



## **Celebrating English Juniors**

**Alex and Sarah Longson on success on the world stage**

**Details of the forthcoming Chessable English Championships and a report on the Chessable Seniors**

**Danny Gormally, Keith Arkell and Michael Adams on the Easter 4NCL**

**Peter Wells on Yuri Averbakh 1922-2022**

**... and a whole lot more!**

# EDITORIAL



This month, Alex and Sarah Longson report on terrific performances on the world stage by English juniors. Rather than your humble editor pontificating on this success, let me reproduce here a letter from the ECF President to the England team juniors ...

*On behalf of the English Chess Federation, I am writing to congratulate each and every one of you for representing your country so well in the recent European Schools and World Cadets & Youth Championships for Rapid and Blitz in Rhodes Greece.*

*England came second in the medals table with 14 medals, seven of which were gold. You were up against 331 players from 40 countries and did your parents and your Federation proud. We wish you the best of luck in all of your upcoming tournaments and look forward to watching your chess careers with great interest. The future of English chess is bright with such a talented group.*

— Dominic Lawson, ECF President

Well done indeed to all the juniors!

As Sarah Longson writes in this issue, “I’ve felt for some time that English junior chess is well primed for success and believe that this is just the start of an exciting period for the community.”

Onwards and upwards.

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# COVER STORY

## Alex and Sarah Longson report on the success of English juniors



### Alex Longson reports ...

England's juniors had an outstanding result in the recently concluded back-to-back events in Rhodes - The European Schools' Chess Championships 2022 and the World Cadets Rapid and Blitz Championships 2022.

There were 27 English players in the European Schools' Championship competing across various open and girls sections (U7, U9, U11, U13, U15, and U17). English juniors won four medals in total, including three golds and one bronze: Bodhana Sivanandan – Gold, Girls U7; Kushal Jakhria – Gold, Open U7; Zoe Veselow – Gold, Girls U9; and Jan Murawski – Bronze, Open U11.



England's medalists in the European Schools (left to right) Jan Murawski, Kushal Jakhria, Bodhana Sivanandan and Zoe Veselow

In the World Cadets Rapid and Blitz there were a further ten medals. Bodhana Sivanandan - Gold, Girls

U8 Blitz and Girls U8 Rapid; Zoe Veselow - Bronze, Girls U8 Blitz and Girls U8 Rapid; Kushal Jakhria - Gold, Open U8 and Bronze, Open U8; Eugenia Karas - Gold, Girls U14 Rapid and Bronze, Girls U14 Blitz; Kai Hanache - Silver, Open U10; and Oleg Verbytski - Bronze, Open U10.

A special mention must go to our "Triple Crown" medal winners Bodhana, Kushal and Zoe (who was even a year younger than many of her competitors in the U9 European Schools).

Bodhana managed the amazing feat of scoring 25/25 across the three tournaments and winning three gold medals!



Bodhana Sivanandan

### Games

*Editor's note: if you want to play through the games online you can go to*

*<https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tQ> and select each game by clicking on a 'chapter'*

The European Schools Girls U7 section was a seven player all-play-all. The two strongest players met in the final round, both on 6/6, and a winner takes all battle took place.

**Aragonda, Sahasra – Sivanandan, Bodhana [C54] Rhodes 2022**

**1.e4 e5 2.Bc4 Nc6 3.Nf3 Bc5 4.0-0 Nf6 5.d4** A well-known gambit that can be quite dangerous for the unprepared.

**5...Bxd4 6.Nxd4 Nxd4 7.f4 d6 8.fxe5 dxe5 9.Bg5 Qe7** The main response, preparing to castle



queenside and also creating some possible ...Qc5 tactics.

**10.Nc3** Rare - the knight isn't very well placed here especially once Black plays ...c6.

10.Na3 is the main line - and here 10...Rg8!? has become very popular, a funny machine-like half-waiting move anticipating the opening of the g-file. Perhaps Bodhana had prepared this inspiring her 14th move.

**10...Be6** A good developing move controlling d5 and preparing to castle.

**11.Bd5?!** 11.Bxf6 gxf6 12.Nd5 Bxd5 13.Bxd5 0-0-0 14.Rf2 White can hope for some positional compensation along the f-file.

**11...0-0-0 12.Qe1? c6** 2...Nxc2 13.Qf2 Presumably this is what both players had seen: 13...Nxa1 14.Qxa7 Qb4! Easy to underestimate this move from afar as it still looks a bit scary for Black, but White has no way to take advantage, e.g. 15.Bxf6 gxf6 16.Rd1 Bxd5 17.Nxd5 Rxd5! and Black wins.

**13.Bxe6+ Qxe6** 13...fxe6 comes into consideration.

**14.Rc1**



**14 ... Rhg8!?** Very sophisticated, anticipating an opening of the g-file.

**15.Qf2 Qg4! 16.Be3** 16.Bxf6 gxf6 17.Kh1 Rg6 and Black is well on top.

**16...Nxe4** Perhaps a bit premature.

16...Rd7 may have been better continuing to build the pressure. Now f7 is defended as e4 is hanging.

**17.Nxe4 Qxe4 18.Bxd4 Qxd4 19.Qxd4 Rxd4** 19...exd4 20.Rxf7 Rd7 21.Rxd7 Kxd7 22.Rd1 c5 23.c3 Kc6 24.cxd4 Rd8 was a nice way to consolidate.

**20.Rxf7** Black clearly has a lot of work still to do.

**20...Rd2 21.Re7 Re2 22.h3 22.a3** clearing the second rank of pawns may have been more constructive - White wants to release the c1 rook for active duties as soon as possible.

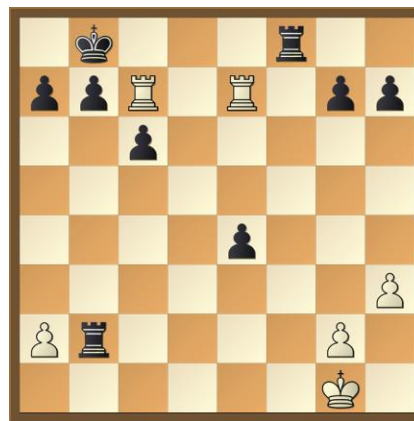
**22...e4 23.Rd1** White decides to go active immediately.

23.Rf1 Rxc2 24.b3 Rxa2 25.Rff7 Kb8 26.Rxb7+ Ka8 27.Rxg7 should be enough to hold.

**23...Rxc2 24.Rdd7?** White goes for the classic doubling on the 7<sup>th</sup> rank - the problem here is that it simply doesn't work as Black can defend the b7 point from b2.

24.b3 was a better option.

**24...Rxb2 25.Rc7+ Kb8 26.Kf1 Rf8+ 27.Kg1**



**27 ... e3** White resigned. Despite the rooks looking active they are curiously stuck.

**0-1**

A deserved tournament victory for Bodhana who, unbelievably, has only been playing tournament chess for less than a year.

In the Open U7 section Kushal Jakhria got off to a flier scoring 5.5/6 before stumbling in round 7 to the Turkish player Ata Peray.

See the game at

<https://lichess.org/study/UJem10tO/rSzhbNhS>

The game was marked by a couple of serious errors, 30...d2? and 38...Be4+?!, possibly as a result of rushing or just not actively considering his opponent's responses. Ironing out these tactical oversights should be a high priority as it is clear that Kushal's overall game is very impressive.



This loss meant Kushal (above) surrendered his lead to Velislav Zahariev. It was another English player who helped the cause by defeating Zahariev in round 8. See the game at

<https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/mLcTHfwL>

By winning his last two games Kushal was able to secure a deserved gold medal.

Zoe amassed an impressive 8.5 / 9 points on the way to her gold medal in the U9 Girls section, but there were some tough games along the way including a long endgame grind against fellow ECF Academy student Amelie Bryant and the following round 5 clash versus the top Italian seed Clio Alessi. See the game at

<https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/BSsPhyiv>

In round 8 Zoe survived a real scare before turning the game around and showing superior endgame technique to defeat her opponent. See the game at

<https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/fnUewjd3>

A fantastic tournament victory, especially as Zoe is still an under 8 player.

The following is a neat tactic spotted by Amelie Bryant, also playing in the U9 Girls:



23.Bxc7! If Black captures the bishop then the queen is lost.

Jan Murawski won bronze in the Open U11, an event dominated by the top seed and candidate master Yagiz Kaan Erdogmus who defeated Jan in the third round. Jan's tournament was characterized by dramatic fighting chess and several turnarounds, perhaps best demonstrated by the following game:

**Bekmukhanov, Sauran (1639) - Murawski, Jan (1439) [C63]**

U11 European School Championship

A very unusual and interesting opening goes badly wrong for Black. However Black continues to set problems for his opponent who makes a huge oversight in the endgame, loses his cool and goes under very quickly in a dramatic turnaround.

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 f5 4.Bxc6** It seems this move wasn't very familiar to Jan.

**4...bxc6 4...dxc6** is the main line leading to quicker development.

**5.Nxe5 Qf6 6.d4 Ba6 6...Ne7!** intending ...d6 looks like the best option.

**7.c4** Preparing to castle.

**7...c5** Black consistently fights to undermine the White position - but Black is looking very loose! **7...d6 8.Nxc6 fxe4 9.Qa4**

**8.Bf4 8.Nc3 cxd4 9.Qxd4**

**8...fxe4 9.Qg4 9.Nc3!** was the only computer approved way to punish Black's risky play: **9...Qxf4 10.Nd5 Qg5 11.Nxc7+ Ke7 12.Qa4** with a decisive attack.

**9...Bc8** Black misses a chance.



9...Qe6! 10.Qxe6+ dxe6 Despite Black's ugly pawn structure he should be OK.

10.Bg5! Qe6 Too late!

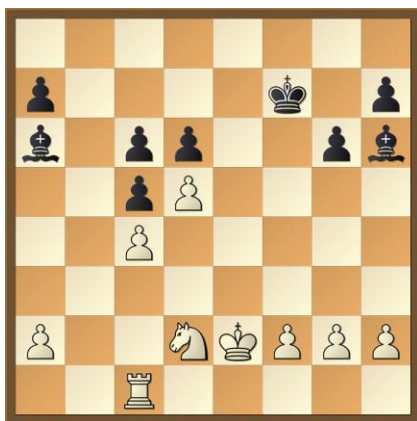
11.Qxe4 Rb8 12.d5 A deadly discovered attack is coming.

12...Nf6 13.Bxf6 Qxf6 14.Ng6+ Kf7 15.Nxh8+ Kg8 It is amazing that Black manages to win this game!

16.Nd2 Rxb2 17.Rb1 Rxb1+ 18.Nxb1 d6 19.Qe8 Ba6 20.Qf7+ White forces off the queens, reckoning that the knight in the corner is doomed anyway.

20...Qxf7 21.Nxf7 Kxf7 22.Nd2 g6 23.Ke2 Bh6 24.Rc1 The endgame should be reasonably straightforward if White manages to unravel.

24...c6 Black goes for broke - and it pays off!



25.dxc6 d5 26.Kd3 26.Rc3 was the simplest way to unravel, breaking the pin: 26...Bxc4+ 27.Rxc4 dxc4 28.c7+-

26...dxc4+ 27.Rxc4?? I'm not sure what White missed here.

27.Kc2 is winning: 27...Ke6 28.Re1+ Kd6 29.Re8 Kxc6 30.Re7+-

27...Bxd2 28.c7 Bb4 28...Ba5 is also good for Black.

29.Ke4 I think White just crumbles now - no doubt frustrated at letting an easily winning position slip.

29.Kc2! is much better. The king defends against the c-pawn and the rook can attack targets along the fourth rank.

29...Ke6 The black king comes to collect the pawn.

30.f3 Kd7 31.Rc1 Kxc7 32.Ke5 Bd3 33.Ke6 c4 34.g4 Bd2

0-1

Vic Pelling, Head of Delegation, commented on the overall performance -

*"I could not have hand-picked a better set of parents and players for the European Schools or World Youth tournaments. Each set of players was focused, dedicated, kept hydrated in warm conditions and of course got plenty of rest for the next day's preparation and games. All their hard work paid off as we managed to win a few medals!"*

*"Win lose or draw, every player had a great time, and they will all become better players for the experience."*

### Final comments from Sarah Longson, Head of the ECF Academy

It was fantastic to see the players having fun and showing great fighting chess representing their country in Rhodes. The medals are of course the icing on the cake, but every England player deserves credit for their performances and experiences like this are so valuable - I hope they all remember their time in Rhodes very fondly!

There were 24 members of the ECF Academy in Rhodes - including the three triple medal winners. I think the work we have been doing with the students is clearly beginning to show great dividends. The Academy provides students the opportunity to learn from some of the UK's best coaches and encourages regular study and actively solving exercises.

I believe, and the results in Rhodes bear testament to this, that some key ingredients to a junior player's success are:

- Natural enthusiasm for the game;

- Being part of a supportive club with access to mentors willing to spend time looking at the young player's games and repertoire;
- Supportive parents taking an active role in managing the training aspects and the practicalities of tournament life;
- Regular attendance in a professional online training programme (such as the ECF Academy, official ECU / FIDE seminars etc);
- Age-appropriate one-to-one support from a professional coach, with increasing provision as the student gets older / stronger.

I've felt for some time that English junior chess is well primed for success and believe that this is just the start of an exciting period for the community.

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## AROUND THE COUNTRY

### The ECF Finance Council

Michael Farthing, Chair of Council reports on the meeting held on 23 April 2022 ...

A good-natured Council Meeting this one with few items of controversy and even these conducted with good grace and cooperation with the result that a seemingly long agenda was rattled through to a finish half an hour before the scheduled end and without the need for an extension – a very rare occurrence. The sad feature was a low attendance – roughly fourteen in the face-to-face meeting with a slightly higher number joining by Zoom.

Oddly, the only item to be defeated was one that had been requested by attendees at the previous AGM – that Council Meetings should be made public by internet. I was expecting this to rattle through, but a number of speakers highlighted the bad publicity and adverse effects a divisive meeting might have, stressing particularly that sponsors might be put off. Also raised was the need for speakers to feel free to express views (maybe only partially thought out) without being tarred with these for all time. As a very thoughtful discussion pursued one could feel the votes changing in the meeting – also a quite rare occurrence. A hand vote resulted in six for and 21 against.

The meat of the day followed with the finance business and again this went through very speedily. Discussion was largely on fairly technical issues beyond the brain of a chairman but conducted in a very cooperative spirit. The draft reports were noted; the membership fees proposals were approved with no one against (unchanged apart from one minor technical item); and the budget followed in like manner.

At this point the Board's proposal for rolling membership was brought forward. The main effect of this is that instead of paying a membership fee every September for the coming year it will be possible to join on any date for a full year from that day. This was more contentious than might be imagined – congresses were very happy with the change, but leagues were concerned about the complexities of charges for rating non-members though the Board gave assurances that common sense would apply. Like the debate on public access, this was settled on a hand vote of 21 to 6 – but this time in the other direction with the motion being passed.

At this point the meeting had an interval but were constrained to put up with the ritual of a BCF meeting. The BCF, of course, was the predecessor to the ECF but it still exists to look after funds left to it in wills and might be needed if mentioned in wills of still living players who have not noticed its disappearance. However, today it finally transferred its trust funds and when the paperwork is all done can retreat into a happy dormancy and never clutter up coffee time at the ECF again!

Resuming the ECF meeting, we rattled through a number of technical constitutional changes, that caused no concerns (in some cases perhaps because the audience barely understood them). So, changes were made consequential to the BCF decision; words were put in place so that blitz games can in the future be rated and count towards Council votes; changes were made to the procedures surrounding the Council voting register and the deadline for appointing proxies at Council meetings (relaxing the requirement now that all voting happens electronically). There then followed motions about direct member representation: representatives now have a formal duty of consultation but will be free cast their votes as they consider is in the best interest of the members they represent. It will now be possible to have bye-elections where vacancies



occur, but representatives must now be members of the class they represent and may not be Board members.

Only the last two of these had any votes against in the hand vote and the last with a hand vote of 13 to 11 went to the only card vote of the day, using our new web-based voting system. The motion was passed on the card vote by 113 votes to 63.

Finally, we had two motions in support of Ukraine, one of which was amended slightly to recognise actions the Board has already taken. Both were passed overwhelmingly, and I think it probably fair to say that any votes against were for technical reasons or from a sense that this was something of a gesture and did not imply a lack of sympathy.

## Nigel Towers, ECF Director of Home Chess writes ...

### Chessable Sponsorship and ECF Events

The Chessable series of events is now well underway with the English Championships taking place in May in Kenilworth, Warwickshire.



### Chessable English Seniors Championships 4th - 8th May 2022

The English Seniors Championships made a welcome return at the Holiday Inn in the centre of Kenilworth with the first Seniors Championship since 2019, including separate sections for players aged 50+ and 65+. The congress was ECF and FIDE rated with a total of seven rounds over the five days.

#### Seniors Over 50

Full results and standings can be found at <https://chess-results.com/Tnr633315.aspx?lan=1>

Mark Hebden led the 50+ section throughout the event, only dropping half a point in his drawn game with long-time fellow competitor GM Keith Arkell.



Mark Hebden finished on 6.5 out of 7 to become the new 50+ Senior Champion with WIM Natasha Regan becoming the 50+ Senior Women's Champion. Natasha had a great tournament with a fine win against Andrew Ledger in round 6 (annotated below) after which she lost to Mark Hebden on board 1 in the last round.



GM Mark Hebden and WIM Natasha Regan – photo by David Bray

Final standings are shown in the table below.

English Seniors Championship 50+		
<b>1st English 50+ Champion</b>	GM Mark Hebden	6.5
<b>2nd</b>	GM Keith Arkell	6
<b>3rd=</b>	Don Mason	4.5

<b>3rd=</b>	CM Mark Josse	4.5
<b>3rd=</b>	Jonathan Nelson	4.5
<b>Women's 50+ Champion</b>	WIM Natasha Regan	3.5
<b>U2000 Perf</b>	WIM Natasha Regan	
<b>U1800 Perf</b>	Neil Homer	



IM Paul Littlewood, Cliff Chandler, Ian Snape and WCM Dinah Norman – photo by Adrian Elwin

## Seniors Over 65

Full results and standings can be found at <https://chess-results.com/tnr633316.aspx?lan=1&art=0&flag=30>



IM Paul Littlewood led the 65+ field for most of the championship but lost out to Cliff Chandler in their round 6 game.

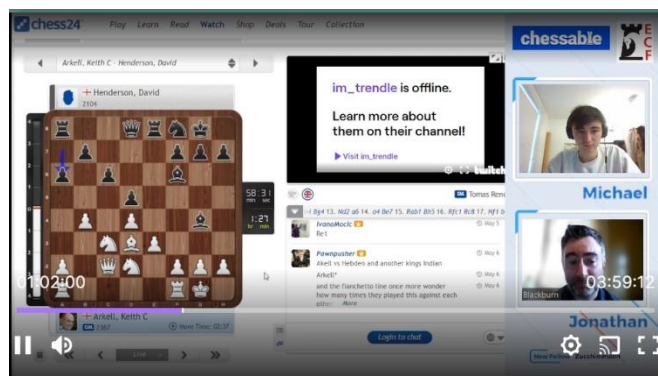


Cliff then went on to draw with FM Oliver Jackson in the final round 7. Final standings were as below, with a three-way tie for first place and Cliff Chandler becoming the English 65+ champion followed by Ian Snape and Paul Littlewood on tiebreak. Final standings were as below based on tiebreaks.

## English Seniors Championship 65+

<b>1st English 65+ Champion</b>	Cliff Chandler	5.5
<b>2nd</b>	Ian Snape	5.5
<b>3rd</b>	IM Paul Littlewood	5.5
<b>Women's 65+ Champion</b>	WCM Dinah Norman	2.5
<b>U2000 Perf</b>	Roger de Coverley	4.5
<b>U1800 Perf</b>	Alan Hall	

We were fortunate to have some excellent commentary on Twitch for rounds 6 and 7 from FM Jonathan Blackburn, IM Tom Rendle and Michael Green.





You can find further details of the event together with links to the games and recorded version of the commentary on the final round at this link - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships/>

We also feature a couple of games from the Seniors Championships below, including GM Keith Arkell's final round won against David Henderson and WIM Natasha Regan's round 6 win against IM Andrew Ledger.

GM Keith Arkell finished second to GM Mark Hebden in the 50+ Section. Here is the round 7 game between GM Keith Arkell and David Henderson with annotations from Keith.

### Arkell, Keith - Henderson, David

Chessable English Seniors Championship

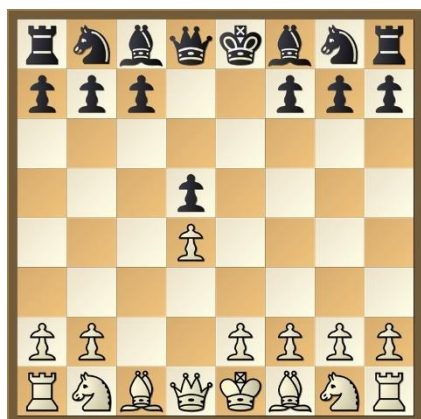
Kenilworth, Warwickshire, Uni (7), 08.05.2022

My friend and long-time rival Mark Hebden fully deserved to pip me to the English Senior ( 50+) title as he was at his best throughout whereas I stuttered a bit and only really came good at the end. This was my last round game.

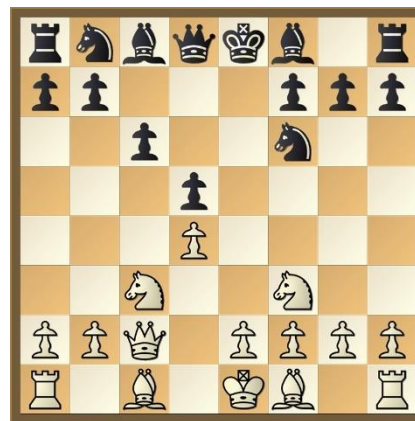
**1.c4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.cxd5**

By move 3 I have already forced my favourite Carlsbad structure!

