

# ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION



OFFICIAL CHESS YEARBOOK 2022

# English Chess Federation



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## **REPORT OF THE BOARD TO COUNCIL - OCTOBER 2021**

**Approved by the Board in September 2021.**



### **INTRODUCTION**

This report has, as in previous years, been prepared in accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission that “instead of individual Directors reporting to Council, there should be a single report of the Board, approved by it beforehand”. The report focuses on what has been achieved during 2020/2021. The Board has reviewed the Strategy and Business Plan document, also included in the papers to Council, and has made a few changes, mainly to reflect the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic and the increased focus on online chess. The Board is happy that that document sets out the Board’s proposed direction of travel over the coming years and the objectives that the Board has set itself for 2021/2022 and beyond.

### **REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

We’re delighted that over the board chess is finally starting to re-emerge after the ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the ECF has suffered serious financial and operational damage over the course of last year, the support of our wonderful members and supporters, together with HM Government’s furlough scheme, has enabled us to see out the worst of the pandemic financially, and the unstinting efforts of the volunteers on whom we depend and to whom we are so grateful have not only helped to put a comprehensive online offering in place for our members but also supported the full return to over the board chess for which we all hope so fervently.

Despite our present troubles much has been achieved. Until the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic it was very much ‘business as usual’ for the ECF, and it was also good to see non-ECF over the board events such as the Hastings Congress, the UK Chess Challenge, the London Chess Classic and the 4NCL continue to flourish – as they will again. If there has been a silver lining to the Covid-19 cloud, it has been the opportunity that the cessation of over the board chess has given many of our hard-working volunteers to turn their attention to developmental initiatives that will serve us well in the future, in particular in the online chess and grading/rating arenas. Highlights include the following:

⊗ Our work to develop our online chess presence over the last year has been highly successful. Over the last 18 months we have taken the ECF online clubs from a few hundred members at the start of the pandemic to around 7,000 club members, making England one of the largest federations globally for organised online chess. We also have around 7,000 players with an online rating, which is higher by some way than the number of players with a recent over the board rating. ECF Online is hugely appreciated by our membership, including our many new members who have become interested in chess following *The Queen’s Gambit* series in particular and who have been joining in significant numbers to take part in ECF online events during the pandemic. The new ECF online players have a different demographic from over the board players, with a much higher percentage of juniors, female players and young players in general. We have taken the opportunity provided by having a large online club to run regular weekly rated tournaments and take part in numerous

international leagues on Chess.com and Lichess, which is again much appreciated by our membership. Highlights for the year include the two British Online Championships in December 2020 and August 2021, the Checkmate COVID marathon in June 2021, and the very successful Improvers Festival specifically targeted at new to chess online players. Much effort has also gone into developing an ECF broadcast facility for online and over the board events led by WIM Natasha Regan and GM Matthew Sadler, who have been providing an outstanding commentary service with a number of IM and GM colleagues which has received extremely positive feedback from our members.

⊗ Clubs and leagues are now restarting over the board chess, with various congresses and events being scheduled. We carried out a survey of over 700 clubs in England, receiving responses from almost 100 which have helped us to better understand the challenges and opportunities that clubs are seeing, together with initiatives in progress where they are looking for support on a national basis. This has provided us with a clear picture of the issues facing our clubs, and we are developing a number of initiatives to provide support for clubs and grassroots chess. We are currently in the course of organising the British Chess Championships for 2021, which will take place in October with separate Open, Women's, Junior and Senior Championships at two venues (Hull and Milton Keynes). Despite the pandemic and the timing of the event outside of the holiday period, we are seeing a good response from players, and look forward to restarting the championships with the supporting Major Open and rating limited events to be staged in the spring as part of a wider chess festival. We also organised a small series of friendly matches for the counties during August and September.

⊗ Despite the problems caused by Covid, junior chess has flourished online. England won three out of four sections of the Glorney Cup, and juniors were entered into the limited range of international online tournaments that were available. The Academy has continued as an online only venture, with plans to adopt a hybrid online/face-to-face approach in due course. A register of coaches has been established and has proved extremely successful. Work has also begun on a national syllabus to better structure the delivery of coaching for new and inexperienced coaches, and we hope that this will be fully operational in the near future.

⊗ Much hard work has gone into developing our benefits package for members. In particular: our GoMembership proposition offers a range of discounts from over 270 online and high street retailers; Chess & Bridge and Chess Direct continue to offer significant discounts to our members on a range of chess products; our monthly 'Chess Moves' magazine has improved in quality by leaps and bounds over the year; and our annual yearbook now provides a complete compendium of news and articles concerning English chess. We will continue to develop our member benefits package so that it makes joining the ECF an attractive proposition regardless of whether rated games are played or not.

⊗ Our new four digit rating system went live in October 2019 and is now well established, with the initial stage of integration with the online rating system in progress whereby online ratings are displayed alongside players' over the board rating. We have moved from an unsupported three digit Clark grading system with two lists per year to a well-managed elo rating system with monthly and daily live ratings recalculated every night and available to all our players. We now have a world-leading rating system for over the board and online ratings which is operated and run by a dedicated rating team.

⊗ Our social media manager, publicity officer and webmaster have continued to work on building our public profile and on developing awareness of chess across England. ECF accounts have around 5,000 followers on Facebook and 10,000 on Twitter. We are also active on Chess.com, with the opportunity to reach between two and three million English registered players on the Chess.com platform. We have revamped and relaunched the ECF newsletter so that it is now a free monthly magazine packed with a wide range of chess articles from regular GM, IM and other contributors and comprehensive round-ups of English chess news. We have also taken some initial steps to advertise the ECF on Facebook, with encouraging results so far. We are now fielding regular press enquiries to the ECF and considerable interest from various media outlets.

⊗ The National Chess Library has finally been relocated to De Montfort University Leicester – a great achievement given the logistical difficulties presented by the pandemic. The library is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in the history of chess or looking to pick up some tips for their own game. The books and journals will be catalogued in due course, but for now the collection can be browsed on the open shelves.

⊗ We have continued to keep our costs and operations under close review. Gary Willson leaves us with our very best wishes after many years of dedicated service to the ECF, and we welcome back Christine Adams and Paul Buswell, who will be providing part-time support on an as needed basis. Andrew Walker also deserves a special mention for holding the fort so valiantly during this most difficult of years. We have taken the opportunity to outsource as many of our day-to-day accounting processes as we can to our third party bookkeepers, and all the evidence is that the transfer has gone and is going very well. In the event we have not needed to call on the Permanent Investment Fund for emergency support, as we feared might be the case in last year's report – but our financial position remains fragile such that the restoration of the ECF's finances to a reserves level of £100k or so may have to be put on hold for the time being.

⊗ Mention should be made of the annual ECF awards, which recognise the achievements of many of our volunteers during the year. This year awards were made to The UK Braille Chess Association (Contribution to Accessible Chess), Lawrence Cooper (Contribution to Women's Chess), Uxbridge Junior Chess Club (Contribution to Junior Chess), Camberley Chess Club (Club of the Year), Oliver Brennan (Online Contribution of the Year), Cheney Rapidplay (Congress of the Year), and Joe Conlon and Andy Howie (President's Award for Services to Chess). Our thanks go to them and to all our other volunteers who work so hard in the cause of our great game.

## **STRATEGY STATEMENT AND BUSINESS PLAN**

### **Furthering the Cause of English Chess**

The ECF will lead the development and organisation of chess for all players in England and our international teams. This will encompass:

- Extending the number of active competitive and social chess players in England, building on the recent wave of interest in chess on both nationally and internationally.
- Increasing the number of juniors playing competitive chess and transitioning to becoming adult competitive players.

- Providing a clear pathway for junior chess players to learn and develop their chess playing from beginners through to Academy and national squad level, and hopefully achieving titles in due course.
- Encouraging the development of women's and social chess as part of a wider commitment to increasing the diversity of participation in chess.
- Supporting and encouraging the return to over the board chess across the country.
- Embedding and continuing the development of online chess.
- Increasing the awareness of chess and its wider social benefits outside the ECF membership.
- Supporting the promotion of chess as a national game/ sport with much increased levels of chess content available and shared via the ECF's website, magazine, social media and broadcast/ streaming platforms.
- Supporting other chess organisations including leagues, clubs and congresses.
- Continuing to develop our four-digit elo rating system with publication of live and monthly ratings for over the board and online events.
- Developing the number of elite players and individual players of exceptional talent.

### **Priority areas**

Our ambition is to increase participation in chess among women of all standards generally, and if possible to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within three years specifically, and to facilitate the transition from junior, to adult, to senior.

We have already begun, and we will continue to develop and refine, programmes to encourage participation among junior players and to help them achieve their potential.

We will establish a clear pathway for chess learning and development, including a national curriculum for chess, working closely with junior coaches across England and in collaboration with schools.

We will maintain and improve our support to English players taking part in international competitions, with the aspiration of re-establishing England as a force in the chess world.

We welcome the ongoing growth in online chess and the increasing level of participation amongst English players. We will continue to organise online events, providing a rating service and supporting online leagues and congresses.

At the same time we understand the central importance of over the board chess and the need to support a safe return to over the board congresses, leagues, and events, and we will continue to provide support and advice to organisers until the Covid-19 situation resolves itself.

Our biggest asset is our membership. We will improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings for all forms of chess that make joining the ECF an attractive proposition independently of playing rated games. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future. The Board will continue to focus on these targets.

We will work with member organisations to grow chess activity at all levels across England, focussing in particular on junior, women's and social chess.

We will keep the operation of the membership system under review, ensuring the system is well maintained, remains fit for purpose, and provides additional benefits to members.

We will continue to provide support to chess organisers, and we will organise and run a programme of national competitions, including the British Championships, the UK Open Blitz Championships, the County Championships, the Women's English Championships and our various ECF online club events and National Championships.

We will continue our work to increase the profile of chess in England via the ECF's website, social media platforms, monthly magazine and broadcast channels covering major over the board and online events and other forms of chess content.

Commercial sponsorship generates additional income that can help us to make extra investment in areas such as junior, women's and international chess. We will seek out new sponsorship opportunities and build on our relationship with existing sponsors and support them to build their brands.

We will actively engage with other chess organisations in England and elsewhere to improve coordination, efficiency, and knowledge-sharing across English chess.

We will develop a set of key performance indicators in order to monitor our progress against our objectives.

### **Business Planning**

The Board will produce an annual business plan that will set out how we propose to deliver the priorities set out in this statement. As part of the business planning process we will refine our strategic intentions and financial planning in consultation with Council and in accordance with prevailing circumstances.

### **The Board**

Directors will work collegiately both within the Board and with other chess organisations. We will encourage a culture where we actively invite comment and feedback. We will ensure our governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose and will develop a plan for achieving more effective Board operation.

### **Funding**

Our core activities will continue to be funded through membership fees. We will use sponsorship and donations/bequests to support strategic and developmental projects and initiatives, ensuring

that sponsors' own objectives are addressed. We will avoid the use of external funding as a substitute for core activity funding. We will work closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in particular regarding funding for strategic and developmental projects and initiatives.

### **Office**

We are committed to maintaining the central functions of an ECF Office, whether physically or remotely. The Office endeavours to provide a high quality and efficient service to ECF members and other chess organisations and gives support to ECF directors and officials as required. Staff will be offered opportunities for professional development on an individual basis.

### **Communications**

Initiatives such as introducing our monthly "Chess Moves" magazine, developing our social media presence, overhauling the website and direct emailing of members and Council have helped to improve communication to members and need to be improved further. We want stronger partnerships with chess players and chess organisations and will continue to develop communications across a range of platforms and seek greater engagement with members to help shape our policies and plans.

## **BUSINESS PLAN**

### **Finance**

Objective: Support the overall objectives of the English Chess Federation and the agreed plans of the Executive Directors.

- Ensure that the ECF's finances are sufficient to enable the ECF's infrastructure to be maintained while the Covid-19 pandemic lasts and rebuild the necessary financial strength thereafter.
- Grow income in such a way as to enable the Board's plans to be achieved, taking into account funds received from donations, sponsorship and other sources.
- Use membership income to fund ongoing operational expenditure, using sponsorship, bequests and donations for new initiatives and developments.
- Develop and maintain a reserve of £100,000 over the five year planning cycle.
- Seek to achieve an annual break-even financial position over the five year planning cycle.
- Ensure that all finance activities are performed transparently, efficiently, and effectively.
- Complete the transfer of all appropriate financial processes to our external bookkeepers.
- Continue to develop our use of Xero functionality.
- Ensure accounting records and accounts are maintained in an accurate and timely manner.



- Simplify the overall financial structure consolidating funds into the ECF and the Chess Trust. This will remove the requirements for the active use of the BCF, Chess Centre Ltd and the Permanent Invested Fund.
- Promote our direct debit facility for the membership scheme.
- Continue to improve the presentation of financial information to directors and to members.

### **Governance**

Objective: Ensure that the ECF's governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose.

- Continue to review compliance with most appropriate governance practice.
- Complete a detailed review of Board regulations.

### **Junior**

Objective: Improve participation levels in and the profile of junior chess in England and reduce the current rate of attrition in the transition to adulthood.

- Continue to develop the ECF Chess Academy in partnership with our chosen partners as the development route of choice for our top juniors.
- Support the Chess Trust as it continues to develop its Accelerator Programme for our elite junior players and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in its support for the British Championships and a range of other junior initiatives.
- Develop and embed a national curriculum as a basis for a clear learning and development pathway.
- Encourage junior chess organisations' activities in England and promote the development of collaborative working.
- Understand why so many girls stop playing chess in school and put in place actions accordingly, liaising closely with the Director of Women's Chess and junior organisers.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve the quality of support to junior players. Implement a national curriculum/syllabus.
- Develop competitive chess in schools with a particular emphasis on those pupils aged over 11.
- Develop chess playing opportunities that encourage girls to continue playing chess in adulthood.
- Encourage adult chess clubs and leagues to integrate, support and develop junior players.
- Review and improve junior financial management processes.

- Identify and work with top junior players to increase participation in non-ECF events, in particular FIDE-rated tournaments.
- Extend take-up of the Supporter category.

### **Women**

Objective: Work towards delivering our ambition to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within three years.

- Increase participation in the English Women's Championships.
- Work with independent organisers to increase female participation in non-ECF events and in particular FIDE rated events.
- Increase the profile of women's chess so that girls/teenagers/women have something to aspire to.
- Reach out to non-chess women's organisations to encourage female take-up of and participation in chess.
- Extend take-up of the Supporter category among girls and women.
- Implement the proposals in the paper "Development of Women's Chess: Progress Plan" that was presented at the October 2020 Council meeting.

### **Home**

Objective: Support the Board in its goal of increasing the perceived added value that the ECF provides to its members.

- Continue to run a programme of ECF national competitions including the British Chess Championships, the County Championships, the English Women's Championships, the English Seniors Championships, and the UK Open Blitz Championships, with additional competitions added where there is sufficient demand from players.
- Relaunch the Grand Prix.
- Maintain and develop the national coaches register.
- Improve support to clubs (improve Club Finder functionality, implement a website facility for clubs without their own websites, provide advice/guidance modules on specific topics etc).
- Continue the development of and support for the ECF's LMS (League Management System) as a core system for club and league organisers who run over the board or online events.
- Continue the development of official ECF online chess events at national and international level, widening participation among junior, female, and social players in particular.

- Support initiatives that encourage the return to OTB chess during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.
- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.
- Maintain official anti-cheating procedures for ECF-organised events. Extend take-up of the Supporter category across the casual/social/online chess playing population.
- Increase use of social media.

### **Events**

Objective: Plan, manage and run the agreed programme of ECF national over the board events including British and English Championships, women's events and junior events to a consistent standard of delivery, building on best practice both nationally and internationally.

- Take overall responsibility for the operation of ECF events, working closely with event organisers.
- Ensure best practice approaches are deployed.
- Monitor and review how events have run and identify and address improvement opportunities.

### **Membership**

Objective: Oversee the operation and effectiveness of the membership system and ensure that it is maintained and improved as necessary.

- Extend special offers for ECF members with third party companies as a membership retention/acquisition initiative.
- Improve communication to and facilities for consultation with corporate and individual members.
- Improve the documentation of the requirements for the administration of membership and of the operation of the new system.
- Identify selling points which might make membership attractive to individuals who are not themselves competitive players.
- Continue to develop the main monthly rating system's functionality.
- Complete the Integration of the online rating system into the main monthly rating system.
- Review junior membership arrangements, including the effectiveness of our free first year membership offer, with a view to improving junior membership retention.
- Complete the move to a full membership organisation and review whether game fee and pay-to-play fees can be replaced with a flat fee per event approach.

- Promote our Supporter category.
- Review the arrangements for bulk membership renewals by corporate members following the abolition of the Membership Organisation scheme.
- Promote the use of the ECF League Management System by affiliated leagues, and consider enhancements to the system, including those necessitated by its increasing use for online chess.

### **International**

Objective: Improve the performance of our international teams.

- Work with the Directors of Junior and Women's Chess to identify and nurture top talent.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve conditions, training etc for international players.
- Develop England's presence in online international events.
- Review how the ECF can better capture the views and insights of top players in England.
- Seek to foster an environment to support top chess players to maximise their potential while also developing a career outside chess.
- Funding permitting, organise more norm events for our players who have potential to reach GM/WGM or IM/WIM level.
- Consider bidding for FIDE online events at youth level.

### **Online**

- Continue to develop and grow our ECF online members clubs with regular events on the major online platforms.
- Support and develop English online community clubs including junior and women's clubs and events.
- Continue to run online National Championships and competitions including the English Online Blitz, Rapid and Bullet Championships, the Online Counties Championships and related competitions, and the English Chess Marathons.
- Develop a programme of ECF online affiliated leagues and clubs to support non-ECF online events and allow these to be rated.
- Continue to develop the online rating system including integration of the rating process with the new monthly rating system and production of a combined listing showing OTB and online ratings along the lines of the USCF model.
- Organise and publicise participation of English teams in online international events.

- Promote daily chess at international level including participation in World and European online daily leagues.

### **Office**

Objective: Continue to provide a high quality service to stakeholders.

- Continue the development of the yearbook as an annual news digest.
- Continue the development of “Chess Moves” as the ECF’s main communication vehicle to members.
- Maintain and develop the ECF’s website linked to our social media and broadcast channels.
- Develop office processes to cope with development initiatives, changing demand from members, and new staffing arrangements and work patterns.
- Continue to provide a responsive service for member and player enquiries via telephone, email and online forms.
- Complete the project to diarise all key Office internal and external deadlines



## **January 2021**

### **4NCL**

We went to press the week before the finals of a successful second season of the 4NCL Online League. That the first division final featured Wood Green was perhaps no surprise, but few would have expected them to be taking on ChessPlus Kingston. However, ChessPlus's second team stunned Guildford Young Guns 2½-1½ in the semi-finals. 57-year-old Pia Cramling held Maxime Lagarde on top board, while on board 4 Harry Grieve quickly drifted into trouble after a promising opening.

### **O. Vakulenko - H. Grieve**

ChessPlus Kingston vs Guildford Young Guns



### **27 g4! b5?**

Too ambitious. Black should never really have put his king on a6 but admitting the error with 27...fxg4 28 ♔g3 ♕b7 29 ♕xg4 ♖c7 30 ♕g5 ♕d7 31 ♕g6 ♕e8 would still have left him with some chances to hold.

### **28 g5!**

The threat of g5-g6 now proves decisive.

### **28...g6**

The pawn won't be long for this world, but neither would it have been after 28...♗e7 29 ♖g8.

### **29 ♖g8 bxc4 30 bxc4 ♕a5 31 ♖xg6 ♕b4 32 ♖f6!**

Simplest.

### **32... ♖xf6 33 exf6 1-0**

Ultimately Guildford missed Romain Edouard, as Alberto Suarez Real draw with Latvian politician and WGM Dana Reizniece-Ozola on board 2, as did Matthew Wadsworth with Goran Pavlik on board 3, despite making a bold winning try in a slightly desperate attempt to salvage the match. Meanwhile Wood Green's match with defending champions Chessable White Rose finished all square. Daniel Fernandez had the better of a draw with Gawain Jones, with Wood Green triumphing on board count, Marcus Harvey's victory over Alex Raetsky on board 3 trumping Christof Sielecki's over Joseph McPhillips on board 4.

Elsewhere the 4NCL Autumn Congress took place every other Tuesday between September 1st and November 24th, attracting 172 players keen to enjoy a 45+15 game.

**Open:** 1-3 David Walker (South Shields), David Findlay (Dundee), Arnim Bossy (Germany) 6/7.

**Major:** 1 Robin Kneebone (Truro) 7, 2-3 Tim Hilton (Oldham), Mick Riding (Gosforth) 5½.

**Minor:** 1 Andrew Todd (Ayrshire) 6½, 2 David Rogers (Charlton) 6, 3 Luohe Wang (Chelmsford) 5½.

## **HASTINGS**

On top of supporting the British Online Championships running from December 18th until January 3rd, we were delighted to see that Caplin Systems are once again also sponsoring Hastings, albeit a Hastings with a difference. Over the weekend of January 9th and 10th, the Caplin Hastings All-Play-All Online Tournament will feature 12 players competing for a prize fund of £7,500.00. We were delighted to see Hastings regulars Keith Arkell, Danny Gormally and Mark Hebden being invited to take on the likes of Michael Adams, Gawain Jones, and Luke McShane. Keep an eye on [www.hastingschess.com](http://www.hastingschess.com) and the usual online portals nearer the time.

## **February 2021**

### **4NCL**

As we saw earlier in these pages, ChessPlus Kingston sprang a surprise in the top flight of the 4NCL Online League. Our congratulations too to the other divisional winners: CSC I, Catford Cosmonauts II, Hertford I, Hackney Thirsty and Dundee City B. On behalf of the UK chess community, we should also once again thank all the 4NCL officials for staging second, highly successful seasons of the 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL Online Leagues. As this magazine arrives with readers, season three should be just beginning.

### **HASTINGS**

David Howell was a convincing winner of the Caplin Hastings All-Play-All (January 9-10). Having amassed 5/6 on the first of two days of rapid chess, Howell began the Sunday by outplaying Michael Adams and went on to defeat Luke McShane too. The former Seaford schoolboy and Hastings Chess Club member thereby racked up a most impressive 9/11, finishing some one and a half points ahead of McShane. We'll have more next time.

### **HORSHAM**

We were saddened to learn that Horsham and Sussex stalwart John Cannon (xxi.vii.1930 - iii.i.2021) has passed away after a short illness. Cannon won the King's School, Macclesfield's Championship when aged just 11, progressing to captain Durham University and participate in the British Championship. On top of being the secretary (1967-2005) and first team captain (1966-2006) of Horsham Chess Club, he was thrice runner-up in the Sussex County Championship in the 1960s and represented the county on a staggering 515 occasions.

### **NORTHUMBERLAND**

A number of local leagues have unsurprisingly moved online in the past few months, some staging a number of one-off type matches, others running regular team and/or individual chess. We're grateful to readers for sending in a number of neat tactical finishes from some of those events. Also rather instructive was the following grind.

## M. Turner - A. Horton

Northumberland Online League 2020/21

Nimzo-Indian Defence

Notes by IM Andrew Horton [picture by Dr John Upham]

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘ge2 ♚e8 6 a3 ♘f8 7 ♘f4 d6 8 ♘e2 e5

Inviting the endgame.

9 dxe5 dxe5 10 ♘h5!?

After this White's bishop ends up a little misplaced on h5. 10 ♚xd8 ♚xd8 11 ♘fd5 ♘e8! was my plan, where White's knights are treading on each others' toes a little.

10... ♘xh5 11 ♘xh5 ♘e6 12 b3 ♘a6

The knight heads to c5 where it will eye the b3- and d3-squares.

13 0-0 ♘c5

Black already has quite a pleasant position, as something has to give for White (either the bishop-pair, or the pawn structure if White plays e3-e4).

14 ♚c2

14 e4 also looks very nice for Black, who will utilise the weakened d4-square.

14... ♚d3! 15 ♚xd3 ♘xd3 16 ♘e2 ♚ed8!?

Actually not the most accurate, as I had missed all the complications after ♘b5. Simply taking on c1 first was better: 16... ♘xc1 17 ♚fxc1 f5 when Black enjoys the advantage of the bishop-pair, and White

has nothing in return.

17 ♘b5!



A strong move which I underestimated.

17... ♘xc1 18 ♚fxc1 ♚d7 19 ♚d1 c6 20 ♚xd7 ♘xd7 21 ♘c3?

21 ♚d1! is another strong move (21 ♘d6!? is also playable), and the point why 17 ♘b5 was annoying. 21... ♘f5 22 ♘d6! was what I saw in the game and Black would have had to find some specific moves to keep the edge: 22... ♘c2 23 ♚d2 ♘xb3 24 ♘xb7 ♘xa3 25 ♘a5 ♘b4 26 ♚b2! (26 ♘xb3? ♘xd2 27 ♘xd2 a5 is winning) 26... ♘xa5 27 ♚xb3 ♘b6. Black is still better, but White has good drawing chances due to the opposite coloured bishops.

21...a5

Now Black is simply better.

22 a4 ♘b4 23 ♚d1 ♘f5 24 ♘d3



Here I was faced with an interesting decision: whether to go for a rook endgame which would be practically difficult for Max to defend, or simply keep the bishop-pair and play a little slower.



**24... ♖xd3**

24... ♖e6 was likely better, and in my mind probably the option a grandmaster would play. You will note that I am still a long way away from that distant land. However, I thought I would have good practical chances in the rook endgame.

**25 ♖xd3 ♗xc3 26 ♖xc3 ♖d8 27 ♔f1 ♖d2 28 ♔e1 ♖b2 29 ♖d3 ♔f8**

This is basically forced after my decision on move 24.

**30 e4**

I actually only considered more active options for White, such as sacrificing the b pawn for activity, but thought I would be doing well in any case. Indeed, 30 ♖d8+ ♔e7 31 ♖b8 ♖xb3 32 c5 is still good for Black.

**30... ♔e7**

30...h5! would make a future ...f7-f5 easier to achieve.

**31 g4!**



Strange, but strong. White has a lot of holes on the dark squares, but it is no so easy to exploit them and White has slowed down the ...f5 break.

**31...h6 32 ♔f1 ♔e6 33 ♔g2 g6 34 ♔g3 f5**

I considered this my main source of play, whether it's good or simply equal.

**35 gxf5+**

35 c5!?! scared me a little in the game, but our silicon friend shows the way for Black: 35...fxg4! 36 ♖d6+ ♔f7 37 ♖d7+ ♔f6 38 ♖xb7 ♔g5, with a clear advantage.

**35...gxf5 36 exf5+ ♔xf5 37 f3 e4! 38 ♖e3 exf3 39 ♖xf3+ ♔e4**

Black's pieces are very active, and White's position is very difficult to defend. This could probably be the description of the position since move 27.

**40 h3 ♖b1!**

A good waiting move, which I was proud of. White basically has to make a concession.

**41 ♜c3!?**

Going passive feels wrong, but it is hard to suggest better moves. 41 ♔g4?? ♜g1+ 42 ♜g3 ♜xg3+ 43 ♔xg3 ♔d3 wins and 41 ♜f4+ ♔d3 42 ♜f3+ ♔c2 simply helps Black's cause.

**41... ♔d4 42 ♜f3 ♜c1?!**

42... ♔c5! was the cleanest route to the full point.

**43 ♔h4?**

Very illogical, putting the king in front of their passed pawn, but we were both quite low on time.

**43... ♜c3 44 ♜f5 ♜xb3 45 ♜xa5 c5!**



The remainder is not without some clever defensive tricks from Max, but thankfully I managed to navigate my way through the traps to the victory.

**46 ♔g4 ♔xc4 47 ♜a7 ♔d3 48 a5 c4 49 a6 bxa6 50 ♜xa6 c3 51 ♜d6+ ♔e3 52 ♜xh6 ♜b4+!**

An only move.

**53 ♔g5 ♜c4 54 ♜e6+ ♔f2**

Another only move. Black keeps the option of going for the h3-pawn in mind.

**55 ♜a6 c2 56 ♜a2 ♔g3 57 ♜a3+ ♔g2 0-1**

A tough game in which it was difficult to spot any obvious mistakes from White. I think Black's play was always slightly more comfortable, and practically I knew it would be difficult for my opponent once we entered the rook endgame.

## SHREWSBURY

David Everington (1946-xxviii.xii.2020), 'The Voice of Telford', was widely known for his work in promoting the new town of Telford, including serving as Telford Development Corporation's head of public relations. He was also a pillar of the Shrewsbury Chess Club, as well as the Shropshire Chess Association and its nine-time champion. Carl Portman described him as "the king of the Shropshire chess scene, who was passionate about playing the game and sharing its joy with others."

## March 2021

### **4NCL**

The 4th 4NCL Online Congress attracted some 226 players (January 15-17), and judging from the impressively high scores in the Intermediate and Minor, we wonder if the 4NCL will soon have to introduce a sixth round with their popular 45+15 time control. At any rate, there was, perhaps unsurprisingly, plenty of success for young players and a number of ECF 'supporters' also did well – let us hope that some of that tier of new membership continue playing competitively over the board once the world has opened up again.

**Open:** 1 Arnim Bossy (Germany) 4½/5, 2-11 Philip Olbison (Manchester), Neil Thomson (Scotland), Martin Burrows (Wigston), Alex Bullen (Cardiff), Simon Smith (Oxford), Harry Zheng (Chelmsford), Peter Finn (Cambridge), Hieu Tran (Battersea), Oisín O’Cuilleainain (Cork), Nadia Jaufarally (St Albans) 4

**Major:** 1-2 Daniel Shek (Crowthorne), Alexander Littlehales (Worthing) 4½, 3-5 Rodolfo Padovan (Battersea), Jason Liu (Dublin), Dave Shapland (Hebden Bridge) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Reya Li (Oxford) 5, 2 Sylvan Clarke (Alwoodley) 4½, 3-7 Jai Kothari (Coulsdon), Michael Temporal (London), Angad Sarpotdar (Yateley), Tim Jones (Bristol), Zaid Ahmed (Richmond) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Yile Wang (Oxford) 5, 2-3 Colin Vernon (Worcester), Titas Vdovycia (Leighton Buzzard) 4½.

In other 4NCL news, we were pleased to see after all our coverage last summer that during the second season of the 4NCL Online League, just 11 players were banned by the league for fair play violations, while a further 11 were barred by playing platform host, Lichess. Only three of these were in the Junior 4NCL Online League, but it's not all good news. The 4NCL also reported that: "There are approximately 25 players in 4NCL Online who we believe were probably cheating in Season 2 [...] amongst these 25 are three squad captains and an ECF arbiter."

It does seem that so long as competitive chess is played online, there will unfortunately be a small minority who cheat. Let us at least hope that the numbers fall further during the current third season of the 4NCL Online League, which saw eight of the 32 top-flight sides winning their opening two matches. Special mentions to 14-year-old Julia Volovich, who defeated IM Jack Rudd, and to Chessable White Rose II top board Maaïke Keetman. The Dutch WFM followed up turning round a difficult position against IM Richard Pert by winning again, as she made fine use of a line recommended in her exciting Chessable course The Fierce Nimzo-Indian to defeat FM David Zakarian.

### **ECF**

Last month we saw how Michael Adams needed a playoff to defeat Ameet Ghasi and become the inaugural British Online Chess Champion. The Caplin British Online Championships were certainly a major success (December 18 - January 3), with almost 800 entrants and 2,400 entries. The full list of champions was as follows:

**British Online Champion:** Michael Adams (Taunton)

**British Online Rapidplay Champion:** Harry Grieve (Guildford)

**British Online Blitz Champion:** Gawain Jones (Sheffield)

**British Online Bullet Champion:** Ameet Ghasi (Richmond)

**British Women's Online Champion:** Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (Edinburgh)

**British Women's Online Rapidplay Champion:** Harriet Hunt (Cambridge)  
**British Women's Online Blitz Champion:** Trisha Kanyamarala (Dublin)  
**British Online 65+ Champion:** George Green (Crowthorne)  
**British Online 65+ Rapidplay Champion:** Paul Kemp (Linton)  
**British Online 50+ Champion:** Clive Frostick (Farnham)  
**British Online 50+ Rapidplay Champion:** Keith Arkell (Paignton)  
**British Under-18 Online Champion:** Shreyas Royal (Battersea)  
**British Under-18 Online Rapidplay Champion:** Oliver Stubbs (Bristol)  
**British Under-18 Online Blitz Champion:** Omeet Atara (Guildford)  
**British Under-16 Online Champion:** Maximilian Wilton (Brighton)  
**British Under-16 Online Rapidplay Champion:** Aaravamudhan Balaji (Orpington)  
**British Under-16 Online Blitz Champion:** Adam Sieczkowski (Witney)  
**British Under-14 Online Champion:** Mohammed Ismail (Newham; also Under-14 Online Rapidplay Champion)  
**British Under-14 Online Blitz Champion:** Arjun Kolani (Brighton)  
**British Under-12 Online Champion:** Nishchal Thatte (Ealing)  
**British Under-12 Online Rapidplay Champion:** Jude Shearsby (Kenilworth)  
**British Under-12 Online Blitz Champion:** Stanley Badacsonyi (Barnet)  
**British Under-10 Online Champion:** Frederick Gordon (Glasgow; also Under-10 Online Rapidplay and Under-10 Online Blitz Champion)  
**British Under-8 Online Champion:** Patrick Damodaran (Coulsdon; also Under-8 Online Rapidplay and Under-8 Online Blitz Champion)  
**British Junior Online Bullet Champion:** Finlay Bowcott-Terry (Halesowen)

## April 2021

### **ABERYSTWYTH**

News reached us of the death of Martyn Whiteside (1947-2020), a Yorkshireman who went to study at Aberystwyth University. He was six-time Aberystwyth Champion and will especially be remembered for setting up the three-board Aberystwyth Chess League, which at one point fellow local resident and two-time British Champion George Botterill estimated involved as much as 10% of the local population.

Whiteside largely gave up over-the-board chess in the mid-80s, but continued to play correspondence, representing Wales and looking well on the way to becoming a correspondence IM until he became father in 1996.

Sad news too from Pembrokeshire where Tony Haigh (1950-xxvii.ii.2021) passed away after a period of illness. Tony was a key member of Cardigan Chess Club, regularly representing them in the Dyfed League from the mid-1990s, as well as in the Welsh Premier League and even the European Club Cup on three occasions. Only for the outward journey to Rhodes did he fly, preferring to travel by boat or train in accordance with his strong environmental ethos. Having got into the green movement whilst a student in Cambridge, he lived in eco-communities in Wales, not least Brithdir Mawr for 20 years, which he made largely self-sufficient and where he was laid to rest. Paying tribute to his good friend, 18-time Welsh Champion Howard Williams commented that "We all have lost a man who combined steadfast principles with exceptional humility."

## BATTLE

The ECF have decided to postpone visiting Torquay for the British Chess Championships until next summer. Instead, there will be a second British Online Chess Championships and we are especially delighted to be able to report that over-the-board British Championships are still planned for this year – in the first two weeks of October. We'll bring you more details when we have them but do note that there may be "A number of smaller, geographically-separated venues to host the different championships, which should reduce the numbers at any single location". That may well make good sense, depending on how far on from Covid the world has moved by October, although we also note the ECF adding: "And avoid the need for players to travel long distances". This possibly may mean that hybrid chess could occur.

## 4NCL

The 4NCL have taken the decision to abandon their 2019/20 season, likely a wise decision, if no doubt a small blow to teams chasing titles and promotion, as well as those top-flight players who were on for norms after six rounds. However, in a manner which should please Stephen Moss, the 4NCL have been far from idle. They are planning on testing the post-Covid waters with weekend tournaments in July and September and especially are redesigning the whole league.

Next season will see the top two divisions of 16 teams compete in one 32-team Swiss (a handy format should any sides drop out or the Government/Covid cause any postponements, although we hope that the rule requiring all top-flight teams to field at least one male and one female player will not be dropped), after which the top two divisions will revert back to their old format of being 12-team all-play-all, a feature which may make the chess even more competitive and should help the league to become more marketable.

Meanwhile Division Three and Four will switch (after three separate Division Threes for the 2021/22 season: North, Central and South) to a central and southern approach, which should help to enable further expansion of what is already, of course, a very successful league.

The 4NCL have also announced that their popular online leagues will continue post-lockdown, at least for another two seasons. A fourth season of the 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL Leagues is scheduled to run fortnightly on Tuesdays from August 24th to December 14th, with season five planned for 25th January until 17th May. In the current, third season of the 4NCL Online, Barbican, Celtic Tigers & Sharks, Chessable White Rose and Guildford Young Guns found themselves topping their respective top-flight pools as we went to press, all still on 100%. One rather exciting clash involved two rising junior stars, with the lower-rated Arya Cont emerging victorious, which helped Oxford to a 2½-1½ victory over Brentwood.

### A. Cont - J. Siddharth

Oxford vs Brentwood

Nimzo-Larsen Attack

**1 b3 e5 2 ♖b2 ♘c6 3 e3 ♘f6 4 ♘f3!?**

Slightly unusual, if a move which has appealed to that most creative of modern players, Baadur Jobava. Instead, 4 ♖b5 ♘d6!/? remains arguably the modern main line of the Nimzo-Larsen.

**4...e4 5 ♘d4 ♘c5**

Developing at pace so makes sense, whereas 5... ♘xd4 6 ♘xd4 d5 7 c4! c6 8 ♘c3 generated some early pressure for White in Naroditsky-Karjakin, Internet (blitz) 2020.

**6 ♘xc6 dxc6 7 d4**

Thematic expansion, but in any case Black's easy development offsets his doubled c-pawns.

**7...exd3 8 ♖xd3**

8 cxd3 isn't ridiculous, but after 8... ♗d5 followed by ... ♖g5 or ... ♖h4, Black still enjoys fairly attractive, easy play.

**8... ♗g4 9 ♖d2 ♗e7 10 ♗c3 0-0-0!**



Black doesn't have any immediate threats down the d-file, but White clearly can't bring a rook to the d-file and Singaporean FM Siddharth Jagadeesh must have been delighted with such an active set-up.

**11 0-0 ♗d5?!**

Exchanging knights helps White and doesn't lead to all that strong an attack for Black. Instead, he might have kept White bottled up with 11... ♖he8, possibly followed by ... ♗d6 and ... ♖e5.

**12 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 13 ♖fe1**

Slow, whereas 13 e4! ♖h5 (or 13... ♖g5 14 ♗h1 followed by f4) 14 ♖f4 would have favoured White, if anyone, with a double attack on the g-file and 14... ♖g5 15 ♗h1 ♗d6 16 ♖e3 retaining sufficient control.

**13... ♖g5!**

The best way to attack. White seems to be able to defend after 13... ♖h5 14 h3 ♗e6 15 ♖e2 ♖h4 16 ♖f3.

**14 ♖c3 f6 15 ♗e4**

The bishop becomes a target here and 15 f4! was a better try, since, of course, 15... ♖xf4? fails to 16 ♖xc5.

**15... ♖d6 16 b4!**

Cont seizes his chance to break out and obtain some definite attacking chances of his own, although even here Black should be for choice.

**16... ♗b6 17 a4 ♖e8 18 ♗d3?!**

Heading round to f1, but there was no good reason to reject the more active 18 ♖c4!, and if 18...f5 19 ♗d3 ♗f3 20 g3 ♖h5 when the engines suggest White is OK after 21 ♖f4 or even 21 ♗xg7.

**18... ♗f3 19 ♗f1 f5!?**



Siddharth is determined to get his rook over to the kingside after all, but 19...a5! would have been fairly strong, frustrating White on the queenside ahead of going 20 ♖a3 ♜d5 followed by ... ♜e4 or even ... ♜g6 with a strong attack.

### 20 g3

Sensible defence, although it transpires that White might have allowed the bishop sacrifice: 20 a5!? ♙xg2! 21 f4! is the key resource and after 21... ♜g4 22 ♙xg2 ♜g6 23 ♜d2 ♙xe3+ 24 ♜xe3 ♜xe3 25 ♜d1!

White is just in time to save the day with a counterattack, and if 25... ♜d6 26 ♜xe3 ♜xd1+ 27 ♙f2 ♜h4+ 28 ♙f3 ♜e1 29 ♜d2, leaving Black with no more than a draw. Remarkable stuff.

### 20... ♜h6?!

Once again, prophylaxis, here in the shape of 20...a6!, would have continued to leave Black slightly for choice.

### 21 a5 ♜xh2!?

Boldly going for the full point and presumably having realised that after 21... ♜h5 22 h4 ♜e4 23 ♜xg7! ♜xh4! 24 ♜f8+ White has perpetual.

### 22 ♙xh2 ♜h5+ 23 ♙h3 ♙g4 24 ♜h1



Further good defence from Cont and a resource it's not completely impossible Siddharth had initially overlooked. Now Black must be rather accurate to even save the game.

### 24... ♙xe3?

This fails to a calm and devastating response. 24... ♜xh3+? 25 ♙g1 is also, of course, all over, but 24... ♜xe3! would have saved the day: 25 ♙g1! (Black wins after 25 fxe3?? ♜xh3+ 26 ♙g1 ♜xg3+ 27 ♙f1 ♜f3+ 28 ♙g1 ♙xe3+) 25... ♜xc3 26 axb6! ♙xh3 27 bxa7 ♜xg3+! 28 fxg3 ♜f3 29 a8 ♜+ ♙d7. Another remarkable line. White is two rooks to the good, but cannot avoid perpetual check,

as with 30 ♖xh3 ♜e3+ 31 ♔f1 ♜f3+ 32 ♔e1 ♜e3+ 33 ♔d1 ♜f3+ 34 ♔d2 ♜f2+ 35 ♔d3 (35 ♔c3?? would be most unwise in view of 35... ♜e3+ 36 ♔c4 b5#) 35... ♜f3+ 36 ♔d2 ♜f2+, etc.

**25 ♔g1! f4**

There's just no defence for Black, as White's king would slip away after 25... ♙xf2+ 26 ♔xf2 ♜e2+ 27 ♔f1 ♙xh3+ 28 ♖xh3 ♜xh3+ 29 ♔xe2 ♜g2+ 30 ♔d1 ♜f1+ 31 ♜e1.

**26 ♙g2**

White is now just a rook ahead and Cont finishes prettily enough.

**26... ♜b5 27 fxe3 f3 28 ♜xg7! ♜f5**

Allowing a simplification tactic, but it would swiftly be mate after 28...fxg2 29 ♖xh7.

**29 ♜xg4! 1-0**

Gawain Jones is currently in New Zealand, along with Sue Maroroa and their baby daughter, but even at 8.30am Gawain is rather strong, as Matt Piper found out, while round 4 of the 4NCL Online League also witnessed a lovely silent sacrifice from Tom Rendle.

### G. Jones - M. Piper

White Rose vs CSC

Ruy Lopez

**1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 ♘f6 4 0-0 ♙c5!?**

This has been played by the likes of Leko, McShane, Spassky and Topalov, but Jones is quick to make it look like a somewhat inferior alternative to the Berlin Wall.

**5 ♘xe5 ♘xe4 6 ♜e2 ♘xe5 7 d4!**



The critical line. 7 ♜xe4 ♜e7 8 ♖e1 ♘g6 is less testing, as in a Howell-McShane encounter from the 2017 British Knockout Championship.

**7... ♙e7**

Naturally not 7... ♙xd4? 8 ♜xe4, and if 8...c5 9 c3, while 7... ♜e7 8 dxc5 ♘xc5 9 ♘c3 leaves White with plenty of compensation; ♘d5 isn't the only threat and 9... ♘g6 10 ♙e3 ♘e6 11 f4 f5 can even be met by 12 g4! with a very strong initiative.

**8 dxe5 ♘c5 9 ♖d1 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♖e8?**

A significant step in the wrong direction. Rather than weaken f7, Black should try 10...c6 11 ♙c4 b5!, as he did in Matulovic-Knezevic, Belgrade 1978. There White retreated to b3 and 12 b4!? ♘e6



(12...bxc4 13 bxc5 ♖xc5 14 ♗e4 would be a huge bind on the position) 13 ♖d3 might well be stronger, with promising attacking chances.

**11 ♖f3! f6?**

The losing move. 11...c6 12 ♖c4 ♗e6 13 ♗e4 is also pretty disgusting for Black, and even 11...♗f8!? 12 ♖e3 ♗b8 13 ♖g3 unsurprisingly leaves him significantly suffering.

**12 ♖c4+ ♖h8 13 b4!**



And wins. There's just nowhere good for the knight to go.

**13...fxe5 14 bxc5 ♖xc5 15 ♗e4 ♖e7**

**16 ♖h5!**

Targeting h7 so is the simplest way of rapidly wrapping up the full point.

**16...d6 17 ♖f7 1-0**

### T. Rendle - P. Hampton

Celtic Tigers & Sharks vs Exeter

Honey Badgers



White now began to target the underdefended black kingside.

**19 ♖g5! f5?**

19...♗g8 was necessary, and if 20 ♗f5? f6. Instead, 20 ♗fe1 ♖d8 21 ♖h6 f6 22 h4! would maintain White's clear superiority.

**20 ♗h5+!**

Beginning a strong manoeuvre. The weakness of g6 will prove Black's undoing.

**20...♖h8 21 ♗f4 ♖f7 22 ♖h6 ♗ae8 23 ♗g5 ♖g8 24 ♗ae1 ♗d8**



**25 ♖e7!**

A lovely silent sacrifice, and an absolute killer.

**25... ♜xe7**

Or 25... ♗f7 26 ♘xf7+ ♜xf7 27 ♘xg6+ and, just as in the game, the black queen is decisively overloaded. **26 ♘xg6+! ♚xg6 27 ♜xf8+ ♜g8 28 ♜xe7 1-0**

## GLASGOW

We were pleased to list two new works from Gambit Publications this month (see pp. 56-57), and Quality Chess, the Glasgow-based chess publishing powerhouse, are very much going strong too, despite all the short-term chaos caused by Covid and Brexit. They've recently announced eight upcoming titles, not least *Think Like a Super-GM* by Michael Adams and Phil Hurtado, as well as a two-volume *1.e4 Coffeeshouse Repertoire* by Gawain Jones, on which editor Andrew Greet remarked that he "can't remember anything with such a high-reward/low-risk set of recommendations as this one".

**SCOTLAND** – The Scottish Chess Tour, like Chess Scotland, which is running the Scottish Online Chess League – and just like too the ECF, 4NCL, Ulster Chess Union and Welsh Chess Union – has been busying supplying replacement chess online. Robin Moss of Carlisle Austin Friars Chess Club won both their 9th and 10th weekenders (January 3-5 and February 5-7). In the former he finished a point ahead of Isaac Browning, Raghav Palanivel (both Edinburgh), Wilfred Wheatley (St Andrews), Sam Coates (Oban), and Emils Steiners (Battersea), while Moss also amassed a perfect score in the latter, where Gordon Frederick (Castlehill), Isaac Browning (Edinburgh) and Alex MacDonald (Greenwood) shared second on 4/5.

## May 2021

### 4NCL

The latest 4NCL Congress (March 26-28) once again featured an impressive five sections and attracted 209 players.

**Open:** 1-3 Simon Smith (Oxford), Arjun Kolani (Brighton), Lewis Turner (Bristol) 4½/5.

**Major:** 1 Julien Shepley (Guildford) 4½, 2-5 Dillan Duke (Hereford), Cormac O'Caolaidhe (Enfield), James Rothwell (Liverpool), Ian Mutton (Letchworth) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Sylvan Clarke (Leeds), Philip Clarkson (Cambridge) 4½, 3-5 Aniruddha Katkar (London), Aneesh Sagar (Petts Wood), Colin Vernon (Worcester) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Shaun Walsh (Bristol), Phillip Payne (York) 4½, 3-7 Titas Vdovycia (Leighton Buzzard), Dominic Cooper (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Bora Aydin (Maidenhead), George Wright (Wimborne), Nicolae Vleju (Hertfordshire) 4.

**Under-1100:** 1 Benedikt Pitel (Hull) 5, 2 Angelo Lynn (Kirkintilloch) 4, 3 Kostya Vitvitskyi (St Albans) 3½.

Those who like their online weekenders should note that the 8th 4NCL Online Congress will run May 21-23, while the second British Online Chess Championships will take place from July 24th until August 8th. As we went to press, there was just one round of the pool stage left to play in the 4NCL Online League. Despite a shock defeat to Downend – Robert Thompson and Stephen Meek demonstrating that even a 300 or 400 rating point disadvantage can still lead to success, as they stunned Alberto Suarez Real and Harry Grieve, respectively – Guildford Young Guns still topped Pool A by two points from Sussex Social Isolators.

Elsewhere the big clash in Pool D was drawn, leaving Celtic Tigers two points clear of Alba, while Chessable White Rose continue to impress: their first team have won all six matches in Pool B and their second team topped Pool C after defeating Barbican 2½-1½.

### R. Thompson - A. Suarez Real

Downend vs Guildford

King's Indian Defence

**1 ♖f3 g6 2 c4 ♘g7 3 d4 ♖f6 4 g3 0-0 5 ♘g2 d6 6 0-0 ♜bd7**

Thompson claimed another scalp in the next round, defeating Laurence Webb after 6...c5 7 ♜c3 ♜c6 8 d5 ♜a5 9 ♜d2 a6 10 ♜b1 b5 11 cxb5 axb5 12 ♜xb5 when 12... ♘f5!? 13 e4 ♘g4 might be Black's best

attempt to demonstrate that he has sufficient, Benko-type compensation.

**7 ♜c3 e5 8 e4 exd4 9 ♜xd4 ♜e8 10 h3 a6**

Joe Gallagher's old favourite. Black angles for aggressive counterplay with a quick ...c5 and ...b5.

**11 ♘e3 ♜b8 12 b3 c5 13 ♜de2 ♜e7?!**

Defending d6, but Black should prefer to gambit it. Indeed, the critical line is 13...b5! when White should probably sacrifice the exchange: 14 ♜xd6! b4 15 ♜a4 ♜xe4 16 ♘xe4 ♘xa1 17 ♜xa1 ♜xe4 18 ♜xc5 ♜e8

19 ♜d1 ♜e7. White has scored fairly well here in a few games, but Black may be OK.

**14 a4!**



Ruling out ...b5 and leaving Black drifting towards exactly the sort of prospectless position he needs to avoid against the Fianchetto variation.

**14... ♖e5 15 ♜c1 ♘d7 16 ♜e1**

A new move. 16 f4 ♘c6 (Bukal-Bakhmatov, Halle 2004) 17 g4!? also comes into the equation.

**16... ♘c6**

16...b5 was possible, but after 17 cxb5 axb5 18 ♘g5 or 18 axb5 ♘xb5 19 ♖xb5 ♜xb5 20 ♘c3 White retains a definite edge.

**17 ♜c2 ♘ed7**

17...b5!? was certainly well worth consideration here when 18 cxb5 axb5 19 axb5 ♘xb5 20 ♘xb5 ♜xb5 21 f4 ♘ed7 22 ♘c3 should still be an edge for White, but Black is fighting and very much on the board

after 22... ♜b4.

**18 ♘f4**

Clamping down on d5 to leave Black suffering.

**18...b5 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘fd5! ♜d8**

A timely invasion and now 20... ♘xd5 21 exd5 bxc4 22 bxc4 ♜f8 23 ♘b5 would leave Black vulnerable to a plan of gradual kingside expansion from White.

**21 ♘xf6+ ♜xf6?**

21... ♘xf6 22 cxb5 ♘xb5 23 ♜cd1 ♜a5 wouldn't have equalised in view of 24 ♘d5, but was undoubtedly a better defence.

**22 cxb5 ♘xb5 23 ♘xb5 ♜xb5 24 ♜cd1?**

Natural, but actually Black doesn't control e5 and 24 e5! would have been very strong since 24... ♘xe5 25 f4 ♘d7 26 ♘c6 wins a piece.

**24... ♜eb8 25 ♜d2 ♜8b6?**

Overly ambitious and 25... ♜xb3 26 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 27 ♜xd6 ♘e5 would have been OK for Black, and if 28 ♘xc5? ♘f8 29 ♜d5 ♘d3.

**26 e5!**



The second time round, the Bristol-based player hits upon the right idea and this must have come as quite a blow to Spanish IM Alberto Suarez Real.

**26... ♜xe5?**

Complete collapse. Had Black gathered his thoughts, he would surely have preferred 26... ♖xe5! 27 ♙g5 ♜e6 28 f4 ♜xb3 29 fxe5 ♙xe5 30 ♙f4 when White is clearly pressing, but at least Black has three pawns for the piece.

**27 ♙f4 ♜c3**

White's task is an easy one after this, but 27... ♜f6 28 ♜e8+ ♗f8 29 ♙d5 would have left him in complete control of the board and Black without a single good defence to the threats of ♙c4 and ♙g5.

**28 ♜e8+ ♗f8 29 ♜xc3 ♙xc3 30 ♙xd6 ♜xd6**

He had to give up the exchange in view of 30... ♙g7 31 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 32 ♜dd8.

**31 ♜xd6 ♜xb3 32 ♙d5**



Once again, a fine post for the bishop. Black might have a pawn for the exchange, but he is quite lost as he won't be able to satisfactorily cover f7 as well as the pinned knight on f8.

