

## CHENEY UNDER 11 TOURNAMENT 24<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER

### JOSEPH CONLON

Once upon a time – only one year ago but a world away – I ran an Oxfordshire qualifying event for the London Junior championships. There had been 100 children; they and their parents had fitted in the venue comfortably. As the same time of year approached, the question nagged – why not run another over-the-board event this year?

I knew the venue – a large self-contained secondary school building with a total of eleven classrooms – was well suited to social distancing. I knew ‘supervised activities provided for children’ were permitted. I enquired; the school were receptive to outside bookings – and so, risk assessment done and tournament protocols planned, I went ahead and advertised.

A few weeks later, on the 24<sup>th</sup> October, after enquiries, entries, withdrawals and organisational nerves about what the government might at any time announce, 13 enthusiastic players turned up at Cheney School in Oxford, ranging from experienced young campaigners fresh from the online Terafinals (Reya Li, Cian Ward and Vassily Sagyaman from the U10s, and Harry Bryant and Diah Patel from the U8s) to those playing their first over-the-board tournament. The chess was in two upstairs classrooms, three boards to each room, while parents waited downstairs in allocated classrooms.

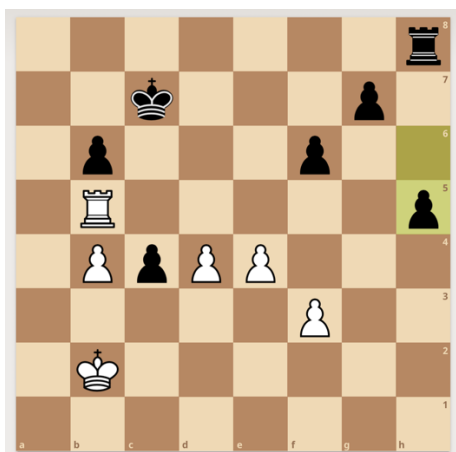
Given the paucity of available OTB chess, the plan was to get plenty of rounds in, and eight were played in total on a 15+8 time control. As expected, the first two rounds went with seed and then in round 3 the top of the draw started clashing

White: Cian Ward (103)

Black: Harry Bryant (83)

Petroff, Stafford Gambit

1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 Nc6 (*Classic junior chess – dodgy but aggressive gambits!*) 4. Nxc6 dxc6 5. d3 Bc5 6. h3 Qd4 7. Qe2 Be6 8. c3 Qd7 9. Be3 Bb6 10. Nd2 O-O-O 11. Bxb6 cxb6 12. O-O-O Ne8 (*White has steered to a clear advantage but Black now starts an enterprising knight manouver*) 13. Nb3 f6 14. Qc2 Nc7 15. Nd4 Nb5 16. Nxb5 cxb5 17. Be2 Qf7 18. Bg4 Bxg4 19. hxg4 Qxa2 20. b3 Qa3+ 21. Qb2 Qc5 22. b4 Qg5+ 23. Kb1 Qxg4 24. f3 Qf4 25. Qa2 a6 26. Qe6+ Kc7 27. d4 Qe3 28. Qb3 Qe2 29. Qc2 Qc4 30. Kb2 a5 31. Qd3 axb4 32. Qxc4 bxc4 33. cxb4 h6 34. Kc3 b5 35. Ra1 Ra8 36. Ra5 b6 37. Rxb5 Ra2 38. Rb1 Rxg2 39. Rb2 Rxb2 40. Kxb2 h5 (*Black is won as the pawn is unstoppable, but White finds the one practical chance*)



41. e5 h4 42. e6 h3 43. e7 h2?? (43. ... Kd7 or g5 kills the game cold) 48. e8=Q Rxe8 45. Rh5 Re2 46. Kc3 Re3+ 47. Kxc4 Rxf3 58. Rxh2 f5 49. Rh5 Kc6 50. d5+ Kd6 51. Kb5 Kxd5 52. Kxb6 g6 53. Rg5 Rb3 54. Kb5 Ke4 and with both players in heavy time trouble the game was played out to bare Kings.

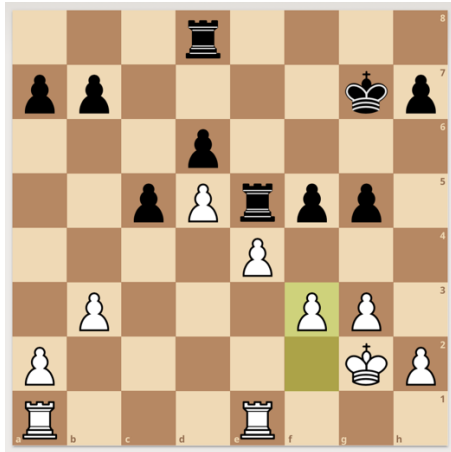
The fourth round saw the meeting of the two highest rated players, Reya Li and Cian Ward. Defending a tricky endgame, Cian did not notice his time run out and lost on time, leaving Reya as the sole leader on 4/4 chased by Harry Bryant on 3.5/4. The two met in the next game, when Harry caught Reya in a passive position and forced through checkmate, leaving Harry sole leader on 4.5/5 and having played the two top seeds.

Eight rounds gives many room for pitfalls though, and in round 7 Maidenhead junior Kanishka Suriarachi defeated Harry. Reya did not let this chance slip, winning all remaining games to take first place with 7/8.

The youngest player in the tournament was Ayan Pradhan, recently turned 5 and playing his first OTB tournament. Nonetheless, honed by online chess, he impressed with an unusually mature style for his age, holding his own against far older and more experienced players:

White. Alexander Conlon (81)  
Black. Ayan Pradhan (ungraded)  
English Opening, Symmetrical

1. c4 c5 2. Nc3 Nc6 3. g3 d6 4. Bg2 Nf6 5. e3 Bd7 6. Ne2 g6 7. O-O Bg7 8. d4 O-O 9. d5 Ne5 10. b3 Qb6 11. Bb2 Rad8 (11. ... Nxc4!) 12. Qd2 Rfe8 13. Nf4 g5 14. Nd3 Nxd3 15. Qxd3 e6 16. Rfe1 exd5 17. Nxd5 Nxd5 18. Bxg7 Kxg7 19. Bxd5 Bc6 20. Bg2 Bxg2 21. Kxg2 Qc6+ 22. Qd5 Qxd5 23. cxd5 Re5 24. e4 f5 25. f3 ...



*Black gets the right idea, but in the wrong move order – 25. ... Rde8 leaves Black clearly better.*

25. ... fxe4 26. fxe4 Rde8 27. Kf3 Rf8+ 28. Ke3 Rfe8 29. Kd3 Kf6 30. Rac1 R5e7 31. Rc4 b5 32. Rc2 Rc8 33. Rf2+ Kg6 34. Rc2 c4+ (and Black drops a pawn) 35. bxc4 bxc4+ 36. Rxc4 Rxc4 37. Kxc4 h5 38. Kd4 h4 39. e5 dxe5 40. Rxe5 Rxe5 41. Kxe5 (and White soon won)

1<sup>st</sup> Reya Li, 7/8, 2<sup>nd</sup> = Harry Bryant, Cian Ward 6.5/8, full results on UTU Swiss.

A big thanks to Cheney School and Dylan Davies, for their supportive attitude and their willingness to continue outside lettings at this time, to Rod Nixon and St Giles Junior Chess Club for the loan of equipment, and to the players and parents for their support of OTB chess at the current time.