

Check Your Mate

Saved by the Bell synopsis

Screech is riding high as the school's chess champion, but panic hits when he finds out he has to play a Russian exchange student in the finals.

Core Conflicts of Episode

- 1. How does the school chess whiz deal with the pressures of newfound fame – and his lucky charm being stolen – to win the big chess match against a terrifying new opponent?**

Monster of the Week

Ivan Dragon, a burly, scaly red dragon with gold highlights from the East and a tactical genius when it comes to the field of battle – and he can throw a mean punch to boot. The only thing Ivan doesn't quite understand is your freewheeling southern California ways.

Setting the Table

- Introduction: Welcome to table / introduce myself (name/pronouns - everyone please write your own) / what we're playing / we're here to have fun (rated PG but if anything objectionable to you arises, please raise red index card) / outline of what's about to happen
- Who has some TTRPG familiarity? We'll learn the Essence20 system as we go
- Background of Saved by the Zord: *Life is pretty easy in the generic, upper-middle class Southern California coast town of Angel Bay, especially in tubular 1993 – that is, until a mad witch from outer space named Rita Repulsa starts sending down monsters to menace the town on the reg for some reason. Lucky for us, Rita's ancient nemesis, a giant floating head suspended in time named Zordon, has the wherewithall to bestow you – [n] teenagers with attitude – with powers of the Morphin Grid to frustrate Rita's seemingly daily schemes. Unfortunately for Zordon, life at Angel Bay High's not easy, and sometimes the scariest monster of all is when the teacher pops a test.*
- Core concept of Power Rangers
 - Who each character is: a teen with mundane high school problems, chosen by destiny, but maybe destiny didn't fully account for your hormones
 - Morphing, how to do it (set up the coin), and what it grants you
 - Zords & that they may or may not be useful in all situations
 - Three key rules of being a Power Ranger:
 - 1. Never use your power for personal gain.
 - 2. Never escalate a battle unless your enemy forces you to.
 - 3. Keep your identity as a Power Ranger a secret.
 - BUT REMEMBER... you are a teenager with attitude!
- Character introduction & selection
 - In this episode, the Blue Ranger will be the narrative driver and experience the primary emotional conflict, including some light flirtation
- Take a moment to familiarize with character sheets

Introduction

A winning streak in the district chess league, a winning streak against Rita's monsters, AND a streak of winning dates with your great lady Violet Beauregard – things are certainly looking up for Jessie Cranston. In fact, Jessie's enjoying something that hasn't really happened to them before – being popular. The students of Angel Bay High are SUPER invested in the world of competitive high school chess right now, and Jessie's the one the school is convinced will take them all the way to the championship. Helping Jessie along the way is the lucky charm Violet gave them: a sharp leather coin wallet for that strange coin Jessie always seems to be carrying. But, my friends, trouble's brewing on the horizon... trouble that wears the color Red.

**Fun historical context: "Check Your Mate" originally aired a scant 81 days before the USSR officially dissolved. But, for this outing, let's pretend we're still in the full swing of a Rocky IV-style Red Scare.*