**32... ♜b1+ 33 ♙g2 ♜e1 34 ♜xe1 ♙xe1 35 ♜f6 ♗e6 36 ♙xe6 fxe6 37 ♜xe6 ♙c3 38 ♜c6 ♙d4**

**39 ♜c7 h5 40 f4 ♙f8**

**41 ♙f3 ♙e8 42 ♙e4 ♙d8 43 ♜c6 1-0**

**BATTLE** – The ECF will be repeating their successful fundraiser for the British Red Cross, which last year raised £12,000 and saw Danny Gormally pipped at the post by Harry Grieve. This year's 24-hour blitz marathon will begin at 5pm on Saturday 5th June. More details are available on the ECF's website, [www.englishchess.org.uk](http://www.englishchess.org.uk). There are also some dates for the over-the-board British Chess Championships the ECF hope to organise. The 'Open Championship Final' is scheduled for October 2-10, with the junior finals over the weekend of October 2-3. The Seniors are set to be in action October 4-10, and the Women's Championship will take place 11-17 October. Keep an eye on [britishchesschampionships.co.uk](http://britishchesschampionships.co.uk) for further details.

Edinburgh 10-year-old Freddy Gordon defeated Bogdan Lalic in the first ECF Grand Prix Rapid event, which took place on Lichess on March 21st. Gordon would pip Keith Arkell to first prize on tie-break after they both finished on 5½/6, but the Paignton-based grandmaster might well have won their final round clash.

## LONDON

We were saddened to hear of the death of Syd Kalinsky (1931 - vii.iv.2021), the founder and president of Cavendish Chess Club, as well as a stalwart of Ilford Chess Club and Essex chess. Syd will be well known to many readers and his accountancy firm even employed a number of chess

players over the years. His love of chess always burnt bright, and he was a pretty decent player at his peak, graded in the 180s.

## SCOTLAND

Robin Moss (Carlisle) continues to plunder the Scottish Chess Tour's online weekenders, winning their twelfth event (April 2-4). Isaac Browning (Edinburgh) only lost to the winner and finished a point back in second, with Sanjith Madhavan (East Kilbride) a further half point in arrears. Meanwhile Aberdeen-based club Bon Accord triumphed in the Scottish Online Chess League. Led by Murad Abdulla and Hamish Olson, they finished on 9/10, a point ahead of Dundee City, with Edinburgh back in third.

## WALES

This year's Welsh Championships will not see the Henry Golding, Tom Weston and John Bishop trophies awarded, but will take place – online. The Championships have been scheduled to run from for May 28th to June 1st. See [welshchessunion.co.uk](http://welshchessunion.co.uk) for more details.

## June 2021

### 4NCL

Chessable White Rose I were the only side to finish on 100% in the pool stage of the top division in the 4NCL Online League. They are yet to lose a match over three seasons of the league but were eliminated on board count by Guildford Young Guns in the semi-final following a 2-2 draw. After racking up 6/6 and showing that even at 63 he is still very much a force to be reckoned with, Mark Hebden was defeated by James Adair in a wild encounter. However, Matthew Wadsworth continued his fine form as he held Gawain Jones with the black pieces on top board, while Alberto Suarez Real took advantage of a rare blunder from Christof Sielecki on board 2. Guildford were also a little fortunate on board 4 where Kamil Plichta was unable to convert an endgame two pawns to the good against Harry Grieve [pictured below].

### H. Grieve – K. Plichta

Guildford vs Chessable White Rose



To win, Black must ensure he can retain a pawn. To that end, 70... ♖d5+! 71 ♔g3 f4+! 72 ♔f2 ♜e3 was the way to go, because after 73 ♞e4 c2 74 ♞xc2 ♜xc2 75 ♜d6 ♔xg6 White shouldn't be able to sacrifice his knight for the f-pawn.

70... ♜xg6+? 71 ♔e3 ♔e5

Black is also unable to win after 71...f4+ 72 ♖d4 f3 73 ♖xc3 f2 74 ♜d3 and 71... ♗d5+ 72 ♖d4 ♗ge7 73 ♗d6.

**72 ♜xf5!**

The right approach and somewhat simpler than allowing 72 ♖d3 ♗d5 73 ♗c5 ♗gf4+ 74 ♖c4 ♗e2, even if this should be drawn too.

**72... ♗d5+!?**

Trying to keep some chances alive, since 72... ♖xf5 73 ♖d3 ♗d5 74 ♗d6+ ♖e5 75 ♗b5 ♗gf4+ 76 ♖c2 followed by 77 ♗xc3 would, of course, just be a draw.

**73 ♖d3 ♗gf4+ 74 ♖c2 ♖d4 75 ♗d6 ♗e3+ 76 ♖b3 ♗xf5 77 ♗b5+!**

Even simpler than 77 ♗xf5+ ♖d3 78 ♗e3!.

**77... ♖d3 78 ♗xc3 ♗d4+ 79 ♖b4 ♗fe6 80 ♗d5 ♖e4 81 ♗c3+ ♖e5 82 ♖c4 ♖d6 83 ♗b5+ ♗xb5 84 ♖xb5 ½-½**

We'll bring you details of the final between Guildford and Celtic Tigers & Sharks next month, the Tigers & Sharks having proved too strong for Chessable White Rose II in the semi-finals, Peter Roberson and Mark Kvetny doing the damage with the white pieces against Tim Wall and Graeme Oswald.

Meanwhile FM Terry Chapman outplayed Freddy Gordon as he proved too strong for the opposition in the 7th 4NCL Online Congress (April 23-25).

**Open:** 1 Terry Chapman (Cavendish) 4½/5, 2-3 Chris Davison (Cambridge), Marija Kuznecova (Latvia) 4.

**Under-2000:** 1-3 Srihari Iyengar (Northampton), Dillan Duke (Hereford), Chris Evans (Banbury) 4.

**Under-1700:** 1-2 Alastair Marston (Bristol), Aneesh Sagar (Petts Wood) 4½, 3-5 Anshul Swamy (Merthyr Tydfil), Colin Vernon (Worcester), Aniruddha Katkar (London) 4.

**Under-1400:** 1 Kotryna Miskinyte (Manchester) 5, 2 Mark McWilliams (Enfield) 4, 3-5 Angelo Lynn (Kirkintilloch), Bora Aydin (Maidenhead), Shaun Walsh (Bristol) 3½.

**Under-1100:** 1 Archie Piatt (Lancing) 5, 2 Kostya Vitvitskyi (St Albans) 3½.

**BATTLE** – A quick reminder that the ECF's Checkmate Covid – The Rematch chess marathon will take place from 5pm on Saturday 5th of June until 5pm on Sunday June 6th, once again raising money for the British Red Cross. Danny Rosenbaum has also organised the ECF Chess for All Festival (May 30th - June 4th), featuring a combination of online tournaments and group coaching for those of beginner and improver levels.

**SHEFFIELD** – As over-the-board chess slowly begins to resume (congresses are even back on the menu), kudos to Sheffield organiser Geoff Brown who staged two four-player events on Sunday 25th April, a pilot for some larger outdoor tournaments Geoff has planned as restrictions ease. Jonathan Arnott won all three games at the Millowners Arms event, while at Yellow Arch Studios Geoff Brown himself shared first place with Darnall & Handsworth clubmate Ian Barker. Local businessman Liam Bardell commented that "It was great to be able to use my venues for this event, supporting and encouraging local chess."

Can you see here how Craig Chatterton, White to move here, might have turned the tables on eventual winner Arnott?



White might block with 33 ♖e4, but much stronger is 33 ♖a8! ♙xa8 34 ♚xa8+ ♔d7 (unsurprisingly 34... ♗c7 35 ♖e7+ ♗d6 36 ♘f5+ leads to mate) 35 ♚b7+ when Black must either lose his knight to a fork or be mated by 35... ♗d6 36 ♘f5+ ♗c5 37 b4#.

We've been delighted to see in recent weeks Wimbledon Chess Club regularly taking chess out into their local community. As your Editor can attest, a small group of players competing in a park or pub garden is likely to attract some interest and can easily lead in time to a regular new member or three for your club.

## **July 2021**

### **BATTLE**

The ECF Chess for All Festival was a big success over the latest school half-term (May 30 - June 4), with online group coaching for 120 players provided by Lateefah Messam-Sparks and Lorin D'Costa, while Lorin and Keith Arkell gave simuls. Nigel Towers continues to manage the ECF's online activities most ably and attention has now turned to a second season of the Online County Championships. The qualifying rounds began in June, with the games once again being played at 6.30pm over five Saturdays, with the finals scheduled for September 18th.

We suspect many readers will want to take part in one of the events which will make up the British Online Chess Championships 2021, which are due to begin on July 24th, running until August 8th on the Chess.com platform. As the world continues to open up, it will be interesting to see how popular such events still prove to be.

The ECF are also, in most welcome news, working hard on planning over-the-board events. The latest to be announced was the British Junior Rapid & Blitz Championship, which will take place in Milton Keynes over the weekend of November 13th and 14th. The ECF have also kindly supplied some junior bursaries for the Northumbria Masters, a nine-round, international Swiss, which is scheduled to take place August 26-30 at the Marriott Metro Centre. Challengers, Major and Minor events are also planned.

### **LEAMINGTON SPA**

Despite the UK Government's delay in moving to stage four of their roadmap, the 4NCL were planning, as we went to press, on going ahead with their 25th Congress at the Woodland Grange hotel, albeit with limited numbers. We will, of course, bring you news next month of that first weekend tournament to be staged in the UK since March 2020. Do note that the 4NCL also have another congress planned at the same Leamington Spa venue for September 10-12. 4NCL and ECF



CEO Mike Truran commented: “The 4NCL team are delighted to see the return of over-the-board chess at the 4NCL congress in July. A lot of hard work (and on occasion frayed tempers!) went into preparing for the congress, and our hope is that HM Government removes or reduces Covid-related restrictions in July as planned such that organising chess events becomes a lot easier all round. But if, God forbid, restrictions do continue beyond July we hope we have established a template that can be used again both by the 4NCL and by other organisations should they wish to do so. “  
The 8th 4NCL Online Congress (May 21-23) resulted in a five-way tie for first in the Open.

**Open:** 1-5 Robin Kneebone (Carrick), Chris Davison (Cambridge), James Cole (Cowley), Lara Putar (Dublin), Mark Lim (Norwich) 4/5.

**Under-2000:** 1-4 Tim Jones (New Milton), Pete Leonard (Hebden Bridge), Andrew Boughen (Surbiton), Aniruddha Katkar (London) 4.

**Under-1700:** 1-2 Kieran Lappin (Hereford), Chris O’Sullivan (Ireland) 4, 3-5 George Zhao (Barnet), Ehsan Farahmandpour (Battersea), Shambavi Hariharan (Nottingham) 3½.

**Under-1400:** 1-3 Craig Reyes (Gibraltar), Bora Aydin (Maidenhead), Ngo Yu Chan (Hong Kong) 4.

**Under-1100:** 1 Adithya Ramesh (Cheshire) 4½, 2-3 Craig Robinson, Diah Dipal Patel (Coventry) 4.

There was also the small matter of the finals of the third season of the 4NCL Online League on the evening on May 18th. Celtic Tigers & Sharks pulled off their best result yet as they claimed the Division One title after a tense match with Guildford Young Guns ended 2-2, the Tigers & Sharks triumphing on board count. Once again Mark Hebden and Matthew Wadsworth impressed for Guildford, the former outplaying Mark Kvetny on board 3, while on top board the latter fought back well from a sub-optimal opening to hold fellow IM Peter Roberson. Tom Rendle and Harry Grieve drew too on bottom board, with the match ultimately decided by Ritvar Reimanis’s slightly fortunate victory over Alberto Suarez Real, the Spanish IM seemingly making a mouse-slip having been pressing and when he was certainly no worse.

As well as the Tigers & Sharks, our congratulations must go too to the other divisional winners (from divisions two to seven) - Hull & Beverley Romans 1, MK Phoenix 2, Barnet Knights A, Charlton Cobras A, MK Phoenix 3 and Newport A - as well as to Muswell Hill Bishops, winners of the equally successful and thriving Junior 4NCL League.

**LONDON** – We were sorry to hear of the passing of popular Pimlico Chess Club member Hamilton McMillan (xxviii.x.1946 - xx.iv.2021), who was sometime affectionately known as ‘Santa Claus’ and graded 163 at the time of his death from heart disease. Unlike many chess players, McMillan managed an obituary in The Times, having been, it transpired, a senior figure in MI6, heading its counterterrorism section until his retirement in 1997. A chemistry graduate from Balliol College, Oxford, McMillan was especially known for his ability to think outside the box, as well as for playing correspondence chess from various places around the world during his early years in the secret service.

## **WALES**

The Welsh Chess Championships went online (May 28 - June 1) and saw eight players contest the first Welsh Online Championship. Jonathan Blackburn (Holmes Chapel) was defeated by fellow FM Grzegorz Toczek (Cardiff), but only dropped one other half-point, whereas Toczek was defeated by Tim Kett (Cardiff) and James Thomas (Penarth). As such, Blackburn’s 5½/7 was enough for the title, finishing half a point ahead of fellow experienced chess tutor Kett. There were also Major and Minor sections, the former won by Sam Jukes (Barry) with 6/7, with Elliott MacNeil (Imperial

College) half a point adrift, while in the latter Khushi Bagga's (North Cardiff) '+5' secured the title with Anshul Swamy (Merthyr Tydfil) back on 5½/7.

## **August 2021**

### **OTB Chess is Back!**

Competitive, large-scale over-the-board chess is back in the UK. Kudos to the 4NCL for staging the first weekend congress since March last year when they put on their 25th Congress just outside Leamington Spa (July 9-11). Numbers were limited to 130 players and the Open was, typically for a 4NCL Congress, a pretty strong affair.

The top seeds realised that it wasn't all going to go their way in round 3 when teenager Aaravamudhan Balaji defeated Peter Wells, while Keith Arkell was held to a draw by Steven Jones. In that same round Nigel Davies drew for a second time and would finish in a large pack of players on '+2' just out of the prizes. Balaji went on to hold Arkell then defeat Jones and so landed up taking home £375 along with Jonah Willow, who overcame the experienced FMs Peter Sowray and Tim Wall on the final day.

**Open:** 1-2 Jonah Willow (West Nottingham), Aaravamudhan Balaji (Petts Wood) 4½/5, 3 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 4.

**Major:** 1 Daniel Gomez (Andorra) 5, 2-5 Julia Volovich (Cambridge), Jude Shearsby (Kenilworth), George Hollands (Snodland), Lewis Turner (Wigston) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Daniel Shrek (Camberley) 4½, 2-4 Anurai Sainbayar (Ealing), Alan Llewellyn, Trevor Blower (both Barrow-in-Furness) 4.

It was then the turn of ChessFest, brought to you courtesy of our Executive Editor, Chess in Schools & Communities and XTX Markets. The weekend of chess in central London began on Friday 16th July when primary school children from across the country descended on Manchester Square, where they played a tournament, received tuition and also got to see some of the armoury from the Wallace Collection, which sits on the north side of the square.

The next day was once again held in the open air of Manchester Square, but this time it was the turn of adults as well as a number of talented young players competing in the DecodeChess Rapidplay.

Michael Adams and Gawain Jones were top seeds, but only had things their own way up to a dramatic fifth round. There Adams was stunned by IM Peter Roberson, despite having the white pieces, while Jones lost on time in a highly complex position against Ameet Ghasi. He was by no means the only player to have an issue readjusting to the clock again, something which speed star Marcus Harvey didn't as he overcame Ghasi in the final round to tie for first with Roberson on a most impressive 6/6.

Sunday 18th saw an even more famous and larger venue, Trafalgar Square. Under a baking sun, thousands of chess enthusiasts came to enjoy a day of chess, which also commemorated the 150th anniversary of Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, as well as it being some 170 years since the Immortal Game occurred. It might have been hot, but the atmosphere was excellent and several young players enjoyed their first over-the-board game, while also enjoying some tuition courtesy of CSC, not to mention the superb actors and living chess display.

The legacy of ChessFest will be the installation of various large sets and chess tables around London. We just hope that there will also be a second Chessfest next year!

Attention now turns to Adam Raoof's 'Hendon FIDE 2300 Plus' over the final weekend of July and start of August, and then the scheduled return of the Golders Green Rapidplay on both August 7th and 14th.

We suspect that the Northumbria Masters at the Marriott MetroCentre will also prove popular from August 26th until the 30th, and features Masters, Challengers, Major and Minor sections. Do note too that the Mind Sports Olympiad is once again on, albeit online (August 13 - September 5), and features various chess events.

## **September 2021**

### **BATTLE**

There may have been few opportunities for competitive OTB action over the past 18 or so months, but plenty have used that time wisely, whether to study their own game, or to become an arbiter. We were delighted to see the ECF announcing that the following have all recently qualified as arbiters: Jorel Ali, Jonathan Arnott, Richard Atkinson, Lucy Broomfield, Richard Buxton, Joseph Conlon, Ruwan Dias, Savin Dias, Ryan Duff, Satish Gaekwad, Stephen Greep, Rob Hammond, Gavin Johnstone, Wadih Houry, Daniel Lee, David Lewis, Ritika Maladkar, Andrey Masterskikh, Paul McKeown, David Revitt, Johan Rydahl, Raymond Sayers, John Stubbs, Oliver Stubbs, Matthew Turner, Sathya Vaidyanathan, David Wilkinson, Hambel Willow and Yaoyao Zhu.

In other ECF news, John Reyes and Tim Wall have been elected as Silver Direct Member Representatives (Lorin D'Costa and Rob Willmoth continue to represent Gold members, while Bronze members also have excellent representatives in the shape of Aga Milewska and Chris Skulte), and while there aren't that many tournaments, at least compared to normal, scheduled for this month, we were pleased to see, looking ahead, that the ECF are still planning on staging British Junior Rapid & Blitz Championships over the weekend of November 13th-14th in Milton Keynes. Before that we hope the finals of the British Open, Women's, Seniors and Juniors Championships will go ahead in October, and don't forget the ECF also have a YouTube channel.

Other dates for the diary include the 29th Birmingham Rapidplay on October 17th, the Hull 4NCL International Congress (October 22-24), and the popular Scarborough Congress (October 29-31). The 2nd Online British Championships (July 24 - August 8), were once again largely well run by Nigel Towers and his fine team. A wide array of time controls helped attract a number of strong fields to the many events which were staged on the Chess.com portal. Champions were:

**Championship:** Standard – Keith Arkell (Paignton); Rapidplay – Brandon Clarke (Littlethorpe); Blitz – Richard Pert (Brentwood); Bullet – Rishi Thariani (east London)

**Women's:** Standard – Akshaya Kalaiyalahan (Oxford); Rapidplay – Katarzyna Toma (South Birmingham); Blitz – Liza Kisteneva (Forest Hall)

**Seniors 65+:** Standard, Rapidplay and Blitz(!) – Terry Chapman (Hampstead)

**Seniors 50+:** Standard – Bogdan Lalic (Wood Green); Rapidplay and Blitz – Keith Arkell (Paignton).

**Under-18:** Standard – Yichen Han (Forest Hall); Rapidplay – Jonathan McKay (Musselburgh); Blitz – Joshua Altman (London)

**Under-16:** Standard and Rapidplay – Mohammed Ismail (Newham); Blitz – Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill)

**Under-14:** Standard and Rapidplay – Arjun Kolani (Brighton); Blitz – James Merriman (Petts Wood).

**Under-12:** Standard – Denis Dupuis (Battersea); Rapidplay – Frederick Gordon (Edinburgh); Blitz – Elis Dicen (Coventry)

**Under-10:** Standard – Alfred Soulier (Coulsdon); Rapidplay – Kai Hanache (Richmond); Blitz – Pengxiao Zhu (Devon).

**Under-8:** Standard – George Zhao (Barnet); Rapidplay – Dildarav Lishoy (Maidenhead); Blitz – Rithvik Ambattu Deepak (Edinburgh)

**Major Open:** Standard – Jay Cranston (Coventry); Rapidplay – Joe Hirst (Newcastle-under-Lyme).

**Under-2000:** Standard – Manvith Sandhu (Halesowen); Rapidplay – Kyle Pelling (Heywood).

**Under-1700:** Standard – Colin Vernon (Worcester); Rapidplay – Zain Patel (Richmond), Oleg Verbytski (Charlton)

**Under-1400:** Standard – Sathya Vaidyanathan (Birmingham); Rapidplay – Ben Adigun (Richmond)

**Under-1100:** Standard – Gary Wilkinson (Norton Rose); Rapidplay – Samuel Baugh (Walsall)

**BELFAST** – The 2021 Ulster Chess Championships went ahead at the Maynard Sinclair Sports Pavilion (July 23-25). Irish Champion FM Tom O’Gorman warmed up for defending his title in Dublin (see Overseas News) by running out a ready winner, while in this 16-player Swiss the Ulster title went on tie-break to Thomas Donaldson (Ballynafeigh).

**Ulster Championship:** 1 Tom O’Gorman (Oxford) 5/5, 2 Mandar Tahmankar (Belfast) 4, 3 Alice O’Gorman (Dublin) 3½.

**Intermediate Championship:** 1 Robert Lavery (Ballynafeigh) 4, 2 Andrew Todd (Bangor) 3½, 3 Mohamed Saad (Ballynafeigh) 3.

## LEICESTER

The ECF’s National Chess Library, containing Bob Wade’s vast collection, is now on the shelves at De Montfort University. Special collections archivist David Mills commented: “After many lockdown related delays, recently we were able to take in the library and archive of the English Chess Federation – nearly 200 crates of books! The library is a fantastic resource for anyone interested in the history of chess or looking to pick up some tips for their own game. The books and journals will be catalogued in due course, but for now the collection can be browsed on the open shelves: just make an appointment via [archives@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:archives@dmu.ac.uk).”













## LONDON

As we reported last month, a dramatic fifth round at the DecodeChess Rapidplay in Manchester Square Gardens on Saturday July 18th saw Peter Roberson outplay Michael Adams [pictured below], and as Black no less, while Gawain Jones, most unusually, lost on time in a very complicated position against Ameet Ghasi. In that same round, Marcus Harvey would fight back from being a pawn down in an ending to overcome Jonathan Pein. Harvey would then defeat Ghasi in the final round to set up a rather unusual tie for first on 6/6, as he and Roberson each won £400.

### M. Adams - P. Roberson

London (rapid) 2021

Sicilian Classical

1 e4 c5 2  f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4  xd4  f6 5  c3  c6 6  g5 e6 7  d2 a6 8 0-0-0  d7 9 f4 h6 9...  e7 10  f3 b5 11 e5 b4 12 exf6 bxc3 13  xc3 gxf6 is another option for Black, as in two Ponkratov-Bacrot games from the World Cup, while Black also often goes 9...b5 straightaway. 10  h4 b5!?

Unusual here, but by no means bad. Play is likely to transpose to the 9...b5 sub-variation after a subsequent ...h5.

**11 ♖xf6 ♜b1 ♞b6 13 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 14 ♙d3**

Thus far Adams's play is very thematic, as here would have been 14 f5!? when 14...b4 15 ♘e2 e5 (15... ♙xe4? 16 fxe6 fxe6 17 ♞f4 feels very creaky for Black, and if 17...f5 18 ♘g3 ♙b7 19 ♙c4 d5 20 ♞e5) 16 ♘g3 h5 17 h4 should be a little better for White even after 17... ♙h6!? 18 ♞xd6 ♜d8 19 ♞xd8+ ♞xd8 20 ♜xd8+ ♙xd8 21 ♙xa6 ♙e7 22 ♜h3.

**14...0-0-0!?**

Roberson is in no rush. Just as thematic and good would have been 14...b4 15 ♘e2 h5! when Black should have sufficient counterplay.

**15 ♞e1 ♙b8 16 ♞h4 ♜g8!**



**17 g3?**

Rather slow. 17 ♞xf6 ♜d7 18 ♞h4 ♙g7 19 ♘e2 a5 would offer Black decent play for a pawn based on his unopposed dark-squared bishop and potential queenside attack, but 17 f5! would have kept that key bishop restricted. After, for instance, 17... ♜g5!? (17...b4 18 ♘e2 exf5 19 ♘g3 fxe4 20 ♙xe4 leaves Black's structure a bit of a mess and 17... ♜xg2? 18 ♞h3 would see the key e6 point collapse) 18 ♜hf1 b4 19 ♘e2 e5 20 g3 followed by ♘g1-f3 White would have a somewhat improved version of the game.

**17...b4 18 ♘e2 f5!**

A powerful counterstrike which rather forces White to give up the exchange to prevent Black from simply taking on e4.

**19 exf5 ♙xh1 20 ♜xh1 d5 21 ♜d1 ♜d7**

21...exf5!? feels ugly to the human eye, but ... ♙g7 is on its way and after 22 ♘d4 ♙g7 23 ♘xf5 ♙f6 24 ♞h5 a5 the engines rather like Black, and with good cause.

**22 ♘g1**

The knight might also have headed to g3, but 22 g4!? ♜b7!? (a deep semi-prophylactic move, basically keeping everything covered for now and waiting for White to commit) 23 ♘g3 ♙c5 would also have left Black clearly for choice.

**22... ♞e3**

It's not so easy to find a plan as Black, especially with the quick time control of 15+5, but 22...exf5!? 23 ♘f3 ♜b7!? (once again, a safe square for the rook) 24 ♙xf5 ♙e7 25 ♞h5 ♙f6! would have retained a clear advantage, and if 26 ♞xh6 ♜h8.

**23 ♞h5**

23 ♖xa6!? exf5 24 ♕h5 ♜a7 must have felt pretty scary to Adams, but after 25 ♗e2! (to avoid any ... ♗g7 and ... ♖d4 batteries) 25... ♗g7 26 ♕xf5 it's not clear that White is doing so badly.  
**23... ♗g7 24 ♗f3**



**24... ♜c8?**

Completing full mobilisation, but it seems that 24...exf5! was again the way to go, and if 25 ♜e1 ♖b6 26 ♗xf5 ♜b7 when Black is all set to go ... ♗c3 followed by ... ♖f6 to rather dent the white queen.

**25 ♜e1**

25 ♖g4!? ♗c3 26 fxe6 fxe6 27 ♗e5! is also at least OK for White: 27... ♗xe5 28 ♖xe6 ♜d6 29 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 30 fxe5 ♜dc6 31 ♗f5 ♜f8 32 g4 with two pawns and full compensation for the exchange in the endgame.

**25... ♖f2 26 ♜f1?**

Roberson would have needed to have been brave to avoid repeating moves after 26 ♜e2 ♖f1+ 27 ♜e1 ♖f2 28 ♜e2, since 28... ♖c5 29 ♖g4 leaves e6 falling, but Adams, of course, wants to win.

**26... ♖b6 27 ♖h4 ♜dc7!**

Roberson is back in full control and now has much the easier position to handle to boot: Black will simply go all out against the white king.

**28 f6 ♗f8 29 ♗e5**

29 f5!? was a better try to randomise.

**29...a5 30 ♖h5 a4!**



Unsurprisingly, Black can afford to sacrifice f7.

**31 ♖d1**

White won't manage to defend after this, but neither would he after 31 ♖xf7 b3, as shown by 32 axb3 axb3 33 cxb3 ♜a7 followed by ... ♚b3+.

**31...a3!**



Now Black can very much dream of dark square domination after 32 b3 ♚d4 33 ♚c1 ♜d6, which would, of course, leave White rather bound hand and foot.

**32 ♜h7!? axb2**

Simple chess. There was also the line opening 32...b3!?.

**33 ♜f3 ♚a5 34 ♜b3 ♜c5 35 ♖d3 ♜d6**

35... ♜a7 would have been an immediate killer, and if 36 a3 ♚a8!.

**36 ♚d2 ♚a8 37 ♖e5**

37 ♖xb4!? ♜c4 38 c3 was grim, but also the last chance.

**37... ♜a7 38 ♜xb2 ♜c3!**



Preparing to triple on the a-file. Very rarely does one see the British no.1 so outplayed.

**39 ♚d4 ♜a3 40 ♖c6 ♚b5! 0-1**

The twin threats are 41... ♚xc6 and 41... ♚f1+.

We were delighted to see that the Golders Green Rapidplay is back. It was run as one section on August 14th, where GM Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) racked up 6/6 to earn £100 and finish a point clear of Oscar Pollock (Berkshire), John Pigott (Little Heath), Samuel Walker, Peter Finn (both Wycombe), and Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill). This continental style format meant that four £50 rating prizes were awarded (under-1750, under-1550, under-1350 and under-1200), which went to: Llewellyn; Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) and Andres Perez Fadon (Wimbledon); Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill); and Harry Bryant (Barnet) and Rahul Babu (Coulsdon).

On top of his Muswell Hill events Adam Raoof would like to stage a GM norm event in October - if he can find a sponsor.

## **October 2021**

### **BATTLE**

Judges Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh have unveiled the shortlist for the ECF Book of the Year Award 2021, with historical works well represented. We can't believe that selecting a winner from the four excellent books listed will be at all easy. They are:

*Masterpieces and Dramas* by Sergey Voronkov, Andrew Soltis's *Smyslov, Bronstein, Geller, Taimanov and Averbakh*, as reviewed in these pages, *The Chess Saga of Fridrik Olafsson* by Oystein Brekke and, last but by no means least, Nigel Short's *Winning*.

It was also most welcome to see some 56 English chess coaches attend the FIDE Trainers Seminar over the weekend of September 3-5, where the speakers included Jacob Aagaard and Artur Yusupov. The 16 hours of lectures were organised by Rob Willmoth, ECF Membership Director and Chair of the English Junior Coaches and Organisers Association (EJCOA), in conjunction with Peter Long, the Secretary of the FIDE Trainers Commission. Rob commented that "EJCOA is very happy to have facilitated this FIDE Trainers Seminar together with the ECF, and with such legendary trainers. We believe it will help the professional development of English coaches and feed through into great results for England players and teams in the future."

### **CARDIGAN**

We were saddened to learn of the death of FM Iolo Jones (ii.viii.1947 - vi.ix.2021), a year after suffering a serious stroke. He tied for first in the 1983 Welsh Championship, represented Wales in 14 consecutive Olympiads between 1972 and 1998 (and 16 in all), including winning an individual gold medal at Novi Sad in 1990, and his name will live on thanks to *A chwaraei di wyddbwyll?*, the only chess book published thus far in Welsh, which Jones wrote along with his famous father, T. Llew Jones. Paying tribute, eighteen-time Welsh Champion Howard Williams noted that "His contribution to chess in Cardigan, in Dyfed and in Wales generally has been immense."

Whilst often a study in concentration at the board, Jones was popular with the players he captained and away from the board "was always friendly, generous and convivial", in the words of Williams.

### **EDINBURGH**

In happier news, it was great to learn that David Stewart and Chess in the Park returned to Princes Street Gardens on September 2nd after a 22-month absence. Visitors to Edinburgh should note that Chess in the Park is every Thursday and Sunday from 2-5pm at the Fountain Cafe, underneath Edinburgh Castle and next to the Ross Fountain, and will run until the end of British Summer Time on October 31st.

### **LEAMINGTON SPA**

The 4NCL staged a second post-pandemic congress at Woodland Grange, just outside Leamington (10-12 September). It was once again a great success, attracting the maximum field size of 170, and saw Brandon Clarke maintain his fine run of form.

**Open:** 1-2 Brandon Clarke (Cambridge), Roland Bezuidenhout (Fareham) 4½/5, 3-7 Peter Wells (Swindon), Andrew Ledger (Sheffield), Venkataramanan Tiruchirapalli (Watford), Rajat Makkar (Reading), Tim Kett (Cardiff) 4



**Under-2000:** 1-2 Oscar Idle (Cowley), Joe Varley (Hull) 4½, 3-5 Andrew Brocklehurst (Civil Service), Ovidiu Angheluta (Romania), Sydney Jacob (Lewisham) 4

**Under-1700:** 1 Evan Lewis (Glamorgan) 4½, 2-6 Stephen Williams (Cwmbran), Richard McMorran (Bedford), David Gilbert (Sidcup), Maxime Lacoult (Birmingham), John Constable (Bude) 4

Meanwhile a fourth season of the 4NCL Online and Junior 4NCL Online Leagues had completed two rounds as we went to press. In Division One, the main upset saw defending champions Tiger Sharks I stunned 3-1 by Schach Attack, for whom Nick Burrows and Nigel Moyse defeated Dong Bao Nghia and Sam Williams respectively. A smaller turn-up was Alba's 3-1 defeat of Chessable White Rose II, courtesy of wins from Iain Gourlay and Hamish Olson, while Hull & East Riding Romans did well to draw with the somewhat higher-rated Anglian Avengers.

**LISBURN** – We were delighted to hear that Lisburn Chess Club are expecting to move into a new, permanent home in the middle of October, at 60-62 Longstone Street. Thanks to the efforts of Neil and Lynda Gardner, the club has progressed from using five borrowed chess boards and meeting at the local library to boasting over 60 members, and will now house the first permanent venue dedicated to chess in Northern Ireland. We wish Lisburn Chess Club all the best and will bring you more news when we have it. In terms of the UK, we believe that up until now only the Edinburgh and Hastings chess clubs own their own premises, but readers may wish to write in and correct the score.

## **LONDON**

The latest Golders Green Rapidplay took place on September 11th, and this time saw two sections, 72 playing in the Open and 21 in the Under-1450 section.

**Open:** 1-2 Ilia Malinovskii (Bloomberg), Maciej Czopor (Wood Green) 5½/6, 3-4 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Connor Clarke (Harow) 5; U1730 rating prize – Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Edwin Kalerwa (Watford), Harry Croasdale (West Bridgford) 4; U1500 – Jamie Doyle (Southbourne), Suyash Srikanta Prasad (Maidenhead), Jakub Rozak (Athenaeum) 4; U1280 – Oleg Verbytski (Charlton) 4

**Under-1450:** 1-2 Hugo Smith (Hampstead), Tamal Matilal (Oxford) 5/6, 3-7 Gelun Tan (Golders Green), David Lewis (Hendon), Toby Brett (south-west London), Callum Calvert (Maidenhead), Frank Gillespie (Beckenham) 4

## **November 2021**

### **BATTLE**

The 2021 ECF Book of the Year is Sergey Voronkov's *Masterpieces and Dramas*, which covers the first ten Soviet Championships. Judges Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh commented that "Potential readers might be discouraged by the apparently obscure subject, but they should not be!" Indeed, Voronkov's prose flows beautifully as he paints a rich picture of the players and how the tournaments were staged against a backdrop of economic hardship. The chess is unsurprisingly also rather good. Notably too Nigel Short's *Winning* received a special commendation from the judging panel.

## BLLENHEIM

Blenheim Palace supplied a sumptuous setting for the Terafinal, the concluding stage of the 2021 UK Chess Challenge, which was staged over the weekend of October 9th and 10th. This year's event featured five sections; each a 12-player rapid all-play-all. The Under-18 section was especially hard fought with Aaravamudhan Balaji (Petts Wood) edging out Tanmay Chopra (Harrow) on tie-break, having won their individual encounter. Just half a point behind on 8½/11 was Yichen Han (Forest Hall). Both Rajat Makkar (Reading) and Arjun Kolani (Brighton College) racked up a huge 10/11 in the Under-14s, the former taking the £250 first prize on tie-break. The Under-10 Champion is Elis Denele Dicen of Coventry Chess Academy, with Advait Keerthi Kumar (Watford) winning the Under-8s on tie-break from George Zhao (Barnet), while Freddy Gordon won the Under-12 Championship by a point and a half. The Edinburgh schoolboy will make his full Scotland debut in the upcoming European Team Championship in Slovenia, where he will line up on board 5 behind Alan Tate, Andrew Muir, Graham Morrison and Adam Bremner.

## BUDE

Bob Jones reports: "The early signs of a post-Covid & OTB recovery were seen in Cornwall in late September when, after a gap of two years, the 2nd Peter & Peggy Clarke Memorial Rapidplay took place at the Parkhouse Centre in Bude. Of their three daughters, Sally, the oldest, was unable to travel down from Derbyshire, but the youngest, Susie, played in the tournament, while Pennie manned the refreshments stall, with proceeds going to a cancer charity. Their uncle, Chris Wood, also played.

The favourites were, of course, John and Petra Nunn, now resident in the town, but there was also a vanload of young students from Exeter University of various nationalities and untested skills, all of which made for an interesting mix of talents.

It was the best-known of the students, Will Claridge-Hansen [pictured below], who in the final round denied John Nunn the chance of a perfect 6/6 score, though he came clear first anyway. Not to be outdone, Petra was runner-up on 5/6, with Claridge-Hansen back on 4½."

### W. Claridge-Hansen - J. Nunn

Bude (rapid) 2021

Notes by Will Claridge-Hansen



After having declined an early draw offer and completely misplaying the opening, I was happy to have reached a position with some play in it.

1... ♖cb7 2 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 3 ♜xc7 ♚xc7 4 b4! ♚b6 5 ♜f3 ♜c4?

5...f6 maintains the rough balance.

6 ♖xc4 bxc4 7 ♘c3 f6 8 ♘h3?

White is doing very well after the more natural 8 a4! ♖d6 9 ♖d2.

8... ♖d6 9 ♘e6+ ♖h8 10 h5? ♖b5!

Now White has no more advantage, and the game soon ended in a draw.

11 ♖d2 ♖xc3 12 ♖xc3 ♖f2+ 13 ♖h3 ♖f1+ 14 ♖h2 ♖f2+ 15 ♖h3 ♖f1+ 16 ♖h2 ♖f2+ ½-½

**HULL** – The British Chess Championship took place at the University of Hull (October 2-10), and saw top seed Nick Pert win his first British title. Just 22 players took part this year, due in part to the first prize being just £2,000 and because non-titled players could only qualify through the earlier British Online Championship. The event was marred too by a number of withdrawals, albeit understandable ones in the case of illness and juniors departing for the Terafinal. Huge credit must still be given to the ECF for staging a Championship and especially to Stephen Greep, who was able to secure a fine venue with excellent playing conditions.

Leading scores: 1 Nick Pert (Sandhurst) 6½/9, 2-6 Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Marcus Harvey (Witney), Mark Hebden (Leicester), Andrew Ledger (Sheffield), Hamish Olson (Edinburgh) 6.

We'll have much more on the British next month, which was certainly a gripping tournament to follow, full of twists and turns. Andrew Ledger was a slightly surprising leader for a long while, until he was outplayed by Hamish Olson in the final round, at the same time as Nick Pert [pictured below] held against Marcus Harvey. The 2021 Champion's best effort put British Online Champion Keith Arkell out of the reckoning in round 6.

### N. Pert - K. Arkell

British Championship, Hull 2021

Bogo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 2 ♖f3 e6 3 c4 ♘b4+ 4 ♘d2 ♘xd2+ 5 ♖xd2 d6 6 ♖c3 ♖e7 7 g3 0-0 8 ♘g2 c6?!

This creates a slightly strange impression. 8...e5 would be normal.

9 0-0 e5?!

9...d5 was a little grim, if also possibly a better try.

10 c5!



Pinpointing the downside to Black's 8th move and now 10...exd4 11 cxd6 ♖xd6 12 ♖xd4 ♖d8 13 ♖ad1 would leave White clearly for choice, as would 10... ♖bd7

11 cxd6 ♖xd6 12 ♜ad1.

**10...dxc5 11 dxe5 ♗fd7 12 ♖f4 ♗a6 13 ♗e4!**

Homing in on the hole on d6. Black's opening has not been a success.

**13... ♗c7**

13...f6!? would have undermined the bridgehead, although even here 14 exf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗d6 ♙e6 16 ♗g5 would leave White running the show.

**14 ♗d6 ♗d5 15 ♗f5! ♖d8 16 ♖g4**

White begins to put his superior development and activity to good use. Already Black's kingside is looking rather shaky.

**16...g6 17 e4 h5 18 ♖h3 ♗c7 19 ♜ad1 ♗e6**



**20 ♜d6!?**

A tempting sacrifice, but 20 ♜fe1! would have been a stronger one, and if 20...gxf5? 21 exf5 ♗g7 22 f6 ♗e6? 23 ♖h4!.

**20... ♖e8?**

Now it's easy for White. As such, Black had to be brave and try 20...gxf5 21 exf5 ♗g7 when 22 ♜e1 (22 f6? ♗xe5! is a clever defence) 22... ♜e8 23 g4!? would have left White with a dangerous attack, but nothing clear.

**21 ♖h4 ♗b6 22 b3**

A little slow and 22 ♖f6! would have won on the spot, in view of 22... ♗d7 23 ♗e7+ ♙h7 24 ♗g5+ ♗xg5 25 ♖xg5 followed by ♗f5 or 22...gxf5 23 ♗g5 ♗xg5 24 ♖xg5+ ♙h7 25 ♜h6#.

**22... ♙h7 23 ♜fd1**

And here 23 ♖f6! gxf5 (or 23... ♜g8 24 ♜xe6 fxe6 25 ♗g5#) 24 ♗g5+ would have led to mate.

**23... ♜h8 24 ♗g5+ ♗xg5 25 ♖xg5 ♙xf5 26 exf5**

The attack remains overwhelming. Sooner or later g6 is going to collapse.

**26... ♗d5 27 fxg6+ fxg6 28 ♙e4 ♗e7 29 ♜d7 1-0**

The British Women's Championship also took place in Hull (October 14-17), with Harriet Hunt claiming the title just as we went to press.

## LONDON

Adam Raooof's Golders Green Rapidplay returned to St Luke's Church in Hampstead on September 25th, where Russian GM Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) won the £100 first prize with 6/6, a point

ahead of Maciej Czopor (Poland), Peter Finn (Cambridge), Kabir Pandit (West London), John Pigott (Little Heath) and Sanjit Kumar (Richmond). The last of those also won the £50 Under-1880 rating prize, with the Under-1675 and Under-1475 prizes going to Vinay Vekaria (Harrow) and Shrayan Majumder (Southampton) respectively, while Sam Pritchard (Golders Green) won the separate Under-1450 tournament with 6/6, finishing a point ahead of Alexander Kairat (Battersea). It was the turn of IM Peter Large (Epsom) to dominate with 5½/6 on October 9th, with Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Lorenzo Lucchi (Lewisham) and Gary Senior (Hendon) finishing a half point behind. Rating prizes went to Stefanus Phan (London), David Maycock (Richmond), Avyukt Dasgupta (Watford), Rian Sarkar (Barnet), Lorenzo Fava (Cambridge) and Andrea Passariello (Italy).

## MILTON KEYNES

The British Seniors Championships took place (October 4-10) at Kents Hill Park, a conference centre and hotel in Milton Keynes. Roger De Coverly [pictured below] wasn't one of the highest-rated players in the Over-65 Championship but dominated the event as he burst clear with 5½/6 before losing a spectacular game in the final round against Phil Stimpson. Meanwhile in the Over-50 Championship Mike Waddington bounced back from an opening round defeat at the hands of fellow FM Andrew Lewis – and how. Waddington won his remaining six games, including against the two players who landed up tying for second.

**Over-65 Championship:** 1 Roger de Coverly (Bourne End) 5½/7, 2 Ivan Myall (Chelmsford) 5, 3-4 Phil Stimpson (Guildford), Paul Habershon (Bedford) 4½.

**Over-50 Championship:** 1 Mike Waddington (Dorchester) 6, 2-3 Ian Robson (Gloucester), Don Mason (Shirley) 5.

### P. Stimpson - R. De Coverly

British Over-65 Championship,  
Milton Keynes 2021  
Scotch Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘c4 ♗f6 5 e5 d5 6 ♘b5 ♗e4 7 ♗xd4 ♘d7 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 0-0 ♘c5 10 f3 ♗g5 11 f4 ♗e4 12 ♘e3 ♘b6 13 ♗c3!?

White's most direct choice and a move explored in Gawain Jones's recent Coffeehouse Repertoire.

13... ♗xc3 14 bxc3 0-0 15 ♚d2

Overprotecting the bishop while connecting the rooks, and not 15 ♚f3? f6! when White's centre would have begun to crumble.

15... ♚e7 16 ♜ae1 c5 17 ♗b3 ♜ad8?

Badly underestimating the power of White's pawns, whereas 17...c4! 18 ♗d4 c5 19 ♗f3 ♘e6 wouldn't have been too bad for Black.

18 f5! ♘b5?

18... ♚xe5 19 ♘g5 wins the exchange, but better this for Black than the game.

19 ♘g5 ♚d7 20 ♘f6!



A lovely move to play and an even stronger choice than 20 ♘xd8 ♜xd8 21 f6.

**20...gxf6 21 exf6 ♔h8 22 ♖h6 ♜g8 23 ♜f3**

The attack is simply too strong, the doubled f-pawns meaning that White is already threatening a classic mating sacrifice on h7.

**23... ♜g4 24 ♜e7 ♜e8! 25 h3!**

Stimpson is alert and doesn't throw it all away with 25 ♜xd7?? ♜e1+ 26 ♔f2 ♜f1+ 27 ♔e3 ♜e4+ 28 ♔d2 ♜e2#.

**25... ♜gg8 26 ♜f4 ♜g3**



**27 ♜g4**

Good enough, although White also had the calm 27 ♔f2!?, and if 27... ♜xe7 28 ♔xg3.

**27... ♜xg4 28 hxg4 ♜g8 29 ♜xd7 ♘xd7 30 ♖f4 ♜e8 31 ♖h6 ♜g8 32 ♖h5 ♜f8 33 ♔d2!**

Finally bringing the knight back into play. Unsurprisingly Black is quite lost.

**33...c4+ 34 ♔f1 ♘a4 35 ♔f3 ♘e3 36 ♔e5 ♘e8 37 g5 ♘f4 38 g6 fxg6 39 fxg6 1-0**

The weekend prior to the Seniors saw the British Junior Championships take place at the same venue. We suspect that a number of future stars will be found amongst the winners, with Mohammed Ismail's 100% in the oldest section just one result of note.

**Under-16 Championship:** 1 Mohammed Ismail (Newham) 5/5, 2 Adam Sieczkowski (Witney) 4, 3 Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 3½ (this was combined with the Under-18 Championship, the title of which curiously Ismail also didn't win, that going instead to Timur Kuzhelev who scored 3/5)

**Under-14 Championship:** 1 Arjun Kolani (Brighton) 4½, 2 Sanjith Madhavan (Glasgow) 4, 3-5 Nina Pert (Brentwood), Dimitrios Zakarian (Oxford), Shivam Agrawal (Wimbledon) 3½

**Under-12 Championship:** 1 Kenneth Hobson (Cowley) 4½, 2-4 Zain Patel (Richmond), Ethan Li (Edgware), Denis Dupuis (Battersea) 3½

**Under-10 Championship:** 1 Jan Murawski (Oxford) 6½/7, 2-4 Emils Steiners (Battersea), Kai Hanache (Richmond), Kameron Grose (Barnet) 5

**Under-8 Championship:** 1 George Zhao (Barnet) 6, 2 Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (Maidenhead) 5½, 3 Kushal Jakhria (Charlton) 5

## **NEWCASTLE**

The Northumbria Chess Congress took place at its regular home of The Parks Leisure Centre in North Shields (September 24-26), where Danny Gormally only conceded a draw to fellow grandmaster Nigel Davies en route to claiming the £300 first prize.

**Open:** 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½/5, 2-3 Nigel Davies (Southport), David Fitzsimons (Ireland) 4

**Major:** 1 Andy Hill (Bristol) 4½, 2 John Turnock (Jesmond) 4, 3-8 Mark Taylor (Rochdale), Ned Carmichael (Beverley), Andy Trevelyan (Jesmond), Roger Greatorex (Llangollen), Mark Murrell (Wanstead), Stuart Skelsey (Forest Hall) 3½

**Minor:** 1-5 Ian Rook (Forest Hall), Noel Boustred (Gosforth), Eddie Czestochowski (South Shields), Daniel Shek (Crowthorne), Ross Blackford (Dunbar) 4

**Foundation:** 1 Neil Simpson 7½/10, 2-3 Max Piotrowicz (both Gosforth), Deborah Edmundson (Bishop Auckland) 7

## **December 2021**

### **4NCL**

The 4NCL Online League and Junior League continue apace on Lichess, with five and four divisions, respectively, and matches held every other Tuesday. With one round left to play in the preliminary all-play-all stage, Division One had seen favourites Chessable White Rose and Guildford Young Guns, for whom Mark Hebden has 5/5, win all six matches in their respective groups. The remaining groups were closer, with Brentwood a point ahead of Anglian Avengers in Group A, while Alba and Chessable White Rose II were both on 10/12 in Group D.

### **BURY ST EDMUNDS**

Alan Merry made a welcome return to the board as he defeated fellow IM Richard Pert en route to triumphing at his local Bury St Edmunds Congress (October 23-24).

**Open:** 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2-8 Richard Pert (Brentwood), David Haydon (Brentwood), Martin Walker (Norwich), David Spence (Suffolk), Dan Waller (Cambridge), Russell White (Chelmsford), Alfie Onslow (Ealing) 3½

**Major:** 1 Max Pert (Brentwood) 4½/5, 2-4 Nathan Barnes (Colchester), Stuart Nelson (Braintree), Jerzy Cholewinski (Ipswich) 4

**Minor:** 1-3 Steven Ashworth (Ely), Colin White (Chelmsford), Richard Dickinson (Bury St Edmunds) 4

### **HULL**

Stephen Greep combined with Mike Truran to stage the Hull 4NCL International Congress, which included a GM event at the University of Hull (October 20-24). The top section looked pretty competitive on paper, and so it proved. Only 17-year-old Polish FM Maciej Czopor came close to

making a norm, racking up 4/5 before Matthew Turner ended his norm chances with a powerful attack in the penultimate round. That enabled Czopor's first round victim, Hungarian GM and fellow London resident Tamas Fodor, to catch him up and tie for first on 6/9.

### M. Czopor - T. Fodor

Hull 2021

French Defence

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖d2 c5 4 ♗gf3**

This remains a fairly popular way to avoid 4 exd5 ♜xd5 and then the trendy 5 ♗gf3 cxd4 6 ♘c4 ♜d7!?

**4...cxd4 5 ♗xd4 ♗c6 6 ♘b5 ♘d7 7 ♗xc6 bxc6 8 ♘d3 ♘d6 9 ♜e2 e5 10 exd5 cxd5 11 c4!**

Clearly if he wants to be better, White must chip away at Black's strong centre and now 11...f5!? 12 cxd5 e4 probably wouldn't have offered quite enough compensation in Xiong-Shimanov, Internet (blitz) 2021, had White calmly gone 13 0-0 ♗f6 14 ♗c4.

**11... ♗f6 12 0-0 ♘g4**

Forcing the pace and a potential weakness.

**13 f3 ♘e6 14 cxd5**



**14... ♘c5+?**

This was presumably over-the-board inspiration. A couple of months earlier 14... ♗xd5 15 ♘b5+ had been seen in Kilpatrick-Haria, Gateshead 2021, when 15... ♘d7! 16 ♗e4 ♘e7 (Pein) may well equalise since White must deal with the threat of ... ♜b6+.

**15 ♜h1 ♜xd5**

Otherwise, the e-pawn would be loose, but now White's pieces spring to life.

**16 ♗e4 ♘d4?**

Missing a bolt from the blue. As such, 16... ♗xe4 17 ♘xe4 ♜c4 was necessary, sub-optimal though Black's position would have been after 18 ♘d3 ♜b4 19 ♘d2! ♜xb2 (or 19... ♜b6 20 ♜xe5 0-0 21 ♘c3) 20 ♜ab1 ♜d4 21 ♘b5+ ♜f8 22 ♜fd1 with a very strong initiative for White.

**17 ♘h6!!**





Already there just isn't a satisfactory defence, in view of 17...gxh6?? 18 ♖xf6+ and 17...0-0 18 ♖xf6+ gxf6 19 ♖e1! followed by ♖g3+ or ♖h4.

**17... ♖xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖c4 19 ♖d3 ♖xd3!?**

This was always likely to come up short, but 19...♖c5 20 ♖xg7 ♖g8 21 ♖ac1 ♖a5 22 ♖f6 would have been pretty hopeless, with White's light-squared bishop ruling the roost.

**20 ♖xd3 gxh6 21 f4! ♖d8 22 fxe5 ♖g8 23 ♖ad1 ♖g4 24 h3 ♖h4 25 ♖g3 ♖h5 26 ♖a3**

The extra queen begins to make her presence rather felt.

**26... ♖d7 27 ♖b4 ♖h4 28 ♖e1! ♖h5 29 ♖e4 ♖xe5 30 ♖xh7 ♖ed5 31 ♖de1 ♖d8 32 ♖g8+ ♖c7 33 ♖c1+ ♖b6 34 ♖c8 ♖5d6 35 ♖b8+ ♖a6**



Fodor has done his best to stay on the board, but his hapless king position is still going to cost him the game.

**36 ♖f3! ♖b6 37 ♖c8+ ♖b5 38 a4+**

38 ♖f5+! would have been even more clinical, and if 38... ♖xf5 39 ♖c4+ ♖a5 40 b4+ ♖a4 41 ♖a6+ ♖xb4 42 ♖c4#.

**38... ♖b4 39 ♖f4+**

Plenty good enough, as would have been 39 ♖c3+! ♖xa4 40 ♖a3+ ♖b5 41 ♖b3+! ♖xb3 42 ♖xb3+ ♖a6 43 ♖c4+ with mate next move.

**39... ♖d4 40 ♖c6 ♖b3 41 ♖c2+ ♖b4 42 ♖c6 ♖b3 43 ♖f3+ 1-0**

There was also a weekend congress, in which Mark Hebden overpressed against John Cooper, while Marco Gallana impressively ground down Keith Arkell ahead of drawing with both eventual winners on the final day.

**Open:** 1-2 Peter Wells (Swindon), Steven Jones (Basingstoke) 4½/5, 3-6 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Keith Arkell (Paignton), Marco Gallana (London), David Maycock (Richmond) 4

**Under-2000:** 1 Tim Spanton (Hastings) 4½, 2-4 Ben Rich (York), Ovidiu Angheluta (Romania), Sam Coates (Oban) 4

**Under-1700:** 1 Joseph Catto (Hull) 5, 2-5 Dave Patterson (South Shields), Andrew Zigmond (Harrogate), Michael Carroll (Hoylake), Adam Nilsson (Scunthorpe) 4

**LISBURN** – The Lisburn Chess Rooms, pictured above, were officially opened on 6th November by not just the Deputy Mayor of Lisburn, Tim Mitchell, but also the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Paul Givan, which was fitting considering the scope and ambition of the new home of Lisburn Chess Club at 60-62 Longstone Street. The club currently has 17 permanent chess boards, a chess library and also a teaching room. We're certain that it won't be at all long before it is open much more than just on Thursday evenings and 10.00-13.30 on Saturdays

**LONDON** – The Golders Green Rapidplay continues to be staged on a frequent basis, with teenager Connor Clarke enjoying a fine result as he tied for first with IM John Pigott on October 23rd.

