with purpose.”

President Thomas S. Monson, “Come, All Ye Sons of God,” *Ensign*, May 2013, 67.



experiences of an older brother on a mission has helped Kayden find the courage to talk with others about his faith. “It can be scary, but when we take the time to share the gospel, especially when we do it one-on-one, people will respect what we believe.”

Living the Standards

When it comes to tools for teaching about the gospel, orange juice may seem like an unusual choice. But for Kayden’s family, it’s been just that. Kayden and his family celebrate his victories with a glass of orange juice. Such an odd beverage of choice has garnered attention and allowed Kayden to share his standards with others. In fact, after Kayden won the world championship, his mom exclaimed, “Orange juice and root beer all around!” When somebody asked, “Can’t you stop being Mormon for just 10 minutes?” Kayden and his mom explained that, no, they could not loosen their standards for even a few minutes, because their standards are part of who they are and what they stand for.

There are few members of the Church in the upper ranks of the competitive chess world, and when the standards of most others around you are not as black and white as the spaces on a chessboard, there can be temptation to let your guard down. Kayden says, “Just as you have to focus in chess to be successful, you have to focus on the Spirit to remember what’s most important.”

He adds that for him, the need for the Spirit makes consistently doing the little things such as daily prayer and scripture study even more important.

Keeping the commandments allows him to uphold his standards and be an example. As Kayden says, “Some people might not fully understand our beliefs and standards, but we do have an influence on them when we are good examples.”

Becoming Your Best

For Kayden’s chess career, becoming his best means working toward becoming a chess Grandmaster—the highest rank in all of chess. But, as Kayden says, what we do in life should only be a part of who we are. In fact, despite his impressive chess skills, Kayden doesn’t even want to be remembered as a great chess player. He says, “I just want to be remembered as a friend and a nice person. I truly care less about being a chess player and more about being a nice person who inspires others. If people remember me a few years down the road, then all I really hope is that they’ll say, ‘That was a really nice guy.’”

Just as he needs to plan ahead in his chess matches, Kayden uses his decisions now as stepping-stones to his most important future goals of serving a mission and then marrying in the temple and starting a family. “Chess helps you focus and helps with your overall life plan,” he says. “Each move affects the future and the outcome of the match. You always have to be thinking things through and setting long-term goals.” **NE**

Matthew Garrett lives in Washington, USA.