**3...exd5**

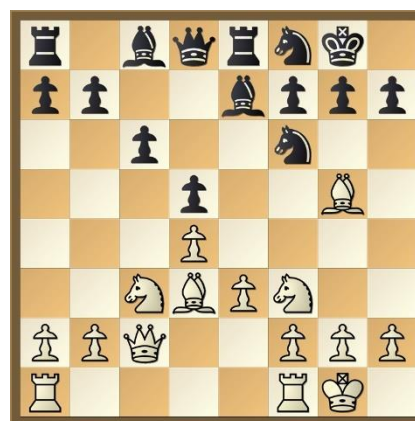


**4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2**



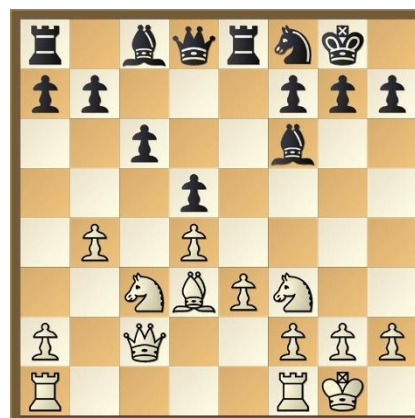
**6...Be7** It is surprising how many online blitz opponents blunder here with the sequence 6...Bd6 7 Bg5 h6? 8 Bxf6 Qxf6 9 Nxd5. Another way to go wrong is 6...g6 (itself a perfectly good move) 7 Bg5 Bf5? Qb3, threatening both Qxb7 and e4!

**7.Bg5 Nbd7 8.e3 0-0 9.Bd3 Re8 10.0-0 Nf8**



Instead of trying to exploit my move order David chooses to defend against a standard QGD Exchange variation.

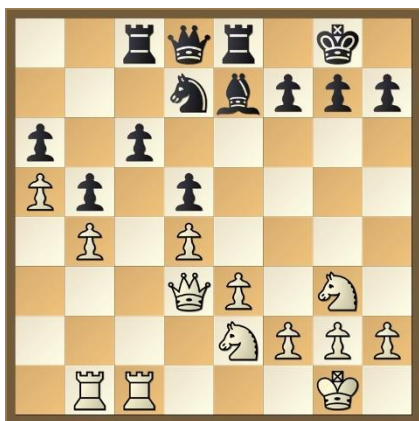
**11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.b4**



And here we go with the minority attack. I have had this type of position umpteen times, affording me the opportunity to continually refine my understanding of the nuances. I believe that if White attacks in the

centre or on the kingside, beginning with f3 and e4, then the d3 bishop is a valuable piece. However, with the knight on f3 and White instead planning queenside operations, the bishop has no use and should be exchanged for Black's counterpart.

**12...Bg4 13.Nd2 a6 14.a4 Be7 15.Rab1 Bh5 16.Rfc1 Rc8 17.Nf1 b5 18.Ng3 Bg6 19.Nce2 Bxd3 20.Qxd3 Nd7 21.a5**



I think White should only play in this way after the light-squared bishops have been exchanged. This is because after the intended plan of manoeuvring knights to d3 and c5 Black would be able to defend the a6 pawn by simply putting his bishop on c8. From there the bishop would be able both to attack and defend. Incidentally, notice how much more effective a white knight on c5 would be when compared to a black one on c4, because of that a6 pawn.

**21...Bf8 22.Rc3 g6 23.Qc2 Nb8 24.Nf4 Qd7 25.Nd3**

The next stage is to bring my knights to d3 and f3 in order to induce the loosening move ...f6 by threatening Nfe5.

**25...Bd6 26.Nf1 Re6 27.Nd2 Qe7 28.Nf3 Kg7 29.g3**



A multi-purpose move. It snuffs out any hope of a black kingside attack on the h2-b8 diagonal, gives my king some wiggle-room and prevents ... Bxh2+ in

some variations after I later capture on c6. It also discourages any thoughts of trying to hurt me with ...f5, ...g5...f4.

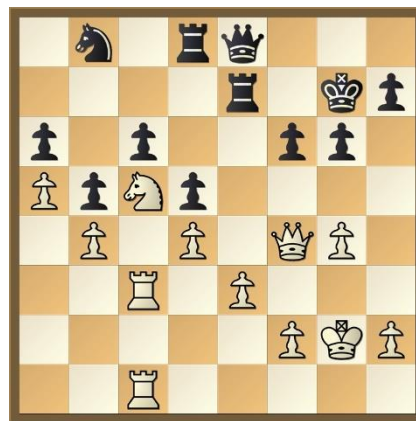
**29...f6 30.Kg2 Rd8 31.Nc5 Bxc5 32.Rxc5 Red6 33.Rc3 Re8 34.Ne1**

This piece has completed its job on f3, so it now heads for pastures new, such as f4 or c5.

**34...Qe6 35.Rc1 Re7 36.Nd3 Qe4+ 37.Kg1 Qe6** If my opponent leaves the queen on e4, intending to exchange it off after Nc5, the endgame would be terrible for him. I would be able firstly to centralise my king and then creep forwards with my pawns. Once the position opened up, e.g. after a well-timed e4, he would be too passive and his pawns too weak to give him many prospects of survival.

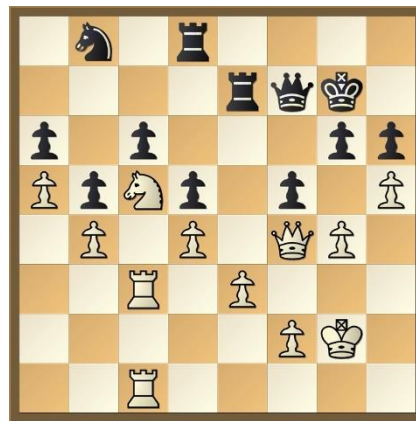
**38.Nc5 Qc8 39.Kg2 Qe8 40.Qd1** Time to bring the queen to bear down on Black's fragile set up.

**40...Qc8 41.Qf3 Qe8 42.Qf4 Rd8 43.g4!**



Sometimes in these positions, which I have had many times before, I bring my king over to the queenside first, and only then blast open the kingside. This time Black is so passive that I decided there was no need.

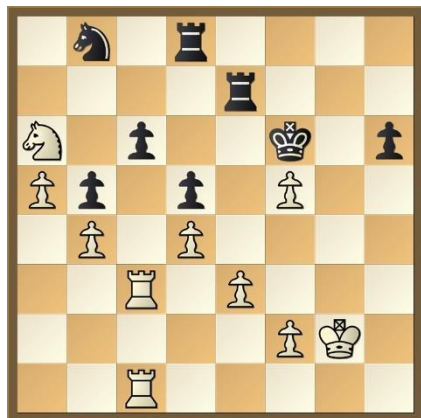
**43...h6 44.h4 Qf7 45.h5 f5**





A little desperate, but the alternatives are rotten. If 45...g5 46 Qf5 and the queen is immovable, so I can plan the breakthroughs e4 or f4 at my leisure, and if 45...gxh5 46 Rh1 should soon wrap matters up.

**46.hxg6 Qxg6 47.Qxf5 Qxf5 48.gxf5 Kf6 49.Nxa6**



**1-0**

Here is WIM Natasha Regan's sixth round game against IM Andrew Ledger with annotations from Natasha and GM Matthew Sadler.

**Regan, Natasha K (1954) - Ledger, Andrew J (2344) [A15]**

50+ Chessable English Senior Championship,  
07.05.2022

The English Seniors is the first Seniors event I have played, and it was lots of fun! Organised by the English Chess Federation and sponsored by Chessable, the over 50s attracted 22 players including English legends GM Mark Hebden and GM Keith Arkell. It was held in the centre of Kenilworth, which has good transport connections, lots of good eating choices, and best of all great walks to the Kenilworth Castle, which had been a regular stop-off point for Queen Elizabeth 1st - each time she went there they built a new wing to the castle especially for her stay! The event was strong and going into round 6 with 50% I met the fearsome IM Andrew Ledger. I had taken a bye in the morning before this game to do some office work, walk around the castle, and to play the online Mind Sports Olympiad shogi arena, which meant I was then ready for anything!

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.b4**



A line recommended by Alejandro Ramirez in his excellent DVD on the Reti, and one of my favourites. I knew I had played it before against a Ledger, and drawn the game, at a 4NCL. I was pretty sure it hadn't been Andrew and I was trying to remember who it had been. It turns out I had played Dave Ledger in 2015 with the moves ...d6 and g3 thrown in.

**3...Bg7 4.Bb2 0-0 5.g3 c6 6.Bg2 d5 7.cxd5 Nxd5**



After playing 5...c6 to support ...d5, it feels a little strange to recapture with the knight on d5, but it's a natural Grunfeld player's reflex to unbalance the pawn structure in this way. Black develops rapid counterplay against the b4-pawn: the c6-pawn serves then to immobilise the b4-pawn, preventing b4-b5. The big drawback to Black's play is that the dark-squared bishops are exchanged which flattens out the normal Grunfeld pressure along the h8-a1 diagonal.

**8.Bxg7 Kxg7 9.Qb3** 9.0-0 is an idea engines are very keen on, sacrificing the b-pawn and grabbing central space in return. 9...Nxb4 In fact, most engines don't grab this pawn(!) preferring 9...a5 instead 10.d4 c5 11.a3 N4c6 12.d5 Na5 13.Nc3 Bg4 14.Ne5 Bc8 15.Nf3 Bg4 16.Ne5 Bc8 17.Qc2 Nd7 18.Nf3 c4 19.Nd2 Ne5 20.Nb5 Bd7 21.Nd4 Rc8 22.Qc3 Kg8 23.Rab1 Ng4 24.e4 Ne5 25.f4 Nd3 26.e5 with good

compensation for White. ½–½, 34 Berserk 9-dev NN  
- Koivisto 8.6, Matthew Engine Games 2022

**9...Qb6 10.a3 a5**



**11.b5** A bold sacrifice!

11.Nc3 axb4 12.Nxd5 cxd5 13.0-0 was the safer way to play. White is now attacking both the d5- and b4-pawns and the b4-pawn is pinned to the queen on b6.

**11...a4** It's always tempting to gain a tempo before capturing a pawn, but this is a double-edged one as the b5-pawn loses the support of the a-pawn to advance which increases the chances of it becoming blockaded.

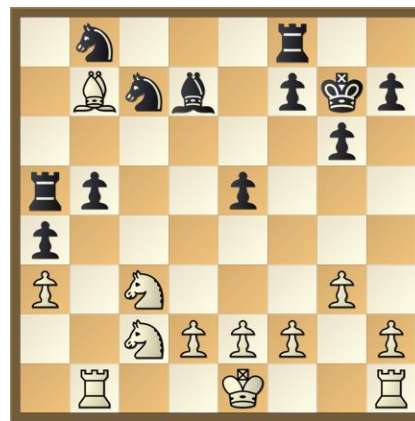
11...Qxb5 12.Qxb5 cxb5 13.Nd4 Nc7 14.Nc3 b4 is the engine preference.

**12.Qc4 Qxb5 13.Qxb5 cxb5 14.Nd4** Knight action that uncovers an attack on Black's knight on d5 and eyes the b5-pawn.

**14...Nc7** Not a favourite move of the engines who all prefer returning the pawn immediately for easy development with 14...Rd8 15.Nxb5 Nc6 16.N1c3 Nxc3 17.Nxc3 Na5 18.h4 Be6 19.h5 Rac8 20.Nxa4 Nb3 21.Rd1 Nd4 22.e3 Nc2+ 23.Ke2 Nxa3 gave Black active play though White held in Stockfish 160422-Dragon 3.

**15.Nc3 Ra5** 15...Bd7 16.Bxb7 Ra7 followed by ...e5 seems like a more efficient approach for Black. We get a similar position in the game, but with White's rook active on b1 and Black's rook a little odd on a5.

**16.Rb1 Bd7 17.Bxb7 e5 18.Nc2**



The engines assess the position as approximately balanced. Black has a little more space across the board but also has an awkward rook on a5 and a stymied queenside pawn structure.

**18...Bh3** This seems like a step in the wrong direction for Black. Black prevents the white king from castling and frees d7 for the knight on b8 but weakens his coverage of the queenside light squares which turns out to be quite significant. After White's powerful next move setting up a blockade on b4, the engines consider White to be in great shape!

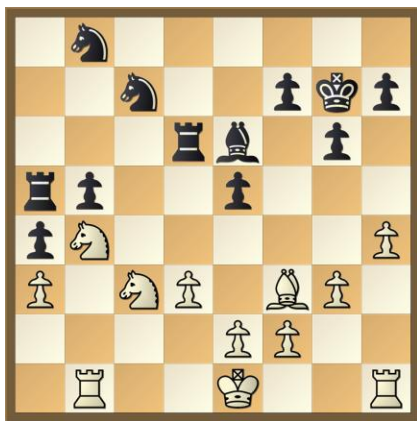
**19.Nb4 Rd8** 19...Nd7 20.Nc6 traps the rook on a5 so Black's knight is still pinned to b8

**20.d3 Rd6 21.Bf3**



The threat of g4 is now in the air, cutting off the light-squared bishop.

**21...Be6 22.h4**



A familiar strategy gaining kingside space is cute in this position, looking to create advantages on the opposite wing in addition to White's solidly-entrenched pieces on the queenside. I wasn't completely sure if it was the right plan (I was also looking at Ne4) but I had already had some success in round 1 with a rook's pawn thrust (eventually queening an advanced a-pawn in that game) and I felt like trying it again against Andrew.

22.Ne4 would have been pretty scary with ideas of grabbing the c-file with Rc1 or hunting the black rooks with Nc5-b7 but you wouldn't expect any other move from this Game Changer!

22...f5 Necessary to control the e4-square and prevent a later Ne4.

23.h5 Bb3 24.g4



A really good move, exploiting Black's last move to put more pressure on the black kingside. The threat of h6 followed by opening the g-file and then invading along it is very attractive, mostly due to the stranded black rook on a5 which will be unable to challenge for any files White opens. My engines were already looking to randomise the position with

24...Ne6 24...e4 25.dxe4 fxg4 but their evaluation is already reaching +2!

25.h6+ Another thematic Game Changer move! On this occasion however the engines want something even simpler:

25.hxg6 hxg6 26.gxf5 gxf5 27.Kd2 followed by Rbg1+ and invasion along both the g- and h-files!

25...Kf8 26.gxf5 gxf5 27.Rh5



27.e3 was a nice calm move, stopping ...Nd4 and preparing White's next move but the vigorous game continuation is also hard for Black to meet

27...Nd4 28.Bd5 Bxd5 [28...Nd7 was the engine favourite, keeping the logjam of white pieces on the queenside. Black's move helps White to deploy all her pieces by drawing the white knight on c3 off the c-file. Now the white rook on b1 has a clear path into Black's position.

29.Ncxd5 Kf7 30.Rc1 Kg6 31.Rh1 Nd7 32.e3 Ne6



33.Rc8 [33.Ne7+ Kf6 34.Nc8 was a really elegant engine suggestion to trap the black rooks in the open board with both knights! I've never seen anything like it! However, White's choice is simple, strong and effective.

33...Kf7 34.Rg1 Ndf8 35.Nc7



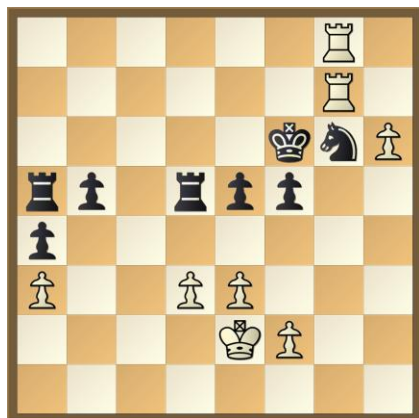


White is consistent in targeting the h7-pawn! Exchanging off the knights will draw away the black knight from f8 and allow Rh8.

**35...Ng6 36.Ke2 36.Nxe6 Rxe6 37.Nc6** was another little knight tactic suggested by the engine, with the double threat of Nxa5 and Nd8+ forking king and rook!

**36...Ne7** This unexpected retreat actually wins a piece but White's position is so good, it barely seems to matter!

**37.Rh8 Nxc7 38.Rg7+ Kf6 39.Rhxh7 Ncd5 40.Rh8 Ng6 41.Nxd5+ Rxd5 42.Rhg8**



and Black resigned. Once the knight moves, there is no stopping h7-h8Q!

**1-0**

## Chessable English Championships and English Women's Championships – May 2022



The Seniors events will be followed later in May by the Chessable English Championships and Chessable

English Women's Championships which will take place between Thursday 19 and Sunday 22 May 2022 at the same venue in Kenilworth.

The **Open Championships** will be the first English Championships since Duncan Lawrie sponsored the first and so far only English Chess Championships competition in December 1991 in Hammersmith. We have a very strong event planned, with a number of English GMs and IMs scheduled to play.

The **Women's Championships** will be the next in the series of highly successful events from the first event in 2016 to the previous championships in 2019 in Hull which was won by WGM Katarzyna Toma and Louise Head. Katarzyna and Louise will be playing again this year, as will WIM Lan Yao.

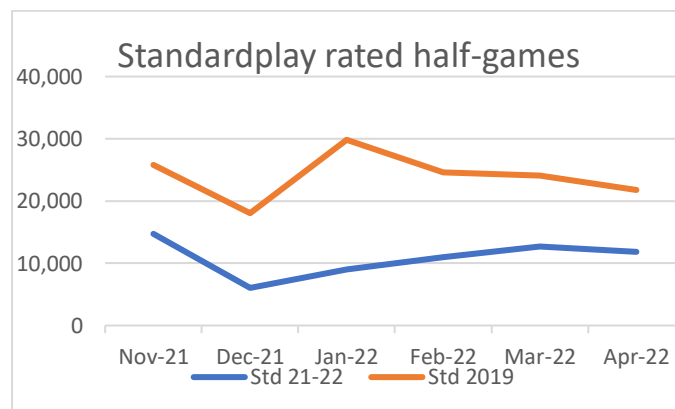
You can find a full list of entries to date for the two Championships (English Open and English Women's) at

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-entrants-list/>

## Return to Over the Board

### Returning in numbers

The graph shows games played and rated by month in English events from Autumn 2021 to date.



OTB chess activity levels have settled to around half pandemic levels. There were 11,846 half games rated for April 2022 (compared with a pre-pandemic figure of 21,768 for April 2019) and 5,782 rapidplay half-games (compared with 14,872 for April 2019). There were 746 blitz half-games sent in for rating with a number of blitz events planned.

## Congress and Events Roundup March to April 2022

April and May events are as shown below including the Southend Easter Congress, 4NCL Easter Congress, 45<sup>th</sup> Nottingham Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cornwall



Spring Congress, 4NCL League, and the English Seniors Championships.

Event	Date	Venue
<b>2nd Southend FIDE Rapidplay</b>	14 April	Southend
<b>Coulsdon Chess Easter Congress</b>	15-16 April	Coulsdon
<b>64<sup>th</sup> Southend Easter Congress</b>	15-18 April	Southend
<b>2nd 4NCL Easter Congress</b>	15-18 April	Daventry
<b>Cheney Rapidplay</b>	18 April	Oxford
<b>Hendon FIDE Blitz</b>	21 April	Hendon
<b>Central London Chess Congress</b>	22-24 April	Imperial College, London
<b>1st Warwick Junior Team League (Rapid)</b>	23 April	Kenilworth
<b>County Champs Finals - Prelim</b>	23 April	Various
<b>38th St Albans Congress</b>	23 April	St Albans
<b>45th Nottingham Congress</b>	23 April	Nottingham
<b>She Plays to Win Girls Starter Tournament (Rapid)</b>	24 April	Brentwood
<b>2nd Cornwall Spring Congress</b>	29 April-1 May	Falmouth
<b>Poplar Rapid Tournament</b>	30 April	Poplar
<b>Surrey and Teeside Megafinals</b>	30 April	Hampton Leatherhead, Stockton

<b>4NCL League 2021/22 Divs 1-4</b>	30 April-3 May	Daventry, Bolton, Leamington, Milton Keynes
<b>Kensington FIDE Rapid Chess</b>	1 May	Kensington, London
<b>English Seniors Championships</b>	4-8 May	Kenilworth
<b>MIND Sports Centre FIDE Blitz</b>	5 May	London
<b>Durham Chess Congress</b>	6-8 May	Darlington
<b>East Kent Megafinal</b>	7 May	Eltham
<b>Golders Green FIDE Rapidplay</b>	7 May	London
<b>Buckinghamshire Megafinal</b>	8 May	Rickmansworth
<b>Bury St Edmunds Junior Congress (Rapid)</b>	8 May	Bury St Edmunds
<b>YJCA Grand Prix Event 4 (Rapid)</b>	8 May	York
<b>West London Chess Academy</b>	8 May	Uxbridge
<b>Coulsdon Chess RP Round Robin</b>	9 May	Coulsdon
<b>Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid</b>	10 May	London

### The English Counties Championships 2021-2022

The final stages of the 2021-2022 Counties Championships are now underway with defending champions Yorkshire looking to protect their 2019 title in the Open competition.

The national stage will be played as a knockout with quarter and semi-finals leading up to the finals day on 2 July at a Midlands venue still to be confirmed. There are three sections in the competition with counties able to enter teams in any section including Open, Minor, U2050, U1850, U1650 and U1450. So far we have one preliminary match played in the U1850 section, with Middlesex narrowly beating

Suffolk by 8.5-7.5. The quarter finals will be played at various venues on 14 May to decide the semi-final places in the various sections, with the semi-finals in June and finals day on 2 July.

#### Open

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	*	Kent	
	*		
	*	Northumberland	
	*		
	*	Grtr Manchester	
	*		
	Yorkshire		
	Middlesex		

#### Minor Counties

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	*	Warwicks	
	*		
	*	Norfolk	
	*		
	*	Devon	
	*		
	Worcs	*	
	Cambs		

#### U2050

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	*	Notts	*
	*		
	Essex	*	
	Yorkshire		
	*	Lancs	*
	*		
	*	Surrey	
	*		

#### U1850

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	Essex		
	Hampshire		
	Norfolk		
	Yorkshire		
	Lancs		
	Devon		
	Grtr Manchester		
Middlesex 8.5	Middlesex		
Suffolk CCA 7.5			

#### U1650

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	*	Lancs	
	*		
	*	Surrey	
	*		
	Warwicks	*	
	Essex		
	*	Yorks	
	*		

#### U1450

Prelim 7th April	Quarter Final 14th May	Semi Final	Final 2nd July
	Yorks	*	
	Essex		
	Notts		
	Notts Juniors		
	Surrey	*	
	Leics		
	Kent		
	Lancs		

## Ukrainian Boy Stars at Durham Congress

Many thanks to Tim Wall for his kind permission to reproduce the following article which first appeared in the Chess with the Knight column in the Newcastle Chronicle:

The unlikely star of the County Durham Chess Congress, held last weekend in Darlington, turned out to be an eight-year-old boy from Ukraine – just four days after his arrival in the UK.