**Open:** 1-2 IM Peter Large (Epsom), Connor Clarke (Harrow) 5½/6, 3-4 Ganesh Viswanath (Australia), Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5; rating prizes: Peter Koiza (Linton) 4½, Stanley Badacsonyi 4½, Julie Oh (both Barnet) 3½

**Under-1450:** 1 William Lawrence (Muswell Hill) 6, 2 Magnus Borissow (Guildford) 4½, 3-4 Elliot O'Donnell (Harrow), Dmitry Nikityuk (Hampstead) 4

It was then the turn of the rapidly improving Peter Finn to win on November 6th and how, as he racked up a perfect score.

**Open:** 1 Peter Finn (Cambridge) 6/6, 2-3 Peter Large (Epsom), John Pigott (Little Heath) 5; rating prizes: Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 5, Samvrit Subin (Richmond) 3½, Oleg Verbytski (Charlton) 4.

Adam Raoof also staged a Muswell Hill Rapidplay on October 26th, which was especially popular, with it being half term, and in which Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) picked up the top prize of £100 with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Kai Rundall (Golders Green).

## **SCARBOROUGH**

The Scarborough Congress returned to the Scarborough Spa, proving popular as it attracted some 275 players. As ever the event was very well run, but was hampered by the strange decision to make the Major under-1850, which resulted in some 92 players taking part in the Open. We can't remember the last time a weekend open saw two players reach 5/5. That happened here as Andrew Ledger continued his fine form from the British Championship, defeating Brandon Clarke in the final round, while David Zakarian kept up with a win over Jon Nelson, who had earlier drawn with Danny Gormally. Notable too was that the Intermediate was won by an ungraded player, 14-year-old Ted Filby from Eastbourne, who only started playing in January after being inspired by *The Queen's Gambit*.

**Open:** 1-2 Andrew Ledger (Sheffield), David Zakarian (Oxford) 5/5, 3 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½, 4-9 Brandon Clarke (Ely), Paul Townsend (York) Tim Wall (Newcastle upon Tyne), Nathanael Paul (Newport), Samuel Milson (Louth), Zoe Varney (Durham) 4

**Major:** 1 Robert Kane (West London) 4½, 2-4 Graham Williamson (Liverpool), Joseph Bradey (Sheffield), Randolph Donahue (Leeds) 4

**Intermediate:** 1 Ted Filby (Eastbourne) 4½, 2-6 Owen Robson (York), Luke Gostelow (Hampton), Keith Marsh (Bradford), John Merry (Salford), Benedict Weis (Uckfield) 4

**Minor:** 1-2 Jason Boutsias (Sheffield), Patrick Coleman (Lytham St Annes) 4½, 3-4 Andrew Nettleship (Sheffield), David Scorer (Clitheroe) 4

**Foundation:** 1-2 Elliot Kent (Newcastle upon Tyne), Dylan Whitney (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 4, 3-5 Jenny Porritt (Sheffield), Michael Simmons (Sheffield), Thomas Hynes (Urmston) 3½

## **TORQUAY**

Everyone must hope that things will be fully back to normal by next summer when we're certain that the British Chess Championships will prove especially popular, as they return to the Riviera Centre at Torquay. There will be all the usual sections, with the event scheduled for the slightly later than normal time of August 8-21, with the Championship and Major Open set to run from the 13th until the 21st, although that may change to avoid any scheduling clash with the 2022 Olympiad.



## **Chess in the Time of Coronavirus**

Organising over-the-board chess has, as we all know, been hugely difficult over the last couple of years – but we've received (and published in ChessMoves) some fantastic articles from clubs and organisations around the country describing how grassroots chess has not only survived the pandemic but is already recovering strongly. The ECF is committed to supporting clubs both during Covid and into the future – you can find further details here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/clubs-home-page/>

### **Games, sets and matches**

Geoff Brown, General Secretary of Sheffield & District Chess Association writes ...

We've returned to playing OTB in Sheffield! Now that pub beer gardens (back yards) are open to groups of six, we are running a Grand Prix style monthly series of multi-venue events. We started on 25th April with eight players split into two groups of four. And then the players played a round robin within their groups. The events are to be Covid aware and as safe as we can make them with equipment being cleaned after each game and players wearing masks whilst sitting at the board. Our next event is planned for Sunday 23rd May when it is hoped we will have five venues and about two dozen entrants. Playing the games out in the open meant that we attracted some interest from the general public which was very pleasing. For further information then either email [gd\\_brown@sky.com](mailto:gd_brown@sky.com) or call me on 07931 563787

### **Ilkley More**

Andrew Wainwright on a new chess centre in Yorkshire

We are delighted to confirm that, pursuant to the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions from Monday 17th May, we can finally open our doors to adult players. Therefore, our weekly Thursday night social chess evenings will commence from this Thursday (20th May) and will be every Thursday

7pm onwards. We would love to invite anyone wanting to come and play some chess in a friendly and relaxed environment to visit us on a Thursday and see the Chess Centre. This is open to players of all ages, so whether you just want to come and have a few games, learn from some of our more experienced players or just generally see what's going on then you are most welcome. Due to COVID rules we are limited in numbers at present so please let us know in advance if you can make it.

Also, please note that we are awaiting confirmation of our premises liquor licence from Bradford Council (expected June 2021). Therefore, at the present time we are not serving alcohol, but we do have a range of coffees, hot chocolates, and soft drinks available, with full table service. Full details can be found on our newly launches website at <https://www.chesscentre.online> On the website you will also see further details of our upcoming events, including ---

- Our first ever 'Mini-Congress' 22nd - 23rd May
- Our first ever Open Rapidplay Tournament - 29th May
- Our first ever Junior Rapidplay Tournament (16 and under) - 5th June

We have a wide range of upcoming events throughout the summer, and we would love to see as many of you as possible at some of these events. All events registrations are online, but please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

Email: [andy@chesscentre.online](mailto:andy@chesscentre.online) | Web: <https://www.chesscentre.online/>

### **No Place Like Holmfirth**

Steve Westmoreland on getting OTB chess during in a pandemic ...

Holmfirth Chess Club is relatively new and a response to the ever-shrinking number of clubs in the Huddersfield League. I was club secretary at Huddersfield Chess Club when we decided to go for it and create a new club from scratch. The idea had been in my head since 2016 and with numbers, the time was right.



19th December 2018 Huddersfield Christmas Blitz at Lindley Liberal Club. It was time to start repairing the league

The 2019-2020 season was our first proper season, with a huge internal focus on developing our new members and, at one point, rehoming the team after a loss of venue. The excellent Stumble Inn offered to host us for free, in their large but unused restaurant area.

In our first full season we competed well in the scratch league and almost won the Examiner Handicap league. When I say almost, we were winning it. This then happened - COVID-19 crashed us to an inglorious halt and ripped my selection pool to bits. We started to lose members quite quickly, with those elderly or suffering from underlying health conditions isolating. Now the sole Committee member left, I made a decision to keep things running as long as possible suspecting that once a stay at home order came in, it would be for a long time.

#### 'Three weeks to flatten the curve' – Boris Johnson

With great reluctance we shut the Chess Club Monday 16th March. This included the popular Junior section, much to the disappointment of my daughter, who had proved excellent in training the younger ones.



Inspired by my purchase of David Smerdon's *The Complete Chess Swindler*, Olivia did a brief session on escaping lost positions

We all became very busy with home schooling and working full time. Members did not want to lose contact, so we moved club nights online.

#### 'All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us' – Gandalf

Using Skype, Chess.com (then Lichess) and screen sharing, we moved online for Huddersfield, Honley and Holmfirth, with the odd invite for Hull to join us. Numbers were very limited, with many not comfortable going online or the fast nature of play. Junior groups did not have great attendance, which was understandable with the home learning going on and pressure on parents.

#### 'Spinning around, spinning around. I'm spinning around, move out of my way' – Kylie Minogue

Three weeks turned to three months, with various restrictions still in place. The moment these relaxed I started up the chess club. A few changes had to come in, such as not handshaking, hand sanitiser, track & trace and the 1m+ rule. I had to spend time measuring up tables and distance. We came back to chess using two boards –



Kyle and Dan are deep in concentration

I was not kidding about the tape measure, much to the players' amusement. As time passed, we tried different ways of playing, using one board but with players only touching and moving their own pieces. As more was known about the virus, we went back to one board. People can still request two boards if they want. Masks were optional. Numbers were small but, with the only open venue, players came through from Huddersfield and Honley.

What followed was a very stressful time as local restrictions were introduced and various rules invented, locally and nationally. I had to spend a lot of time reading and reviewing. Sadly, the Club had to shut again on the 27th of July courtesy of Kirklees Council. This lasted until the start of September. We had a plan for competitive play though.

### POD Chess

3 team chess was introduced to operate with the limited club player pool. This allowed us to maximise space and, where players wanted, to use two boards. The Stumble Inn management were great, allowing us to run games on a Monday, which was very useful in navigating the rules on people numbers and then the 'Rule of Six'. Teams entered from Huddersfield, Honley, Wakefield and Belgrave (Halifax).



Nick (Holmfirth) vs Steve (Belgrave) with Dave observing. This was pre-Scotch eggs

We lasted until 12th of October when Kirklees shut us down again, despite my appeals to the local Council and MP.

'Everything comes to he who waits ... and I have waited so very long for this moment' – Skeletor  
There was no let up this time from the local Council and local restrictions were replaced by national ones. Expecting a long lay off, I quit chess for four months. The excellent *Queen's Gambit* series changed that, as queries started to come through on joining clubs in Huddersfield and Holmfirth. Online play resumed to keep these prospective new members. This was followed up by a recruitment drive on the local community Facebook site ahead of the latest relaunch.

9th June we returned on the same lines as before, until Monday 19th July when facemasks, distancing and me having set up everything, was no longer required. More players started to return and new players joined. Training occurs every week now, especially with the excellent Andrew Drabble attending club nights to coach.



Kier and Pat cross swords

In the end we came out of the pandemic with an expanded club and a history of close collaboration with others. We had a one-off match against Bradford Chess Centre in Ilkley and can put expanded teams into all leagues and enter the Yorkshire Saturday Silver Rooks league. With the return of most of the Senior team to Holmfirth, we were able to divvy roles around and now welcome Rob Mitchell as our new Club Secretary. Bar Kirklees and the Government imposing yet more restrictions and lockdowns, the new season looks rosy.

#### Attitude to the pandemic

The virus is better understood, and mass vaccination has occurred. In terms of risk, we are in a much better place. Holmfirth Chess Club remains open and if people want to take individual precautions they can do so and be welcome. Our increasing numbers suggest people have a good understanding of risk post vaccine and are happy to return.

## Play Chess Festival in Hull

Stephen Greep reports ...



August saw the start of a three-month 'Play Chess Festival' in Hull organised by the Hull and District Chess Association (HDCA), branded with its own logo displayed on banners, badges, and stickers! The event was launched at The Deep, Hull's premier tourist attraction, with Councillor Rosemary Pantelakis (portfolio holder for Culture and Leisure) playing the opening moves of the Queen's Gambit (naturally) on a giant chess set, against the backdrop of the main aquarium tank, where two divers battled it out in a game of underwater chess. A short video of the launch event, presented by Professor Graham Chesters, the HDCA President, can be found at <https://vimeo.com/582881937/d28ca1a886>

Our August events have focused on juniors with chess sessions taking place in various parks, squares and libraries (as a part of libraries' summer programme) across Hull. Sometimes as a part of wider events, sometimes as standalone chess events, these have been tremendously popular. A key event being a three-day junior summer school attended by 63 children, held at Hymers College, who provided all the facilities for free. An early and unexpected bonus was agreement from KCOM (historically Hull's own telecommunications company) to provide funding but also technical and equipment support for an online local schools league in 2022.

At an open-air chess event in Central Hull, alongside tables arranged with sets and boards there was a demonstration of living chess (a repeat of the event staged at the 2018 British in Hull) which saw the players decked out in tabards with illustrations representing key Hull landmarks (such as the William Wilberforce statue – bishops). The month culminated in a chess event as a part of Hull's Freedom Festival. Outside Hull Minster and the adjacent Trinity Market there was a 'rolling simul', a blitz tournament and plenty of boards for members of the public.





September is more targeted at adults with more library events. A chess café day with 10 contributing local cafés spread throughout the city is supporting a weekend with a GM visit to a local chess club, a public event with a return of Hull's now famous Grand Master ale, and a simultaneous in the glass nose cone of the Deep. At the end of the month there will be a pop-up Chess shop for three days in Hull City Centre.

October is the month for more serious chess players, with Hull hosting the British Chess Championships (2nd-10th October), the British Women's Championships (14th-17th October), a HDCA/4NCL organised Grandmaster norm event (20th-24th October) and weekend congress (22nd-24th October). All these events are being held in the prestigious Canham Turner Conference Centre, at the University of Hull.

While it's too early to evaluate the outcome of the festival, large numbers of the public have simply sat down and played chess; we have nearly 100 new junior contacts. Local newspapers, TV and radio have been promoting the events and chess in general. All the events have been well supported and we have received a tremendous amount of goodwill from partner organisations who have helped with funding, help in kind and advice, including Hull City Council, Visit Hull and East Yorkshire, The Deep, University of Hull, KCOM, ECF, 4NCL, CSC, Chesskid and others.

### **The First London MindSports Centre: a journey into the unknown**

Chris Skulte writes ...

The idea of a MindSports Centre has been floated a number of times in the past, never making it past the goalposts for various reasons. It has been an exhausting and exciting journey to get to where we are today, and I am happy to share some parts of the journey in this article.

#### **The beginning**

You could say the journey started over five years ago, when Hammersmith Chess Club began their complete metamorphosis, deciding that we wanted to do things differently. We were below 20 members, with an average age north of 60 and were definitely not diverse – now we have a membership north of one hundred, a new venue, a thriving junior section, stable finances, an excellent website and social media presence.

The way we saw our role is that we are only custodians of the club and it was our job to improve the club, as well as show as many new people as possible our beautiful game, before handing it onwards to the next generation.

This isn't saying that there is a major problem with all chess clubs, but there are many many venues which are cramped, dingy, sometimes smelly, or feel unwelcoming to newcomers, making the transition to over the board chess less attractive to women, young players (and their parents) or new people wanting to play chess.

#### **Finding a venue worthy of our mission**

Having moved away from our previous hall to the Young Chelsea Bridge Club on our journey to improve our playing conditions, John White and I were approached in June 2020 regarding a similar vision to create an inclusive venue to play for MindSports. We were hooked and jumped on the solution.

Our main option before this point was to look at increasing fees for a much improved playing venue (which others are already successfully delivering on across the country), this project gave a new vision to work on, a focus to raise money with a decent return, offering reasonable/cheaper rent to Mindsports that want to use the venue.

The challenge became twofold -

- Raising enough capital to purchase the location
- Being commercial enough for the ongoing run costs of the venue

The more we returned on the investment, the more the venue would cost and the less money that clubs could put towards growth. There was a balance to be found.

After many discussions between Bridge, Go, and Chess folk, we felt we had the right balance on the above to potentially make this happen. Some sports had more potential funders and fewer players, others had more players and fewer initial potential funders.

After a lot of searching for a location, the Salvation Army Hall near Ravenscourt Park was selected as the preferred venue for our needs. This required about £2.1m to purchase and refurbish.



### Fundraising and Challenges

John White and I spent more than 100 hours of our time in conversations with every person we knew in the chess world to get feedback and advice on who would like to get involved, we also funded a significant amount of money into the early legal work required. If this didn't work, we would be out of pocket with nothing to show.

We believed in this vision, but it was time to put our money where our mouths were, which is not always the case with these things. After much discussion, we agreed the following -

a) The main lease would go to Young Chelsea Bridge Club – a charity which would sublet it to other parties as needed. This also saved on business rates that may have needed to be

paid. Another option was having a central management entity, which would rent the space out based on a rate card and promote all of the clubs.

b) A 2.5% return was paid to all investors each year. We floated options between 1% & 5%.

c) The premises would be two floors refurbished from the current layout with the bar at the front door of the building. We also considered a three-floor option, and four floors (building a penthouse at the top). This was going to cost another £1m, which might require a loan and take longer to open. Though selling the penthouse would fund the extra floor, it was decided this could always be done later.

### Key Lesson

Things evolve and change constantly, not always going the way you would hope, as there are so many moving parts. A strong vision is needed to keep everyone moving in the same direction, and be clear on messaging to people. For chess, we saw this as a new standard for chess clubs, having

people see a different way that things could operate, hopefully igniting a flame across the country on similar projects.

We pushed forward with our vision for chess, why we felt things needed to change, and ran a number of presentations, alongside reaching out to other passionate players. On top of this we were lucky enough to get some publicity from a few of the chess publications and on social media. It took a while to get the ball rolling, but we now have a closed group of investors that are passionate about helping improve chess across the country. We hope that this will be one of many initiatives going forward.

### The MindSports Centre opens

As of today, the refurbishment works are near completion. The venue will have four playing areas and a fully licensed bar, which will serve reasonably priced food and drinks. To date three clubs have currently moved into the venue -

Young Chelsea Bridge Club - <https://www.bridgewebs.com/youngchelsea/>  
London Go - <https://gocentre.londongo.club/> & <https://gocentre.londongo.club/>  
Hammersmith Chess Club - <https://hammerchess.co.uk/>

Grandmaster Nigel Short came down for one of our opening night lectures [below], which was an honour for the club.



There are also ongoing discussions with a number of leagues, and individuals looking to use the centre for various one-off events, with the space. If you feel it may be useful for an event, please feel free to get in touch.

All the best to everyone who is continuing to push chess forward, I have a lot of respect for everyone who is putting in the hours of thankless work to help improve chess in the country. It's a lot of hard work behind the scenes, and every now and again we get the ingredients right to make a

step-change. For this, we must continue to support each other as best we can, and magic will continue to happen.

If anyone would like more information, please do get in touch. I'm happy to share any advice to help clubs across the country.



Three years ago Northwich were down to a core of 6 players and only one 500 team in WDCL. We nearly closed. We decided to try and build the club back. What actions did we take to save the club?

- We contacted former players to see if they were interested in returning (some did).
- We invested in new Boards and clocks to smarten up our appearance.
- We made joining free to new members for a year.
- We advertised on the Northwich facebook page (free)
- We tried to set up a website with some success (more needs to be done)
- We took a stand at a local village fete
- As membership grew, we set up three teams, each with their own captain.
- We maintained a sociable atmosphere on club nights when we didn't have a match
- During the pandemic we ran our Monday night chess club online.
- We collect £10 per member in subs and invest every pound back into club facilities, if we have no expenditure then we waive the subs.

The result is that we now have 14 members with several more promising to join when the pandemic is over. In the 2019/20 season we ran three teams. So, it can be done but does need effort from club members.

What more do we have planned?

- We are not happy with our existing venue as we keep getting pushed around from one room to another, so we plan to move if we can find a suitable alternative. We have considered pubs, a scout hut, a rugby club, a cricket club and council facilities. All of these present their challenges. We want better facilities to play social chess and league matches. Some venues we have looked at want £50 per night. We haven't got that. I suspect all clubs have this issue. Pubs want the footfall so I suspect that will be the answer, so long as we can get an area that is sufficiently quiet for matches.
- We plan to have our website re-built. It's not just setting it up but also keeping it up to date.

- We have agreed to support The Grange Junior School with their Chess Club. It currently has 30 members.
  - We have agreed to open a Junior Chess Club at Northwich Library on a Saturday morning. The library won't charge us as we are using a public area and they want the footfall. I'm hopeful that we will grow attendance there and it will spill over to some parents joining our Monday night club.
  - We will attach our club banner to the railings outside the library to advertise the club.
6. We will keep the online club under review as we have certainly attracted new members through this channel.

We will work with Chess and Schools and Communities (CSC) to see if we can grow Junior Chess in Northwich

### **Chessington Chess Club, Surrey**

Email: [chessingtonchessclub@gmail.com](mailto:chessingtonchessclub@gmail.com) Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CHESSingtonClub>

We think having free membership this year has been key in allowing us to welcome a much wider range of audience than we otherwise would have – particularly of players of all ability and background. We may be the only club in Surrey offering this. Furthermore, we have been proactively looking to get more women, children and young people interested in joining. To date we have had more women join our team, and even more fantastic, at our recent blitz tournament last Wednesday, we had a great turn out with female winners, which adds emphasis that more should be done to allow women to participate and showcase their (perhaps unrealised) strengths in the game.



Chessington First Blitz prize winners

We recently launched our junior chess clubs on Mondays, and we have so far, with no advertising, had eight children join on our first day, three girls and five boys. I think the key here is to not just attract children but having the right dialogues with parents to make them understand the merits of chess and have appreciation for it. This can be quite tricky when they have been brought up to think chess is boring or not helpful. So for me, that's where a lot of focus should be as well. We charge £5.00 a session, but currently that is used to cover venue hiring costs, and whatever is left is to claw back the expenses

on our equipment. We don't pay ourselves for the teaching or time.

In terms of inclusivity is where I think we have succeeded the most. Our club has opened the doors to players from all walks of life, from members who have been strong players all their lives, to inexperienced players willing to give it a go. We've even had members who have sought out our club as an outlet/haven to escape from their daily stresses in their busy lives – from doctors, musicians and college students to first-time parents. Elsewhere, we have members who are on the spectrum and have found our club a friendly environment to be themselves in.

Our success to date is down to three things, I think –

- 1) our unwavering efforts, enthusiasm and passion to help put chess on the map and grow our club. Every day we set out on working on an initiative to get closer to our goal
- 2) the guidance and support our peers at Epsom Chess club have provided us
- 3) our chess teacher, IM Michael Basman, who is a fellow Chessington resident and has given us huge amount of support, showing us the ropes to make our club a success.



### **Stroud Chess Club**

by Stroud club Chair Duncan Dicks -

<https://www.facebook.com/StroudChess/>

Stroud has become one of the biggest clubs in Gloucestershire over the past ten years. Up to around 2010 the club had slowly ebbed away as a result of lack of funds and difficulty finding a reliable venue. In desperation four of the players decided to inject some money into the club and find a good quality venue. It took seven or eight years for the club to start breaking even and making a profit, but in that time we've gone from seven or eight middle aged men meeting up once a week, to a membership of around 40, running four teams in the local leagues, plus three teams in the 4NCL online tournaments (the Stroud Youngies team won the 4NCL Div 2 championship in December), with new

players asking to join every month, young players (several juniors and under 30s) outnumbering the older, and a small but growing number of female players. Stroud players make up a good proportion of the County chess team, too.

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

We began regular online meetings. We have a Lichess arena tournament for members every Tuesday at 7.30, and before we came back to OTB chess we ran a similar tournament on Thursdays, too. This attracted more new players, several becoming OTB members when we returned. We also arranged matches online with local teams, and began entering the 4NCL tournament, now running three teams – Stroud Oldies, Stroud Middles, and Stroud Youngies.

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



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

The return to OTB chess has been challenging. We've insisted on mask wearing at the board, and with the recent surge in cases mask wearing is now compulsory in the club. Several players are vulnerable and will only play matches when rates are low, so team selection can be complicated! The local league has had a phased return to competition. The intention was to ramp that up to fuller competition at the start of 2022, but this certainly seems in doubt now.

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

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

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

by Club Secretary John Wickham

Norfolk's over the board (OTB) league and Cup competitions resumed in October 2021. We had fewer teams than pre-Covid, so instead of three divisions, each with ten teams, we had four divisions, each with six teams. While this meant that there would be fewer games, it was felt necessary to ease players back into OTB chess, but also to provide some free weeks for possible rearrangements. The latter has turned out to be wise, enabling clubs to cope with being unable to field teams due to Covid and to cope with further restrictions following the introduction of Plan B.

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

One encouraging feature of the return to OTB has been an influx of new players, some of whom have previously played online and some because of the *Queens Gambit*. For those who have been playing online where the platform applies the laws of chess, they have been prone to making illegal

moves (e.g. making moves such as castling with both hands, promoting without replacing the pawn with the promoted piece etc.). They also have had to get used to pressing a clock rather than that being covered automatically by the platform.

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

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

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

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



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

Prizes were very kindly donated by Morrisons Supermarket, Cromer - as part of their 'Make Good

Things Happen' scheme. Dan Hedges was also given a copy of SIM Mike Read's book 'My 120 Selected Correspondence Games'.

### **The Coventry Chess Academy**

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



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

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

It just so happened that when I was at school, there was no bespoke junior chess club for children in Coventry either! My parents had to give me a lift to Birmingham every weekend where we had been fortunate enough to find the Checkmate junior chess club run by the late, great Mike Fox. Being in such an enriching and supportive environment with great coaches and other strong juniors helped take my chess to the next level and eventually I achieved my dream of playing chess for England. I wanted to give the same opportunity to children in my home city on their doorstep. My pitch for funding was successful and the CCA was born. It continues to be run as a not-for-profit entity to this day. All of the CCA coaches are volunteers and all membership fees get invested back in the club for the benefit of its members.



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

I was fortunate to find a team of committed volunteers for the club right from the start. Some had been friends of mine from school chess days, like James Grute. Others were stalwarts of local chess like my good friends Steven Turvey and Roy Watson, who must be the world's most energetic great-grandfather! Quite fittingly, Roy was the first person I met and played when I joined my local adult club, the excellent Kenilworth Chess Club, of which I continue to be a member till this day.

Roy is the unsung hero of the CCA, hardly ever missing a session, and is a bona fide club legend, hugely popular among all the children thanks to his zest for chess and his imitable sense of humour!

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



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

Pre-pandemic, sessions were held weekly and lasted for two hours, which each member attending paying a small fee per session. On average, thirty to forty members would be in attendance each week, split into five different groups to cater for ability. Since the resumption of sessions after lockdown ended, the group has been split in smaller sub-groups attending at different times, but importantly the people and the welcoming, sociable, enriching environment have not changed.

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



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

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

We have an incredibly diverse membership, with dozens of different backgrounds represented. Each week sees a mixture of friendly games, coaching, serious play and fun time. Children can progress through the various ability groups, with

some doing so at frightening pace. Members of secondary school age are eligible to become prefects and are given responsibilities which include helping newer and younger members. Some even progress all the way to become coaches, like William Morris who joined the club when he was still in primary school and will head to university later this year.



## **Ravi Haria – England’s Newest GM**

GM Ravi Haria annotates one of his games from the European Team Championships in November 2021



Ravi had already achieved the GM norms he needed, and now was his chance to meet the crucial rating requirement. Above all, like anyone playing for his/her country in a major event, he wanted to win for his team, but history will record this game as the moment that he clinched the well-earned GM title.

### **(2) Lodici, Lorenzo (2529) - Haria, Ravi (2497) [C11]**

23rd European Teams Terme Catez SLO (3.14), 14.11.2021

*Haria, Ravi*

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.Nce2 c5 6.c3 Nc6 7.Nf3 Be7 8.a3 0–0 9.Nf4 Qa5 10.Bd3?!**



I was struggling to remember my prep, but it quickly became clear that this move was inferior to its alternatives. Surprisingly, it has already been played in a couple of high level games.

10.Ra2 is better, with the idea of meeting 10...Nxd4 11.Nxd4 cxd4 with 12.b4! , now that the white rook won't be hanging on a1 after 12...Qc7.; 10.Be3 is also possible, planning to eventually recapture on d4 with the bishop.

**10...Nxd4 11.Nxd4 cxd4 12.Qh5?** 12.Nxe6! is the only move which keeps White in the game. 12...fxe6 13.Qh5 h6 14.Bxh6 Nc5! 15.Rd1 Rf5! 16.Bxf5 exf5 17.b4 Qa6 18.bxc5 Qxh6 19.Qe8+ Bf8 20.cxd4 f4! After a weird but forcing line, Black emerges on the better side of a material imbalance, but White is clearly still fighting.

**12...f5!** 13.0-0 13.exf6 Nxf6 14.Qh4 e5+ 0-1 (60) Delgado Ramirez,N (2616)- Bluebaum, M (2670) Tornelo INT 2021; 13.Nxe6 was the only line I needed to calculate, but it's obvious that after 13...Nxe5 14.Bxf5 Rxf5 15.Qxf5 White won't be able to retain the e6-knight.

**13...Nxe5 14.cxd4 Nxd3?!**



This isn't really a mistake according to the engine, but looking at the game after the tournament, it's clear that White's light-squared bishop is a fairly useless piece. Initiating the trade gives my opponent some hope of achieving a lock on the dark-squares. 14...Nc6 is probably more accurate and was played in the only other game to reach this position. 15.Be3 Bf6 16.Ne2 Qb6 17.Kh1 Bd7+ 0-1 (62) Vitiugov,N (2747)-Van Foreest,J (2644) Wijk aan Zee 2020

**15.Nxd3 Bd7** 15...Qb6 immediately is more accurate, tying down White's dark-squared bishop to the d4-pawn. 16.Be3 Bd7

**16.Re1** 16.Bg5! would have potentially caused me a few problems. 16...Bxg5 17.Qxg5 Bb5 was my idea, but White has decent drawing chances in the resulting major piece endgame.

**16...Qb6 17.Bg5 Bd6 18.Qh4 Rf7?!**



I thought this was a very clever move, preventing any possible ideas of Be7. But looking at the game again, I don't really know why I didn't just play 18...Rae8. 18...f4 is what I want to play, but after 19.Be7 Bxe7 20.Qxe7 Rf7 21.Qc5 White doesn't have any problems.

**19.Bd2 f4! 20.Bb4 Qxd4 21.Bxd6 Qxd3 22.Rac1?!**



22.Bxf4 is clearly required, but I was happy enough to enter the endgame after 22...Qd4 23.Bg3 Qxh4 24.Bxh4 Rc8

**22...f3 23.Rc7**

Trying to gain some activity and play for tricks, but it fails for tactical reasons.

**23...fxg2 24.Rxb7 Bb5! 25.Rxb5 Qxb5 26.Kxg2 Qd7 27.Bc5 Qc7 0-1**



## The 107th British Chess Championships

The over the board British Championships made a welcome return in October 2021 after a break during the pandemic in 2020. The championships took place in Hull for the main championship and the women's championship, and Milton Keynes for the junior and senior championships, and ran for two weeks from 2nd to 17th October. The events took place at separate venues to manage the event sizes and with suitable COVID safety precautions in place.

### Championships

The main championships took place over 7 rounds from 2nd to 10th October. The top 10 places were as below (with some pictures from the games)

### Final ranking after nine rounds

Rk.	SNo	Title	Name	FED	Rtg	Club/City	TB1	K	rtg+/-
1	1	GM	Pert, Nicholas	ENG	2548	Sandhurst	6,5	10	-4,2
2	2	GM	Gormally, Daniel	ENG	2480	Blackthorne Russia	6,0	10	-2,3
	3	FM	Harvey, Marcus R	ENG	2465	Witney / 4NCL Wood Green	6,0	10	2,5
	4	GM	Hebden, Mark L	ENG	2455	Syston	6,0	10	0,2
	8	IM	Ledger, Andrew J	ENG	2329	Sheffield	6,0	10	16,0
	9	FM	Olson, Hamish	SCO	2273	Bon Accord	6,0	20	23,4
7	5	IM	McPhillips, Joseph	ENG	2425	Bolton	5,5	10	-6,2
	16		Finn, Peter	ENG	1959	Wycombe And Hazlemere	5,5	20	50,4
9	6	GM	Arkell, Keith C	ENG	2380	Cheddleton	5,0	10	-11,0
10	13	WFM	Sucikova, Svetlana	SVK	2175	White Rose	4,5	20	22,4
	14	WFM	Head, Louise	ENG	2090	Crowthorne	4,5	20	-21,2



Freddie Gordon plays GM Nick Pert; and IM Marcus Harvey plays GM Danny Gormally



Peter Finn vs IM Joe McPhillips

Nick Pert managed to win the event becoming the 107th British Champion, finishing on 6.5 points just ahead of Danny Gormally, Marcus Harvey, Mark Hebden, Andrew Ledger and Hamish Olson who all finished on 6 points.

You can find an interview and report on the tournament which Nick did for Chessbase at the YouTube link below, including Nick's commentary on the games, several of which ended up in rook and pawn endgames ---

<https://en.chessbase.com/post/pert-s-path-to-winning-the-british-otb-championship-2021>

Here, GM Nick Pert talks us through his perspectives on the event, together with the round 8 game against IM Joe McPhillips, and how he managed to stay ahead of the pack to win the event ...

"The British Championships took place in Hull this year. The venue and playing conditions were first class, but due to the timing and late organisation of the event, numbers were lower than usual. The competition itself was extremely close with many players considering this to be a golden opportunity to become British Champion. Heading into round 8 the 5 players who were tied in joint 1st place on 5/7 had all at different stages been in reasonable positions to win the tournament. I downfloated to IM Joseph McPhillips with the White pieces."

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.Nc3 c5 5.cxd5 Nxd5**

Joseph plays many openings so it was hard to predict what he would play. As this game was played in the morning instead of the afternoon I knew his preparation time must have been limited. I had previously analysed ideas involving the mainline 6.e4 for my DVD series, but preferred 6.e3 as it is slightly less theoretical.

**6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 Nxc3** A rare move but it seems as though this is the latest fashion. 7...Bb4 and 7...Be7 have been played many more times and often lead to Isolated Queens Pawn positions.

**8.bxc3 Qc7**



## 9.Rb1!?

I was more or less out of my preparation already. I knew that Bd2 was the main move, but recalled watching a crushing victory by World Champion Magnus Carlsen against Duda with this interesting Rook move. Given that it felt like a must win situation for me, I was happy to sacrifice a pawn for active play. 9.Bd2 is safer 9...Nd7 10.Bd3 Bd6 11.0–0 b6 12.Re1 Bb7 When Black can complete his development with roughly equal play.

9...Qxc3+!? A brave choice but not bad.

9...Nd7 10.Bd3 10 c4 is safer, saving the pawn. 10...Qxc3+ 11.Kf1 Be7?! Probably not the best move, but it is amazing how quickly things go wrong for Black. 12.h4! 0–0 13.Rh3 Nf6? Qc7 was necessary. 14.Ne5! Threatening Bxh7+ 14...Qa5 15.Rg3 Kh8?! 16.Bg5 h6



17.Bxh6! gxh6 18.Qf3 1–0 (18) Carlsen,M (2855)-Duda,J (2756) chess24.com INT 2021 (18.Qf3 Qc3 19.Qf4 Ng8 20.Nxf7+ Rxf7 21.Qxf7 would have finished the game.)

## 10.Bd2 Qc7 11.Bd3



## 11. ...Qd8?

A bizarre move. Trailing in development Black simply must start getting his pieces out.

11...Nc6 12.0–0 Be7 was expected when White has a number of interesting options such as Qc2, Qe2, Rb1 or Re1. All offer full compensation for the sacrificed pawn, but Black's position is also playable.



**12.0-0 Nc6 13.Be4!? Be7** Black wisely declines the 2nd pawn. 13...Nxd4? 14.Qa4+ Nc6 15.Bxc6+ bxc6 16.Ba5 Qd5 17.Rfd1 Qc5 18.Bb6+–

**14.Ne5!**



Keeping up the pressure.

**14...Nxe5!** 14...Nxd4? Again Black cannot take the 2nd pawn. 15.Bc3 had been my intention. (15.Qh5 may be even stronger. 15...g6 16.Nxg6 fxg6 17.Bxg6+ hxg6 18.Qxh8+ Bf8 19.Bh6+–) 15...Bc5 (15...Nf5 16.Qa4+ Kf8 (16...Bd7 17.Nxd7 Qxd7 18.Qxd7+ Kxd7 19.Rxb7+–) 17.Bxb7+–) 16.Qa4+ Bd7 17.Qc4 winning material.

**15.dxe5 Qd4**



15...0-0 16.Qc2 h6 17.Rfd1 looked difficult for Black since the Queen has no squares on the queenside. 17...Qe8 (17...Bd7! is most resilient. 18.Rxb7 Qe8 19.Qc3±) 18.Rb3→ Qa4? is not possible. 19.Bxh6! gxh6 20.Rg3+ wins the Queen.

**16.Qc2!** discouraging castling. From now on the game is all about making it difficult for Black to castle. 16.Qe2 0-0 is Black's idea.

**16...Bd7** 16...Qxe5 17.Bxb7 Bxb7 18.Rxb7 would be decisive since Black still cannot castle due to the pressure on the Bishop on e7.

**17.Bxb7 Rb8** 17...Rd8 18.Ba5 Ba4 19.Bc6+ Bxc6 20.Qxc6+ Qd7 21.Qf3 Rc8 22.Rb7 Qa4 23.Bb4+—  
Black just simply cannot get his King safe without losing material.

**18.Be3 Qxe5** 18...Qa4 19.Qxa4 Bxa4 20.Bc6+ wins for White.

**19.Bxa7**



**19...0-0** Black finally castles but it costs him an exchange.

19...Rd8 I thought that this was his plan. 20.Bb6 Rb8 (20...Bd6 21.f4 and there is no check for Black.)  
21.Bc7 Bd6 threatening mate so I cannot capture the Rook. Simply trading the Bishops however is  
very strong for White. For example; 22.Bxd6 Qxd6 23.Rfd1 Qe5 24.Bc6 Bxc6 25.Rxb8+ Qxb8  
26.Qxc6+ Ke7 27.Rd7+ Kf8 28.Qb7 Qe8 29.Qc7 wins the Black Queen.

**20.Bxb8 Rxb8 21.Rfd1 Bb5** 21...Be8 22.Bf3 is just a clean exchange for White and the Rooks are  
coming off too.

**22.Re1!**



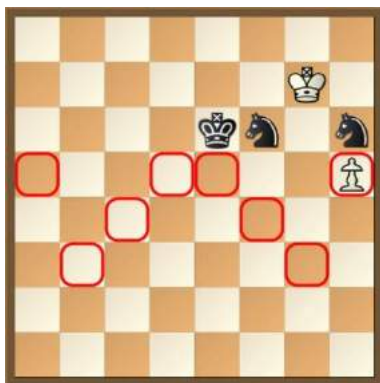
Black decided to give up here.

**22...Qc7** 22...Qg5 23.h4! Qh5 24.Qc7 (24.Bf3 Qxh4 25.a4 also wins a piece.) 24...Re8 25.Re5 and  
Black loses the b5 Bishop.

**23.Qxc7** After this win I moved into joint first place with Andy Ledger who defeated Danny  
Gormally. In a tight last round I drew a fairly solid game against Marcus Harvey whilst Hamish Olson

and Keith Arkell both did me a massive favour by beating Andy Ledger and drawing with Mark Hebden respectively to allow me to finish outright 1st on 6.5/9!

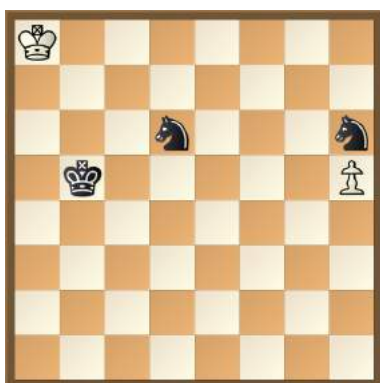
Aside from Nick's series of great results to manage first place, the championship also produced a study-like ending in the game between Louise Head and Hamish Olson. This game resulted in a very rare two knights vs pawn endgame with the following position reached at move 70, with Black to move. Looking through the moves with an engine the computer suddenly sees mate in 76 moves which tells you that something special is happening here.



The players had reached a two knights v pawn endgame with the white pawn on the Troitsky line. The line was worked out by the great study composer and theoretician Alexy Troitsky as the furthest forward that the pawn may be for the side with the knights to force a win. In this case the pawn is on the line which means it's a theoretical win for black.

Alexy Alexeyevich Troitsky worked all this out in exhaustive detail in the 1920's with some painstaking study on the position many years before computer engines were available, eventually discovering the magic line and the rule for the knights to be able to deliver checkmate. The winning technique is to use the King and one of the knights to force the king into the corner away from the pawn while the other knight maintains the pawn blockade. In practice the mate is complex to execute within the 50 move rules and one of the most difficult of the minor piece endgame positions.

The game between Louise and Hamish continued for another 25 moves of manoeuvring after which the following position was reached.



It was now black to play and mate in six. Can you see the winning moves?

## Women's Championships

The women's championships took place over 7 rounds from 14th to 17th October, and produced some great chess, with the top 10 places as below, again with some pictures from the games.

### Final ranking after seven rounds

Rk.	SNo	Title	Name	FED	Rtg	Club/City	TB1	TB2	TB3	K	rtg+/-
1	1	IM	Hunt, Harriet	ENG	2414	None	5,5	0,0	20,0	10	-4,0
2	3	WGM	Toma, Katarzyna	ENG	2254	Wood Green	5,0	0,0	20,0	20	7,2
3	4		Kueh, Audrey	ENG	2080		4,5	1,5	19,0	20	18,8
4	2	GM	Arakhamia- Grant, Ketevan	SCO	2376	None	4,5	1,5	19,0	10	-13,9
5	5	WCM	Varney, Zoe	ENG	1937	None	4,5	0,0	21,0	20	18,0



Zoe Varney v IM Harriet Hunt; and GM Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant v WGM Katarzyna Toma

The women's championship had a strong field of 11 players with the lead changing hands several times during the course of the event. IM and WGM Harriet Hunt became the British Women's Champion with 5.5 points after the 7th round, followed closely by WGM Katarzyna Toma on 5 points, and Audrey Kueh, GM Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant and Zoe Varney all finishing on 5 points.

Here, IM and WGM Harriet Hunt talks us through her games and how she became the British Women's Champion for 2021 in a close fought event.

I've long had a love-hate relationship with being a non-professional chess player. When one plays a few bad games it's reassuring to retreat to the safety of a 'real-world' job, which doesn't require you to stand or fall in nerve-shredding solo combat day after day. However, there's the concurrent sense of chess opportunities missed or, rather more simply, of missing chess. The invitation to the British Women's championship arrived at a point of hiatus in my career plans, so it was a good time to throw down the gauntlet and challenge myself to remember how to make a few decent moves. It was my first over-the-board event in over two-and-a-half years, after the birth of my third child in 2019 followed by the pandemic.

Lack of battle practice definitely showed itself in the guise of a tendency to overcomplicate positions and a few important missed tactics. After losing a particularly painful long game to Katarzyna Toma in Round 3, I was less than overjoyed to be facing Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant

immediately the next morning. The difficulties of pairing a 7-round Swiss with 11 players, taking into account some half-point-byes and withdrawals, meant that the order in which the top contenders faced one another was a little random. Ketevan had herself lost to Katarzyna Toma in the second round, so at this point the championship seemed to be Katarzyna's for the taking, but I was keen to stay in the hunt for second place.

### Hunt, Harriet (2414) - Arakhamia-Grant, Ketevan (2376) [C78]

British Women's Championship Hull (4), 16.10.2021

**1.e4 e5** A surprise. Ketevan has played the Sicilian pretty consistently throughout her career.

**2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Bc5**



The Moeller Defence – a less common relative of the Archangel (5... b5 6. Bb3 c5).

**6.c3 0-0** A rare line played several times by Onischuk. (6...Ba7 is more common in this position).

**7.d3**

7.d4 is of course the main move, when White typically accepts the challenge to sacrifice a piece for a kingside attack after e.g. 7...Ba7 8.Bg5 h6 9.Bh4 exd4 10.cxd4 d6 11.Bxc6 bxc6 12.Nbd2 g5 13.Nxg5 hxg5 14.Bxg5 Sutovsky - Bartel, Biel 2015. However, I had no idea of the current theory here, so I went for a less immediately combative option.

**7...d6 8.h3 Ba7**



## 9.Bxc6

9.Bg5 doesn't seem so good here after 9...h6 10.Bh4 g5 11.Nxg5 hxg5 12.Bxg5 Kg7 when White is slow to get other pieces to the kingside.; 9.Re1 is probably the best move objectively, when Black leaves the Lopez bishop high and dry with 9...Ne7 10.Nbd2 Ng6, e.g. Hansen SB – Acs, Bundesliga 2006, but it's easy for White to drift planlessly here on an off day. I had a deep fear this was going to be another off day, so I went for the text when at least I have a concrete idea.

**9...bxc6 10.Na3 h6 11.Re1 Be6 12.Nc2 a5**

12...c5!? comes into consideration here - temporarily shutting in the bishop is less important than deterring White's plan of d4 to activate the knight pair.

**13.d4 exd4 14.Ncxd4 Bd7**



Natural to preserve the bishop pair, but Ketevan had underestimated the forcing lines that follow.

**15.e5 Nd5 16.c4 Ne7 17.exd6**

17.b3

**17...cxd6 18.Bf4 Bc5 19.Nb3 Bb4 20.Re2 a4 21.a3**



An unusual configuration leading to an exchange of minor pieces.

**21...axb3 22.axb4 Rxa1 23.Qxa1**



As Ketevan said after the game, ‘Somehow I got a horrible position.’ Black is suffering here with weak pawns on d6 and b3.

**23...Be6 24.Qc1 Nf5 25.Qc3 d5 26.Rd2 Nd6?! 27.Bxd6 Qxd6 28.c5 Qf4 29.Rd4**

29.Nd4 would be more straightforward.

**29...Qf5 30.Qxb3 Rb8 31.Qc3?!**

31.Rd1 d4 32.Qa3 would maintain a grip more easily.

**31...Qb1+ 32.Kh2 Ra8 33.b5 cxb5**



**34.c6?** 34.Rb4 is better

**34...Rc8?** 34...Ra1 would be a tougher defence, as 35.c7 Qh1+ 36.Kg3 Rc1 is far from clear

**35.Rf4** Now White is winning.

**35...Qa2 36.Nd4 Qa7 37.Qg3 Qc5 38.b4! Qe7 39.Qe3 Qd6 40.g3 Ra8 41.Qc3 Qb8 42.Qc5 Qc8 43.h4 Ra2 44.Nxb5 g5 45.Nd6 Qf8 46.Rf3 Bg4 47.c7 Bxf3 48.c8Q Ra1 49.Qxf8+ Kxf8 50.Qc8+ Kg7 51.Qc3+**



Escaping the mating net by forking Black's loose pieces.

## 1-0

The tournament swung my way after Katarzyna Toma suffered an aberration while playing 'on increment' and lost on time in Round 5 to Zoe Varney, who made the strongest impression on the field among the up-and-coming players. I managed (just about!) to hang on to a half-point lead with two wins on the final day, with Katarzyna Toma half a point behind and a three-way tie (Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant, Audrey Kueh, Zoe Varney) for third place. I think it would be fair to say that of the three top seeds, Katarzyna Toma played the best chess, Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant was the most consistent in dispatching lower-rated opposition, but I was the luckiest on the day!

The field of 11 players was undoubtedly far smaller than the organisers had hoped for, as was the Open championship itself the preceding week. However, given the extraordinary year, I feel we should be celebrating the return of an over-the-board Championships in whatever reduced form, rather than bemoaning players' absence. The Hull organisational team certainly did their utmost for the participants, with excellent playing conditions at the Canham Turner Conference Centre at the University of Hull.



It was also a pleasure to meet the Lord Mayor of Hull at the opening ceremony, and Graham Chesters (above), President of the Hull and District Chess Association, at the prizegiving.



## British Juniors

The British Juniors took place in Milton Keynes on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd October with winners and new British Junior champions as follows ---

### U18

5 rounds U18/U16 combined competition

5	Kuzhelev, Timur	U18	RUS	Coulsdon	3,0
8	McKay, Jonathan	U18	SCO	Glasgow Montrose	2,5
10	Barry, Jake	U18	ENG	None	2,0

### U16

5 rounds U18/U16 combined competition

1	Ismail, Mohammed Aayan	U16	ENG	None	5,0
2	Sieczkowski, Adam	U16	ENG	Witney	4,0
3	Badacsonyi, Frankie	U16	ENG	Muswell Hill	3,5

### U14

5 rounds

1	Kolani, Arjun	ENG	Crowborough	4,5
2	Madhavan, Sanjith	SCO	Glasgow	4,0
3	Pert, Nina P	ENG	Brentwood	3,5

### U12

5 rounds

1	Hobson, Kenneth	ENG	Cowley	4,5
2	Patel, Zain	ENG	Kings College School	3,5
3	Li, Ethan Bingxuan	ENG	None	3,5

### U10

7 rounds

1	Murawski, Jan	ENG	St Josephs School	6,5
2	Steiners, Emils	LAT	Battersea	5,0
3	Hanache, Kai	ENG	None	5,0

### U8

7 rounds

1	Zhao, George	ENG	Westminster Under School	6,0
2	Dildarav, Lishoy Gengis Paratazham	ENG	Surrey Juniors	5,5
3	Jakhria, Kushal	ENG	Charlton	5,0

The U8s and U10s saw some outstanding games from some of our youngest juniors. The tournaments were relayed to the internet with live boards at the venue with some fantastic chess played. Here are a couple of skilfully played checkmates from the two tournaments.

The first is a critical position from Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham's Round 3 game against Kushal Jakhria. What move did Dildarav find in this position to trap Black's king with mate to follow?



The second is Adithya Vaidyanathan's Round 5 game in the Under 10s. Adithya has managed to force white's king into the centre of the board in another mating net. How did White finish off with some accurate moves from this position?



U16 champion Mohammed Ayan finished first with a perfect 6 out of 6 in the combined U16/U18 section. Here is an example of one of his games against Frankie Badacsonyi.

**(6870) Ismail, Mohammed Aayan (1719) - Badacsonyi, Frankie (1511) [A30]**

2021 British Chess Championships U18 Milton Keynes (Kents Hill Park (4.1) 03.10.2021

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.e3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.b3 Bb7 5.Be2 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.Bb2**

We have reached an English Opening Queen's Indian variation.

**7...c5 8.Nc3**

So far we are following Andersson v Tal from 1976 and Andersson v Miles from 1980.

**8...d6 9.d4 Ne4 10.Nxe4 Bxe4 11.Nd2 Bb7**



The position is about equal with a slight plus for white.

**12.Bf3** Looking to exchange the queen's indian bishop.

**12...Qc7 13.Rc1 Nd7 14.Qe2 Rac8 15.Rfd1 Rfd8 16.Nf1 Nf6 17.Ng3** The position is about equal with White aiming for a king's side initiative.

**17...Qb8 18.d5!**



White is slightly better now because of the more active bishop.

**18...e5** Probably the best move but Black's bishop is now shut out. **18...exd5 19.Nf5 Rd7 20.Bg4** and Black is struggling.

**19.Nf5 Qc7 20.e4 g6 21.Nxe7+ Qxe7 22.Qe3 Rc7 23.Be2**



Aiming for f4 and a king side attack.

**23...Ne8 24.f4 f6 24...exf4 25.Qxf4** and White has a big attack.

**25.fxe5 fxe5 26.Rf1 Ng7 27.Rf2** Looking to double on the f file.

**27...Rf8 28.Rcf1 Rcc8 29.Bc1 Rxf2 30.Rxf2 Rf8 31.Rxf8+ Qxf8 32.Qg5**

White has the more active pieces and is looking to take advantage of the bishop pair.



**32...Bc8 33.Qh4** with the idea of Bg5 and attacking on the dark squares.

**33...Ne8 34.Bg5 Qf7**



**35.Bg4?!** This allows Black to equalize after the exchange with Black able to hold the position. Better to keep the bishops on. 35.h3 Ng7 36.Bf3 Ne8 37.Kf2 Ng7

**35...Bxg4 36.Qxg4 Nf6 37.Qh4 Kg7 38.Qh3 h5 39.Qh4 Qf8 40.h3 Qf7 41.Bd2 Kg8**

It's difficult to make progress on the K side so white switches to the Q side.

**42.b4**



42.. Nd7? The critical mistake allowing White to make his way into Black's position on the dark squares.

43.Qd8+ Kh7 44.Bg5?! 44.Qc7 would have been winning for White with the various weak pawns.

44...cxb4 45.Be7 Nc5 would have equalised with play for both sides.

45...Qf4 46.Bg5



Stopping the perpetual check and still playing for a win.

46...Qf7 47.Qc7



White is back in control with the dark square bishop stopping the black queen from infiltrating on the f file and the white queen going to pick up some of the weak pawns.

47...a5 48.Qxd6 White is now clearly better and probably winning.

48...a4 49.Qxb4 Another pawn drops.

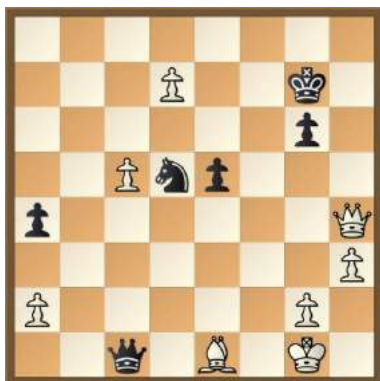
49...Nc5 50.Qxb6 Nxe4 51.Qe3 Qf5 52.Be7 Kg7 53.c5



53...Kf7 54.Bd8 Ke8 55.Ba5 h4 56.Be1 56.c6! is probably best pushing the pawn straight away.

56...Nf6 57.d6 Nd5 58.Qe2 Qf4 59.Qb5+ Kf7 60.Qb7+ Ke6 The rest is straightforward.

61.Qc8+ Kf7 62.Qd7+ Kf8 63.Qd8+ Kg7 64.Qxh4 Qc1 65.d7



And the pawn can't be stopped.

