

January 2022



## 2022 kicks off with a bang for English chess

Inside - a bumper issue for improvers including IM Nigel Povah on Technique and IM Paul Littlewood on Pins, and an interview with GM Matthew Sadler on *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement* ... plus GM Michael Adams, GM Peter Wells, GM Keith Arkell, FM Alex Longson, Ian Watson, Christopher Jones and lots more!



The ECF are delighted to announce that we now have a Substack! A what, I hear you ask? Well, it's a cross between a newsletter and a blog and is part of the ECF's drive to reach out to a wider community. A significant part of the subscription will be to showcase articles from ChessMoves, hoping to raise the profile of the writing and the benefits of ECF membership. Please do subscribe free to the Substack but also spread the word to the broader chess playing community. Join free at <https://englishchessfederation.substack.com/>

While we are on the subject of making ECF more publicly accessible, please do follow (free again) our Twitch channel which has regularly updated excellent content thanks to WIM Natasha Regan, GM Matthew Sadler and a terrific range of top players – join at [https://www.twitch.tv/ecf\\_commentary](https://www.twitch.tv/ecf_commentary)

Omicron has knocked back the return to OTB chess, causing several postponements including prominent events like Hastings and 4NCL's second weekend. However, there have been a number of announcements recently of forthcoming congresses such as Frome, Cotswolds and the 4NCL Congress in Harrogate, so fingers are firmly crossed that OTB will flourish again very soon. For the ECF's latest Covid updates go here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-covid-19-helpful-articles/>

## An Apology

In last month's issue of ChessMoves in our piece about the Lichess Junior Masters Series we accidentally demoted Jonathan Hawkins from GM to IM. Perhaps we had his excellent book *Amateur to IM* stuck in our heads. Whatever the reason, we hope that GM Jonathan Hawkins will accept our sincere apologies.

--- Danny Rosenbaum



## CONTENTS

<a href="#">Editorial</a>	2
<b>COVER STORY</b>	15
<a href="#">Bodhana Sivanandan takes two silvers at the Blitz and Rapid European Chess Championship. GM David Howell wins Titled Tuesday and Harry Grieve gains an IM norm</a> [cover pictures, middle and right, by Brendan O'Gorman]	
<b>NEWS and VIEWS</b>	
Including ...	
<a href="#">Director of Home Chess Report – Nigel Towers</a>	3
<a href="#">Congress Round-up</a>	4
<a href="#">Clubs Corner</a>	6
<a href="#">ECF Online</a>	9
<a href="#">Tweet of the Month</a>	14
<a href="#">Chess Magazine taster</a>	16
<a href="#">Letter to the Editor</a> – from a special correspondent!	16
<b>JUNIOR MOVES</b>	
<a href="#">Littlewood's Choice</a> – Paul Littlewood	18
<a href="#">Paul Lam on the Coventry Chess Academy</a>	20
<a href="#">Schools Springing into Action</a> – Neill Cooper	22
<a href="#">World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships 2021</a> – Alex Longson	23
<b>IMPROVERS</b>	
<a href="#">Technique</a> – Nigel Povah	27
<a href="#">Tactics</a> – Paul Littlewood	30
<b>FEATURES, WRITING, ANALYSIS, STUDIES AND PROBLEMS</b>	
<a href="#">Game of the Month</a> – Michael Adams	33
<a href="#">FIDE World Championship</a> – Peter Wells	37
<a href="#">Arkell's Endings</a> – Keith Arkell	43
<a href="#">The Interview</a> – Mark Rivlin meets Matthew Sadler	46
<a href="#">Problem Corner</a> – Christopher Jones	49
<a href="#">How to Solve a Study</a> – Ian Watson	51
<a href="#">Ads</a>	52
<b>HOLD THE BACK PAGE</b>	
<a href="#">Events Calendar</a>	53

# NEWS and VIEWS

## Director of Home Chess Report

Nigel Towers writes ...

### Return to Over the Board

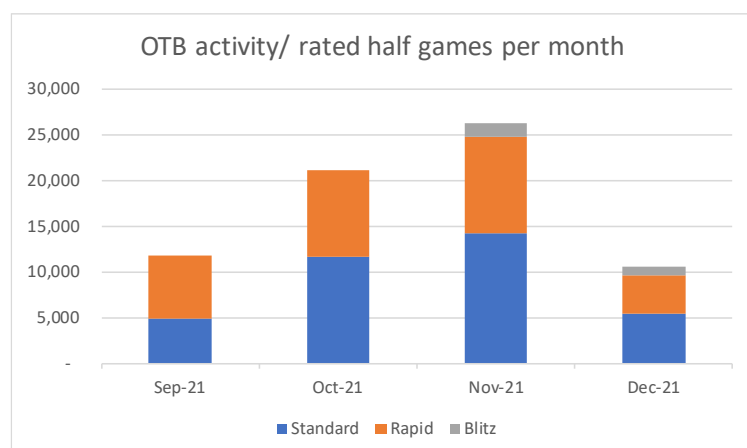
#### Some numbers

The return to over the board play slowed in December based on the usual holiday period reduction in over the board (OTB) activity together with several congresses and events cancelling following HMG's Plan B announcement and increased restrictions. Some OTB events went online including the London Junior Chess Classic.

Leagues and club competitions continue but again with some postponements due to the holiday period and the introduction of Plan B.

Overall, there were about half the number of OTB rated games during December compared with the November figures.

Looking forwards, the 4NCL has postponed its January weekend 2 but at the time of going to press are still planning to run their 27th OTB 4NCL congress later in the month, and hopefully we can look forward to increased activity again from February onwards.



### Number of rated half-games rated in the month (2019 figures in brackets for comparison)

	OTB				Online	
	Standard	Rapid	Blitz	Standard	Rapid	Blitz
Nov. 21	14,294	10,524	1,434	2,094	2,832	1,630
	(25,826)	(20,266)	(0)			
Dec. 21	5,490	4,130	1,000	756	2,860	1,638
	(18,048)	(10,464)	(0)			

NB – There is generally a reporting delay for events which means the December game counts will increase over the next few weeks

The move to faster time controls continues with rapid and blitz games now making up a noticeably larger percentage of total games played. We expect to be publishing ECF blitz lists once we have sufficient results to produce a viable national list for OTB events at the faster time control.

### Congress Round-up

As above there was a reduction in congresses played for December compared with the preceding month but some notable events went ahead during the month.

Date	Event
Dec 3 - 12	London Chess Classic including Masters, English Rapidplay and English Women's Rapidplay, and Blitz Competitions
Dec 4	Twickenham Junior Congress
Dec 5	Warwickshire Junior Championships 2021 – Kenilworth School
Dec 5	North London Grand Prix
Dec 9	London Mind Sports Centre – FIDE Blitz
Dec 12	Oxted FIDE Invitational, Open, and Friendly Blitz (Head and Tail)
Dec 14	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid @ The Clissold Arms, London
Dec 17	2nd EJCOA IM Tournament
Dec 18 - 19	London Junior Chess Championships - OTB event cancelled and moved online
Dec 18	National Prep Schools Rapidplay
Dec 18	13th Richmond Blitz Blast, Twickenham

We feature reports from a couple of December congresses below.

### Oxted Tournament Report

The Oxted Congress ran as a small ECF and FIDE rated event on December 11th and 12th.

There were two sections at the Oxted events, invitational and open sections with two rounds per day played at a standardplay time control of 90 minutes with 30 second increments. The event took place in Oxted in Surrey.

The invitational section included a mix of players above and below 2000 rating where some of the lower rated players played some really challenging games against stronger players including IM Michael Basman - <https://chess-results.com/tnr597854.aspx?lan=1>

Rk.	SNo		Name	FED	Rtg	Pts.	TB1	TB2	TB3
1	2		Lentzos Ioanis	GRE	2103	4,0	0,0	4	7,0
2	3		Finn Peter	ENG	2020	3,0	0,0	3	7,0
3	4		Gorgun Aliriza Atif	TUR	1842	2,0	1,0	2	10,0
4	5		Smith Mark	ENG	1782	2,0	0,0	2	7,0
5	1	IM	Basman Michael J	ENG	2249	1,0	0,0	1	7,0
6	6	AFM	Damodaran Patrick	ENG	1616	0,0	0,0	0	10,0

Ioanis Lentzos came first in the invitational event with 4 out of 4 followed by Peter Finn.

There were 10 players in the Open section which was won by Maxim Dunn with 4 out of 4 - full results here - <https://chess-results.com/tnr589771.aspx?lan=1>

The organisers made some unorthodox provisions to include speed (rapid/blitz) rated games between standard rounds for players finishing early, although most players made the most of allotted time.

Overall, the players really enjoyed the OTB experience and it was great to see the return of a local OTB congress in Surrey.

## Warwickshire Junior Championship 2022



The Warwickshire Junior Championships made a welcome return in December, run by Alex Holowczak and supporting team including Paul Lam, Roy Watson, Lana Nasibova and Richard Buxton.

The Championships were held at Kenilworth School and Sixth Form on Sunday 5th December 2021.

There were six sections - Under 8, Under 10, Under 12, Under 14, Under 16/18. There were seven rounds in each of the U10-U16/ U18 sections, all played at 15|10 rapidplay time control. The Under 8s played 8 games in an all-play-all format.

Congratulations go to the section winners [see table next page]

Rishi Iyer U8 Warwickshire Champion. In the background, Paul Lam, featured in this issue

Section	First (and 2022 Warwickshire Junior Champions)	Second	Third
U8	Rishi Iyer (8/8)	Aarav Parekh	Krish Gandhi



<b>U10</b>	Amitesh Purushothaman	Adithya Vaidyanathan	Akshath Shivakumar
<b>U12</b>	Tom Junde He	Kai Miller	Ravi Vora
<b>U14</b>	Rohan Pal	Keatan Patel	Zain Amir
<b>U16/ 18</b>	Karan Kukreja	Hayk Mesropyan	Ansh Agrawal

The OTB London Christmas Chess Congress was cancelled but moved online with the final stages completed as online events on Lichess.

### **ECF OTB Events**

We have various ECF English Championships and invitational events scheduled from March onwards together with the Counties final stages and of course the British in Torquay in August and the UK Blitz in the Autumn - [https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/#start\\_date=2021-12-31;categories=677540487](https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/#start_date=2021-12-31;categories=677540487)

As mentioned last month, the ECF will also be restarting the over the board Grand Prix for the 2022/2023 season running from 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023. The 2022/2023 Grand Prix will be a 12 month individual competition based on all ECF rated congresses and restricted to direct members of the Federation at Silver, Gold and Platinum levels (Junior included). All open congresses rated by the ECF are included, provided their rating results reach the ECF within one month of the last day of the congress. Leagues, knockouts, invitational events, team competitions, internal club competitions and matches are not included.

### **Clubs Corner**

There is a network of around 800 local chess clubs across England registered in the ECF's club finder here - <https://ecf.justgo.com/clubfinder.htm> - and you will almost certainly be able to find some clubs nearby, many with junior sections. Many clubs now have Twitter accounts which they use to publicise club events and keep in touch with existing and new members. These are now included in the club finder directory so you should be able to find a club and find their web site and social media addresses.

You can read more about clubs across England in our Clubs Community page here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/clubs-home-page/>

Here are a couple of local club stories from Stroud CC in Gloucestershire, and Aylsham CC in Norfolk highlighting how clubs are adapting to some challenging times and looking to grow their membership and levels of participation.

## Stroud Chess Club

by Stroud club Chair Duncan Dicks - <https://www.facebook.com/StroudChess/>



Stroud has become one of the biggest clubs in Gloucestershire over the past ten years.

Up to around 2010 the club had slowly ebbed away as a result of lack of funds and difficulty finding a reliable venue. In desperation four of the players decided to inject some money into the club and find a good quality venue. It took seven or eight years for the club to start breaking even and making a profit, but in that time we've gone from seven or eight middle aged men meeting up once a week, to a membership of around 40, running four teams in the local leagues, plus three teams in the 4NCL online tournaments (the Stroud Youngies team won the 4NCL Div 2 championship in December), with new players asking to join every month, young players (several juniors and under 30s) outnumbering the older, and a small but growing number of female players. Stroud players make up a good proportion of the County chess team, too.

How have we coped during Covid? We lost our venue during the first lockdown, but because we have good links in the town we were able to find an improved venue for when we were allowed to reopen in autumn 2021.

Stroud summer swiss Thursday		
		
<b>missedidea</b>	<b>WriteOn</b>	<b>PetruTarabuta</b>
Points 7	Points 7.5	Points 5.5
Tie Break 31.75	Tie Break 34	Tie Break 18.5
Performance 2065	Performance 2222	Performance 1901

We began regular online meetings.

We have a Lichess arena tournament for members every Tuesday at 7.30, and before we came back to OTB chess we ran a similar tournament on Thursdays, too.

This attracted more new players, several becoming OTB members when we returned.

We also arranged matches online with local teams, and began entering the 4NCL tournament, now running three

teams – Stroud Oldies, Stroud Middles, and Stroud Youngies.

As a result of our junior policy – we have a team in the local league called Stroud Cubs that is intended to give young players an opportunity to start playing competitive chess – our young players have developed rapidly and two of them are regular members of our first team, Stroud Badgers.



We were lucky enough to be able to welcome a strong Croatian player into the area a few years ago, who had great chess culture and a real passion for teaching the juniors. While he's now moved back he remains a friend of the club and has started his own chess coaching business (ART OF CHESS) and several of our players, especially the juniors, benefit from online coaching sessions with him.

The return to OTB chess has been challenging. We've insisted on mask wearing at the board, and with the recent surge in cases mask wearing is now compulsory in the club. Several players are vulnerable and will only play matches when rates are low, so team selection can be complicated! The local league

has had a phased return to competition. The intention was to ramp that up to fuller competition at the start of 2022, but this certainly seems in doubt now.

Overall, the past two years have been surprisingly good for us. We've maintained a good presence and get contacted regularly by people wanting to try out the club. Lockdown seems to have inspired people to either return to chess or give it a go after playing online or with friends and family that they've been forced to spend more time with!

I'd like to thank, especially, Adrian Walker, Vince Southcott, and Rob Wilden for being amazingly supportive and hardworking for the club over the past ten years, and Brian Dinter our chess coach. There are many others who deserve a mention, but I don't want to list everyone for fear of missing someone out. They know who they are, and they have my heartfelt thanks.

*Duncan Dicks (Chair, Stroud Chess Club) – January 2022*

---

## **Aylsham Chess Club & Norfolk County Chess**

by Club secretary John Wickham

Norfolk's over the board (OTB) league and Cup competitions resumed in October 2021. As we had fewer teams than pre-Covid instead of three divisions, each with ten teams, we had four divisions, each with six teams. While this meant that there would be fewer games, it was felt necessary to ease players back into OTB chess, but also to provide some free weeks for possible rearrangements.

The latter has turned out to be wise, enabling clubs to cope with being unable to field teams due to Covid and to cope with further restrictions following the introduction of Plan B.

In the months leading up to December most games proceeded but December has seen some clubs have to rearrange games, though in the main this has been down to club members having other commitments in the lead up to Christmas. There has also been some reluctance to play chess OTB wearing masks and/ or due to concerns over the risk of infection. For some clubs this is being reflected in games being rearranged and it seems likely that many matches in January will be postponed and rearranged.