Maksym Kryshafor, who until recently lived in Odesa, western Ukraine, was the winner of the Minor tournament, scoring a perfect 5/5 and winning the first prize of £400, despite starting as 55th seed out of 58 players by rating.

On his way to victory, Maksym, the current Ukrainian Under 8 Champion, defeated experienced North East players Michael Allen (South Shields), Ian Rook (Forest Hall), Luke Owen (Darlington) and Chris Clynes and Bob Berry (both Bishop Auckland). Allen and Owen were among those in equal second place on 4/5.

The Ukrainian schoolboy's result was even more remarkable given that he and his mother had fled to Romania shortly after the war broke out in Ukraine in February. Just days before the Durham Congress, they were brought to this country by North Yorkshire chess enthusiast Paul Townsend as part of the UK Homes for Ukraine scheme. They are now living with Townsend and his family, and Maksym has been enrolled in a local primary school.

The organiser of the Durham Congress, Mick Riding of Gosforth, hailed Maksym's "brilliant" achievement - "We're over the moon that he's won," said Riding, who has also volunteered to host a Ukrainian family.

Maksym's success crowned a great weekend for North East chess, as the congress – held at Darlington's Dolphin Centre – attracted a total of 160 players (double the usual entry in previous years). This was due in large part to Riding's excellent work in securing sponsorship from Darlington City Council, the late Professor Julian Farrand, Venator, MHA Tait Walker and Cell Pack Solutions.

The Congress's Open section was won by a regular visitor to the region, International Master Brandon Clarke (Cambridge) on 4.5/5. Four North East players were among the group who finished 2nd equal on 4: Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Grandmaster Daniel Gormally (Alnwick), David Walker (Leam

Lane) and Zoe Varney (Durham University). On tie-break, Wall wins the Northern Counties Championship, and a qualifying place to the 2022 British Championship.

While the Major tournament was won by Luke Remus (London), the top North East player was South Shields' Anthony Sweeting, who finished equal 2nd on 4/5. RGS Newcastle student Will Robinson (Gosforth) scored a creditable 3.5.

There are two major chess events coming up on Tyneside in the next few weeks aimed at junior players. Chess clubs and schools are strongly encouraged to enter their players in both competitions – to gain experience and for the chance to qualify for the national finals.

Entries are welcome from any player under the age of 20 for the National Youth Championships. The Regional Final is being held on Saturday May 28 at St. Mary's Catholic School, Benton Park Road, Newcastle. Entries are being taken at <https://ejcoa.co.uk/online-payments/nyc-regional-final>

The next month, there is also the traditional UK Chess Challenge MegaFinal, which is being held as usual on Saturday June 18 at the RGS in Jesmond. To enter, go to: <https://www.delanceyuksschoolschesschallenge.com/>

## The 45th Nottingham Congress



A report by Steve Burke and John Swain, first published at <https://www.nottinghamshirechess.org/competitions/>

118 players participated in the Congress at Nottingham High School over the weekend of 23-24 April.

Prizes for the Open were enhanced thanks to generous sponsorship from Marcel Taylor (also one of the arbiters!) who also sponsored a new "Improvers" section.

Nottingham's Jonah Willow, who very recently qualified for the IM title, scored 4.5/5 and won £750, defeating GM Mark Hebden in round 4 and securing a draw with IM Brandon Clarke in round 5. Brandon and Bruce Baer finished 2nd= on 4/5 and collected £300 each.

Winners of the other sections were ---

### Major (Under 1950)

1st= Sammy Benzaira, Alejandro Lopez-Martinez, James Luong, David Wells, all on 4/5

### Intermediate (Under 1750)

1st= Andre Cockburn, John Robinson, Bill Ward, Paul Wheatley, all on 4/5

### Minor (Under 1550)

James McBain 5/5

### Improvers (Under 1350)

Joseph Hogan 4.5/5

A full list of the final placings in each section can be found [here](#)

Further detailed results may be seen at [Chess-results.com](https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Chess-results.com)

Thanks are due to all who played or who helped to organize the event, including Neil and Ann Graham who ran a refreshments stall which raised £225 for the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Appeal.

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## Chess in the Wild West

A report on the second Cornwall Spring Congress  
29 April – 1 May by Ian George

Following the success of the first spring congress in 2019 at the Falmouth Hotel, two years of Covid prevented a return to this splendid venue until this year. It was therefore a great pleasure to welcome players from all parts of the country for a weekend of chess competition. In order to provide comfortable playing conditions, we limited numbers to a maximum of 80 and had to stop taking entries early in March. We started with 25 entries from players living in Cornwall and over 50 from outside the county. As well as being an open event the congress also doubled as the Cornwall Championships.

The smooth running of the congress was guaranteed by the experienced team of Rebecca and Colin Gardiner (organisers) and ECF arbiter John Constable (controller), with the assistance of Ian George (administration and website).

There were few issues for the organisers to deal with. The importance of having an experienced and qualified arbiter in charge of the chess was shown when problems with the computer prevented John from using the Swiss Manager software, forcing him to do all the pairings by hand. As you would expect, he accomplished this arduous task in such an efficient and unobtrusive way that few players were aware of any problem.

The congress was played over five rounds in three sections using a time control of 75 minutes for all the moves with 30 second increments from move 1. Included in each section was a competition for Cornish players for the annual trophies and the title of Cornwall champion.





*Play in progress in round 5*

### **Championship (Under 2200)**

26 played in the Championship. The early running was made by ECF Chief Executive Mike Truran, a distinguished member of the Cornish diaspora, back playing in the county for the first time since his schooldays over fifty years ago. The decisive game was played in round 4 between Mike Truran and James Thomas of Wales who was a half-point behind and had started as tenth seed in the field. After a quiet start James got the upper hand and won the game. With a win in the final round, he finished in first place, half- point ahead with 4/5.

The remaining issue to be decided was who would be Cornwall champion and take home the championship trophy. Mike Truran started a half-point ahead of Mark Littleton and with the tie-break advantage. In the end Mark lost and Mike drew to secure the title of Cornwall champion. He generously donated his prize to the Cornwall Chess Association. The Emigrant Cup, which dates from 1904, contains other distinguished names, notably Michael Adams who won in 1983 (1<sup>st</sup>=), 1984, 1986 and 1987. Mike claims a record in becoming adult champion a record 53 years after securing the junior title!



*Presentation of the Emigrant Cup to Mike Truran*

### **Major (Under 1860)**

30 played in the Major. This was won in impressive style by Andrew Swales (Burnley) with 5/5. The battle for the Falmouth Cup was a different matter with Philip Walters from the Scottish border region and Nigel Kirkman (Calstock) in contention. Nigel won his game and, although the players were not aware of it at the time, had the tie-break advantage in the event of Philip drawing with Laurence Tarbuck. After a fluctuating game, in which both players had a winning advantage at some point, Philip eventually came out on top. Congratulations, therefore, to another long-term exile from the duchy on his third win of the Falmouth Cup, two short of the record holder, Anton Barkhuysen.



*Presentation of the Falmouth Cup to Philip Walters*

### **Minor (Under 1525)**

21 played in the Minor. A prominent feature of this section was that the first four places were taken by ungraded players new to tournament chess. Sharing 1<sup>st</sup> prize on 4½/5 were Inigo Atkin (Wales) and

Eldon Vallejo. Inigo being ineligible, Eldon received the Penwith Cup.



Presentation of the Penwith Cup to Eldon Vallejo

The final standings and prize lists are at <http://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/html/archive-cong/cong-2022.shtml>

### ECF President's Award for Services to Chess 2020

Before the Saturday afternoon round ECF Chief Executive Mike Truran made a belated presentation to county secretary and treasurer Ian George.



### Future events

The first Cornwall Autumn Congress will take place on 14-16 October in the equally splendid setting of the Queen's Hotel, Penzance. Full details are at <http://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/congress/autumn/autumn-2022.shtml>

### The Second 4NCL Easter Congress

Report by GM Daniel Gormally

I was very happy with my preparation for the 4NCL open which took place in Daventry in Northamptonshire over the Easter weekend and it nearly paid off in spectacular style, as I won my first six games before stumbling at the end.

In order to do well you need to start well and what you do directly beforehand seems pivotal. To be completely relaxed and not rushing to get there, I decided to travel down the day before and that turned out to be a wise decision.

There are not many places to eat near the hotel, so I decided to go into town, which was about a half hour walk away. The Italian restaurant served decent enough fare but was terribly slow, probably due to being almost overrun by local patrons. The old town of Daventry looked nice enough, and so I retired back to the hotel in good spirits.

### Gormally, D (2471) - Handley, M (1982) [D93]

4NCL Easter Open 2022, 15.04.2022

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bf4** This is a line where the play is fairly forcing, and in truth the theory has been well worked out since the days of the Kasparov-Karpov matches.

**5...0-0 6.e3 c5 7.dxc5 Qa5 8.Rc1 dxc4 8...Ne4** is an alternative. **9.cxd5 Nd7! (9...Nxc3 10.Qd2 Qxa2 11.bxc3 Qa5) 10.Nd4 Nxc3 11.bxc3 Qxa2** with a rather messy opening position.

**9.Bxc4 Qxc5 10.Bb3 Nc6 11.0-0 Qa5 12.h3**



**12...Bd7?** A key mistake, arguably already the decisive one!

**12...Bf5** is by far the most popular move. Black plays ... Bf5 to prevent White playing e4, so is entirely logical. But I wasn't entirely surprised to see ... Bd7,

as my opponent was spending a lot of time in the opening and in general looked uncomfortable. Afterwards he told me that he had quit chess for over twenty years and had only come back recently and was struggling to learn the ins and outs of the Grunfeld. 13.Qe2 Ne4 14.Nd5 e5 15.Bh2 Be6 16.Rxc6!? bxc6 17.Ne7+ Kh8 18.Bxe6 fxe6 19.Nxc6 is supposed to lead to equality.

**13.e4!** White takes over the centre and already has a big advantage. Threats like e5 and Nd5 loom large.

**13...Rad8 14.Nd5 Be8** 14...Be6 seemed more resilient to me at the board, even if Black remains in trouble.

**15.Bc7 Rxd5 16.exd5 Qxc7 17.dxc6 Bxc6** This is the first time I started thinking. White is up the exchange for the pawn, but if Black is allowed time to co-ordinate his pieces, he can easily get back into the game. It is important to act quickly.

**18.Ba4!** The reason this move is useful is because it rids Black of the bishop pair, which could give him some hope of getting back in the game.

18.Re1 Rd8 19.Qe2 Nd5 is still better for White, but at least Black can claim some kind of temporary activity. After 18.Qe2 Black has a couple of moves which worried me. 18...Nh5 at least aims for ... Nf4, even if objectively this shouldn't be enough to save Black. (18...Qf4!? diving into the position with the queen also contained some irritability factor.)

**18...Qb6 19.Bxc6 bxc6 20.Qa4** Normally when you are the exchange behind you need the opponent's rooks tied down, but sadly for my opponent this wasn't the case here and White's heavy pieces can run rampant.

20.Ne5 also seemed winning, even if Black wipes out the queenside. 20...Qxb2 21.Nxc6 Qxa2 22.Nxe7+ Kh8 23.Ra1 Qe6 24.Rxa7 attracted me during the game. The knight on e7 is stuck for the moment but White is so active that surely won't matter.

**20...Rc8** 20...c5 21.Ne5 Qxb2 22.Rxc5 is also fairly bad for Black. 20...Qxb2 won't save Black either, White has a choice of taking on c6 with the rook or just grabbing on a7 with the queen, in both cases winning easily.

**21.Ne5 c5 22.b4! Qe6** 22...Nd5 23.Rxc5! is a neat touch.

**23.Rfe1 cxb4 24.Nc6**

**1-0**

**Lentsoz, I (2116) - Gormally, D (2471) [A21]**

4NCL Easter Open 2022, 16.04.2022

I was pleased with the game against Michael Handley, and according to the computer I had played almost flawlessly. A Lichess centipawns check returned a score of 0 inaccuracies, 0 mistakes and so on. Due to my opponents shaky ... Bd7 move and my solid preparation before the game, perhaps this wasn't surprising.

I also sensed some anxiety amongst the other top seeds. The organisers were using English ratings instead of FIDE ratings, something I protested about before the tournament on Facebook. I didn't like being third or fourth seed when on FIDE ratings I was the highest rated and had been for some time. The reason they used English grades was apparently because some of the lower sections were often exposed to extremely underrated players entering on a very low FIDE grade. This had apparently drawn some ire from some of the amateur players. However, in my view it is inconsistent to seed a FIDE rated event using national ratings. The reason I mention this minor grumble is because in round one Nicolas Sketτος upset second seed Peter Roberson, who, I speculate, might have been feeling some extra pressure due to a slightly higher seeding than normal. In any case after winning in round two that was the last we saw of Robo, as he then promptly withdrew. This obviously helped my chances as it was one less player to worry about.

**1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Bb4 3.Nd5 Be7 4.e3 Nf6 5.Nxe7 Qxe7 6.Be2 0-0 7.d3 d5 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Nf3 c5 10.0-0 Nc6 11.Qc2 Rd8** 11...Ndb4 12.Qc3 Bf5 13.b3 Rfd8 14.Rd1 was another possibility, when Black is pressing.

**12.a3 Nc7?!** This was a tricky position to navigate and I went slightly wrong here. Black should at least wait for White to play e4 before withdrawing the knight.

12...Be6 13.b3 Rac8 14.Bb2 f6 is at least equal for Black.

**13.b3 Bf5 14.Bb2 Rd7 15.Rac1 Na6 16.Qc3 Re8? 17.Rfe1! Qd8 18.Red1?!** The wrong rook!

18.Rcd1! was more accurate. It is tempting to keep the rook on the c-file; however, if White ever manages to open the centre with d4 then the rook will do a useful job on e1.



**18...f6 19.Rd2 Kh8 20.Bf1 Bg4 20...Qb6** tempted me at the time, with the idea perhaps of hitting b3 given the chance with ... Na5 or ... Be6, but White can ignore all this and blow up the centre. **21.d4!? cxd4 22.exd4 e4 23.d5** can become fairly dangerous for Black.

**21.Rdc2** My last move was a prophylactic measure against 21.d4? which can now be met by 21...Bxf3 22.gxf3 exd4 with advantage to Black.

**21...Bf5 21...Bxf3** I probably should have spent more time on. This leads to a very dynamically unbalanced position, where White has the two bishops against Black's two knights. **22.gxf3 f5 23.Qc4 Qg5+ 24.Kh1 Nc7** is another mess.

**22.Rd2 Ne7** As soon as I played this I started to feel uncomfortable. That is the danger of morning games, you haven't always woken up by the time you play, and I felt like I was close to blundering. I suddenly realized I had given my opponent a chance to sacrifice.

**23.e4?** This took me somewhat by surprise and I didn't react very well.

It was careless that before I played my last move I hadn't even considered the idea of 23.Nxe5!? and was rather lucky that I wasn't just losing. **23...fxe5 (23...Nd5** is also possible, but an admission that Black is scared of the piece sacrifice. Which I was. **24.Qc2 fxe5 25.e4 Bg6 26.exd5 Rxd5 27.Re1 e5** looks a bit weak.) **24.Qxe5 Rg8 25.d4 Bg6**

**23...Be6?** In general, in this tournament I calculated pretty well, but this was a rare exception and I overlooked a key point a few moves later.

**23...Bg4!** was by far the most logical move and I was kicking myself a bit later for not playing this. **24.b4 (24.Nxe5 fxe5 25.Qxe5 Ng6** no longer seems convincing for White.) **24...Bxf3 25.gxf3 Ng6! 26.bxc5 Nh4** gives Black plenty of action.

**24.b4 cxb4 24...Rc7?** had been my original idea, but to my horror I realized that after **25.b5 Nb8 26.d4!+-** Black cannot take on d4 and is completely collapsing! So, plan B has to go into motion: **24...b6** My opponent mentioned this after the game, but I doubt this holds either. **25.Qc2!** introduces a cruel threat of d4, and **25...cxb4 26.d4** looks miserable for Black.

**25.axb4 Qb6 26.d4 Rc7 27.Qa3 Rxc1 28.Bxc1 exd4 29.Nxd4 Bg8 30.Bxa6?** Short of time, White

reaches for a simple move, but this takes all the pressure off Black.

**30.Qa4!?** **Rd8 31.Nf3+-;** **30.Nb5!** is crushing, with the idea of Nd6, Rd6 etc. If Black covers this with ... Nc8, then Rc2 followed by Be3 and Black will quickly collapse.

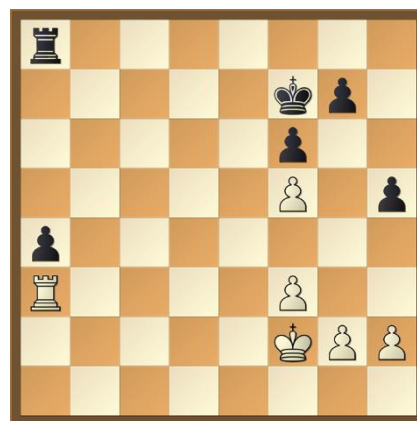
**30...bxa6 31.Qa5? Nd5!** A nice trick although objectively this is still just equal.

**32.f3 Nxb4 33.Qxb6 axb6 34.Ba3 Na2 35.Nf5 b5 36.Rd7 Be6 37.Ra7 Bxf5 38.exf5 b4 39.Bb2 Nc3 40.Bxc3** I was praying for **40.Rxa6?? Nd1!** with a nasty threat of mate on e1. **41.Re6 Rxe6 42.fxe6 Kg8-**

**40...bxc3 41.Rc7?!** Still not fatal, except there was something much simpler.

**41.Rxa6 Rc8 42.Ra1!** was the cleanest way to steer the game towards the draw. I feel like this was the key moment of the tournament for me, because if I had dropped something in round two I wouldn't have got the confidence and momentum that I achieved later in the event.

**41...h5 42.Rxc3 a5 43.Kf2 Kg8 44.Rc7 Ra8 45.Rc3 a4 46.Ra3 Kf7**



**47.Ke3?** A difficult ending to navigate, especially when short of time. My opponent heads for the a-pawn but as he indicated afterwards in our brief chat, it was better to linger around the kingside.

**47.Kg3!** holds the fort. Endgame maestro Keith Arkell also suggested this idea when I showed him this game later. There are very few rook and pawn endings he doesn't know about! **47...Ke7 48.Kh4 Kd6 (48...Ra5=)** **49.Kxh5 Kc5?** even loses. **50.Kg6 Kb4 51.Ra1** White will overwhelm the kingside and can always sacrifice the rook for the a-pawn later.



**47...Ke7 48.Kd4 Kd6 49.h4 Kc6?!** I very rarely get rook and pawn endings and didn't feel at all comfortable! As I said to Keith later though, I am probably an underrated grinder. When I'm on form, I can hold my own perfectly well in endgame play. This is still winning but I didn't realize yet that I could just wait and then if the white king ever moves, the black king will gain access to e5.

**49...Ra7 50.g4** (*50.Kc4 Ke5* is easy for Black) **50...Ra5** and White can do nothing on the kingside and is essentially helpless. **51.gxh5 Rxf5 52.Ke4 Ra5 53.f4 Ke6 54.f5+ Kf7** now Black can come around ... **Kg8-h7-h6** and win that way. White can put the king on **g4** but Black will just pass with the rook and leave White in zugzwang.

**50.Kc4 Ra7?** It was better to go back **50...Kd6!** with the same winning plan as before, of just waiting and then eventually gaining access to e5. **51.f4 Ra7 52.Kd4 Ra8 53.Kc4 Kc6 54.Kd4 Kb5-+**

**51.g3!** It was impressive how my opponent kept resisting given that he had been down to increment for a while.

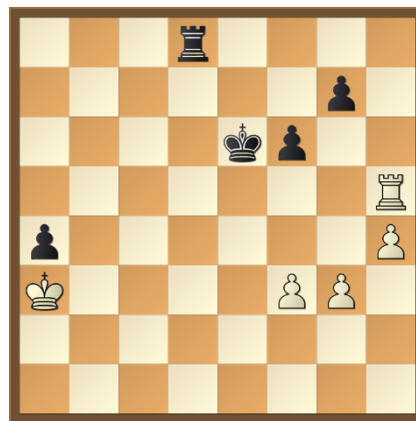
**51...Ra8! 52.Kb4 Kd5 53.Rd3+ Ke5 54.Ka3** By getting the king behind the pawn instead of the rook, White has made matters quite tricky as now his rook is free to become active.

**54...Kxf5 55.Rd5+ Ke6?** I thought this was being clever and it wasn't. Probably I was nervous and stopped calculating here, trying to rush him in his time trouble.

**55...Kg6 56.Rb5 Rd8 57.Kxa4 Rd1** was a surprisingly simple win. Black will get in around the back with ... **Rg1** and the white kingside will quickly collapse.

**56.Rxh5** My opponent gave me a look here as if to say that he thought I had blundered **h5**. I hadn't, and had planned my next, when White still has problems to solve.

**56...Rd8**



**57.g4 57.Kxa4 Rd5!!** is winning according to Stockfish 12, but I'm not sure if I would have gone for this at all, it looks extremely counter-intuitive to exchange rooks when a pawn down! (*57...Rd3? 58.g4 Rxf3 59.g5=* is apparently just a draw, even though the white king is a long way away.) **58.Rh7 Kf7** White is helpless against the threat of ... **Rd3**.

**57...Rd3+ 58.Kxa4 Rxf3 59.Kb5??** Tempting and bad.

The cold-blooded **59.g5!** would have held the draw.

**59...Rf4 60.g5 fxg5 61.hxg5 Kf5 62.Kc5 Kg6 63.Rh1 Kxg5** The white king is cut off and the rest is just a technical conversion.

**64.Kd5 Kf5 65.Rh8 g5 66.Rh1 Rf3 67.Rg1 Kf4 68.Rh1 g4 69.Rh8 g3 70.Rf8+ Ke3 71.Rg8 Kf2 72.Ke4 g2**

**0-1**

**Gormally, D (2471) - Fallowfield, J (2152) [A65]**  
4NCL Easter Open 2022, 16.04.2022

I was extremely happy after round two because it was rare that I managed to win a technical game. If nothing else, it showed that I wasn't a one-trick pony, doomed to only win in preparation. The trend continued with endgame wins in round four and five. Before then on the Friday afternoon game I faced Jeremy Fallowfield.