1-0

### British Seniors

The British Seniors took place in Milton Keynes with Over 50 and Over 65 sections over 7 rounds from Monday 4th – Sunday 9th October. The Over 50s section was won by FM Mike Waddington on 6 out of 7 points, followed by Ian Robson and Don Mason on 5 points. The Over 65s section was won by Roger De Coverly on 5.5 points out of 7

### Over 50's - final rankings after seven rounds

Rk.	SNo	Title	Name	FED	Rtg	Club/City	TB1
1	10	FM	Waddington, Mike P	ENG	2047	Dorchester	6,0
2	3		Robson, Ian A	ENG	2189	Wotton Hall	5,0
	8		Mason, Donald J	ENG	2062	Shirley & Wythall	5,0
4	4	CM	Kett, Timothy J	WLS	2156	4NCL West Is Best	4,5
	6		Crocker, Philip J	ENG	2109	Chester	4,5

### Over 65's – final rankings after seven rounds

Rk.	SNo	Name	FED	Rtg	Club/City	TB1
1	15	De Coverly, Roger D	ENG	1863	Bourne End	5,5
2	4	Myall, Ivan J	ENG	2011	Chelmsford	5,0
3	7	Stimpson, Philip	ENG	1949	Guildford	4,5
4	6	Habershon, Paul F	ENG	1977	Bedford	4,5



## **Women's Chess – round-up**

Great results in 2021 and hoping for more in 2022! - Aga Milewska, Director of Women's Chess

Last October, I stood for the position of Director of Women's Chess because I believe the ECF needs to bring more women and girls into organized competitive chess. There has never been a better time to do this, thanks to the phenomenal success of the Netflix hit series *The Queen's Gambit* in encouraging more women to take up the game, and the increasing numbers of people, male and female, now playing chess online. In this new role, I have started to use my experience as an active tournament player, coach, organiser, and arbiter to help female players fulfil their potential, and work to redress the gender imbalance in chess at all levels.

During the pandemic, I have been involved in the England Women's Online Team on Lichess.org, working together with the British Women's Champion, IM and WGM Jovanka Houska, FIDE Women's Commission member Christelle Hafstad, and IM Lawrence Cooper.

In preparation for the role, I was privileged to serve as Alternate Director for Women's Chess from 2020-21, attending a number of ECF Board meetings, and this has helped me get to know how the ECF's various directorates work and interact with each other.

There are several good projects now taking place to encourage more women and girls to take up the game, including the 'She Plays to Win' online club run by England Women's Team Coach, IM Lorin D'Costa.

I would like to offer practical help to organisers, clubs and ECF members wishing to start similar initiatives. An exciting project I am engaged in is FIDE's '2022 – the Year of Women in Chess', and I am working with the FIDE Women's Commission to organise an international tournament in April

2022 for English women players, to enable female players to compete for title norms. Another important area of work is communicating with women and girls playing in clubs and tournaments and being a point of contact for local organisers wishing to offer greater opportunities for female players.

On June 18, 2021, there was a highly successful tournament, the Queens' Online Chess Festival, played on the Tornelo platform. Built on the recent success and appeal of *The Queen's Gambit*, this event aimed to promote female players, organizers, arbiters, influencers, leaders, and rising stars of all levels, backgrounds and countries. Players from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas were initially able to participate in Continental Online Blitz Qualification Tournaments, and those who qualified played Queens' Online Individual and Team Finals. An English Women's Team took part as well, with me as captain. The festival, which ran from 11th to 27th June 2021, also included several interesting webinars and networking. Every festival participant could choose an interesting topic and learn more about it. All in all, it was a great event that enabled more girls and women to get involved and connect through chess!

### **England Women's Team on Lichess**

The England Women's Club on Lichess is captained by Jovanka Houska and can be found here - <https://lichess.org/team/england-women> - including full details of upcoming events. We have an amazing team, including Jovanka Houska, Lawrence Cooper, Rayelynn Posadas, Jo Hutchinson and myself, and we focus on connecting English women and girl players on this platform. The club is very well subscribed and runs a regular schedule of weekly events, with some major events planned.

The team participates in Lichess's League of Nations competition, and currently plays in regular internationals and European leagues, including the Quarantine League, Torres de Quateria, and the Anita Cup. To take part in ECF Women's and Girls' events, you need to have an account on Lichess and apply to join the Lichess England Women and Girls Team.

### **British Women's Championship in Hull - October 15th-17th 2021**

This brilliant OTB event was won by IM and WGM Harriet Hunt, who is enjoying a great comeback into chess competition. Just behind her were WGM Katarzyna Toma in second, and Audrey Kueh, Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant and Zoe Varney were in equal third.

### **Amazon's Pride Blitz Online Tournament on Chess.com - October 23rd 2021**

English women took part in this tournament, which featured elite players competing together with chess streamers. The format was in two stages - a 9-round Swiss, followed by a knockout for the eight best players.

### **European Team Championship in Catez, Slovenia - November 11th-21st 2021**

The England Women's Team took part in the European Teams Championship, and you can see us in the photo below, provided by professional photographer and England team member Maria Emelianova of Chess.com.

The team was WGM Katarzyna Toma, WFM Louise Head, WFM Maria Emelianova, WFM Shohreh Bayat and WCM Zoe Varney, together with team captain IM Lorin D'Costa, International Director IM Malcolm Pein, and myself.





### **English Women’s Rapidplay - December 4th-5th 2021**

There was an amazing result achieved by WIM Lan Yao, who won the English Women’s Rapidplay in her first championship as an English player. Second place went to IM Hunt Harriet, while in equal third place were Audrey Kueh and WFM Louise Head.

There was also a fantastic end to the year, with 6-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan (below) of Harrow Chess Club winning Silver Medals in both the European Youth Rapid and Blitz Championships.



### **She Plays To Win’ support for girls in England**

She Plays To Win is a UK Girls Chess Project led by the England Women’s Coach, IM Lorin D’Costa, to try and encourage more girls to participate and learn chess in a fun environment. This involves FREE 30-minutes training in the weekly girls’ group, and a tournament on the Lichess server afterwards.

This is open to all girls in primary, secondary or university (under 28) regardless of chess level or experience. SPTW is also doing live events - for example a SPTW Secondary Girls Squad at the Golders Green Rapidplay, and the plan is to expand the live events as and when permitted.



## **Junior Chess – round-up**

from Alex Holowczak

## **World Online Youth & Cadets Championship 2020**

This was held in December 2020.

SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pts.	Rk.	Group
24	Zheng Harry Z	1685	ENG	1	1	0	0	½	½	½	3,5	33	Open 10
25	Shearsby Jude	1673	ENG	1	1	½	0	1	0	0	3,5	34	Open 10
11	CM Royal Shreyas	2121	ENG	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	4,0	26	Open 12
37	Thatte Nishchal	1873	ENG	0	1	0	1	½	0	1	3,5	39	Open 12
36	Yoon Jacob D	2116	ENG	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	3,0	42	Open 14
30	CM Ratnesan Ranesh	2258	ENG	0	0	1	1	0	0	½	2,5	45	Open 16
34	CM Balaji Aaravamudhan	2206	ENG	0	1	1	½	0	1	0	3,5	29	Open 16
24	FM Willow Jonah B	2386	ENG	1	0	1	1	0	0	½	3,5	26	Open 18
15	Dicen Elis Denele	1379	ENG	1	1	0	1	½	1	½	5,0	10	Girls 10
21	Jayawarna Thisumi	1316	ENG	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	4,0	20	Girls 10
7	Arora Tashika	1744	ENG	½	1	0	0	1	1	½	4,0	20	Girls 12
27	Pert Nina	1537	ENG	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	4,0	26	Girls 12
24	WCM Sheikh Anum	1853	ENG	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	4,0	23	Girls 14
36	Weersing Abigail Riis	1704	ENG	½	1	0	0	1	0	0	2,5	45	Girls 14
27	Jaufarally Nadia	1905	ENG	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3,0	32	Girls 16

## **English Online Schools Championships 2021**

These were held online due to the pandemic. The winners of the ECF event were -

**Under 11** - 1st King's College Junior School; 2nd Westminster Under School; 3rd Brentwood Preparatory School

**Under 19** - 1st Hampton School; 2nd Wilson's Grammar School; 3rd Reading School

Regular Lichess team battles for schools are being organised by Neill Cooper on Friday evenings.

## **Glorney Cup 2021**

The annual junior internationals against the rest of the British Isles took place online again. Sadly, no continental teams accepted their invitations this year. England won three of the four sections, plus the pre-tournament blitz, and were 2nd by half a gamepoint in the other section. GM Matthew Sadler and WFM Natasha Regan streamed commentary on the final round games, which included our decisive 4-1 victory against Ireland in the final round of the Under 18.

The results can be seen here (this is the Under 18; links to the other tournaments can be found from there) - <http://chess-results.com/tnr569577.aspx?lan=1&art=0&flag=30>

In the two years in which the Glorney Cup has been held online, England has had a considerably stronger team than we were previously able to field over-the-board.

## European Schools Online Rapid Cup 2021

This was held in December. The results from the qualifiers are below –

SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pts.	Rk.	Group
5	AFM Damodaran Patrick	1616	ENG	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	4,0	30	U10
20	Jakhria Kushal	1328	ENG	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	5,0	6	U10
55	Barbier-Ramaiah Rohan Theo	0	ENG	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	3,0	57	U10
58	Chen George	0	ENG	1	½	½	1	0	1	½	4,5	18	U10
62	Groot Wassink Leon	0	ENG	0	½	1	0	1	1	0	3,5	38	U10
63	Hanache Kai	0	ENG	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	6,0	3	U10
75	Sefton Adam	0	ENG	0	1	1	0	0	1	½	3,5	43	U10
5	Zheng Harry Z	1599	ENG	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	5,0	3	U11
28	Jayakumar Bharath	0	ENG	0	1	1	0	½	0	1	3,5	15	U11
13	Dasgupta Avyukt	1675	ENG	½	1	0	1	1	0	0	3,5	21	U13
15	Hobson Kenneth	1632	ENG	1	½	0	1	1	1	1	5,5	3	U13
28	ACM Whelan Joseph	1407	ENG	0	1	½	0	1	0	½	3,0	29	U13
30	Badacsonyi Stanley	1400	ENG	1	0	0	1	1	½	1	4,5	12	U13
42	Omoruyi Jaden	0	ENG	½	0	0	0	½	1	0	2,0	36	U13
11	Agrawal Shivam	1711	ENG	1	0	1	0	1	½	0	3,5	15	U15
14	Badacsonyi Frankie	1611	ENG	1	0	1	0	1	½	0	3,5	16	U15
19	Tarling Adam	1384	ENG	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3,0	21	U15
25	Cox Lucian	1061	ENG	0	0	1	0	1	1	½	3,5	18	U15
28	Berry Aidan	0	ENG	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2,0	25	U15
9	Cox Toby	1782	ENG	0	½	½	0	1	0	0	2,0	10	U17
37	Sivanandan Bodhana	0	ENG	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	5,5	2	G10
11	AFM Latypova Olga L	1462	ENG	1	0	½	0	0	1	1	3,5	15	G13
20	Barbier-Ramaiah Riya Aude	1205	ENG	0	0	0	0	0	0	½	0,5	24	G13
22	Chan Ngo Yu	0	ENG	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2,0	20	G13
25	Pyun Lindsay	0	ENG	1	½	0	1	0	0	1	3,5	14	G13
11	Maton Emily	1444	ENG	1	0	1	0	1	0	½	3,5	10	G15

The top eight in each qualifier made the knockout stage, in which Bodhana Sivanandan finished in 2nd place, winning the silver medal.

## European Youth Championship 2021

This was held as a replacement for the European Youth Championship, which was cancelled due to Covid.

SNo	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Pts.	Rk.	Group
7	Zhao George	1431	ENG	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	½	½	6,0	15	U08: Open
63	Jakhria Kushal	0	ENG	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	6,0	13	U08: Open
44	Sivanandan Bodhana	0	ENG	1	0	1	½	1	0	0	1	1	5,5	13	U08: Girls
50	Veselow Zoe	0	ENG	1	1	1	½	1	1	0	1	0	6,5	5	U08: Girls
87	Murawski Jan	1130	ENG	0	½	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	5,5	34	U10: Open
16	Ashton Alannah	1294	ENG	1	½	1	0	0	1	0	0	½	4,0	42	U10: Girls
65	Rida Ruqayyah	0	ENG	1	1	½	1	1	0	1	½	0	6,0	8	U10: Girls
36	Zheng Harry Z	1704	ENG	0	1	½	1	½	1	0	½	1	5,5	28	U12: Open
44	Thatte Nishchal	1886	ENG	1	0	1	0	½	0	1	0	½	4,0	62	U14: Open
51	Maton Emily	1415	ENG	1	0	0	0	1	½	1	½	0	4,0	43	U14: Girls
62	AFM Latypova Olga L	1266	ENG	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	4,0	42	U14: Girls
15	CM Balaji Aaravamudhan	2217	ENG	1	0	½	1	0	1	1	1	1	6,5	5	U16: Open
30	Volovich Julia	1742	ENG	½	0	0	1	1	1	½	0	1	5,0	19	U16: Girls

### **British Junior Rapid & Blitz Championship 2021**

This brand-new event was held in Milton Keynes on 13th-14th November and attracted almost 200 entries across the various sections. The full results can be found here (this starts at the Rapid U18 & U16 - you can navigate from there) -

<http://chess-results.com/tnr590354.aspx?lan=1&art=0&flag=30>

I expect to arrange for this tournament to be organised again in 2022.

### **European Youth Rapid & Blitz 2021**

These were held over-the-board in Serbia between 26th-30th December. Due to the emergence of the Omicron variant, only one English player attended – Bodhana Sivanandan. She participated in two competitions in the Under 8 Girls section –

- Rapid - 8/9, Silver medal
- Blitz - 15/18, Silver medal

### **England Juniors on Lichess**

An England Juniors team has weekly tournaments on Lichess here -

<https://lichess.org/team/england-juniors>

### **ECF Academy**

There are 86 current members, which is almost back to pre-Covid levels.

2021 successes include -

- 2 promotions to the Accelerator Programme (Kenneth Hobson and Theo Khoury)
- European success for Bodhana Sivanandan (see above)
- Kenneth Hobson winning the British U12 Championship

### **ECF Registered Coaches Scheme**

This scheme was formally introduced here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/new-ecf-registered-coaches-scheme/>. The list of coaches can be found here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/list-of-ecf-registered-coaches/>



## **International Chess – round-up**

from Malcolm Pein

### **January**

The year kicked off with the Caplin Hastings Online All-Play-All. As the regular Hastings Masters could not go ahead due to Covid, what the event lacked in numbers it made up for in strength, as the rapidplay tournament attracted a star-studded line-up of 10 GMs and two IMs, thanks to generous sponsorship of £7,500 from Hastings Congress sponsor, Caplin Systems.

The event was appropriately won by former local Hastings player GM David Howell, who scored an outstanding 9/11 and won first prize of £1,200. He defeated second-placed GM Luke McShane (7.5)

and GM Michael Adams (7) in impressive victories. IM Matthew Wadsworth, while the lowest-rated player in the field, scored a creditable 5/11.

### **Caplin Hastings All-Play-All January 9-10**

#### Final scores

1 GM David Howell 9/11; 2 GM Luke McShane 7.5, 3 GM Michael Adams 7; 4 GM Gawain Jones 6.5; 5 GM Daniel Gormally 6; 6 GM Matthew Turner 5.5, 7-8 IM Matthew Wadsworth & GM Keith Arkell 5; 9 GM Nick Pert 4.5; 10-11 GM Mark Hebden & IM Ameet Ghazi 3.5; 12 GM Glenn Flear 3.

<https://chess-results.com/tnr545595.aspx?lan=1&art=1&flag=30>

### **May**

European Hybrid World Cup Qualifier, Elstree (May 23-25). Thanks to support from the owners of the Elstree Hilton, I was able to stage an event for five of our players to seek qualification for the World Cup and gain valuable experience in this mode of chess, which will become increasingly popular.

IM Ravi Haria achieved an excellent win in Round 1, defeating German GM Falko Bindrich 2-0. Ravi's win with Black was quite spectacular – a game I annotated in September's edition of ChessMoves. In Round 2, Ravi overpressed with White in the first game against Russia's Ernesto Inarkiev when the draw was in sight and lost by the same score.

Two other English players in the hybrid qualifier, GM Simon Williams and FM Marcus Harvey, also made valiant efforts against their much higher-rated opponents, Samvel Ter-Sakhayan and the Croatian chess legend Zdenko Kozul, respectively. Marcus even managed to win 'on demand' in game two but lost the tie-break.

### **R. Haria – F. Bindrich**

European Hybrid Qual 2021

Round 1 Game 1

*Notes by Haria*

**1.e4** As I now only needed a draw, this was the most logical first move. My opponent's repertoire comprised of 1...e5 and the Najdorf - and the fact that he needed to win made it extremely likely that he'd play a Sicilian.

**1...c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+** I was also quite fortunate that in the past year, I've started writing a book series on the Anti-Sicilians - so it was an easy decision to avoid 3.d4.

**3...Nd7 4.a4** Part of my preparation noted that my opponent liked to gain counter-attacking chances with ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5 ideas. Therefore, I thought 4.a4 was the most pragmatic choice, to frustrate his counterplay.

**4...a6 5.Be2 Ngf6 6.Nc3 b6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Qxd4** It might seem strange that I've delayed playing the d2-d4 pawn break, and now capture with my queen. The point is that I've waited for Black to place his pawns on a6 and b6. The plan now for White is to continue with Be3 and Nd2-c4, attempting to target these 'weaknesses'.

**8...Bb7 9.0-0 e6 9...e5** is the other mainline.

**10.Rd1 Qc7 11.Be3 Be7?!** Quite a strange decision, arguably inferior to the alternative, which would have made the game a lot more complex. **11...Ng4!** is Black's best try, basically preventing White from enacting his idea of Nd2-c4 and hitting the b6- and d6-pawns. The line may continue: **12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4 Nge5** Potentially followed by **...Rc8** and even **...g7-g5**. It's clear that this was a better option for Black in a must-win scenario.

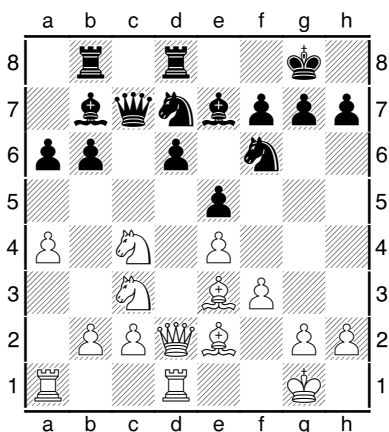
**12.Nd2 0-0 13.Nc4 e5** **13...d5** is Black's other option, but I think White should have a small edge. For example: **14.exd5 Nxd5 15.Nxd5 Bxd5 16.Bf4 Qc6 17.Ne3 Nf6 18.Be5 Be4 19.a5 b5 20.c4 Rfd8 21.Qb6** White's queenside pawns could become a target

**14.Qd2!** It seems weird to give this move an exclamation mark, as it's clearly inferior to **14.Qd3**. Nevertheless, I thought it gave Black an impossible choice. As the variations will demonstrate, capturing on e4 simplifies the game too much for Black to attain any realistic winning chances - yet anything else enables me to push **f2-f3**, after which I will have achieved excellent central control.

**14.Qd3** is objectively the better move. The plan for White now is to consolidate with **Bf3** and **Qe2**, keeping control of the important **d5-square**. **14...Nc5** is the most important move to check, but White will emerge with an advantage. **15.Bxc5 dxc5 16.Qf3!** Followed by **Ne3**.

**14...Rfd8 14...Bxe4** is the only move to prevent White from acquiring a significant advantage. Yet relinquishing the light-squares was clearly antithetical to my opponent's objectives. **15.Nxe4 Nxe4 16.Qb4 Nec5 17.Bxc5! dxc5 18.Qc3** Black is a pawn up, but White's piece activity and control of the light-squares, combined with Black's weak queenside pawns, ensured that I was confident that I would basically be playing for two results here: **14...Nxe4? 15.Nxe4 Bxe4 16.Nxd6**

### 15.f3 Rab8



**16.a5?** Impatient. A typical idea to break through on the queenside, but it also grants Black unnecessary counterplay. **16.Bf2!** is the simplest option. It's important to realise that Black has basically zero ideas. He can't manoeuvre any of his pieces due to his weak **a6-**, **b6-**, and **d6-pawns** - essentially he has nothing to do. For example: **16...h6 17.Bf1 Nh5 18.Qe1!** followed by something like **Ne3**, or even doubling the rooks on the d-file with **Rd2**.

**16...b5 17.Nb6 Bc6 18.Ncd5 Bxd5 19.Nxd5** [19.exd5 is still good enough for a nice advantage, but I didn't want to entertain Black's exchange sacrifice after 19...Nxb6 20.Bxb6 Rxb6 21.axb6 Qxb6+ 22.Kh1]

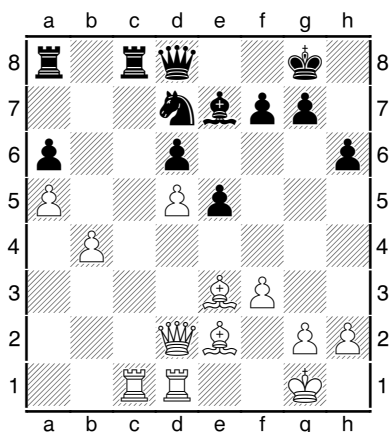
**19...Nxd5 20.exd5** [I presumed that I was doing very well here. My whole plan revolved around continuing with b2–b4, Rac1, and c2–c4, after which Black's queenside would collapse, and I couldn't find a way for Black to prevent this. As it turns out, I completely misevaluated the position.]

**20...Rdc8?** [20...Bf6! I completely missed this option. Black prepares an ...e5–e4 push, and I can't really stop it. 21.c3 Re8 Followed by ...Nc5. Compared to the game, it's unclear what my plan is - for the moment, queenside expansion seems unlikely.]

**21.Rac1 Qd8?** [21...Qb7 Black simply can't allow me to play b2–b4 and c2–c4. 22.b4 Bd8 23.c3 White is still fractionally better, and I knew that there was little risk in this position - but it will also be a very difficult task to make a breakthrough.]

**22.b4!+-** [Black can't prevent the opening-up of the queenside with the forthcoming c2–c4, and is probably just close to lost now.]

**22...h6 23.c4 bxc4 24.Bxc4 Ra8 25.Be2!** [Preparing an invasion on the c6–square.]



**25...Rxc1 26.Rxc1 Bg5 27.Bxg5 hxg5 28.Rc6 e4** [Attempting to find some counterplay, but I had enough time to calculate all the relevant lines and realise that there was little danger in the position.]

**29.fxe4 Ne5 30.Rxa6 Rc8 31.b5** [If Black leaves his rook on c8, I can confidently sacrifice an exchange with Rc6.]

**31...Rc5 32.Bf1 g4 33.b6 Qc8 34.Ra7 Kh7 35.Qf2 g6 36.b7 1–0**

### **Gibraltar hosts FIDE Women's Grand Prix (May 22-June 2)**

Kazakhstan's Zhansaya Abdumalik won the star-studded FIDE Women's Grand Prix, held at the Caleta Hotel (the traditional venue for the Gibraltar Masters), scoring her final GM norm and

reaching a 2500 rating in the process to qualify as a Grandmaster. The event was a triumph for organiser GM Stuart Conquest, who managed to host a prestigious international event with players flying in safely from around the world while many other tournaments were hit by Covid. Stuart has now returned to live full time in the UK and I hope we will all benefit from his organisational skills and infectious enthusiasm.

### Leading scores

1 Zhansaya Abdumalik (Kazakhstan) 8.5/11; 2 Mariya Muzychuk (Ukraine) 7; 3-4 Gunay Mammadzada (Azerbaijan) & Kataryna Lagno (Russia) 6.5.

### July

I secured a wild card entry for IM Ravi Haria and he was the only England player who made the trip to Sochi on Russia's Black Sea coast to take part in the 206-player FIDE World Cup. With the possibility of Russia joining the Red List at any moment our other leading players were naturally cautious about participating.

Ravi scored an impressive tie-break win against Russia's Vadim Zviagintsev in Round 1, but then was knocked out in the tie-break in Round 2 by France's Etienne Bacrot, an elite player. Ravi defeated Bacrot with black in a 'must win' game, something that one very rarely sees at the top level and I was reminded of Nigel Short's remarkable victory in the last round of the interzonal at Manila in 1990 which was also a French Defence Exchange Variation:

#### **E. Bacrot – R. Haria**

FIDE World Cup 2021 Krasnaya Polyana (2.2), 16.07.2021

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 exd5 4.Nf3 Bd6 5.Bd3 Ne7 6.0–0 Nbc6 7.Nc3 Bg4 8.Nb5 f6 9.c3 Qd7 10.b4**  
Trying to discourage Black from castling queenside

**10...0–0 11.Nxd6 Qxd6 12.a4 Rfe8 13.Ba3 Qd7 14.h3 Bf5** After light bishops are exchanged Black has a comfortable game

**15.Re1 Bxd3 16.Qxd3 Ng6 17.b5 Na5 18.Nd2 Nf4 19.Qf3 g5** Consequently, Black has to try and complicate as he needs a win

**20.Bb4! Nc4 21.Nxc4 dxc4 22.Qxb7 Qd5!** A clever idea: Black's knight is the superior minor piece but he does not have full compensation for the pawn

**23.Qxd5+ Nxd5 24.Kf1 Kf7 25.Rxe8 Rxe8 26.Re1 Rd8 27.Rb1 27.Bc5! Nxc3? (27...Ra8 28.Bb4!?)**  
28.Re7+

**27...Re8 28.g3 h5! 29.Re1 Rd8 30.Re4 c6 31.bxc6 Rc8 32.h4 32.Ke2 Rxc6 33.Kd2** looks better, as getting pawns fixed on dark squares is not ideal

**32...g4 33.Re2 33.f3**

**33...Rxc6 34.a5 a6 35.Rb2 Rc7 36.Bd6 Rd7 37.Bc5 37.Bb4 Rd8 38.Ke2 Ke6**



**37...Nxc3 38.Rc2? 38.Rb6!**

**38...Ne4! 39.Ke2 39.Rxc4?? Nd2+**

**39...c3** White lost an important pawn and the black king is ready to march in

**40.Ke3 f5 41.Rc1 Rb7 42.Bb6 Ke6 43.Kd3 Kd5 44.Kc2 f4! 0-1** If 45.gxf4 Rf7.

Ravi Haria's results:

R1 v. Vadim Zviagintsev (Classical: 1, 0; Tie-break: 1, 1)

R2 v. Etienne Bacrot (Classical 0, 1; Tie-break 0.5, 0)

### **August - Norms galore at London, Stafford & Northumbria Masters**

There may not have been a traditional summertime British Championships in Torquay, but August brought a series of tournaments – for both the UK's top players and club players.

After the long hiatus forced by Covid, four title norm all-play-alls were held in August: Muswell Hill in North London, an IM norm event run by Adam Raoof, the Wood Green GM Invitational in Stafford, organised by Lawrence Cooper, and GM and IM events at the Northumbria Masters – the UK's biggest international event of 2021 – staged by North East organiser Tim Wall in Gateshead. I am grateful to all of them for their efforts.

The Muswell Hill IM event (9-13 August) produced IM norms for Ireland's Conor Murphy and Poland's Maciej Czipor, with them sharing first place ahead of a strong field that included Russian GM Alexander Cherniaev - <http://chess-results.com/tnr569604.aspx?lan=1&art=4>

Then IM Lawrence Cooper, the manager of the Wood Green squad in the 4NCL, put on a GM round robin in his home town of Stafford. The Wood Green Invitational (17-21 August) resulted in a victory for Ravi Haria, who scored his second GM norm, and a third IM norm (clinching the title) for Marcus Harvey - <https://chess-results.com/tnr574412.aspx?lan=1&art=4&flag=30>

### **Wood Green GM Invitational scores**

1 Ravi Haria (Elstree) 7.5/9, 2 GM Tamas Fodor (Hungary) 6.5, 3-4 GM Mark Hebden (Leicester) & FM Marcus Harvey (Witney) 6, 5 GM Matthew Turner (Scotland) 4, 6 IM David Fitzsimons (Ireland) 3.5, 7-9 Andrew Greet (Scotland), FM Jonah Willow (Nottingham) & FM Borna Derakhshani (Canterbury) 3, 10 FM Jonathan Blackburn (Wales) 2.5.

A total of 211 players took part at the Northumbria Masters in Gateshead (26-30 August), the UK's biggest international event of 2021 (the biggest Congress overall was Scarborough in October, with some 250 competitors in all sections). The 80-strong Northumbria Masters Open tournament was won convincingly by IM Brandon Clarke of Cambridge, who finished on 7.5/9, a half-point ahead of GMs Daniel Gormally, Keith Arkell, Peter Wells and Marian Petrov (Bulgaria).

As well as the Masters Open, the nine-round congress had well-supported Challengers (Under 2000), Major (Under 1750) and Minor (Under 1500) events.

Alongside the Swiss tournaments were GM norm and IM norm all-play-alls, with the GM norm tournament another triumph for Ravi Haria, who clinched his third GM norm with 6.5/9, finishing

first equal with Ireland's Conor Murphy (also scoring his first GM norm). In total, an incredible four norms were scored in a single tournament – with IM norms for Callum Kilpatrick (his third, and reaching 2400 to become England's latest IM) and for IM-elect Marcus Harvey.

The IM norm event was won by 19-year-old WIM Zala Urh (Slovenia), who scored her first IM norm. Also notable were good performances by local North East juniors, James Moreby and Yichen Han, with James just half a point away from the IM norm.

#### Northumbria Masters GM scores

<http://chess-results.com/tnr574708.aspx?lan=1&art=1&flag=30>

1-2 IM Ravi Haria & IM (elect) Conor Murphy 6.5/9; 3 IM (elect) Marcus Harvey 6; GM Tamas Fodor (Hungary) & IM Matthew Wadsworth 5.5; 6 Callum Kilpatrick 5; 7 GM Matthew Turner (Scotland) 3; 8 IM Peter Roberson 2.5, Alexander Cherniaev (Russia) 2; 10 IM David Eggleston 1.5.

#### Northumbria Masters IM scores

<https://chess-results.com/tnr574709.aspx?lan=1&art=1&flag=30>

1 WIM Zala Urh (Slovenia) 6.5; 2 FM James Moreby 6; 3-5 FM Jonah Willow, FM Yichen Han & IM Peter Large 5; 6 William Claridge-Hansen 4.5; 7 FM Harry Grieve 4; 8 IM Andrew Muir (Scotland) 3.5; 9 FM Iain Gourlay (Scotland) 3, 10 IM Roderick McKay (Scotland) 2.5.

#### Northumbria Masters Open leading scores

1 IM Brandon Clarke 7.5; 2-5 GMs Daniel Gormally, Keith Arkell, Peter Wells & Marian Petrov (Bulgaria) 7; 6-8 Hamish Olson (Scotland), Dong Bao Nghia (Vietnam) & Roland Bezuidenhout (South Africa) 6.5.

#### **September - England compete in FIDE Online Olympiad**

England took part in the FIDE Online Olympiad Division 1, (September 8-10), part of the sprawling online rapidplay event, which ran from August 20 and was overseen by England's Alex Holowczak as Chief Arbiter, another feather in his cap.

Combined teams were comprised of Open, Women and Junior players, and our squad finished 9th in a very tough Division 1 Pool D, with 20.5 game points. The group was topped by: 1 Poland; 2 USA; 3 Canada. Our team were plagued with connectivity problems, and one of our players even had to go and play somewhere else when the Wi-Fi broke down in her house. Several games were decided by disconnections or blunders induced by disconnections, something we will have to resolve next time.

#### England team scores

GM Michael Adams 2/4, Luke McShane 3/4, David Howell 1/5, Gawain Jones 3.5/5; WGM Katarzyna Toma 0/1, WFM Louise Head 0.5/7; FM Borna Derakhshani 2/7, FM Akshaya Kalaiyahan 6/7; 0.5/6, Audrey Kueh 1.5/4; Shreyas Royal 0.5/2, Nadia Jaufarally 0/2.

#### **McShane wins Manx Liberty Masters**

England's Board 2 Luke McShane enjoyed an impressive tournament victory at the Manx Liberty Masters (18-26 September), held in Douglas on the Isle of Man. The tournament, put together by the organisers of the Manx Liberty team in the 4NCL, was the strongest round-robin classical event in the UK this year.



### **Hull 4NCL Invitational GM tournament**

With support from Hull City Council, the 4NCL organised a GM norm round-robin in Hull, 20-24 October. Poland's Maciej Czopor and Hungary's Tamas Fodor jointly won with 6/9. Czopor's score made him an IM norm. The English norm aspirants were not successful this time.

#### **Scores**

<https://chess-results.com/tnr583389.aspx?lan=1&art=1&turdet=YES&flag=30>

1-2 FM Maciej Czopor (Poland) & GM Tamas Fodor (Hungary) 6/9; 3-4 IM Conor Murphy (Ireland) & GM Matthew Turner (Scotland) 5.5; 5 IM James Jackson 5; 6 IM Brandon Clarke 4.5; 7-8 IM Matthew Wadsworth & GM Nigel Davies (Wales) 4; 9 FM Jonah Willow 3.5; 10 FM Shreyas Royal 1.

### **1st EJCOA Invitational, Newcastle-upon-Tyne**

Two more IM norms were scored at the 1st EJCOA Invitational at Forest Hall Chess Club on Tyneside, another tournament organised by FM Tim Wall. The norms were scored by Ireland's Tarun Kanyamarala and England's Jonah Willow.

#### **Scores**

<http://chess-results.com/tnr586262.aspx?lan=1&art=1>

1 FM Tarun Kanyamarala (Ireland) 7.5; 2 FM Jonah Willow 7; IM David Fitzsimons (Ireland) & FM Yichen Han (Netherlands) 6; 5 Thomas Eggleston 5; 6 Trisha Kanyamarala (Ireland) 4.5; 7 Mikhail Sedykh 3; 8-9 Steven Jones & IM Michael Basman 2.5; 10 Roderick McKay (Scotland) 1.

### **November - Ravi Haria gets GM title amid mixed Euro Teams results**

The England Open team finished 13th out of 39 teams at the European Teams Championship in Catez, Slovenia (12-21 November) - <https://chess-results.com/tnr583987.aspx>

After a Bronze medal-winning performance at the previous OTB European Teams in Batumi in 2019, this was obviously a disappointment, but came after a nightmarish journey to Slovenia for the England teams that made an all-important good start difficult to achieve with four of the five players succumbing to flu shortly after arrival.

England fielded its usual top four players – Michael Adams, Luke McShane, Gawain Jones and David Howell – and Ravi Haria as 5th board and reserve. The best score was achieved by Gawain Jones with 5.5/7 and this was good for an individual silver medal on board three, a tremendous achievement. The other players turned in solid results (Michael Adams 2.5/6; Luke McShane 4/8; David Howell 3.5/8 and Ravi Haria 3.5/7).

The second silver lining was that Ravi Haria passed the all-important 2500 rating milestone in his second game, achieving the Grandmaster title.

In the Women's Team Championships, with several of our strongest players unavailable, the selectors decided to give debuts to players on the lower boards. It was clear everyone was terribly out of practice over the board, but after a bad start the team performances got better and better. The final showing of 25th out of 31 teams was about par overall. There were promising performances by Board 1 Katarzyna Toma who lost her first four games and then won the next four (!) and the players making their debuts on the lower boards gives cause for optimism going forward - <https://chess-results.com/tnr583986.aspx?lan=1>

### Individual scores

1 WGM Katarzyna Toma 4/8; 2 WFM Louise Head 0.5/6; 3 WFM Maria Emilianova 0.5/5; 4 WIM Shohreh Bayat 3.5/7; 5 Zoe Varney 3.5/6.

### **December - London Classic stages Rest of World match at new venue**

Chess in Schools and Communities' London Classic (28 November to 12 December) went ahead at a new central London venue, the Cavendish Conference Centre – and while understandably on a smaller scale due to the spread of the Covid Omicron variant at the time, it was clearly a successful event within those parameters.

The centrepiece of the Classic was the England v Rest of the World match (December 3-9), which pitted Mickey Adams, Luke McShane and Gawain Jones against Boris Gelfand (Israel), Nikita Vitiugov (Russia) and Maxime Lagarde (France). While the Rest of the World squeaked ahead in the last round to win by the narrow margin of 9.5-8.5, the contest lived up to its billing in quality and exciting games. It was particularly nice to have Gelfand, a chess legend, at the LCC and his lecture was a highpoint. The match could have gone either way as Luke was clearly better in his last round game against Vitiugov before he allowed a strong sacrifice in time pressure.

### England scores

Mickey Adams 3/6; Gawain Jones 3.5/6; Luke McShane 2/6.

### **More norms in Newcastle**

The 2nd EJCOA Invitational at Forest Hall, Newcastle (December 17-21) produced two more IM norms, this time for England's William Claridge-Hansen and Ireland's Tarun Kanyamarala. I look forward to more success for our players there.

### Scores

<https://chess-results.com/tnr596069.aspx?lan=1&art=1>

1 IM Matthew Wadsworth 7; 2-3 Tarun Kanyamarala (Ireland) & William Claridge-Hansen 6; 4 Yichen Han (Netherlands) 5.5; 5 Maciej Czopor (Poland) 5; 6-7 IM David Eggleston & FM Jonah Willow 4; 8 Tom O'Gorman (Ireland) 3.5; 9 Jonathan Blackburn (Wales) 3; 10 IM Neil Bradbury 1.

### **Summary**

The standout English chess stars of 2021 are undoubtedly our newest Grandmaster, Ravi Haria, and Terry Chapman, whose unswerving passion for the game has been rewarded with a brilliant Silver Medal performance at the European Seniors Individual Championship in Sardinia.

While this has clearly been a challenging year for England teams on the international stage – at the European Team Championships and the Online Olympiad – there have been encouraging signs of resurgence at different levels of the game.

The initiatives taken by individual organisers and the 4NCL to put on title norm all-play-all and international Opens, particularly Tim Wall, have been a lifeline for the development pipeline of future titled England players. (Tim's tournaments alone generated a total of 9 title norms this year, which is a commendable effort and an unprecedented success.)

That pipeline (of strong international Opens, title norm events and an integrated junior training setup) needs careful nurturing over the next decade if England is to continue to be a significant chess power in future. And of course, generating sponsorship and other funding at all levels of the game, from professional to clubs and school chess, remains the key to this success.

--- *Malcolm Pein*



## **Online Chess – round-up**

from Nigel Towers

### **1. ECF Online Clubs**

ECF Online Membership numbers continued to increase throughout 2021, following last year's launch of the online clubs and tournaments in January 2020. We continued with three clubs on two platforms.

#### **Chess.com**

ECF Members Club (open to ECF members or supporters)

<https://www.chess.com/club/english-chess-federation-members>

ECF Open Chess Club (open to all players)

<https://www.chess.com/club/english-chess-federation>

#### **Lichess**

English Chess Players Members Club (open to ECF Members or Supporters)

Lichess.org - <https://lichess.org/team/english-chess-players>

Club membership grew steadily throughout the year, with a total number now of more than 8,000 online players.

<b>Members clubs</b>	<b>December 2021 figures</b>	<b>December 2020 figures</b>
Chess.com ECF members	1,670	1,182
Lichess English players	1,429	943
Chess.com ECF Open Club	5,005	3,874
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,104</b>	<b>5,999</b>

By the end of 2021 we had over 5,000 members in the Chess.com Open Club and over 1600 members in the Chess.com ECF Members clubs. We also had over 1400 members in the Lichess English Chess Players ECF Members Club.

This means that by the end of the year we had some of the largest federation clubs on Chess.com and Lichess and were able to compete in the top international leagues on both platforms.









### **Members' club tournaments**

We continued with three afternoon/evening tournaments per week for each club during the early part of the year, with the addition of a Tuesday Improvers rating limited event for players under 1600 and a Monday evening rapidplay during the course of 2021.

The tournaments have been a mix of Swiss and Arena format at a range of blitz and rapidplay time controls. 10|0 is the most popular time control on Chess.com and Lichess and the 10|0 and 10|2 events have proved very popular in addition to the faster 3|2 and 5|2 blitz events. There have been more requests for slower play online events in contrast with the introduction of blitz events to over the board play.

### Rapid and blitz events

The standard schedule continued with the following weekly pattern of rapid and blitz events from April 2020 and running throughout the year.

Event	Date	Format	Time Control
<b>Friday Evening Diamond</b> (ECF Online Rated)	8.00pm Friday on Chess.com	90 minute Arena at 10 0	 Blitz
<b>Saturday Evening Rapid</b> (ECF Online Rated)	8.00pm Saturday on Lichess.org	120 minute Arena at 10 5	 Rapid
<b>Sunday Evening Rapid</b> (ECF Online Rated)	8.00pm Sunday on Chess.com	5 round Swiss at 10 5	 Rapid
<b>Monday Afternoon Blitz</b> (ECF Online Rated)	5.00pm Monday on Lichess.org	7 round Swiss at 5 2	 Blitz
<b>Monday Evening Rapid</b> (ECF Online Rated)	8.00pm Monday on Lichess.org	90 minute Arena at 10 5	
<b>Tuesday Afternoon Improvers</b>	5.30pm Tuesday afternoon	Mix of Swiss and Arenas at rapid and blitz time control for players under 1600	 Rapid  Blitz
<b>Wednesday Evening Blitz</b> (ECF Online Rated)	8.00pm Wednesday on Lichess.org	9 round Swiss at 3 2	 Blitz
<b>Thursday Afternoon Blitz</b> (ECF Online Rated)	5.00pm Thursday on Chess.com	7 round Swiss at 5 2	 Blitz

The Friday Evening tournaments included prizes of one month's Chess.com Diamond membership for the winner and the highest finishing player under 1400.

All ECF events have been ECF online rated, with numbers generally maintained for club events. ECF online ratings were moved to the main ECF rating system during the course of the year with player records showing the full set of ratings at different formats and time controls.

### English Juniors Club

The English Juniors team was set up in 2020 by ECF Junior Director Alex Holowczak. It has continued to run fortnightly events during 2021 on alternate Thursdays and sometime weekly at 6.00pm with occasional matches against other countries.

The junior club events were a mix of rapid, blitz and bullet with the occasional Chess960 event. The club link and joining instructions can be found here - <https://lichess.org/team/england-juniors>

## England Women's Club



The England Women's Club was established in 2020 by Jovanka Houska and led by Jo Hutchinson and Lawrence Cooper. The club is currently run by IM Lawrence Cooper including full details of club events -<https://lichess.org/team/england-women>

## 2. Online Rated Leagues

English leagues continued to run online during 2021 as the pandemic continued. An increasing number of these were ECF online rated with the full list of online rated leagues at the end of the year as follows.

Platform	Organiser	Events	Format	Time Control	
Lichess	<b>Beverley</b>	Beverley Championships <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/62628/rounds">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/62628/rounds</a>	Individual Challenge		Standard
	<b>Bolton</b>	Bolton Club Internal	Individual Challenge	50 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>Cornwall Online League</b>	Winter Premier, U2100, U1700, U1625, U125 2nd Online U2100, U1625 1st Cornwall Online Knockout	Individual Challenge	30 15	Rapid
Lichess	<b>West of England Online</b>	Counties League and Champs	Individual Challenge	60 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>Ealing</b>	Ealing Chess Club Winter Tournament Spring Tournament <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/64094/home">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/64094/home</a>	Individual Challenge	45 15	Standard
	<b>EACU</b>	Union Open, U1800, U1600 and U1400 competitions <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/64449/ofixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/64449/ofixtures</a>			
	<b>Eccles</b>	Rapidplay club events			Rapid
Lichess	<b>England Schools</b>	Weekly U11 and U19 Individual and Team Online Competitions			Rapid Blitz
Lichess	<b>ECF Blitz Grand Prix</b>	<a href="https://lichess.org/team/ecf-online-blitz-grand-prix-series-2021/tournaments">https://lichess.org/team/ecf-online-blitz-grand-prix-series-2021/tournaments</a> 1st Sunday each month	Platform Tournaments	Various	Blitz
Lichess	<b>ECF Rapid Grand Priz</b>	<a href="https://lichess.org/team/ecf-online-rapid-grand-prix-series-2021/tournaments">https://lichess.org/team/ecf-online-rapid-grand-prix-series-2021/tournaments</a> 3rd Sunday each month	Platform Tournament	10 2	Rapid
	<b>English Counties U18 Team Competition</b>	<a href="https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Juniors/online-county-under-18-championship/">https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Juniors/online-county-under-18-championship/</a>		10 5	



	<b>Essex</b>	Various Rapid and Blitz Leagues and Championships	Challenge	10 5 5 2 60 15	Rapid Blitz Standard
Lichess	<b>Five Counties</b>	Five Counties League Seasons – Divs 1 and 2	Challenge	60 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>4NCL League (Season 3)</b>	4NCL and J4NCL Season 3	Challenge Challenge	60 15 10 5	Standard Rapid
Lichess	<b>Golden Falcons</b>	Blitz and Rapid Swiss	Challenge		Rapid Blitz
Lichess	<b>Guildford</b>	Guildford APA, Standard Rapid and Blitz Club Competitions	Challenge Platform Platform	45 15 3 2 10 5	Standard Blitz Rapid
Lichess	<b>Hammersmith</b>	Sledgehammer and Rockhammer Cups online Sledgehammer Cup <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/61984/rounds">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/61984/rounds</a> Rockhammer Cup <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/61985/rounds">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/61985/rounds</a>	Challenge Challenge		Standard Rapid
Tornelo	<b>Hampstead Congress</b>	Open and U1700 online congresses	Platform	90 30	Standard
Tornelo	<b>Hastings Online</b>	12 player all play all	Arbiter paired	15 10	Rapid
Lichess	<b>Hertford</b>	Hertford Club Internal <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/66882/rounds">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/66882/rounds</a>	Challenge	90 30	Standard
Lichess	<b>Hillingdon</b>	Hillingdon District League Team Swiss <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/65173/efixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/65173/efixtures</a>	Challenge		Standard
Lichess	<b>Hull DCA Team Competition</b>	<a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/62843/efixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/62843/efixtures</a>	Challenge		Standard
	<b>Iceni Live League</b>	Open and Challengers	Challenge		Standard
	<b>Ivan Gromov League</b>	Ivan Gromov Online Schools League <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/73960/efixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/73960/efixtures</a>			
Lichess	<b>Junior Masters</b>	Winter Cup Challenge Qualifiers and Spring Qualifiers <a href="https://www.juniormasterseries.com">https://www.juniormasterseries.com</a> <a href="https://www.juniormasterseries.com">https://www.juniormasterseries.com</a>	Platform	10 5	Rapid
Lichess	<b>London Junior Chess Champs/ Junior Masters</b>	U8, U10, U12 U18 qualifiers and finals	Lichess tournament	10 5	Rapid
Tornelo	<b>London League</b>	London Online Chess League 11-week league with several divisions; games on Wednesday evenings played on Tornelo	Platform		

		<a href="http://www.londonchess.org.uk/main.php">http://www.londonchess.org.uk/main.php</a>			
Lichess	<b>Manchester Champs</b>	Manchester Swiss Tournament Individual Championships	Challenge		Rapid
Lichess	<b>North East League</b>	North East online league – Season 1 Div 1, 2, 3 and X North East Online League – Season 2 Divs 1-4	Challenge	45 15	Standard
	<b>North East Counties</b>	Open U2000 U1700	Challenge		Standard
	<b>Northumberland Individual Online</b>	Open U2000 U1700	Individual Challenge	90 30	Standard
Lichess	<b>Oxfordshire</b>	Mike Duck Online Tournaments <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/65140/efixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/65140/efixtures</a>	Lichess tournament		Standard
	<b>Ribble</b>	1st Online Ribble Rapidplay <a href="http://congress.org.uk/congress122/home">http://congress.org.uk/congress122/home</a>	Lichess tournament		Standard
Lichess	<b>SCCU</b>	County Challenge U2050 Team Events U1675 Team U1450 Team	Challenge	60 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>Shropshire</b>	Individual, Individual Minor Shropshire League	Challenge	45 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>Thames Valley</b>	Thames Valley Div 1, Div 2, Next Gen <a href="https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/league/club/33433/63460/org/fixtures">https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/league/club/33433/63460/org/fixtures</a>	Challenge	45 15	Standard
Lichess	<b>UKCC</b>	UK Chess Challenge Online - Mega and Giga Finals	Challenge		
	<b>Uxbridge</b>	Uxbridge Champs and Rapid Champs		45 15	Standard Rapid
Lichess	<b>Wanstead</b>	OL Warriors Swiss Rapid (10/5) OL Warriors APA Wanstead Club Champs Online Rapid Champs OL Club Challenge Standard OL Classical 2 in 1 Snakes and Ladders OL Swiss (10/5) Easter Rapid	Challenge Challenge	10 5 45 15	Rapid Standard
Lichess	<b>Watford</b>	Online 2021 Junior New Year Online 2021 Classical Online 2021 Spring Junior Comp	Challenge Challenge		Standard Rapid
Chess.com	<b>West Midlands Area Online League</b>	Spring and Summer Leagues Divs 1 and 2	Chess.com Team	15 10	Rapid
Lichess	<b>Wilsons</b>	Wilson's School Tuesday and Friday Blitz Events	Challenge	10 2	Rapid
	<b>Yorkshire</b>	T4 Major, Intermediate and Starter Competitions Junior Grand Prix Plate and Elite Tournaments	Lichess tournament	20 0	Rapid

### Five Counties Online League

League Organiser Nigel Colter provides a short update on the Five Counties Online League which has continued during 2021

The Five Counties league has continued throughout the last year and remains an entirely online association of clubs across England. With the return of OTB matches the number of teams competing naturally reduced and is currently 17 teams of which 10 are junior teams. The clubs range geographically from Cheshire in the North to Kent in the South.

The organisation relies completely upon the ECF LMS for captains and players to organise and record their match results. Results are then automatically submitted each month for rating.

All players have to be ECF Members or Supporters which means there are no game fees to manage. On match night a WhatsApp group allows captains to instantly relay messages to their opposing captains. Match night is Thursday and alternates with the Junior 4NCL online chess league. Players enjoy the ability to do a bit of pre-match prep as their opponent's Lichess name and which pieces they have are displayed on the ECF LMS 60 minutes before the scheduled time. The game time is 45 minutes plus 15 seconds Fischer increments from move 1.

The two divisions start at different times. Division 2 consists entirely of junior teams and starts at 6:00pm. Some junior teams also play in Division 1 with other adult teams, and this starts at 7:30pm. We expect that the Five Counties Online League will continue to offer club captains and trainers online standard play league matches. This will continue to be particularly beneficial for juniors to get proper Standard Play match experience without the travel hassles and late starts.

### Cornwall Chess Online

Website: <http://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/index.htm>

League Organiser Ian George writes ...


Although some clubs began to meet on a limited basis, most OTB team competitions were suspended throughout 2021. The Cornwall Spring congress - <http://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/congress/cong-2022.shtml> - is scheduled to take place at Falmouth from 29 April to 1 May 2022 after a break of two years. We also intend to organise a few one day and single evening events.



Online, the Cornwall club on Lichess has continued to offer competitive opportunities for our players. At the end of 2021 we had 80 members, 25 of whom had not been playing OTB chess previously. We organise a range of regular standard and rapidplay events in a variety of formats including challenge matches against SC Heimbach-Weis/Neuwied (Germany) and the Fijian national team.

Full details of our online activities are at <http://www.cornwallchess.org.uk/html/online/index-online.htm>

### 3. Online Congresses

A number of congresses also continued online in 2021 as shown below.

Lichess	4NCL Online Congresses	Monthly standard play congresses	Challenge	45 15	 Standard
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Lichess	Cornwall Online Congress	Fortnightly rapidplay congresses			 Rapid
Tornelo	Hampstead Online Congress	Monthly Hampstead Online Congresses <a href="https://tornelo.com/chess/orgs/chess-england/">https://tornelo.com/chess/orgs/chess-england/</a>	Challenge	60 10	 Standard

#### **4. ECF Online Grand Prix 2021**

from December's ChessMoves



The First ECF Online Blitz and Rapid Grand Prix Series ran as a 9 month event from March to October 2022. The series followed much the same scoring system as the over the board Grand Prix's. Each series consisted of nine monthly tournaments, with an open blitz tournament on the first Sunday of each month and a rapid on the third Sunday. Players were awarded points based on where they finished

in each of a number of categories including Open, Women's, Juniors and rating limited groups. Players' highest six scores across the events were then added up to decide the winners with trophies for the 1st to 3rd places in each group.

The Open leaderboards were as below. Congratulations to the winners across all sections. The winners are as below for the two series.