One encouraging feature of the return to OTB has been an influx of new players, some of whom having previously played online and some because of the Queens Gambit. For those who have been playing online where the platform applies the laws of chess, they have been prone to making illegal moves (e.g. making moves such as castling with both hands, promoting without replacing the pawn with the promoted piece etc.). They also have had to get used to pressing a clock rather than that being covered automatically by the platform.

At Aylsham we have benefited from several new members, and this enabled us to run our Club Championship and Challengers competitions. We have a good level of entrants in both competitions and so far 23 games have been played. As this runs till June then there is plenty of time for the competitions to be completed. Club nights have good attendances and we even had good turnouts on 27th December 2021 and 3rd January 2022. We anticipate continuing with our club nights during January, even with Plan B restrictions.

In the Norfolk League we entered one team in Division 2 and one team in Division 3, which was one less than in the 2019/2020 season. Both teams are sitting at the top of their division, though there are several matches left to play. We have also entered all three cup competitions, including the six board Norfolk and Suffolk Cup. The latter is the first time for our club, and we have been drawn against a strong team, so may need to look for a giant-killing performance.



On Monday 20th December Aylsham Chess Club (ACC) members took part in a novelty chess event called 'Hand and Brain'. Players were randomly paired with a partner - with 'the hand' sitting at the chessboard playing the moves and 'the brain' telling 'the hand' (by a one-word instruction only) the name of the piece they should move. This led to some interesting games and the hand did not always follow the brain's ideas, though in most cases that was because the hand saw a better move!



Photo (left to right) - John Wickham, Dan Hedges, SIM Mike Read & Bruce Carman

Senior International Master (SIM) Mike Read was guest of honour at the event. Mike has competed 115 times for Great Britain and England teams at correspondence chess - and played on top board for England at the 13th Correspondence Chess Olympiad. Mike has also been the author of four chess books and achieved a spectacularly high peak rating of 2571. His most recent book '110 Instructive Chess Annotations' (available on Amazon along with his other three books) is likely to be of particular interest to Norfolk chess players as it analyses games played by local players.

Dan Hedges (Aylsham's top board) won the event - with a perfect score of four wins. John Wickham (Norfolk County Chess Association and ACC Chair) and Bruce Carman (Norfolk County Chess Association League Controller and ACC Match Captain) were in joint second place with 3 points.

Prizes were very kindly donated by Morrisons Supermarket, Cromer - as part of their 'Make Good Things Happen' scheme. Dan Hedges was also given a copy of SIM Mike Read's book 'My 120 Selected Correspondence Games'.

## **ECF Online**

### **ECF Club Events**

The Chess.com ECF Members and Lichess English Chess Players clubs continue to grow with rated club events played each week. The events continue to prove very popular with eight ECF online rated tournaments each week across the two platforms.

### **ECF Lichess Online Internationals**

The Lichess English Chess Players team plays in a number of regular online events and leagues including the Lichess Mega A Team Battles which run every fortnight on Friday afternoons, the Bundesliga / Quarantine league at 7 pm on Sunday and Thursday evenings, the Liga Iberia/ Torres de Loule at 3-30 pm on Sunday afternoons where we play in Division 1, and the very competitive mid-week Champions League starting at 5-30 pm on Tuesday evenings. The Lichess team battles are very well supported with streaming commentary on key events from WIM Natasha Regan and colleagues and a big team of regular players including a number of titled players.

## Bundesliga

We are currently moving between divisions 3 and 4 (and occasionally 5 or 6) of the main Bundesliga with GM Keith Arkell and IM Richard Pert as top scorers in the twice weekly events along with David Wilson, Henny Penny and Woodpusher - <https://rochadeeuropa.de/-turniere/>

## Liga Ibera

This is a Spanish organised league with three divisions of around 14 teams each on Sunday afternoons. The league is played at multiple time controls (but typically 3|3) and is highly competitive with the English Chess Players team moving between Divs 1 and 2 - <https://lichess.org/team/liga-ibera>

## Other Lichess leagues

We have also joined the highly competitive Russian organised Wall to Wall League - стенка на стенку – which has a mix of 3|0 blitz and bullet team battles. We also participate in the weekly Colegas bullet league at 1|0 and 2|0.

## Chess.com Internationals

The Chess.com Nations League Season 4 starts again in February and will run on **Sundays from February 13 to Sunday, March 27, 2022**. We are in the top division and will be competing in the top division against USA, Canada, Romania, Kyrgyzstan and others. Matches will be played in the usual format of rapid and blitz games for each board, with all results counting towards the match score.

## Chess.com Titled Tuesdays and Lichess Titled Arenas

Chess.com run a weekly Titled Tuesday at 6-00 pm every Tuesday. This runs as an 11 round Swiss at blitz time control and regularly attracts more than 500 titled players with commentary from numerous streamers. GM David Howell won the first event of the New Year on January 4th with a near perfect 10 out of 11 score and finishing ahead of GMs Hikaru Nakamura, Nils Grandelius, Alexander Grischuk and many others. Lichess run a similar titled Arena on Tuesdays and Saturdays which again is well worth a look with a number of streamers covering the action.

## ECF Christmas Endgame Challenge



The ECF ran a two-day Endgame Challenge on December 29th and 30th with IM Lorin D'Costa (above right) and GM Keith Arkell (above left). The challenge included a series of afternoon Zoom lectures on endgame theory you really must know, coaching on practical endgame positions and some practice tournaments for attendees to test their endgame skills with others taking part in the course/challenge.

The Endgame Challenge coaching was in two parts -

Part 1 – Some basic positions, Pawn, Knight and Bishop Endings

Part 2 – Minor piece, Rook and Queen Endings

As well as the afternoon lectures and tournaments, GM Keith Arkell took on all attendees in an endgame simul during each evening of the event. Keith faced almost 50 players in each simul and was looking to take each game through to an ending – i.e. no early wins and no draw offers made or accepted in the opening or middlegames.

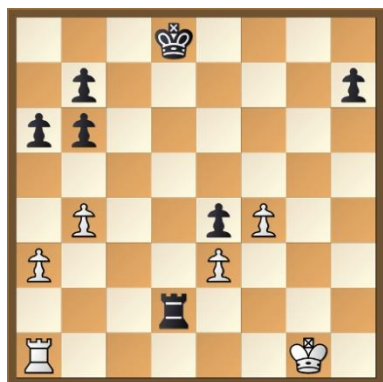
The challenge was very successful with a lot of positive feedback from attendees and we will be scheduling a one day Challenge Rerun on Saturday 29th January with Lorin and Keith for those that couldn't make the first session. We will also be running a series of Saturday afternoon endgame tournaments in the English Chess Players Club and open to all club members. These will start from thematic endgame positions with two tournaments with different starting positions at 2.00 pm and 2.40 pm.

There were many excellent endgames played during the Christmas Endgame Challenge thematic tournaments and simuls but Keith has singled out the following game from simul 1 on 29<sup>th</sup> December as being particularly instructive. We join the game after Black's move 30 when we have reached a rook and pawn ending. Keith (with the White pieces) is a pawn down but has a protected passed pawn. Both sides have pawn weaknesses – two for White and three for Black. An important principle in most rook and pawn endings is to try and keep your rook active, target pawn weaknesses – often one then the other if there is more than one weak pawn - and look to infiltrate with the king.

### Atomrod – ushakan

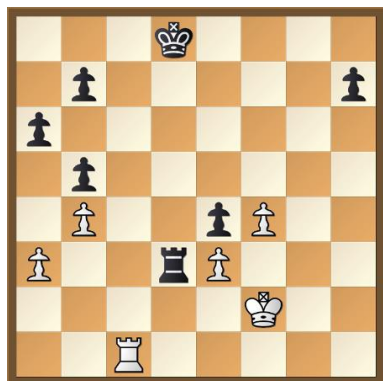
GM Atomrod simul Lichess.org

29.12.2021



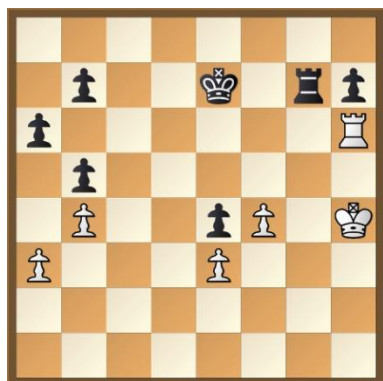
Position after black's 30th move.

**31.Rc1?!** A natural move but Kf1 may be best **31...Rd3?** This is a mistake. Re2 is better to attack the pawn on e3. 31...Re2 32.Rc3 defending the pawn 31..b5 fixes the pawn on a3 and keeps the king on the back rank. 33.Kf1 Ra2 – keeping the rook active and attacking the other weakness. **32.Kf2 b5?!** Rxa3 was best after which the position would have been equal.



Keith is a pawn down but has kept his protected passed pawn on f4. Black now has three weak pawns against White's two weak pawns. In addition the Black queen side majority is not mobile, and Black's h pawn is a long way from promoting. Keith looks to get his rook active and start targeting the Black pawns with his rook.

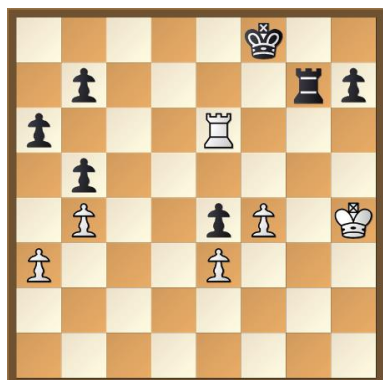
**33.Rh1 Rd7 34.Rh6 Re7 35.Kg3 Rg7+ 36.Kh4 Ke7**



**37.Rb6?!** Attacking the b pawn. Perhaps better to play 37.Rh5 Kf6 38.Re5 attacking the e pawn.

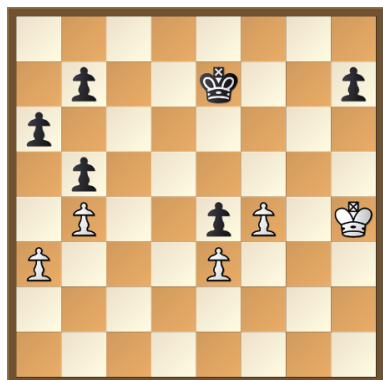
**37...Kf8?** A critical and instructive mistake. Rg1 was best give up the b pawn and get the rook active again and looking at the target pawns in White's position. 37...Rg1 38.Rxb7+ Kf6 39.Rc7 Re1 40.Rc3 Kf5

**38.Re6** And now back to the e pawn.



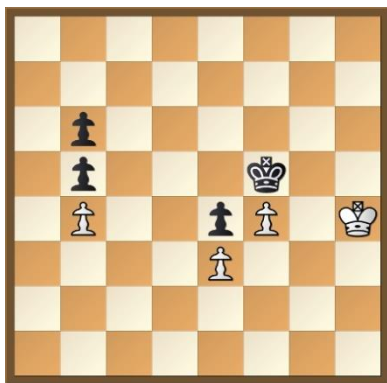
**38..Re7??** Very tempting to protect the e pawn but this is a blunder with Rg1 best to keep the rook active. White is now winning as the rooks will come off and White's protected passed pawn will decide. Black's extra pawn on the Q side will be of no use as the pawn majority is fixed.

**39.Rxe7** played immediately and the rest is straight forward. **39..Kxe7**



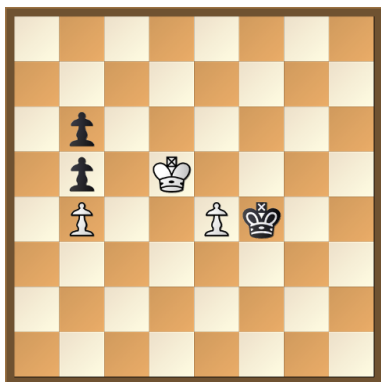
**40.Kg5 Ke6 41.Kh6 Kf6 42.Kxh7 b6 43.Kh6 a5 44.Kh5 Kf5 45.Kh4 axb4 46.axb4**





Black to move. Capturing the b or d pawn takes too long and the win is now straight forward.

**46..Ke6 47.Kg5 Kf7 48.Kf5** Taking the opposition and picking up the d pawn. **48..Ke7 49.Kxe4 Kf6 50.Kd5 Kf5 51.e4+** which decides the game **51..Kxf4**



Black resigns. **1-0**

## ECF Online Grand Prix – 2022

Series 2 will of the ECF online Grand Prix kicked off on 2nd January with the first Blitz Arena of 2022.



Blitz Arena 1 was won by Mike Harris on 31 points followed by Chris Davison and Firead.

The series will run for ten months until October. We are following the same format with the blitz series running on the first Sunday of each month and the rapid on the third Sunday. The top six results count towards the leader board with ECF trophies and signed books for the winners (i.e. highest aggregate scores on the leader board) at the end of October.

You can find further details and an entry form at the link here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series/>

The 2022 leader boards can be found here (Rapid pending) - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series-blitz-leaderboards/>



## COVER STORY – English Success

Our cover shows three English players who have excelled recently.

Littlewood's Choice this month features a game by Bodhana Sivanandan on her way to finishing runner-up in the European School Championships 2021 U10 Girls. All credit to Paul for spotting Bodhana's great promise, for shortly after his article arrived with the Editor, Bodhana went on to win double silver at the Blitz and the Rapid European Chess Championships - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/congratulations-bodhana/>

Also on the cover are GM David Howell and FM Harry Grieve, who both put in fine performances this month as reported below. Congratulations to all three.



## Tweet of the Month

**David Howell** @DavidHowellGM · Jan 4

Nearly rage-quit after blundering in an early game. But with some perseverance and a lot of luck, it turns out miracles do happen. Might have to postpone my retirement plans... 🤔

**ChesscomLive** @ChesscomLive · Jan 4

🎉 Congratulations to 🏆 @DavidHowellGM 🏆 for winning the FIRST #titleduesday of the year 2022 with a fantastic score of 10/11! 🎉

Rank	Player	Rating	Country	Score	Points
#1	GM howitzer14	(3041)	🇩🇰	10/11	57.5
#2	GM mishanick	(3065)	🇷🇺	9.5/11	54.2
#3	IM vi_pranav	(2908)	🇮🇳	9/11	64
#4	GM SantoBlue	(2920)	🇮🇹	9/11	60
#5	GM jefferyx	(3057)	🇺🇸	9/11	58.7
#6	GM champ2005	(2993)	🇮🇳	9/11	58.5
#6	GM Zhuu96	(2939)	🇷🇺	9/11	58.5
#8	GM BogdanDeac	(2912)	🇷🇴	9/11	57.2
#9	GM exoticprincess	(2881)	🇩🇰	9/11	52.5
#10	GM Arseniy_Nesterov	(2898)	🇷🇺	8.5/11	56.2
#11	GM Grandelicious	(2868)	🇮🇳		

**STANDINGS**

In our last issue we congratulated GM David Howell on his terrific performance in the 2021 FIDE Chess.com Grand Swiss. Well, congratulations are very much due again after David won Titled Tuesday on Chess.com with a score of 10/11. He beat a field of 652 titled players!

A nice victory, trapping his opponent's queen in the last round against GM Jeffrey Xiong, sealed the tournament.

