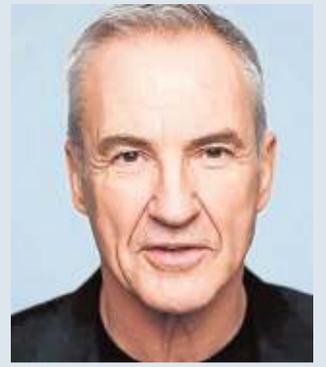


"I don't go to Spain for beach holidays"

Actor Larry Lamb speaks to us ahead of his visit to the Marbella Film Festival **P23**



Tourism chiefs keen to test the British water at upcoming travel market

It remains to be seen how Brexit and the Thomas Cook crisis will shape southern Spain's biggest sector

The statistics speak for themselves; they show how dependent Andalusian tourism is on the UK. The regional government's Tourism Ministry says 3.3 million British tourists flew into airports in the region last year, which was almost a quarter (23.7%) of all international travellers and 9.4 per cent of all tourists to Andalucia.

However, the upcoming World Travel Market in London, from 4 to 8 November, is shaping up to be the barometer that gauges how, and to what extent, southern Spain will be affected by two major developments in the industry upon which the region relies so much: Brexit and the collapse of tour operator Thomas Cook. **P2**

Criticism of Sheikh Al-Thani escalates as Malaga city hall wades in

The crisis around Malaga CF continues as the club faces the threat of serious financial problems if measures aren't taken by December. Despite presenting an action plan to La Liga a fortnight ago, little has changed and the club president has united the city council against him. **P48**

British education in Spain will still be the benchmark despite Brexit, experts concluded at a seminar in Malaga this week **P6**

Picasso and Calder leap into open space in the ambitious new exhibition now open at Museo Picasso Málaga **P36&37**



From an exercise bike to 500 vegan bars. We take a look at the more unusual request stars have had on their Costa visits **P32&33**

Change of wind limits damage from forest fire in Casares

One house was burned down as a result of the blaze which started on Tuesday night **P3**



THE GENIUS SCHOOLBOY FROM MARBELLA

Lance Henderson has become Spain's youngest ever Grand Master of chess **P24&25**

The 16-year-old hones his skills at home. :: JOSELE

Lance Henderson, the teenage genius

At just 16 years old this Marbella schoolboy has become Spain's youngest ever Grand Master of chess



PEDRO LUIS ALONSO

✉ Twitter: @Plalonso27

Despite his talent he is giving priority to his studies at present rather than thinking of a career in the world of chess

MALAGA. Lance Henderson de la Fuente appears to be a normal teenager, but actually he isn't. He may not wear a Superman cape, but he does have a special power. He is studying for his Baccalaureate at Swans International School in Marbella and gets good marks, although he has never been described as exceptional. He has a maturity that is uncommon for his age; he doesn't have a girlfriend, doesn't like partying and doesn't use a mobile phone unless he has to. Nor does he play video games or use social media, all of which makes him unconventional although he does practise several sports. He gave up piano lessons years ago but there is something at which he has no comparison but treats as perfectly normal: he is the youngest Grand Master of chess in the history of Spain.

Despite his name, he comes from Marbella. His parents came to the Costa del Sol 18 years ago. His father, Matt Henderson, is an American IT entrepreneur, and his mother, María del Pino de la Fuente, is an aerospace engineer from Valladolid who lived in Germany for several years. This promising cocktail produced two children, a girl and a boy, both highly intelligent and chess enthusiasts, but it is Lance, the younger, who has an exceptional talent.

His mature manner of speaking belies his age. In July, when he was 16 years and two months old, he achieved the title of Grand Master at a Portuguese League of clubs, considerably younger than Spanish champion Paco Vallejo, who is 37. Last year, in the Gibraltar Open (which many believe is the best Open



Lance Henderson, at home practising to improve his chess still further. :: JOSELE

in the world), he achieved his first norm (a high level rating), and the second came in a closed tournament in France.

Lance was the first to be surprised. "I had heard something, and I thought maybe there would be one norm. I wasn't worried about it, either. Nothing would change if I didn't achieve that record, although I know some people are interested in these things," he says.

His story has never been typical. He didn't start playing chess until he

was nine. "I went on a camp in Cordoba and met the Lechuga brothers [Luis Miguel and Diego Lechuga Cabrero], who were the provincial champions and I started to play a few games with them. They taught me things about the final moves, and that interested me. I knew the rules, but I never used to play," he says.

At the top, in seven years

It has only taken this local superhero seven years to reach the peak of world chess.

"When he came back from Cordoba he and his sister joined the Ajedrez Metro Club in Marbella. They told me my daughter could be a very good player, but my son saw some patterns in the game that almost nobody else did," says Matt. "And after nearly three years he won the National."

However nothing, or very little, has changed in Lance's life. He will never lose the rank of Grand Master - although the ELO scoring can change, in a system which is quite

similar to the ATP points in tennis.

"We have talked about the importance of continuity, of daily work," says Matt. María del Pino recalls that "in many tournaments he takes his schoolbooks with him and studies for a few hours as well as competing in the evenings".

International Master

Lance Henderson became an International Master when he was 14. "I always had some favourite players and wanted to follow the same path as them. When I was 13 I came to the conclusion that I would like to be an International Master at 14 and a Grand Master at 16. I told myself that if I managed that I would be doing well, and that has been the case," he says, although it is not going to revolutionise his life or change his priorities.