#### **Blitz Grand Prix Winners**

<b>Open</b>	<b>1st – Harry Grieve 129</b>	2nd – Keith Arkell 121	3rd – Peter Finn 110
<b>Juniors</b>	<b>1st – Edward Jackson 125</b>	2nd – Frederick Gordon 76	3rd – Theo Khoury 67
<b>Seniors</b>	<b>1st – Keith Arkell 143</b>	2nd – David Walker 116	3rd – Julian Tang 96
<b>Women's</b>	<b>1st – Louise Head 140</b>	2nd – Lindsay Pyun 129	3rd – Mae Catabay 88
<b>Under 2000</b>	<b>1st – Edward Jackson 133</b>	2nd – Theo Khoury 79	3rd – Frederick Gordon 75
<b>Under 1700</b>	<b>1st – George Calvert 79</b>	2nd – Lindsay Pyun 76	3rd – Jan Murawski 75
<b>Under 1400</b>	<b>1st – Brent Frankel 129</b>	2nd – Dylan Wastney 126	3rd – Ushakan Thushyanthan 113
<b>Under 1100</b>	<b>1st – Jacob Liu 116</b>	2nd – George Zhao 75	3rd – Amelia Fretwell 55

#### **Rapid Grand Prix Winners**

<b>Open</b>	<b>1st – David Walker 123</b>	2nd – Keith Arkell 119	3rd – Tristan Cox 79
<b>Juniors</b>	<b>1st – Frederick Gordon 105</b>	2nd – Elis Dicen 76	3rd – Harry Zheng 67
<b>Seniors</b>	<b>1st – David Walker 136</b>	2nd – Keith Arkell 136	3rd – Douglas Vleeshouwer 82
<b>Women's</b>	<b>1st – Elis Dicen 143</b>	2nd – Mae Catabay 82	3rd – Lindsay Pyun 75
<b>Under 2000</b>	<b>1st – Frederick Gordon 109</b>	2nd – Elis Dicen 81	3rd – Harry Zheng 76
<b>Under 1700</b>	<b>1st – Stanley Badacsonyi 76</b>	2nd – Theo Khoury 71	3rd – Adithya Vaidyanathan 59
<b>Under 1400</b>	<b>1st – Oleg Verbytski 110</b>	2nd – George Zhao 99	3rd – Balahari Bharat Kumar 79
<b>Under 1100</b>	<b>1st – Lucian Li 150</b>	2nd – Alex Gao 97	3rd – Idhant Sinha 73

Full details here ---

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2021-online-grand-prix-series-blitz-leaderboards/>

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2021-online-grand-prix-series-rapid-leaderboards/>

There was some excellent chess played over the course of the event and we are pleased to feature a game below between two of our top junior players ...

**Bora Aydin (1818) – Edward Jackson (2186) [B13]**

ECF Grand Prix Blitz Event 3 Arena Lichess.org, 10.11.2021 - [Annotated by Edward Jackson]

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Nc3**



A slightly odd development as normally White wants to put a pawn on c3 and the knight will develop via d2.

**5...Nc6 6.Bf4 Bg4 7.Be2 e6 8.h3 Bh5 9.a3 Bd6 10.Bxd6 Qxd6 11.Qd3 Bg6 12.Qd2 a6 13.0–0–0 0–0**



Black achieves a perfect setup.

**14.Bd3 b5 15.Bxg6 hxg6 16.g4 b4**



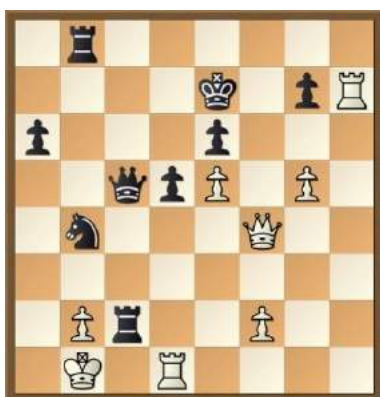
With opposite sides castling both sides are going to go for an attack against the enemy king by launching pawns forward. Black's attack will prove to be faster and stronger.

**17.axb4 Nxb4 18.g5 Nd7 19.h4 Rfc8 20.h5 Rab8 21.hxg6 Rxc3**



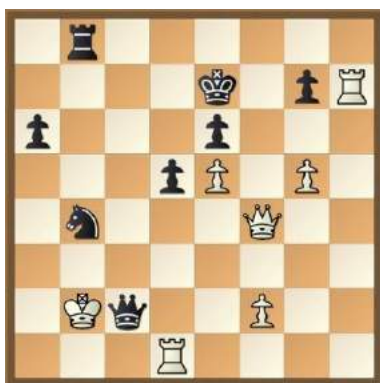
**22.gxf7+ 22.Qxc3 Na2+ picks up the white queen; 22.bxc3 Na2# is immediate mate**

**22...Kxf7 23.Ne5+ Nxe5 24.Qf4+ Ke7 25.dxe5 Rxc2+ 26.Kb1 Qc5 27.Rh7**



Black's king looks under fire, but White is a move too slow and Black crashes through first.

**27...Rxb2+ 28.Kxb2 Qc2+**



With mate to follow **0–1**

### **5. ECF Festival for All**

30th May – 4th June 2021



The Chess for All Festival took place during the first week in June (Sunday 30 May - Friday 4 June). This was targeted at players from beginner level up to 1600 Elo and was very successful, with around 120 entrants for the week's events. These included coaching sessions from Lateefah Messam-Sparks and IM Lorin D'Costa, simuls from Lorin and GM Keith Arkell, and a series of very well attended training tournaments. Lorin took 45 opponents with 41 wins, 2 draws and 2 losses. GM Keith Arkell played against 33 opponents with 33 wins.

The event was very well received, and many thanks to Lateefah, Lorin and Keith for the great coaching and impressive simultaneous exhibition play. The winners of the four improvers' tournaments and the two U1600 tournaments received copies of the acclaimed book *1500 Forced Mates* by Jakov Geller, with the winners of the four beginners' tournaments receiving monthly Platinum memberships of Chess.com. We are now looking to establish a series of coaching events going forwards based on the festival model and supported by regular rating limited tournaments and events.

### **6. ECF Marathon 2021 - Checkmate Covid-19 The Rematch**

June 2021

The ECF once again ran a 24-hour Marathon in aid of the British Red Cross. The Marathon took place during a critical phase of the global pandemic and was hugely well supported by English Chess organisers, players and commentators. It took place on the weekend 5th-6th June on Chess.com. 292 players took part including nine grandmasters.



GM Keith Arkell came first with a huge 655 points and a winning streak of 44 games. Shreyas Royal took second place and Nathanael Paul came third. The event raised £5,000 for the British Red Cross. There was a total of 6,074 games played over the 24 hours (2,611 on the 5th and 3,463 on the 6th). The event was also supported by a 24-hour stream on the ECF's commentary channel organised by WIM Natasha Regan. This included a top level line-up of commentators and guests, from the opening session at 5.00pm on Saturday with GM Michael Adams and WFM Shohreh Bayat through to the closing session from 4.00 to 5.00 pm on Sunday, with GM David Norwood and IM Richard Farleigh.

Many thanks to all who took part, to those who streamed and those who donated to the British Red Cross and/or those who donated the terrific prizes. Thanks also to chief organiser Danny Rosenbaum, to WIM Natasha Regan for her fantastic and tireless work in organising the commentary, and to GM David Norwood for his generous matching of the last hour's Red Cross donations, and his support for the women's prize fund.

The prize list and the prize donors can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/checkmate-covid-the-rematch/>

The tournament results can be found at

<https://www.chess.com/tournament/live/arena/checkmate-covid---the-rematch-1187013>

## **7. Counties Online 2021**

### **ECF Online Counties Championship**

We again ran an Online Counties Championship in 2021 on the Chess.com platform. The overall schedule was as follows ---

#### Qualifying Stages

##### Open

The Open competition attracted just two teams (Northumberland and Devon), who qualified automatically to play each other in the main Counties final.

##### Minor Open Counties

Team Swiss rounds on 12 & 19 June, 3 & 17 July and 21 August. The Minor Open competition included 8 teams, who took part in a 5-round Swiss with the top two (Essex and Northumberland) qualifying for the finals.

##### U1800 Counties

All-play-all played on matchdays 12 June, 17 July and 21 August. There were three teams in the U1800 section, which was run as an all-play-all, with Leicestershire and Northumberland qualifying. You can find the fixtures and a full set of results on the LMS page here -

<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/60070/ofixtures>

##### National 1400

Matchdays 21 August, 11 September & 18 September. All of the finals took place on Saturday 18th September with matchups as follows ---

**Open:** Devon v Northumberland

**Minor Open:** Northumberland v Essex

**U1800:** Northumberland v Leicestershire



Games were available via the Interactive Match Cards in the LMS - <https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/67699/efixtures>

Board 1 of the Devon v Northumberland Match saw GM Keith Arkell playing against IM Andrew Horton. Here is the position after black's move 25, by which point Keith has swapped off into a double rook endgame with a slight edge based on black's pawn weaknesses.



A rook and pawn endgame after just 25 moves is hardly a new experience for me, and although it would doubtless be a draw with best play, I have just enough to work with to continue the struggle.

**26.Rc1** I saw little point in 26 Rfd1 Ra4 27 f3 f5 when I have no really convincing plan. I place a high value on long term strategy in the endgame and will always strive for a position which has the potential for gradual improvement of the pieces. As a first step I envisaged placing my rooks on d2 and d4

**26...Ra4 27.Kf1 g6 28.Ke2 Kg7**



**29.Rcc2** I have to do this very carefully, as the immediate 29 Rc3 allows 29...d4 30 Rcd3 dxe3 with a draw.

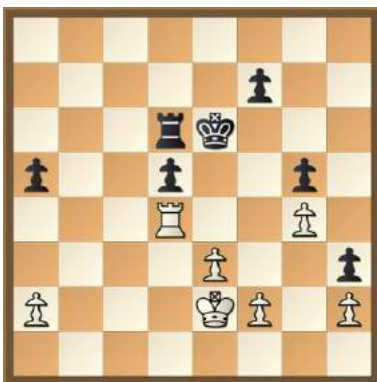
**29...Rd6 30.Rd3 g5** Andrew would like to play...g4 to frustrate my intended plan of Kf3, g4, Kg3 and Kxh3.

**31.Rcd2 Kf6**



If 31...g4 32 Rd4 Rxd4 33 Rxd4 f5 34 f3 when there are plenty of pawn weaknesses to target.

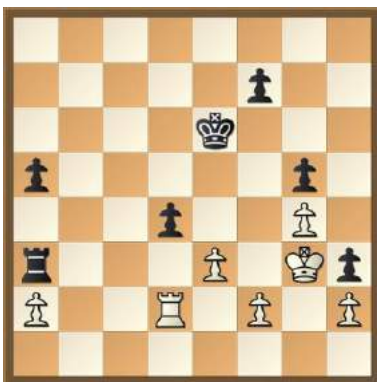
**32.Rd4 Rxd4 33.Rxd4 Ke6 34.g4**



**34...Rb6** Black must of course defend actively.

**35.Kf3 Rb4 36.Rd3** I didn't like 36 Rd2 a4, with the idea of ...a3 and ...Rb2.

**36...Ra4 37.Rd2 Ra3 38.Kg3 d4**



There was no way of avoiding this transition after which Black, although a pawn down, should still hold with accurate play.

**39.Rxd4 Rxa2 40.f3 Ra3** I like this move. It is important for Black to break up my flexible pawn structure before it becomes free to advance.

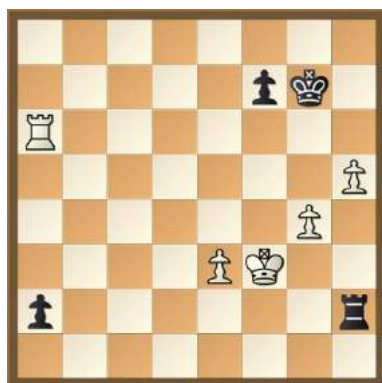
**41.Re4+ Kf6 42.Kxh3 a4 43.Kg3 Rb3**



**44.f4** Played reluctantly, but there is no time for 44 h4 gxh4+ 45 Kxh4 a3 when the a pawn will interfere with the defence of my important e and f pawns. Of course I can instead play 44 Rxa4 Rxe3, but, while I have won countless endings with 4 v 3 or 3 v 2 on the Kingside, they still remain the option of last resort.

**44...a3 45.fxg5+ Kxg5 46.h4+ Kg6 47.Kf3** While it seemed unlikely that I would be winning this, I was curious to explore what kind of problems I could set my opponent. Incidentally, 47 Kf4?? a2 48 Ra4 Rb4+ wouldn't be too clever. Always be vigilant!

**47...a2 48.Ra4 Rb2 49.Ra6+ Kg7 50.h5 Rh2**



**51.e4** I'll never tire of saying that this important chess move shouldn't be rushed into!

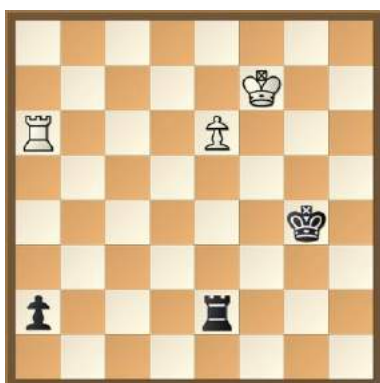
**51...Rb2 52.e5** Although I can't possibly be winning by force, my best practical chance involves playing e6 at some point, then trying to achieve something with the resulting passed pawns.



**52...Rh2 53. Kf4 Re2 54.Kf5** I knew that 53 e6 fxe6 54 Kg3 Rb2 55 g5 Rb3+ 56 Kf4 Rb4+ 57 Ke3Rh4 58 Ra7+ Kg8 59 h6 Rg4 was a draw, so I wanted to play around a bit first before committing to anything.

**54...Rf2+ 55. Kg5 Re2 56.Kf4**

I had a good look at 56 h6+ Kh7 57 Kf6 Rf2+ 58 Ke7 a1=Q+ 59 Rxa1 Kxh6 60 Ra6+ Kg5! (not 60...Kg7 61 Rf6 winning). 61 Rf6 Re2 62 Rf5+ Kxg4 63 Kf6 Re1 when I can't possibly hope to win. During a brief chat after the game Andy pointed out that in this line he need not jettison his a pawn as he can also draw with 57...Kxh6 58 Kxf7+ Kg5 59 e6 Rf2+! His idea is to keep either checking or attacking my e pawn as my Rook isn't free to intervene. There is a beautiful winning line if instead of 59...Rf2+! Black plays 59...Kxg4?



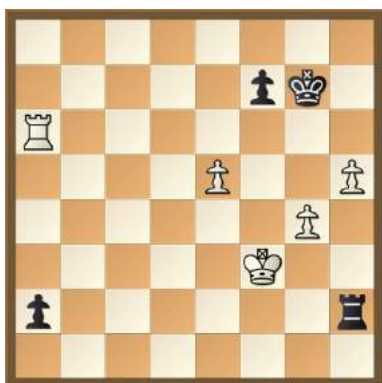
when 60 e7 Rf2+ 61 Kg6 Re2 62 Ra4+ Kg3 63 Kf6, threatening Rxa2, and therefore forcing 63...Rf2+ 64 Kg5 Re2 65 Ra3+ Kf2 66 Rxa2 brings about Queen v Rook. There is something about this sequence which mocks Tarrasch's quip (or was it Tartakower?) that 'All Rook Endings are drawn'.

**56...Rf2+ 57.Ke3 Rh2 58.Kf3**



Black is in a minor Zugzwang as currently he has everything ideally placed.

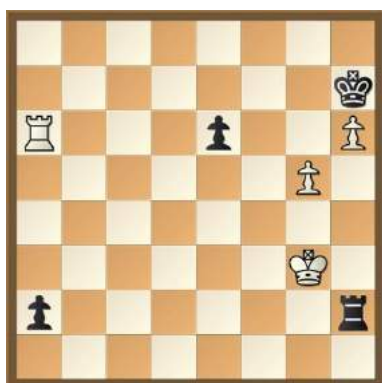
**58...Rb2 59.g5 Rh2 60.h6+ Kh7**



**61.e6** There is nothing else worth trying.

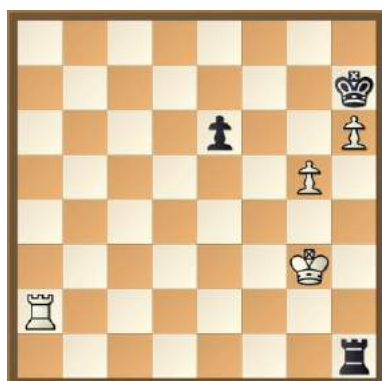
**61...fxe6**

**62.Kg3**



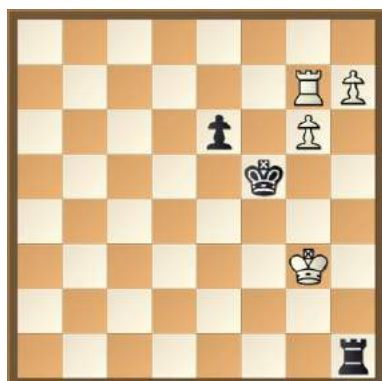
**62...Rh1** ?! 'This is not the losing move, but it does require greater precision from Black. There was no need to keep my pawns under such restraint as after 62...Rb2 I can use neither my King nor Rook to escort them home. I'll leave you to verify this for yourself.

**63.Rxa2**



**63...Rb1??** I didn't ask Andrew, but I think he panicked when he saw 63...Kg6 64 Rh2, but Black can still save himself with 64..Rg1+! 65 Kf3 (or 65 Kf2 Ra1 66 h7 Ra2+ followed by ...Rxh2 and...Kxh7) 65...Rf1+! and the Rook comes back to f7. The position would then be a fortress even without the e6 pawn. In what has been for the most part an accurately played game by both of us I am now winning by force for the first time.

**64.Ra7+ Kg6 65.Rg7+ Kf5 66.h7 Rh1 67.g6**



**1-0**

## **8. British Online Chess Championships**

July and August 2021

The 2nd British Online Championships took place over two weeks from 24th July – 8th August 2021 on the Chess.com platform. As with the main over-the-board British in October, the event was run by the English Chess Federation, in collaboration with the Welsh, Scottish, Irish, Ulster, Jersey, Guernsey and Isle of Man Chess Federations/Unions. The British Online included separate Championships – Open, Women's, Junior, Senior and Rating Limited events.

The event was organized by the British Isles Chess Championships team including Kevin Staveley as tournament director and a team of around 15 arbiters in the control team. We had direct entries from numerous titled players in the open championships including ---

<b>Championship Standard</b>			
1	Adams, Michael	GM	ENG
2	Clarke, Brandon GI	IM	ENG
3	Arkell, Keith C	GM	ENG
4	Hebden, Mark L	GM	ENG
5	Lalic, Bogdan	GM	CRO
6	Blackburn, Jonathan LB	FM	WLS
<b>Championship Rapid</b>			
1	Lalic, Bogdan	GM	CRO
2	Arkell, Keith C	GM	ENG
3	Pert, Richard G	IM	ENG
4	Clarke, Brandon GI	IM	ENG
5	Blackburn, Jonathan LB	FM	WLS
7	Milewska, Agnieszka		ENG
<b>Championship Bullet</b>			
1	Milewska, Agnieszka		
2	Arkell, Keith C	GM	
3	Pert, Nicholas	GM	
4	Turner, Matthew J	GM	
5	Clarke, Brandon GI	IM	
<b>Women's Standard</b>			
1	Arakhamia-Grant, Ketevan E	GM	SCO
2	Kalaiyalahan, Akshaya	FM	ENG
3	Pert, Nina P		ENG
<b>Women's Rapid</b>			
1	Toma, Katarzyna	WGM	ENG
2	Pert, Nina P		ENG
<b>Women's Blitz</b>			
1	Head, Louise	WFM	ENG
2	Milewska, Agnieszka		ENG
<b>Under 14 Rapid</b>			
1	Pert, Nina P		ENG
<b>Over 50 Standard</b>			
1	Arkell, Keith C	GM	ENG
2	Lalic, Bogdan	GM	CRO
<b>Over 50 Rapid</b>			
1	Arkell, Keith C	GM	ENG
<b>Over 50 Blitz</b>			
1	Arkell, Keith C	GM	ENG

The event was a great success with 570 entrants and 1,877 entries across the various championships and competitions. There were 10 different championships (Open, Women's, Seniors (50+ and 65+) and Juniors with six different age groups) and 4 different time controls from standardplay to bullet in each championship.



Commentary was provided by GM Matthew Sadler and WIM Natasha Regan Game Changer YouTube channel where you can catch up on the games from the recordings for the different events and rounds - <https://www.youtube.com/c/EnglishChessFederation/videos>

Congratulations go to GM Keith Arkell as the second British Online Champion. Congratulations also to Akshaya Kalaiyalahan as the second British Online Women's Champion, and to all the new Champions across the different categories and time controls including some very strong female players, the seniors and of course the many junior players who took part during the school holidays.

You can find the full set of the champions and prize winners along with the winners of the Major Open and rating limited festival events in the tables below.

Event	Time Control	1st Place	2nd Place	3rd Place
<b>Championship</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Keith Arkell	Michael Adams	Bogdan Lalic
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Brandon Clarke	Harry Grieve	Bao Nghia Dong
	<b>Blitz</b>	Richard Pert	Brandon Clarke	Bao Nghia Dong
	<b>Bullet</b>	Rishi Thariani	Brandon Clarke	Nick Pert
<b>Womens</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Ashkaya Kalaiyalahan	Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant	Elzbieta Vine
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Katarzyna Toma	Tashika Arora	Jessica Mellor
	<b>Blitz</b>	Liza Kisteneva	Lilli Hahn	Louise Head
<b>Seniors 65+</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Terry Chapman	Ian Calvert	Williams Phillips
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Terry Chapman	Brian Gosling	
	<b>Blitz</b>	Terry Chapman	Chris Jones	Maurice Lawson
<b>Seniors 50+</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Bogdan Lalic	Chris Duncan	Paul Dargan
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Keith Arkell	David Walker	Chris Duncan
	<b>Blitz</b>	Keith Arkell	John Pitcher	Graham Waddingham
<b>Under 18</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Yichen Han	Johnathan McKay	Toby Cox
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Jonathan McKay	Jake Barry	Ashwanth Subramanian
	<b>Blitz</b>	Joshua Altman	Jonathan McKay	
<b>Under 16</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Mohammed Aayan Ismail	Polina Shchepinova	Adam Sieczkowski
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Mohammed Aayan Ismail	Adam Sieczkowski	Dillan Duke
	<b>Blitz</b>	Frankie Badacsonyi	Mohammed Aayan Ismail	Adam Sieckowski
<b>Under 14</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Arjun Kolani	Shivam Agrawal	Theo Khoury
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Arjun Kolani	Dimitrios Zakarian	Sanjith Madhavan
	<b>Blitz</b>	James Merriman	Dimitrios Zakarian	Alex Royle
<b>Under 12</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Denis Dupuis	Harry Zheng	Max Pert



	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Frederick Gordon	Jude Shearsby	Ehtan Bingxuan Li
	<b>Blitz</b>	Elis Denele Dicen	Max Pert	Zain Patal
<b>Under 10</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Alfred Soulier	Jan Murawski	Rishi Vijaykumar
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Kai Hanache	Luohe Wang	Cian Ward
	<b>Blitz</b>	Pengxiao Zhu	Jan Murawski	Alexander Linton
<b>Under 8</b>	<b>Standard</b>	George Zhao	Advait Keerthi Kumar	Ayan Prahhan
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham	George Chen	George Zhao
	<b>Blitz</b>	Ambattu Rithvik Deepak	George Zhao	Michael Amos
<b>Junior Bullet</b>	<b>Bullet</b>	Stanley Badacsonyi	Yichen Han	Mohammed Aayan Ismail
<b>Major Open</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Jay Cranston	Manoj Arora	Cagri Gursel
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Joe Hirst	Andrew McGettigan	Hugo Fowler
<b>Under 2000</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Manvith Sandhu	Kenny Quinn	Ranasinge Ranjula Gamage
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Kyle Pelling	Huzaifi Baig	Brent Frankel
<b>Under 1700</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Colin Vernon	Sanjit Kumar	Arnold Acibar
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Zain Patel/Oleg Verbytski		Niki Mullins
<b>Under 1400</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Sathya Vaidyanathan	Rithwik Gururaj	Joshua Seet
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Ben Adigun	Phillip Payne	Bora Aydin
<b>Under 1100</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Gary Wilkinson	Rohan Barbier-Ramaiah	Marijka Mykhnenko
	<b>Rapidplay</b>	Samuel Baugh	Oliver Smith	Benjamin Danesh
<b>Weekend Open</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Jay Cranston	Chris Davison	Manoj Arora
<b>Weekend U1800</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Alistair Marston	Ruqayyah Rida	Rishi Vijaykumar
<b>Weekend U1500</b>	<b>Standard</b>	Riya Barbier-Ramaiah	Shea McPherson	Rowan Kent

## **9. ECF Online Internationals**

International Chess continued to be very popular with the online boom and the ECF's English club teams took part in regular international events on Chess.com and Lichess.

### **Chess.com Nations League**

Season 3 - 2021

The Chess.com Nations League continued in 2021 with Season 3. We ran a couple of friendlies from the ECF Members Club. The first was a team battle using the new Chess.com Team Arena functionality with five teams competing from the League. This was followed by a 3-leg match against the very strong Romanian Federation Team where we lost all legs but with some close

fought games ---

<https://www.chess.com/club/matches/live/english-chess-federation-members/871968>

<https://www.chess.com/club/matches/live/english-chess-federation-members/871967>

<https://www.chess.com/club/matches/live/english-chess-federation-members/871966>

The Chess.com Nations League Season 3 completed on 1st August with the England team winning both legs of our final match against Canada. This means that despite a slow start to the season we came through strongly to finish third in the table at the end of the season. Many thanks to the team for supporting the event, including GM Keith Arkell and IM Tom Rendle.

#	Name	Rd 1	Rd 2	Rd 3	Rd 4	Rd 5	Rd 6	Rd 7	Total
1	Kyrgyz Republic	W5	W7	W2	W4	W6	D3	W8	6.5
2	Romania	W4	W8	L1	W3	W5	W6	W7	6
3	England	L7	D5	W8	L2	W4	D1	W6	4
4	United States	L2	W6	W7	L1	L3	W8	W5	4
5	Jamaica	L1	D3	D6	D8	L2	W7	L4	2.5
6	Canada	D8	L4	D5	W7	L1	L2	L3	2
7	Argentina	W3	L1	L4	L6	X8	L5	L2	2
8	Poland	D6	L2	L3	D5	F7	L4	L1	1

Team England continued to compete in daily chess events and Team England Live in the World and European leagues which are the two long-running live chess leagues on Chess.com, with a series of matches this month.

### Lichess Bundesliga

The Lichess Bundesliga is the largest of the international leagues on Lichess with up to 20 divisions, and up to 30 teams per division. The league started as the Quarantine League and then developed into the Bundesliga - <https://lichess.org/blog/X4da-RAAACQAa50f/announcing-the-lichess-bundesliga>

The league team battles took place on Thursday and Sunday Evenings at 7-00 pm through the year with the top three going up and bottom three going down.

Bundesliga Liga N		
Team Battle Positions	Movement	
1	↑	Liga N-1 A
2	↑	Liga N-1 B
3	↑	Liga N-1 C
4		Liga N A
5		Liga N B
6		Liga N C
7		Liga N A
8	↓	Liga N+1 A
9	↓	Liga N+1 B
10	↓	Liga N+1 C

We played in the Bundesliga throughout 2021, mostly in division 4 but moving between divisions 2 and 6 depending on results. The top scorers were GM Keith Arkell and IM Richard Pert in the twice-weekly events along with David Wilson, Henny Penny and Woodpusher - <https://rochadeeuropa.de/turniere/>

### **Torres de Loule/ Liga Ibera**

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

### **Champions League**

This is an international league which ran throughout the year with team battles at 5.30 pm on Tuesdays with around 20 teams and 15 leaders at 3|0 Blitz time control.

### **Other leagues, marathons, bullet events and Fischer random**

We participated 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 20 leaders per team participating in 2 hour arena format team battles at blitz time control. We also took part in a number of the bullet leagues and the Fischer Random Leagues.

## **10. ECF Online Daily Chess**

### **Team England Daily Chess**

The ECF fields England Teams in the Chess.com Nations League (via the ECF Members club) and participates in a series of Team Battle Leagues on Lichess (via the ECF English Chess Players Club). We also support the Team England and Team England Live clubs who participate in the Chess.com Daily Leagues and the World and European Live Leagues.

Our Manager for Daily Chess, Andrew Caswell reports on recent Team England successes, ECF Members Daily Chess and Team England Live Events.

### **Team England and ECF Members Daily Chess**

Daily Chess is an internet chess based form of correspondence chess. Moves are shared over the internet via an internet chess server (e.g. Chess.com or Lichess). Daily matches are configured for a set number of days per move. For example at 3 days per move, you would have a full 72 hours to make your move after which your clock resets for another 3 days. With daily games, you can log out of the site and your game will still be there when you come back. You can check on your game throughout the day whenever you have time to make a move.

Since the early days of Chess.com Team England have been successful in competing in daily (3 days per move) team match competitions. Team England are current World and European Champions for 2020 with a 100% record in both competitions. The team has continued that form into 2021 and remains unbeaten after 8 rounds this year.

ECF members are playing on some of the top boards for Team England. The top 5 ECF members as rated on Chess.com are ---

<https://www.chess.com/member/it-bites>  
<https://www.chess.com/member/nutflush>  
<https://www.chess.com/member/aardvarkcya>  
<https://www.chess.com/member/westy77>  
<https://www.chess.com/member/knightrider185>

Here are a couple of games by ECF members from the 2021 World League season so far.

Team England v Team Holland (1st v 2nd, a 692-a-side match which Team England have won)  
Board 10 <https://www.chess.com/game/daily/311910694>

### RainPiper (2167) - it-bites (2204) [A22]

WL2021 R2: Team England vs Chess Team Ho Chess.com, 15.02.2021

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.e3 Be7 5.d4 exd4 6.Nxd4 0-0 7.Be2 d5 8.Nxd5 Nxd5 9.cxd5 Qxd5  
10.Bf3 Qc4 11.b3 Qa6 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.Be2 Qb6 14.Qc2 Bb4+ 15.Bd2 Rd8 16.Rd1 Ba6 17.Bxa6  
Bxd2+ 18.Rxd2 Qxa6 19.f3 Qa5 20.Ke2 Qg5 21.Kf2 Rxd2+ 22.Qxd2 Rd8 23.Qc3 Rd6 24.h4 Qd8  
25.Ke2 h6 26.Qc2 Rg6 27.Kf2 Qd6 28.Rh3 Qe5 29.Qd2 Rd6 30.Qc2 Qa1

The game has been equal up to this point. White now makes a mistake.

**31.Rg3?** Blocks the K and allows Black's next. Better was h5 making space for the king.



**31...Rd1 32.Rg4 Rf1+ 33.Kg3 Qe5+ 34.f4 Qxe3+ 35.Kh2 h5** it-bites won by resignation

**0-1**

Team England v Team Serbia (1st v 4th, a 224 a side match which Team England have won)  
Board 4 <https://www.chess.com/game/daily/302424664>

### weary\_willy (2097) - biljana\_82 (2140) [B52]

WL2021 R1: Srbija Tim vs Team England, a Chess.com, 15.01.2021

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Bd7 4.Bxd7+ Nxd7** Recapturing with the N with Black looking for a win.



**5.0-0 Ngf6 6.Qe2 e5 7.c3** White will now play to break open the centre with d4 and take advantage of his lead in development.

**7...g6 8.d4 Qc7 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Bg5 Bg7 11.Na3 a6 12.Rad1 b5** Black starts taking space on the queen side.

**13.Nc2 Nb6** The position is about equal.

**14.Nd2 c4 15.f4 0-0 16.f5 h6 17.Bh4 g5 18.Bg3 Qe7 19.h3 Na4 20.Rb1** Black is slightly better with the white rook tied down to defending the b pawn from the marauding black knight.

**20...Rfe8 21.Qe3 Qc5 22.Bf2 Qxe3 23.Nxe3 Rad8** Black is now much better and should look to control the d file.

**24.Rfd1 Rd3 25.Kf1 Red8** Black is winning at this point but misses a discovery with their next move.  
**26.Ke2 Nc5?**



Somehow missing the discovered attack. Black has been better up to this point but White now picks up a pawn.

**27.Nexc4 Ncxe4 28.Nxe4** A second discovered attack - opening the line of the R on d1 and preparing Nxf6 check. Suddenly White is better.

**28...Rxd1 29.Rxd1 Rxd1 30.Nxf6+ Bxf6 31.Kxd1 bxc4 32.Bc5**



**32...Bd8 33.Ke2 f6 34.Kf3 Kf7 35.Ke4 Ke8 36.Kd5 Kd7 37.a4 h5 38.g4** White's extra pawn should be enough with the same coloured bishop ending and Black's pieces tied to defending the f pawn. weary\_willy won by resignation

**1-0**

If you would like to help Team England you can join the club here - <https://www.chess.com/club/team-england>

### **ECF 2020 Daily Chess Championships**

As well as the Team England matches the ECF has been running an ECF Daily Chess tournament which started in 2020 in the ECF members club.

Round 3 of the tournament continues. The original 99 entrants have been reduced to just 9 who are competing in 3 groups of 3 to decide which 3 players will play the in the final round for the title of 2020 Champion.

### **ECF 2021 Daily Championships**

149 players entered the 3 tournament sections (Open, U1750, U1400 as per Chess.com ratings). There are just 8 players left in contention for the U1400 section which is currently led by @benjaminlappin. The U1750 section still has 14 players left with @metal57guru and @southernchris in the joint lead. In the open there are 10 players remaining in the 2nd round matches. They are playing in three groups with the winners of each group going through to the third and final round.



## **Guildford's 25 Years in the 4NCL**

### **Part 1 - Nigel Povah and Roger Emerson chronicle the rise of their 4NCL powerhouse team**

In this series of articles we will cover the history of Guildford teams in Division One of the 4NCL over the past 25 years, from small beginnings to the powerful squad of the late teens of the 21st century. In many ways this growth has mirrored the expansion of the 4NCL itself into a large, successful, and well-managed organisation. While we are now pulling back from our sponsorship, we are confident that the 4NCL itself will continue strongly into the future.

Guildford first entered the 4NCL in 1996 with a team headed up by IMs Andrew Martin, Andrew Kinsman, Nigel Povah and Mark Ferguson, but sponsorship from Nigel didn't commence until the 1999/2000 season when GMs Stuart Conquest, James Plaskett, Daniel King, Jonathan Rowson and Danny Gormally joined the ranks. This enabled Guildford to establish itself as a mid-table team in the highly competitive 4NCL first division.

Slough won the league that year, but Wood Green ran them close, as they had managed to recruit Alexander Morozevich and Nigel Short amongst others. We were due to play Wood Green in round 10 and a discussion arose as to who would play top board with White against Nigel, who was making his first ever appearance in the 4NCL. Jim Plaskett was very keen to take him on, as they had played a number of online blitz games in a particular variation of the Tarrasch French, and Jim felt he had good chances in this line.

### J. Plaskett - N. Short

Guildford vs Wood Green, 4NCL 2000



Plaskett now played **18 ♖c2!** with the idea of ♗b3, so Nigel avoids the hit with **18... ♙a5** which also vacates d5 for his knight.

#### 19 ♚h4?!

This was played after a long think as Jim was clearly trying to formulate a plan. Much better was **19 ♗b3!** with threats of ♜xf7 followed by ♙xe6: for example, **19... ♜c7 20 ♙h6 ♙a3 21 ♜ad1 ♜e4 22 ♖c1 ♙a5**

**23 c4**, with a very active position and swinging a rook to h3 as one of many possibilities, or **19... ♖d5 20 ♙h6 ♜e4 21 ♜xe4! ♖xe4 22 ♜e1 ♖d5 23 ♜e3** and again ♜h3 is coming.

#### 19... ♜xc3?

For some peculiar reason Nigel chooses this very dubious self-pin. **19... ♙a3** was probably best: for instance, **20 ♖h6 ♙xc3 21 ♖xf8 ♜xf8 22 ♖b3 ♙g7** and Black has adequate compensation for the material deficit. If, instead, **19... ♜d5 20 ♙g4 ♜f6** (and not **20... ♜xc3? 21 ♜e3!**) **21 ♙g3 ♙a3 22 ♜ac1** when White is slightly for choice, but Nigel also thought **19... ♜c7** was reasonable, with an unclear position.

#### 20 ♖b3! ♜d5 21 ♙h6

**21 ♙e4!** was best, targeting e6: for example, **21...b5 22 ♖xc3 ♙xc3 23 ♜xf7 ♜xf7 24 ♙xe6 ♖h4 25 ♙h1! ♙c6 26 ♙xc6 ♖xc6 27 ♜ac1 ♖b7 28 ♜e5 ♜d7 29 ♜c5** and wins.

#### 21... ♖b4?

Better was 21... ♖f6! 22 ♜ac1 ♘g7 23 ♚g5 ♘f6 24 ♚g4 ♘xe5 25 dxe5 ♚c5 26 ♘xc3 ♗xc3 27 ♚c4, restricting White to a clear plus.

**22 ♗d7**

22 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 23 ♗d7 was the more accurate move order: 23... ♜d8 24 ♘xd5 ♘xd4 25 ♘xb7 ♘xa1 26 ♜xa1 ♜xd7 27 ♘f3, winning.

**22... ♜d8?**

The final mistake. 22... ♚b5! 23 ♘xc3 ♚xd7 24 ♘xb4 ♗xb4 25 ♜ad1 and 22... ♜c7 23 ♘xb4 ♚xb4 24 ♗xf8 ♚xf8 would both allow Black to play on.

**23 ♘xd5 ♜xd7**



**24 ♜xe6!** A killer blow.

**24...fxe6**

White also wins after 24... ♜c8 25 ♜xg6+ hxg6 26 ♚xg6+ ♗h8 (or 26... ♗f8 27 ♘h6+ ♗e8 28 ♚g8+ ♗e7 29 ♚xf7+ ♗d8 30 ♘g5+ ♘e7 31 ♚f8+ ♗c7 32 ♘f4+ ♘d6 33 ♜c1+) 27 ♚h5+ ♗g8 28 ♚g4+ ♗h8 29 ♘xb7.

**25 ♘xe6+ ♗h8 26 ♘xc3**

The important follow-up to White's 24th.

**26... ♜d8**

Instead, 26... ♜g7 (or 26... ♘d5 27 ♘xd7 ♚a3 28 ♘xb4) 27 a3!! attacks the bishop which has to guard f8, as, for instance, 27... ♘xc3 is simply met by 28 ♚f4!, threatening both ♚f8+ and ♚b8+ with mate to follow on g8, while moving the h-pawn sees ♚h6+ and mate on f8.

**27 ♚f4 1-0**

If 27... ♜f8 28 d5+ ♘xc3 29 ♚xf8# or 27... ♗g7 28 ♘xb4 ♚xb4 29 ♚c7+ ♗f6 30 ♚f7+ ♗g5 31 h4+ ♗h6 (31... ♗xh4 32 ♚f6+ picks up the rook) 32 g4 and Black cannot escape the mating net.

From 2000/01 onwards, sponsorship was increased with Nigel Povah's company, Assessment & Development Consultants, providing the funding. The team was rebranded Guildford-A&DC but still struggled to compete with the might of Beeson Gregory and Slough, as well as the rising star Wood Green. Stuart Conquest had an excellent season, often playing on board one and scoring an undefeated 9/11. He produced this very nice finish against Douglas Bryson.



### S. Conquest - D. Bryson

Guildford-A&DC vs Poisoned Pawns

4NCL 2001



Bryson has just played 44... ♔h7 and Stuart now finds a nice sequence to force his a-pawn home:

**45 ♖xf6!! gxf6 46 ♖d7+ ♔h8**

Clearly not 46... ♔g6?? 47 h5+ ♔g5 48 ♖g7#.

**47 a6 ♖a2 48 a7 ♖ea5 49 ♖d8+ 1-0**

In 2001/02 GM Tony Kosten joined the Guildford-A&DC ranks and immediately made a positive contribution, scoring 7/10 operating on one of the top three boards, including this win against Paul Littlewood.

### P. Littlewood - A. Kosten

Guildford-A&DC vs Wood Green II,

4NCL 2001



Black is a pawn behind, but he has managed to damage White's kingside so the position is roughly equal. However, Tony hopes he might be able to create some play. One thing that is true about Tony: he is a fighter and not known to give up easily.

**29 ♖bd1 ♔g7 30 h4**

This weakens the white king position. 30 ♖a1, preparing to mobilise the a-pawn, was a better try.

**30... ♖f5 31 ♖1d3 ♖c1+ 32 ♔h2 ♟h5**

Black eyes up the weak f4-square.

33 ♖e3 ♜f1 34 ♔g2 ♜a1 35 ♘c2 ♜f4+ 36 ♔h2 ♜f6 37 a4 h6 38 ♜d1 ♜a2 39 ♜c3 ♜e6?  
39... ♜e2! was best: 40 ♜c7 ♜xf3 41 ♔g2 ♜aa3 with an edge for Black.

40 ♜d2

40 ♘b3! ♜xf2+ 41 ♔g3 ♜e2+ 42 ♔xf2 ♜xc3 43 ♜d3 ♜c6 is very promising for White, as the exchange of a pair of rooks reduces the danger to the white king and he can now try to exploit his passed a-pawn.

40...g5 41 hxg5 hxg5 42 ♜c5 ♜h6+ 43 ♔g1 ♜h3+ 44 ♔f1 ♜h5



A rather passive looking move, but it anticipates White's reply.

45 ♜dd5 ♜xc2!

A clever resource, but 45... ♜f4! was even better: 46 ♜xg5+ ♔f8! when the twin back rank mating threats force 47 ♔e1 ♜xg5 48 ♜xg5 ♜xc2, which is superior to the line in the game as the white king is prevented from joining the action.

46 ♜xc2 ♜f4



47 ♜xg5+ ♜xg5

Black now has a won position and it is just a matter of technique, although White does at least have his a-pawn.

48 ♜c4 ♜g6 49 ♔e2 ♜g1 50 f4 ♔f6 51 ♔f3 ♜h4+ 52 ♔e4 ♜e1+  
52... ♜g6! was better.

53 ♔d5 ♜a1 54 ♔c6 ♜f5

Or 54... ♜g6 55 ♔b6 ♜e7 56 a5 ♜d5+ 57 ♔b5 ♔e6 and wins.

55 ♔b6 ♜d6 56 ♜b4 ♔e6 57 a5 ♔d5 58 a6 ♜c4+



### 59 ♖b7?

59 ♖a7! was more tricky, although Black is fine if he plays 59... ♗d6 60 ♜b3 ♜c1! 61 ♖b6 ♜c6+! 62 ♖a7 when Black's rook and knight are beautifully co-ordinated to hold up the advance of the a-pawn and allowing him to activate his king: 62... ♖e4 63 ♜e3+ (not 63 ♜b6?? ♗c8+ and 63 ♜b4+ ♖f5 64 ♜b3

♖xf4 65 ♜e3 f5 66 ♜b3 ♖e5 is similar to what now follows) 63... ♖xf4 64 ♜e2 ♖f3 65 ♜a2 f5 66 ♖b8 f4 67 ♜a4 (clearly not 67 a7?? ♜c8#) 67... ♖g4 68 ♖a7 ♖f5 69 f3 ♖e5 70 ♜a1 ♖d4 71 ♜a2 ♖e3 72 ♜a3+ ♖e2 when Black aims to give up his knight for the a-pawn with a winning rook and pawn ending.

### 59... ♖c5!

The rook has no safe squares.

60 ♜xc4+ ♖xc4 61 a7 f5 62 a8 ♖ ♜xa8 63 ♖xa8 ♖d3 64 ♖b7 ♖e2 65 ♖c6 ♖xf2 66 ♖d5 ♖f3 67 ♖e5 ♖g4 0-1

Winning by the single tempo.

It wasn't until 2002/03 when the addition of Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova, fellow GMs Mark Hebden, Glenn Flear, Joe Gallagher and Eric Prié, as well as IM Alexander Cherniaev, ensured that Guildford-A&DC could finally muster a strong challenge to the top seeds, Wood Green, but it still wasn't sufficient to prevent Wood Green securing their first title. Indeed the two sides went on to have a number of hard-fought, last-round clashes over the next four years.

In 2003/04 it was Guildford-A&DC's turn to win the league for the first time with a final round 4½-3½ victory over Wood Green, thanks to impressive wins from Emil Sutovsky and Danny King, who scored a stunning 9½/10 throughout the season. Alexander Cherniaev also had a good season for Guildford, scoring an impressive 8/10, which included a solid draw against Luke McShane in the final crunch match with Wood Green and enabled him to secure his final GM norm.

### E. Sutovsky - A. Morozevich

Guildford-A&DC v Wood Green,  
4NCL 2004  
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♘b5 ♗f6 4 e5

4 ♗c3 is the most popular move here.

4... ♖d5 5 0-0 a6?!

5... ♖c7 is the more natural continuation.

6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 ♗g5!?

Sutovsky plays in his typical enterprising style, moving his only developed piece a second time to target the weak f7-square.

7... ♖c7

Both players praised this move after the game. One wonders what Sutovsky intended after 7...h6 since 8 ♖h5?! (8 ♗e4 is best with equality) 8...g6 9 ♖h4 e6 sees the knight having to retreat when Black is better.

8 c4



Sutovsky continues with his direct play.

8... ♗b4?!

Morozevich decides on a forcing variation. 8... ♗f4! was much safer: 9 d4!? ♗e6 10 d5 (10 ♗xe6?! ♙xe6 11 d5 cxd5 12 cxd5 0-0-0 13 ♙f4 ♙xd5 is much better for Black) 10... ♗xg5 11 ♙xg5 cxd5 12 cxd5 ♖xe5 13

♙e3 offers dynamic play for the material.

9 a3 ♗d3 10 ♗xf7

Sutovsky had spent a lot of time examining the various lines and only had about 30 minutes left at this stage to reach move 40.

10... ♖g8?!

Morozevich is hoping to weather the storm, but he seems to misjudge the coming danger. Both players saw 10... ♖xf7 11 ♖f3+ ♗g8 12 ♖xd3 ♖xe5 was possible, with a position that slightly appears to favour White due to Black's disrupted position despite his bishop-pair.

11 ♖f3 ♖d7

White is already winning after 11... ♙e6 12 ♗g5 ♙xc4 13 ♖e4 ♗xe5 14 ♖e1 h6 15 ♗h3 and 11... ♗xe5?? 12 ♖f4.

12 ♗d6+!

12 e6 was the main alternative: 12... ♖xe6 13 ♖xd3 ♖xf7 14 ♖b3 with an edge. However, not 14 ♖xh7? ♙f5 15 ♖h4 g5 16 ♖g3 0-0-0 and Black is clearly on top.

12...exd6 13 ♖xd3 dxe5

After the game both players thought 13... ♖f5 was best, but the engines still prefer White after 14 ♖b3 b5 15 d3 ♙e6 16 exd6 ♙xd6 17 ♗c3.

14 ♖xh7 ♖f7 15 ♖e1 ♙e6

15... ♖e7 16 ♜xe5 ♜f8 17 ♚h5 is only a little better for White.

**16 ♚d3!**



Repatriating the queen and keeping the black king in the centre. Not 16 ♜xe5? inviting trouble after 16... ♗d6 17 ♜e3 0-0-0.

**16... ♜d8?!**

This leaves the king stuck in the centre. 16... ♗xc4 17 ♜xe5+ ♗e7 18 ♚e3 ♗d7 19 d3 ♗d5 20 ♗c3 ♗d6 21 ♜g5 ♜ae8 22 ♗e4, when White is clearly better, was probably a better defence than in the game.

**17 ♚g3 ♗d6?**

The engines prefer 17... ♚f5, tempting White to play 18 ♜xe5 ♚f6 intending ... ♗d6 with tempo: 19 ♚e3 ♗f7 20 ♜e4 ♗f5 and Black is fighting back.

**18 ♗c3 e4** Black cannot allow ♗e4.

**19 ♚e3 ♗xh2+**

Desperation as if 19... ♜h8 20 h3.

**20 ♗xh2 ♜h8+ 21 ♗g1 ♚h5**



Despite being short of time, Sutovsky calmly defends.

**22 f4! ♚h2+ 23 ♗f2 ♜h4**

Alternatively, 23... ♜d3 24 ♚xe4 ♚g3+ 25 ♗e2 ♗f7 26 f5! ♜e8 27 fxe6+ ♜xe6 28 ♚xe6+ ♗xe6 29 ♗e4!, winning the rook and leaving White with a massive material advantage.

**24 d3**

The engines prefer 24 d4!, but the move played also works in that both see f4 defended.

**24... ♜xd3 25 ♚xe4 ♚g3+ 26 ♗g1 ♜d6**

After 26... ♖h2+ 27 ♔f1 there is no perpetual or 26... ♔d8 27 ♘e3 with an easy win (27 ♖xd3+ ♖xd3 28 ♜d1 also wins due to the extra piece).

27 ♘e3 ♖h2+ 28 ♔f2 ♜g4 29 ♜ad1

♖g3+ 30 ♔f1 ♔f8

A desperate time trouble shot...

31 ♜xd6 ♘xc4+ ...which is easily met by:

32 ♘e2 1-0

### A. Baburin - D. King

Wood Green vs Guildford-A&DC

4NCL 2004



Having steadily outplayed Alexander Baburin, Danny King finishes the game with a nice tactic.

24... ♖xd4! 25 ♜e2

25 exd4 ♜xe1+ 26 ♔g2 ♘e3+ 27 ♖xe3 (if 27 ♔f3 ♘g4+ 28 ♔f4 ♜xf2+ 29 ♘f3 ♜xf3+ 30 ♔g5 ♜f5+ 31 ♔h4 g5# or 27 ♔h2 ♜xf2#) 27... ♜xe3 is hopeless.

25... ♖f6 26 ♜xb2 ♘xb2

With a safe extra pawn.

27 ♘c2 ♘g4 28 ♘d3 ♘xd3 29 ♘xd3 ♘f3 30 ♘f1 c5 31 ♘g2 d4 32 exd4 cxd4 33 ♜b1 d3 34 ♘xf3 ♖xf3 35 ♖c4 d2 36 ♖f1 g6 37 ♜d1 ♖xd1 38 ♖xd1 ♜e1+ 0-1

The 2004/05 season saw Guildford players achieving some exciting finishes. Nigel had a particularly satisfying weekend in November, winning the following miniature on a Saturday.

### N. Povah - A. Walton

Guildford-A&DC vs Numerica 3Cs 4NCL 2004

Dutch Defence

1 d4 e6 2 ♘f3 f5 3 e4!?

This gambit, which I christened 'The Deferred Staunton Gambit', was a line I had found after looking for a way of meeting the Dutch after 1...e6 and 2...f5, and at the time there were fewer than 30 games on the Mega Database. I ended up playing the line 10 times between 2002 and 2016, scoring 70% and wrote an article on it for Volume 5 of Secrets of Opening Surprises in 2006. Even today the online database only gives 64 games, with White scoring reasonably well.

3...fxe4 4 ♘g5 ♘f6

4...d5 is the much less popular alternative.

### 5 f3

Playing in true gambit style.

### 5...exf3

5...c5 is Black's most popular reply: 6 fxe4 cxd4 7 ♖d3 ♗c6 8 0-0 ♘d6 when White can continue with either 9 ♗a3 or 9 ♗d2 with reasonable prospects.

### 6 ♖xf3



White intends ♗d3, 0-0 and ♖h3 with dangerous kingside threats.

### 6...c5?!

This is too slow. 6... ♗c6 is best: 7 c3 ♗e7 8 ♗d3 0-0 9 ♖h3 h6 10 ♗g6 e5! (10...hxc5 11 ♗xc5 is much better for White) 11 0-0 exd4 12 cxd4 ♗xd4?! (12...d5! is excellent for Black) 13 ♗c3 d5 14 ♖d3 hxc5 15 ♖xd4 g4 16 ♗g5 c6 17 ♖f2 ♗d7?? (a terrible blunder; 17...♖b6 18 ♗e3 ♖b4 19 ♖h4 ♗e6 retains the upper hand) 18 ♗f7+ (18 ♖h4! is even stronger) 18... ♗xf7 19 ♖xf7+ ♗h7 20 ♗xe7 ♖b6+ 21 ♗h1 1-0, Netusil-Vavruska, Czech League 1992.

### 7 ♗d3 ♖e7?

This doesn't help at all, although White should be winning after 7... ♗c6 8 ♗xh7

♗xd4 9 ♗g6+ ♗e7 10 ♖f2.

### 8 0-0 ♗c6



### 9 ♗xh7! ♗xd4

Alternatively, 9... ♗xh7 10 ♗xh7 ♗xd4 (or 10... ♗xh7 11 ♖h5+ g6 12 ♖xg6+ ♗d8 13 ♗f7) 11 ♖d3 or 9... ♗xh7 10 ♖h5+, winning in both cases.

### 10 ♗g6+ ♗d8

Alan had used over an hour by this point, compared to my 13 minutes.

**11 ♖d3 ♗c7 12 ♜f7 ♝h4??**

Overlooking the simple fork, but 12... ♜g8 13 ♞f4+ ♚b6 (or 13... ♚c6 14 ♞d6 when White wins after 14... ♜xd6 15 ♜xd6 ♞xd6 16 c3 ♜f5 17 ♜a3 or 14... ♜e8 15 ♜e5+) 14 b4 is overwhelming with threats

like c3 and ♞d6 in the air.

**13 ♜g3+ d6 14 ♜xh4 1-0**

Then on the following day Nigel managed to execute the following strong finish.

### N. Povah - J. Sisask

Guildford-A&DC vs Bristol, 4NCL 2004



White has just captured on b6, so Black decides to challenge the invader.

**31... ♜fb8?**

However, with all of Black's pieces on the queenside, he is vulnerable to a kingside attack. 31...f6 was better, although White still enjoys a significant advantage.

**32 ♜xh6!!**

I'd seen that this and my next move would create a very powerful attack.

**32...gxf6**

Alternatively, 32... ♜b2 33 ♜xf7! gxf6 (33... ♚xf7 34 ♜h5+ ♚e7 35 d6+ mates again) 34 ♜h5 ♜b6 35 ♜f5 mates or 32... ♜xc4 33 ♜xc4 gxf6 34 ♜f6 ♚g7 35 ♜f3 ♜f8 36 ♜xe5 ♜a7 37 ♜f4 with a crushing attack.