The Chess.com report at <https://www.chess.com/news/view/howell-wins-january-4-titled-tuesday> features the game as well as the live commentary from WGM Ketī Tsatsalashvili.

## Congratulations to Harry Grieve!



Harry gained his first IM norm with a terrific score of 7/9 to take joint top spot in the Roquetas Open. Along the way he beat GM Karthik Venkataraman and drew with GM Daniel Dardha. Readers of our last issue will be aware that Harry is on a roll having won the First ECF Online Blitz Grand Prix, which completed in December 2021 (picture by [Brendan O’Gorman](#))



### 150 Not Out

2021 was a notable year for a number of clubs in South London and its environs.

In September, Guildford Chess Club celebrated its 125th anniversary with a festival including a 125-board simultaneous display by players including GM Gawain Jones and Nick Pert.

Meanwhile the Richmond and Twickenham Chess Club returned to the Adelaide, their venue of exactly 120 years before. You can read the background on this serendipity at

<https://rtchessclub.com/2021/12/20/our-new-venue/>

All this leads us to *Movers and Takers, A Chess History of Streatham and Brixton 1871-2021* written by Martin Smith.

The book was published at the end of last year to mark the 150th anniversary of the club, and is a delight. Every page has some snippet of interest, and the book is packed full of photos that bring a smile to the face. I hope the author won’t mind me saying that it is the sort of book that you can enjoy dipping in and out of. The book can be ordered via [SFChess@btinternet.com](mailto:SFChess@btinternet.com) for £12.50 +£2.50 p&p.

There is also more information at <https://streathamchess.org/2021/12/05/movers-and-takers-is-published.html>



### 27th 4NCL FIDE-rated Congress

The Congress is scheduled to take place on 21-23 January 2022 at The Old Swan in Harrogate. There are three sections with a total prize fund of £3000 – please visit

[https://4ncl.co.uk/fide/information\\_27.htm](https://4ncl.co.uk/fide/information_27.htm) for more information and updates. At the time of writing, this event was still due to take place, but please make sure to check the website.



### Reminder - Level 1 Arbiters Course in February

We thought it worth a reminder as the start of the course is getting close. We will be holding a Level 1 Arbiters Course in February 2022, running over five Monday evenings from 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Dates are 7th February; 14th February; 21st February; 28th February; 7th March, with a course fee of £40.

For more information and online entry visit <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-arbiter-course-registration/>



## Changes to the ECF Calendar

We publish an edited version of the calendar at the back of this issue, but do visit the online site for a more comprehensive and up-to-date version - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>. This news piece describes a few changes we have made - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/changes-to-the-ecf-calendar/>. Calling clubs, congresses et al - don't forget to publicise your event in the calendar for free!

---



## Book Review by Gary Lane

This month Gary Lane reviews *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement*. You can read it at <https://chess.business/blog/>. Elsewhere in this issue we have an interview by Mark Rivlin with the book's author, Matthew Sadler. There's also Gary's view of another New In Chess title, *Magnus Carlsen - A Life In Pictures*.

---



## Improvement

Eagle-eyed readers will notice that we are providing more content for chess 'improvers'. We are hoping to develop this further in future issues in response to feedback we have had.

The mention earlier in this issue of Guildford Chess Club celebrating its 125th anniversary served as a reminder to mention again that you can find a number of instructional videos by IM Andrew Martin aimed at juniors at Guildford's YouTube channel -

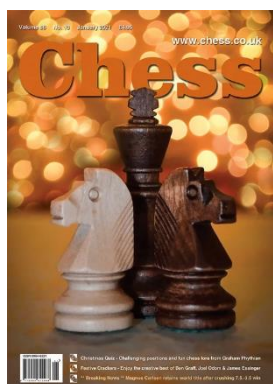
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4hLvAFqhh84\\_p3qF5nhYmw/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4hLvAFqhh84_p3qF5nhYmw/videos)

Are there any resources that you would recommend adding to our page aimed at newcomers / improvers <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/new-to-chess/>? Please take a look and let us have your feedback.

---



## CHESS Magazine taster



Click here for this month's taster -

<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0478/2876/2775/files/chess-magazine-january-2022-sample.pdf?v=1640183389>

Click here to purchase / subscribe - <https://chess.co.uk/collections/chess-magazine/products/chess-magazine-january-2022>

---



## Letter to the Editor

From a special correspondent ...

Dear Sir,

I wish to complain to the ECF in the strongest possible terms.



You will no doubt be aware that I played in the Hampstead Weekend Chess Congress U140 section last weekend. I nearly didn't play. Thankfully, my last-minute demand to increase the winner's pot from £80 to £750,000 was granted. Additionally, whilst I refused to turn up to my second game and thus defaulted, my insistence that in order to avoid the distracting lighting of the main playing hall the third game was to be played in the cleaning cupboard was duly met. I went on to win by four clear points after winning an especially good game 6. People dubbed it 'The Weekend Congress of the Century'.

But I succeeded only in the face of the KGB's persistent efforts to derail me. Soviet Russia may be no more, but I know the communist security apparatus is still operational. I have evidence to show that the KGB has successfully infiltrated the Kent County Chess Union and is using it as a platform to foil me in my attempts to gain weekend U140 chess glory. People may call it paranoia and suggest I'm unhinged, but I call it plain good sense.

The signs are obvious. Kent U140 players have clearly been schooled in the ways of the Soviet chess machine - they take draws off each other to save their energy for me and they analyse my games together as a team. And the signs are starker still, at least to those whose eyes are open. The recent congress was awash with KGB operatives. Disguised as 'mothers' to so-called 'Kent juniors', they used this flimsy cover story to hover around the playing area surveilling me and noting down my games. But they gave themselves away by their military physique, 1980s fashions, the wigs and their moustaches. I was not fooled.

Matters simply cannot continue like this. The ECF must take action. I hereby refuse to take part in further weekend congresses until the ECF acts - I insist you take the following steps:

- First, we must not continue with classical chess rules. Some years ago I invented what is known as 'Fischer Random' to ensure that the Soviets cannot use their teams of opening analysts to get the better of me. This should be adopted by all ECF rated tournaments.
- Second, all chairs and tables must be X-rayed for listening devices. They tried bugging me in 1972 and they'll try it again.
- Third, any Kent U140 players called Vladimir, Yevgeny or Vasily to be banned immediately and their details sent to MI5. Also applies to anyone playing the Petrov Defence or the Leningrad Dutch.

Unless you immediately implement these sensible and proportionate measures, I shall be forced to organise a specially arranged re-run of the congress to take place exactly twenty years after the first congress. It will be held outside the ECF's jurisdiction, most likely some war-torn enclave riven by sectarian strife, subject to UN sanctions and desperate for international recognition. Probably Essex.

Now is the time for the ECF to take a stand. Will you fight for the free world, or meekly bow to the Soviets?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Mr R. J. Fischer  
Reykjavik, Iceland.

# JUNIOR MOVES

In Littlewood's Choice this month we analyse a game by Bodhana Sivanandan, who is featured on our cover, and whose recent achievements are noted in our news section.

## Littlewood's Choice



I was impressed to see that one of our youngsters, Bodhana Sivanandan, did extremely well recently, finishing runner-up in the European School Championships 2021 U10 Girls. Most of her games were hard-fought. Indeed, in the final she only succumbed to Aydogan Arya after 133 moves!

Here is one of her earlier games in the contest.

### **Bodhana Sivanandan vs Anastasia Kutateladze**

**1.e4 c5 2. Nc3 e6 3. Bc4 a6 4.a4 Nc6 5. f4 b6 6. Nf3 Bb7 7. d3.d6 8. 0-0 Be7**



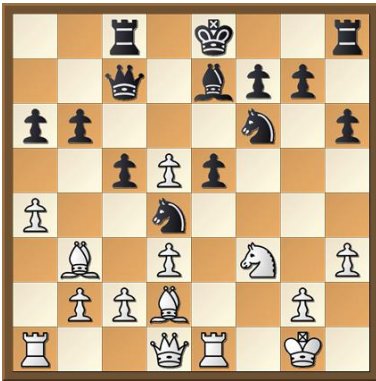
The opening has been a Closed Sicilian but Black has neglected her K-Side development. With this in mind White could have played the sharp 9.f5! trying to exploit her lead in development. The idea behind this is to sacrifice a pawn to open the a2 – g8 diagonal for White's Bishop. A possible continuation is 9...exf5 10.Qe1 bringing the Queen to g3 with pressure on Black's K-side. An alternative idea is 9.Qe1 again with good chances. In the game White chooses a rather less effective continuation:

**9.Re1 Qc7 10.Be3 Nf6 11.h3 h6 12.Ba2 Nb4 13.Bb3 Rc8 14.Na2 Nc6 15.Bd2 e5?!**



After a slow start Black has played well and now should have continued with the sharp 15...d5 when she stands better. In contrast, the game move hands back the advantage to White.

**16.fxe5 dxe5 17.Nc3 Nd4 18.Nd5 ?!** Better was 18.Nxd4 first **18...Bxd5 19.exd5 ?**



...and this is a clear mistake as now Black is better again after 19...Nxb3 20.cxb3 0-0 21.Nxe5 Bd6 22.Nc4 Nxd5 with the much superior pawn structure.

**19...Bd6? 20.c3?!** again 20.Nxd4 is an improvement

**20....Nxb3 21.Qxb3 0-0 22.c4 Rfe8 23.a5 b5**



**24.Re2?** White should have played 24.cxb5 axb5 25.Qxb5 with a slight advantage.

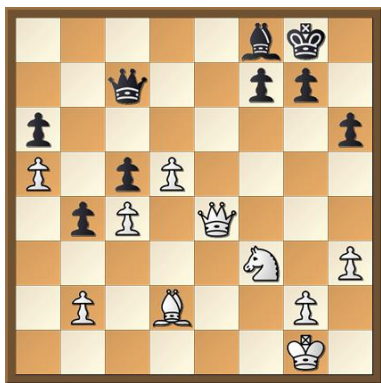
**24....b4?!** The sharp 24...e4 is good for Black, as the complications favour her.

**25.Qa4 e4 26.dxe4 Rxe4 27.Rae1**



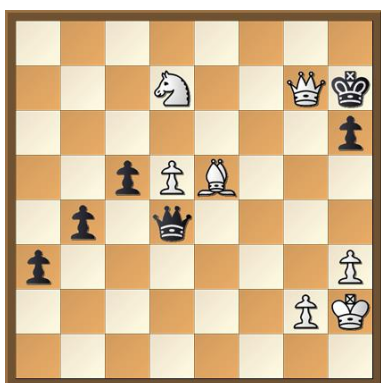
**27...Rce8??** It has been a tough contest so far with no-one making any obvious mistakes but Black now blunders and White takes full advantage.

**28. Rxe4 Rxe4 29. Rxe4 Nxe4 30.Qe8+ Bf8 31.Qxe4**



White has won a piece and now makes no mistake in finishing Black off.

**31....Qxa5 32.b3 Qa1+ 33.Kh2 Qb2 34.Bf4 Qxb3 35. Ne5 a5 36.Nd7 a4 37.Qe8 a3 38. Qxf8+ Kh7 39.Qxf7 Qxc4 40.Be5 Qd4 41,Qxg7 mate.**



An interesting but clearly not flawless game. However both players fought hard, with White eventually coming out on top after a difficult struggle. The remarkable thing from my point of view, though, is that the winner, Bodhana Sivanandan, is only six and a half years old! Clearly a fantastic prospect for the future.

--- Paul Littlewood Email: [plittl@hotmail.com](mailto:plittl@hotmail.com)



## **The Coventry Chess Academy**

The CCA has enjoyed great success since it was founded. We asked its founder and director Paul Lam to take us through some of its history.

I founded the Coventry Chess Academy (CCA) in July 2013 with the support of a social enterprise grant from the University of Warwick in partnership with the charitable organisation UnLtd and the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Wales (HEFCE).

I came up with the idea for the CCA after being contacted by a colleague whose six-year-old son was interested in playing chess. His son's school did not have a chess club and he had been unable to find a suitable and local place for him to learn. Around the same time, I attended a talk on social enterprise by a representative of the charitable organisation UnLtd. After some investigation and reflection, I concluded there was a demand for chess amongst local children and that chess could become a vehicle for social change through the skills and qualities it teaches. Moreover, as a former England junior international and qualified chess coach, I realised I was in a position to make this happen.

It just so happened that when I was at school, there was no bespoke junior chess club for children in Coventry either! My parents had to give me a lift to Birmingham every weekend where we had been fortunate enough to find the Checkmate junior chess club run by the late, great Mike Fox. Being in



such an enriching and supportive environment with great coaches and other strong juniors helped take my chess to the next level and eventually I achieved my dream of playing chess for England. I wanted to give the same opportunity to children in my home city on their doorstep. My pitch for funding was successful and the CCA was born. It continues to be run as a not-for-profit entity to this day. All of the CCA coaches are volunteers and all membership fees get invested back in the club for the benefit of its members.



Super GM Anish Giri with members of CCA on the occasion of his simul in 2016

I was fortunate to find a team of committed volunteers for the club right from the start. Some had been friends of mine from school chess days, like James Grute. Others were stalwarts of local chess like my good friends Steven Turvey and Roy Watson, who must be the world's most energetic great-grandfather! Quite fittingly, Roy was the first person I met and played when I joined my local adult club, the excellent Kenilworth Chess Club, of which I continue to be a member till this day. Roy is the unsung hero of the CCA, hardly ever missing a session, and is a bona fide club legend, hugely popular among all the children thanks to his zest for chess and his imitable sense of humour!

Another important source of support came from students from the University of Warwick, many of whom would volunteer with us over the following years, including some very strong players. The likes of David O'Neill, CM Peter Williams and FM Peter Batchelor would make fantastic contributions to our club and members. It has given me great satisfaction to provide references for students, some of whom have gone on to teach in schools [below, celebrating success in 2017]



Since the CCA was founded, sessions have always been held on Saturday mornings at Cheylesmore Community Centre in Coventry which, under the stewardship of Centre Manager Paul Jamieson, is a pillar of the local community, used by community groups as diverse as badminton, language learning and dance. Paul shared our vision and saw the potential in what we had to offer.

Pre-pandemic, sessions were held weekly and lasted for two hours, which each member attending paying a small fee per session. On average, thirty to forty members would be in attendance each week, split into five different groups to cater for ability.

Since the resumption of sessions after lockdown ended, the group has been split in smaller sub-groups attending at different times, but importantly the people and the welcoming, sociable, enriching environment have not changed.

The CCA was not intended to be just a normal chess club. The club was established with the mission of demonstrating the power of chess to provide children with skills and qualities that will empower them in and outside the classroom.



One of CCA's talented youngsters, Elis Dicen, with Garry Kasparov

In 2013, chess-playing opportunities for schoolchildren in Coventry were few and far between. Since then, hundreds of children have passed through the CCA's doors and made tremendous strides on and off the chessboard. Complete beginners have been transformed into proficient chess players. Novices have been transformed into tournament winners. And some of our members are among the most talented chess playing prospects in the country. Moreover, numerous children have grown in confidence, developed their social skills and formed friendships, all while having great fun. We have succeeded in reaching out to those who are most in need; some of our members come from areas of high socio-economic deprivation and others have faced language barriers e.g. not speaking English as a first language.