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.Bg5**  
I had started playing this line in response to preparing for the black side of the variation against Andy Ledger at the British Championships. Impressed with the kind of attacking positions White was likely to get, I essayed it a few times in blitz games online.

**6...c5** Black's most popular choice.

Black has various ideas here, for example it is also possible to prepare the idea of ... c5 with 6...a6!?

**7.d5 e6 8.Qd2 exd5** Facing Mark Hebden in the last round and only needing a draw to win the tournament outright, I went for broke and 7/7 instead, based on the logic that I might never be in with a chance to record such an impressive score ever again. He played 8...Qa5 here, still following his game against Ledger at the British. 9.Bf4!? a slight surprise and something I had prepared before the game. 9...exd5 10.cxd5 Ne8 in the short time before round seven, I had anticipated this move but sadly for me, my preparation didn't go deeply enough. Having had only about three hours sleep before the final day, it was most likely I was just tired. 11.h4! f5 12.exf5? I was out of preparation and responded badly to his last move, even though it was a fairly obvious one and typical of Mark's style, which is to look for "action" at any given opportunity.

**a)** White should keep going! 12.h5! fxe4 13.hxg6 Rxf4? this was the move I had feared, but I didn't go deeply enough. (13...hxg6 14.Bh6 is also good for White.) 14.Qxf4 Bxc3+ 15.bxc3 Qxc3+ 16.Kf2 and I had failed to realize that he couldn't snap the rook off on a1, due to the obvious mate threats that White has;

**b)** At the train station in Long Buckby waiting for the train home, Keith said he would have just gone for 12.Bh6 just to take the sting out of Black's position. Given the tournament situation, that would have not been a bad idea at all: 12...Bxf5 13.g3? far too slow and a sign that I was overly nervous. 13...Nd7 Black is already very comfortable, and Mark went on to win. A tragedy for the Gorm!

**9.cxd5 Na6** As Jeremy told me after the game, due to not having played much since the pandemic, he was a bit rusty and more or less on his own here as far as the theory was concerned, so decided to just "get a move out".

9...a6 10.a4 Nbd7 11.Nh3! is rather comfortable for White, who waits for the knight to go to d7 before committing the knight to h3. The following plan is then obvious: Nf2, Be2, and 0-0, when White has a promising attacking set-up.

**10.Bxa6!?** Not the most critical move, but in the circumstances a practical one. In tournaments with a heavy workload of two games a day, you want to keep things as simple as possible.

10.Nge2 Nc7 11.Ng3 a6 12.a4 Rb8 13.Be2 b5 14.axb5 axb5 15.0-0 is another possible continuation.

**10...bxa6 11.Nge2 Rb8 12.0-0 Re8** Jeremy was a bit down about his position in the post-mortem and seemed to think that White is clearly better. More objectively speaking, Black has the two bishops and a b-file to operate down. 12...a5! with the idea of activating the bishop from a6, at first glance looks perfectly fine for Black, although when you start moving the pieces around and execute White's main plan, the engine starts to change its mind a bit. 13.b3 Ba6 14.Rfe1 Rb4 15.Ng3 Qb6 16.Bh6 Bxh6 17.Qxh6 c4+ 18.Kh1 is a position that contains some danger for Black. Already there is a threat of Nf5.

**13.Rab1 Bd7?** This is rather slow. Already I sensed that Jeremy had given up on his position.

13...a5! with the same plan of activating the bishop via a6, which is a better square than b5, where it just blocks the b-file.

**14.Ng3** Now ... Bb5 will just be met by Rfe1, when the bishop will look rather pointless, and White is ready to start attacking with f4, e5 etc.

**14...Qb6?** One mistake follows another. This is just a tactical oversight.

14...Rb4 was what I was expecting in the game, retaining some irritability factor with ... Rd4. 15.Qf4 Bb5 16.Rf2 Black is struggling to break the pin (...h6 just drops a pawn) but it is also not exactly clear how White strengthens his position.

**15.Qf4!** After thinking for a while Jeremy graciously resigned, rather than prolong the agony even further.

The variations are hopeless for Black. 15.Qf4 Nh5

**a)** 15...Qd8 16.Qxd6 Qb6 17.Qf4 is just a free extra pawn;

**b)** 15...h6 16.Bxf6 (it is probable that I would have gone for 16.Bxh6+- as that looked even easier to play.) 16...g5 17.Bxg5 hxg5 18.Qxg5 Qd8 19.Qd2 Qh4 20.Nce2;

16.Nxh5 gxh5 17.Bf6+- I used this strong start to propel me forward. Getting to 6/6 was exciting. Before the tournament I had drawn my last four games, so wasn't expecting anything special at all. Despite the disappointing last round, the result of this tournament is likely to give me a lot of confidence going forward.

1-0

## 4NCL Easter Congress ... continued

Keith Arkell reports ...

The spacious hall at the Mercure Daventry Hotel is ideally suited for events with a lot of players, and the 4NCL management have done well to secure it both for tournaments and for the 4NCL itself. This splendid venue was where 165 of us gathered for the 2022 Easter Congress. The only problem, through bad luck rather than anybody's fault, was that something went wrong with the air conditioning, and it was a little uncomfortable for some of us.

As usual with recent English over-the-board tournaments we had a mix of crazily under-rated young players and die-hard seasoned players, with the former whittling down the ratings of the latter. I've been saying for quite a while that the easiest way to move up the rankings is simply to remain inactive. Woe betide those players when they do go active again though!

My GM pals Danny Gormally and Mark Hebden shared first place.

Danny has been working harder on his openings lately, but for me what stood out was his endgame play. He showed a level of patience and technique which bodes well for his future.

Mark works very hard on his opening repertoire, and this can lead to some effortless wins when his opponents don't get it right early on.

### Round 5 Mark Hebden vs Shabir Okhai

Shabir Okhai and Mark are good friends who often travel to tournaments together, and when they get paired it has not always gone Mark's way. Here however Black was not allowed any respite after making early errors.

**1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. c4 c5 4. e3 cxd4 5. exd4 d5 6. Nc3 Bb4 7. cxd5 Nxd5 8. Qc2 Nc6 9. Bd3 h6 10. O-O Be7 11. a3 O-O 12. Rd1 Kh8** This looks a little unnatural, though in itself it may just about be playable. 12...Bf6 is the commonest move, although, for example, 12... Bd7 and 12...Qb6 also seem fine.

**13. Bc4 Nf6** Moves like ...Kh8 and ...Nf6 are doing nothing to solve Black's development problems, and

here it may have been more prudent for Shabir to take on c3, then bring out his queen or bishop.

**14. Bf4** There was also an argument for an immediate d5 when in many variations Black would prefer his king back on g8 because of the weakness of the f7 pawn.

**14 ...Bd7 15. Qd2** This looks scary, but I don't think there is really a threat to take on h6, so Black is allowed time, for example, to bring his queen's rook into the game. I think that again the immediate 15 d5 would have been hard to meet, so that after 15...exd5 16 Nxd5 Nxd5 17 Rxd5 the threat to double rooks and to sacrifice on h6 would have left Black in serious trouble now that the rook can join in the attack.

**15 ...Ng8?** Black is scared of ghosts, and after another unnecessarily negative move he gets into serious trouble. He should play actively with 15...Rc8.

**16. d5!** At last, here it comes! I very much doubt that there is any longer a defence.

**16 ...exd5 17. Nxd5 Bg4 18. Qe3 Bxf3 19. Qxf3 Rc8** This loses the exchange, but there was in any case no way to prevent material losses.

**20. Nxe7 Qxe7 21. Bd6 Qg5 22. Bxf8 Ne5 23. Qg3 Rxc4 24. Qxg5 hxc4** A nice vigorous game by Mark Hebden. **1-0**

### Rating Update - Categories and Titles

Important note to those who have not returned to chess post-Covid

Later than planned, new categories will become attached to ratings for the 1 June list. Those who have played more than 30 games in the last 12 months will retain category A. They are joined by those others being rated by the Elo formula, denoted as category K players. Both categories are treated by the rating team as having a reliable full rating. Players who have played few games are rated differently and have a P rating category. When requiring an estimate of strength, P category ratings should be used in conjunction with any external evidence available. The rating methodologies are described [here](#).

The headline refers to the other category, denoted H. These players have limited recent activity under many different circumstances. It is difficult to categorise these under K or P categories or even



move them to unrated, so the rating team will let those involved decide. If an H player plays one submitted game before year end, then the player's rating will convert to a K rating. If not, their rating will expire and on resumption will start as a new player.

For those who have been irritated by losing their rating since Covid began, to find it has only been hidden from their profile (but appears in their "view OTB results" link), there is a welcome change. All ratings, (current and historical) will be disclosed on their profile.

Another improvement will be introduced at the same time. Player's profile will now include over the board FIDE titles and those with the English National Master title will also be identified.

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## ECF Online

Nigel Towers, ECF Manager of Online Chess writes ...

The number of online chess clubs and competitive events continues to grow alongside the return to OTB chess. This month saw further increases in ECF online membership levels as follows:

Chess.com ECF Open club - 5,472

Chess.com ECF Members - 1,746

Lichess English Chess Players - 1,500

We continue with three tournaments a week in the Lichess English Chess Players Club and four per week in the Chess.com ECF Members Club. All the Members and English Chess Players club tournaments are ECF online rated with events submitted for rating on the 14th and 28th of each month.

## ECF Chess.com International Leagues

### Chess.com Live Chess World League Season 9



England are in **Division 3** of the LWCL Season 9 with each round consisting of a blitz and a rapid Chess.com match with two games per board against the opposing team in each match.

We lost our LWCL match this month, losing all three legs against Team Iran.

### Chess.com Live Chess European League Season 5



Our other matches this month have been in the Live Chess European League where we are in **Division 1** with matches played over three legs (bullet, blitz and rapid).

We won both of our matches with a 2-1 win against Team Turkey and a 3-0 win against Team France.

LWCL and LCEL matches are open to all members of the ECF Open Club on Chess.com with full details of all our matches at <https://www.chess.com/clubs/matches/live/english-chess-federation>



## Lichess Internationals and Events

We continue to field an England team in the very popular Lichess team battles including the Bundesliga, Liga Ibero, and Champions League.

### Bundesliga

The Liga team battles take place on Thursday and Sunday evenings and we continue to move between divisions 3 and 5.

### Liga Ibero

This is a Spanish organized league with three divisions of around 14 teams each on Sunday afternoons. The league is played at multiple time controls and is highly competitive with the English Chess Players team playing in divisions 1 and 2 <https://lichess.org/team/liga-ibero>

### Champions League

This is an international league with team battles with around twenty teams and fifteen leaders at a blitz time control.

### Other Leagues, Marathons, Bullet Events and Fischer Random

We also participate in the regular Mega A Team Battles every other week on Friday afternoons. The Mega Team Battles are the largest of the Lichess Team Battles, with up to 200 teams and twenty leaders per team participating in two-hour arena format team battles at a blitz time control. We also take part in a number of the bullet leagues and the Fischer Random leagues.

## ECF Online Grand Prix 2022

The ECF Online Grand Prix runs for ten months from January until October 2022. We are following the same format as the 2021 series, with the blitz events running on the first Sunday of each month and the rapid events on the third Sunday. A top six result counts towards the leaderboard, with ECF trophies and signed books for the winners at the end of October. You can find further details and an entry form at [2022-online-grand-prix-series](https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series-blitz-leaderboards/)

The 2022 series continued with March rapid and April blitz events. The winners were Chris Davison for the rapid and Mike Harris for the blitz.

### Rapid Event Four Sunday April 17th

Rapid Event 4 was won by @elisdenele, followed by @Pawn2c4 and Andrew McGettigan.



Chris Davison maintains his lead overall after four rapid events followed by Tristan Cox and Paul Kemp <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series-rapid-leaderboards/>

### Blitz Event Five 1st May

Event 5 was won by Mike Harris followed by @Weasy6 and @Firead.



Chris Davison also leads in the online Blitz Grand Prix based on points to date in the blitz events, followed by Michael Harris and John Sharp <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series-blitz-leaderboards/>

## World Chess League Live Update

Report of events up to 6 May by Peter Hornsby

Fed	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP
1	SchachAttack	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1			7
2	Chess Club Politika B	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1/2			6 1/2
3	Z-House	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1/2			6 1/2
4	Chile Rapid Team 2020	1	0	1	1	1	1/2	1	1			6 1/2
5	Warwick University	1	1	1	0	1	1	1/2	1			6 1/2
6	Better Chess Community (Eskaki)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1/2	0			6 1/2
7	Durham Alumni	1/2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1			6 1/2
8	Harvard	1	1	1	1	1	1	1/2	*			6 1/2
9	Philippines Finest Chess Club	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1			6
10	Chess Club Politika A	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1			6

The '20/20' online league which was set up when the pandemic started has continued to grow considerably in strength and number of teams (140 from around the globe), and therefore the tournament has been rebranded to the World Chess League.Live - you can see the new website and league table at [www.worldchessleague.live](http://www.worldchessleague.live) and <https://results.scorchapp.co.uk/t/worldchessleague/alive2021-2022/pairings/9>

Matches are played once a month on Chess.com for free, and as we reach the penultimate round three English teams remain in contention. SchachAttack, who also play in 4NCL, captained by Nick Burrows and with FM Shreyas Royal in their ranks, lead the pack. Durham Alumni are not far behind, starring IM Andy Horton and former England Junior Champion Sam Walker.

Warwick University are also in contention. Their board 1 is FM Sam Chow. In their most recent match vs. Kyiv Chess Club, played in extraordinary circumstances of course, Sam played against IM Viktor Skliarov and managed to salvage a draw for his team. His match is analysed below courtesy of FM Jonathan Blackburn who has commentated on the tournament on Chess TV for Chess.com with <https://www.twitch.tv/chessheroes> which was featured on Sky News:



White "samssky"  
 Black "viktorskliarov"  
 Result 1½-1½

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Bb7 5. Bg2 Be7 6. O-O O-O 7. Nc3 Ne4 8. Bd2 Nxc3 9. Bxc3 d6 10. Qc2 Qc8 11. e4 Nd7 12. Rfe1 c5 13. d5 e5 14. Rf1 Ba6 15. Qd3

With neither player having used much time on the clock White had a typical space advantage but here allowed Black to create some play on the queenside...



15 ...b5 16. cxb5 c4! (the point!) 17. Qe3 Bxb5 18. Rfb1 Nc5 19. Nd2 Bd8 20. Bf1 Bb6 21. Qe1 Black's minor pieces are all active and he has a chance to activate more pieces. Can you see how?

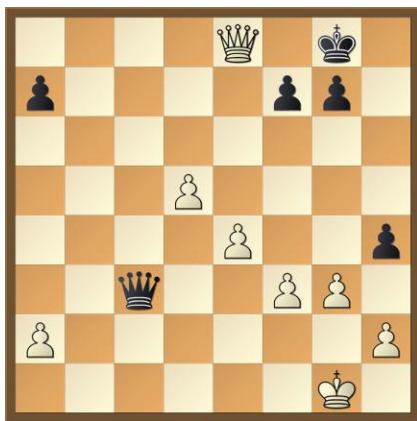


21 ...Na4 but not like this ( 21... f5! Bringing the f8-rook into the game and targeting the weakness on f2, and there is no good way to defend). 22. Bb4 Bd4 23. Bxd6 Sam rightly snaffles a pawn and his pieces start to find useful squares and create threats. Rd8 24. Be7 Re8 25. Ba3 Qa6 26. Nf3 Rac8 27. Bh3 c3 28. Bxc8 Qxc8 29. Nxd4 exd4 30. bxc3 Nxc3 While White is an exchange up (for now) the rook on b1 looks difficult to save, at least without giving away more white pawns and Black's pieces remain incredibly active, aided by that pawn on d4. Sam makes a good decision to give it back on his terms and retain very good winning chances...



31. Rxb5 (31.Rb2, Rxe4 32.Qe2, a6! and it's Black who is better!) Nxb5 32. Rc1 Qg4 33. Bb2 h5 Black is in desperate need of counterplay against White's king, as well as preventing any back rank mate problems. 34. Qf1 Nc3 35. Bxc3 dxc3 36. f3 Qc8 37. Qb5 h4 38. Rxc3 Qxc3 39. Qxe8+ By playing this line you know that there is always a risk of perpetual check.





**39...Kh7 40. Qxf7** But here this gives away the win! **40.Qd7** is a cute way of preventing Black's next counterplay, **40...hxg3**, **41. Qh3+** and the queen can protect the king.

**40... h3** and now the net is cast and White's king has no escape...

**41. Qf5+ Kg8 42. Qe6+ Kf8 43. Qxh3 Qe3+ 44. Kf1 Qxf3+ 45. Ke1 Qxe4+ 46. Kf2 Qd4+**

**47. Ke2 Qe4+ 48. Kf2 Qd4+ 49. Ke2 Qe4+ 50. Kf2 1/2-1/2**

Meanwhile, Storona Koroyla, which means 'King's Castles' in Ukrainian, were the victors at this year's '20/20' Chess rapidplay tournament at Birmingham University Chess Society (BUCS) ahead of eleven other teams. They were led by Maxim Dunn, supported by strong performances from Ben Purton, Michael Green and Sammy Mendel (pictured)



The tournament had finally resumed after a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic, and it was certainly worth the wait. Over £400 was raised for

Oxfam in the process

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/2020chess>

If you would like to join the league for next season or if you have any questions, you can email the founder and tournament director Peter Hornsby at [director@worldchessleague.live](mailto:director@worldchessleague.live)

## NEWS AND VIEWS

### Correction

In last month's edition we stated that Louise Head came second in the 2019 English Women's Championship. However, Louise and Katarzyna Toma came joint first, and there was no tie-break. Many apologies to Louise and the reader for the mistake.

### GM Michael Adams

*ChessMoves* columnist Michael Adams has been very busy recently. His [interview on the Perpetual Chess Podcast](#) was thoroughly entertaining and instructive and was prompted by the publication of *Think Like a Super GM*, which he wrote with Philip Hurtado (of which more in our next issue). Meanwhile, Mickey ended up joint second in the strong Tepe Sigeman tournament after a fine last round win:

**Adams, Michael (2698) - Salem, A.R. Saleh (2690)**  
TePe Sigeman & Co Chess Tournament 2022

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.h4 h5 5.Bd3 Bxd3 6.Qxd3 Qa5+ 7.Nd2 e6 8.Ngf3 Nh6 9.0-0 Nf5 10.Nb3 Qa6 11.Qd1 c5 12.Bg5 cxd4 13.Nbxd4 Nxd4 14.Nxd4 Nc6 15.Nxc6 Qxc6 16.a4 Rc8 17.a5 Be7 18.Bxe7 Kxe7 19.c3 Qb5 20.Qd4 Qc5 21.Qf4 Rhd8 22.Qg5+ Kf8 23.Qxh5 Kg8 24.Qg5 d4 25.Rfd1 d3 26.Ra4 Rd5 27.Rg4 g6 28.Re4 Qxa5 29.h5 Qd8 30.Qg3 g5 31.Rg4 Kh8 32.Rxg5 Rc4 33.h6 Qf8 34.Rxd3 Re4 35.Rh5 a5 36.Rxd5 exd5 37.h7 a4 38.Qg5 1-0**

### Chess in Prisons update

Carl Portman ECF Manager of chess in prisons writes: The English Chess Federation and Chess in Schools and Communities Charity are delighted to announce an agreement about work with chess in prisons between the two organisations. There has been tremendous progress in the last few years not just in the UK but around the world and chess in

prisons is now firmly on the agenda from FIDE all the way down to local levels.

I shall continue to visit prisons on behalf of the ECF and give coaching, simulms and lectures. The follow on from my prison visits has always been to encourage the setting up of chess clubs so that prisoners can meet regularly to play. CSC have the resources and experience of doing just this so we will work jointly to foster chess in prisons.

In this regard the ECF is very much an 'enabler' whereas the CSC might be seen as an implementer, though the ECF and myself do donate equipment and books also. Don't forget to read my report about chess in prisons in the 2022 yearbook.

One final point. Both organisations are working to field teams in the online World Prison Chess Championships in the autumn, and more detail will be given when it is available.

I thank Malcolm Pein, Mike Truran and Nigel Towers for their support. The challenges ahead are huge, but it is rewarding and joyous work, and as ever chess wins the day.

I must comment that I continue to work with prisons in other capacities, from my independent role as chess columnist for the prison newspaper to the author of 'Chess Behind Bars' and I often receive invites on this basis, but of course I do highlight the work of the ECF and CSC in any discussions.

### **Southern Counties Chess Union**

Anthony Fulton has done the English chess world a great service. His book *The Southern Counties Chess Union - a retrospective* is a testimony to the author's industry and dedication. Isaac Newton wrote in a letter, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

Well, in the same vein, future chess historians researching not just the SCCU but also county chess generally will be indebted to Fulton for his authoritative account. It is published by Conrad Press and retails at £15.99 and was due to be published as *ChessMoves* was going to press. You will find it online at

<https://theconradpress.com/our-books/>

### **ECF Awards**

Stephen Greep writes ... Details of how to apply for this year's ECF awards have been released. There are eight awards:

- Accessible Chess

- Club of the Year
- Congress of the Year
- Contributions to Community Chess
- Online Chess Contribution
- Junior Chess
- Small Club of the Year
- Women's Chess

In addition, the prestigious President's Awards for Services to Chess (for which more than one award may be made each year) are also presented. All the details required in order to make a nomination may be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Awards-2022.pdf>

Entries for this year's awards close on 8 July. More can be found on the ECF website.

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/nominations-invited-for-this-years-ecf-awards-2/>

Enquiries and nominations to the Awards Committee Chairman Stephen Greep at [sjgreep@gmail.com](mailto:sjgreep@gmail.com)

### **Norms**

Congratulations to Jonah Willow who competed in the Irish Chess Union Easter Festival GM Norm Event and gained his final IM Norm. He then went on to win the Open section of the Nottingham Congress (report on the latter elsewhere in this issue).

### **Yearbook**

The ECF Yearbook 2022 is now available! Features this year include Ravi Haria England's Newest GM, Chess in the Time of Coronavirus, Guildford's 25 Years in the 4NCL, Michael Adams' Games of the Month, Keith Arkell's Endings, Peter Wells, Paul Littlewood and much more ...

The price for ECF members is £17.85 including P&P, and for non-members £19.85 including P&P. Click [here](#) to order while stocks last. ECF members can also follow this link to read / download a free PDF version of the 2022 Yearbook - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Yearbook-2022-complete-II-compressed.pdf>

### **Reminder**

A friendly reminder that the ECF will be charging game fee (£18 adult, £6 junior) to leagues and clubs who send in non-members' results for rating. Note that the ECF does not charge game fee for non-member players who have played three games or fewer in a league. Details [here](#).