**33 ♜f6!**





A quiet move which takes control of the sixth rank and allows my queen into the game. I can't claim to have seen all of the variations in depth, but I was very confident that my three remaining pieces would combine effectively against Black's lone king, particularly as all of his forces were out of play on the queenside.

### 33... ♖f8

Alternatively, 33... ♖g7 34 ♜xh6! ♜g8 (or 34... ♖xh6 35 ♘f5+ ♖h7 36 ♜h5+ ♖g8 37 ♜h6 with an inevitable mate on g7) 35 ♜h5 ♖f8 36 ♜h7 ♜a7 37 ♜h6+ ♖e8 38 ♜d6! with threats of ♘g4-f6#, or ♘f5-g7+ followed by ♜h8 mate, as well as ♜b8+: for instance, 38... ♜d7 39 ♜b8+ ♜d8 40 ♜xe5+ ♖f8 41 ♘f5 ♜d7 42 ♜h8 and it's all over. Here 34 ♜f3! is also winning: 34... ♜d7 (or 34... ♜a7 35 ♜xh6! ♜g8 – 35... ♖xh6 fails to 36 ♜f6+ ♖h7 37 ♘f5 – with mate to follow) 36 ♜f6+ ♖f8 37 ♘f5 ♘xc4 38 ♜h8 ♘e3+ 39 ♖f3 ♘xf5 40 ♜d8+ ♖g7 41 ♜xg8+ ♖h7 42 ♜h8+) 35 ♜d6 ♜c8 36 ♜h5 and wins.

### 34 ♜h5 ♜d7 35 ♘f5

Not the most accurate, but good enough, with the engines now giving mate in 17. They prefer 35 ♜xh6! with mate in nine: 35... ♜b6 36 ♜h8+ ♖g7 37 ♜h7+ ♖f8 38 ♘f5 when Black has to give up material to delay mate.

### 35... ♖e8 36 ♜xh6 ♖d8 37 ♜d6 ♘b7

37... ♜b7 holds out a bit longer, but is still pretty hopeless after 38 ♜f8+ ♖c7 39 ♜xd7+ ♖xd7 40 ♜xa8 with mate in 11.

### 38 ♜f8+ 1-0

Black had had enough, as 38... ♖c7 39 ♜xd7+ ♖xd7 leads to mate as given in the next note and the pointless 39... ♖b6 40 ♜h6+ doesn't last much longer. Instead, 38 ♜f6+! led to the same mate without giving him the ... ♖b6 option: 38... ♖c8 39 ♜xd7 ♖xd7 40 ♜e7+ ♖c8 41 ♖d6 ♘xd6 42 ♘xd6#.

The big clash between Guildford-A&DC and Wood Green in the final round ended 4-4, enabling Wood Green to win the title on game points. However, the standout game of the match saw Emil Sutovsky at his spectacular best, with this sparkling finish, perhaps one of the best ever seen in the 4NCL, which arguably deserved to see Guildford win the crown, but it wasn't to be.

## E. Sutovsky - I. Sokolov

Guildford-A&DC vs Wood Green,  
4NCL 2005



**22... ♔f8**

Played to avoid the loss of the queen to ♖f6+, but Sutovsky is not deterred.

**23 ♜ef6!! gxf6**

23... ♖d8 24 ♜xh7+ ♜xh7 25 ♙xd8 wins.

**24 ♜xf6 ♖c4**

Black is helpless too after 24... ♖d8 25 ♙h6+ ♔e7 26 ♖f3! d2 27 ♖xc6!! dxe1 ♖+ 28 ♜xe1 ♜g8 29 ♜d5+ ♖xd5 30 ♖xd5.

**25 ♜e4 ♜cd4! 26 ♙h6+**

26 cxd4 h6 27 ♜c1 ♖xa2 28 ♙e3 is also winning for White.

**26... ♔e7 27 cxd4 ♜xd4 28 ♜c1 ♖xa2 29 ♜xd4 ♜hd8!**



Sokolov is relying on his powerful passed d-pawn, rather than 29... ♜ad8 30 ♜a1 ♖e2 31 ♜d5+ ♜xd5 32 ♖xe2 dxe2 33 ♜xd5 when White wins.

**30 ♜f4**

Sutovsky rejected 30 ♖xd3 because he couldn't find a suitable follow-up after 30... ♜xd4 31 ♜xc7+! ♔d8! 32 ♜d7+ ♔c8 33 ♜xd4? ♖a1+!, but instead 33 ♖f3! ♖b1+ 34 ♔h2 ♜xh4+ 35 ♔g3 ♖g6+ 36 ♔xh4 ♖xh6+ 37 ♔g3 ♖g5+ 38 ♔h2 wins, as does 30 ♙g5 ♜xd4 31 ♖f3 ♜b8 32 ♜d5+ ♔e8 33 e6.

**30...d2 31 ♜c3!**

White also wins with 31 ♜xh7 dxc1 ♖ 32 ♙g5+ ♔e8 33 ♖xc1 ♔d7 (33...c5 to prevent ♖c6+ runs into 34 e6! ♖xe6 35 ♜f6+ ♔e7 36 ♜e4) 34 ♖d1+ ♔c8 35 ♖xd8+.

**31... ♖a4!**

Sutovsky had a long think here. He was running out of time and I remember thinking his position was looking pretty grim, but he played:

**32 ♜g8+ ♔e8**

Best and clearly not 32... ♔e6? 33 ♜f6+ with mate in three against either 33... ♔xe5 or 33... ♔d7.

**33 ♜f6+ ♔e7**



Here Nigel thought Emil was going to take the perpetual, but he suddenly played a stunning sacrifice:

**34 ♖d5+!! ♜xd5**

Note that 34... ♙e8 allows 35 ♜xd2.

**35 ♜xf7+!!**

And now he goes all in with another sacrifice. The engines already announce mate in 8!

**35... ♙d8**

If 35... ♙xf7 36 ♜f3+ ♙e8 (36... ♙e6 37 ♜f6+ ♙d7 38 ♜f5+ transposes or if 36... ♙g8 37 ♜xd5+ ♙h8 38 ♜xa8#) 37 ♜f8+ ♙d7 38 ♜f5+! ♙e7 39 ♜g5+ ♙e8 40 ♜e6+ ♙f8 41 ♜h6# or 35... ♙e6 36 ♜g4+ ♙xf7 (or 36... ♙xe5 37 ♜e7+ ♙f6 38 ♜e6#) 37 ♜f3+ ♙e8 38 ♜e6+ ♙d8 39 ♜g5#.

**36 ♜f8+ ♙e7 37 ♜g5+ 1-0**

It's mate in six after 37... ♙xf8 38 ♜f3+ ♙g8 (or 38... ♙e8 39 ♜h5+ ♙d7 40 ♜g4+ ♙e8 41 ♜e6+ ♙f8 42 ♜h6 mate) 39 ♜xd5+ ♙g7 40 ♜h6+ ♙xh6 41 ♜e6+ ♙h5 42 ♜f5+ ♙xh4 43 ♜g3 mate.

After the game Sutovsky explained that he had seen this winning idea back when he played 31 ♜c3, but he then doubted himself after 31... ♙a4, forgetting that after his ♖d5+ a king move would allow the simple and winning ♜xd2. An amazing finale to a highly entertaining game.

Wood Green managed to retain their title in 2005/06 after another 4-4 draw against Guildford-A&DC, enabling them to win the league by a single game point, with both teams having won their other 10 matches.

In 2006/07 Wood Green temporarily lost their sponsorship from Brian Smith, who had supported them so impressively for many years, and this left the field open for Guildford-A&DC to 'sweep the board' with its first team winning the title with 11/11 and its second team coming second with 10/11. It is also worth noting that 11 Guildford-A&DC players occupied the top 15 places for the highest percentage scores in the first division.

This feat of taking the top two places was repeated again in 2007/08 and in 2014-15 under Roger's stewardship. No other team has ever managed to take the top two places in the 4NCL.

The final round clash of the 2007/08 season with Hilsmark Kingfisher proved to be rather one-sided as Guildford-A&DC emerged as 7-1 victors with Eric Prié winning the following interesting game.

## E. Prié - R. Britton

Guildford-A&DC v Hilsmark

Kingfisher, 4NCL 2008

London System

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 d5 3 a3**

One of Eric's many offbeat ideas which he has played countless times.

**3...g6**

3...e6 is most common when Eric has played both 4 ♘g5 and 4 ♘f4.

**4 ♘f4 ♘g7 5 e3**

Eric is playing a London System set-up, which he is very familiar with, but here he has committed to a3, which may or may not prove helpful.

**5... ♘bd7 6 h3 c6**

This is rather passive. 6...b6 aiming to fight for the e4-square was an option. So too was 6...c5, as was 6...0-0, deferring the decision about how to play on the queenside.

**7 ♘bd2 0-0 8 ♘e2 ♘e4**

8...c5 was played against Gata Kamsky, another London System expert: 9 c3 b6 10 a4 a5 11 0-0 ♘b7 12 ♖b3 ♗c8 13 ♘b1 ♘e4 14 ♘a3 ♘c6 15 ♘b5 e6 16 ♗fd1 ♖b7 17 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♘b5 and White won in 44 moves, Kamsky-Chirila, Philadelphia 2014.

**9 0-0 ♗b6**

A common idea in these London set-ups, targeting the b-pawn.

**10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♘d2**



Eric offers the pawn, and it looks like it can be taken. Black has lost all three games here when he did so, but White is already better due to the weak e4-pawn

**11... ♗xb2**

Or 11...c5 12 ♘c4 ♗d8 13 c3 cxd4 14 cxd4 with a clear structural advantage.

**12 ♗b1 ♗xa3**

12... ♗c3 13 ♘c4 with ♗b3 to follow is even worse, as White has retained more of his pawns.

**13 ♘c4 ♗a4 14 ♗a1 ♗b5**

14... ♗b4? led to even quicker disaster: 15 c3 ♗xc3 16 ♗c1 and the queen was trapped in Hoang-Makropoulou, Mardin 2011.

**15 ♗a5 ♗b4 16 c3 ♗xc3 17 ♗b1!**



There's to be no escape from ♖c1.

**17...c5**

White also wins after 17... ♗b6 18 ♗xb6 ♖xa5 19 ♗xa8 e5 20 dxe5 ♘xe5 21 ♖xe4 ♘xf4 22 ♖xf4.

**18 ♖b5 cxd4 19 ♖c1 ♖xc1+**

19...a6 20 ♖b3 ♖xb3 21 ♖xb3 was hopeless too in Mohr-Bratovic, Bled 2002.

**20 ♖xc1 d3 21 ♘d1 b6 22 ♖a3 ♘b7?**

The engines suggest the clever 22... ♗c5! when the b6-pawn is tactically taboo due to the monstrous d-pawn after 23 ♗xb6? axb6 24 ♖xa8 ♘d7 25 ♖a7 ♘xb5 26 ♖xb6 ♘a4 27 ♖xc5 ♘xd1. Similarly if 23 ♖xb6? axb6 24 ♖xa8 ♘a6 25 ♖d5 e6, but there is no need to take on b6 and White can continue with 23 ♘e5 ♘e6 24 ♘g7 ♖xg7 25 ♗d2 ♘d5 when 26 f3 is just one illustration of White's superiority: 26...exf3 27 e4 ♘c6 28 ♖xc5 bxc5 29 ♖xc5 ♖fc8 30 ♖xe7 and wins.

**23 ♖xe7 ♘c6 24 ♖b1 ♖fe8 25 ♖a3 ♘d5 26 ♗d6 ♖e6 27 f3 f5 28 ♖b5 ♗c5 29 ♖xc5! bxc5 30 ♖xc5**

The bishop is in trouble and Black isn't saved by 30... ♖xd6 31 ♖xd6 ♘f7 32 fxe4 (or 32 ♖d7, preventing the rook on a8 getting active) 32...fxe4 33 ♖c6 ♖e8 34 ♘b3.

**30... ♘a2 31 ♖a5 1-0**

In 2008/09 the final match was contested with the newly-formed Wood Green Hilsmark Kingfisher (WGHK) and it resulted in another 4-4 finale, enabling WGHK to take the title, which Guildford-A&DC would have taken had they won the match.

By 2009/10 and 2010/11 work pressures forced Nigel Povah to reduce his sponsorship, with him having to withdraw altogether in late 2011 due to illness. Fortunately, Nigel's close friend and Guildford and former Streatham & Brixton club-mate, Roger Emerson, stepped in.

## **Part 2 - Nigel Povah and Roger Emerson explain how Guildford continued to raise the bar**

Taking over management from Nigel in November 2011, Roger brought in a number of new players, including grandmaster Romain Edouard (about whom more later), and several overseas titled players now living in or with close ties to England, including GM David Smerdon, IM Gediminas Saraukas, his wife Zivile and her sister IM Dagne Ciuksyte, who is now a mainstay of the England Women's team.

Because we had slipped to a disappointing seventh place the previous season, in 2011/12 we were due to meet favourites Wood Green in round 4 in January 2012, so Roger sought to ambush them by bringing back Ety Stefanova and also hiring Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Nigel Short on the top two boards.

Unfortunately things didn't go to plan. Nigel got outplayed as Black by David Howell in a strange French Defence (see CHESS, March 2012, pp. 30-31) and MVL was lucky to escape with a draw against Stephen Gordon, who missed a winning chance.

### M. Vachier-Lagrave - S. Gordon

Guildford vs Wood Green, 4NCL 2012



Stephen has just played 23...e5. Realising that 24 ♖e3 ♘b7, with the threat of 25...♙e4 was winning for Black, as was 24 ♘xe5 ♙e4, Maxime felt he needed to hit out:

**24 g5!?**

Now Black can actually play 24...exd4 as 25 ♖xd4 ♙a5 26 gxf6 g6 is fine for him.

**24...f5**

This looks fine, but after...

**25 ♘xe5! ♙e4 26 f3 ♙e3+ 27 ♙f2 ♙xg5+ 28 ♖h2 ♖xe5 29 f4**

...White recovers the piece.

**29...♙g2+ 30 ♙xg2 ♘xg2 31 ♖g1 ♖e4 32 ♖xg2 ♖xf4 33 ♖d7**

And Maxime was able to generate sufficient counterplay to liquidate down to a drawn ending.

However, ½/2 on our top two boards was certainly not what we had been hoping for. Worse was to follow, as Dave Smerdon missed a chance against Nick Pert just before the time control.

## N. Pert - D. Smerdon

Wood Green vs Guildford, 4NCL 2012



### 38...h4! 39 f3 g4 hxg3?

With seconds left, Dave misses 39...h3! 40 ♖f3 (or 40 ♖xc6 b4!) h2 41 g5 g6 42 g4 ♜d5!, winning. 40 ♖f3 ♜d5? 41 ♖xd5+ cxd5 42 g5 g2 43 ♖d4...And White won.

One further win with White and no losses for Wood Green saw them come out as comfortable 5½-2½ winners, and our further loss against White Rose in round 9 relieved Wood Green of any pressure as they powered to their sixth championship.

## 2012-13

Clearly something more was needed if Guildford was going to mount a serious challenge in 2012/13. So, in addition to having Ety Stefanova and Nigel Short playing on a regular basis, Roger added Gawain Jones and Robin van Kampen while bringing back Mark Hebden.

By the final weekend another tight finish against Wood Green seemed in prospect, so Roger managed the coup of bringing Matthew Sadler back to English chess. For their part, Wood Green added Alexei Shirov and Vassily Ivanchuk to the mix, after pretending to have signed up fifteen of the top sixteen players in the world. Apparently this was an idea cooked up in the pub; perhaps it should have stayed there, but it gave Roger the inspiration for a Star Wars themed team talk about defeating the Wood Green “Evil Empire”.

Round 10 on the Sunday swung our way, as an 8-0 demolition of Cheddleton, who had previously drawn 4-4 with Wood Green, saw us finally edging ahead on the all-important game points. And so to Round 11, where Roger’s guesses on pairings worked.

Simon Ansell’s excellent article in the June 2013 edition of CHESS (pp. 14-19) covered our all-GM clash against Wood Green in some detail, including Gawain Jones’s “solid” draw on board 1 against Alexei Shirov, Mickey Adams’s win for Wood Green on board 2 balanced by Robin van Kampen’s win on board 7 for Guildford, and Nigel Short’s scrambled draw on board 5 against David Howell. While the other four boards were all draws, they were all highly competitive.

Perhaps the most comfortable, on its face, was Matthew Sadler’s draw with Black against Ivanchuk on board 4(!), in what Nigel Short called “a rancid Dutch”. The players’ joint postmortem showed how much they had both seen.

## V. Ivanchuk - M. Sadler

Wood Green vs Guildford, 4NCL 2013

Dutch Defence



The two players analysed this position after the game in some depth, with Roger Emerson and Luke McShane looking on, exploring Ivanchuk's suggestion of 16 ♖fe1. Further discussion produced this analysis: 16...e5! 17 cxd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 19 g4! ♜f7 (19... ♜g6 20 gxf5 ♜xf5? 21 e4 ♗xd4 22 ♖c4 pins and wins) 20 f4!? (a remarkable possibility pointed out by Ivanchuk; after 20 gxf5 exd4 21 e4 ♖a5 22 ♗c4 ♜xc4 23 ♖xc4+ ♗h8 Black is at least OK) 20...exd4 (Matthew later decided 20...exf4 was likely stronger) 21 ♜xd5 ♜xd5 22 gxf5 dxe3 23 ♖xe3 ♖f6 (Black has some practical compensation for the exchange) 24 ♖d3 (the modern day engines think White is clearly better after the calm 24 ♖cd1 or 24 ♗e4) 24... ♗b4 (if 24... ♗d4 25 ♖e5 ♖b6 26 ♗f1) 25 ♖c3 (Black is winning at the end of the long line 25 ♖g3 ♖b6+ 26 ♗f1 ♖xf5 27 ♖e8+ ♗f7 28 ♖ce1 g5 29 ♖1e7+ ♗g6! 30 ♖f8 ♖b5+ 31 ♗e1? ♗d3+ 32 ♗d1 ♜xb3+ 33 axb3 ♖xf8) 25... ♖b6+ 26 ♖c5 ♗d3 is very promising for Black.

**16 cxd5 exd5 17 ♖fe1 ♖d6 18 ♖b5 ♖b8 19 ♖c5 a6 20 ♗a4 b6 21 ♖c3 a5 22 ♗b2 ♗b4 23 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 24 ♖xc7 ♗e8 25 ♖cc1 ♗xa2 26 ♖c2 ♗b4 27 ♖c3 ♗a2 ½-½**

We subsequently decided that slightly better for Black beforehand would have been to play 14... ♖ad8 before ... ♜h5 and wait to see White's response before moving his bishop, but all in all it was an excellent game by Matthew and just what we needed.

On board 3, Romain Edouard's early space advantage against Luke McShane came to naught, and he had a knight worryingly offside approaching the time control. A nice combination solved all his problems, and we had another half-point in the bag.



### R. Edouard - L. McShane

Guildford vs Wood Green, 4NCL 2013



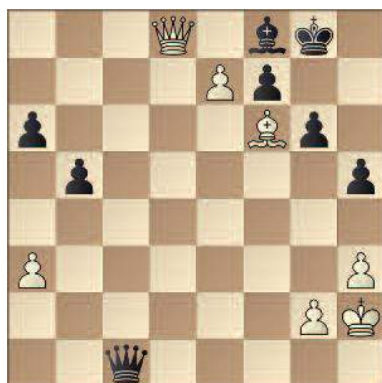
**38 h4 ♖g8 39 g5+! hxg5 40 hxg5+ ♔f7 41 ♘c4! dxc4 42 ♖xe6! ♕xe6 43 ♙c4+ ♔f5 ½-½**

On the lower boards Ety Stefanova and Mark Hebden both had winning chances against Nick Pert and Jonathan Rowson, but two further draws were sufficient for us to tie the match 4-4 and become champions.

Even more rejoicing followed as Guildford II somehow managed to avoid relegation by the slenderest of margins through a final round 6-2 win against none other than Wood Green II. On board 1, Yang-Fan Zhou was the happy recipient of a time-trouble present from Alex Baburin.

### Y. F. Zhou - A. Baburin

Guildford II vs Wood Green II, 4NCL 2013



**38... ♕f4+ 39 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 40 ♔f2 ♕c2+??**

40... ♕f4+ draws.

**41 ♘g3 1-0**

Realising that he could no longer keep checking, Black resigned. It's worth remembering that the 4NCL was still operating time controls with no increments – something we had to keep reminding our international players – so such disasters were a more common occurrence then.

Another noteworthy win was by David Smerdon on board 2 against John Emms, Dave trying out the Portuguese variation of the Scandinavian for the first time in the 4NCL. Having had mixed fortunes with the Stonewall, Dave found the Portuguese more to his liking – an opening position rated a disaster by all the engines, but allowing the attacking (not to mention swindling!) chances that he loves.

### J. Emms - D. Smerdon

Wood Green II vs Guildford II, 4NCL 2013

Scandinavian Defence

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘g4 4 ♘b5+ ♘bd7 5 h3 ♘h5 6 c4 e6 7 dxe6 fxe6 8 d4 c6 9 ♘a4 ♘b6 10 ♘b3 ♘b4+ 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♘e3 a5 13 a3 ♘xc3+ 14 bxc3 a4 15 ♘a2 ♖e7 16 g4 ♘g6 17 ♘e5 ♘e4 18 f3 ♘fd7!?

Now 19 0-0 would have been prudent: for example, 19... ♘xe5 20 dxe5 ♖h4 21 ♖e2 ♘d3! 22 ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 23 ♗xf2 ♘xc4 24 ♘d4 and Black has trouble preserving his minor pieces.

**19 fxe4**

Black now obtains real attacking chances.

19... ♘xe5 20 dxe5 ♖h4+ 21 ♖e2 ♖g3 22 ♗f1 ♖g2+ 23 ♗f2 ♗xf2+ 24 ♘xf2 ♗f8 25 ♖d4 ♖f3+ 26 ♖e1?



This attempt to hang on to the piece is a mistake. 26 ♖d2 would have been OK. Now Dave finishes off accurately.

26... ♖h1+ 27 ♘g1 c5 28 ♖e3 ♗f3 29 ♖xc5 ♘d7 30 ♖d4 ♘xe5 31 c5 ♗f8 32 ♘xe6+ ♖h8 33 ♖e3 ♖g2 34 ♘f5 ♘f3+ 35 ♖d1 ♗d8+ 36 ♖c1 ♗d2 37 ♖xf3 ♗c2+ 38 ♖b1 ♗b2+ 0-1

### 2013/14

So 2012/13 had been a success – just. Winning the title, combined with our second team’s miracle survival in Division One, was gratifying and a relief, but during the summer months we looked to overhaul the squad in order to strengthen it overall and be ready for the expected Wood Green counter-attack. In particular, we looked for more young players in search of titles and for others who were prepared to put in the Sunday ‘hard yards’ rather than stay up too late carousing in the bar on Saturday night.

London resident Alberto Suarez became a regular along with GM Jean-Pierre Le Roux, and star juniors Matthew Wadsworth and Akshaya Kalaiyalahan also joined. Alberto’s first full season for us

was capped with a sparkling victory against Jonathan Hawkins, which gave Alberto his third norm and the IM title.

### A. Suarez Real - J. Hawkins

Guildford II vs Cheddleton, 4NCL 2014

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 dxe4 4 ♗xe4 ♗d7 5 ♗g5 ♗gf6 6 ♘d3 e6 7 ♗1f3 ♘d6 8 ♙e2 h6 9 ♗e4 ♗xe4 10 ♙xe4 ♙c7 11 0-0 b6 12 ♙g4 ♙f8 13 b3 ♘b7 14 ♘b2 ♗f6 15 ♙h3 ♗d5 16 g3 ♗b4

All played many times up to here, but latest theory in this line now seems to favour 16...c5, as recommended on page 367 of Daniel Fernandez's monumental guide *The Modernized Caro-Kann*.

17 ♘e4 f5 18 ♗g5 ♙e7 19 ♗xe6+ ♙xe6 20 ♘xf5 ♙f7 21 ♖ae1



This had all been seen before, but 21 c4 ended as a draw in Sutovsky-Antoniewski, Italian Team Championship 2011. Alberto's move is much stronger.

21... ♖e8

21... ♖d8 22 ♘e6 ♙f6 isn't pretty for Black, but this loses.

22 ♖e6 ♖xe6 23 ♘xe6 ♙f6 24 ♘c8! ♘a8

24... ♙e7 is no better: 25 ♘xb7 ♙xb7 26 ♖e1 ♘e7 27 c4! and Black can't untangle his pieces in time to stop White's attack.

25 ♖e1 ♗d5 26 ♖e6 ♙d8 27 ♙f5+ ♗f6



28 d5! ♙f7 29 ♖xf6+ gxf6 30. ♘e6+ ♙g7 31. ♙g4+ ♙f8 32. ♙g6 ♙e7 33 ♘xf6 ♙h7 34 ♙g4 cxd5 35 ♘xh8 1-0

A very impressive game by Alberto.

Neither Guildford nor Wood Green had any mishaps in the first seven divisional rounds, both winning all their matches by large margins. Going into the final weekend, Wood Green in fact held a one game-point advantage, but although they won their round 9 and 10 matches by further large margins, we managed to outscore them – despite Mark Hebden suffering a loss to Sue Maroroa-Jones, who had been helped by husband Gawain’s opening preparation! Going into the final round, we had managed to snatch a small game-point lead which meant that Wood Green would need to win the match to take the title.

Round 11 was another all-GM clash with the teams having virtually equal average ratings of about 2650. Wood Green had brought in Luke McShane, Jon-Ludwig Hammer, Viktor Laznicka and Alexei Shirov, while we had added Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Anish Giri on the top two boards. The match was covered in detail in the June 2014 edition of CHESS, including a frontcover photo by John Saunders of Roger in formal kimono with samurai sword, ready to gee up the troops with a showing of the classic film *Yojimbo* (subsequently copied in the spaghetti western *A Fistful of Dollars*). Perhaps Roger’s pep talk was too successful, because Romain Edouard on board 3 was inspired as Black to play an ultra-aggressive opening.

### J. L. Hammer - R. Edouard

Wood Green vs Guildford, 4NCL 2014

Queen’s Gambit Accepted

1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 b5!? 4 a4 c6 5 axb5 cxb5 6 ♖c3 a6 7 ♖xb5 axb5 8 ♜xa8 ♘b7 9 ♜a1 e6



What does Black have for the exchange? Clearly something, as there are now over 70 games on the database, involving such strong exponents as Nakamura. Romain himself has played it several times with good results, having used about a week’s worth of super-computer time to validate his analysis. As the game shows, Black’s two bishops can combine to great effect, but the main advantage in this game was psychological: Hammer was immediately under pressure against a prepared opening and on at least two occasions adopted a passive ‘safety-first’ approach, when something more dynamic was needed.

10 ♘e2

10 f3 and 10 ♖f3 are other possibilities but, faced himself by this variation, Romain has also played this move.

♖f6 11 ♖f3 ♖xe4

11... ♘b4+ 12 ♘d2 ♘xd2+ 13 ♜xd2 ♖xe4 is probably stronger, as played by Romain in a subsequent game.

12 0-0 ♖d5 13 ♗e1 ♗c6 14 ♗c2 ♘d6

And here 14... ♘e7 may be stronger.

15 ♘f3 ♘b8 16 ♜e1 f5 17 ♘xe4 fxe4 18 ♖g4 0-0 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♜xe4 e5 21 dxe5 ♘xe5



22 ♜b1?

After playing well under pressure, White finally weakens. The retreat 22 ♜e1! would have preserved the advantage: 22...c3 can be met by 23 ♜xe5 ♗xe5 24 bxc3, but 23 b3 is also good enough.

22... ♘f6 23 ♜e2 ♘c8

This might have been even stronger the previous move.

24 b3 ♘g4

By now White was particularly short of time.

25 ♖f1?

25 f3 was better.

25...c3

Now and over the next few moves Romain prefers to keep the two bishops. While the engines think he should take the rook, this is a practical example of the old maxim about the threat being worse than the execution.

26 ♘e3 ♜a8 27 ♘c5 ♜a2 28 f3 ♘f5 29 ♜c1 ♘d3 30 b4 ♘g5 0-1

Meanwhile, on board 1, MVL was so shocked by Romain's "unsound" opening that he felt he needed to win with Black to counter Romain's "inevitable loss". Maxime, a month older than Romain, has been winding him up ever since they were kids, so his remarks shouldn't be taken too seriously. Nevertheless he put in a very polished performance to outplay Mickey Adams. This game didn't get published at the time, but it's worthy of study.

### M. Adams - M. Vachier-Lagrave

Wood Green vs Guildford, 4NCL 2014

Sicilian Najdorf

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♘e3 ♗g4 7 ♘g5 h6 8 ♘h4 g5 9 ♘g3 ♘g7 10 ♖d2 ♗c6 11 ♗b3 b5 12 h4

Mickey varies from 12 f3, which he played against Gelfand in the London Classic six months earlier.

12...b4 13 ♗a4 gxh4 14 ♘xh4 ♘d7 15 f3 ♗ce5 16 fxg4 ♘xa4 17 0-0-0 ♘d7 18 ♘e2

Perhaps 18 ♖d4, eyeing f5, was better. Mickey may have expected that his queen sortie might result in a draw by repetition.

18... ♖xg4 19 ♙xb4 a5 20 ♙b7 ♖b8 21 ♙a7 ♖a8 22 ♙b7 ♙b8



Maxime correctly assesses that a queen exchange will give him the advantage.

23 ♙xb8+ ♖xb8 24 c3 a4 25 ♖d4 ♖e3 26 ♖dg1 ♖g8 27 ♖f2 ♖g4 28 ♖e1 ♖e5 29 ♙b1 ♖f6 30 ♖f3 h5 31 ♖h4 ♖g4

White has been forced into a passive position, and Black's next few moves turn the screw.

32 a3 ♖e3 33 ♖e2 ♖xd4 34 cxd4 ♖b5 35 ♖h3 ♖xe2 36 ♖xe3 ♖a6 37 e5 ♖g4 38 g3 d5

White's bishop is now out of play.

39 ♖d1 ♙d7 40 ♖d2 ♖c4 41 b4 axb3 42 ♙b2 ♙e6 43 ♖f3 ♖bg8

The start of a series of manoeuvres to enable the black rooks to infiltrate White's position.



44 ♖ff2 ♖e4 45 ♖d1 ♖gg4 46 ♙c3 ♖e3+ 47 ♙b2 ♖ge4 48 ♖dd2 ♖e1 49 ♖h2 ♖g1 50 ♖hf2 ♖ee1 51 ♙c3 ♖a1 52 ♙b4 ♖a2 0-1

Faced with the threat of 53... ♖ga1, Mickey resigned.

Things got even better for us when deep opening preparation by Gawain produced a dangerous pawn sacrifice in the main line of the Caro-Kann.

## G. Jones - V. Laznicka

Guildford vs Wood Green, 4NCL 2014



White has sacrificed a pawn to open the g-file and lure Black's knight to an exposed post. The normal response 19 exf6 leads to the exchange of knights and Black's position being freed up at the slight expense of a weak e6 pawn. Gawain prefers to keep Black's position more cramped, albeit at the cost of a pawn.

**19 ♖c3!? ♔a6 20 ♗b5 ♜xf2 21 ♚xf2 ♚xb5 22 ♚g3 ♔h8**

In the commentary room Jon Speelman suggested 22... ♜ad8 23 ♜dg1 g5! 24 hxg6 ♜xd2 25 ♜xh6 ♜fd8 as forcing White to take a draw. This would certainly have been safer, although Stockfish's perfect defence favours Laznicka's move.

**23 ♜hg1 ♜f7 24 ♚g6 ♚e8 25 ♜f4 ♜f8?**

But this is a mistake. 25... ♜h4! protects the e-pawn while enabling the bishop to keep defending f6.

**26 ♜xh6 ♜d7 27 ♜xd7 ♚xd7 28 ♜g5 ♚e8 29 c4! a6 30 ♜d1 b5 31 ♚xe8 ♜xe8 32 ♜d7 bxc4**

At a temporary cost of two pawns White has blocked in the black bishop.



**33 ♚c2 ♜a8 34 a4 ♚g8 35 ♜b7 f4 36 ♜xf4 ♜d8 37 a5 ♜d4 38 ♜d2 ♜h4 39 ♜b6 ♜xh5 40 ♜xa6 g5 41 ♜xe6 g4 42 a6 ♜h1 43 ♜e8 c3 44 ♚xc3 ♜h7 45 e6 g3 1-0**

And Black resigned before White could play 46 e7.

Matthew Sadler held Shirov comfortably with Black on board 5, and Guildford got solid draws on the three lowest boards, which left the game between Anish Giri and Luke McShane as the last to finish. Their encounter was evenly balanced past the first time control, but a perhaps injudicious

pawn push by Luke left his position with a number of weaknesses, which Anish eventually managed to exploit.

The final result was therefore a 6-2 victory for Guildford, avenging our loss by a similar margin two years before. This was perhaps instrumental in persuading Brian Smith to withdraw from sponsoring Wood Green in the 4NCL and retreat to his London League stronghold, thus bringing to an end over a decade of intense rivalry between our two teams, in which both teams had won five championships, broken only by Pride & Prejudice in 2010-11. With hindsight, we can say we enjoyed it all (as, we hope, did Brian), but boy was it tough!

### **Part 3 – Roger Emerson and Nigel Povah conclude their coverage of Guildford’s 4NCL adventures, which saw their team go an astonishing 85 matches without defeat**

Following Wood Green’s retreat from the forefront of the 4NCL, Guildford’s strongest challenger looked likely to be Cheddleton, headed by David Howell and Jonathan Hawkins. Indeed, our meeting in February 2015 proved to be a tense affair, which ended as a narrow victory, 4½-3½. However, it could have been a catastrophic defeat as we had substantially worse positions on several boards.

The April 2015 edition of CHESS covers Jean-Pierre Le Roux’s lucky escape to a draw in grave time trouble after looking totally busted by move 15, as well as Mark Hebden’s even luckier win after Fiona Steil-Antoni failed in severe time trouble to refute Mark’s unsound queen sacrifice. On board 5, Maxime Lagarde lost control in an unusual line against Simon Williams’ King’s Indian.

#### **M. Lagarde - S. Williams**

Guildford vs Cheddleton, 4NCL 2015

King’s Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♞g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘ge2 0-0 6 ♘g3 a6 7 ♞e2 c5 8 dxc5 dxc5 9 e5 ♚xd1+ 10 ♞xd1 ♘fd7 11 f4 ♘c6 12 ♘ge4 f6 13 exf6 exf6 14 ♘d6 ♜d8 15 ♘d5 f5 16 0-0



Instead, against 16 ♘c7, Simon had no doubt planned 16... ♘f6! 17 ♘xa8 ♜xd6 18 ♘c7 ♘b4 19 0-0 ♘e4 when all Black’s pieces are very active. Maxime should probably have played 16 ♞e3 ♞xb2 17 ♜b1 ♞d4 18 ♚f2, keeping his centralised knights while developing his queenside pieces. The pawn sacrifice is only temporary.



16... ♖f6 17 ♗xc8 ♜axc8 18 ♘f3 ♜e8 19 ♘e3 ♗e4 20 ♜ad1 ♗d4 21 ♔h1 b5 22 cxb5 axb5 23 b4 ♗xf3 24 gxf3 ♗c3 25 ♗xc3 ♜xe3



This was beginning to look rather dangerous for us, but Maxime defended coolly.

26 ♗d5 ♜e6 27 bxc5 ♜xc5 28 ♜f2 ♜c4 29 ♜fd2 ♘h6 30 ♔g2 ♗f7

30... ♘f8 followed by 31...b4 was probably stronger, but, getting short of time, Simon was happy to take the draw – particularly in view of the position on board 7 where Ety Stefanova was in some trouble.

31 ♜b1 ♘xf4 ½-½

### A. Stefanova - V. Hamitevici

Guildford vs Cheddleton, 4NCL 2015

Sicilian Defence

1 ♗f3 c5 2 b3 g6 3 ♘b2 ♗f6 4 e4 ♘g7 5 ♘d3 ♗c6 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♜e1 d5 8 exd5 ♗xd5 9 ♘g7 ♗xg7 10 ♘b5 ♗d4 11 ♗xd4 cxd4 12 ♚e2 e6 13 c3 ♚f6 14 cxd4 a6 15 ♘c4 ♗b4 16 ♚e4 ♜d8 17 ♗c3 ♜xd4 18 ♚b1



Ety's offbeat opening has gone horribly wrong. Now 18...b5 would maintain a winning advantage, in view of 19 ♘f1 ♘b7 20 ♗e4 ♜xe4 21 ♜xe4 ♘xe4 22 ♚xe4 ♚xa1 23 ♚xa8 ♚xa2 and 19 ♗e4 ♚f4 20 g3 ♚f5 21 ♘f1 ♘b7, with a huge bind on the position. Instead, Hamitevici's retreat allows Ety to just about stay in the game.

18... ♜d8 19 ♜e3 b5 20 ♘e2 ♘b7 21 a3 ♗d5 22 ♗xd5 ♜xd5 23 ♜a2 ♜c8 24 h3

Ety was already short of time. 24 b4 was better.

24... ♜f5 25 f3

25 ♖a1! and if 25... ♜xf2 26 ♘f3 was a neat way of relieving pressure.

25... ♜fc5 26 ♖b2 ♗xb2 27 ♜xb2 ♜c2 28 ♜xc2 ♜xc2 29 d4 ♜a2 30 b4



30... ♜d2

Black could have waited to take the d pawn: 30...g5! followed by 31... ♘d5 cements Black's position in the centre and keeps White's pieces tied down.

31 ♗f2 ♜xd4 32 ♜c3 ♜d7 33 ♖e3 f5 34 h4 ♗f6 35 g3 h6 36 ♜c1 ♜h7 37 ♜c5 ♜d7 38 ♜c1 ♖e5 39 ♜c5+ ♖d6 40 a4 bxa4 41 ♜a5 ½-½

Ten moves too late! White will be able to capture both black a-pawns, so following the time scramble the players agreed a draw.

After recovery from his operation, Nigel Povah was back jointly running the squad by late 2014. Typically during these 4NCL weekends Nigel preferred to play, with reasonable success, and then host second and third team meals in the hotel, while Roger acted as organiser and chauffeur for first team players, hosting a dinner in some nearby inn. This meant that Nigel didn't suffer the anguish of following such matches as the one against Cheddleton, either in the playing hall or online from a laptop in the hotel bar. For this match, Roger took Brian Smith's advice a step further than his mantra 'Never enter the playing hall during the first session!' and went for a long walk outside, only returning after the first time-control had been reached – one of Roger's best ever moves in the 4NCL.

After somehow avoiding disaster, Guildford I had a relatively trouble-free run to the title in 2014-15, while our second team surpassed themselves by managing to snatch second place after Cheddleton dropped three points in the final weekend. The next two seasons, 2015-16 and 2016-17, were again relatively trouble-free for our first team, as our strongest challengers Cheddleton had again dropped enough match points in the first ten rounds for us to be assured of the title with a round to spare.

There were individual successes for our younger players. Matthew Wadsworth, at age 15, got his first IM norm. First, Matthew took advantage of some injudicious pawn moves by his opponent.

### M. Wadsworth - G. O'Toole

Guildford II vs Barbican II, 4NCL 2016



21...d4 22 ♖f3 c5 23 ♖xd4 ♚b6 24 ♖f2 ♜xd1+ 25 ♜xd1 ♖xf3+ 26 ♚xf3 ♚e6 27 b3 a5 28 ♖g3 f5 29 exf6 ♖xf6 30 f5 ♚e8 31 ♜d6 ♚f8 32 ♚d5 ♖g7 33 f6 ♖h6 34 f7 ♜g5 35 ♚xg5 ♖xg5 36 ♖e5+ ♚g7 37 f8 ♚# 1-0

A further win against Iain Gourlay the following day ensured that Matthew reached his target with an undefeated 7/10 , and further norms in the next couple of years enabled him to claim the IM title.

Meanwhile Yang-Fan Zhou secured his second GM norm, with some fine wins.

### Y. F. Zhou - S. Ansell

Guildford II vs Cheddleton, 4NCL 2016



33 ♜xd7!

A little combination to win a pawn.

33... ♜xd7 34 ♖xb6 ♜dd8 35 ♖xc8 ♜xc8 36 g5

Yang-Fan follows up accurately, fixing Black's kingside pawns and paving the way for clearing the second rank to allow ♜h2.

36... ♖b7 37 ♖d3 ♖c5 38 f4 ♚e7 39 ♖xc5+ ♜xc5 40 ♚e3 e5 41 g3 ♚d6 42 ♜h2 ♖c8 43 ♚d2 ♖e6 44 ♚c3 ♜c8 45 ♜xh7 e4 46 ♖e2 ♚c5 47 g4 ♜f8 48 ♜h6 ♜g8 49 f5 gxf5 50 gxf5 ♖d7 51 g6 fxc6 52 fxc6 ♖e8 53 ♜h5+ ♚d6 54 c5+ ♚c7 55 ♜h7+ 1-0

In 2016/17 it was the turn of Daniel Fernandez to shine, obtaining the third norm needed for him to become a GM. The August 2017 edition of CHESS gives Daniel's win against GM Neil McDonald. Here's another, showing Daniel's seeming knack of lulling opponents into playing poorly.

### D. Fernandez - M. Gantner

Guildford vs White Rose, 4NCL 2017



Daniel now brings his king up to support his central pawns, provoking Black into weakening his kingside structure.

**30 ♖e3 g5?! 31 fxg5 ♜xg5 32 ♔d3 ♜e6? 33 ♜e3!**

Stopping Black from re-routing his knight to e5 via f3.

**33...h6 34 ♜g1 ♔f8**

Realising too late the need for his knight to get to e5.

**35 h4**

Suddenly White has a winning infiltration.

**35... ♜f7 36 ♜eg3 ♜e5+ 37 ♔c3 ♜h7 38 ♜g8+ ♔f7 39 ♜a8 ♜c6 40 ♜gg8 ♜xe4 41 ♜af8+ ♔e6 42 ♜xf6 ♜e2 43 ♜xh7 1-0**

In our final match of 2016/17, a 6½-1½ victory over Cheddleton, Matthew Sadler had a fine win over the dangerous Ivan Sokolov. That game featured in the July 2017 edition of CHESS and showed Matthew's deep knowledge and understanding of opening theory. We'd like to show two other examples of this, which also demonstrate Matthew's determination, fearlessness and love of a challenge.

When Guildford's first and second teams clashed in March 2014, Matthew was happy to take on Dave Smerdon in Dave's own pet line of the Milner-Barry Gambit, with which he'd nearly beaten Jan Timman.

### D. Smerdon - M. Sadler

Guildford II vs Guildford I, 4NCL 2014

French Defence

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♜b6 5 ♜f3 ♜c6 6 ♞d3 cxd4 7 cxd4 ♞d7 8 0-0 ♜xd4 9 ♜bd2!?**

Dave Smerdon's favourite wrinkle.

**9... ♞c5 10 ♜xd4 ♞xd4 11 ♜f3 ♜e7 12 ♜xd4 ♜xd4 13 ♜e1 b6!**

Timman played 13... ♜c6 14 ♞e3 ♜xe5 15 ♞c5 ♜g5 and ended up slightly hanging on for a draw.

14 ♖e3 ♜xb2 15 ♜g4 ♘g6



The point of Matthew’s line is revealed: 13...b6 allows the black queen to stay on the long diagonal, without allowing a white rook to infiltrate to b7. Now 16 h4 can be met by 16... ♘xe5 because of 17 ♜xg7? ♘f3+.

16 ♜ab1 ♜c3 17 ♖f1 0-0

White is now just two pawns down without any attack.

18 ♖d4 ♜c2 19 ♜b3 ♜ac8 20 ♜h3 ♜d2 21 ♜d1 ♜f4 22 ♜h5 h6 23 ♖e3 ♜xe5 24 ♜f3 ♖a4 25 ♜d4 ♖c2 26 ♜h5 f5 27 ♜h3 ♜c3 28 ♜d2 ♖e4 29 g4 ♜f6 0-1

Roger met Dave coming out of the playing hall, looking shell-shocked. Dave moaned that “He played a move my engine thought was third-best!”

Here is another fine example, this time from four years later.

### F. Libiszewski - M. Sadler

3Cs vs Guildford, 4NCL 2018

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♖e7 4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 e5 ♘fd7 6 ♖d3 c5 7 c3 ♘c6 8 0-0 g5 9 dxc5 ♘dx5 10 ♘xe5 ♘xe5

More usual is 10...g4.

11 ♘b3 ♘xd3 12 ♜xd3 f6!?



Here is Matthew’s innovation. The ‘book’ move is 12...e5 which doesn’t have a good score at all for Black.

13 f4 gxf4 14 ♖xf4 e5 15 ♖h6

After 15 ♖g3!? exf4 16 ♖g7 ♜f8 17 ♘d4 Black is somewhat tied up, but without White seeming to have a knockout punch. Nevertheless, it takes nerves of steel and a good memory for your home analysis to play like this.

15... ♜g8 16 ♖xh7 ♖e6 17 ♖g7?

White is a pawn ahead. but already it was time to retreat: 17 ♖e3 ♖d7 18 ♜f2 was called for.

17... ♖d7 18 ♖h1?



A fresh blunder. White was maybe expecting 18 0-0-0, but instead Matthew plays...

18... ♖d8!

...And the bishop on g7 is trapped.

19 ♖g6+ ♖f7 20 ♖g3 ♖e7 21 ♘a5 b6 22 cxb6 axb6 23 ♘b3 ♜a4 24 h3 ♜e4 25 a4 d4 26 cxd4 ♖d5 27 a5 ♖xb3 28 ♖xb3 ♖xb3 29 dxе5 fxe5 30 axb6 ♜xg7 31 b7 ♖d6 32 ♜a8+ ♖e7 0-1

Neil McDonald sought to improve on White's play in the final weekend of the 2017/18 season and was successful, up to a point. On page 18 of the June 2018 edition of CHESS Jonathan Rogers showed how Matthew outplayed his GM opponent to win in 52 moves, as Guildford I moved steadily to a sixth title in a row, again securing the title with a round to spare.

## 2018/19

The following season saw two significant changes. Firstly, Manx Liberty (made up of a nucleus of central European players in the former Bundesliga side S.G. Trier) had come through the divisions to challenge for the title. Secondly, Brexit had added uncertainty to the future participation of overseas players. In response, Nigel and Roger recruited England internationals Mickey Adams and Luke McShane, and reached agreement with Hou Yifan (studying for a year at Oxford) to appear in the final weekend. At the same time we hired Lizzy Paetz as our main first team female player to fill the gap left by new mother Ety Stefanova.

Lizzy had a solid, unbeaten season – as did most of the squad – with a 2500+ performance, but the star turn was again Matthew Wadsworth who racked up a 2600+ rated score of 7/9. The season finale again proved an anti-climax to those hoping for an upset, because White Rose again scored an upset of their own by beating Manx Liberty 4½-3½. Even so, we wanted to put down a marker for battles to come, so Guildford I were out for blood in the final match. On the first two boards Matthew Sadler and Constantin Lupulescu, as Black, neutralised Richard Rapport and Mickey Adams. Meanwhile, on board 3, fireworks started to fly.

## D. Fridman - L. McShane

Manx Liberty vs Guildford, 4NCL 2019

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 g3 ♘g7 4 ♘g2 0-0 5 0-0 d6 6 c4 ♘bd7 7 ♘c3 e5 8 e4 c6 9 h3 ♚a5 10 ♚e2

Fridman deviates from the normal 10 ♚e1, against which Luke had another complex win, over David Howell in December 2017.

10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 ♚e8 12 ♚d1 ♘b6 13 ♚d3 ♘d7 14 ♘f4 ♚ad8 15 ♘xd6 ♘xh3



The tactics kick off.

16 c5 ♘xg2 17 ♘b3 ♚b4 18 cxb6 ♘xe4 19 ♘xb4 ♘xd3 20 bxa7 ♘f5 21 ♚xd8 ♚xd8 22 ♘d6?!

After a flurry of tactics, the position has clarified, but this attempt seems too ambitious. Instead 22 ♘c5 would ensure retention of the advanced a-pawn, giving White a continuing slight advantage.

22... ♚a8 23 ♘b8 ♘d7 24 ♚d1 ♘f6 25 ♘e4 ♘e7



26 ♘d6

If instead 26 ♘d6 ♘g4 27 ♚e1 ♘e6 28 ♘xb7 ♘xb8 29 axb8 ♚+ ♚xb8 30 ♘7a5 when Black has the two bishops and the white knights are vulnerable.

26... ♚f8 27 ♘xe7+ ♚xe7 28 ♘d6 ♘g4 29 ♚d4 ♘e5 30 ♚g2 ♚xa7 31 ♚xg4 ♚xd6

Avoiding a last trick in 31... ♘xg4?? 32 ♘c8+.

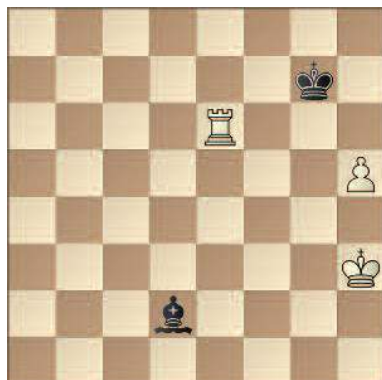
32 ♚d4+ ♚e7

Black has won a crucial pawn. Fridman put up stiff resistance, but Luke eventually won on move 102!

On board 6, Romain won an ending straight out of his Chess Calculation Training series of books.

## R. Edouard - V. Erdos

Guildford vs Manx Liberty, 4NCL 2019



**56 ♖g4 ♗c1 57 ♖f5 ♗d2 58 ♜g6+ ♔h7 59 h6! ♗c1**

If 59... ♗xh6 60 ♖f6 ♗e3 61 ♖f7 and now Black must lose his bishop or allow mate, as in the game.

**60 ♜g7+ ♖xh6 61 ♜g6+ ♔h7**

If 61... ♖h5 62 ♜g1 and wins.

**62 ♖f6 ♗e3 63 ♖f7**



**63... ♗a7 64 ♜a6 ♗b8 65 ♜a8 ♗c7 66 ♜c8 ♗f4**

Or 66... ♗b6 67 ♜c1!.

**67 ♜c4 ♗g5 68 ♜c3! 1-0**

The bishop now blocks the black king's escape square.

Our seventh title in a row gave Guildford a total of ten championships, and we were on course for another in 2019/20 before COVID-19 changed so many things in the chess world.

The past twenty-five years have seen us help to launch the careers of David Howell, Matthew Wadsworth, Akshaya Kalaiyalahan, Alex Golding, Viktor Stoyanov and others who we hope will continue to climb the chess world in the future. We have helped a number of players to reach GM and IM titles.

We have also had the pleasure of hosting the entire England team, several established superstars – world champions Hou Yifan and Etym Stefanova, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave, Anish Giri, Peter Svidler and Pentala Harikrishna, for example – and some potential superstars of the future in the likes of



David Anton and Jorden van Foreest. Most importantly, we have introduced a generation of young French grandmasters to the English Sunday roast, including parsnips – which only Jean-Pierre Le Roux could name, as apparently the French only feed them to horses.

Over the years, many Guildford players have had lost positions, but they have rarely ended up losing – and it's this fighting spirit, embraced by all, which has created our run of success. To exemplify that, we'll show just one example. Akshaya Kalaiyalahan had been outplayed positionally by John Cox, so with little time on the clock swindling mode was required.

### A. Kalaiyalahan - J. Cox

Guildford II vs Barbican, 4NCL 2016



**29 ♖e6 ♗f6**

29...fxe6 30 dxe6 ♗f6 is fine for Black, but he decides he doesn't need to risk it.

**30 ♖xf7! e4?**

Already Black needs to take care. 30... ♖a1 31 ♜g5 ♖xf1+ 32 ♜xf1 ♗e4 33 ♜e7 ♜d8 would stabilise the position.

**31 ♖xf6! ♜xf6 32 ♗e6?**

32 ♜h6! was actually the correct move, but who's to argue with results?

**32...g5??**

The losing move. 32... ♜g7 was required. Now Akshaya makes no mistake.

**33 h4! h6 34 ♜c3+ ♜g6 35 h5+ ♜h7**

Or if 35... ♜xh5 36 ♜f6.

**36 ♜f6 ♜c7 37 ♜g6+ ♜h8 38 ♗f7 1-0**

Taking our lesson from that and from the sight of too many sportsmen staying on too long, we have decided to retire at the top. So the Guildford I name is retired, following an unbeaten run of 85 matches in the 4NCL. Guildford's 4NCL teams for the coming season will be built around our successful Young Guns, Gatekeepers and Castles teams in the ever-growing 4NCL Online. We would like to thank all our players for their part in Guildford's 4NCL success over the past 25 years, and we wish them and the 4NCL as a whole every success in the future.

## **The Chess Trust - Report for 2021**

With the pandemic still causing restrictions on over the board play, 2021 was still another difficult year for the activities of the Trust. Despite this, the Trust has continued its work as far as possible.

As in 2020 the Trust's main activity has been the development and delivery of the Accelerator Programme, which is designed to develop young players to become the titled and international players of the future. Under the day-to-day management of the UK Chess Challenge, the Programme has continued its work with the support of two experienced mentors, John Emms and Adam Hunt, who have been engaged to provide the necessary level of training expertise on a regular basis. Activities include mentoring, coaching and support for attendance at selected events. Approximately ten candidates are invited to join the Programme by a selection committee, and progress is reviewed regularly with the Trustees. Trustees regard this as a long-term initiative; performance should be assessed in that light.