We have an incredibly diverse membership, with dozens of different backgrounds represented. Each week sees a mixture of friendly games, coaching, serious play and fun time. Children can progress through the various ability groups, with some doing so at frightening pace. Members of secondary school age are eligible to become prefects and are given responsibilities which include helping newer and younger members. Some even progress all the way to become coaches, like William Morris who joined the club when he was still in primary school and will head to university later this year.

--- Paul GM Lam, CCA Founder & Director



## Schools Springing into Action

Neill Cooper writes about a variety of events for secondary schools coming up this Spring.

### 1. Fortnightly Friday Lichess Schools Battles 6pm-7pm

At these informal events most players are at home. You can find events listed at <https://lichess.org/team/secondary-school-chess>. This term Graham Iwi (Bristol GS) is running these so please email him at [GIwi@BGS.BRISTOL.SCH.UK](mailto:GIwi@BGS.BRISTOL.SCH.UK) or Lichess message him - @grahamiwi - if you would like to enter your school.

### 2. Team Chess Challenge

We hope to be running these regional events around the country. A few events are already listed at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/team-chess-challenge-2021-22/> but more will be coming soon. If you think your school could host one then please let me know.

### 3. Junior Team Chess Challenge

Like Team Chess Challenge but for Under 13s (year 8 and below) only. See <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/>

### 4. Schools Team Problem Solving

Try to solve these chess problems in school. Round 1 is now over and 12 teams scored full marks. Round 2 is coming out soon! See <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/>

### 5. Ivan Gromov League

Long play online chess, fortnightly on Thursday evenings 7.30pm start. List of past matches at <https://ecfms.org.uk/lms/node/73960/efixtures>. If you would like to join in please contact Justin Moston Email: [j.moston@etoncollege.org.uk](mailto:j.moston@etoncollege.org.uk) or Adam Raoof Email: [adamraoof@gmail.com](mailto:adamraoof@gmail.com)

### 6. U19 National School Chess Championships

The NSCC has now reached the Regional Stage - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/u19-regional-2021-22/>. If you have a qualified team you should already know about it!

### 7. U19 NSCC Unqualified Events

These are for any schools NOT taking part in the NSCC regional stage. Monthly informal events at 4pm on Mondays with players together at school, so you build up the camaraderie of playing together for the same team. First event on 17th January. Email Neill at [manager.secondary@englishchess.org.uk](mailto:manager.secondary@englishchess.org.uk) if you would like to take part.



## **World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships 2021**

A tournament report from FM Alex Longson. Alex's blog for the event can be found here on Lichess with game reports - <https://lichess.org/@/rowrulz/blog/world-rapid-and-blitz-chess-championships-2021/QvaAPZL3>



[photo courtesy of [Chess24](#)]

The FIDE World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championships are an annual event held by FIDE (the world governing body for chess) to determine the World Champion for rapid chess and the World Champion for blitz chess. Therefore, the chess world has three world champions – a 'classical' (much slower), 'rapid' and 'blitz' champion. Well – technically up to six world champions as there is an open and female champion for each category.

The 'classical' title is by far the most prestigious and dates back officially to 1886 when Wilhelm Steinitz defeated Johannes Zukertort to be recognized as the World Champion. The 'classical' title is



decided in a match every two years between the champion and the challenger, who has to make their way through a gruelling path for the right to challenge the champion.

In contrast the Rapid and Blitz Championships are a relatively new introduction – FIDE only started holding the annual event in 2012. They take place in December and the 2021 event was held in Warsaw, Poland. Both the rapid and blitz events take place back-to-back.

#### Time control comparison

Classical – 2 hours for 40 moves, then 1 hour for 20 moves, then an extra 30 minutes plus a 30 second increment per move from move 61

Rapid – 15 minutes plus 10 seconds per move

Blitz – 3 minutes plus 2 seconds per move

#### The World Rapid Championship 2021

176 players took part in a 13 round Swiss event with a time control of 15 minutes plus 10 seconds a move. The top three seeds at the start of the event were world champion Magnus Carlsen (who held all three world championships at the start of the event), Hikaru Nakamura and Jan-Krzysztof Duda. The tournament was won by Nodirbek Abdusattorov, a 17-year-old Grandmaster from Uzbekistan. This was a sensational result for the teenager who is known as a rapid specialist but is 'only' ranked 113th in the world in classical chess.

Abdusattorov certainly rode his luck at times surviving lost positions in each of the last three rounds and eventually winning the tiebreak blitz playoff versus Ian Nepomniachtchi. However, he can hardly be begrudged his victory as he defeated many strong players along the way including Caruana, Aronian, Gelfand and world champion Magnus Carlsen.

There was a little bit of controversy with the tiebreak rules. After 13 rounds four players were tied on 9.5 points – Abdusattorov, Nepomniachtchi, Carlsen and Caruana. The organisers used 'Buchholz' to rank the four players and then the top two players played the blitz tiebreak to determine the champion. This decision was heavily criticized by most of the top players who felt all tied players should be involved in the tiebreak.

Perhaps the key game in the tournament was the round 10 clash between Carlsen and Abdusattorov. Playing with the black pieces Carlsen got a comfortable endgame position and tried to squeeze out one of his famous endgame wins. Abdusattorov defended well and Carlsen pushed things a bit far and ended up having to defend a tricky queen endgame which despite being objectively drawn was very difficult in practice. Abdusattorov showed no fear in taking down the champion when his chance arose.

#### The World Blitz Championship 2021

179 players took part in the two-day, 21 round Swiss event with a much faster 3+2 time control. Carlsen had won the last three editions of the event and was therefore a hot favourite going into the competition. Indeed, he had been very active on Lichess.org in the build-up playing blitz and bullet under his handle "drnykterstein". However, despite getting off to a perfect 4/4 start things just didn't work out for the champion and he ended up losing six games. To put this into perspective he had only lost three games in total in the previous three blitz championships.

The winner of the event was the elite French grandmaster Maxime Vachier-Lagrave who scored 15 / 21 alongside two other players: Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Alireza Firouzja. This time it was Firouzja who lost out on the controversial tiebreaks and a playoff was held between Duda and La-Grave with the French grandmaster coming out on top.

It really is fascinating to follow the blitz games between elite grandmasters and marvel at the quality of moves on display. Of course, there are plenty of blunders, but the general level is extremely high



and to some extent you are witnessing pure intuition – these are literally the first moves that pop into the grandmasters’ minds as they are forced to play most moves “by hand”.

For a fuller report on the event go to the Lichess link at the top of this article. You can find annotated games and puzzles at <https://lichess.org/study/YUq80ysG> by scrolling down the various chapters on the left-hand panel. Once you click on a puzzle you can guess the answer and/or show the solution.

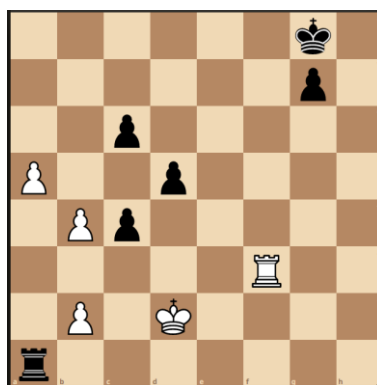
We have selected a few of the intermediate and advanced puzzles below.

**Test your tactics** – Selected puzzles from the 2021 World Rapid and Blitz by FM Alex Longson.

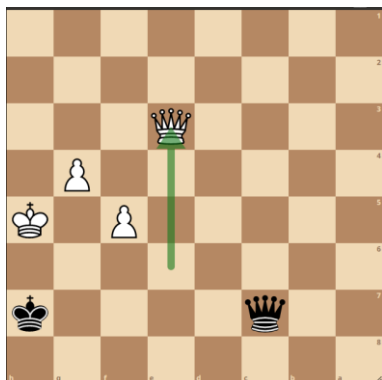
### Intermediate



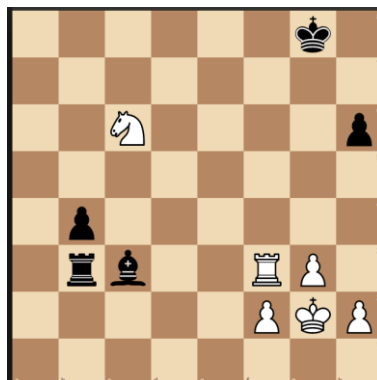
Black has just played rdc8 which loses. Why?



What should white play in this position?

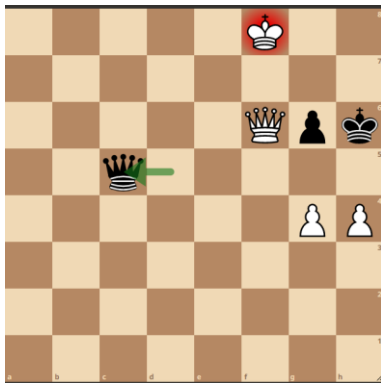


White has just played Qe3 controlling important dark squares. What could be wrong with that?

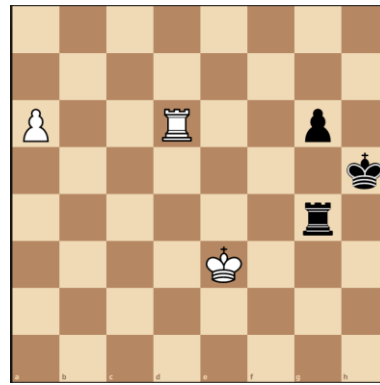


What should white play here?

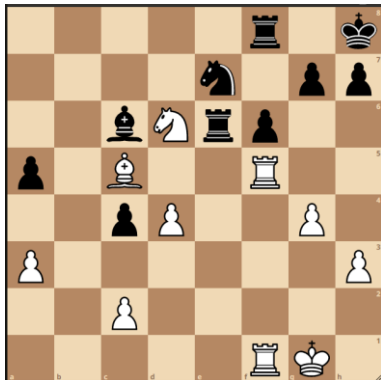
### Advanced



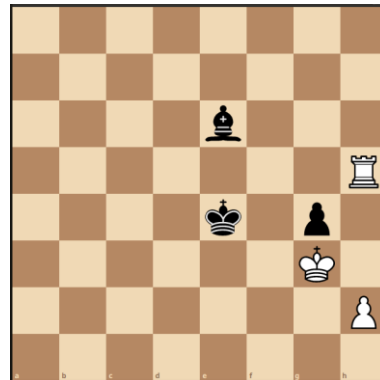
Black has just played ...Qd5+ which loses (...Qa8+ was necessary). How does white win from here



White to move – what would you play in this position?



White to move - What would you play in this position?



White to move again – what would you play here?

# IMPROVERS

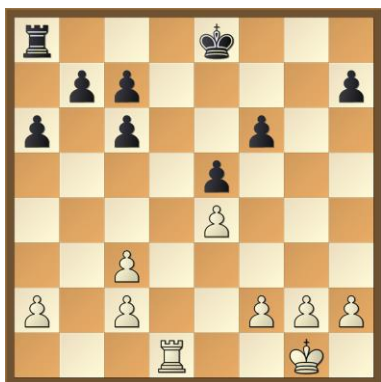
## Technique by IM Nigel Povah

This series of articles (originally written in 1978/79 but recently updated with input from engines) will attempt to make the reader more aware of certain important factors which are often overlooked or not adequately understood by many chess players. We have all heard the expressions "It's simply a matter of technique!" or "... with a technical win". However, the so-called 'technical win' is often far from simple. So what is meant by a technical win and what does it entail? A technical win usually refers to a position in which the winning strategy is readily obvious, since similar or analogous positions are given within the wide body of chess theory. It is the technical ability of the grandmaster which elevates him above the master. By this I mean their knowledge and understanding of standard positions is superior to that of their subordinates. This 'understanding' is based on accurate positional assessments which enable the GM to choose the correct course of action for a given position. For instance, he must know which pieces to exchange according to the influence of the prevalent pawn structure, hence he must know which types of endings are won and drawn and the correct procedure.

Let us take as our first example the following position from the game Fischer - Smyslov, Monaco 1967:

### Fischer, Robert James - Smyslov, Vassily V [C69]

Monaco Grand Prix-01 GM Monte Carlo (7), 30.03.1967



This position arose from Fischer's favourite exchange variation of the Ruy Lopez. A quick assessment reveals that White stands slightly better because he has an effective 4 v 3 pawn majority on the king-side, whilst Black has an ineffective 4 v 3 majority on the queenside. Now many players in this position would automatically challenge White's control of the d-file with

**16...Rd8?** which in fact loses because the resulting King and Pawn ending is lost.

Naturally Smyslov avoided this disaster, simply because he knew the King and Pawn ending was lost, so he played 16...Ke7 and eventually managed to draw, although not without some difficulties.

**17.Rxd8+ Kxd8** Now the position is won for White - assuming he has the technique! It is worth giving the winning procedure, in order to illustrate the plight of Black's queen side 'majority'.

Play might continue with **18.f4** an effective way of creating an outside passed pawn. It should be noted that 18.h4 and 18.c4 are also effective winning tries.

**18...exf4** (18...Ke7 19.fxe5 fxe5 20.Kf2 with an even simpler winning plan as Black's king doesn't have access to the e5 square).

**19.Kf2 Ke7 20.Kf3 Ke6 21.Kxf4 b5** Note that 21...c5 22.Kg4! (22.c4? b5 23.h4 c6 24.g3 a5 25.g4 h6 26.e5 fxe5+ 27.Ke4 Kf6=) 22...c4 23.Kh5 b5 24.Kh6 transposes.

**22.Kg4!** 22.g4?! looks like it might work but there is a flaw 22...c5 23.c4! it's generally desirable to prevent Black from playing ...c4, as he could then follow up with ...c5, ...a5 and ...b4 when the powerful ...a4 and ...b3 would be a dangerous threat 23...h6 24.h4 b4 now the only way for White to continue is with 25.e5 fxe5+ 26.Ke4 when he has the potential outside passed pawn but Black can still hold with 26...a5 27.g5 h5! Black retains his own h-pawn which will offer him counterplay should White try to grab Black's queenside pawns e.g. (not 27...hxc5? 28.hxc5 when the outside passed pawn proves decisive eg 28...a4 29.g6 Kf6 30.g7 Kxg7 31.Kxe5 and the White monarch will mop up most of Black's queenside to achieve a won position) 28.g6 Kf6 29.g7 Kxg7 30.Kxe5 Kg6 31.Kd5 Kf5 32.Kxc5 Kg4 33.Kc6 when both sides will queen with equal chances.

**22...c5** 22...Ke5 23.Kh5 Kxe4 24.Kh6 Kf4 (24...Ke3? 25.Kxh7 f5 26.Kg6 f4 27.h4 Kf2 28.Kf5 and the h-pawn will decide) 25.Kxh7 Kg5 26.Kg7 and Black is powerless to prevent the White king moving over to eliminate the queenside pawns because of the threat from the advance of the h-pawn.

**23.Kh5!** White does not have time for 23.c4 here, as Black has 23...Ke5 when White must retreat to hold the position 24.Kf3 Kd4 25.g4 Ke5 26.cxb5 axb5 27.c3 c4 28.a3 c5 29.Ke3 h6 30.h4 Kd6 when neither side can make progress.

**23...c4 24.Kh6** White threatens to queen his h-pawn in 7 moves and Black's attempts to prevent this are insufficient e.g.