## 4NCL

Elsewhere in this issue Danny Gormally, Keith Arkell and Michael Adams report on the 4NCL Easter Congress.

Meanwhile, the main 4NCL 2021-22 season has seen more action. Here are the results -

[https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/7/1\\_2/export/](https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/7/1_2/export/) (Round 7)

[https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/8/1\\_2/export/](https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/8/1_2/export/) (Round 8)

[https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/9/1\\_2/export/](https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/4ncl/9/1_2/export/) (Round 9)

Plus [http://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/media/4ncl/prog-div1\\_2.html](http://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2021-22/media/4ncl/prog-div1_2.html) (table) and <https://www.4ncl.co.uk/replay/2122/otb/div1-2.htm> (games)

Board 1 in Round 9 saw an entertaining match-up between Alexei Shirov (White) and Gawain Jones (Black)

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 a6 4. Ba4 Nf6 5. d3 b5 6. Bb3 Bc5 7. a4 Rb8 8. axb5 axb5 9. Bg5 h6 10. Bh4 d6 11. Nbd2 g5 12. Bg3 O-O 13. c3 Bb6 14. Nf1 Ne7 15. Ne3 Be6 16. Bxe6 fxe6 17. h4 g4 18. Ng5 Bxe3 19. Nxe6 Qc8 20. Nxf8 Bb6 21. f4 gxf3 22. Qxf3 Qxf8 23. Rf1 Qg7 24. Bxe5 dxe5 25. Qxf6 Qg3+ 26. Kd2 Qxg2+ 27. Kc1 Be3+ 28. Kb1 Qe2 29. Qf7+ Kh8 30. Qf6+ Kg8 31. Ra6 Qxd3+ 32. Ka1 b4 33. Qf7+ Kh8 34. Qf6+ Kg8 35. Qe6+ Kh8 36. Qxe5+ Kg8 37. Qg3+ 1-0

## BCET awards

A reminder that the deadline for nominations and citations for the BCET Awards is 31 May. Please send these to John Wickham at

[j.r.wickham@btinternet.com](mailto:j.r.wickham@btinternet.com)

More details at

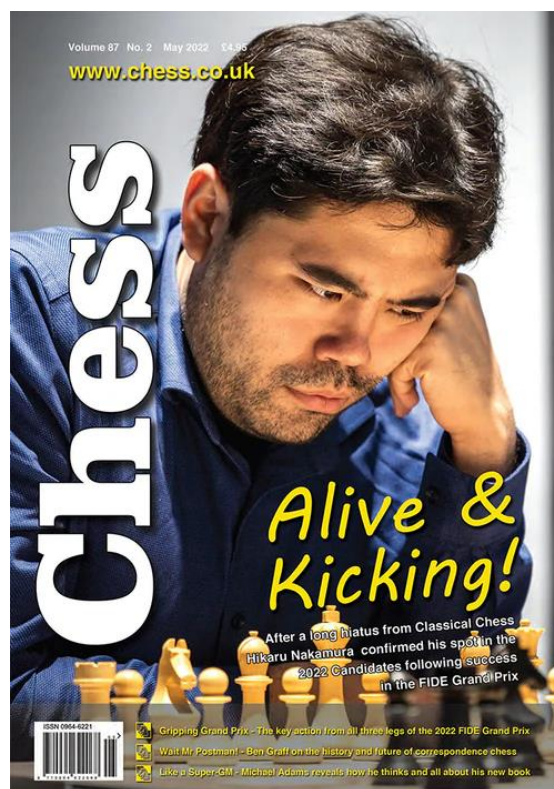
<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/bcet-awards-2022/>

## She Plays To Win

Elsewhere in this issue, we have a review of the new book *She Plays To Win*. Its author, Lorin D'Costa, is keen to help girls' chess in the UK. He recently gave a 12 board chess simultaneous exhibition at Hendon chess club - there's a report at <https://www.hendonchessclub.com/news/2021-22/may-simul/> - and wants to hear from other clubs who may be interested in running similar events. You can reach him via

<https://www.sheplaystowin.co.uk/contact-us>

# CHESS Magazine taster



Click here for this month's taster -

<https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0478/2876/2775/files/chess-magazine-may-2022-sample.pdf?v=1651590824>

Click here to purchase / subscribe -

<https://chess.co.uk/collections/chess-magazine/products/chess-magazine-may-2022>

## The First Women in Chess Global Exchange Forum

The first of four Zoom meetings organised by the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess was hosted by ECF Director of Women's Chess Agnieszka Milewska on 10 April 2022.



Let us not forget that this forum is about connecting us, connecting people, connecting all those who care about women in chess and want to contribute in any



way. Thank you all for joining - *IM Eva Repkova, Chairperson of FIDE Commission for Women's Chess*

The Year of the Woman in Chess is in full swing with the strong engagement of women in chess worldwide through workshops, training seminars, fundraisers, and women's day events, organized by the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess.

An online event, the Global Exchange Forum, was organized in cooperation with Chess24. This is a quarterly seminar aiming to connect chess officials, organizers and influencers working on behalf of women around the globe.

The first seminar took place on 10 April 2022. The event was hosted by **Agnieszka Milewska**, the ECF's Director of Women's Chess, and **Eva Repkova**, Chairperson of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess.

The special guest, **GM David Smerdon**, presented research on the gender gap in chess, *Facts and Myths about Gender in Chess*.

Smerdon is a PhD in Economics at the University of Amsterdam and Tindergen Institute. He was awarded the title of International Grandmaster in 2009 and has represented Australia in seven chess Olympiads.

He was part of an international research team of academics that included **GM Hou Yifan**, one of the best female players in history and the current top-rated woman. They took an in-depth look at some of the challenges women face in chess and the possible approaches to address them.

According to the results of the research, girls drop out at faster rates than boys at all ages, but the drop-out is especially severe after age 16.

There are both participation and performance gaps for women in chess, caused both by social and biological factors.

Stereotypes are among the social factors that negatively affect women's performance. Multiple studies have found that women chess players play worse against men than against other women, while men modify their playing style when facing women – they take longer to resign against women and play riskier openings against attractive females.

Some of the evidence shows that women and men exhibit a similar life-cycle of chess strength, except for women who have children.

When speaking of boosting female participation in chess, it was noted that role models matter for minorities in competitive environments. For example, Ugandan girls who watched *Queen of Katwe* before their mathematics exams were 44% more likely to pass. Having a female leader among Indian politicians means girls are more likely to pursue politics, and delay marriage and children. The same happens in chess. It is not just top players who can be role models for girls playing chess. It can be trainers at all levels, administrators, arbiters, organizers, commentators, and streamers.

Peer effect is another thing that can shorten the gender gap in chess. In men-dominated environments, having more women peers significantly helps women. The results of the research show that having to train alone, feeling pressure to represent all female players, and lacking social/friendship groups cause disincentives for female players to continue playing.

Smerdon's recommendations on how to increase the number of women playing chess are:

- Sponsor an annual FIDE retreat for talented girls, featuring role-models;
- Consider introducing a 'gentle' quota into national leagues;
- Develop and publish an annual Women in Chess Federation ranking.

For more information about the research, you can watch the Exchange Forum on [FIDE's YouTube channel](#) or download David Smerdon's [Facts and Myths about Gender in Chess presentation](#).

## TWEET OF THE MONTH



CHESS Magazine  
@CHESS\_Magazine

...

Lots of chess to enjoy with @ChampChessTour in Oslo, @STLChessClub hosting #TheAmericanCup, @GMGawain playing the Italian Teams... And from last weekend's @4NCL congress, a reminder that chess is for all ages. John Stubbs captures Freddy Gordon (11) meeting James Wallman (93).



© Chess

## FEATURES

### GM MICHAEL ADAMS' GAME OF THE MONTH



Danny Gormally shows the power of the bishop pair in this long but convincing victory, part of his six game winning streak at the 4NCL Easter Congress. You can see Danny's report on the Congress elsewhere in this issue.

As the action develops in this game the long-term advantages of the bishop pair are apparent as Black suffers throughout. The unopposed dark-squared bishop controls key territory, while Black's knight struggles for a good outpost. Eventually a path is opened for White's king to stroll into Black's position via those sensitive squares. Once the position becomes more open the greater range of the bishops makes matters simple.

#### D. Gormally – M. Turner

4NCL Easter Congress 2022

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Bb4+ 5.Nc3 0-0 6.Bg2 dxc4 7.0-0 c5** After this Black will always be a little worse, 7...Nc6 hanging onto the pawn is more critical.

**8.dxc5 Qa5** 8...Qxd1 9.Rxd1 Bxc5 10.Ne5! gives a typical Catalan advantage - White's fianchettoed bishop dominates the board.

**9.Qd4 Nc6** Black develops as 9...Qxc5 10.Qxc5 Bxc5 11.Ne5! again suits White.

**10.Qxc4 Qxc5 11.Qxc5 Bxc5 12.Bf4 Nd5** This gives Max's light-squared bishop more scope at the cost of accepting an isolated pawn. 12...Bd7 13.Rac1 keeps an edge.

**13.Nxd5 exd5 14.Rfd1 Be6 15.Rac1 Bb6 16.Ne5 Ne7** 16...Rac8! was a resourceful reply, as a capture on c6 looks more hopeful for Black. However,

calculating the key line 17.Bxd5 Nxe5 18.Rxc8 Bxc8 19.Bxe5 Re8 regaining the pawn is not simple.



**17.Nd3!** Often a good post for the knight, from which it might reroute to f4 later, and a path is opened for White's dark-squared bishop to infiltrate.

**17...Rfd8** 17...Rfc8 18.Bd6 is also uncomfortable.

**18.Nc5** It's hard to argue with grabbing the bishop pair, but the concrete 18.Bc7! was good. 18...Bxc7 19.Rxc7 Rd7 20.Rxd7 Bxd7 21.Nf4 picks off the weakling. The alternative 18...Rdc8 19.Bxb6 axb6 20.a3 saddles Black with more weak pawns, and b4 could be another handy outpost for White's knight or even king.

**18...Bxc5 19.Rxc5 Rac8 20.Rxc8 Bxc8** The clever 20...Rxc8 21.Bd6 Nf5 22.Bb4 Nd4! was more disruptive; 23.Kf1 (23.Rxd4?? Rc1+ 24.Bf1 Bh3) 23...Nc6 24.Bc5 Rd8.

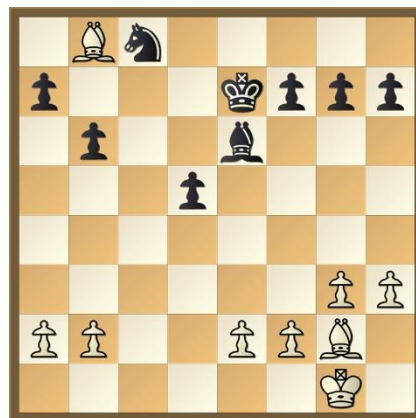


**21.Be3** 21.Bb8! was a better way to attack the pawn; then 21...a6 22.Bc7 Rd7 23.Bb6 dominates the dark squares. Having missed this chance, a long battle develops where White aims to force Black's queenside pawns onto light squares, to take control of that sector of the board.

**21...b6 22.Rc1 Be6 23.Bf4** Turner has consolidated somewhat: 23.Rc7 Rd7 24.Rxd7 Bxd7 25.Bf4 Be6, also holds firm.

**23...Rc8 24.Rxc8+ Nxc8 25.Bb8** Danny correctly senses that it is in his interest to move Black's pawns off the dark squares, but this doesn't currently threaten anything.

**25...Kf8 26.h3 Ke7** After 26...h5 27.h4 the pawn on h5 could be misplaced later.



**27.g4** Danny takes some kingside space.

**27...a6** Black needs to fight for the Black squares. 27...f6 28.f4 Kd7 29.Kf2 d4 30.a3 Nd6 creates counterplay - not 31.Bxa7? Kc7. In the middle of a tough defence it is hard to judge the moment to get active, and Max misses a few chances to jump out over the next few moves.

**28.f4 f6 29.Kf2 Nd6** 29...Kd7 was tougher.

**30.Bc7!** An awkward move to meet.

**30...b5 31.Ba5 g6** Black has to look for activity before White's king gets involved. 31...f5! 32.g5 d4 was better.



**32.b3 Nb7 32...f5! 33.g5 d4 34.Bb6 Ne4+** again creates counter chances. The knight can't be happy on b7.



**33.Bb4+ Kd7 34.Bc3 34.Ke3** was simpler.

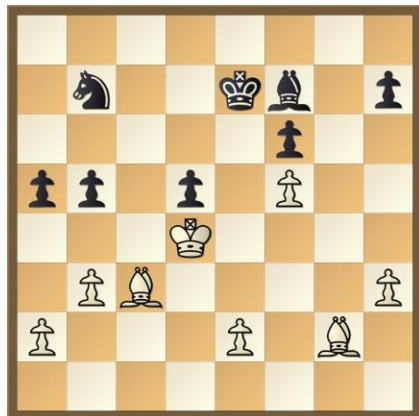
**34...Ke7 34...f5 35.gxf5 Bxf5 36.Bxd5 Nd6** threatening Ne4+ and Bxh3 complicates matters.

**35.Ke3 a5 35...Nd6 36.Bb4 Kd7 37.Kd4 Ne4 38.e3** continues the squeeze.

**36.f5** The computer suggests the sublime **36.Be1! Kd6 37.b4 a4 38.Bh4 f5 39.Kd4.**

**36...gxf5 37.gxf5 Bf7** Endgames are often tactical, and here **37...Bxf5 38.Bxd5 b4!** was another chance.

**38.Kd4!** Now White is in control again.



**38...b4 39.Be1 Nd6 40.Kc5 40.Bxd5! Nxf5+ 41.Kc5** was good. The pawns on a5 and b4 will be picked off by the white king.

**40...Nxf5 41.Kb5**

White's king has taken an express route to the queenside via the vulnerable dark squares, and will now capture Black's pawns there.

**41...Nd4+ 42.Kxa5 Nxe2 43.Kxb4 Nf4** White's two passers supported by the bishops should decide, and Danny shows fine technique in the remainder of the game. Patience is the watchword as he prevents any active possibilities, rather than rushing to advance the queenside pawns.

**44.Bf1! Bg6**



**45.Kc3!** Not **45.a4? Bd3!**; **45.Bg3 Bd3** also wins but requires more precision.

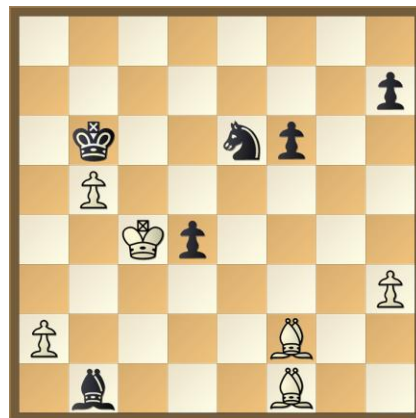
**45...Ne6 45...Bh5 46.Kd4!** dominates.

**46.Bf2!** Covering d4.

**46...Kd6 47.Bg3+ 47.a4 Ke5 48.Bg3+ Ke4 49.Bg2+** also works, but Gormally prevents the king advancing.

**47...Kc6 48.b4 d4+ 49.Kc4 Be4 50.b5+ Kb6 51.Bf2 51.Kb4 d3 52.Bf2+ Kb7 53.Kc3** was another way to do it.

**51...Bb1**

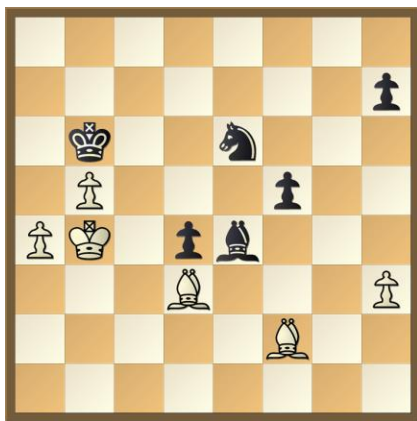


**52.a3!** **52.a4 Ka5 53.Kd5 Nd8 54.Kxd4 Kxa4 55.b6 Ka5 56.Kd5** is good enough, but it is much easier to keep the a-pawn safe.

**52...Ba2+ 52...Ka5** was the last try.

**53.Kb4 Bd5 54.a4 f5 55.Bd3 55.a5+ Kb7 56.Bc4** was fine, but Danny plans to capture on d4 with check. The slow approach has caused total collapse.

**55...Be4 55...f4** can be met by **56.Bxh7.**



**56.Bc4! Nf4 57.Bxd4+ Kb7 58.h4! 58.a5 Nxb3**  
**59.a6+ Ka8 60.b6** is good enough, but why give away  
 a pawn if you don't need to?

**58...Ng2 59.Bf2! f4 60.Kc5 f3 61.Kd4 Bc2 62.Bd5+**  
**Kc7 63.a5 Nf4 64.Bg3**

**1-0**

## Yuri Averbakh 1922-2022

In the first of a two-part essay Peter Wells reflects on the extraordinary life and work of the chess world's first centenarian grandmaster ...



On 7 May, the chess world lost its oldest grandmaster when Yuri Averbakh sadly died just three months after we had celebrated his turning 100. Many words have already been devoted to him this year – several moving obituaries and tributes over the last few days, to add to some well researched and fascinating accounts of his life as he turned centenarian. Two in particular I would commend for impressive detail and insights - Yosha Iglesias writing for Chess 24 [Yuri Averbakh celebrates his 100th birthday | Chess24.com](https://chess24.com/en/news/yuri-avrebakh-celebrates-his-100th-birthday) and

Douglas Griffin who frequently makes superb contributions to chess history both via Twitter and his blog and wrote this typically fine piece back in February - [Yuri Averbakh | Soviet Chess History \(Wordpress.com\)](https://www.douglasgriffin.com/2022/05/02/yuri-avrebakh-soviet-chess-history/)

However, I feel it is worth adding something here for several reasons. Firstly, the scale of Averbakh's chess output in so many diverse roles is truly remarkable. It is common enough to hail the achievements of venerable figures as they reach the landmarks of old age. It is much less expected to look back over their lives and genuinely wonder how they managed to pack quite so much into such a short period. For many Western chess professionals, it becomes a matter of financial necessity to perform many different roles within the game, even though the variety can also prove very satisfying. Speaking for myself, for example, I have added coaching/seconding, writing, national team captaincy and some classroom teaching to my basic playing activities. Yet Averbakh can claim to have done several of these at a very high level, but also boasted: an astonishing 27 years as editor of two of the Soviet Union's most prestigious chess journals (Shakhmaty v SSSR and Shakhmatnyi Byulleten); long stints as either President or Deputy President of the Soviet Chess Federation; years of diligent and hugely productive research into the endgame; and notable success presenting a popular long-running TV programme. This show played a considerable role in ensuring that the regime's determined quest for chess success genuinely engaged the interest of a sizeable chunk of the Soviet population. As Artur Kogan said on Twitter, based upon the experience of hearing Averbakh lecture in the late 1990s, he had a gift of "making easy what seemed so complex" which, together with his very engaging personality would have constituted the ideal qualities for this mass audience.

Furthermore, it feels to me that Averbakh's passing provides an appropriate moment for reflection. For one thing - as I have indicated before - the chess world is changing very rapidly (for better and for worse) and it seems to me more important than ever that the game keeps a strong sense of its rich history. Amongst the most significant periods of that history is that defined by the domination of the game by the Soviet Union. This ascendancy ran pretty much all the way from 1945 until 1991 - with one significant interruption courtesy of Bobby Fischer and arguably another (albeit less traumatic one) at the hands of

the 1978 Hungarian Olympiad team – and Averbakh was a towering figure throughout that period. I have to admit, I am also intrigued by someone who wielded significant power, especially during the turbulent 1970s, but appears to have made so few enemies. In this period tough decisions were made, as Fischer's rapid ascent caused something of a crisis of confidence in Soviet chess hegemony with first Taimanov and then Spassky being strongly admonished for their poor match performances, and just a few years later the embarrassment of Korchnoi's defection and the renewed challenge which he represented. Nonetheless, not just at the moment of his passing, but also in previous descriptions of Averbakh's life, it is rare to find anyone with a bad word to say about him.



*Photo of Averbakh with David Bronstein watching by Eric Koch / Anefo, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons*

It is difficult to know where to start when trying to describe Averbakh's numerous activities in brief. One way might be to separate the image that I had of him growing up, from the rather more rounded reality. For me and many of my generation, Averbakh was first of all celebrated for his astonishing endgame work – years of dedicated research that produced several volumes which were the go-to works for any serious endgame study. I also knew that he was a powerful political figure and was aware of something of his play, not least from his participation in the celebrated Zurich 1953 Candidates Tournament.

If I am honest though, I think I was also a bit surprised to realise quite what an accomplished player Averbakh was. In fact he only described

himself as a 'professional player' for twelve years – from 1950 to 1962 – but he accomplished an incredible amount in this period. Already in 1952 at the Saltsjobaden Interzonal, he simultaneously obtained the GM title and qualified for the Candidates. In 1954 he won the 21<sup>st</sup> Soviet Championship a full point and a half ahead of Taimanov and Korchnoi. Anyone familiar with the post-war Soviet Championships will know the scale of this achievement; gruelling events (this one over a full twenty rounds) are a huge measure of a player and not least of their stamina too. This feat was almost repeated in 1956 when he tied for first with Spassky and Taimanov, although the latter prevailed in the tiebreaks that followed. These results are very strong evidence that, at least for this decade or so, Averbakh was one of the top ten players in the world.

Most accounts of Averbakh's play emphasise that he was an extremely solid player, very good at removing an opponent's attacking qualities, supremely accomplished in the endgame (his decision to research extensively in this field did not come out of the blue!) but somewhat cautious tactically. Intriguingly – and rich in implicit guidance for beginners – he believed that he had learned chess 'the wrong way round', being exposed first to heavily strategic works and only later really discovering tactics and combinations.

There is plenty of evidence for this characterisation, not least his awesome record of 8.5-0.5 against the attacking maestro Nezhmetdinov, who appeared to struggle ever to obtain against Averbakh the sort of attacking positions upon which he thrived. As the King's Indian Defence was doing so much for the dynamism of young Soviet players such as Geller and Bronstein in the 1950s, Averbakh's greatest contribution to opening theory was an antidote designed to hinder Black's chances of developing serious king-side counterplay. The line which bears his name – 1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 Be2 0-0 6 Bg5





is motivated primarily by trying to hinder the ...e5 break and its greatest successes were usually to be found in endgames with Black being squeezed for space.