As part of its plans to pursue the development of junior players the Trust has established an additional avenue for support. This is the Junior Development Programme, which is available to other students as well as to those who have completed their Accelerator Programme course. This has also been generously supported by the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust (JRYCT).

Additionally, the Trust made the following awards previously under the British Chess Education Trust. The BCET trust funds were transferred to the Chess Trust for future management. Awards made to schools were – Stroud High School; Watford Junior Chess Club; Petts Wood and Orpington Chess Club Junior Section; Handsworth Primary School.

The Trust also supports the British Chess Championships in conjunction with the JRYCT in line with John Robinson's wishes.

### **Donations**

The Trust does not have infinite resources. It is dependent on sources from donations to continue its work in the long-term. The Trustees are grateful for all donations, and for any large donations or bequests, the trustees will take into consideration specific requests from donors as to how their gift should be applied, subject to it being consistent with the objectives of the trust. Donations and bequests attract reliefs from taxation. Any bequests made to a charity may reduce the inheritance taxes that may be due on an estate.

Donations made by an individual who is a UK taxpayer will enable the Trust to reclaim basic rate tax on the value of a donation through the government's Gift Aid scheme. Thus, a donation of £100 will enable the Trust to reclaim £25, making the total donation worth £125 to the Trust. A donation made by an individual who pays UK tax at the higher rate of 40% or 45% will be able to reclaim the difference between the basic and higher rates through their tax return.

The Trust will be establishing a regular donations scheme so that donors will be able to make small regular payments to the Trust, which will have the benefits of the Gift Aid Scheme.

Donations should be sent to The Chess Trust at the English Chess Federation Office, The Watch Oak, Chain Lane, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0YD. If you would like to donate directly to the Chess Trust by BACS, the sort code is 601015 and the account number is 87899590. If you choose this method,

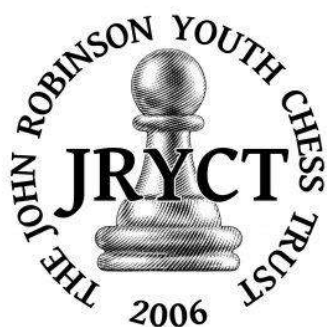
please let the ECF office know by email at [office@englishchess.org.uk](mailto:office@englishchess.org.uk), so that the Trustees can be informed.

The Chess Trust - Registered Charity Number 1160881

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### **The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust**

Founded in 2006 - charity registration number 1116981



The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust was founded in 2006 and is an independent grant-making charity (registration number 1116981). The Trust was created following the death of Mr. John Robinson on 1st February 2006.

Applications for financial support are invited and should be emailed to the Chairman (*see the email address below*). The aim of the Trust is to support junior chess and grants are made to individuals, chess organizations and events. The Trust supports ENG players under the age of 21.

If you wish to enquire about the work of the Trust, please contact the Chairman Dr. John Higgs by email at [john.higgs@englishchess.org.uk](mailto:john.higgs@englishchess.org.uk)

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### **Chess in Prisons**

Carl Portman, ECF Manager of Chess in Prisons - a report for 2021

It is very easy in life to accentuate the negatives in any given situation. It takes no imagination, and very little effort. However, even in difficult times, there are always opportunities to shine a light in the darkness.

Whilst it is a fact that the Covid-19 Pandemic in all its manifestations has prevented me for differing reasons from visiting a single prison this year, the wheel has not stopped turning and I want to give a brief report on what has happened with direct regard to me, the ECF and chess in prisons. I should caveat this by stating that I am also the chess columnist for *Inside Time*, the prison newspaper. This is something I do independently of the ECF. It is a platform where I can best promote chess because the newspaper has a distribution of some 60,000 but the opportunity for some 83,000 prisoners to see it is possible. Naturally, I mention the ECF occasionally, and people know who to contact to get their chess fix!

It is from this column that I receive my many letters, which form the invaluable feedback that helps me to 'feel the temperature' of chess in prisons and decide what approach I might take. Inmates write to me on any manner of chess related (and other!) subjects, from telling me how chess is played in their prison, to their thoughts on the game. I receive requests for magazines, books and chess equipment. If I can fulfil such requests I do, and I try to write personally to every prisoner

who asks me a question. I send chess magazines each month, (thanks to the Chess Shop in London for those) and I write to prisons to encourage them to play. I am busy writing about prisons chess every month at least and often, more frequently.

Covid has been a significant impediment to progress. Much of the work I did with prisons in setting up clubs came to a sudden halt. Prisoners were (even more) isolated, locked up for up to 23 hours a day, and many prisons are still at levels where chess visits are not allowed. I have not been able to visit personally for safety or prison policy reasons, but that will change, I am sure. Just as things were looking up and I was receiving requests to visit, the dreaded Omicron variant came along, and here we are again with confusion and fear putting visits 'on hold' again.

This year though, I was involved in a very significant, global event. I was contacted by none other than the FIDE Head Office. They have set up a 'Chess for Freedom' project, which promotes chess in prisons around the world. They had heard about my work and wanted me to speak at their inaugural online conference on 11th May, which I did. To be on the same bill as Anatoly Karpov and FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich was a thrill, and there were many influential online viewers including Nigel Short, Malcolm Pein and dignitaries from around the world, so this was a most wonderful 'shop window' for prisons chess.

For me, this showed how far prisons chess had come in the world, and it is now an item for rehabilitation agendas everywhere. It made me very happy. My presentation went very well, and I received a very nice letter from FIDE's Managing Director Dana Reizniece-Ozola, which I show further down this report.

That was the merry month of May.

Then I was looking forward to becoming involved with the online World Prison Chess Championships which many people have read about. The Chess in Schools and Communities Charity were the drivers here, developing and managing teams from HMP Wandsworth and HMP Hollesley Bay. Their co-ordinator, Peter Sullivan deserves huge credit for his work which he clearly loves, and the prisoners are lucky to have him in the London area. I do want to see more involvement with prisons in the midlands and the north but to do that requires people and resources. Not easy, but infinitely doable.

It is public knowledge (via my Twitter postings!) that, sadly, my wife was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer and a lot of my focus has been (and remains) looking after her. Travelling away to prisons, was not feasible and I could not risk bringing Covid home – as Susan's immune system was shot to bits. I just could not find a way to be involved in the online championships but great kudos to Malcolm and his team.

Chess in prisons is not a role that should be 'done' by either the ECF or CSC or indeed anyone else. There must be a collaborative and targeted approach and to use a rather hackneyed cliché it truly is a journey, not a destination. The prison estate is large and transient. For obvious reasons there are many hurdles to jump to get into a prison (unless you are a criminal of course!) and it can take weeks and months to do even the simplest of things that we would do in a trice in any other environment. Sometimes the ECF 'does' and sometimes the ECF 'enables' with prisons chess, it is as simple as that. This all requires time and resources which inevitably means...money!

Like most of the ECF positions, mine is a voluntary role which I have occupied since March 2014. I do not take it for granted and I fully expect that someone else might like to take my place, after all it has been almost eight years and we have come a long way since then. I have no problem at all with this, but until then and as long as prisoners write to me with requests such as *'could you help a sad, alone prisoner a little help with the gift of a chess set'* (sic) then I know there is still work to do. I shall continue to promote chess in prisons at any opportunity.



I do hope that 2022 allows more freedom to visit prisons once again. I have the energy and passion for the challenges, and I love most of all to meet inmates to talk, coach and play chess with them. Nothing is certain in these times, and we must see how the situation develops. It is always an honour to promote chess to those who clearly need something in their lives to aid them in their situation.

What about you? Wherever you are in England, you can write to your local prison and offer to visit and just play some chess. It won't be easy to get a 'yes' from governors but you might just be surprised. No one person (me) can do everything, but I know that everyone (you) out there can do something. You can make a massive difference.

## ECF Awards 2021

### **Presidents Awards for Services to Chess – Joseph Conlon**

'The only way of discovering the limits of the possible is to venture a little way past them into the impossible,' wrote science fiction writer Arthur C Clarke. In a Covid-19 world, where a return to over the board chess has seemed impossible for over a year, Joseph Conlon (Joe) has been a pioneer, turning an aspiration into reality for many juniors.

In October 2020, Joe was inspired to schedule an U11 junior tournament in Oxford. He was quick to recognise that 'supervised activities provided for children' were permitted under government regulations, with many young people having returned to sports, music and scouting. So why not a return to over the board junior chess under this remit?

Since then, Joe has shown his commitment to the cause by running four more U12 junior tournaments, between April and June 2021. Over 80 children have taken part in total, a third of

whom are girls. The participants have ranged in standard from novices from local primary schools to multiple England juniors who have previously played internationally. Children have travelled from Manchester, the Midlands, London, and the south of England to take part. As increased interest and enthusiasm have been generated (there were 46 participants in the 20th June 2021 tournament), so Joe has continued to innovate, adapting the model to split the juniors into subgroups named after famous chess players, with an all-play-all format within each subgroup, and negotiating extra space in the school.

In a short space of time, with the help of a supportive state secondary school (Cheney) in Oxford, Joe established his blueprint: a large, airy building with multiple classrooms, a small number of chess boards in each room, and parents also subdivided into mini-groups in different rooms. Risk assessments completed, Covid disclaimers signed by parents, hand sanitiser standing proudly like an extra queen next to every board, the tournament went ahead on 24th October 2020. It was the first junior over the board, ECF-rated tournament since the start of the pandemic.

It would have been easy to keep all this a closely-guarded secret. However, in the November 2020 ECF newsletter (#50), Joe summarised his experience for the benefit of others. Practical advice abounds in his report as does his humility. Since then, Joe has acted as an inspiration and pair of guiding hands for another parent, Wadih Khoury, to host a successful standard play tournament at the end of May 2021, at the same school.

It should also be noted that chess interest from the hosting secondary school has increased as a result of two of its pupils participating, with one of the teachers, David Smith, stepping up to re-establish a chess club and the prospects of a team, in a state school that has previously not had a chess focus.

--- *Anna Bishop*

### **Presidents Awards for Services to Chess – Andy Howie**

Andy Howie is the Executive Director of Chess Scotland. I am nominating him for a Special Award for an exceptional contribution by a member of a neighbouring Federation as that seems to me to be appropriate. I set out below the details of that contribution.

Andy has been a member of the FIDE Fair Play Commission since 2014, but his involvement has grown considerably since the start of the pandemic. He has helped the ECF and English chess enormously in three ways in particular:

#### **1. ECF Fair Play Regulations for Online Chess**

When the pandemic led to a substantial increase in Online Chess activity, the previous Regulations were found to be inadequate. Andy contributed to the preparation of new Regulations, which have stood the test of time better, and he has served on ECF Fair Play Panels.

#### **2. 4NCL Online**

Andy has been an arbiter for the 4NCL Online and the Junior 4NCL Online since their inception in April 2020. Fair Play checks have been a significant part of his duties, but by no means all of them. On almost every Tuesday and Thursday when the competitions have been in progress, he has worked late into the night processing results. During April 2021 he was away in Yekaterinburg, Russia, as the Deputy Chief Arbiter of the Candidates Tournament. That did not stop him carrying

out his 4NCL duties on the relevant Tuesdays and Thursdays.

### 3. British Online Championships 2020 – 2021

Andy was the Fair Play Arbiter for the Championships. He was working from morning until night on each of the 12 playing days. As with the 4NCL, he spent considerable time processing results, but at the Championships his principal focus was on the Fair Play aspects. He had to cope with a near deluge of unsubstantiated and mostly unfounded allegations, while at the same time ensuring that cases of genuine concern were fully and fairly investigated. He accomplished this with a remarkable degree of thoroughness and patience. I am pleased to nominate him for the Award.

--- David Sedgwick

**Contribution to Accessible Chess** – The UK Braille Chess Association

**Contribution to Women’s Chess** – Lawrence Cooper

**Online Contribution to Chess** – Oliver Brennan

**Contribution to Junior Chess** – Uxbridge Junior Chess Club

**Club of the Year** – Camberley Chess Club

**Congress of the Year** – Cheney Rapidplay

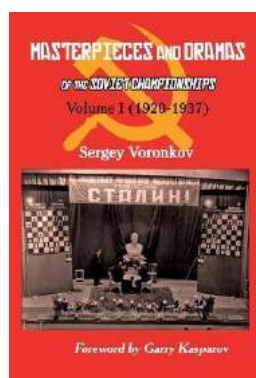
The following document records the citations made for the successful 2021 ECF award winners - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/ECFAwards2021.pdf>

— Dr Stephen Greep, Chairman ECF Awards Committee, 03/08/2021



### Book of the Year 2021

From the excellent books on the shortlist, two stood out – Nigel Short’s *WINNING* and Voronkov’s *Masterpieces and Dramas*. The latter is winner of the Book of the Year 2021. However, Short’s book is so good that it merits a mention in the award.



#### **Masterpieces and Dramas**

Sergey Voronkov

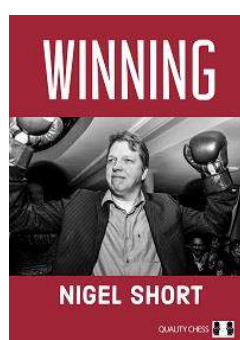
Elk and Ruby pp 534 hardback £35.95

The full title, *Soviet Championships Volume 1 (1920 – 1937)*, is the story of the first ten Soviet Championships. Potential readers might be discouraged by the apparently obscure subject, but they should not be! The book reads like a novel describing how the championships were organised and played in the appalling conditions of post-revolutionary Russia and is an extraordinary story of keeping chess alive against very considerable odds.

Voronkov states that 'he is interested in the people' and his approach is 'closer to a documentary movie than a dry chronicler of events'. Thus the focus is on individual stories and twists of fate of the many characterful players such as Alekhine's and Bogolubov's exclusion from Russia, which vividly contrasts with Botvinnik's early years. Many contemporary cartoons, photographs, press reports and gossip make you feel that you are there when reading the book.

The chess is very good too. Gary Kasparov in his foreword praises 'the great game selection ... showing chess in the context of time'. Voronkov also has a great eye for the dramatic moments in the tournaments, positions of chess interest and historically valuable games.

A most remarkable, absorbing and entertaining chess history which fully lives up to its title, Masterpieces and Dramas, on and off the board. A worthy winner of Book of the Year 2021 over strong competition.



### **WINNING**

Nigel Short

Quality Chess pp 413 hardback £29.50

The title WINNING might suggest that this was a collection of Nigel's best games. But WINNING refers to eight tournaments that he won over 30 years and includes all the games he played in them covering good, practical, defensive and survival games that are required to win a tournament. A unique approach which well matches Short's annotating style and personality. The result is an

outstanding first book.

— Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska, Sean Marsh – 8th October 2021

### **British Chess Educational Trust Awards 2020**

With funds provided by the generosity of the late Sir George Thomas (now administered by the British Chess Educational Trust) the English Chess Federation annually awards shields to schools which have shown outstanding achievements or enthusiasm in chess. Commencing 1982 inscribed chess boards have been substituted for shields. Recommendations for awards should be forwarded (via the appropriate Union if in England, or via the national organisations for Scotland or Wales) to: John Wickham, 55 Shakespeare Way, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6SL Email: j.r.wickham@btinternet.com by 31st March. Latest recipients are as follows ---

**Handsworth Primary School; Petts Wood & Orpington Chess Club Junior Section; Stroud High School; Watford Junior Chess Club**



### **New FIDE Arbiters**

Alan Atkinson, ECF Manager of Arbiters, writes ...

Following the decisions on Arbiter title applications approved by the 4th quarter FIDE Online Council Meeting in December 2020, England has another FIDE Arbiter. I am sure that everyone will want to join me in sending Emma-Jane Billington-Phillips congratulations on her achievement! (4/1/21)





Many congratulations to Hok Chiu (above left), who has recently been awarded the title of FIDE Arbiter! (31/8/21)

Following the decisions on Arbiter title applications approved by the recent FIDE Council Meeting, England has another FIDE Arbiter. I am sure that everyone will want to join me in sending Aga Milewska (above right) congratulations on her achievement! (18/11/21)



## GM Michael Adams' Games of the Month

A selection of articles by GM Michael Adams from ChessMoves in 2021



GM Michael Adams – picture by Chris Stratford

When you delve deeper into online games, even those involving very strong players, with the common 15 minutes + 5 seconds increment time limit, it is often the case that as the clocks run low serious mistakes occur. This one is an exception as the players successfully negotiate the strategic complexities for a long time, Luke keeps on probing artfully throughout, whilst Gata defends stoically. However the mounting pressure and the psychological difficulties of being on the back foot mean that he finally misjudges the moment to break out and generate counterplay. This slip deep into the endgame allows Luke to liquidate to an instructive winning king and pawn endgame.

### **Luke McShane - Gata Kamsky**

European Club Cup Online 2021

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d3** Luke is an expert on the Black side of the Berlin himself and chooses to sidestep the forcing lines here, aiming for a slow build up.

**4...d6** 4...Bc5 is a more popular choice, but Kamsky prefers a less theoretical variation.

**5.0-0 Bd7 6.c3 g6** Due to White's quiet opening Black can deploy the dark squared bishop more actively than on e7.

**7.Re1 Bg7 8.Nbd2 0-0 9.Nf1 Nh5**



Gata decides to begin preparing f5, but this desirable advance often falls foul of tactical issues in such positions. Sensible improving options such as 9...h6, or 9...Re8 were alternatives.

**10.Bg5 Qe8** If 10...f6 11.Be3 is best (11.Bh4 Kh8 12.Ne3 a6 13.Ba4 Qe8 14.Nd5 Rc8 looks alright for Black) 11...f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.d4 leaves Black's position rather loose. If 13...e4? 14.Bc4+ Kh8 15.Ng5 is an immediate problem 15...Qe8 16.Bf7! Rxf7 17.Qxh5 wins.

**11.Ng3 Nxb3** 11...Nf4!? 12.Bxf4 exf4 13.Ne2 Bh6 leads to a rather strange position which is not very clear.

**12.hxg3** White's kingside structure has lost some flexibility, but the doubled g-pawns are a handy barrier making the White king very secure.

**12...h6** The typical tactical idea 12...Nd4!? swaps some pieces 13.Bc4 (13.cxd4 Bxb5) 13...Nxf3+ 14.gxf3 gives White a pleasant position; two captures towards the centre have resulted in good control there, and the half-open h-file could well come in handy.

**13.Be3**



**13...a6** Kamsky switches plans, 13...Kh7 intending to follow with f5 was more consistent, perhaps he didn't like exposing his own king, but after this decision Luke is pressing a bit with little counterplay.

**14.Ba4 b5 15.Bb3** There was also a good case for retreating the bishop a bit further: 15.Bc2! intending d4 next.

**15...Na5 16.Bc2 c5** White's bishop on e3 is more useful than the one on g7, and the Black knight is lacking active options on the queenside. White also has more pawn breaks available.

**17.a4!** Probing Black's queenside before the Black knight can regroup to c6.

**17...Qe7** Black would like to play 17...b4 but 18.cxb4 cxb4 19.Qd2! leaves pawns hanging on both flanks. Gata chooses to improve the position of his queen, 17...Be6 doing the same for his bishop was a worthy alternative.

**18.Qd2 Kh7 19.Ra3** Luke prepares to double up before opening the a-line. There was another way to take the initiative on the queenside: 19.b4 cxb4 20.cxb4 Nc6 21.Bb3! - the point of the advance, White's bishop finds a more productive diagonal. 21...Be6 22.Bxe6 Qxe6 23.Rec1 keeps some pressure.

**19...Nc6 20.axb5 axb5 21.Rea1 Rxa3 22.Rxa3 Rb8** White's control of the open file isn't too serious yet due to the lack of entry squares, but it is something to work with. 22...Be6! was a decent option here as 23.Ra6 can be met by 23...Qb7.

**23.Ra6 Qe8**

Preparing to expel the rook 23...Nd8!? was also possible.



**24.Bb3!** Improving White's bishop.

**24...Qc8 24...Ra8? 25.Bxf7** shows that it is never very comfortable to have the White bishop eyeing f7, and Gata hurries to swap it.

**25.Ra1 Be6 26.Bxe6 Qxe6 27.Qd1!** Bringing another piece towards the open file.

**27...Bf8** Kamsky continues to defend patiently, and secures the pawn on c5 with the idea to play d5 at some stage, the more 'active' 27...c4 28.dxc4 bxc4 29.Ra6 Qc8 30.Qa4 rebounds.

**28.Ra6 Qc8** Now 28...d5 doesn't work due to 29.Nxe5 Qxe5 30.Rxc6.

**29.Qa1 Qc7** It's not easy to relieve the pressure 29...b4 30.Qa4 Nd8 31.cxb4 Rxb4

32.Qe8! Qxa6 33.Qxf8 Ne6 34.Qxf7+ Ng7 35.Bxh6 Kxh6 36.Qf8 Kh7 37.Ng5+ Kh6 38.Qh8+ Kxg5 39.Qh4 mate is a pretty indicative line showing the dangers lurking in the position.

**30.g4** Luke gains space on the kingside, there were a couple of other good ideas; 30.Nh2 begins transferring the knight towards the enticing d5 square. This seems a bit slow, but the line 30...b4 31.Bd2 Rb6 32.Ng4 Bg7 33.Ne3 shows that it is a viable concept. 30.Qa2!? is another good move, this diagonal is more commonly occupied by White's bishop, but the queen is also well placed here preventing 30...Rb6? due to 31.Rxb6 Qxb6 32.Qxf7+.

**30...Nd8** Rerouting the knight is logical, but loses control of the a7 square. 30...Kg8 securing the pawn on f7 was another idea.

**31.g3 Ne6** 31...Qc8! 32.g5 h5 fixing the kingside structure limits White's options.

**32.Kg2 Rb6 33.Ra2** 33.Ra5!? was another good move. If the rook stays high up the board Black continues to offer an exchange: 33.Ra7 Rb7, or 33.Ra8 Rb8.

**33...Rb8**



**34.Qh1** Showing impressive vision Luke switches the attack to the other side of the board 34.b4!? cxb4 35.cxb4 giving the bishop on e3 more scope was another idea.

**34...Qb7 35.Qh4!** 35.Bxh6 Bxh6 36.g5 Nxc5 37.Nxc5+ Kg7 doesn't lead anywhere, this prepares the reinforcement Ra1-h1, which needs to be prevented.

**35...Ra8** Not 35...c4? 36.Ra7.

**36.Rxa8 Qxa8 37.Bxh6! Bxh6 38.g5 Qf8** Now 38...Nxc5? loses: 39.Nxc5+ Kg7 40.Nxf7. 38...c4 looks very dangerous after 39.gxh6 cxd3 40.Qe7, but now the unexpected 40...Kxh6! (40...Qxe4 41.Qxf7+ Kxh6 42.Qxe6 d2 43.Qxd6 wins) 41.Qxf7 Ng5! hangs on.

**39.gxh6** Although material is reduced the complexities of positions with queens and knights on the board mean that matters remain tense.

**39...Qd8** 39...Qxh6 40.Qe7 Qf8 41.Qd7 b4 42.Nd2! heading to c4 leaves Black in deep trouble.

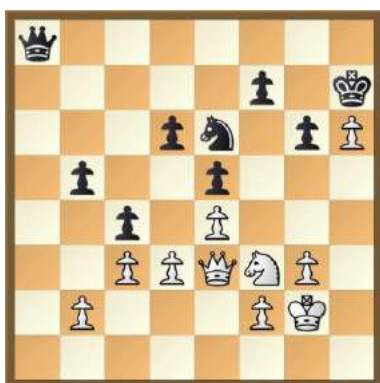
**40.Qh1** White must keep queens on to hang onto the extra pawn, 40.Qxd8 Nxd8 leads nowhere.

**40...Qa8** Kamsky takes control of the a-file and lines his queen up on the long diagonal towards the White monarch, thinking that the pawn on h6 provides cover for the Black knight, and seems likely to drop off sooner or later. However, later on he might have regretted not playing the more direct 40...Qf8, 41.Qa1 Kxh6 42.Qa6 (42.Qa7 Qe8) 42...Qb8 is passive but holding.

**41.Qc1 c4** The unexpected 41...f5! 42.Ng5+ (42.exf5 gxf5 leaves the White knight pinned, or 42.Qe3 f4 is annoying) 42...Nxg5 43.Qxg5 fxe4 equalises.

#### **42.Qe3!**

A very strong move, keeping all White options open.



**42...cxd3** Black faces a tricky choice 42...Qb7 43.dxc4 bxc4 44.Nd2! f5! (44...Qxb2 45.Nxc4 Qb8 46.Qd2) 45.Nxc4 f4 was the best hope. 42...Qc6 is met by the thematic advance 43.d4! a move that has lost nothing in strength by the amount of time taken to play it. 42...Qa2? 43.Qb6 shows the vulnerability of the Black king 43...Qxb2 (43...cxd3 44.Qxd6 Qxb2 45.Qe7) 44.Qb7.

**43.Qxd3 Qc6 44.Qe3** The unexpected 44.Qd5! is strong 44...Qxd5 (44...Qb6 45.Qa8) 45.exd5 Nd8 the knight is forced onto a bad circuit due to 45...Nc7 46.Ng5+. Then 46.Nd2 Kxh6 47.Nb1 and White will pick off the pawn on b5.

**44...Qb7 45.Kg1 f6** Covering the g5 square to free the black knight.

**46.Nh2!** A better direction than 46.Nd2 b4 47.c4 Nc5.

**46...Ng5 47.Ng4 Qe7 48.f4 Nf7 49.Qf3**

49.f5! Ng5 leaves White with an edge although there is still plenty to play for.



**49...Nxb6?** Gata misses his chance, and makes a fatal slip falling in with White's plans, 49...f5! forces White's knight backwards and gets Black right back into the game. 50.exf5 gxf5 51.Qd3 e4 52.Qd4 Nxb6 is alright.

**50.Qh1** The pinned knight gives Luke the option to liquidate all the pieces at the moment of his choosing, heading towards a winning king and pawn endgame.

**50...Qg7 51.Qh4! g5** 51...f5!? was a bit trickier but 52.Nf6+ Kh8 53.g4 fxg4 (53...exf4 54.g5) 54.Nxg4 Kh7 55.fxe5 dxe5 56.Kg2 g5 57.Qxh6+ Qxh6 58.Nxh6 Kxh6 59.Kg3 leaves Black with a familiar problem - a remote passed pawn on the queenside will distract the Black king decisively: 59...Kh5 60.b3 g4 61.c4 bxc4 62.bxc4 Kg5 63.c5 Kf6 64.Kxg4.

**52.fxg5 fxg5 53.Qh5** 53.Qxh6+ comes to the same.

**53...Qg6 54.Qxh6+ Qxh6 55.Nxh6 Kxh6 56.Kf2 Kg6** 56...Kh5 57.Kf3 g4+ closes the kingside but doesn't help 58.Ke3 Kg6 59.Kd3 Kf6 60.c4 bxc4+ 61.Kxc4 Ke6 62.b4 Kd7 63.Kd5 Kc7 64.b5

**57.Kf3 Kh5 58.b4!** White will eventually create a passed pawn with c4 to decide the game.

**58...Kg6** 58...g4+ 59.Ke3 Kg6 60.Kd3 prepares c4.

**59.c4** It's still possible to go wrong: 59.Kg4? Kf6 and White is already lost! 60.Kh5 (60.Kf3 Ke7! A neat triangulation 61.Kg4 (61.Ke3 Ke6) 61...d5! 62.exd5 (62.Kf5 d4) 62...e4 63.Kh3 Kd6) 60...d5 61.exd5 e4 62.Kg4 Ke5. The simple 59.Ke3 Kf6 (59...Kh5 60.c4) 60.Kd3 Ke6 61.c4 is also good enough.

**59...Kf6** After 59...bxc4 60.b5 c3 61.Ke2 d5 62.b6 dxe4 63.b7 the Black pawns are too slow.

**60.cxb5 Ke6 61.Kg4** 61.Ke2 Kd7 62.Kd3 Kc7 63.Kc4 Kb6 64.Kd5 also works.

**61...d5 62.exd5+ Kxd5 63.b6 Kc6 64.Kxg5**

Black resigned, 64...Kxb6 65.Kf5 removes his last pawn and all hope.



Five English players took a shot at the European World Cup Qualifier. The highlights were a good win by Marcus Harvey to equalise the score in his mini match with Zdenko Kozul, and Ravi Haria's excellent play in his opening match which he won 2-0. We are going to take a look at the first game.

This is as complicated as it is attractive. As well as accurate calculation, assessing complex material imbalances is a continuing necessity. Given the unusual playing conditions and demanding time limit, the players do a good job of threading their way through the morass of variations.

### F. Bindrich – R. Haria

European Hybrid World Cup Qualifier 2021

**1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3**



White turns down the option to transpose to a Catalan with 6.d4. The flexible system deployed in this game was recommended in Mihail Marin's excellent books on this English move order.

**6...b6 7.Bb2 Bb7 8.e3 c5 9.d3** I would prefer 9.Qe2 here, White might want to play d4 in one move at a convenient moment, and now his position loses some dynamism.

**9...Qc8** As Black's queen moves again shortly, the immediate 9...Nc6 seem a good alternative.

20

### **10.Nbd2**

I think the White knight should have been developed more actively on c3: 10.Nc3. After 10.cxd5 Nxd5 possibly followed by a timely Bf6 is comfortable for Black.





**10...Nc6 11.Qe2 Qc7** Due to White's slow build up Black has time to reposition the queen, and this does prevent one active White plan to play Ne5. Nonetheless the developing 11...Rd8 was quite reasonable 12.Ne5 Nxe5 13.Bxe5 dxc4 is fine, and 12.d4 a5 gives idea of a4, and the bishop might find a6 a useful square later.

**12.a3** I feel White should have lined up a rook opposite the Black queen with 12.Rac1 - when the position opens up this is often useful. Instead 12.cxd5 is not too terrifying 12...exd5 limiting the knight on d2 is tempting, and 12...Nxd5 is ok.

**12...Rad8 13.Rad1** White is drifting without a plan, one of the rooks should have gone to c1 although it is not particularly scary; 13.Rfc1 Qb8 14.cxd5 Nxd5 15.d4 is roughly equal. 15.Nc4!?, or 13.Rac1!? are other ideas.

**13...Rfe8** Moving the queen a second time has enabled Black's rooks to be placed on their best squares in the centre, this rook will have a bright future on the e-file in the game, and the opposition to the White queen proves particularly handy later.

**14.Ne1** Retreating the knight doesn't inspire confidence, but 14.Rfe1 e5 isn't impressive, or 14.d4 Ba6 is an annoying pin. 14.e4 dxe4 15.dxe4 e5 planning Nd4 shows how the knight on c6 has more prospects than the one on d2.

**14...e5**

Black is well prepared to take more central territory.



**15.f4** This doesn't work out well, but 15.cxd5 Nxd5 16.Ne4 leads to a rather squashed Hedgehog.

**15...exf4 16.gxf4 d4!**



Fixing the structure, and staking out central space, this also puts an impenetrable barrier in front of the bishop on b2.

**17.e4** If White had a lot of time to play a combination of the useful moves Bc1, Ndf3, Bh3, and Ng2 bringing his minor pieces to better positions the situation would be quite different. However, Ravi takes decisive action to blow open the position long before White can redeploy his slumbering pieces.

**17...Bd6!** A resolute move, Ravi is happy to offer material to increase the scope of all his pieces. Black had good alternatives in 17...g6 intending 18.e5 Nh5, or 17...Bc8 preparing Ng4, but the principled game continuation gives greater clarity to Black's plans.

**18.e5?** Bindrich ploughs ahead, but it was more circumspect to consolidate with 18.Qf3 Bc8 19.h3 when it is less obvious how Black should continue. 19...Re6! is good as 20.e5 Nxe5 21.fxe5 Bxe5 is still promising. White should keep the tension with the better 20.Bc1 instead.

**18...Nxe5!** The only consistent continuation, but now Black's activity is considerable.

**19.fxe5** After 19.Bxb7? Nxc4 is one good option.

**19...Rxe5** 19...Bxe5 20.Bxb7 Qxb7 21.Bc1 is less urgent.

**20.Ne4** Not 20.Qf2? Rh5 and h2 caves in. Realising he had opened the floodgates for the opposing forces, White offered a draw with this move.



**20...Nxe4!** Ravi makes the correct but brave decision to continue the game. Black has ample

compensation, and with his king much safer than his opponent's practically his play is easier, but it is never simple to reject the small strategic gain of a half point with Black in the first game of a mini-match in a complicated position.

**21.Bxe4** After 21.dxe4 Rde8 22.Bc1 Rxe4! is important, 23.Bxe4 Rxe4, now 24.Qg2 Re6! followed by Rg6+ wins instantly. After the better 24.Qh5 the bishop on b7 is so strong that Black can just continue slowly, 24...g6 25.Qh3 h5 and White's position gradually collapses: 26.Rf2 Bc8 27.Qd3 Rg4+ 28.Kf1 (28.Kh1 Bb7+ 29.Nf3 Qd7) 28...Bxh2.



**21...Qe7** 21...Rde8! was better, when Black's pieces co-ordinate perfectly, the queen can still be useful on c7. 22.Qg2 Rxe4! (cleaner than the other promising capture 22...Bxe4 23.dxe4 R5e6) 23.dxe4 Re6! leaves White's queen embarrassed the threat of Rg6 is very hard to meet, if 24.Qh3 Rh6.

**22.Nf3** 22.Qf3! enables White to bring his troops back into alignment 22...Rxe4 23.dxe4 Bxe4 24.Qh3 looks awkward, but Ng2 will cover the White king, whilst he has some extra material in the bank. Or 22...Bxe4 23.dxe4 Rxe4 24.Bc1 Re2 25.Ng2, and White is beginning to get organised.

**22...f5** 22...Bxe4 23.Nxe5 Bg6 24.Rde1 Re8 regains some material with an edge, but the game move is much more creative and enticing.

**23.Nxe5** 23.Bd5+ Bxd5 24.Nxe5 Qg5+ 25.Ng4 Bc6 26.Bc1 Qg6 27.Rde1 Re8 28.Qd1 Rxe1 29.Rxe1 h5 30.Qe2 Kh7 leaves Black in control - the knight will be captured when Black chooses.

**23...fxe4**



**24.Rf7** 24.Nf7 is also alright as after 24...e3 the unexpected quiet move 25.Qg4! saves the day (not 25.Nxd8 Qg5+) 25...e2 26.Nh6+ Kh8 27.Nf7+ leads to perpetual after 27...Kg8 as 27...Qxf7?? 28.Rxf7 isn't possible - the White queen covers d1. The retreat 24.Ng4? e3 leaves White marmalized by the bishop pair, the continuation 25.Rf5 Qh4 26.Rdf1 seems sensible, but now 26...Bxh2+! 27.Nxh2 Qg3+, or 27.Qxh2 Qxg4+ mates.

**24...Qg5+ 25.Qg2 Qxg2+ 26.Kxg2 Ba8** Despite the exchange of queens White still has a lot of issues to deal with, the knight on e5 is hanging and a nasty discovered check will happen soon.



**27.Rf5** A tricky decision, 27.dxe4? Bxe5 28.Rxa7 Bxe4+ 29.Kg1 Bc2 30.Re1 Bf6 31.Rb7 d3 and the d-pawn can't be stopped. Or 31.Bc1 Bxb3 32.Rb7 d3 33.Bd2 Bxc4 34.Rxb6 Bd4+ 35.Kg2 Bd5+ 36.Kg3 c4 and the Black bishops dominate. The related line 27.Rxa7? Bxe5 (not 27...e3+? 28.Rxa8) 28.dxe4 Bxe4+ transposes to 27.dxe4.

Exchanging rooks instead is logical, 27.Rd7 Rxd7 28.Nxd7 e3+ 29.Kg1 looks pretty hopeless for White with the knight caught behind enemy lines, but rounding it up efficiently is not so simple 29...Bf3 30.Rc1! Bg4 31.Bxd4 cxd4 32.c5 creates counter chances, or 29...Bc6 30.Nxc5 bxc5 31.Rf1 hangs on.

**27...g6 28.Rg5** After 28.Nf7 e3+ 29.Kh3 gxf5! 30.Nxd8 f4 Black's imposing pawn chain will sweep all before it 31.Rg1+ Kf8 32.Bxd4 cxd4 33.Ne6+ Ke7 34.Nxd4 Be5! wrong-foots the White knight.

**28...e3+ 29.Kg1 Re8 30.Ng4** White had to start returning material with 30.Nxg6! hxg6 31.Rxg6+ Kf7 32.Rxd6 Rg8+ 33.Kf1 Rg2 34.Bxd4 e2+ 35.Ke1 exd1Q+ 36.Kxd1 cxd4 37.Rxd4 leaves Black with some challenges to win the game with the few pawns remaining. 30.Nd7 Bf4 31.Nf6+ Kf7 32.Nxe8 e2 transposes to the game, but 31.Rg3 continues to resist.

**30...Bf4 31.Nf6+** It must have been tempting to plug the long diagonal with 31.Rd5. Now the calm 31...Rf8! is the simplest preparing to harass the White knight with h5, if 32.Rd7 Bf3. The capture 31...Bxd5 also works 32.Nf6+ (32.cxd5 Kg7!) 32...Kf7 33.Nxd5 e2 34.Re1, now the sneaky retreat 34...Bg5! is not easy to see, but the threat of Bh4 decides.

**31...Kf7**



**32.Nxe8 e2!** 32...Bxg5 33.Nd6+ is much less impressive.

**33.Rf1** The very pretty point is that 33.Re1 Be3 mates,



so White has to jettison a lot of material.

**33...exf1Q+ 34.Kxf1 Bxg5 35.Nc7 35.Nd6+ Ke6 36.Nb5 Bf4 37.Nxa7 Bxh2** is straightforward, the bishops are far too strong here supporting the advance of the kingside pawns.

**35...Bc6 36.Nb5 a6**

White resigned, 37.Nd6+ Ke6 38.Nc8 Bd8, or 37.Nc7 Bf4 38.Nxa6 Bb7 leave the Black knight running out of road.



The removal of a player after round 8 of the British Online Championship had considerable knock-on consequences, a lot of players missed the re-arranged last round, and the forced reallocation of those points was far from ideal. Whilst there was little else to be done in the circumstances, it would be good to see amongst other measures longer bans, and more collaboration between sites with co-ordination from FIDE.

In any case despite these upheavals Keith Arkell was a deserved winner, playing the most challenging, and practical chess throughout. In this last round game against Mohammed Ismail he overcomes the emotional rollercoaster of his previous result being reversed, and goes after the win which would clinch the title - a task he goes about in his own inimitable style.

Keith would have been unaware during the game, in the later stages, that other results meant that a draw would have been sufficient at that stage.

### K. Arkell – M. Ismail

British Online Championship 2021

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 Be7 7.Bg5** It seems slightly counter intuitive that in the days of modern preparation, Keith's continued loyalty to his usual opening repertoire continues to pay dividends, but his depth of knowledge often outweighs the lack of surprise value.

**7...g6 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 9.e3**



**9...Be6** Keith has had many games with **9...Bf5 10.Bd3 Bxd3 11.Qxd3** including an important success in this tournament, but it seems more logical to me for Black to keep both bishops on the board.

**10.Be2 Nd7 11.0-0 0-0 12.b4 a5 13.b5**



After **13.a3 b5** intending **Nb6-c4** is one option.

**13...c5!**



This advance challenges the centre, and thwarts the smooth mobilisation of the minority attack, looking to give the dark squared bishop more influence.

#### 14.Rfd1 Rc8 15.Rac1



#### 15...Qc7

A key moment as Black has to take a major strategic decision. Closing the queenside with 15...c4 is approved by the machine, although to the human eye it looks rather committal. Consolidating a passed pawn on c4 is welcome, although Black's fixed structure lacks dynamism, however there is useful piece play available, as he can continue with a combination of Be7–b4, Nb6, and Bf5 in the future.

16.e4 Nb6 17.e5 Be7 doesn't really help White, his pieces aren't ready to support kingside action, despite the pawn on e5. Keith might have preferred 16.g3 aiming to transfer the bishop to g2 as in the game, or 16.Nd2 followed by Bf3.

The flexible 15...Nb6 was a good alternative, when Qe7 could follow, a better square than the queen ends up on in the game.

#### 16.Qb1 Qb8

The queen is tucked away out of trouble but has little influence here.

**17.g3 Rfd8 18.Bf1 Nb6** The computer still endorses 18...c4, but this is clearly a less favourable version than earlier.

**19.dxc5** Keith decides to resolve the structure, instead of continuing with 19.Bg2.



**19...Rxc5 20.Nd4**



**20...Rdc8?** The opposite-coloured position that now arises is favourable for White, so Mohammed should have preferred 20...Bxd4 21.exd4 Rcc8 where the weak c4 square balances White slightly better bishop. The natural 21.Rxd4 isn't good as 21...Rdc8 22.Ne2 Rxc1 23.Nxc1 Qc7 takes control of the c-file. Maintaining the bishop pair with 20...Bg4!? was also a better idea, getting the bishop out of range of the knight, and hitting the rook on d1.

**21.Nxe6! fxe6** If 21...Rxc3 22.Rxc3 Rxc3 23.Nf4 Rc5 24.Bg2, the IQP is becoming a serious problem.

**22.Ne2!** The knight on c3 hasn't had a big role so far, but now it is ready to actively jump to f4, and combine with Bh3 ideas to target e6. A future h4–h5 might also undermine Black's king cover.





**22...Nc4?!** A tempting leap, but this was a good moment to bring the queen back into the action, 22...Qd6! also covers the sensitive point on e6. 22...Rxc1 23.Rxc1 Kf7 reducing material, and only then deploying the king was another reasonable continuation.

**23.Bh3 Re8 24.Nf4**



**24..Kf7** The king move is clearly not ideal, but 24...Qd6 also looks rather shaky. However the queen's return to the action gives Black some active ideas as well. 25.e4 Bg5! 26.Bxe6+! (26.Nxe6 Rxe6 27.Rxd5 Rxd5 28.Bxe6+ Qxe6 29.exd5 Qg4! is not very clear, or 28.exd5 Re2 29.Rxc4 Qb6 and Black is getting active) 26...Rxe6 27.Rxd5 Bxf4 28.Rxd6 Bxd6, here White's queen should be more valuable than the assorted pieces, but there is plenty of play left.

**25.e4 Qd6** 25...d4? is refuted by 26.Bxe6+! Rxe6 27.Nxe6 Kxe6 28.Rxc4 Rxc4 29.Qb3! Qc7 30.Rc1.

**26.exd5 exd5 27.Bg2 Nb6 28.Rxc5 Qxc5**



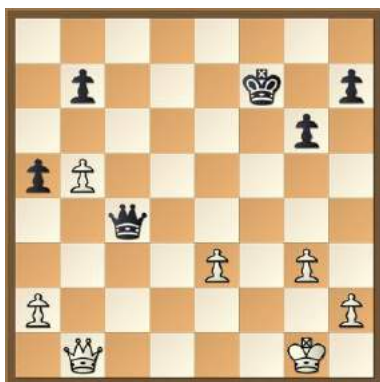
**29.Bxd5+** The hard to see finesse 29.Qd3! activating White's queen before grabbing the pawn was best, one day it might profitably swing over to f3.

**29...Nxd5 30.Rxd5** 30.Nxd5 can now be met by 30...Re2!. This variation shows another point of 29.Qd3! - it's useful to have the e2 square covered.

**30...Qc4 31.Rd7+** Forcing the exchange of rooks aids Black, as White's queen is passively placed. 31.Kg2 was good as 31...Qe4+ 32.Qxe4 Rxe4 33.Rd7+ Re7 34.Rxe7+ Bxe7 35.Kf3 brings the monarch to e4.

**31...Re7 32.Rxe7+ Bxe7 33.Ng2** Not a welcome retreat to have to make, but Black's queen is dominating its counterpart, so Keith looks to challenge it. The machine points out the crafty 33.h4! with the idea that 33...Bxh4 34.Qd1 Be7 35.Qf3 creates real problems for Black, as the two White pieces combine perfectly to annoy Black's open king.

**33...Bc5 34.Ne3 Bxe3 35.fxe3**



The complexities of this endgame are enhanced by the fact that both players frequently have to calculate the possibility of a queen swap leading to King and Pawn endgames, where despite the extra passed e-pawn, results vary considerably.

**35...Qe6** It's natural to prioritize your queen in a Queen + Pawn endgame, but now was a good moment to move the king towards the queenside; 35...Ke6! was correct. After 36.Kf2 (36.Qb3? Qxb3 37.axb3 Kd5 gives time to snap off the b5 pawn.) 36...Kd6, or 36...a4 are fine for Black.

In contrast 35...Qe2? loses although the details are still quite complicated: 36.Qf1+ Qxf1+ 37.Kxf1 Ke6 38.Ke2 Kd5 39.Kd3 a4 (39...Kc5 40.a4 Kb4 41.e4) 40.e4+ Kc5 41.b6 Kxb6 42.Kc4 Kc6 43.Kb4. 35...a4? also fails similarly to 36.Qf1+.

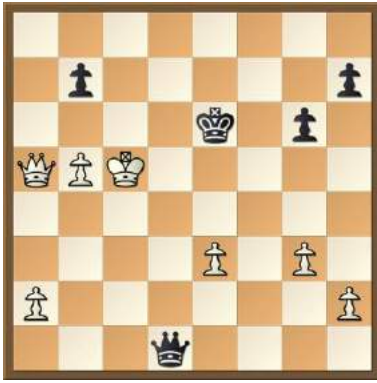
**36.Kf2** White is still not in time for 36.Qb3 Qxb3 37.axb3 Ke6.

**36...Qf6+** This is not very constructive, 36...Qd5 was possible as 37.Qb3 still doesn't work: 37...Qxb3 38.axb3 Ke6 39.e4 Kd6 40.Ke3 Kc5 41.Kf4! (41.e5? Kxb5 even wins for Black.) 41...Kxb5 42.Ke5 Kb4 43.Kd6 Kxb3 44.e5 a4 and there will soon be two new queens on the board in an equal endgame. 36...a4 37.Qc2 a3 also makes sense - White's queen is now totally tied to the pawn on a2.

**37.Ke2 Qe6 38.Qc2 Qd5 39.Qc7+** It's still somewhat surprising to me that 39.Qb3 doesn't work, but 39...Qxb3 40.axb3 Ke6 41.e4 Kd6 remains ok for Black. 39.Qa4! hitting a5 and angling for Qf4+ was best, then checks like 39...Qg2+ 40.Kd3 Qf1+ 41.Kd4 only help White.

**39...Ke6 40.Qc8+ Kf7 41.Qc7+ Ke6 42.Qxa5** Grabbing a second pawn, but now White's queen is out of play, and lots of checks are coming.

**42...Qg2+ 43.Kd3 Qf1+ 44.Kd4 Qd1+ 45.Kc5** Objectively it was time to settle for a draw with 45.Kc4, but this last try pays dividends.



**45...Qd6+** 45...Qd5+! actually leaves Black having more fun. After 46.Kb4 (46.Kb6?? Qd8+) 46...Qd2+ 47.Ka4 Qxa2+ 48.Kb4 Qd2+ 49.Ka4 Qc2+! is worth a try, rather than immediately giving perpetual. The precise 50.Ka3! holds, but the inaccuracy 50.Kb4? Qe4+ 51.Ka3 Qxe3+ allows Black to remove another pawn, whilst keeping the checks going, and leaves him pressing.

**46.Kc4 Qd5+ 47.Kc3** Now White has escaped the checks and is back in control.

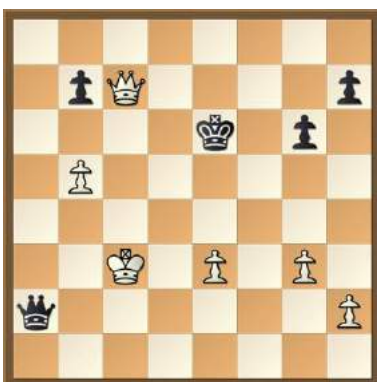
**47...Qe5+ 48.Kc2** It's natural to avoid the pawn being captured with check, but 48.Kb3! Qxe3+ (48...Qd5+ 49.Kb2! Qe5+ 50.Qc3 Qxb5+ 51.Qb3+ wins.) 49.Qc3 co-ordinates handily with ideas of a4 or Qc8+.

**48...Qe4+** The focus on checks is understandable, but the calm 48...Qxe3! saves the day, White can't improve the queen easily due to the loose pawn on b5: 49.Qd2 Qc5+, 49.Qd8 Qc5+, or 49.Qb4 Qe2+.

**49.Kd2 Qg2+?! 49...Qd5+!** keeps the checks going.

**50.Kc3 Qd5** After 50...Qxh2 51.Qb6+ Kf5 52.Qxb7 Qxg3 53.Qd5+ Kg4 54.Qe4+ Kh3 55.b6 Qe1+ 56.Kb3 Qd1+ 57.Kb4 Qd2+ 58.Kc5 the b-pawn will eventually promote.

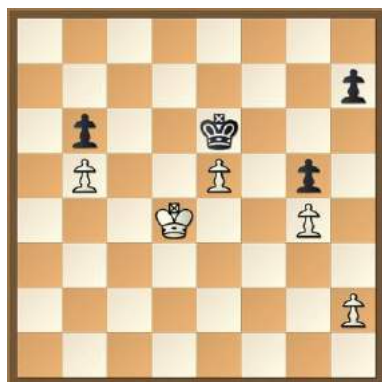
**51.Qc7 Qxa2 51...Kf6** at least avoids an immediate queen swap.



**52.Qc4+!** This clarifies matters.

**52...Qxc4+ 53.Kxc4 b6 53...Ke5 54.Kc5** is straightforward.

54.Kd4 Kd6 55.e4 Ke6 56.e5 g5 57.g4



Black resigned, his king will have to give ground.



Etienne Bacrot had a good run in the World Cup, before encountering Magnus Carlsen in the quarterfinals. Like many other players, Nigel Short has been less active of late, so he does an excellent job of negotiating this very complex first round game without showing signs of rust. He is rewarded with the full point when the Frenchman loses his bearings deep in the endgame.

### N. Short – E. Bacrot

Sigeman & Co, Malmo 2021

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.f3** A good practical choice - Nigel avoids sharp theoretical developments he focuses on less these days.

**6...e5** The main move, but it does allow White an outpost on d5.



**7.Nb3 Be6 8.Nd5 Be7** If 8...Bxd5 9.exd5 forces Black to lose time moving the knight again, so Bacrot continues developing.

**9.Be3 0-0 10.c4 a5**

**11.Bb6** Nigel continues to play ambitiously, if White could complete development he would be doing well, but it's not easy to find the time without allowing activity. 11.Be2 a4 12.Nd2 Nd4 gives Black counterplay.

11...Qd7



12.a4 Consolidating the knight on b3, but the b4 square is weakened.

12...Rfc8 13.Be2 Bd8 14.Bf2 Nb4 15.Nxb4 Exchanging the strong knight on d5 feels wrong, 15.0–0 looks a better option here.

15...axb4 16.Nd2 Qc6 Preparing to swap the passive bishop.

17.b3 Bb6



18.Nf1! 18.0–0 Bc5 is comfortable for Black, so Nigel sends the other knight towards d5 via e3.

18...Nd7 18...Bxf2+ 19.Kxf2 Nd7 20.Ne3 is quite convenient for White, who is ready for Qd2 and Rhd1, but 18...Nh5 19.g3 f5 was an interesting alternative.

19.Bd3 19.Ne3 Bd4 isn't convenient. This move discourages f5, and the bishop could secure the pawn on b3 from c2 later.

19...Bc5 19...g6!? was a useful waiting move; the more committal 19...Nc5 20.Ne3 would suit White.

20.Ne3 Bd4 The bishop moves again, but this causes White considerable disruption.

21.Ra2 After 21.Rb1 the visual 21...b5! is still possible 22.axb5 (22.cxb5? Qb6 23.Qe2 Rc3 leaves the queenside collapsing.) 22...Qb6 23.Qe2 Bc3+ 24.Kf1 Nc5 with good compensation.

21...Qc5 22.Re2



22...b5! This square looked pretty well covered, but now Black's pieces get very active whichever way White captures.

23.axb5 Not 23.cxb5? Qc3+ 24.Kf1 Bxb3.

23...Bc3+ 24.Kf1 Ra1 25.Bb1 Qd4 26.Qc2 White's pieces are tied up, and time is required to get his king to a comfortable spot, but the extra protected passed pawn on b5 won't be reclaimed soon, creating a dynamic balance.



26...Nc5 27.g4! 27.Nf5? Qd3 forces Black where he wants to go.

27...Nxb3 28.Kg2! White needs to get the king out of the back rank pin: 28.Nf5 Qxc4 29.Ne7+ Kf8 30.Nxc8 Nd2+.



**28...Nc5** The razor sharp nature of the position is shown by 28...Bxc4? 29.Nf5 when Black can resign.

**29.Nd5** 29.Nf5 Qxc4 30.Ne7+ transposes to the game. The alternative 30.Nxd6 b3 31.Nxc4 bxc2 32.Rxc2 Nd3! is around equal, but not here 33.Rxc3? Nf4+ 34.Kg3 Ne2+.

**29...Qxc4 30.Ne7+ Kf8 31.Nxc8 Bxc8 32.Ba2! Qxb5** Now White gets to unravel, 32...Rxa2! was required, 33.Qxa2 b3! (33...Qxb5 looks dangerous, but is not that clear.) 34.Qa8 Qxe2 35.Qxc8+ Ke7 36.Qc7+ Ke8 and White should settle for perpetual. 37.b6? Bd4 38.Rf1 b2 39.b7 Qxf1+ 40.Kxf1 b1Q+ rebounds.