**24...f5** 24...a5 25.g4 a4 26.h4 c5 27.Kxh7 b4 28.g5 b3 29.cxb3 cxb3 30.axb3 axb3 31.g6 b2 32.g7 b1Q 33.g8Q+ Ke7 34.Qd5 with a winning ending.

**25.exf5+ Kxf5 26.Kxh7 c5 27.Kh6!** White prepares to escort his g-pawn home.

not 27.h4? Kg4 28.g3 b4 29.Kg6 a5 30.h5 a4 31.h6 b3 32.cxb3 cxb3 33.axb3 axb3 34.h7 b2 35.h8Q b1Q+ with a draw.

**27...b4 28.h3** the g-pawn is preparing to advance.

**28...a5 29.g4+ Kf4 30.g5 a4 31.g6 b3 32.axb3 cxb3 33.cxb3 axb3 34.g7 b2 35.g8Q b1Q 36.Qg5+ Kf3 37.Qxc5** with a won Queen and Pawn ending.

Our second example is the game M.P. Cook - N.E. Povah, Islington Open 1977, in which an interesting ending was reached, sadly illustrating 'the English disease' of poor endgame play, since neither player understood the priorities of the position.

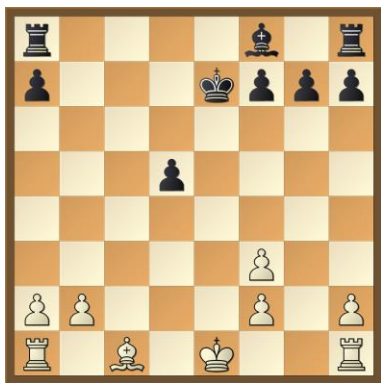
**Cook, M. - Povah, N. [B13]**

Islington Open (2), 17.12.1977

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.e3 cxd4 4.exd4 d5 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3 transposing to the Panov-Botvinnik variation of the Caro-Kann.

6...Bg4 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Qb3 Bxf3 9.gxf3 e6 10.Qxb7 Nxd4 11.Bb5+ Nxb5 12.Qc6+! forcing the king to move.

12...Ke7 13.Qxb5 Qd7 14.Nxd5+ Qxd5 15.Qxd5 exd5



I must confess to having blindly followed theory to reach this position - a dangerous practice, since I did not know quite how to assess this position. I felt that my passed d-pawn, centralised king and his doubled pawns might offer me some chances; but on the other hand my d-pawn may become a weak target and his potential outside passed pawn on the queenside might prove to be an embarrassment.

The game continued **16.Be3** which was recommended by Botvinnik in ECO volume B.

**16...Ke6** A natural move but now both players had to consider how they would continue their development, paying particular attention to the pawn structure, which determines which endings are to be favoured. Both of us knew that the king and pawn ending would favour White due to his outside passed pawn on the queenside but what of the Bishop ending or the Rook ending? It was John Nunn during the post-mortem who made both my opponent and myself feel rather naive when he summed up the position as follows: "White wins the King and Pawn ending; the Bishop ending is probably drawn because White's potential queenside passed pawn is counterbalanced by the weakness of his h-pawn; the Rook ending favours Black because of his inside passed pawn; finally White's best chances lie in the ending with all of the pieces, since Black has vulnerable a- and d-pawns and White might create a passed queenside pawn." Hence, to summarise, White should either try to avoid exchanges or somehow exchange all of the pieces. The game continued

**17.Rc1?! already an inaccuracy.**

Perhaps 17.Kd2 Rc8 18.Rhg1 g6 19.Bd4 Rg8 20.Rae1+ offered better chances.

**17...Bd6 18.Ke2 Rhc8 19.h3 a5!** Black intends to attack White's queenside pawns and to eliminate his own weak a-pawn.

**20.Kd3 Be5 21.Bd4 Bxd4 22.Kxd4** Slowly Black is achieving his objectives and the promising Rook and pawn ending is not far away, although it is being achieved more by luck than judgement!

**22...Rab8 23.b3 Rb4+ 24.Ke3 Rxc1 25.Rxc1 a4!-+** Black now has a very promising position, which should be won, mainly due to White having weak b- and h-pawns.

**26.Rb1 Ke5** (26...g5! 27.Kd3 h5 28.Kc3 Rh4 29.bxa4 Rxa4 30.Ra1 Kd6 31.a3 Rf4-+).

**27.Kd3 Rh4** (27...g5!-+).

**28.Rh1** (28.bxa4 Rxh3 29.Ke2 Rh4 30.Rb7 Ke6 31.Rb6+ Kf5 32.Rb7 Kg6 33.a5 Ra4 34.Rb5 Rxa2+ 35.Ke3 Ra3+ 36.Kf4 Ra4+ 37.Kg3 d4 with good winning chances).

**28...axb3 29.axb3 Kd6** with White's king cut-off along the fourth rank and his rook passively defending the h-pawn, Black intends to attack the weak b-pawn.

**30.Ke3 g5** fixing the White king-side pawns.



**31.Kd3 Rf4?! Black could win comfortably with 31...f5 32.Ke3 (32.Rg1 h6 33.Rg3 f4--+) 32...g4--+**

**32.Ke2 Kc5 32...h6!** was simpler as 33.Rg1 f5! preventing White from playing the active Rg4 and leaving him powerless to meet the threats of ...Kc5-b4 and ...Rh4 intending to meet Rh1 with ...g4

**33.Rg1! h6 34.Rg4! Rf6??=** throwing away the win.

the unobvious 34...Rb4! wins the b-pawn and the game, since the King and pawn ending is won 35.Rxb4 (35.Rg1 Rxb3 36.Rc1+ Kd6--+) 35...Kxb4 36.Kd3 h5! 37.Kd4 h4 38.Kxd5 (38.Ke5 f5 39.Kxf5 d4 40.Ke4 Kc3--+) 38...f5 39.Ke5 g4 40.fxg4 fxg4 41.hxg4 h3--+

**35.b4+ Kb5**

$\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$

Hence, the moral behind these games is to be aware of which endings are to be favoured for any given pawn configuration. In order to assist the reader, I shall attempt to examine certain classic endgame situations in future issues, so that he/she might be able to make the correct decisions and demonstrate the appropriate technique!



## Tactics by Paul Littlewood

### Pins

*The defensive power of a pinned piece is only imaginary - Aaron Nimzowich*

*The pin is mightier than the sword - Fred Reinfeld*

In my first article I highlighted the dangers of missing tactics. So in the next few articles I want to cover some of the tactical motifs we should look out for. Here is a simple example of a pin from one of my own games.

**P. Littlewood vs T. Gulbrandsen, Norway 1977**



White can exploit the absolute pin of the Black knight by 1.f4 winning material.

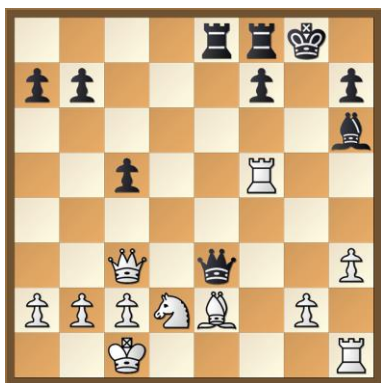
Note that the Black Knight is pinned against the Black King and so cannot move. There are other sorts of pins which are not absolute, for example if a White Knight is pinned by a Black Bishop against a White Queen. Clearly if the White knight moves then he would lose his Queen. However sometimes the fact that this pin is not absolute can be exploited. Consider the following position.



White can play the surprising move 1.Nxe5! and after 1...Bxd1 2.Bxf7+ Ke7 3.Nd5 mate.

Here is an example of how a pin can be exploited.

### Bronstein – Kaplan, Hastings 1975

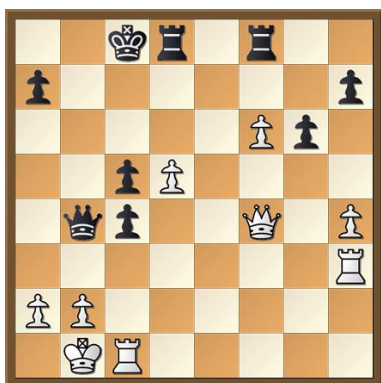


After 1...Qxc3 2.bxc3 Rxe2 3.Rd5 Rxd2 4.Rxd2 Rd8 5.Rd1 c4! ...White is powerless, as after various pawn moves he will be forced to move away from the defence of the Rook on d2 and so will be a piece down.

There are several examples which are rather more complex. Please have a go at the following two positions to see if you can spot the pin tactic involved.

### Klaman vs Lisitsin, USSR 1937

White to play and win



### Benites vs Euwe, San Juan 1948

White to play and win



Pins feature in just about every game of chess that you play and so it is important that you grasp the principles involved and apply them to your own games.



## Improvers – Solutions

The solutions to the two problems above are -

### Klaman vs Lisitsin USSR 1937

1.Rb3 ! this exploits the pin on the Black pawn on c5. Now if 1...cxb3 then 2.Qxb4 wins or if 1....Qa4 ( or 1..Qa5) 2.Qb8+ Kd7 2.Rb7+ Ke8 3.Re7 mate

### Benites vs Euwe San Juan 1948

1.Qa3! ....with the main point being that if 1...Qxa3 2.Rd8+ Ke7 3.Re8 mate. Black doesn't have to take the Queen but other moves lead to material loss.

Happy pinning!

--- Paul Littlewood Email: [plittl@hotmail.com](mailto:plittl@hotmail.com)

# FEATURES, WRITING, ANALYSIS, STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

## GM Michael Adams' Game of the Month



The English Rapid produced a lot of interesting games, but none were as spectacular as this pearl by Lawrence Trent played against Ravi Haria, who will have many happier memories to look back on from 2021.

In rapid it is important to seize the initiative, and with a tricky opening, followed up aggressively, intuitively and inventively, Lawrence puts the pressure on Ravi. Then he grabs the opportunity for a show stopping finish to this beautiful miniature when it presents itself.

### **R. Haria – L. Trent**

English Rapid Championship 2021

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.d3 h6** A slightly offbeat line ruling out Ng5 ideas, and keeping options open.

**5.c3 d6 6.a4 Be7** Black often chooses to fianchetto the bishop with 6...g6, or these days even the more adventurous 6...g5.

**7.0-0 0-0 8.Re1**



**8...Nh7!** Showing one of the advantages of h6, Black might redeploy the minor pieces with Ng5 or Bf6, and this also prepares the Kh8 and f5 ideas Lawrence executes in the game.

**9.Be3** Developing the bishop isn't ideal here, as it will impede the rook on e1. Instead 9.a5 was useful, Black is reluctant to allow the pawn to advance further as it leaves weak light squares, so would reply 9...a6. Then either 10.d4, or 10.Nbd2 Kh8 11.d4 was preferable.

**9...Kh8 10.d4** Continuing the flawed plan - this isn't consistent with White's last move 10.a5 a6 (10...f5 is premature: 11.exf5 Bxf5 12.a6 b6 13.Bd5 Bd7 14.d4) 11.Nbd2 f5 12.exf5 d5 13.Ba2 Bxf5 14.d4 was better.

**10...f5! 11.dxe5** White's centre is crumbling, due to 11.Nbd2? fxe4 12.Nxe4 d5, but 11.exf5 was the lesser evil 11...e4 12.Nfd2 (12.d5 Na5 13.Nfd2 Nxc4 14.Nxc4 Bxf5) 12...d5 13.Bf1 Bxf5 14.f3.

After 11.Bd5 f4 12.Bc1 Bf6 is good, and the intriguing 12...g5 13.Bxc6 g4 14.Bd5 gxf3 15.Qxf3 Qe8 followed by Ng5 also looks quite dangerous.

**11...fxe4 12.exd6!** There is no choice: 12.Nd4 Nxe5, 12.Nfd2 d5.

**12...Bxd6!** A good move, stronger than the tempting 12...exf3 13.dxe7 Qxe7 14.g3 Bh3 15.Nd2 Rad8 16.Qb3 when it is not so easy to exploit the pawn on f3, due to White's well developed pieces. The alternative 12...cxd6!? 13.Nd4 d5 14.Be2 Bg5! is also very sensible - Black has taken over the centre.

**13.Nd4 Ne5** A great square for the knight, Lawrence gains time by attacking the bishop.



**14.Be2 14.Nd2** was the alternative, when 14...Nf6 15.Be2 transposes to the next note. Black can also consider 14...Ng4!? 15.g3 Qe8 16.h3 which looks terrifying, but White does have a lot of defenders ready to repel the threats.

**14...Ng5 14...Qh4** is too direct 15.g3 Qe7 (15...Qh3 16.Bf1 expels the queen.) 16.Nd2 Nf6 although Black remains a little more comfortable here.

14...Nf6! is better aiming for Ng4. After 15.Nd2 (15.h3 Nd5! is crushing 16.Nc2 Nxe3 17.Nxe3 Qh4) 15...Neg4 16.Bxg4 Black has two promising tries, but White can weather the storm: 16...Nxc4 (16...Bxh2+ 17.Kxh2 Nxc4+ 18.Kg1 Qh4 19.N4f3 exf3 20.Nxf3 is ok) 17.h3 Bh2+ 18.Kh1 Bf4 19.Nxe4! (19.hxg4? Qh4+ 20.Kg1 Qh2+ 21.Kf1 Qh1+ 22.Ke2 Bxg4+) 19...Bxe3 20.fxe3 Qe7 21.Rf1 Bd7 22.hxg4 Qxe4 23.Nf5 is only a little better for Black.

The computer likes the subtle 15...a6! preparing c5 to shift White's best placed piece, as well as being the best move this is very practical - creating a new problem, whilst keeping Black's powder dry on the kingside leaves White with plenty to worry about. 16.b4 (16.h3 Qe8 heading to g6 is even stronger now White has committed a kingside pawn.) 16...b6 17.b5 axb5 18.axb5 Rxa1 19.Qxa1 Neg4, and White's queen will be missed on the kingside.

**15.Nd2 Nd3** The immediate 15...Nh3+ looks pretty scary but can be countered; 16.gxh3 Qh4 17.Nb5! – the only really convincing defensive resource, knocking out the bishop on d6 takes the sting out of the attack, 17...Bxh3 18.Nxd6 cxd6 19.Kh1 followed by Rg1 holds on.

**16.Rf1** Ravi misses a chance to turn the tables; 16.Bxd3! exd3 17.Qh5 eliminates one of the dangerous knights, and brings White's queen into the action, it also connects the White rooks. In the game White's major pieces will never get involved. 17...c5 18.Bxg5 Qxg5 19.Qxg5 hxg5 20.Ne6! Bxe6 (20...Rf5 21.Nc4) 21.Rxe6 and the d-pawn is more of a weakness than a strength: 21...Bf4 22.Nc4.



**16...Nf4!** The knight can't be easily removed, so it will remain a real thorn in White's side.



**17.Bg4** 17.Bxf4 Bxf4 18.b4 (18.g3 Bxd2 19.Qxd2 c5 20.Nb3 Qb6 21.Nc1 Bh3 is crushing, or 18.Nc4 Nh3+ 19.gxh3 Bxh3 opens the White king allowing the Black queen to join the attack.) 18...Nh3+ 19.gxh3 Bxh3 opens the White king allowing the Black queen to join the attack.) 18...Nh3+ 19.gxh3 (19.Kh1 Bxh2 leaves White's king too open: 20.gxh3 Bxh3 21.Kxh2 Qh4 22.N2f3 exf3 23.Nxf3 Rxf3 24.Bxf3 Bxf1+) 19...Qg5+ 20.Kh1 Bxd2 21.Rg1 Qd5 22.Bc4 Qxc4 23.Qxd2 Qf7 and White's shattered structure is an enduring problem.