There is no doubt a lot of truth in all this, but I was also struck by the rich variety of his games. There seemed to be plenty in which he displayed a healthy feel for the initiative, a willingness to sacrifice material and – in a nod to the engines of a later era – a striking enthusiasm for generating play by pushing his h-pawn! It is certainly not my intention to try to re-write the description of Averbakh's style, but a modification to admire its breadth might be in order. I enjoyed the following demolition on the dark squares en route to another 1950s tournament victory

### Wolfgang Uhlmann – Yuri Averbakh

Dresden Round 10, 1956

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Nge2 d5 6.a3 Be7 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Ng3 c5 9.dxc5 Bxc5 10.Bd3 Nc6 11.0-0 Be6 12.Nce2 Bd6 13.Nd4?!**

The logic of White's play really needs to be that he can play against the isolated pawn and this feels like an admission that things have not gone quite to plan. With the structure returning to symmetry in this way, everything is down to the placing of the pieces and Black's already feel slightly more harmonious. Averbakh mentions 13 Bd2 Ne4, but White should surely try still to make 13 b4 work.

**13...Nxd4 14.exd4 Re8**

Stronger than the sharp 14...Ng4?! 15 h3 Nxf2 16 Rxf2 Bxg3 which allows the counter-strike 17 Bxh7+ Kxh7 18 Qd3+ and Qxg3 which Averbakh rightly gives as helpful only to White.



**15.Nf5?!**

Perhaps not yet at the height of the powers which he reached in the 1960s and then as Candidate in 1971, Uhlmann was nonetheless already a very strong player by the age of 21. This feels like a strange decision. My instinct is that Black's slight ascendancy on the dark squares always outweighs the bishop pair after this, although the extent to which this plays out so devastatingly in the final combination could, of course, hardly have been anticipated.

**15...Bxf5 16.Bxf5 Qb6 17.b3 g6 18.Bh3 Ne4**

Already White's pieces, particularly the bishop pair look poorly coordinated. Somehow the defence of the d4 pawn will force White into passivity, whereas Black can shield d5 effectively without losing any of the dynamic potential of his forces.

**19.Qd3 Be7 20.g3 Bf6 21.Be3 Re7 22.Rac1 Rae8 23.Rfd1 Qd6?! 24.Bg2**



**24...h5!**

The right plan. Black's pressure on the e-file prevents White from placing obstacles in the way of this advance and when the pawn reaches h4 it turns Black's dark-square pressure into something much more tangible.

**25.Qb5?! a6 26.Qa5 h4 27.g4?! Bg5!**

Averbakh mentions that 27 Bf4 would have been met by 27...Qe6 28 Be5 h3 'with an attack'. This is true, but should still have been preferred to this further compromising of the dark squares. The exchange of dark-squared bishops accentuates White's weaknesses and the resulting knight on g5 is a powerful attacker which it is virtually impossible to evict.

**28.Bxg5 Nxc5 29.h3**

29 Qxd5? Nxc3+ 30 Kf1 Re2! just wins for Black as Averbakh points out.

**29...Re2 30.Rf1**



**30...R8e3! 31.fxe3**

This just loses, but there was little joy in declining the material either with 31 Rc3 leading after 31...b6! 32 Qxa6 Rxc3 33 Qxe2 Nxc3+ 34 Bxc3 Rxc3 35 Qe8+ Kg7 36 Qe5+ Qxe5 37 dxe5 Rd3 (even stronger than grabbing the b-pawn) to an ending in which Black's active rook and White's pawn weaknesses would have found Averbakh in his element.

**31...Rxc3+ 32.Kxc3 Qg3+ 33.Kh1 Qxh3+ 34.Kg1 Qxe3+**

"Incredible as it seems, Black now manages to win both of White's rooks" – Averbakh.

**35.Kh1 Qh3+ 36.Kg1 Qg3+ 37.Kh1 Nf3 38.Qd8+ Kg7 39.Rxf3 Qxf3+ 40.Kh2 Qf4+ 41.Kg2 Qxg4+**

**0-1** (Averbakh's comments translated by Douglas Griffin)

## ARKELL'S ENDINGS



**Arkell, Keith - Harvey, Marcus**

e2e4. High Wycombe Open (5), 10.03.2013

'Gentle pressure relentlessly applied' – *Ray Elliott*

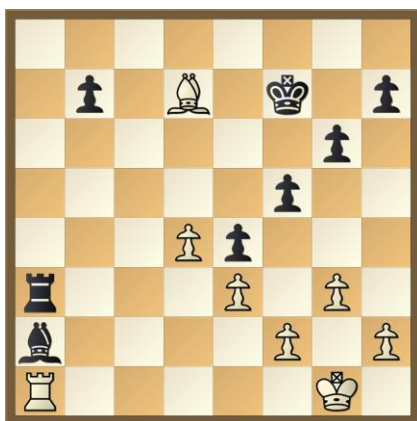
The importance of patience: my longest ever rook and pawn Endgame! This month's article is not so much about the winning technique itself as about my general philosophy when converting an advantageous endgame. It requires very little energy to gently probe your opponent's position, repeating wherever possible, when you have the upper hand and they have no counterplay. The constant need to be alert can have a wearying effect on a player who is forced to endure hours of pressure, not knowing the moment when you will elect to make a transition. The following game was played nine years ago, during the early stages of Marcus's development into a very strong player, on the verge of becoming a GM.

**1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.g3 Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7.b3 a5 8.Bb2 a4 9.b4 d5 10.cxd5 exd5 11.b5 Ne4 12.Ba3 Bd7 13.Qd3 Ra5 14.Bxe7 Qxe7 15.Nc3 Qd6 16.Rfc1 Rc8 17.Rab1 Be6 18.Ne5 Nd7 19.Nxe4 dxe4 20.Qc3 Raa8 21.Nxd7 Qxd7 22.a3 c6 23.bxc6 Rxc6 24.Qb4**



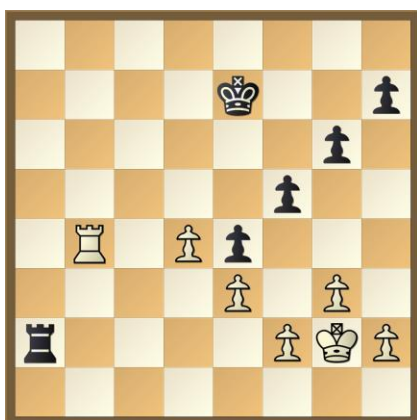
If you compare my pawn on d4 with Black's on b7 you can see that I have the better structure, but Black's active pieces should enable him to restrict my advantage to a minimum.

**24...Rac8 25.Rxc6 Rxc6 26.e3 Ba2 27.Re1 Rc2 28.Bf1 Qc6 29.Bb5 Qc3 30.Qxc3 Rxc3 31.Bxa4 Rxa3 32.Bd7 g6 33.Ra1 Kf7**



I can't actually win a piece here, but I can force a rook endgame a pawn up.

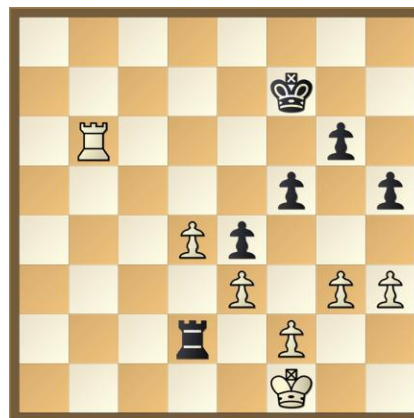
**34.Bb5 Ke7 35.Bc4 Ra4 36.Bxa2 b5 37.Kg2 b4 38.Rb1 Rxa2 39.Rxb4**



This position deserves to be winning for White but it may not be. I'm not sure. I remember discussing something very similar with my hero of days gone

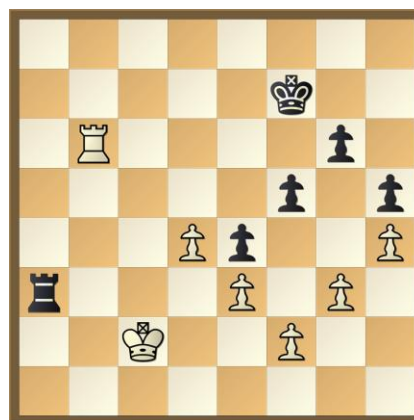
by, Ulf Andersson, and we concluded that against perfect defence it may be a draw. I do, however, have the option of applying hours of nagging pressure.

**39...h5 40.Rb6 Kf7 41.h3 Rd2 42.Kf1**



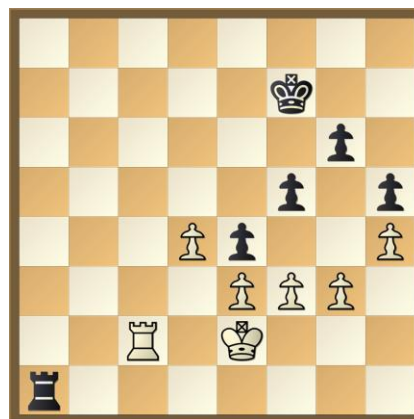
I would like to play 42. g4 to undermine his pawn structure, but 42...f4! is too strong.

**42...Rd1+ 43.Ke2 Rh1 44.h4 Ra1 45.Rb2 Ke6 46.Kd2 Ra3 47.Rb6+ Kf7 48.Kc2**



Somewhere around here I realised that I would have to play f3, and most likely e4, at some point, but there is certainly no rush.

**48...Ra2+ 49.Rb2 Ra3 50.Kb1 Rd3 51.Ra2 Rc3 52.Kb2 Rd3 53.Kc2 Kf6 54.Ra6+ Kf7 55.Rc6 Ra3 56.Kd2 Rd3+ 57.Ke2 Ra3 58.Rc2 Ra1 59.f3**

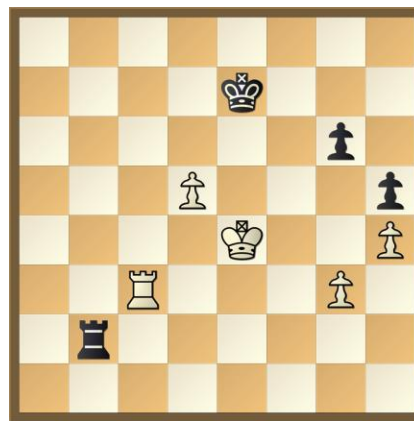




Marcus will be a little more worn out by my playing this on move 59 rather than 46.

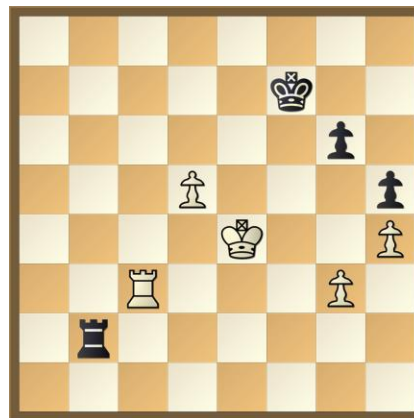
**59...exf3+ 60.Kxf3** I now wait another 42 moves before breaking with e4.

**60...Rf1+ 61.Rf2 Re1 62.Ra2 Rf1+ 63.Kg2 Re1 64.Kf2 Rd1 65.Ra6 Kg7 66.Rb6 Kf7 67.Rd6 Ra1 68.Rc6 Rd1 69.Ra6 Rb1 70.Ra5 Kf6 71.Ra8 Rd1 72.Ra2 Ke6 73.Ke2 Rg1 74.Kf3 Rf1+ 75.Rf2 Re1 76.Re2 Rf1+ 77.Kg2 Rd1 78.Kf2 Kf6 79.Re1 Rd2+ 80.Kf3 Ra2 81.Rb1 Ra6 82.Kf4 Re6 83.Rc1 Re4+ 84.Kf3 Kf7 85.Rc7+ Kf6 86.Ke2 Rg4 87.Rc6+ Kf7 88.Kf2 Re4 89.Kf3 Re8 90.Ke2 Ra8 91.Kd3 Ra1 92.Ke2 Rg1 93.Kf2 Rd1 94.Rc2 Ke6 95.Kf3 Rf1+ 96.Rf2 Re1 97.Re2 Rf1+ 98.Kg2 Rd1 99.Kf2 Kf6 100.Re1 Rd2+ 101.Kf3 Ra2 102.e4**



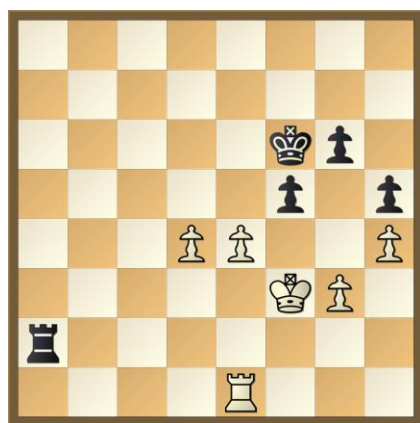
His main concern is both to look after g6 and restrain my d pawn.

**108.Rc7+ Kf6 109.Rc6+ Kf7 110.Rc3**



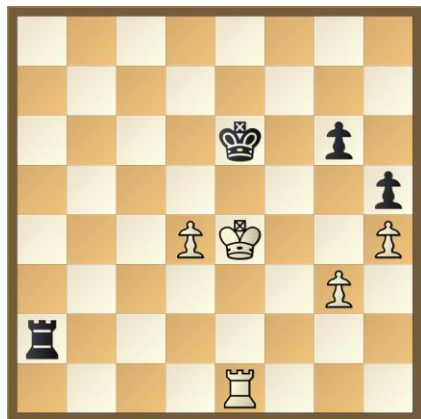
I don't think there was really any need to drag the game on any longer; I could have concluded matters more swiftly with 110 Ke5 as the d-pawn is too fast after e.g. 110...Re2+ 111 Kd6 Rf3 112 Kc7. Have you noticed that I don't concern myself too much with trying to establish the exact moment when a player is losing by force? You have no way of knowing this during the game unless the position is very simplified or they make a clear blunder.

**110...Ke7 111.Kd4 Rb1 112.Re3+ Kd7 113.Ke5 Rb4 114.Re4 Rb3 115.Kf4 Rd3 116.Re5 Rd4+ 117.Ke3 Ra4 118.Kf3 Ra6 119.Kf4 Rf6+ 120.Kg5 Rf3 121.Kxg6 Rxg3+ 122.Rg5 Rh3 123.Kxh5 Kd6 124.Rf5 Rg3 125.Kh6 Rg8 126.h5 Kc5 127.Kh7 Rg1 128.h6 Rg2 129.Kh8 Kd6 130.h7 Ke7 131.Re5+ Kf6 132.Re8 Kf7 133.Rd8 Rh2 134.d6 Ke6 135.Rg8 Rh1 136.Kg7 Rg1+ 137.Kf8 Rf1+ 138.Ke8 Ra1 139.d7**



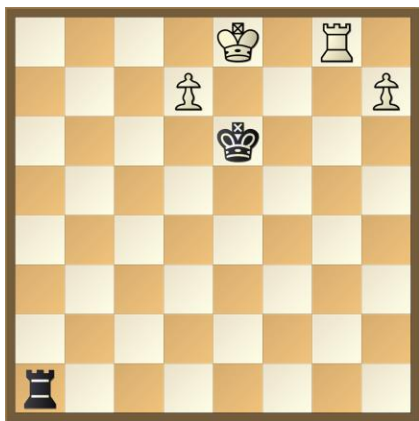
Not a move to be rushed into, as I have quipped many times already, but because of the weakness of the g3 pawn there is no other plan.

**102...fxe4+ 103.Kxe4 Ke6**



Black will now have to increase his vigilance after an energy-sapping period of cat and mouse.

**104.Re3 Rb2 105.Ra3 Rb6 106.Rc3 Rb2 107.d5+ Ke7**



Exactly 100 moves after entering the rook and pawn endgame my opponent threw in the towel. It is worth noting that during the intervening years Marcus has developed into a formidable grinder himself.

1-0

## Book Review of the Month

by Ben Graff in Association with Forward Chess

**Time for a good book! The best new writing and the greatest classics, under one roof ...**



We had a terrific response to the first column and as a result have reflected on the best approach for future articles. We will always feature a classic and a contemporary book, but we might well mention additional new books depending on what has been shared with the ECF by publishers and suppliers in the previous weeks. We may also include a short author interview from time to time...

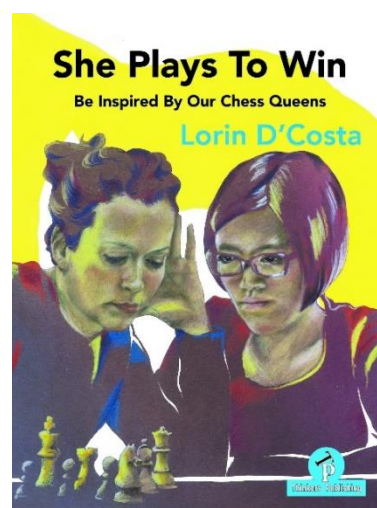
This month, we explore two books that have been shaped by lockdown - *She Plays To Win* by Lorin D'Costa and Danny Gormally's *Pandemic Shark*, in addition to *The Bishop Pair* by Efstratios Grivas. We also review the funniest classic of them all, *The Complete Chess Addict* by Mike Fox and Richard James.

A particular thanks to Chess & Bridge for providing the contemporary titles reviewed in our May edition. If you ever have half an hour to spare in London, there is no better place to spend it than in their Baker Street shop.

Away from some enjoyable reading, I recently submitted the final drafts of my new book "*Checkmate - Great Champions and Epic Matches from a Timeless Game*" to the publisher, after some intensive work (and quite a lot of chocolate) over Easter. It is always hard to let go, but good to finally hand it over. I take my hat off to all authors who are brave enough to let their work out into the world!

### Contemporary Book of the Month

***She Plays To Win* by Lorin D'Costa**  
Thinkers Publishing



From the football field to the political world and beyond, glass ceilings are being shattered. Women and girls are finally getting the chance to take centre stage and to fulfil their potential, in all walks of life. While there is much more work to be done, England Women's coach Lorin D'Costa is playing his part in shaping a watershed moment for women's chess.

Few of us can rival the way in which D'Costa put his time in lockdown to good use. In April 2020, he founded the not for profit She Plays to Win organisation, with the aim of encouraging more girls to learn, play and benefit from chess. Two years on, progress has been incredible. 500 girls have been signed up for free weekly Zoom lessons, with a further 200 enrolled in his beginners' programme. D'Costa also hosts weekly tournaments on Lichess and is determined to double the percentage of female ECF members by 2023.

D'Costa states, "I believe that maybe something should be made known for these potential female chess enthusiasts; that there are role models for them to look up to, to be inspired by." Each week, his lessons cover the analysis of a game by a top female player, and he recognised that over time he had "built up a large collection of games and tactics, which I felt could be published."

*She Plays To Win* groups female players into seven categories, including "World Champions", "The Future" and "Best of UK." For each of the eighty-four players featured, D'Costa lists some key statistics, identifies their playing style and opening repertoire, and features an excellent game. There are also sections on Judit Polgar and Beth Harmon.

As would be expected from a coach of Lorin D'Costa's calibre, every game is analysed both to a high standard and in a way that is accessible to the developing player. The formatting is very good, and there are plenty of helpful diagrams. As a father of daughters, I am personally inspired to see D'Costa celebrating the huge achievements of female players at the chessboard, while also charting a pathway for the next generation.

As he says, "This book is not just for girls and women... Any chess player can learn from these games and discover female chess history, both from the famous players in the past right up to the present day." This is a coaching manual for all of us, and I have no doubt that anyone who played through the games would both get a lot of pleasure and improve their play.

Perhaps my one quibble is that I would have liked to have seen more detailed biographies, beyond the basic statistics, for a few selected players. That said, the information that is provided acts as a great starting point for anyone who wants to then explore any of these players' histories in more detail. Moreover, given that *She Plays To Win* weighs in at 481 pages, it represents great value for money.

Garry Kasparov, who has been on his own journey in relation to his views on women's players once wrote, "The Polgars showed that there are no inherent limitations to [female players'] aptitude—an idea that many male players refused to accept until they had been unceremoniously crushed by a twelve-year old with a ponytail." The world is changing. Perhaps too slowly, but undoubtedly for the better. D'Costa's work and this book are an important contribution to

shaping the type of society – and future chess world – that we all want to see.

*She Plays To Win* is undoubtedly a victory, both for women's chess, and for Lorin D'Costa.

### **Other exciting new offerings**

***Pandemic Shark* by Danny Gormally**  
Thinkers Publishing

Danny Gormally's output has been prolific during lockdown, and *Pandemic Shark* is another terrific offering. What I always admire about Danny's work is his openness and honesty. He gives a real insight into the life of a working GM and combines personal stories with coaching insights to great effect. This makes for an engaging and engrossing formula, and books that all players will enjoy.

From lessons on Skype, through to the world of chess streamers and his thoughts on Pandemic Sharks (players who have become much stronger during lockdown, with the improvement not reflected in their current ratings) this is a book that captures the strangeness of the times we have all been living through.

At its core *Pandemic Shark* explores how chess players can improve, whatever their age - something Gormally was once sceptical about, but now embraces. He is a very perceptive guide, and I would recommend both *Pandemic Shark* and all his other books without hesitation.

***The Bishop Pair – Power of the Sun* by Efstratios Grivas**

Thinkers Publishing

We have most likely all looked at our opponent's bishop pair with fear and trepidation at some point in our chess careers. Equally we have probably basked smugly when we have ourselves been suitably blessed by the chess gods with the "power of the sun." Grivas highlights that our intuitive sense that the bishop pair is strong is not always based on a proper understanding as to why this is the case.

What might be dry and technical in a lesser writer's hands is skilfully and interestingly done by Grivas. He looks at the bishop pair in situations where the centre is open, semi-open and closed, as well as when the pawn structure is unbalanced. He features ninety-six games (in some cases in full, for others the key fragment) and lucidly draws out key points and tips.



From Steinitz to Carlsen, the examples given are enjoyable and accessible, irrespective of whether the reader is settling down to serious study or just wants to enjoy some good chess. This is a very useful book for anyone who wants to improve their middlegame play.

