

# BOISE weekly

## Luke and Carl Vellotti 14- and 18-year-old brothers will be UCLA roommates, begin freshman year this fall

By George Prentice / Boise State Public Radio - JULY 24, 2013



Seven moves.

That's how long--or short--it took Luke Vellotti to beat me at chess. I could say that I wasn't paying strict attention to the game because it took place during an interview with a 14-year-old genius. Suffice to say, Vellotti is one of the best players in the nation, recently earning enough points to be considered an International Master by chess' international governing body. His brother, Carl, 18, is equally competitive and regularly beats Luke at sports and other games (anything other than chess).

Boise Weekly recently sat down with the pair to talk about their friendly sibling rivalry and how they'll soon be in the unique position of being roommates when they begin their freshman year at University of California, Los Angeles.

What's your earliest recollection of playing chess?

Luke: I was probably 4 years old, playing in a chess tournament, and I remember being very happy. I also remember doubling numbers at a pretty early age. I could double all the way to 1 million when I was 4.

Did you always attend public schools in Boise?

Luke: Yes. I went to Collister, Shadow Hills and Boise High. But I started going to the Treasure Valley Math and Science Center when I was 8 years old. My brother entered [TVMSC] as a sixth-grader. I entered as a third-grader.

Carl: We started talking last September about going to the same college when we were done with high school. We applied to a number of places, but when Luke got a full-ride scholarship from the Stamps Family Charitable Foundation to attend UCLA, that pretty much sealed the deal for us to go there.

How well do you manage high expectations of yourself?

Luke: I always try to work hard. Otherwise there's not a reason for me to do as well.

What's the longest period of time that you've stayed away from home?

Luke: Four nights, during a national science bowl competition earlier this year.

But you must acknowledge that living away from home will be a pretty big challenge.

Luke: It will be a lot different from anything I've done before.

Carl: One of our parents may stay in Los Angeles during our first six months.

What will your majors be?

Luke: Math and computer science.

Carl: I'll be majoring in bioengineering.

And what are your professional dreams?

Luke: I want to be a doctor. Dr. Michael Gold, an anesthesiologist at St. Al's hospital, has been a mentor of mine for several years.

Carl: I also want to be a doctor, maybe an orthopedic surgeon.

How are chess masters rated or ranked?

Luke: There's an international body of chess--the Federation Internationale des Echecs; it's in France. Right now, I'm an International Master-elect until FIDE approves my latest results. The next level, which is the highest rating in the world, is Grand Master. There are only 1,000 Grand Masters in the world.

I've heard about the elements of chess magic. Tell me about that.

Luke: There are three: The first is multiple chess, playing a number of players at once.

How many competitors have you simultaneously defeated?

Luke: I played, and won, 21 boards at once. It was a 2010 fundraiser to benefit earthquake victims in Haiti. The second element is blindfold chess.

Hold it. How is that possible?

Luke: Each space is assigned a letter--A through H--and a number--1 through 8. I also play multiple boards blindfolded. The third element is my favorite: speed chess. Each player has no more than one minute to win.

So let's talk about the "G" word: genius.

Luke: I've never taken an IQ test. That's for everybody else to decide.

Does the word "genius" make you uncomfortable?

Luke: Not really, I'm used to it.

How do you think you'll manage being around a significantly older student population at UCLA?

Luke: I've been around older students much of my life.

Carl: Honestly, for most students, it's not that big a deal.