**17...Nxb2** Effectively the winning move, as the only escape route unsurprisingly eludes Ravi, but objectively 17...c5 18.Nb5 Bb8 lining up a lot of nasty threats was stronger 19.g3 (19.Bxc5 Bxg4 20.Qxg4 h5! 21.Qd1 Ngh3+! 22.Kh1 Qg5 23.g3 Qxc5.) 19...Nfh3+ 20.Kh1 a6 keeping a big advantage.

**18.Kxg2 Nf3** The slow 18...c5!? 19.Nb5 Bf4 also leaves White with terrible practical problems, e.g 20.Bxc8 Rxc8 21.Bxf4 Rxf4 22.Nc4 Qf6 and there are too few defenders available to stop a decisive breakthrough. 23.Qh5 Nf3 24.Qh3 Qg6+ 25.Kh1 Rh4 26.Qxc8+ Kh7 27.Qc7 Qh5 mates soon. The correct 21.Nc4! Qe8 22.Qg4! h5 23.Qh4 hangs on.



**19.Bxc8** The only move, captures on f3 are hopeless: 19.N2xf3 Bxg4, or 19.N4xf3 Bxg4. If 19.Bxf3 Qh4! decides 20.Rh1 Bh3+ 21.Kg1 Rxf3.

**19...Qxc8**



**20.Rh1?** White has only one, hard to see move here: 20.Rg1! Nxf1 (20...Qg4+ 21.Kh1 Qh3 22.N4xf3 exf3 23.Nf1, or 20...Nxf2 21.Qh5 get White out of trouble) 21.Qxg1 Bf4 22.Re1 leaves White's king still open, but exchanges have doused the flames for now. Instead, 20.N2xf3? exf3+ is hopeless 21.Kh1 (21.Nxf3 Qg4+ 22.Kh1 Rxf3) 21...Qh3.

**20...Nh4+! 21.Kf1** Forced due to 21.Kg1 Qh3 22.Qf1 Qg4+.

**21...Qh3+ 22.Ke2 22.Ke1 Ng2+ 23.Ke2 Nxe3** is clearly insufficient.



**22...Rxf2+!** A devastating, brilliant blow 22...Qg4+ 23.Kf1 is less impressive.

**23.Kxf2 23.Bxf2 Qd3+ 24.Ke1 Ng2** mate is the very pretty point, as the queen and knight duo combine perfectly to conclude the game.

### Analysis Diagram



**23...Rf8+**



White resigned, due to 24.N2f3 Qg2+ 25.Ke1 Nxf3+ 26.Nxf3 Rxf3 when he is helpless: 27.Qd4 Qxh1+.  
Or 24.Ke2 Qg2+, 24.Ke1 Ng2+.



## **The World Championship 2021: Carlsen – Nepomniachtchi: Reflections by Peter Wells**



On December 11th 2021, the third in a series of increasingly perplexing blunders put an end to Ian Nepomniachtchi's (Nepo's) World Championship challenge and saw his opponent, Magnus Carlsen crowned as Champion for an extraordinary fifth time. As someone who had suggested before the match (in the November edition of *Chess Moves*) that the pundits may be dismissing Nepo a little too lightly, I guess this is the moment to eat some humble pie. The emphatic score line of 7.5 – 3.5 meant that the match even wound up three games before its scheduled finish. In the old system, where draws 'didn't count' it would have sounded even worse as a simple 4-0, so in one sense it is difficult to object to Malcolm Pein's reference in *Chess* magazine to Nepo being 'swept aside'.

However, particularly since Covid prevented me from submitting my intended 'interim report' for the December issue, it feels incumbent on me to recall quite how different the match felt at that stage. For, in a way perhaps not seen since Kasparov's 'officially' thwarted comeback against Karpov in 1984, this was a 'match of two halves'. It is in no way seeking to diminish the portion of pie which I ought to ingest, to claim that a huge part of the tension generated by the most viewed chess match in history, would fail to be captured by overly focusing on Nepo's collapse following the historic sixth game. After five games and for much of the sixth the match was delicately poised, and the general sense was that Nepo could feel quite content with the way he had settled in. Taken as a whole, having followed much of the commentary including that on social media, the match also forms a fascinating study of quite how transient both our narratives and the issues they apparently throw up can prove. It also offered considerable vindication of those who have talked up the importance of psychology in the game. More than any title match I can remember, it felt as if Nepo's demise following Game 6 was, at the risk of brazen self-promotion, *All in the Mindset*.

World Championship games are customarily examined in minute detail both during and after the event and this was truer than ever. The reason was, in part, the very highly qualified teams of commentators and even streamers on hand – I gather the legendary Vasyl Ivanchuk's Twitch stream came as a surprise to many, it certainly did to me! One new addition was the innovation of having top quality engines playing matches from key positions reached in the match, offering an insight into how their numerical assessments were likely to pan out in terms of results – kind of putting some flesh onto the over-used phrase 'with best play'. In any case, despite the lopsided final result, I would contend that the early games offered quite sufficient content to justify such scrutiny.

In particular there were rich pickings for students of contemporary opening preparation and ample evidence not only of very hard graft but also considerable creative thinking on the part of both teams. Indeed, the very first two games vividly illustrated how advances in opening theory can occur rapidly at the point where assumptions which have long been held sacred begin to be questioned.

Take for example the 8 h3 anti-Marshall position of Round 1.



I wonder how many times players have begun their analysis of this position by inserting the moves 8...Bb7 9 d3 and only then begun to consider whether Black needs to 'be solid' with 9...d6, or can still seek Marshall-style counterplay with 9...d5? I'm pretty sure I have and that I am definitely not alone in this. Megabase 2021 features more than 5,500 games from this position, yet only a handful have featured the 8...Na5!? move which Magnus and his team came up with. Once the e5-pawn is securely defended, of course, there has been a consensus that ...Na5 is a 'positional threat', but surely the e-pawn cannot just be abandoned? The upshot was that Black obtained counterplay for his pawn after 9 Nxe5 Nxb3 10 axb3 Bb7 11 d3 d5 12 exd5 Qxd5 13 Qf3 Bd6, sufficient that it is not hard to believe this will prove attractive to those keen to venture the Marshall Gambit in the first place. This will doubtless be debated further in future, but it was enough to ensure that Nepo didn't repeat 8 h3. Perhaps most impressive of all was that the speed with which Nepo played 14 Kf1 left little doubt that his team had considered this too.

Game 2 also brought home quite how swiftly an opening can evolve once fresh possibilities come into view. The Catalan with 7 Qc2 a6 has been popular for decades, with 7...b5, intending to meet 8 a4 with 8...b4, more recently establishing itself as a more or less respectable alternative.



However, by the time this position arose on the board in Game 2, it was apparently clear to both teams that Black can meet 8 a4 with the surprising 8...Bb7 9 axb5 a6 – a pawn sacrifice which may in time even prove a stiff challenge to one of the most highly regarded white openings. In the event Magnus elected to take quite a substantial risk - 8 Ne5!? - to shy away from this. In one sense this fitted with the approach which typified his openings – a preference for ensuring that he was the first to deviate from established lines, probably indicating (as I believe Anish Giri suggested) a willingness to venture

onto slightly less optimal paths against a human opponent, rather than test the most critical choices which come with increased danger of an engine-generated surprise.

However, whilst this elegantly encapsulates his approach with Black – especially his 8...Rb8 move of Games 5 and 7 – there was surely something more at work here. For a player who later attributed his success to making “very few mistakes in simple positions”, the decision to be the prime mover in reaching the following random mess



was a fascinating and very brave one. Peter Heine Nielsen - the hugely successful leader of Magnus's team - suggested in a superb interview with Chess India's indefatigable Sagar Shah, that this was partly about wanting to have the Catalan available and needing to find an alternative path in order to make it 'playable'. However, in conjunction with the first game it looks very much like an attempt to unsettle Nepo before he could even get any rhythm going and it should be said that – at least prior to Game 6 – it appeared not to have really succeeded on this level.

Given this incredibly lively start to the match, I was quite dismayed at how quickly the narrative about the inevitability of draws in classical chess got going. Of course, given the total absence of decisive games in the Caruana match three years ago and their scarcity against Karjakin in 2016 too, this was always a background concern – and one to which I alluded back in November. However, it took only a couple of less scintillating draws in Games 3 and 4 for this to gain considerable momentum. Game 4 in fact struck me as a considerable achievement by Nepo, whose stunning preparation deftly removed the sting from a creative novelty, a tribute not only to his team's thoroughness, but indeed a reminder of how all this involves extraordinary feats of memory.

There are, I would suggest, two versions of this narrative. The more radical is that classical chess itself is in crisis – that the ever deeper penetration by engines in the opening phase (and beyond) has gradually squeezed the ability of White not just to obtain an advantage, but even to reach a sufficiently interesting position that playing for a win is realistic in the absence of blunders. If I understood him correctly, I think I am with Peter Heine Nielsen on this: we may be headed in this direction, but we are not there yet. Moreover, when this does become a more urgent worry, my sympathies will almost certainly lie with those who wish to mix things up through modifying the time control etc. rather than by moving to Chess 360 or otherwise messing significantly with the rules. The less drastic version of the argument is that it is the structure of World Championship matches specifically which render this crisis far more acute – the lengthy preparation over several months directed at one specific individual which enables it to reach far more threatening proportions than in other events. Add to this the fact that coming back from a defeat in a match of just 12 or 14 games is notoriously difficult - thus tipping the players in the direction of a 'safety first' mentality - and I am inclined to agree that this adds up to a significant issue. Once again, though, I think reform should be approached with caution.

Unprecedented viewing figures for this match suggest once again that a head-to-head World Championship contest has a special appeal and that the chess world should be especially judicious in how it seeks to improve the format. It bears repeating that it is our rich history which does so much to



ensure that chess is not perceived as 'just another board game'. It should also be mentioned that some attempts at reform were implemented this time: the slightly longer match – scheduled at 14 games, alongside a less generous time control (30 second increment only after move 60) and fewer rest days. With regard to the latter in particular, it is arguable that what is an advantage in terms of trying to break a deadlock might prove detrimental once the situation changes into one of a player seeking to come back from behind. We can only speculate whether a bit more time to rest might have offered Nepo the chance to recover some of his composure.

My first worry that we might not see a decisive game - or more specifically that Nepo might be proceeding too gingerly to be a player able to deliver one - occurred in Game 5. This moment has been widely discussed, but I think it is significant enough to bear repeating. From the diagram, having secured just the kind of pleasant edge which appeared to be the goal of his opening strategy, Nepo failed to seize the moment, eschewing a move which seemed obvious enough to most observers.



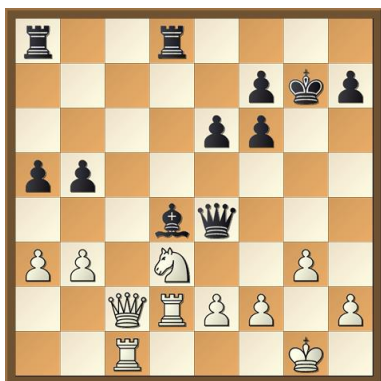
There has been significant debate about Nepo's match strategy, whether he was overall a bit too tentative and not really true to his dynamic style. Some said this during the early games, but concern grew at the stage when he needed to strike back. For many, these concerns manifested themselves in terms of opening advice – some calling for the Italian or the English (both of which seemed plausible and eventually made an appearance), a further group for the Scotch (seemed less likely to me) and a vocal minority for the King's Gambit (well, each to their own). What is clearly true, is that for the approach he opted for to work, it was essential that he should seize any chances that came along. Magnus had placed his pieces slightly strangely here and White's obvious plan of seizing space by pushing the c-pawn with 20 c4! (looking to push further) would have likely placed Black under some tangible pressure. In the press conference, Nepo seemed keen to suggest that his preference for 20 Red1 was merely a stylistic choice, motivated by a keenness to keep the c4 square for a piece. Deep down, though, I suspect he knew. Matthew Sadler informs us that Black tended to hold the position after 20 c4! in games between the top engines, but did so with 20...Qe6! This makes sense in that it pins the pawn against the b3 bishop, but nonetheless looks very awkward to the human eye. In any case, the point is that White's goal in such positions is to put pressure and make the defender uncomfortable and Nepo here missed his single best chance to do this in a risk-free setting.

It is way beyond the scope of this article to attempt a comprehensive analysis of Magnus's historic victory in Game 6. Interested readers can find myriad sources discussing the play in detail. I will limit myself here to a couple of brief comments.

Firstly, there is no real debate that this was *the* turning point of the match. Not only was it the game which broke the deadlock, but from the point where the queenside pawns were cleared away, Magnus's extraordinary, remorseless technique throughout the different phases, never mind the record number of moves for any World championship (an impressive 136!) must have been utterly exhausting for the defender. For Magnus too, but it is much easier to take this gruelling schedule (the

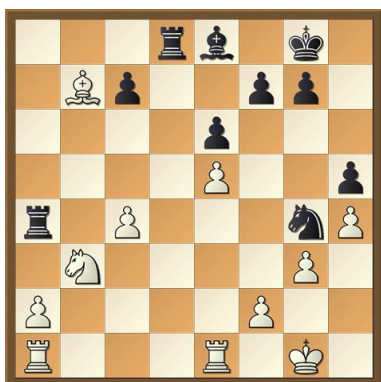
game ended after midnight!) when victorious. This grinding is prime Magnus territory anyhow and combining relief with deep satisfaction he was clearly ecstatic at the end.

Somehow, this mammoth achievement did a great deal to dampen the narrative that classical chess is in crisis. Curious, in a way, since if the only way to break the deadlock were to put the two players through an ordeal on that scale then it might be rational to start having more serious misgivings! Moreover, whilst I have seen varying descriptions of this extraordinary game, I feel strongly that credit has to go to Nepo for the intensity of the fight, and even the pessimists have never doubted that classical chess can produce great fights if both sides are intent on playing for the win. Several of Nepo's decisions – keeping queens on the board with ...gxf6 and the much criticised decision to go for the imbalance of queen v two rooks with the infamous 25...Rac8 from the diagram below, only really make sense if he had half an eye on fighting for the full point.



I liked Jan Timman's insightful observation that "It's hard to see how Black could realistically play for a win with his weakened king's position," but at the same time the whole picture was blurred by Magnus's rare time pressure and - as a matter of record - there is no denying that Black's best chances to emerge victorious came later, with his curious failure to play ...Bxb4 on either moves 35 or 36.