### **Classic Book of the Month**

#### **The Complete Chess Addict**

Faber and Faber

There are many chess books that can teach you something. A smaller number might make you chuckle. *The Complete Chess Addict* stands alone in being laugh out loud funny, no matter how many times you read it.

Mike Fox and Richard James note that “This is not a deadly serious look at chess,” and they remain true to their word. Instead, we get a treasure trove of anecdotes and humorous stories, grouped under headings including “The Greatest,” “The Frightful,” “The Unacceptable” and “The Bizarre.”

Did you know that Queen Victoria never travelled without a chess set? Or that during the depression, Humphrey Bogart supported his family by working as a chess hustler on Broadway? Bogart was even offered a job as the resident expert in a chess café, but inexplicably decided to focus on a career in films instead.

From the time a dog played on board eight for the Brighton third team, through to what happened when two clubs both secured a last-minute recruit from the local pub for a league game, the humour inherent in the happenings, combined with the warmth of the telling, make this a must read.

There are tales about disastrous tournament performances which are destined to make all of us feel a little better. Colonel Moreau’s 0/26 at the Monte Carlo tournament is duly celebrated. “Twenty-six games, twenty-six duck eggs; a world record. For dogged persistence, it’s a landmark; you or I would have feigned a headache or beriberi or a sick uncle after maybe ten of those noughts. So Colonel Moreau gets our palm for the gamest of good losers.”

Less philosophical losers are documented, including the Danish player who, following an error with his queen, “Unable to contain his despair... snuck back into the tournament hall at dead of night, and cut the heads off all the queens.” Along with various other

instances of less-than-ideal sporting conduct at the chess board.

Fox and James note that “Murder and chess are, happily, infrequent companions these days, but... it wasn’t always thus,” and give further intriguing details, including a retelling of the (hopefully) apocryphal short story in which Alekhine told a friend about the time he had encountered “a ragged old peasant” who could deliver checkmate in twelve moves from the starting position. Once the peasant had demonstrated that he could in fact do this, Alekhine took him to meet his hated rival Capablanca, who was similarly defeated. “As Alekhine concluded his sensational account, the friend leans forward eagerly and asks the questions you are now asking yourself: ‘Then what did you do?’ Alekhine’s devastating reply: ‘Why, we killed him of course.’”

Long before Fantasy Football was a thing, Fox and James hit on the brilliant notion of constructing historical chess teams, in various categories including “The Sinners,” “The Sportsmen” and “The Entertainers.” I was amused to note that “The Thinkers” have one of the weakest teams. The authors suggest that “Presumably if you spend your time thinking up the General Theory of Relativity... you don’t have much time left for rook and pawn endgames.” Albeit I sometimes wonder whether overly thinking about a position is where I have been going wrong in my own games! (The reader will infer from this that I have not had a particularly good season.)

In addition, *The Complete Chess Addict* contains sixty games, ranging from those played by the very best through to some of the celebrities’ offerings and a stack of records and other interesting facts. As the authors note at one point, “Over-indulgence in the material in this section could very easily turn you into the club bore. (On the other hand, judicious use of it could win you quite a few bets down the pub.)” Certainly, for any chess writer who is looking to source some colour, this book is a must have.

Perhaps *The Complete Chess Addict* is a little out of sync with today’s world of chess publishing. It strives to be light, where modern writers are often all too serious. Inevitably having been published in 1987, it is dated in places. A new generation of celebrities and sports stars would demand a place in the ranks of today’s teams. This is an opportunity to laugh, and to be entertained, rather than to build

your knowledge with a systematic degree of academic rigour.

Yet perhaps the very fact that this book does not quite conform to the idiosyncrasies of our age is another reason to like it so much. There is a story that Bobby Fischer himself was the proud owner of a copy. Getting your hands on *The Complete Chess Addict* must rank as a great move for any chess player.

*Ben Graff is a writer and chess journalist. He is a regular contributor to Chess, The Chess Circuit and Authors Publish. He is the author of The Greenbecker Gambit and Find Another Place. He is not a grandmaster, but did draw with one once.*

## Mark Rivlin interviews Chris Ross



The number one totally blind chess player in England, Chris Ross has a current Elo rating of 2242 and was awarded the CM title in 2012. After becoming blind in his childhood, he attended a mainstream school and went on to read German at The University of Sheffield. Chris has enjoyed a successful career in various academic roles and his book *Blind Faith* has recently been published by Steel City Press.



**You have recently published your book *Blind Faith*. Tell us the background about the book and your reasons for writing it.**

Initially, I wrote notes for myself as a record of analysing some of my best games. Friends gave me feedback saying it was very helpful and it just spiralled from there. Essentially the book is a collection of my best 80 annotated games, and it is both educational and aspirational. These games show my chess journey from 2003, in particular how I managed to go from 180 ECF to around 200-plus in

2005-6. The book shows how I got better and enabled me to be more consistent.

### **Can club players benefit from the book?**

Yes, I believe they can. It's written in the style of a stream of thought and it is not riddled with computer analysis. The fundamental aspects of the games will benefit club players, particularly the analysis of positional value.

### **Please tell us about your chess journey**

The man who is responsible for my chess progress is actually the snooker icon Steve Davis. My formative years were spent trying to emulate him. In the late 1980s, when I lost my sight, I joined the Braille Chess Association (one of the reasons was that I knew Steve Davis liked chess) and a chess club in Middlesbrough. I went to university in Sheffield and played for Darnall and Handsworth, and I am lucky to have represented the UK in a considerable number of tournaments for visually impaired chess players.

The only chess-related regret I have is not being able to get much stronger, mainly because I have held full-time posts in education and academia since university.

### **How is blind chess played?**

We play with adaptive sets and with pieces that have pegs so they don't fall over. The black pieces have nails at the top. Digital clocks have been a wonder for blind chess as the analogue clocks were unreliable. The mechanics of a game involve two boards; the sighted player has a regular one, and the blind player has his or her own. The moves are announced to each other. Most players are fine with it, but it can be challenging to some beginner players and older players sometimes have problems with algebraic notation.

I have a bit of an advantage because I was sighted as a child, so I understand colour and space. I am able to play on a regular board because I can visualise the game and I also have exceptional spatial awareness. However, these attributes are unique – most blind players do not have these attributes. At university, I played with another team player and we analysed games in our minds on the bus going home. It's all about 'visualising' the board, which is important for all chess players. Knowing how many moves ahead is not as important as the overall bigger picture. For instance, I may have a strategy of how my rook can

penetrate the seventh rank or where I want pawns to be in 20 moves.

### **Who are your chess mentors?**

GM Neil McDonald has given me tremendous support in mentoring and coaching before and after international tournament games. IM Richard Palliser has also been a huge inspiration and my original Sheffield captain Geoff Brown from Darnall & Handsworth CC who has supported me for 25 years, going above a captain's duties to enable me to play. This includes a lot of mileage and time in getting me to games. His commitment to the game is inspirational.

### **Is there a similar spike in interest in blind chess as there has been in the wider chess community?**

Unfortunately not – blind chess is a very small community and playing the game can be quite expensive. You need a degree of independence; it's much easier for sighted people to participate in tournaments and sort transport, hotels and facilities. Blind chess is more prevalent among older people and we don't have enough younger players learning and playing over the board chess. It's certainly easier to get into local chess and interact with the wider community.

The Braille Chess Association has around 200+ members, with around 40 active over-the board players. Another problem is that there is no international standardisation level of visual impairment, so the definition of sighting in the UK is different to other countries.

### **Outside chess, tell us about your work and other interests**

I have a senior job as Head of the Sheffield Regional Assessment Centre that carries out study needs assessments for Disabled Students' Allowances. I manage a team of assessors who support such students. I taught German in a school for ten years and then got interested in support for students in higher education and became a disability advisor, eventually going through the ranks to my current position. Having left university in Sheffield in 2003, I'm now back there.

I play cricket for Northamptonshire in the Blind National League. It's an interesting sport with an excellent social scene. We play roughly twelve games a season and it is quite competitive. I also play for Yorkshire in the Development League.



## What would you still like to achieve in chess?

I never obtained a FIDE Master title (my highest grade was 2247) but I believe if the ECF had bought into the Elo grading system 20 years ago I would have had more FIDE-rated tournament opportunities. Now we have a four-digit system, I will look to play more FIDE-rated tournaments.

## What do you think of the 'Blindfold King' Timur Gareyev?

I think he's a bit of a gimmick. I don't see the point of doing what he does just to break records. It would be different if he could do these kinds of simultaneous displays to help develop visualisation for chess players.

## What more could the ECF do to help promote blind chess players?

The Braille Chess Association is in a good financial place at the moment. In the mid-1990s, there wasn't a substantial relationship with the ECF but now there is more communication. We have a problem in the BCA with junior retention so this could be a good focal point for the ECF, to help blind junior chess development. I qualified for the British Championships a few times and I think there is room for collaboration in promoting diversity here. In the 4NCL there are rules about teams having to field a female or junior, so perhaps for the 4NCL team composition or in the British there could be an opportunity to give a place for a registered disabled player.

*Blind Faith* can be purchased here -

Ebook -

<https://steelcitypress.co.uk/product/blind-faith-ebook/>

Book - <https://steelcitypress.co.uk/product/blind-faith/>

## An extract from *Blind Faith*

by Chris Ross

Game 50 Chris Ross - Peter Mercs

Sheffield Congress 2015 Sicilian Moscow

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+

The Canal-Sokolsky variation of the Sicilian Defence, often called the Moscow variation. Unlike its sister variation, the Rossolimo, the Moscow does not strive

to shatter the Black formation in compensation for giving up the bishop-pair. Interestingly, though, the Moscow pertains similar objectives, one of which is the ultimate good knight versus bad bishop ending, that all the variations have in common. The Moscow variation sets out to demonstrate that piece play, a lead in development and the occupation of the light squares will give White a positional plus.

### 3...Nd7

The response preferred by Gary Kasparov no less. 3...Bd7 allows the exchange of light-squared bishops and 5. c4, forming the Maroczy Bind, which gives White a comfortable edge, since the light-squared bishops are no longer on the board.

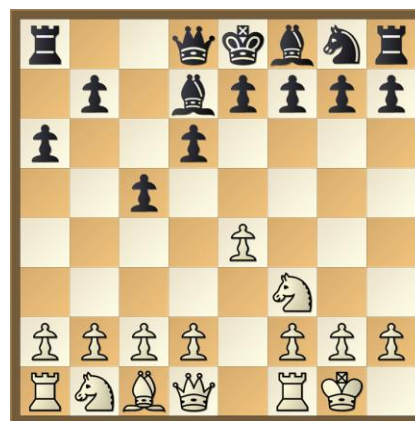
3...Nc6 is a more challenging variation, but after 4. 0-0 Bd7 5. Re1

White's light-squared bishop is given a flight-square back on f1, where it will later emerge to support White in his occupation of the light squares. The text-move should force White to part with the bishop-pair, but this is ultimately within his game-plan in any case.

### 4. 0-0 a6

In round three of this tournament, Black played 4...Ngf6, permitting 5. Re1 and once again the light-squared bishop had a flight square back on f1. A subtlety in the move order, but important as White then achieved an easy advantage and converted the victory in under 35 moves.

### 5. Bxd7+ Bxd7



Here a close analysis of the position should be undertaken. What is White attempting to achieve and where is he going to accomplish it? White has

voluntarily given up the light-squared bishop, which should only be done if a long-term objective is intended. Indeed, with this exchange, White is stating that he believes Black's light-squared bishop is of little significance. Examining the black pawn-chain, it is clear that the pawns on c5, d6 and e7 limit the scope of the dark-squared bishop quite considerably. To develop the dark-squared bishop, Black will either have to advance the e-pawn, thereby leaving the d-pawn backward and vulnerable, or fianchetto it, which is not going to be easy considering White's follow-up.

Taking that analysis further, White is thus intending to make Black's dark-squared bishop 'bad' and wishes to have his own queen's knight (b1) prove to be 'good', thereby giving him an advantage in the endgame.

To that end then, White needs to ensure that Black does not keep the bishop-pair. Having exchanged his own light-squared bishop, White must endeavour to exchange his king's knight for Black's light-squared bishop. Due to the pressure exerted on the light squares in the middlegame, this is easily accomplished.

#### **6. d4 cxd4**

If permitted, White will play d4-d5 and clamp down on the light squares with his pawns, reducing Black's light-squared bishop to a mere observer. Black cannot allow this.

#### **7. Qxd4**

Best, as recapturing with the king's knight would only leave the knight awkwardly placed to reach its objective square. The queen recapture hinders Black's development and increases White's. Black's g-pawn is now pinned, preventing him from fianchettoing. Indeed, Black will now have to make some kind of concession to enable him to complete development.

#### **7...e5**

Black attempts to break out and remove the white queen from her dominating position. Black reckons that putting the pawn on e5 is better than on e6, as if 7...e6, the g-pawn would still be pinned, and the d-pawn is no less backward whether the e-pawn is on e6 or e5. Also, Black is controlling some useful central squares.

Like its sister variations, Black seeks a Sveshnikov or Kalashnikov type of set-up, understandably fighting for space within the centre. However, just like these sister variations, the outpost on d5 is now exposed. With White having refrained from landing his king's knight on d4, he will find it much easier to transfer this knight around to the outpost than if he had recaptured in the centre with the steed.

#### **8. Qd3**

White retreats the queen to a light square, as that is what coloured square she now belongs on, with the light-squared bishop having been exchanged. The e-pawn is guarded and the black d-pawn becomes a focus point. However, as Nimzowitsch instructed us, the square in front of an isolated pawn or backward pawn is to be targeted and controlled, not the weakness itself.

#### **8...Nf6**

A slight inaccuracy in the move order, but this is not yet critical. 8...Be7 or 8...Bc6 is to be preferred.

#### **9. Nc3**

Slightly toying with Black. White does not wish to commit his queenside pawns, as Black's pawn break, ...b7-b5, may undermine it. In that sense then, White only wants to play a2-a4 or c2-c4 if he really must. This begs the question then as to whether Black should flick in ...Bb5 at some stage to force c2-c4, but the validity of this is not clear.

#### **9...Be7?**

After this, White has a strong, if not positionally winning set-up. Black has failed to appreciate the long-term plans for White and the seriousness of the d5 outpost.

9...h6 was Black's only good option. Although this leaves an anchor or hook for White to exploit and the f5-square beckons, Black's king's knight had to be maintained to keep any kind of control over the d5-square. After 9...h6, White can lever open the position at some stage with f2-f4 or simply transfer the king's knight around to the d5-square, as in the game.

#### **10. Bg5**



White completes development and has a commanding position with overwhelming control of the d5 outpost. From here on, Black never achieves equality and White's play is natural, simple and extremely efficient.

### 10...Be6

Black attempts to regain some control of the d5 outpost. White's threat was to exchange on f6, luring Black's dark-squared bishop away from the defence of the backward pawn. If Black is required to recapture on f6 with the g-pawn, his pawn structure is so devastatingly fractured that an inevitable loss will soon occur.

### 11. Rfd1

The correct rook. It is removed from the a6-f1 diagonal, completely negating any possible tactics that Black may dream of. The d-pawn is yet again targeted and the white queen's rook is left on that side of the board in case a2-a4 and operations on the flank are necessary.

### 11...Qa5

Since Black is positionally struggling, he resorts to tactical means in an attempt to lessen the pressure. White, naturally, does not have to get involved with any complications and the continuation of his game-plan is the easiest and most effective way to refute the tactical tricks.

### 12. Bxf6

Removing a defender of the d5 outpost and beginning that long-term plan of obtaining good knight versus bad bishop. The departure of the second bishop is insignificant since White will soon regain Black's light-squared bishop or win material as an alternative.

### 12...Bxf6 13. Nd2

White ignores the tactical offer of a pawn and, instead, continues with his plan, mindful that his positional superiority is more than enough to convert the victory without having to get embroiled in a tactical melee. White's king's knight is transferred around to exert pressure on the d5 outpost. Black's attempt to complicate things tactically has only left his queen on a more vulnerable square, thereby aiding White in his endeavours.

13. Qxd6 Rd8 14. Qa3 Qxa3 15. Rxd8+ Ke7 16. bxa3 Rxd8 is not the route White wants to go down, despite being a clear pawn up.

### 13...Rd8 14. Nc4 Bxc4

Black exchanges his light-squared bishop as this knight can cause so much damage otherwise. Tactically, the d-pawn may be vulnerable as the black queen does not have many squares to escape to. If needed, the white knight can step backwards on to e3 and then jump satisfactorily into d5.

Either way, the white knights will lead a merry dance around the black forces and effectively split them in half. So, with the text-move, Black hopes to regain some tempi to permit himself to castle and organise an untangling process.

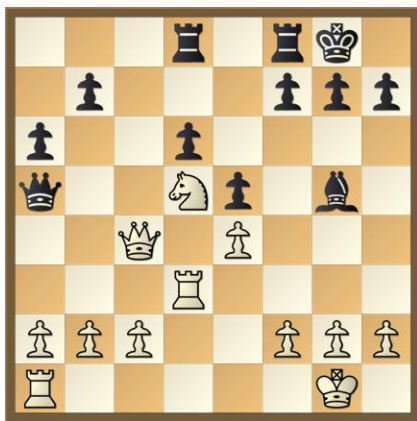
### 15. Qxc4 0-0 16. Nd5 Bg5

Black wishes to keep his dark-squared bishop, as his only true hope of salvaging the game is by tactical means and, potentially, with a kingside attack. Instructively, all the black forces are not only uncoordinated, but are indeed undefended.

White has now achieved pretty much everything he has set out to do from the opening. He has obtained a huge positional advantage and any endgame will simply be winning. How then to complete development and where is the focus to be concentrated?

### 17. Rd3





The white rook is lifted on to the open third rank, placed on a light square and so facilitates the doubling up of rooks on the backward d-pawn. The undefended white queen is an issue in the position, though, as it is not entirely clear at the moment where she belongs. Black's natural break is ...f7-f5 and whilst the white queen remains on the a2-g8 diagonal, he must waste time to ensure that no discoveries are going to cause him fatal consequences.

17. a4 is certainly an option, gaining space on the queenside and introducing the tactical threat of 18. b4, winning the black queen. Black can easily avoid this with 17...Rc8 and may follow up with the ...b7-b5 thrust. Although this opens up the a-file for White, it is unclear whether any joy will be gained down it. Despite being a promising prospect, the uncertainty of the plan does not warrant the compromised nature of the white pawn-chain. Indeed, the white c-pawn is backward on a half-open file. To ensure that it does not become weak, White will be obliged to play c2-c3. That is one pawn weakness in the white queenside; playing a2-a4 would incur a second, possibly one too many.

Thus, the rook lift. However, this does not entirely solve White's 'true' weakness, again a guiding principle for the black-sided player of the Sicilian Defence, that being the e4-pawn. That e4-pawn is a focus-point and Black can now turn his attention to its undefended nature.

#### 17...Rc8 18. Qb3 b5

Black gains space on the queenside, and, more importantly, gives himself the c4 outpost. This is, though, in all reality, not a true outpost, for although Black can temporarily occupy the square, he cannot maintain in. This is an important feature and the quintessential difference in the actual effectiveness of an outpost.

#### 19. c3 Qd8

Black retreats to defend his loose bishop on g5 and has the potential of swinging the queen across to the kingside for an attack. After 19...Rc4 20. Qc2 the e-pawn is defended covertly though, due to 20...Rxe4 21. Rg3, revealing an attack on the two loose black pieces.

#### 20. Rad1 Rc4 21. f3

This puts a pawn on a light square, which is somewhat inconvenient for White, who no longer has the third rank for his rook. Awkwardly too, the a7-g1 diagonal becomes a tactical liability. This is a necessary evil, though, since White needs tempi to consolidate his position. Although a temporary measure, White has something else in mind, namely to counter-attack against the oncoming black onslaught. Similar themes can be seen in the King's Indian Defence and other such openings.

#### 21...g6

Unfortunately, Black does not have the luxury of such preparatory moves. He is naturally striking out with his break of ...f7-f5, but there is not time to waste here. Again, Black mistakenly perceives that he will be obliged to recapture on f5 with a pawn, in order to open up the g-file and to have a central pawn mass. Things are not so clear, though, as will soon become apparent. That said, 21...f5 22. exf5 Rxf5 23. a4 is a sneaky way with which to attack the black queenside pawns, because if 23...Rxa4? then 24 Nb6+ wins the exchange.

#### 22. Qc2

Transferring the white queen across to the kingside, both for defensive purposes and to facilitate some other heavy-piece manoeuvring. More important is the fact that the black rook posted on c4 can now be evicted.

#### 22...f5

Black strikes out, as surely he must, for otherwise White will slowly improve his piece superiority, not least the queen, and then begin to exert pressure on the black queenside pawns, as well as the backward d-pawn.

The show of impatience by Black is understandable, but it leads to a swifter demise for him.

#### 23. b3 Rc8 24. exf5

It was essential to evict the black rook from c4 before this exchange occurred, as the fourth rank becomes open. It would have been criminal to permit the rook on c4 to swing across to h4 and join in a possible kingside attack. With the move order adopted, White's forces now begin to control more light squares and, indeed, the e4-square is freed up.

#### 24...gxf5

It is difficult to criticise such a natural response, but Black is on the verge of sheer collapse in any case.

24...Rxf5 25. Qe2 Rf7 is the only possible way for Black to survive the position for any length of time. White can then choose his continuation which will include the occupation of the e4-square or the targeting of the black queenside pawns.

#### 25. f4



A devastatingly disruptive move. The third rank is yet again opened up for the white rook and the pressure on the e5-pawn reverberates backwards on to the d-pawn. If fxe5 and ...dxe5 is permitted, there are discoveries along the open d-file and penetration by a white rook must occur.

#### 25...exf4

Black's pawn formation is a miserable sight to behold, but annoyingly for Black, 25...e4 26. Rg3 would lose the pinned bishop on g5. White is in no hurry to recapture the doubled f-pawn, for as it is, it limits the scope of the dark-squared bishop. Studying the black pawn structure now reveals four pawn islands, with doubled and isolated pawns to boot.

#### 26. Kh1

Remaining calm to the finish. The white king is removed from all the tactical possibilities along the a7-g1 diagonal, so that the white knight can leave

the d5-square without any tactics occurring against the exposed white king. Although this increases the weakness of the white back rank, Black simply does not have time to exploit this, as his own king will be slain well before he is offered that opportunity.