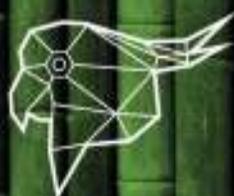
"Right now I don't have any specific aims. I just want to study every day and improve. To do well in the next tournament. The Spanish number one, Paco Vallejo, got to 2,730 (ELO score). To be the best chess player ever I would have to dedicate myself to it all day and I'm not prepared to do that because I have my classes at school. I think it would be difficult to be the top player in Spain. It's true that I do have plenty of free time in the evenings, so reaching 2,600 would be a good achievement," he says.

To give you an idea, an idol in the history of chess, American Bobby Fischer, reached 2,785 points and the present champion, Magnus Carlsen, 2,872.

"Only a tiny percentage of players make a living from chess, with conferences, sponsors and streaming," explains Lance, who is thinking of a different type of career although he is still unsure what it would be. "I know the subjects I like. Maths, sciences... I'm not good at language or literature," he says.

His coach, another Grand Master from Malaga, Ernesto Fernández - when he began, he trained with Jesús Garrido - agrees that the future is something Lance needs to decide. Should he dedicate himself entirely to chess or train for a career?

"It's more of a problem in Spain than elsewhere. In countries like China, Russia and India, the children



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PROFILE

Personal details:

Full name: Lance Henderson de la Fuente.

Date and place of birth: 19 May 2003, Marbella.

Everyday life: Studying his Bacca-laureate at Swans International School in Marbella.

Chess background:

Coach: Ernesto Fernández, from Malaga (also Grand Master, the first from the area).

Current ELO score: 2,491, although it will be 2,494 this month.

International Master: At the age of 14.

Grand Master: At 16 years and two months (Bobby Fischer achieved it at 15 and a half, and Judit Polgar, at 15 years and four months).

CLOSE-UP

-How many languages do you speak?

-English and Spanish. I'm more comfortable in English, because all the books I read and the subjects I'm studying are in that language. I've also learned Chinese at school for five years. Writing it isn't the same as speaking it, which is easier than some people think because you don't have to conjugate the verbs.

-Choose a film...

-I prefer action series, like 'Prison Break' or '24'.

-A town or city.

-Forni di Sopra (In the Italian Dolomites), which is very green. Living in Marbella, with so much beach, I need mountains.

-A music group?

-The songs I listen to are in English. Sometimes I like more than one style. At the moment I'm listening to Jason Aldean.

-Tell me something that bothers you.

-Sometimes I'm a bit paranoid in a chess game if I start to lose or the pace of play changes. If my rival gets up I'm always afraid he is going to cheat. Anyway, the rules need to be improved in that aspect. If the games are retransmitted online you can go outside to talk.

-Are you a religious person?

-No.

-Who would you like to meet?

-If it could be in the past, Steve Jobs.

-You can't vote yet but are you interested in politics?

-No.

-Do you get good marks at school?

-Yes.

-What sports do you play?

-At weekends I normally go running or walking in the mountains. I do football and basketball at school, and years ago I took table tennis lessons

-Do you often go to discos?

-No.

stop going to school and focus completely on chess, leaving other aspects of life aside. They get grants, sometimes directly from the government, and they try to improve their game with coaches who accompany them and with companies as sponsors," says the coach.

"You can make a living from chess, competing, training and numerous other aspects, and I think Lance could do it. The thing is, it isn't easy to make that decision if you are thinking of just competing and leaving your studies aside. You have to consider the financial side as well as your happiness, and that's complicated when you are so young. But I'm sure that a bit further on he will see the situation more clearly and make the right decision."

Role models

Bobby Fischer is a chess hero for Lance, as is the Cuban player José Raúl Capablanca, although he doesn't have a preference for one or the other. "When I'm studying I like to see the classic games, which are more instructive. There was more creativity then, you can see other ideas. Nowadays the game is more studied, and people haven't had to think about how to play. There are almost no differences in style. It's not so easy to say that a player is more positional or more aggressive," says the youngster.

With regard to the way he moves his pieces on the board, Ernesto Fernández is the best person to describe it. "He is quite a complete player. Logically, any Grand Master reaches that level because they handle all the phases and styles of the game well, but if I had to choose one I would say that he has a great strategic understanding of positions with many pieces and positional details in the long term," he explains.

Now, as Fernández says, Lance's rapid progress is the result of "a large number of small details, which in the end make all the difference".

State of mind

Lance says his way of playing is associated with his state of mind. "When I'm angry I play more aggressively, but in general I think I'm more positional," he says.

One of the main problems now is testing himself against rivals. "I don't play in federated tournaments much now, because the level is too low for me in some of them. I'm going to be more selective this year," he says. His next event is on the Isle of Man, from 9 to 20 October. The winner will classify for the Candidates Tournament in 2020, and there are 432,500 dollars in prize money.

He also plays in club tournaments to keep improving. He is a member of one in Silla (Valencia) and has competed with another from Porto in Portugal. Last year he competed in Gibraltar, where he only lost one game even though eight of his ten rivals were better. He was the best Spanish-speaking competitor, and the youngest of the top 30.

How to become a Grand Master

The rank of Grand Master can only be achieved after gaining three norms in tournaments which fulfil a series of criteria. They must have at least three Grand Masters from different countries, and nine rounds are played with a time control of at least 120 minutes. There must

also be an international referee present to make decisions during the event. Finally, a chess player who wants to achieve a norm must have a result of 2,600 ELO points in that tournament. In addition, once the three norms have been reached, the player must equal or exceed the figure of 2,500 ELO points (a system created in 1970). In 2017 there were just 47 Grand Masters of Chess in Spain.



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