If this has an impact on the relevance of this game to the classical chess debate, it pales in comparison with the effect it probably had on Nepo. Losing an exhausting game after a heroic defence is one thing, but where it is possible to look back on moments which make it feel like a full-point swing, the pain is increased considerably. None of this fully explains the subsequent collapse, but I had the feeling that people underestimated the extent to which Nepo should take time out for recovery and not try to force the pace. In fact, he did this – very sensibly – for one round, but in Game 8 he looked (actually for the first time in the match) totally out of shape. He seemed to invest time at the wrong moments, be unsure as to his aims in the game – for all that the use of the Petroff Defence should have offered a clue – and then blundered to render his overall task in the match essentially insurmountable. I don't want to dwell on the sad demise – I am worried that this is the part of the match which will, thanks to the headlines, be all too easily remembered. However, one further moment is worth recalling.



The first thing to say here is that, until the blunder, Nepo had somewhat resembled his old self. Black is fine in this position, but by playing 27 f3!? Nh6 28 Be4, Nepo could have perhaps ensured that it was Magnus who would have to make good decisions to secure full equality – 28...Rxc4 29 Rec1, for example, could lead to trouble. Instead Nepo played the catastrophic blunder 27 c5?? allowing his bishop to be trapped with 27...c6.

We are all accustomed now to chess spectators playing the instant expert thanks to the proximity of an engine, but this time when there was a chorus of discontent at the primitive nature of the blunder, it was hard to disagree. Yes, most amateur players would indeed spot the problem with 27 c5. I couldn't help recalling one of Capablanca's outrageously immodest annotations which, from memory, ran something like "My opponent should have realised that a player of my skill and experience would never have allowed such a move, if it were good!" Probably some such thought from Nepo would have sufficed to realise that such an 'ideal' move must have a flaw if Magnus had permitted it. I also had nagging away at me a Twitter exchange from a couple of days before where I had replied to an excellent general point from @Duffman, by indicating that it was a bit far-fetched to imagine that a piece blunder might decide a game at this level. More humble pie.

This blunder seemed to cause genuine sadness in the chess community. Niclas Huschenbeth tweeted with more than a hint of bitterness: "I hope everybody who complained about the first five draws is happy now" and honestly, I couldn't help sympathising. My own tweet, pointing out that even Magnus looked "conflicted" – his relief and obvious sporting gain seemingly balanced by some regret at the manner of his opponent's collapse – was positively received. As Vishy Anand said poignantly, after a move like 27 c5?? "You don't even know what to tell yourself anymore."

Nepo's final blunder two days later was again best summed up by a tweet, this time David Smerdon who lamented "Oh Nepo, no, not like this." That too echoed my feelings watching live, but there was no getting away from the fact that the end no doubt came by now as a great relief.

### Afterword

So where did the match leave us? First and foremost, in great admiration of Magnus. Yes, he only prevailed by a single win in the phase of the match in which his opponent played at the level of which we know he is capable. Yet the fact that Nepo collapsed in the way he did is itself down to Magnus. As Jonathan Rowson wrote in *The Moves that Matter* "At some point you have to accept the brutality of competition. The strength of really strong players lies in their ability to make other strong players play below their strength...The strong weaken the weaker because strength is ultimately a function of the will, and in a context where there is no escape, one side's will ultimately yield to the other." Yes, Magnus is unmatched in simple positions in particular, but it is probably his astonishing will to win which ultimately gives him the edge. It is hard to imagine any other player who could have triumphed in the crucial sixth game, and it was this essentially which won him the contest.

Magnus didn't wait long after his celebrations to drop a bombshell. Despite having appeared unusually content through much of the match, his reservations about the World Championship match system, together perhaps with the limited satisfaction which he derived from Nepo's psychological collapse, led him to suggest that he may elect not to defend his title next time. This was not, he hastened to add, an announcement of retirement but rather a refocussing on a new goal – to be the first player to reach 2900.

This may, of course, help to foster a fruitful discussion regarding the future of the World Championship and perhaps some moves towards reform. Or, regrettably, it could lead to a World Championship without the player generally acknowledged to be the best in the world.

Intriguingly, but in my view a little disturbingly, Magnus did suggest that the qualification of Alireza Firouzja for the next match could motivate him to play. This struck me as a little odd on two levels.

First, the days in which the World Champion could seek to influence who would be his challenger appeared to be gone and unlamented. There is nothing wrong *per se* with what Magnus has said – he has a perfect right to try or not to defend his title – but the situation which has pertained under his reign in which we could be confident that he would compete with whichever player was thrown up by the system had a very healthy feel to it. Even more than this, I couldn't help wondering whether Magnus had fallen victim to the phenomenon of being swept up by possibly transitory narratives which I discussed earlier. Alireza is a fantastic player, obviously with tremendous potential, and at the time of Magnus's statement he had just enjoyed a magnificent result in the European team championship which had propelled him to the No 2 spot in the World. Perhaps Magnus is simply right and a match with him would be a uniquely compelling prospect. But possibly we might ask, what of Ding Liren, whom Magnus has yet to play in a match and who would have great significance as the first Chinese player to compete in an Open World Championship. Or Nodirbek Abdusattorov who by sensationally winning the World Rapid Championship (in which, incidentally or perhaps not so incidentally, Nepo gave notice that his recovery may not be the slow process that I had feared) perhaps offered a reminder that there may be other major talents in the coming generation. Whatever the future holds, let us hope that our extraordinary World Champion may be at the centre of it for years to come.



## Arkell's Endings



### Queen and Pawn Endings – Playing by the Rules

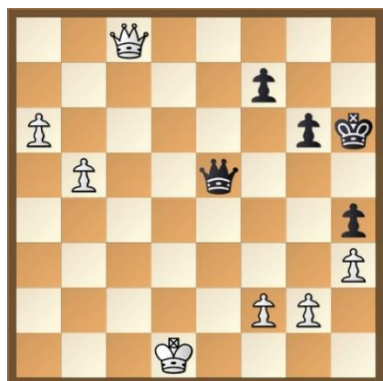
Each problem that I solved became a rule, which served afterwards to solve other problems – *René Descartes, Discourse on Method*

Invention hovers always a little above the rules – *Mary Oliver*

#### Keith Arkell - Azer Mirzoev

Hastings Challengers (10), 07.01.1998

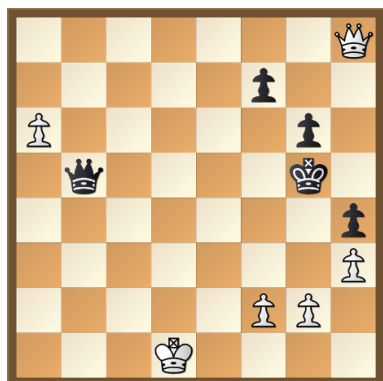
1.c4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bf5 6.Nh4 e6 7.Nxf5 exf5 8.e3 Bb4 9.Bxc4 0-0 10.0-0 Qe7 11.a5 Nbd7 12.a6 b5 13.Be2 Nb6 14.Qc2 Qd7 15.Rd1 Rac8 16.Bd2 Bd6 17.Bd3 g6 18.e4 fxe4 19.Nxe4 Nxe4 20.Bxe4 Rfe8 21.Bf3 c5 22.dxc5 Rxc5 23.Qb3 Nc4 24.Bb4 Rce5 25.Bc3 R5e7 26.h3 h5 27.Bd5 Re2 28.Bxc4 bxc4 29.Qxc4 Qe7 30.Rd5 Be5 31.Bxe5 Rxe5 32.Rxe5 Qxe5 33.Rb1 Rb8 34.b4 Qb5 35.Qc7 Qb6 36.Qf4 Qb5 37.Qc7 Qb6 38.Qf4 Qb5 39.Rc1 Rf8 40.Qd6 Re8 41.Rc7 Qb8 42.Qd7 Rf8 43.b5? h4 44.Kf1 Kg7 45.Rxa7 Qe5 46.Rc7 Qa1+ 47.Ke2 Qe5+ 48.Kd3 Kh6 49.Rc4 Qf6 50.Rc8 Qa1 51.Ke2? Qe5+ 52.Kd3 Qa1 53.Ke2? Qe5+ 54.Kd1 Rxc8 55.Qxc8





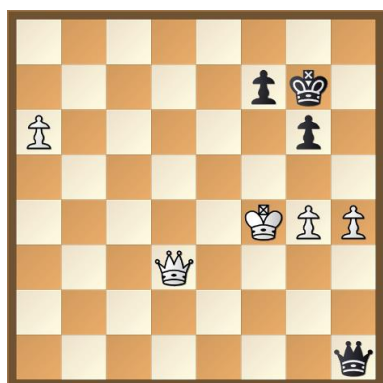
Queen endgames are the most difficult to calculate - not only are the variations often very long, but there are many branches. So because humans are not very good at calculating, we arm ourselves with a series of useful axioms. I will identify some of these as I take you through a Queen ending I played against an Azeri GM two decades ago.

**55...Qxb5 56.Qh8+ Kg5**



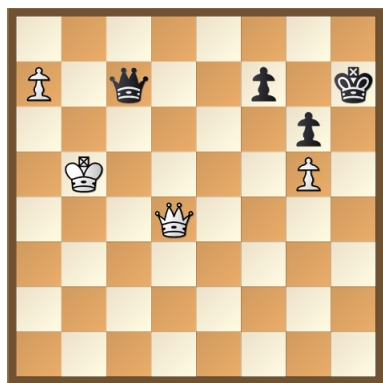
**57.f4+** This is winning, but I should have been more aware of our first axiom, that Queen endings abound in mating patterns. I think it was Larsen who first drew attention to the numerous occasions when the player with the advantage gets complacent and stumbles into a mate. Here I should have seen 57 Qd4, which shields my King from perpetual check, prepares to push the pawn to a7 and sets up a forced mate against 57...Qxa6: 58 f4+ Kf5 ( or 58... Kh6/h5 59 Qh8# ) 59 Qe5#.

**57...Kxf4 58.Qxh4+ Kf5 59.Qf2+ Kg5 60.h4+ Kh6 61.Qf6 Qd5+ 62.Ke1 Kh7 63.Kf2 Qd2+ 64.Kg3 Qa2 65.Qd6 Qb3+ 66.Kf4 Qa4+ 67.Kg5 Qa1 68.Qf6 Qa2 69.Qc6 Qa1 70.Kg4 Qd4+ 71.Kh3 Qe3+ 72.g3 Qg1= 73.Qf3 Kg7 74.g4 Qa1 75.Qd3 Qh1+ 76.Kg3 Qg1+ 77.Kf3 Qh1+ 78.Kf4**



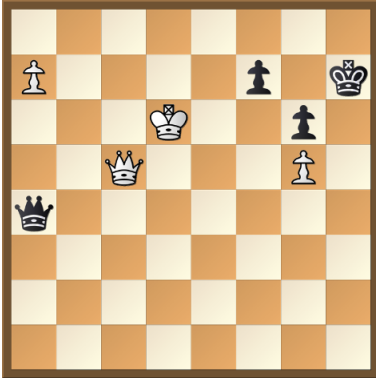
A good generalisation in Q+P endings (Axiom No.2) is that the number of pawns matters very little compared with how advanced they are.

**78...Qxh4 79.Qd4+ Kh7 80.a7 Qh2+ 81.Ke4 Qe2+ 82.Kd5 Qa6 83.g5 Qe6+ 84.Kc5 Qa6 85.Kb4 Qb7+ 86.Ka5 Qc7+ 87.Kb5**



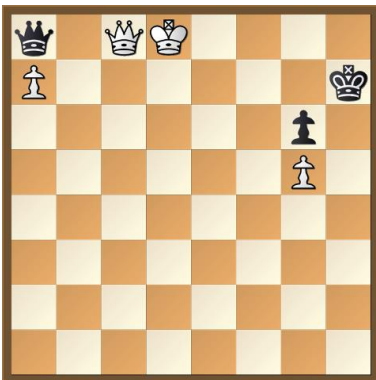
There is one aspect in which Q+P endings are no different from others: use the King actively!

**87...Qb7+ 88.Qb6 Qd7+ 89.Kc5 Qe7+ 90.Kc4 Qe4+ 91.Qd4 Qc6+ 92.Kd3 Qf3+ 93.Qe3 Qd5+ 94.Kc3 Qc6+ 95.Kb4 Qb7+ 96.Kc4 Qc6+ 97.Qc5 Qb7 98.Kd4 Qd7+ 99.Ke5 Qe8+ 100.Kf4 Qa4+ 101.Ke5 Qe8+ 102.Kd6 Qa4**



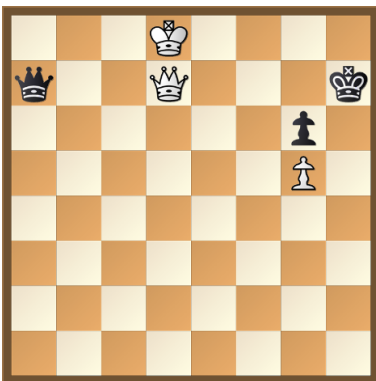
My opponent has done a good job in keeping his King away from cross-checks (Axiom No.3), but my own King can now frighten the f-pawn.

**103.Ke7 Qe4+ 104.Kxf7 Qf3+ 105.Ke8 Qa8+ 106.Kd7 Qb7+ 107.Kd8 Qa8+ 108.Qc8**

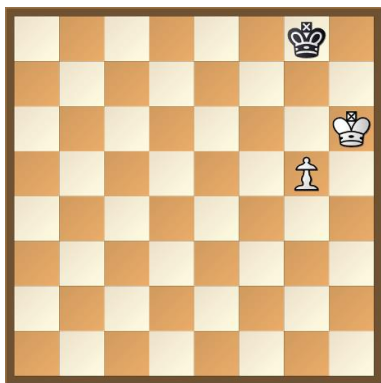


And here is the final axiom ( No.4 ) for this article: familiarise yourself with basic K+P endings. If, without Queens, the King can get to e6 or e7, White wins irrespective of whose move it is.

**108...Qxa7 109.Qd7+**



**109...Qxd7+ 110.Kxd7 Kg8 111.Ke7 Kg7 112.Ke6 Kg8 113.Kf6 Kh7 114.Kf7 Kh8 115.Kxg6 Kg8 116.Kh6**



1-0



## **The Interview**

Mark Rivlin meets GM Matthew Sadler

Photograph by [Brendan O’Gorman](#)



Matthew Sadler is one of England’s greatest chess players – twice British champion and currently ranked two in England and 42 in the world with a FIDE rating of 2694. After getting his GM title at 19 and playing on the professional circuit for a few years, Matthew then opted for a main career in IT while continuing to play occasional competitive games and writing. Greatly respected around the chess world, Matthew has co-written with WIM Natasha Regan two critically acclaimed books on AI and chess and has recently published *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement*.

Questions - Mark Rivlin

*Following up on Game Changer (co-written with WIM Natasha Regan, and recipient of the 2019 ECF Book of the Year Award) you have recently published The Silicon Road to Chess*

*Improvement. What is the main theme of this book and why did you decide to write it?*

The main theme is how to work with engines to improve your game and how to learn from the amazing games they play. I give a lot of examples from my own practice and training (such as secret matches I played with Leela and Stockfish) to show all the creative ways in which I’ve used engines to keep improving as I get older. I’m never quite sure why I suddenly get the urge or the energy to write books, it’s usually after a period of intense analysis that I suddenly feel it’s time to tell everyone about all the amazing things I’ve seen. And this was very much the case with *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement*.

*Working in IT has been your main source of income for around 20 years. Tell us about your work.*

I’m currently working as an IT Solutions Architect for a European payments processor, focused on Remote Access Solutions. A perfect thing to be doing when so many people have to work from home!