Outline

- I. Ernie's to the Max – setting the stage
 - A. At their usual booth, the gang (plus Jessie's girlfriend Violet) is celebrating Jessie's latest chess win. *Who was Jessie's opponent? How did Jessie clinch the match?*
 - B. With Chess Fever gripping Angel Bay High, the other students see an opportunity to capitalize on Jessie's success with some classic teen scheming. *How might they turn Jessie's chess prowess to their financial or social advantage?*
 - C. At that moment, two jocks from Valley with East Coast accents barge into Ernie's and beeline for Jessie's table. The gang recognizes them as Vinny and Guy-Guy (actual names from the *SbtB* episode), the "Chess Cousins," who run the chess-betting racket over at their school. The district finals are going to be between Valley and Angel Bay, and they offer the gang a \$100 wager on the outcome (this is a lot of money to these kids!). *Let the PCs respond and negotiate how they want, but Vinny and Guy-Guy will insist on SOME wager.*
 - D. Once the wager is made, the Cousins introduce Valley's ace in the hole: Peter Breshnev, Valley's new Russian exchange student, who spent all his days in Russia training using the greatest in Russian chess technology. "He's the most perfectly trained chess player ever. It is mentally impossible for you to win." Then the Cousins leave Ernie's gloating over their surefire win, and a pallor falls over the gang. They're terrified of this new threat.
- II. We Need a Montage - give the PCs a scene or two to get into their characters with this question: *How do you prepare to take on Peter? Jessie, what does your 'training montage' consist of? Everyone else, how are you working to help Jessie and/or further your schemes? Ask for checks as relevant and reward mechanical or narrative benefits if appropriate. Can be set to Rocky IV's training montage music.*
- III. The Moon - Rita has also taken notice of Peter Breshnev. "I like that guy's vibe, and I love how he scares the Power Brats. Maybe it's time for my monsters and I to take up a chess hobby too!"
- IV. Ernie's to the Max - the next day - regrouping after the work of the prior day. Jessie is on a lunch date with Violet (Tori Spelling playing a nerd; this is literally the casting), who's

trying to gas Jessie up about her impending match with Peter. Into Ernie's walks a beautiful woman in a tight dress with long, flowing golden blonde hair carrying a notebook. She beelines to Jessie and Violet's table and drops her notebook forcefully between them, turning to look at Jessie with a playful grin. She speaks like butter. "Jessie, hello, my name is Allison Fox from Chessboy (/Chessgirl) Magazine, and I'd love to check out your moves." This is Rita in disguise; use stats for Rita Repulsa (Recently Freed) from *Finster's Monster-Matic Cookbook*. Her high Cleverness and Willpower defenses will make it difficult for any PCs to get a read on her. Violet is immediately put off by Allison, but Jessie may not seem to think anything strange about it (thanks to those defenses). Allison continues: "We've been so impressed by everything we've heard about how well you play, and we'd love to feature you as our Checkmate of the Month¹. Allison asks to interview Jessie; unless Jessie can overcome Rita's Cleverness, they'll instantly agree; even if they feel something is wrong, Allison will insist on the interview, but perhaps Jessie will set themselves up for a more positive outcome later in the game. Finally, Allison invites Jessie to a party at "Chessboy Mansion" in the "pawn-shaped pool," but notes that the interview can start after school today. Allison leaves, and Violet is upset. *How does Jessie feel about this attention?* Have Violet respond appropriately.

- V. Angel Bay High - dual scenes
 - A. Violet, noticeably upset, runs into the girl PCs in the ladies' room (if everyone else is a dude, just have this happen in the hall). They ask what's wrong and have a scene trying to comfort her. "It's so hard not to get jealous when you're dating such a high-risk hunk."
 - B. The interview. Allison asks more and more probing questions of Jessie. Play this as a tactical conversation, very back-and-forth, with Allison trying to get Jessie to reveal sensitive information. Use opposed checks if necessary. Eventually the interview should come around to Jessie's lucky charm. Allison will ask to see it. *How does Jessie react?* One way or another, Allison will get her hands on the coin wallet. At that point, her facade drops, and Allison transforms into Rita. "I can't believe you Power Goon would be stupid enough to keep your coin in here! Now it's mine, and you'll never morph again! Of course, it wouldn't be very sporting of me if I didn't give you an opportunity to win it back. Meet me at Chessboy Mansion (*apparently it is real!*) at the crack of dawn. And don't worry about the big chess match against Valley – you've got bigger problems!" Rita cackles and teleports away, Jessie's "lucky charm" - and power coin - in hand.
- VI. The gang regroups – *How do the PCs feel about what's happening?* Advance any B-plots as needed. Dissuade the PCs from being too proactive (the only way to get the coin back now would be to go to the Moon Palace, which Zordon will not allow).
- VII. The next day – the "Chessboy Mansion" – a gigantic derelict building with, sure enough, a dried up pool in the shape of a chess pawn. It's the Golden Hour. *How do the PCs show up?* Whatever their approach, navigate the conflict so it splits in two:
 - A. All PCs but Jessie will be teleported to an 8x8 energy grid where they'll face off against Ivan Dragon and 8 Putties (see The Chess Battle under GM Notes).
 - B. Rita's really going to turn the screws against Jessie – she's invited Violet to the Mansion and, while disguised as Allison, will act so uncomfortable and forward with Jessie that Violet will want to break up with them! Jessie will have to use their social skills – not their strong suit – to protect Violet and win their power coin