#### 26...Qe8

Black seeks penetration possibilities down the open e-file. Possibly ...Qe4 is an option or maybe ...Qh5 with kingside ambitions, both of which are easily refuted. The black queen has no good squares though, while forks on b6 may tie Black down and Nb4 may pressurise the d-pawn to such an extent that it's simply lost.

#### 27. Qf2

Removing the white queen from the gaze of the black rook on the c-file. Possibilities now offer themselves with h2-h4 if needed, but critically, White will now challenge the open file. Black can offer little resistance now.

#### 27...Rc5

Presumably played with the intention of offering up the exchange on d5 followed by ...Qe4 or ...Qe3 penetration ideas. White must not, and does not permit such tricks.

#### 28. Re1 Qf7 29. Nxf4

Simple and strong. White has cashed in his positional plusses. The damage caused to Black's pawn structure and openness of the king no longer mean that the endgame is necessary. There are too many weaknesses in the black camp for it to be tenable. White now has too many threats. 30. Ne6, winning an exchange, is threatened, as well as 30. Rg3, picking up that loose bishop on g5 again.

#### 29...Bxf4 30. Qxf4 Re8

As good as resigning, but the black position was hopeless and the various weaknesses in the black camp meant that there is no acceptable defence.

30...Qf6 would have offered some resistance, as it controls the long a1-h8 diagonal and puts pressure on the only weakness in the white position, the c3-pawn, but the conversion is simple enough for White, with the open files and ranks. After the text-move, the tactical finish is simple in its entirety, but perfectly apt for all of that.

#### 31. Qg5+ Kh8 32. Rxe8+ Qxe8 33. Qf6+ 1-0

With 34. Rg3+ coming in, Black will lose his queen and the mop-up is easy enough thereafter.

### Opening references

a) 9. Bg5 h6 10. Bxf6 Qxf6 11. Nc3 Rc8 12. Nd5 Qd8 13. Rfd1 Be6 14. Qb3 Bxd5 15. Rxd5 Qc7 16. c3 Be7 17. a4 b6 18. Qd1 0-0 19. Nd2 Rfd8 20. Qe2 Qb7 21. Nc4 Rc5 22. Ne3 Bg5 23. Rxc5 bxc5 24. Nc4, Adla-Schneider, Gibraltar 2015.

b) 9. Bg5 Rc8 10. Nc3 Be6 11. Rfd1 h6 12. Bxf6 Qxf6 13. Nd5 Bxd5 14. Qxd5 Rc7 15. Rac1 Be7 16. Nd2 Qe6 17. Qa5 Qc8 18. c3 0-0 19. Nf1 Rc5 20. Qa4 b5 21. Qb3 Qc6 22. Ng3 Rc8 23. Rd3 Bf8, Peptan-Vajda, Sovata 1998.

c) 10...Bc6 11. Rad1 0-0 12. Bxf6 gxf6 13. Nh4 Qc7 14. Nf5 Rfd8 15. Qg3+ Kf8 16. Qg7+ Ke8 17. Qxh7 Bf8 18. Ng7+ Bxg7 19. Qxg7 Ke7 20. Qh6 Rg8 21. Qd2 Qd7 22. Qd3 b5 23. a3 Rg6 24. Nd5+ Bxd5 25. Qxd5, Etrog-Le Bihan, Montigny le Bretonneux 1999.

d) 10...0-0 11. Bxf6 gxf6 12. Nd5 Re8 13. Nh4 Kh8 14. Rad1 Bf8 15. Qf3 Re6 16. Nf5 Rc8 17. Qh5 Re8 18. Rd3 Bxf5 19. Qxf5 Bg7 20. Rh3 h6 21. Ne3 Re6 22. Qh5 1-0, King-Ernst, Eeklo 1979.

I have seen various great performances by youngsters recently... not least the excellent result for Shreyas Royal in the European Individual Chess Championships which was covered in the April *ChessMoves*.

Today, though, I am going to focus on the ECF Red Cross Blitz Marathon for Ukraine which was brilliantly won by our own Keith Arkell.

What caught my eye was the excellent performance by the youngster Jude Shearsby, who finished seventh in a tough field.

His most exciting game was against GM Mark Hebden, who is one of the best blitz players in the UK.

As in most five-minute games there were all kinds of errors by both sides but eventually Jude came out on top after an exciting finish where both sides had just a few seconds left.

### Mark Hebden vs Jude Shearsby ECF Blitz Marathon 03/04/22

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Be7 8.Qf3 Qc7 9.0-0-0 Nbd7 10.g4 h6 11. Bxf6 Bxf6 12.h4 Nb6 13.g5 Bxd4 14.Rxd4 Qc5 15.Qd1?**

This is a mistake. The simple 15.Rd2 maintains a small advantage for White.

### **15...hgx5 16.Rxd6 Nd7?!**

Black makes a mistake in return. 16...Nd5! was best when the position is equal after 17.e5 gxf4 18.Nxd5 exd5 19.Bg2 (19.Rxd5?! Qe3+ 20.Kb1 Be6 is slightly better for Black).

### **17.f5 exf5?**

However, this is a serious error. After 17...Ke7 18.Rd4 Ne5 White would have been only slightly better.

**18.Rd5 Qe3+ 19.Kb1 Rxh4 20.Rxh4 gxh4 21.Rxf5?**

## JUNIOR MOVES

### LITTLEWOOD'S CHOICE







A serious mistake, after which the tide turns in Black's favour. The simple 21.exf5 would have given White an excellent position as it is very hard for Black to complete his development.

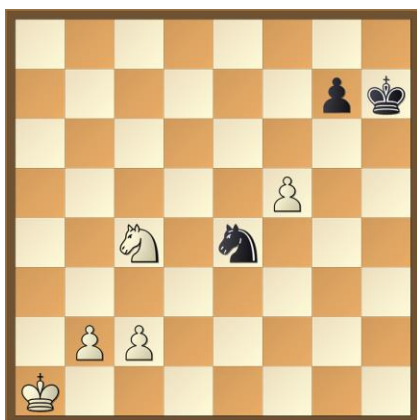
**21....Nf6 22.Re5+ Be6 23.Bc4 Rd8 24.Qf1 Qd4 25.Rxe6+ fxe6 26.Bxe6 b5 27.a3 Qe5 28.Bf5 Kf8 29.Qg1**

Black is now winning but both sides have very little time. The simplest way to proceed is 29...Rd4! Then, if 30.Ne2 Rxe4 31.Bxe4 Qxe4 32.Nc3 Qf5 and the black h-pawn will prevail in the ending.

**29...Qg3?! 30.Qb6 Rd6??**

Suddenly, Black blunders and throws away all his good work. 30...Re8 is simplest, when if 31.Qxa6 then 31...h3 and Black is way ahead in the pawn race.

**31.Qc5 h3 32.Bxh3 Qxh3 33.Qxd6+ Kg8 34.Qxa6 Qf1+ 35.Ka2 Qc4+ 36.Ka1 Qf1+ 37.Nb1 Kh7 38.Qe6 b4 39.Qf5+ Qxf5 40.exf5 bxa3 41.Nxa3 Ne4 42.Nc4?**



Black is of course lost but remarkably White has to be very accurate which is very difficult when you have only a few seconds left on your clock. It turns out that this natural centralizing move throws away all the advantage. The correct way was 42.Nb5 so as to protect the pawn on f5 with Nd4.

**42...Kh6 43.Ne3 Kg5 44.b4 Kf4 45.Nd5+ Kxf5 46.Kb2 Ke5 47.c4 g5 48.b5 g4 49.Ne3 Kd4 50.b6 Nd6 51.Nf5+ Kc5 52.Nxd6??**

Having thrown away the win, Mark now blunders and with just a few seconds left Jude manages to maintain his composure and force the win with queen against lone king.

**52...Kxd6 53.Kc3 g3 54.Kd4 g2 55.c5+ Kc6 56.Ke4 g1=Q 57.Ke5 Qxc5+ 58.Ke4 Qxb6 59.Kd3 Qc7 60.Kd2 Qd6+ 61.Kc2 Qd5 62.Kb2 Kd6 63.Ka3 Kc5 64.Ka4 Qd4+ 65.Kb3 Qd3+ 66.Kb2 Qc4 67.Ka3 Kb5 68.Kb2 Kb4 69.Kb1 Qc3 70.Ka2 Qd2+ 71.Kb1 Kb3 72.Ka1 Qb2 mate**

A pulsating game but you have to admire the resolve of Jude, who didn't collapse when he had blundered in a winning position. Instead, he kept on fighting and in the end produced a remarkable turnaround in fortunes.

If you have played any exciting games as a youngster that you would like to have published in my column, then please send them to me at [plittl@hotmail.com](mailto:plittl@hotmail.com). I cannot promise that they will appear, but I will give them every consideration.

- Paul Littlewood

## IMPROVERS

### TACTICS

by IM Paul Littlewood

Back rank considerations are always important in chess. When I was very young, I played what I thought was the winning move only to realise that my opponent had a devastating back rank check that would have ruined my position. Fortunately, he missed it and I learnt an important lesson.

There are lots of combinations which take advantage of the weakness of the back rank.

Consider the following position -



Geller – Debarnot  
Las Palmas 1976

White wins by **1.Qxc7+ Rxc7 2.Rxd8+ Rc8 3.Rdxc8 mate.**

Here is another example -



Black wins by **1....Rc1+ 2.Bxc1 Re1 mate.**

Defending against back rank mating combinations is often a question of foresight by providing your king with a loophole when it is convenient to do so.

Consider the following example -



Fine vs Reshevsky  
Semmering 1937

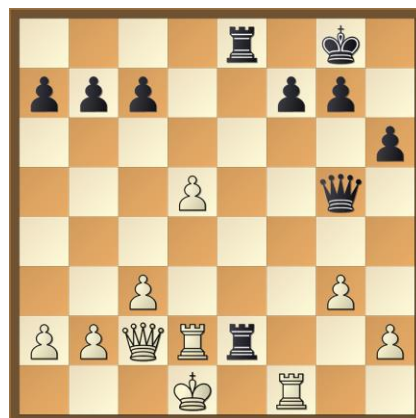
In this complex position White took the opportunity to safeguard his back rank by playing **1.h3** to provide an escape square for his king.

Here are two more difficult examples for you to solve with the solutions being posted at the end of the article.



Short vs Biyiasas  
Hastings 1979-80

How did White force the win?



Rumens vs P.E. Littlewood  
London ELO 1976

How did Black exploit the weakness of White's back rank to obtain a winning position?

## Solutions

### Short vs Biyiasas

White wins by **1.Qxe5+ Qxe5 2.Rxf8+ Rxf8 3.Rxf8 mate**

### Rumens vs P.E. Littlewood

Black wins by **1...Qf6!**. Now if **2.Rxf6 Rxe1** mate or **2.Rxe2 Qxf1+** wins. White therefore played **2.Rg1** but after **2...Qf2 3.Rxe2 Qxg1+ 4.Kd2 Rxe2+ 5.Kxe2 Qxh2+ 6.Kd1 Qh1+** he resigned as another pawn is lost.

# STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

## PROBLEM CORNER

Christopher Jones with his monthly conundrum

In the last *ChessMoves* I left you this selfmate problem to solve -

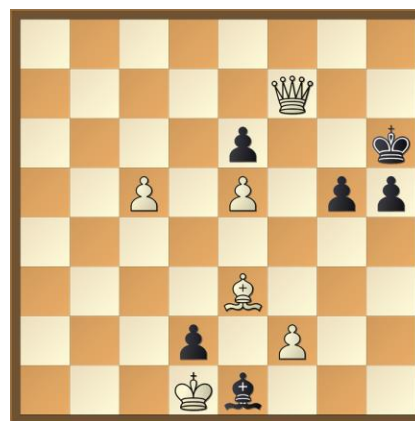


Selfmate in five  
Stefan Schneider  
1<sup>st</sup> Prize, *Schach* 1961

I gave you the hint that if it were not for the black knight at b8 any waiting move would force Black to give mate by playing ...Bc2. But 1.Rxb8 is a mistake because then after 1...Bc2 White has the move 2.Rb1. This is the key to the solution: White must capture the black knight, but in such a way that the capturing piece cannot interpose on the first rank. White begins with a quiet move, 1.Kg1. Now play unfolds as follows - 1...Na6 2.Kf1 Nb4 3.Ke1 Nc2+ 4.Kd1, and now wherever the knight goes White can safely grab it, because even captures that guard the first rank are allowable: 5...Bxc2 will be *double-check* and hence mate after 4...Na3 5.Qxa3, 4...Nb4 5.Qxb4 and 4...Nxd4 5.Bxd4. We also have 4...Ne3 5.fxe3 and 4...Ne1 5.Kxe1.

In this issue we return to more orthodox, 'White to play and mate', problems. Some while ago, I extolled the delights available on the website of the British Chess Problem Society ([www.theproblemist.org/](http://www.theproblemist.org/)), in particular the Weekly Chess Problem displayed on the first page. At the bottom of that screen is the 'Archive of Weekly Chess Problems', containing the solver-friendly problems that have graced this page over the years. From this archive I have picked out, almost at random, two 'mate in 3' problems.

This one appeared on the website on 26 January 2015 -



Mate in three  
Vladimir Pachman  
2<sup>nd</sup> Prize, *Magasinet* 1947

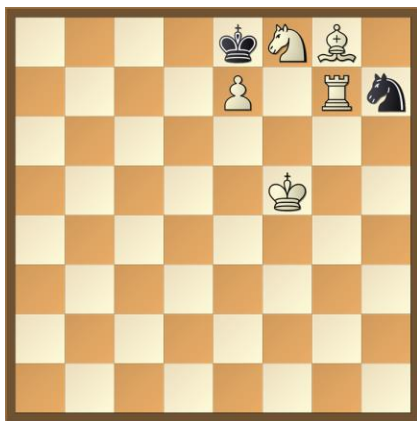
As the BCPS commentator, Michael McDowell, puts it, the problem exhibits a 'clever reciprocal theme'. But as well as satisfying aficionados of reciprocal themes it should also serve as a pleasing and not too challenging problem to solve, so you may like to have a go at doing so before reading further.

You can be pretty sure in a composed problem that the key will not be a routine over the board candidate move such as 1.Qf6+, which indeed serves only to push the black king to a safer place. So we want to keep the king trussed up. One move that does this and threatens mate is 1.Qg8. But Black can thwart the threat of 2.Bxg5 by playing 1...h4. So our attention is drawn to the possibility of moving the pawn from f2. Possibly one first looks at 1.f4, threatening 2.fxg5, when ...gxf4 fails to 2.Bxf4 and ...g4 to 2.f5. But there is no quick mate after the successful defence, 1...Bh4!.

So, attention turns to 1.f3. This has a subtler threat: 2.Bxg5+ Kxg5 3.Qf6#. There are two defences to this threat. One is 1...Bh4. But now 2.Qg8 **does** work! Black is in zugzwang. He no longer has the move ...h4 available, and instead is forced to move the bishop away from its defence of g5, allowing 3.Bxg5#. And if Black plays the other defence, 1...h4, then all of a sudden 2.f4 becomes a killer blow, because the defence ...Bh4 is no longer available; so the threat of 3.fxg5# does now carry the day (2...gxf4 3.Bxf4; 2...g4 3.f5).

Here, to give you a fairly gentle solving exercise, is the mate-in-3 problem that appeared on the website a fortnight earlier -





Mate in three

Johannes Kohtz and Carl Kockelkorn  
*Deutsches Wochenschach* 1912

I'll give the solution next time, but if in the meantime you want to look it up then the 12 January 2015 archive entry on the BCPS website will do this for you. And possibly, if you have a liking for solver-friendly chess problems you may find yourself making more extensive visits to the archive!

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

## HOW TO SOLVE A STUDY

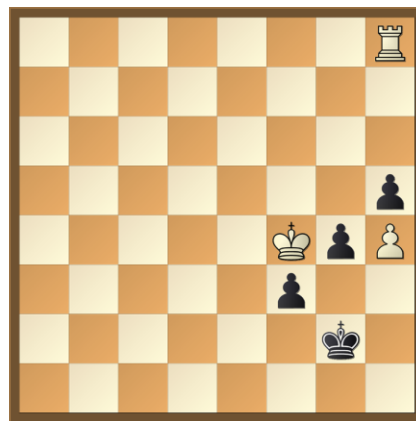
by Ian Watson

### Magical May

May is more Michelet magic month ... our regular contributor, Paul Michelet, enjoys making new versions of old studies, improving on the classics, but he also enjoys making new versions of his own studies. If you read this column in March, you'll have seen the precursor to the first position, so you should be able to solve it on sight. If you didn't read my column, well, it's still not hard to solve... but I hope you are feeling suitably guilty!

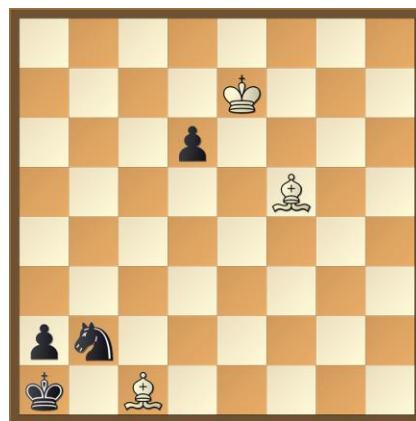
Solving studies is partly about your accumulated memories of other studies, which give you all sorts of help. So, you can apply your Michelet knowledge to these first two. The third one might be an unfamiliar mechanism, but it does appear quite often in studies, and the theme's name will help.

Here's the first, easiest, one -



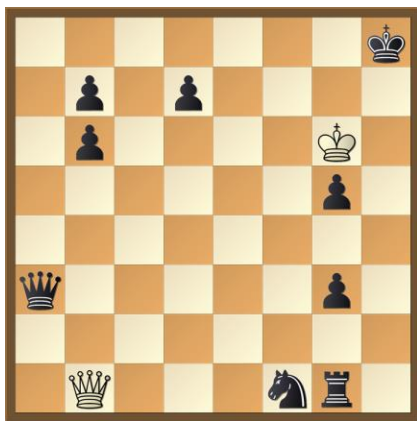
White to play and draw

Paul also sent me a new version of a study that appeared in this column in December. It'll be seriously challenging to solve if you missed that issue, but if you read and remember it you should be okay.



White to play and win

Paul has also, in recent years, explored the theme of white queen 'staircases'. I won't explain that, because it'll become clear when you find the solution to his third study this month. The solution is twenty (yes, twenty) moves long, but astonishingly it's not impossibly tough. If you want a clue, there's one after the diagram; if not, "look away now".



White to play and win

(Clue: every one of White's 20 moves is a queen move.)

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## How to Solve a Study – solutions

(White: king, rook, pawn)

1.Rc8 f2 2.Rc2 Kg1 3.Kg3 f1Q 4.Rc1 Qxc1 stalemate,  
or 3...f1R 4.Rg2+ perpetual check.

2...g3 3.Rc1 and 3...Kh2 4.Kf3.

(White: king, bishop, bishop)

1.Ke6 d5 2.Ke5 Nc4+ 3.Kd4 Nd6 4.Bd3 Ne4 5.Ba3  
wins.

After 5...Nd2 White can win with either 6.Bg6 or  
6.Bf5, e.g. 6.Bg6 Ne4 7.Kxd5 Nd2 8.Kd4 Nb1 9.Bc1.

White has to refuse the capture of the d-pawn at  
first; for example 1.Kxd6 Nc4+ draws.

There are many sidelines which I can't give here,  
but you could check this complex study using the 7-  
piece tablebases. I usually use the online  
Lomonosov ones, but they are offline at present,  
perhaps because the server is in Moscow and is  
affected by sanctions?

(White: king, queen)

1.Qd1 Qe7 2.Qa1+ Kg8 3.Qa8+ Qf8 4.Qa2+ Kh8 and  
up the staircase 5.Qb2+ 6.Qb3+ 7.Qc3+ 8.Qc4+  
9.Qd4+ 10.Qxd7 Rh1 11.Qd5+ Kh8 12.Qxh1+ Nh2  
13.Qa1+ and again 14.Qa2+ 15.Qb2+ 16.Qb3+  
17.Qc3+ 18.Qc4+ 19.Qd4+ 20.Qd7 and wins.

## Events Calendar

Find the complete calendar here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>

May 19-22 Chessable English Women's Championships  
May 19-22 Chessable English Championships  
May 19 - Hendon FIDE Blitz  
May 21 - 22 Sussex Junior Worthing Rapidplay  
May 21 - 22 County Championship Final Stage – Quarter Final  
May 21 - EJCOA National Youth Championships – East Midlands  
May 21 - West Anglia Megafinal  
May 21 - Ilkley Grammar School Junior Rapidplay  
May 22 - Third Crewe Rapidplay  
May 22 - EJCOA National Youth Championships - West Midlands Regional Final  
May 22 - EJCOA National Youth Championships - North West Regional Finals  
May 22 - West London Chess Academy  
May 23 - Coulsdon Chess RP Round Robin  
May 27-29 EACU Third FIDE-rated Congress  
May 28 - Manchester U10 Megafinal  
May 28 - UKCC Edinburgh Megafinal  
May 28 - EJCOA National Youth Championships - North East Regional Finals  
May 28 - Poplar Rapid Tournament  
May 29 - Manchester U11-U18 Megafinal  
May 29 - Colchester Junior Chess Event  
May 29 - Kensington FIDE Rapid Chess  
May 29 - Smarticus Juniors Rapidplay  
June 1 - Edinburgh Chess Club Bicentenary  
June 2 - Hendon FIDE Blitz  
June 3-5 Cotswold Chess Congress  
June 3-5 South Lakes Chess Congress  
June 4 - Oxford Megafinal  
June 4-5 Hamratty Hammersmith Chess Club Congress  
June 11-12 County Championships Final Stages – Semi-Final  
June 11 - EJCOA National Youth Championships Herts Regional Final  
June 11 - Bristol Megafinal  
June 12 - 31st Birmingham Rapidplay  
June 12 - UKCC Somerset Megafinal  
June 12 - York Megafinal  
June 18 - UKCC Online Megafinals U10s Event 1  
June 18-26 First Caplin Menchik Memorial  
June 18 - Lancaster Chess Congress  
June 18 - Meri's Charity Simultaneous Exhibition  
June 18 - Golders Green FIDE Rapidplay  
June 19 - UKCC Online Megafinal U11-U18s Event 1  
June 19 - Second Norfolk Blitz  
June 21 - Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid  
June 25 - UKCC Shropshire Megafinal  
June 26 - Poplar Rapid Tournament  
June 26 - Hampshire Megafinal  
June 26 - Smarticus Juniors Rapidplay



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