*Despite not playing chess full-time, you are still among the top 50 players in the world with a current rating of 2694. How much chess will you be playing over the board in 2022?*

I would love to play some over-the-board chess in 2022, but I guess I'm waiting to see whether things return to some pre-Covid-19 normality or whether the current state of things will become the new normal.

*What has been the main impact of increased engine capability/AI on the way chess is played at different levels – social chess to GM level?*

For social players, I think that strong engines in particular have made spectating chess a lot more fun: you can watch complicated games played by top players with a good idea of what is going on just by looking at the evaluation bar and some suggested moves. Moreover, players keen to improve have access to fantastic online resources based around the capabilities of strong engines, whether it's opening courses supported by perfect engine analysis or tools to verify your games automatically. At the GM level, engines have transformed the quality of opening play and accelerated the pace of opening developments beyond anything imaginable even ten years ago.

*What does the future hold as computers get more powerful and what's the next step for AlphaZero?*

Engines continue to amaze us. You might think at some stage that a ceiling must have been reached, but engines continue to improve at a fast pace. In particular, the strength of engines in the opening and in long-term planning and evaluation has been transformed by the 'neural nets' (starting with AlphaZero) and engines now outstrip us by far even in those areas. I'm really positive for human chess though and I'm expecting that the next generation of young players – brought up on all this fantastic engine-enhanced training material – is going to be clearly stronger than the current generation. I don't know whether Magnus Carlsen will reach a 2900 classical rating, but it wouldn't amaze me if one of his successors did.

*As an avid chess book reader and reviewer for New in Chess, tell us about some of your favourite titles and how they have influenced you.*

I've felt really lucky to be a reviewer of books in a golden age of chess literature. Not only in terms of the accuracy of the (engine-checked) analysis, but also the wealth of strong players writing about the game and the breadth of subjects. In the past month I've read a lovely book about the maverick Dutch IM Manuel Bosboom (*Chess Buccaneer* by Merijn van Delft and Peter Boel), the next superb instalment of *Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships* (Sergey Voronkov) and *Off the Board Chess*, a wonderful self-published biography of games by AP Smith. I'm never really sure precisely what I've learnt from reading such a book, until an idea flashes into my mind during a game and I realise where it came from. I love to fill my head with evocative games full of drama – that's the sort of knowledge you can recall in the heat of battle, much more so than long reams of analysis.

*Your recent interview on the Perpetual Chess podcast was the perfect companion for a two-hour walk with your views on a range of chess subjects from Magnus Carlsen's play in the world championship to your young nephew's understanding of the value of the pieces; from Alireza Firouzja's engine footprint to the Carlsbad Structure. Your enthusiasm is contagious, so will you be doing more of this kind of work?*

That's really nice to hear! Well, I'm not a professional chess player so I do this kind of thing on an ad-hoc basis. It's never really planned and that's fine by me. I do publish videos quite regularly on the *Silicon Road* YouTube site - <https://www.youtube.com/c/siliconroadchess> - analysing engine games and giving an engine perspective on human games, like the recent World Championship between Carlsen and Ian Nepomniachtchi.

*We've experienced a huge resurgence in chess during Covid-19 with many rookies taking up the game online and getting to 1500 at the speed of light. But for club players at this level, pushing towards 2000 is a tough climb. Can AI form part of the diet to help club players get better?*

I definitely think so. We've already mentioned AI-based online training tools (Simon Williams' [gchess.com](https://www.gchess.com) and [decodechess.com](https://www.decodechess.com) are two examples that come immediately to mind) but there are also lots of great ways of training with your own engine and I give a lot of attention to that in *The Silicon Road* with lots of examples from my own training efforts.

*On the podcast mentioned above you talk about the effect that losing has on players. Two years ago, I experienced a long run of defeats and I was frightened to lift a piece for fear of messing up. How can and should club players cope with defeat?*

To be honest, I reacted variably throughout my career to losses, so I decided that the most important thing was to avoid them as much as possible. I think the essential problem is that you're never quite sure how much you've been affected by a loss until you're playing the next game. At the end of the day, I think that having plenty of energy is the key. Losing a game knocks the wind out of you and slows your momentum and you need additional energy to get going again. So things like sport, or a nice long walk are really good for recharging your batteries after a loss. Also making sure that you stay positive by doing stuff that makes you feel life is worth living even after a loss, for me that's usually a good meal with some wine and a huge dessert or two.

*You worked with Garry Kasparov analysing some of the recent World Championship games. Tell us about this and when analysing the best players in the world, to what level of player do you pitch the analysis?*

That's always a tricky one because the strength of the viewers varies a lot and you want to provide something for everyone. Certainly with Garry, his most unique quality from my point of view is his World Championship and match experience which is simply amazing. So I was always happy when he started talking about his own World Championships and relating his experience to the Carlsen-Nepomniachtchi match. I think those are things that can appeal to players of all strengths, nothing too chess technical, just the insights of someone who's done and seen it all. And in general, those are the types of insights I try to go for when commentating myself – rather than long variations – though I can't help getting excited by nice tactics 😊

*Outside of chess and your IT work, what are your other interests?*

My brother is also an IT professional by day, and in his case, a concert pianist by night. So I've always been hugely keen on classical music and art from an early age. Going to concerts and art galleries was a big pastime before lockdown. I think that's probably the thing I miss most at the moment! Other than that, thanks to Julian Hodgson recommending *Babylon 5* to me many years ago, I've become a huge science-fiction fan and I read a lot of science fiction books as well!

*The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement* is available at the Chess and Bridge shop and online.

Link to Ben Johnson's interview with Matthew on the Perpetual Chess Podcast here - <https://www.perpetualchesspod.com/new-blog/2021/12/21/ep-258-gm-matthew-sadler>

Link to one of the recap analysis from the world championships here - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bw1h0tJzj3c>



## Problem Corner

Christopher Jones with his monthly conundrum

In the last Chess Moves I left you with this problem to solve –



Mate in 2

Herbert Ahues

2nd Prize, *Schach-Echo* 1960

As I said last time, there is a white piece that simply by moving anywhere threatens mate. Your job was to find the black defence that succeeds if White moves that piece ‘any old where’, and then to explore how White can improve upon ‘any old where’ and find the one square that works. (As I also said, it would be anathema to a composer to set this position if the strong moves 1...Bxd5 and 1...Kxd5 were *unprovided* – that is, could be played with impunity if it were Black to move; but you’ll see that as matters stand those moves could be met respectively by 2.Nd2 and 2.Qf3.)

The white piece in question is the d4B. Any move by it threatens 2.Rd4; but moving it ‘any old where’ fails against 1...Bxd5, now a viable defence. (If the white Bishop moves on the d4-a7 diagonal then the intended response, 2.Nd2 now allows 2...Ke5, and if it moves on the d4-h8 diagonal then we have 2.Nd2 Kxe3.) We correct this by trying 1.Be5 (cutting the line b8-f4 and so preparing to meet 1...Bxd5 by 2.Qxf4); but now Black successfully guards d4 by 1...Ba7 as we’ve lost the response 2.Re5. So try 1.Bf6. Now 1...Bxd5 fails to 2.Nf6 (as we’ve cut the line f8-f5); but 1...Rd8!, which in other lines fails to the (now impossible) 2.Nf6, is the refutation. Finally we come to 1...Bg7!, which is indeed the key move, enabling 1...Bxd5 to be met by 2.Ng5. From the foregoing we know how the unsuccessful defences 1...Kxd5, 1...Ba7 and 1...Rd8 are met.

Composers of mate-in-2 problems frequently like to show interesting tries (plausible-looking ‘solutions’ that fail because of just one successful black defence), not only because this makes for a good puzzle but also it makes a point about how the pieces on the board interact with each other, which may make the process of establishing what must be the key move a much more interesting and satisfying investigation. Consider this problem –



Mate in 2

Leonid Isaev

1st Prize, *Shakhmatny Listok* 1927

With the black King on a black square, it makes sense to examine possibilities of White's black-square Bishop or Queen inflicting the mate. 1.Qd6 would threaten 2.Qxh6; but then 1...Rb6! (which in the diagram position would be met by 2.Bxc5) is a successful defence. Similarly, let's try 1.Bd6, threatening 2.Bf4. Now 1...Ng2! succeeds - in the diagram it would allow 2.Qg3, but the Bishop has blocked the Queen's route to that square. So by going to d6 both the Queen and the Bishop have interfered on lines that White needs to keep open (the Bishop's line to c5, the Queen's line to g3) mutual self-interference. For this reason the key move is 1.Bf8!, threatening 2.Bxh6 without any interference.

I'll leave you with a problem that takes this idea further.



Mate in 2

Lev Loshinsky

1st Prize, *Bulletin Central Chess Club USSR* 1972, v. David Shire, *The Problemist Supplement* 2020

This has some similarities with the Isaev problem, as the Queen and the b1 Bishop look likely candidates to inflict mate – this time each of them could threaten mate by going to e4 or to d3. But do any of these moves work? Solution next time!

As ever, if you have any queries or comments don't hesitate to email me.

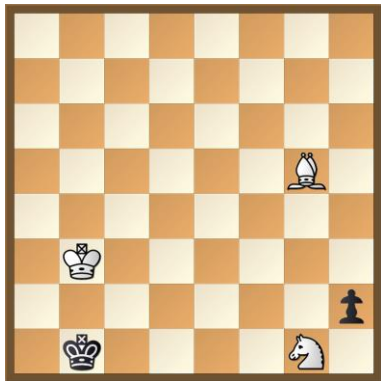
--- Christopher Jones Email: [cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk)



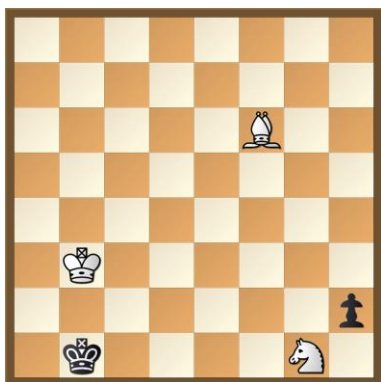
## How to Solve a Study

Ian Watson writes ...

### New Year Knights



White to play and draw



White to play and draw

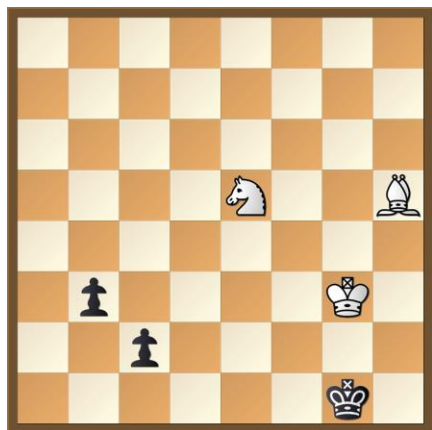
Two puzzles in one – like last month. As usual with these so-called ‘twin’ studies, there’s only a small change in the position but a big change in the solution. White can’t prevent Black queening his pawn, and queen against bishop and knight is a win for the queen in almost all positions, so White has to act swiftly. You obviously have to move the knight, but do you move it to e2 or to f3? At this point, you should guess (and you’d be right) that one of those knight moves is correct in one of the positions and the other move is correct in the other position. That’s solving progress, but you still need to find the rest of the moves. You’re nearly there already, however – just notice that in the first position after 1.Nf3 h1Q 2.Nd2+ Black can’t go into the corner because of 3.Bf6 mate, so you will get a discovered check. Now it’s easy: 2...Kc1 3.Ne4+ forces a repetition because 3...Kd1 4.Nf2+ wins the queen. One down, so the other one must begin with 1.Ne2. Now you see that 1.Ne2 h1Q 2.Nc3+ Ka1 3.Nd2+ is another repetition because 2...Kc1 allows 3.Bg5 mate. You should also check that the other knight move doesn’t work, in both positions, to fully appreciate the studies.

Simple to solve, but notice the pleasing echoes; in one the bishop starts on g5 and Black can’t allow it to go to f6, and in the other the bishop starts on f6 and Black can’t allow it to go to g5. That is what makes a good twin – differences but with symmetries.

This pair of studies was composed by Vitaly Halberstadt, who is best known for his study composing, but was also a strong OTB player; for example, he won a brilliancy prize for a

game against Janowski. These twins were first published in *Problemas* in 1967, the year Halberstadt died.

It's now the start of the New Year, and so a good moment to show a new study after looking back at a pair from the past. I was prompted to show you those twin studies, because I received the following new composition from Paul Byway. Paul, like Halberstadt, was a strong OTB player when he focused on playing, but then turned to study composition; he now specialises in 'miniatures' – positions with seven men or fewer. He has become Britain's 'Master of the miniature'. This study is a little harder than the Halberstadts, but very solvable.



White to play and win

The solutions are given below ...

Ian Watson Email: [ian@irwatson.uk](mailto:ian@irwatson.uk)



### How to Solve a Study – solution

**1.Nf3+ Kh1 2.Nd4 c1Q 3.Bf3+ Kg1 4.Ne2+ Kf1 5.Nxc1 b2 6.Bg2+ Ke1 7.Nd3+ Kd2 8.Nxb2 wins**

1...Kf1 2.Nd2+ Ke1 Nxb3

2...c1N 3.Bf3+ Kg1 4.Bg2

6...Kg1 7.Ne2 mate

Paul points out the 'sting in the tail', that 5...b2 is answered by a second knight fork. Neither he nor I know if this is a novel feature with such limited material, but it's new to us both.



A message from Chessable, sponsors of the ECF eNewsletter ...

**chessable**  
**MoveTrainer**

Take Control of your  
chess improvement

Try for free now

MoveTrainer® turns chess books and videos into fully interactive courses. It finds out what you know, and what you don't by regularly quizzing you. It then uses the science-based principles of spaced repetition, implicit and explicit learning to ensure you learn it all quickly and efficiently - <http://chessable.com/movetrainer>

## Events Calendar

Here is a selection of upcoming events. Please make sure to check for updates with the organisers, and for more details at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>

- 20 January - Junior 4NCL Online League Season 5
- 21 January - 27th 4NCL Congress
- 22 January - 2nd EJCOA Weekend Masterclass
- 23 January - Coulsdon Chess Junior Grand Prix Spring
- 25 January - 4NCL Online League Season 5
- 29 January - Coulsdon Chess Rapidplay
- 30 January - Norfolk Rapidplay Congress 2022
- 3 February - Junior 4NCL Online League Season 5
- 5 February - Junior 4NCL Weekend 2
- 5 February - 1st Online Kidlington Chess Tournament
- 5 February - Coulsdon Chess Junior Grand Prix Spring
- 5 February - 2021-22 Northumberland Rapidplay Championships
- 6 February - Sussex Junior Horsham Rapidplay

## ECF Membership

**Supporter – £10**

**Queen's Gambit Scheme Supporter – free**

**Bronze – £18.00 | Junior Bronze – £6.00**

**Silver – £27.00 | Junior Silver – £6.00 (free for brand-new members in the first year)**

**Gold – £39.00 | Junior Gold – £19.50**

**Platinum – £75.00**

The ECF membership year is fixed and runs from the 1st of September to the 31st of the following August. To find out more about the range of benefits and to join online ---

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-membership-rates-and-joining-details/>

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-membership-partners-and-benefits/>