¹ These are actual jokes from the *SbtB* episode. This is a funny one.

back. This is where earlier events might come back to help Jessie and Violet (how did Jessie react at Ernie's? What did the other PCs tell Violet?).

- C. Once Jessie has their power coin back, Rita will send them to the same chess realm as the other Rangers in frustration. But Jessie's tactical prowess has a special ability here: it gives Rangers pawns of their own! Now this is a fairer fight!
- D. Zords?? See how it feels.

VIII. Resolution – *With Ivan Dragon defeated and their lucky charm back – and presumably things with Violet are good as well – how does Jessie feel about taking on Peter? How did the other PCs' schemes (if still active) resolve?* Of course, Jessie ultimately wins the chess match against Peter, and Angel Bay High are declared Southern California Chess Champions – truly the highest honor a school can reach.

GM Notes

The Chess Battle

Ivan's chess match against the Rangers takes place on an electrified 8 x 8 grid with alternating colored squares.

- One side: 8 putties placed as pawns, Ivan placed as king
- The other side: Rangers placed in the following starting positions:
 - Red: King, Pink: Queen, Yellow: Bishop, Black: Knight, Green: Rook
- Rangers must move as their pieces would or else take 1 Stun damage from the board
 - Track their movement with marker so they see where they started/to help visualize the pattern
 - Special rule: this Stun damage will not ever Defeat a PC on its own, but if a PC would be Defeated, it will strip their actions for an extra round.
- Have only the Rangers roll initiative; they will act in initiative order but will alternate turns with the bad guys. Make sure a Putty makes a standard two-square pawn opening move on turn one of the battle to help clue the players in to what's happening.
 - Also give Jessie their turns outside of the chess realm; the chess realm becomes a survival test for the Rangers until Jessie can recover their coin and join the battle
- Otherwise, regular combat damage, range, and adjacency rules apply (the chess board only affects moving patterns).
- However, Ivan is not bound by chess movement rules (and neither will Jessie be once they arrive)

Ivan Dragon

Threat Level: 6

Size: Large | Health: 9

Movement: 30ft Ground

Strength: 8 | Speed: 3

Smarts: 5 | Social: 2

Toughness: 18 | Evasion: 13

Willpower: 15 | Cleverness: 12

Skills

- Athletics (Boxing) +d8*
- Intimidation +d6
- Initiative +d6
- Culture (Chess Tactics) +d8*
- Animal Handling +d4

Attacks

- Left Claw (Athletics): +d8*, reach, 1 sharp damage
- Right Claw (Athletics): +d8*, reach, 2 blunt damage

Powers

- Tactical Master: Not only is Ivan Dragon super tough to beat in a chess match, but he applies the lessons of the chess board to the battlefield. As a free action, Ivan Dragon may test his Culture (Chess) skill against the Willpower defense of an enemy character within 30 ft. On a success, Ivan Dragon immediately understands that character's tactical position and weaknesses and gains Edge on any attacks against them made this round.
- The One-Two Punch: Ivan Dragon makes two attacks on his turn, one with his Right Claw and one with his Left Claw.

Hang-Ups

- Freewheeling American Ways: Ivan Dragon is a tough nut to crack or do any damage to. However, he doesn't really understand the youth of Southern California at all. Each Social skill successfully used against him causes him to suffer 1 stun damage; as long as Ivan Dragon is Stunned, all attacks against him target his Evasion.