**33.Rxa1 Bxa1 34.Bc4!** White takes control of the position and grabs the initiative.

**34...Qb6 34...Qb8 35.Qd1!** is good as 35...Bc3? is not possible due to 36.Bxc5 dxc5 37.Qd8 mate.



**35.Bxc5** The subtle withdrawal 35.Qd1! was best. 35...Bc3 36.Qd5! White's queen settles on a more powerful central post compared to the game. 36...Be6 (36...Qc7 37.Bxc5 dxc5 38.Qa8 Ke7 39.Ra2 Bb7 40.Qg8!) 37.Qa8+ Ke7 38.Bxe6 fxe6 39.Ra2.

**35...dxc5 36.Qa2 Bd4 37.Qa8 Qb7 38.Ra2 Ke8!** The only try, as 38...g6 39.Ra7 wins.



**39.Bxf7+!** Stronger than 39.Ra7 Qxa8 40.Rxa8 Kd7.

**39...Kxf7 40.Ra7 Qd7!** Etienne keeps on fighting, although White has won the Black queen, the two connected queenside passers supported by the bishop pair, especially the one handily anchored on d4 mean that conversion is far from simple.

**41.Qd5+** Forcing moves are always tempting, but 41.h4! was a clever idea. As Black's queenside pawns can only be held up, White should look to clean up Black's kingside pawns, and then advance his own pawns on that flank. Therefore advancing the pawns whilst Black doesn't have a very useful move gains valuable time: 41...Ke7 (41...b3 42.Qd5+ Ke7 43.Rxd7+ Bxd7 44.Qxb3) 42.Rxd7+ Bxd7 43.Qg8 Be6 44.Qxh7 b3 45.Qxg7+ Kd6 46.h5 b2 47.Qb7 leaves White much quicker than in the game.

**41...Ke7 42.Rxd7+ Bxd7 43.Qg8 Kd6 44.g5! 44.Qxg7 b3** is simpler for Black.

**44...Be6 45.Qxg7**

The position should now be equal, but in practice it is normally easier to play with a queen than without one. Even if there is objectively sufficient compensation, the number of checks needed to be calculated often result in errors.

**45...b3 46.Qxh7**



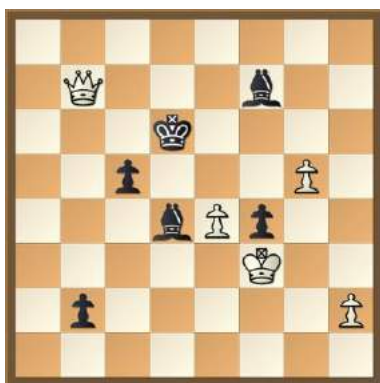
**46...b2** It's normal to advance the pawn which is furthest forward, but after 46...c4! there are two runners for White to keep an eye on. 47.g6 c3 48.g7 b2 49.g8Q Bxg8 50.Qxg8 b1Q 51.Qd8+ Kc6 52.Qc8+ Kd6 ends in perpetual.

**47.Qb7 Bf7** It was more practical to push the pawns and pray; 47...c4 48.g6 c3 49.g7 c2 50.Qb4+ Kd7 51.Qa4+ Ke7 52.Qxc2 Kf6 is far from easy to convert, if it is even possible after 53.Kg3 Kxg7 54.Qb1 Kf6 55.h4 Bc4.

**48.f4! exf4** The capture removes handy support from the bishop on d4, but 48...c4? 49.f5! c3 50.g6 isn't possible.

**49.Kf3**





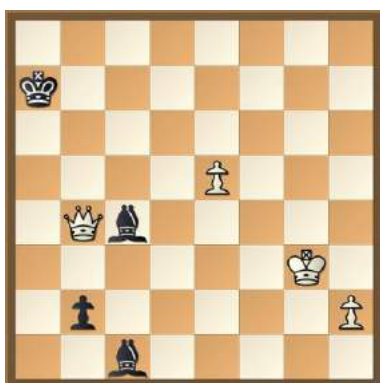
**49...Bc4?** The final error. The more natural 49...c4! is still far from clear 50.g6 Be6! (50...Bxg6 51.e5+! Kxe5 (51...Bxe5 52.Qb6+) 52.Qe7+ Kf5 53.Qe4+ Kg5 54.Qxf4+ Kh5 55.h4! setting up mate is a funny computer line.) 51.Qb4+ Kc6 52.Kxf4 c3 53.Qxd4 b1Q 54.Qxc3+ Kd7 and Black should survive.

**50.g6 Bd3 51.g7 Bc4** Clearly Bacrot had miscalculated something, perhaps he missed 51...Bxg7 52.Qd5+, as 51...b1Q 52.Qxb1 Bxb1 53.g8Q is hopeless. The loss of several tempi with the bishop is unsurprisingly disastrous.

**52.Qb6+ Kd7 53.Kxf4 Bxg7 54.e5 Bh6+ 55.Kg3 Bc1** Black has saved the pawn, but it will never get to promote with the Black king wide open.

**56.Qd6+ Kc8 56...Ke8 57.e6** decides 57...b1Q (57...Bb5 58.Qb8+) 58.Qd7+ Kf8 59.Qf7 mate.

**57.Qxc5+ Kb7 58.Qb4+ Ka7**

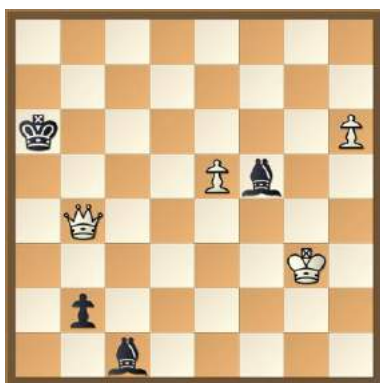


**59.h4!** White doesn't need to hurry, just gradually edge his pawns forward.

**59...Be6** The light squared bishop can't find a safe spot: 59...Ba2 60.Qa4+ Kb7 61.Qxa2; 59...Bd3 60.Qd4+.

**60.h5 Ka6** There is no hope: 60...Bf5 61.Qe7+! Kb8 (61...Kb6 62.Qf6+) 62.Qf8+ Bc8 63.Qb4+ Kc7 64.h6.

**61.h6 Bf5**



### 62.h7!

Black resigned, as 62...Bxh7 63.Qd6+! sets up a fatal check next: 63...Ka5 64.Qc7+, 63...Ka7 64.Qc7+, 63...Kb7 64.Qd7+ or 63...Kb5 64.Qd7+ Kb4 65.Qxh7 Kb3 66.Qb1 kills all hope.



I wasn't sure if I could find an appropriate game from the ECF Marathon, blitz games are great fun to play, but not always amenable to detailed analysis afterwards, although perhaps yours were a bit better than mine!

Anyway, we should not judge this game between the top two finishers too harshly, besides the demanding time limit the playing duration required to win the event was even more of a handicap to overcome. Considering these provisos the level of play is pretty impressive.

In some ways this features typical blitz game themes: a series of good moves when a natural plan emerges, some shaky ones when the momentum switches in the opposing direction, a tendency to force matters when on reflection a quiet move might have been more useful, and lots of dirty tactical tricks which ultimately decide matters.

### S. Royal – K. Arkell

Checkmate Covid Rematch 2021

1.d4 c5 2.d5 e5 3.Nc3 d6



If you play all night after a while every opening looks viable! According to my trusty edition of Nunn's Chess Openings this is called the Semi-Benoni, a good choice if you are concerned the Czech Benoni is a bit too promising!

**4.e4 Be7 5.g3** White has a number of decent alternatives such as 5.Nf3, 5.Bb5+, or 5.a4.

**5...f5** Objectively dubious, but well suited to a blitz game. Keith must have also considered swapping his bad bishop with 5...Bg5 6.Bxg5 Qxg5 7.Nf3, although this does leave White's lead in development looking a bit worrying.



**6.Bg2** Having prepared a fianchetto, it was unlikely Shreyas would consider deploying that piece on the other side of the board, but 6.Bb5+! would have required Black to move his king, or lose the pawn on f5 after blocking the check.

**6...Nf6 7.Nge2 0-0 8.0-0 fxe4 9.Nxe4 Nxe4 10.Bxe4 Nd7**



Black should be careful, 10...Bg5 11.f4! wouldn't work out well, but now all his pieces are mobilising smoothly, and the lack of space is not a significant factor.

**11.Nc3 Nf6 12.Bf3** 12.Bg2 was better although Black has a pleasant choice between 12...Bg4, or 12...Qe8 with ideas on both sides of the board, to play b5 or Qg6.

**12...Bh3 13.Re1 Qd7**



**14.a3** When things aren't going well in a blitz game it is hard to reverse the flow, but this is not urgent enough.

**14...Qf5** A good move, 14...Ng4 was also strong.

**15.Be3 Ng4 16.Bxg4** A regrettable necessity - without a light squared bishop the white king will never be far from a mating net, but against determined defence this will not be so simple to achieve at the quick time limit.

**16...Bxg4 17.Qd3 Qh5**



**18.Qf1 18.Ne4** with the idea that Bf3 can be met by Nd2 in some lines also made sense.

**18...Rf3** Doubling rooks looks impressive, but it will take a useful square away from the Black bishop or queen, and 18...Bf3 immediately certainly had its points.

**19.Ne4 Raf8 20.b4!**



Shreyas begins fighting back, White has to try to hold things together on the kingside and create some queenside play.

**20...b6 21.bxc5 bxc5 22.Rab1!** The rook can't do that much damage on its own, but it will be an annoying distraction from Black's aggressive ideas.



**22...Bf5** I doubt Keith intended to trap his own rook, although Black is still better afterwards. The retreat **22...R3f7** with the idea of **Bf3** was better.

**23.Nd2 Bxc2 24.Rb2**



**24...Rxe3** A mistake - Black should make White give up the knight, as it is one of the few pieces that can cover the sensitive light squares. If you think about the quality of the pieces remaining on the board, **24...Bg6!** was wiser.

**25.Rxe3 Bf5 26.Rb7?** Forcing moves are always hard to resist when the clock ticks down, but this drives his opponent's pieces to their best locations. Now would have been a good moment to improve the position of the White knight with 26.Ne4!

**26...Bg5** Both black bishops are working together to control all the key diagonals.



**27.f4** Continuing to look for activity and a decent practical try as 27.Re2 Bd3, or 27.Qe2 Bg4 28.Qe1 don't look inspiring.

**27...exf4 28.gxf4 Bf6** The unexpected withdrawal 28...Bc8! attacks the loose rook and prepares Bxf4. However Keith's consolidating move looks ideal, defending g7, and preparing to land the bishop on d4.

**29.Rg3 Bd4+ 30.Kh1 Re8 30...Bg6** Putting another barrier on the g-line and attacking d5 was a good idea.

**31.Nf3** Missing 31.Rg5! which forces Black to swap queens with 31...Qh3.

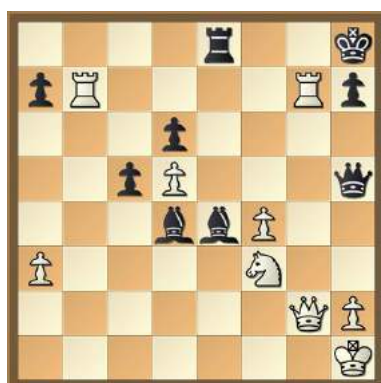
**31...Be4**

An impressive bishop pair!



**32.Qg2 Kh8** The simplest way to win was 32...g6! closing down White's threats, then 33.Rh3 Qxd5 34.Rhxh7 Bxf3 leaves White out of ideas. The alternative 32...Bxf3 33.Rxf3! leaves White on the edge but pushing him over is not so simple.

### 33.Rgxg7



**33...Qxd5!** This calm decision, navigating some icebergs decides the game.

It's not too difficult to work out that 33...Bxf3? 34.Rxh7+ Qxh7 35.Rxh7+ Kxh7 36.Qxf3 doesn't work, but 33...Qxf3? 34.Rxh7+ Bxh7 with the idea of 35.Qxf3? Be4 is more tempting. However 35.Rxh7+! changes the picture 35...Kxh7 36.Qxf3 and White is winning.



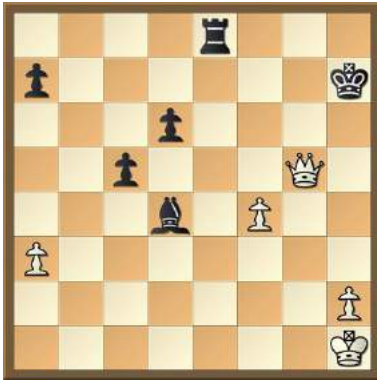
**34.Rxh7+?** This instigates a forcing sequence with a sting in the tail.

There were a number of better alternatives, which are objectively good for Black, but might well have created considerable confusion over the board. 34.Rbe7 Rb8! 35.h4 Black's next two moves are extremely difficult 35...Bf6! 36.Rc7 Qe6! defending the back rank and freeing the black rook for aggressive action.

Moving the other rook to e7; 34.Rge7 Rg8 35.Qxg8+ Qxg8 36.Rxe4 Bf6 is better for Black but leaves plenty to play for.

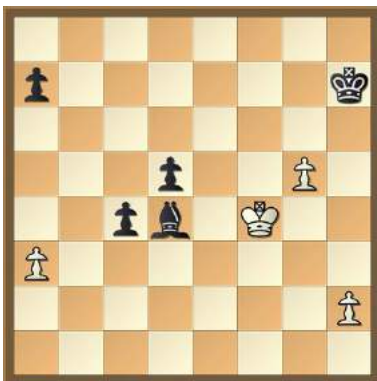
Giving the White king some air with 34.h4 is also sensible 34...Qxb7 35.Rxb7 Bxb7 36.Kh2 Re3 leaves Black with a lot of material for the queen. The best try 37.Qa2! Bxf3 38.Qf7 is not too easy to spot.

**34...Bxh7 35.Rxh7+ Kxh7 36.Ng5+ Qxg5 37.Qxg5** All these moves were fairly forced, but Shreyas had missed the next two that matter.



**37...Re1+ 38.Kg2 Rg1+ 39.Kf3 Rxf5 40.fxf5 d5** Black is just a piece up, and Shreyas swiftly throws in the towel to move onto the next game!

**41.Kf4 c4**



**0-1**





## GM Keith Arkell – Arkell's Endings

A selection of articles by GM Keith Arkell from ChessMoves in 2021

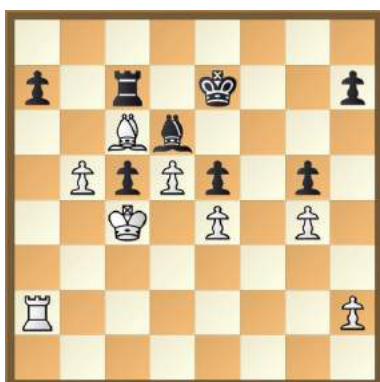


GM Keith Arkell

When Nigel Towers approached me to write a regular column based around my endgames I was only too happy to oblige.

I would like to begin with the theme of zugzwang. A very common aid to making progress in positions with reduced material is your opponent's obligation to make a move - from simple K+P v K positions, when they must give way when facing the opposition, to more complex situations.

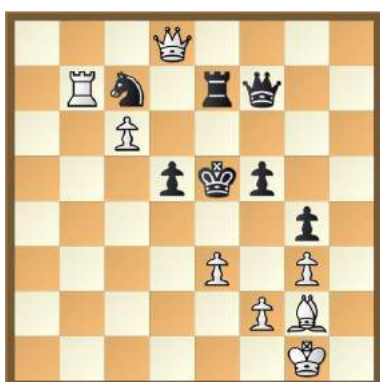
After a quick scan of my games I was surprised how often zugzwang has come to the rescue. Here are four examples; in each case the key move is made by a rook.



Against GM Pia Cramling, in a French team match in 1999, I played **48 Ra6**. If Black were now allowed to pass I would have problems making progress, but instead she must either move the rook and drop the a pawn, or move the king and leave the bishop undefended. The game concluded **48...Kd8 49 Bb7** (exploiting the attack on the loose bishop to win the a pawn.) **49...Rd7 50 Rxa7 Bb8 51 b6 Rf7 52 Kxc5 Rd7 53 Kc6 Rd6+ 54 Kb5 1-0**



This position, against FM Francis Rayner at the 2008 Liverpool British Championship, would be a draw without zugzwang. After **65...Rb2**, however, he is obliged to play either 66 Rd3 or 66 Kh3. Against 66 Rd3 I have a neat little trick, viz: 66 ...e4! 67 dxe4 Rb3! exploiting the lateral pin to promote my pawn. In the game he chose **66 Kh3**, after which, with his king now forced away from the action, I was nonetheless able to break through with **66...e4 67 dxe4 Ke5 0-1**



I already had a winning position v GM Hichem Hamdouchi in the French Team Championship of 1995, but 57 Ra7 terminated the game immediately. He clearly can't move a pawn; if he moves his knight he drops a rook; if he moves his rook he loses a lot of material; if he moves his King then Rxc7 wins, so that just leaves the queen.  
**57...Qg7 58 Bxd5! 1-0.** The queen no longer defends d5 so after 58...Nxd5 59 Ra5 Qd7 60 Rxd5+ and when he recaptures I can take the loose rook on e7.



In the fourth case the zugzwang didn't happen over the board but only in my head. Against FM David Zakarian in the 2014 4NCL I am attacking the h6 pawn which he can't defend with either

35...f6 or 35...Rh8 because I trap his rook with 36 Bg4. In the game he just gave up the pawn with **35...Nb3**, and I soon went on to win. If he tries to save the pawn he must play 35...Nc6 when I was ready with 36 R2b1! Amazingly Black would then be in zugzwang even though there are still 21 pieces on the board!



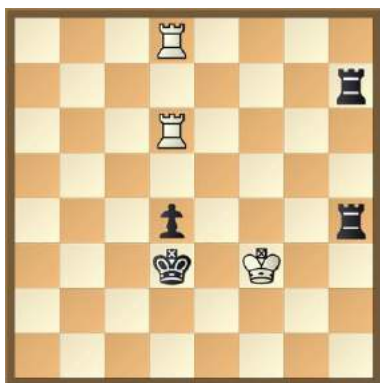
I will let you work out for yourself precisely why Black is in zugzwang here.



In this month's article I'm going to demonstrate how a king with pawn shelter can be used effectively in a mating attack against a king bereft of cover. The two examples were both played during the early days of 2020, before Lockdown took hold. Both games were double rook endings against strong opposition.

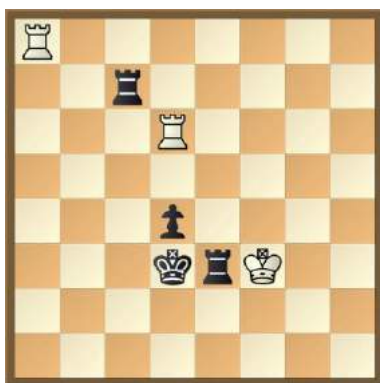
**GM Hort, Vlastimil - GM Arkell, Keith 0-1**  
Bunratty Masters 2020.02.23 Round 6

### 61. Rd6



This was the position after White's 61st move in a tense last round game at Bunratty where I was playing black against legendary GM Vlastimil Hort. In order to win I will need to promote my pawn, and the most effective way to do this is to combine threats to advance it with threats against his exposed king. Notice that my king will be that much harder for Hort to get at because I can duck and weave behind the pawn.

**.. Rf7+ 62. Kg3 Re4 63. Ra8 Rg7+ 64. Kf3 Rf7+ 65. Kg3 Rc7 66. Kf3 Re3+**



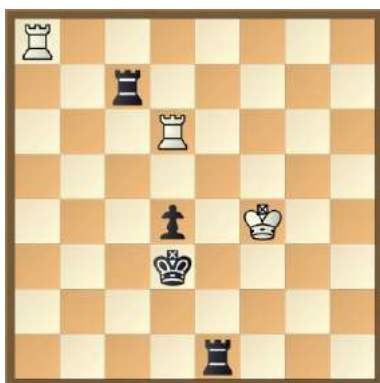
**67. Kf4**

If 67 Kf2 I will make serious progress by forcing his king to the back rank after 67...Rc2+ 68 Kf1 Rf3+ 69 Kg1 (here we can see the first mating pattern after 69 Ke1? Re2+ 70 Kd1 Rf1 #)

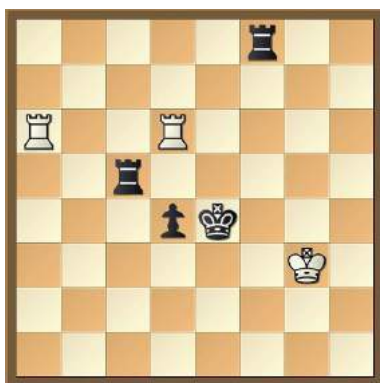
69...Rf4

Obviously most of the time in chess we can't calculate all lines up to mate, so instead we form micro-plans with which we hope to make progress. Back to the game

**67 .. Re1**

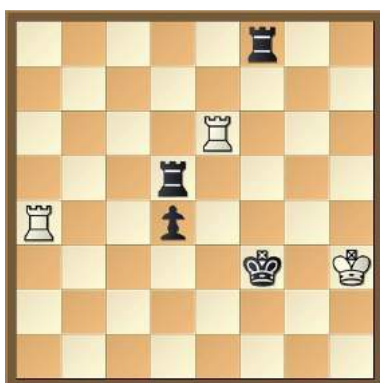


**68. Ra3+ Rc3 69. Ra4 Rf1+ 70. Kg4 Rc4 71. Ra2 Kc3 72. Kg3 Rf8 73. Kg2 Kd3 74. Ra3+ Ke4 75. Re6+ Kd5 76. Raa6 Rc2+ 77. Kg3 Rc5 78. Red6+ Ke4**



Threatening 79...Rg5+ 80 Kh4 Rg1, when White's king will be in dire straits.

**79. Ra4 Rg5+ 80. Kh4 Rd5 81. Re6+ Kf4 82. Kh3 Kf3**



I have been continually closing in on the white king while distracting my opponent with threats to push the pawn, and finally, in mutual time-pressure, he overlooked my main idea.

**83. Kh4** Had Hort prevented the mate then 83...d3 would have guaranteed decisive progress.

**Rh8+ 0-1**

**IM Milliet Sophie vs GM Arkell Keith 0-1**

4NCL 2020.01.11

We join our second game Milliet-Arkell also in 2020, after Black's 53rd move.

**53.. Rf2+**



As in the previous endgame, the extra pawn serves as a shield against harassment from the White rooks. In the meantime, while my opponent has been focussing on preventing the advance of my central pawn mass, I have a free hand to go after her king.

**+54. Ka3**

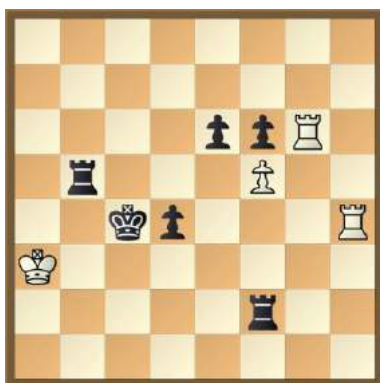
Had the king retreated to the back rank I would have gained a decisive advantage after either 54...Rxb3 or even just 54...d4 55 Rxf6 d3, but now I can play directly for mate.

**Kc5 55. b4+**



The only other way to prevent mate is 55 f5, but then 55...d4 56 b4+ Kc4 is curtains.

**Kc4 56. b5 Rxb5 57. f5+ d4**



Threatening 58...Ra5 # and ready to meet 58 Ka4 with Ra2 #.

0-1

### Keith Arkell (KeithArkell) vs Tristan Cox (RockTroll)

Queen's Gambit Declined Exchange Variation

Live Chess Chess.com, 06.06.2021

[Atomrod]

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Qa4+ Nc6 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6



We reach a position from the QG exchange variation. One way or another I am playing for a minority attack with long term pressure on the half open files on the queenside which is likely to last into the endgame.

9.e3 0-0 10.a3 Bxc3+ 11.bxc3 Qg6



So far we are following Arkell - Ward from the Aberystwyth British of 2014.

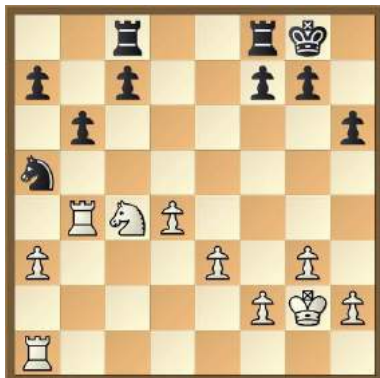
12.g3 Rc1 was played in Aberystwyth and we are now out of the book lines.

12...Bg4 13.Bg2 Qf5 Increasing the pressure on the weakened light squares.

14.Qd1 Played to allow White to castle.

14...Bh3 15.0-0 Bxg2 16.Kxg2 Qe4 17.Qb1 Qxb1 18.Rfxb1 b6 19.Nd2 Na5 20.Rb4 Rac8 W's plan is to advance the c pawn, open and build pressure on the queenside open files now that the queens are off.

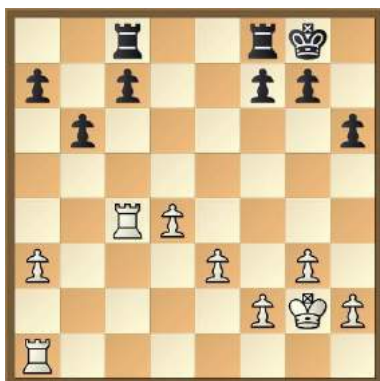
21.c4 dxc4 22.Nxc4



Critical move.

22...Nxc4? ± This is a mistake as it allows White to build up on the c file unopposed. (+0.07) The best move was 22...c5 23.dxc5 Rxc5 24.Nxa5 Rxa5 25.a4 Rc8 26.Rd1 Rc7

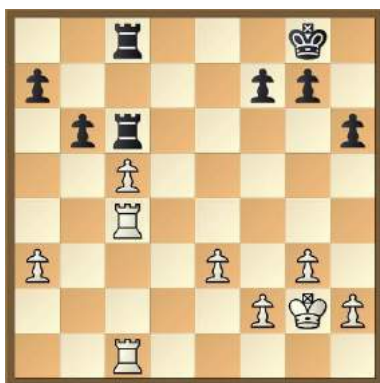
23.Rxc4



White now has a clear target on the c file.

23...c5 24.Rac1 Rc6 25.dxc5 Rfc8?

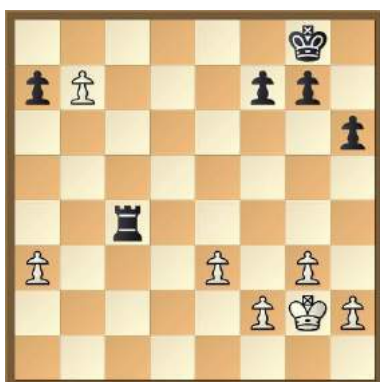




Easily played in a blitz games but this is the losing move after which black's position falls apart fairly quickly. Can you see the winning sequence without looking at the game score. The best move was 25...bxc5 26.Rxc5 Ra6 27.R1c3 Rd8 28.Rf5

**26.cxb6!** The critical move.

**26...Rxc4 27.Rxc4 Rxc4 28.b7!**



At this point my opponent resigned. My playing style is well suited to such things as simuls and marathons as I am able to go on auto-pilot for much of the time, thus conserving energy. Here, for example, recognition of the patterns enabled me to spend just 51 seconds on the game and 1 second on the final combination (cxb6). This was one of about 40 R + P endings I had during the 24 hours.

[28... Kh7 29.b8Q] **1-0**



### The Need for Precision

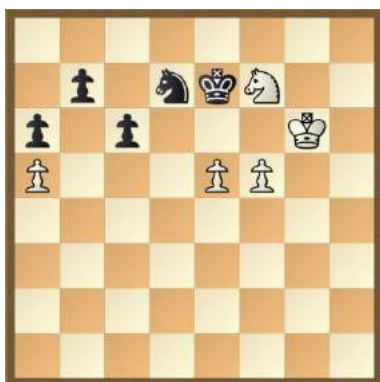
'Fast is fine, but accuracy is everything' – *Wyatt Earp*

**(2880) Arkell, Keith - Franklin, Sam [E62]**

4NCL 2018–19 England ENG, 17.03.2019

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.d4 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 0-0 5.g3 d6 6.Bg2 Nc6 7.0-0 Rb8 8.Bf4 a6 9.a4 h6 10.a5 g5  
11.Bc1 e5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.Be3 Be6 14.Qa4 Qe7 15.Rfd1 Rfd8 16.h3 Rxd1+ 17.Rxd1 Rd8 18.Rxd8+**

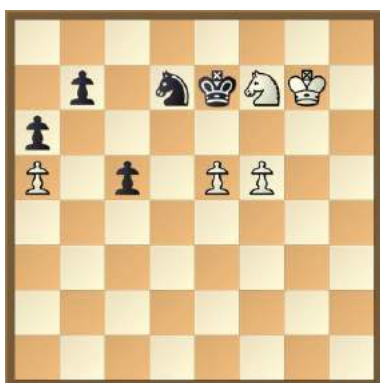
Qxd8 19.Nd2 Bd7 20.Qa1 Qe7 21.Nb3 Qb4 22.Qa4 Bf8 23.Qxb4 Bxb4 24.Na2 Be7 25.g4 Kf8 26.Kf1 Ke8 27.Ke1 Nb4 28.Nxb4 Bxb4+ 29.Bd2 Bxd2+ 30.Kxd2 Bc8 31.Nc5 c6 32.Nd3 Nd7 33.Be4 Nf6 34.Bg2 h5 35.gxh5 Nxh5 36.Nxe5 Nf4 37.Bf1 Bxh3 38.Bxh3 Nxh3 39.Nd3 Kd7 40.Nc5+ Kc7 41.Ke3 Nf4 42.Kf3 f5 43.e3 Ng6 44.Ne6+ Kd6 45.Nxg5 Ne5+ 46.Kf4 Nxc4 47.Kxf5 Nxb2 48.Ne4+ Kd5 49.Nd2 Kd6 50.e4 Ke7 51.e5 Nd3 52.f4 Nc5 53.Nc4 Kf7 54.Nd6+ Ke7 55.Kg6 Ke6 56.Nf7 Ke7 57.f5 Nd7



Of the various ways to classify endgames the most obvious is by material balance, but another is to draw a distinction between those in which you can slowly improve your position and carry out long term plans and those in which absolute precision is required. The following endgame fits the latter category. Starting from this position, each one of my next eleven moves was absolutely forced if I were to win the game. Who else can join me on 11/11?

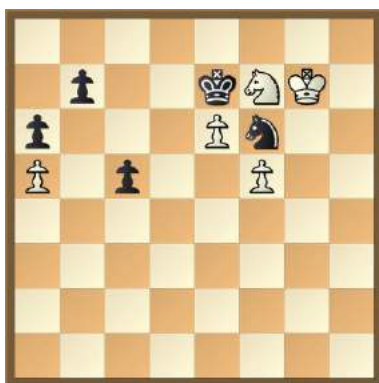
**58.Kg7** If you found 58 Kg7 you are on 1/1. Other moves fail to bring home the point, for example 58 f6+? grinds to a halt after 58...Ke6, and 58 e6 allows the strong piece sacrifice 58...Nf8+ followed by 59...Nxe6.

**58...c5**



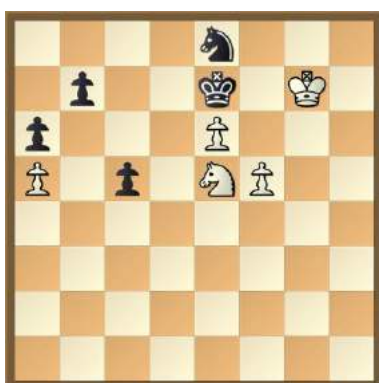
**59.e6** Again there is no other move. White must act fast! 2/2

**59...Nf6**



**60.Ne5** You shouldn't be considering any other move here. 3/3

**60...Ne8+**



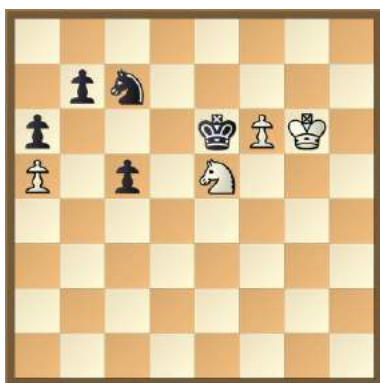
**61.Kg6** Again clearly the only move. 4/4.

**61...Nc7**



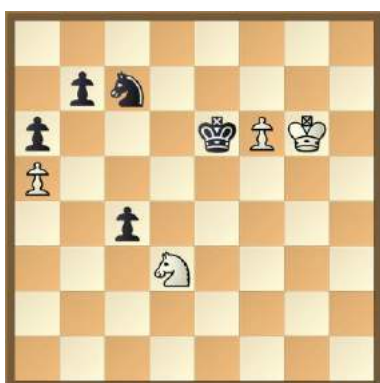
**62.f6+** 5/5, but you really only deserve a point if you have seen the follow-up. I don't need my e-pawn - it's his colleague who is destined for greater things.

**62.. Kxe6**



63.Nd3 6/6.

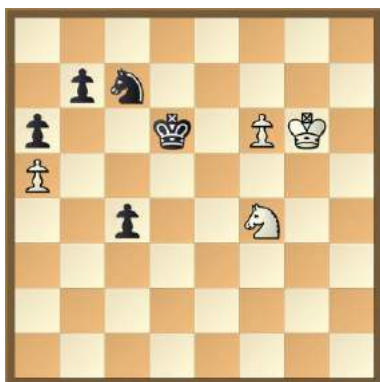
63...c4



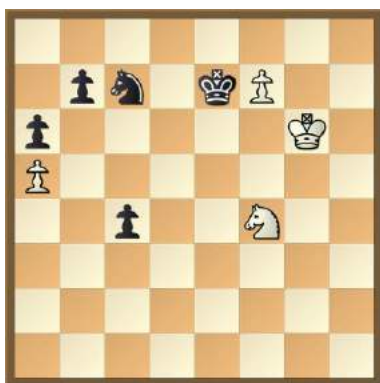
If 63...Kd7 64 f7 Ne6 65 Nxc5+, or here 64...Ke7 65 Nxc5 Kf8 (65...Ne8 66 Nd7!) 66 Nd7+

64.Nf4+ Did you play this because you saw that 64 Nc5+ fails ( 64...Kd6 65 f7 Ke7 66 Kg7 Ne8+!) or did you regard the two moves as being of equal value? Either way, 7/7.

64...Kd6

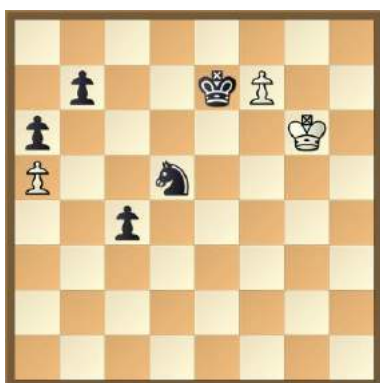


65.f7 {8/8.} 65...Ke7



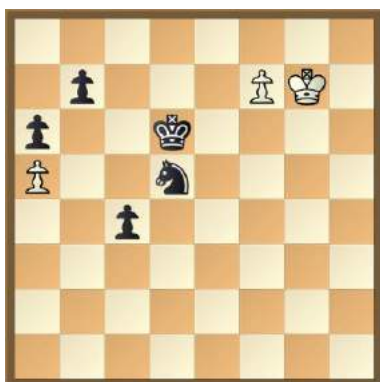
**66.Nd5+** If you are on 9/9 you probably saw this move a long way off. It is, of course, fundamental to the whole sequence.

**66...Nxd5**



**67.Kg7** 10/10.

**67...Kd6**



**68.f8Q+** And if you have got this far you won't slip up here. Congratulations if you made it to 11/11! The game concluded:

**68...Kc6 69.Qc8+ Nc7 70.Qf5 Nd5 71.Kf7 b6 72.axb6 Nxb6 73.Qa5 Nd5 74.Ke6 Nc7+ 75.Ke5 Nb5 76.Qb4 c3 77.Qc4+ Kb6 78.Kd5 Nc7+ 79.Kd4 Nb5+ 80.Kd3 a5 81.Qa4 Ka6 82.Kc4 1-0**

## Errors Under Pressure

*'Pressure is when you play for five dollars a hole with only two in your pocket'* - Lee Trevino

Have you noticed how the decisive error by a player who has been under constant pressure is often fairly basic - even in games between the very strongest? The implication is that you shouldn't worry too much whether you are winning by force. Most of the time you won't be, but if you can keep hammering away over a sustained period, they may go wrong when you least expect it.

Here is the top board encounter from the recent final of the Online Counties Championship between Devon and Northumberland. My opponent became an IM 3 years ago, at 19, and has the talent to go on to become a GM.

### GM Keith Arkell - IM Andrew Horton

Counties Championship final – Devon v Northumberland, Board 1 Chess.com, 18.09.2021

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 Bb4+ 4.Bd2 a5 5.g3 0–0 6.Bg2 d5 7.Qc2 c5 8.cxd5 cxd4 9.Nxd4 Qb6 10.e3 exd5 11.Nc3 Nc6 12.Nxc6 bxc6 13.0–0 Rb8 14.Rac1**



**14...h5** An awkward move to deal with. In both the middle game and the endgame a black pawn on h3 will keep me on my toes.

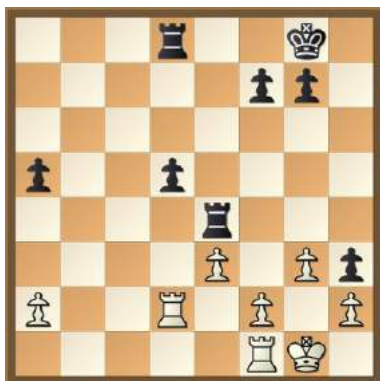
**15.Na4 Qd8 16.Bxb4 Rxb4 17.b3 h4 18.Qxc6 Bd7 19.Qc7 h3 20.Qxd8 Rxd8 21.Bf3 Bxa4 22.bxa4 Rxa4 23.Rc2**



After a logical sequence of moves we have arrived at an ending in which my opponent's active pieces should neutralise the slight vulnerability of his pawns. Although the h3 pawn is a long-term

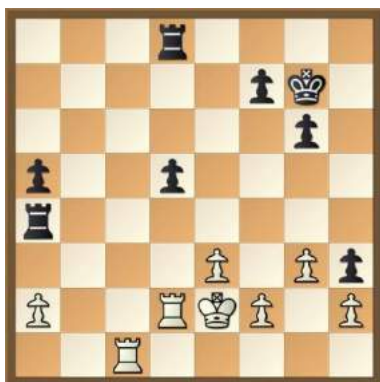
target, it is doing a good job for the moment in restraining my natural plan of expanding in that area.

**23...Rc4 24.Rd2 Ne4 25.Bxe4 Rxe4**



A rook and pawn endgame after just 25 moves is hardly a new experience for me, and although it would doubtless be a draw with best play, I have just enough to work with to continue the struggle. **26.Rc1** I saw little point in 26 Rfd1 Ra4 27 f3 f5 when I have no really convincing plan. I place a high value on long term strategy in the endgame and will always strive for a position which has the potential for gradual improvement of the pieces. As a first step I envisaged placing my rooks on d2 and d4

**26...Ra4 27.Kf1 g6 28.Ke2 Kg7**



**29.Rcc2** I have to do this very carefully, as the immediate 29 Rc3 allows 29...d4 30 Rcd3 dxe3 with a draw.

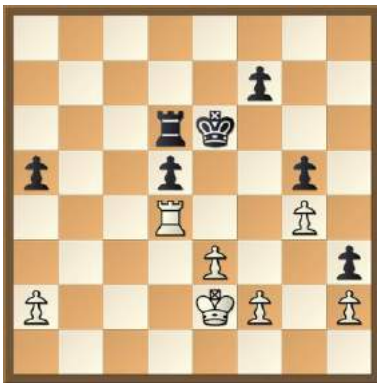
**29...Rd6 30.Rd3 g5** Andrew would like to play...g4 to frustrate my intended plan of Kf3, g4, Kg3 and Kxh3.

**31.Rcd2 Kf6**



If 31...g4 32 Rd4 Rxd4 33 Rxd4 f5 34 f3 when there are plenty of pawn weaknesses to target.

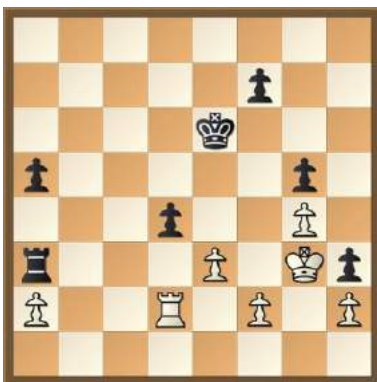
**32.Rd4 Rxd4 33.Rxd4 Ke6 34.g4**



**34...Rb6** Black must of course defend actively.

**35.Kf3 Rb4 36.Rd3** I didn't like 36 Rd2 a4, with the idea of ...a3 and ...Rb2.

**36...Ra4 37.Rd2 Ra3 38.Kg3 d4**



There was no way of avoiding this transition after which Black, although a pawn down, should still hold with accurate play.



**39.Rxd4 Rxa2 40.f3 Ra3** I like this move. It is important for Black to break up my flexible pawn structure before it becomes free to advance.

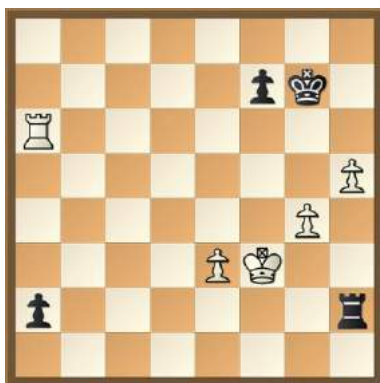


**41.Re4+ Kf6 42.Kxh3 a4 43.Kg3 Rb3**

**44.f4** Played reluctantly, but there is no time for 44 h4 gxh4+ 45 Kxh4 a3 when the a pawn will interfere with the defence of my important e and f pawns. Of course I can instead play 44 Rxa4 Rxe3, but, while I have won countless endings with 4 v 3 or 3 v 2 on the kingside, they still remain the option of last resort.

**44...a3 45.fxg5+ Kxg5 46.h4+ Kg6 47.Kf3** While it seemed unlikely that I would be winning this, I was curious to explore what kind of problems I could set my opponent. Incidentally, 47 Kf4?? a2 48 Ra4 Rb4+ wouldn't be too clever. Always be vigilant!

**47...a2 48.Ra4 Rb2 49.Ra6+ Kg7 50.h5 Rh2**



**51.e4** I'll never tire of saying that this important chess move shouldn't be rushed into!

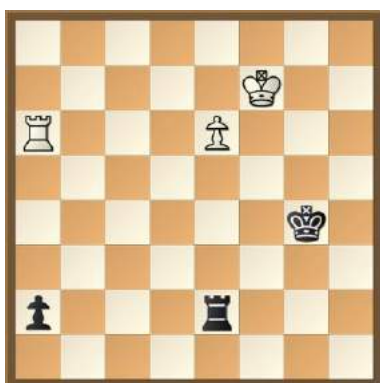
**51...Rb2 52.e5** Although I can't possibly be winning by force, my best practical chance involves playing e6 at some point, then trying to achieve something with the resulting passed pawns.



**52...Rh2 53. Kf4 Re2 54.Kf5** I knew that 53 e6 fxe6 54 Kg3 Rb2 55 g5 Rb3+ 56 Kf4 Rb4+ 57 Ke3Rh4 58 Ra7+ Kg8 59 h6 Rg4 was a draw, so I wanted to play around a bit first before committing to anything.

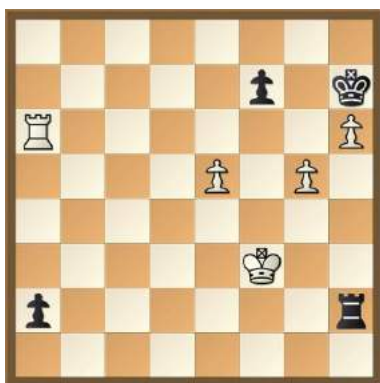
**54...Rf2+ 55. Kg5 Re2 56.Kf4**

I had a good look at 56 h6+ Kh7 57 Kf6 Rf2+ 58 Ke7 a1=Q+ 59 Rxa1 Kxh6 60 Ra6+ Kg5! (not 60...Kg7 61 Rf6 winning). 61 Rf6 Re2 62 Rf5+ Kxg4 63 Kf6 Re1 when I can't possibly hope to win. During a brief chat after the game Andy pointed out that in this line he need not jettison his a pawn as he can also draw with 57...Kxh6 58 Kxf7+ Kg5 59 e6 Rf2+! His idea is to keep either checking or attacking my e pawn as my rook isn't free to intervene. There is a beautiful winning line if instead of 59...Rf2+! Black plays 59...Kxg4?



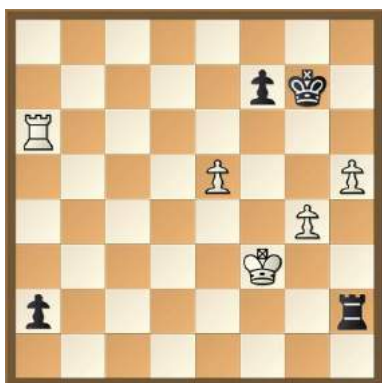
when 60 e7 Rf2+ 61 Kg6 Re2 62 Ra4+ Kg3 63 Kf6, threatening Rxa2, and therefore forcing 63...Rf2+ 64 Kg5 Re2 65 Ra3+ Kf2 66 Rxa2 brings about Queen v Rook. There is something about this sequence which mocks Tarrasch's quip (or was it Tartakower?) that 'All Rook Endings are drawn'.

**56...Rf2+ 57.Ke3 Rh2 58.Kf3**



Black is in a minor Zugzwang as currently he has everything ideally placed.

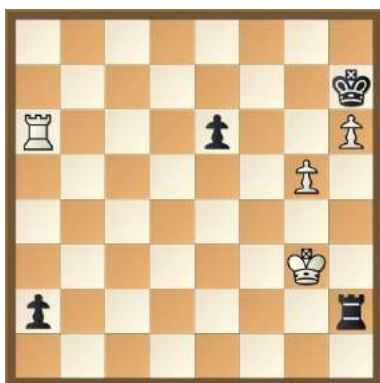
**58...Rb2 59.g5 Rh2 60.h6+ Kh7**



**61.e6** There is nothing else worth trying.

**61...fxe6**

**62.Kg3**



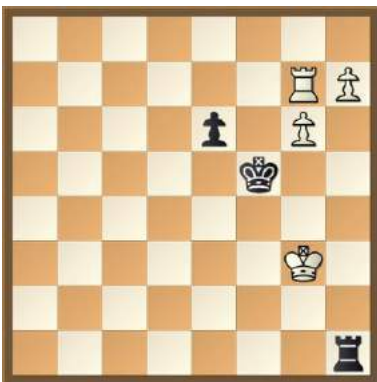
**62...Rh1 ?!** 'This is not the losing move, but it does require greater precision from Black. There was no need to keep my pawns under such restraint as after 62...Rb2 I can use neither my king nor rook to escort them home. I'll leave you to verify this for yourself.'

63.Rxa2



**63...Rb1??** I didn't ask Andrew but I think he panicked when he saw 63...Kg6 64 Rh2, but Black can still save himself with 64..Rg1+! 65 Kf3 (or 65 Kf2 Ra1 66 h7 Ra2+ followed by ...Rxh2 and...Kxh7) 65...Rf1+! and the rook comes back to f7. The position would then be a fortress even without the e6 pawn. In what has been for the most part an accurately played game by both of us I am now winning by force for the first time.

**64.Ra7+ Kg6 65.Rg7+ Kf5 66.h7 Rh1 67.g6**



1-0



### Highlighting the freedom of movement a Bishop has over a Knight

*The Bishop moves diagonally forwards or backwards, to the extent of the Board* - Howard Staunton

Perhaps I can blame Covid-19 for the bout of food poisoning I suffered during the middle rounds of the British over-the-board Championship. Had the disease not stolen my sense of smell 18 months earlier, I might have detected something suspicious about the quiche I picked up for a rushed lunch.

However, I was feeling very well for this Round 7 encounter with one of a growing number of Lockdown warriors – players who have improved substantially through study and online practice and who are now hundreds of points under-rated. I will annotate this game in the style already

familiar to readers of my book – i.e. limiting the comments to my thoughts at the board rather than using engine analysis.

### Keith Arkell - Oliver Stubbs

Over-the-Board British Championship Hull (7), 08.10.2021

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.d3 Bg7 7.Be3 Nc6 8.Qd2 Nd4 9.Rc1 c6 10.Bh6 Bxh6 11.Qxh6 Nf5 12.Qd2 0–0 13.Nf3 Re8 14.h4 h5 15.Ne4 Nd6 16.Nc5 e5 17.0–0 Bf5 18.Ng5 Qe7 19.b4 f6 20.Nge4 Bxe4 21.dxe4 Rad8 22.Qh6 Qg7 23.Qe3 Kh7 24.Rfd1 Qf7 25.a4 Nbc4 26.Qb3 b6 27.Nd3 a6 28.Rc3 Re7 29.Rdc1 b5 30.a5 Nb7 31.Bh3 Rc7 32.Nb2 Nbd6 33.Rd3 Nxb2 34.Qxb2 Nc4 35.Qc3 Qe7 36.Rcd1 Rd6 37.Rxd6 Nxd6 38.Qc5 Nxe4 39.Qxe7+ Rxe7 40.Rc1 Rc7 41.Bg2 Nd6 42.Rxc6 Rxc6 43.Bxc6 Kg7



Following some very good chess from my opponent this was the best I was able to achieve after 43 moves – an endgame which offers some winning chances. My advantages consist in the knight being tied to the defence of a6 and the possibility of my king breaking into Black's position. It is obviously a big plus that Oliver's a6, b5, g6 and h5 pawns are on the same colour as the bishop.

**44.f4** If I can persuade the e5 pawn to move, my king will have a direct route into Black's queenside through the g1 - a7 diagonal.

**44...Kf7 45.Bd5+ Ke7 46.Kg2 Kd7 47.Kf3 Ke7 47...Kc7** won't free the knight to move as there will then be nothing defending the g6 pawn, so Black must wait in the centre with his king.

**48.e3 Kf8**



**49.e4** For me move 49 is rather early to play e4, but it is necessary to make any progress. My idea is to play g4 followed by g5 in order to prize open the black squares for my king's entry. The problem is that against the immediate 49 g4 Black can randomise the position with 49...e4+ 50 Kg3 hxg4 51 Kxg4 Nf5!

**49...Kg7 50.g4 hxg4+** I was hoping for 50...Kf8 51 g5 Ke7 52 gxf6+ Kxf6 53 fxe5+ Kxe5 54 Ke3 when Black will have to give way decisively due to zugzwang, a theme which will soon gain in importance.

**51.Kxg4 Kh6**



**52.Ba8** I want to be able to play Kg5 after I take on e5, and this triangulation with the bishop places my opponent in zugzwang.

**52...Kg7 53.Bc6 Kh6 54.Bd5 Kh7** Against 54...Kg7 I intended 55 fxe5 fxe5 56 Kg5 with another zugzwang because 56...Nf7+ 57 Bxf7 Kxf7 58 h5 is a won K+P ending.

**55.fxe5 fxe5 56.Kg5 Kg7 57.h5 gxh5 58.Kxh5 Kh7 58..Kf6** also allows me to penetrate his position with 59 Kh6.

**59.Kg5 Kg7 60.Ba8** Again we see the triangulation theme to bring about yet another zugzwang!

**60...Kf7 61.Bc6 Ke6** After 61...Ke7 62 Bd5 my king will gain access to f6 when the e pawn will soon fall.

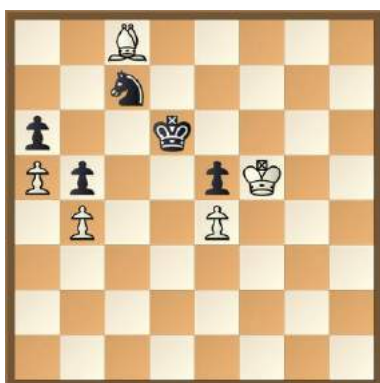
**62.Kg6 Ke7 63.Bd5**



The 4th zugzwang of this endgame.

**63...Ne8 64.Bb7 Nc7** An amusing idea which I was aware of during the game was that if Oliver tries to trap my bishop with 64...Nd6 my a-pawn queens, viz: 65 Bxa6 Kd7 66 Bb7! Nxb7 67 a6.

**65.Kf5 Kd6 66.Bc8**



And after zugzwang number 5 the black pawns will start to drop off.

**66...Ne8 67.Bxa6 Ng7+ 68.Kg6 Ne6 69.Bxb5 Nd4 70.Ba4 Ne6 71.Bb3 Nf4+ 72.Kf6 Nd3 73.b5 Kc5 74.b6 Nb4 75.b7 Na6 76.Kxe5 Kb4 77.Bd5 Kxa5 78.Kd6 Kb6 79.e5**



**1-0**

## **GM Peter Wells writes ...**

A selection of articles by GM Peter Wells from ChessMoves in 2021



GM Peter Wells (picture by Dr John Upham)

### **Didactic Tactic**

How we talk about tactics and why it matters

I have been thinking lately about the ways in which we describe chess tactics. We tend to begin with a range of easily defined devices - forks, pins, skewers, double attacks etc. - and it is clearly important that we do. We need to be speaking a common language on these and there are numerous books and other resources which neatly classify them in this way. Indeed, it is often only late in the day that the admission is made - perhaps by means of a final chapter on 'mixed themes' - that in practice, the most interesting tactics often involve a blending of these different elements.

Beyond these basics we are liable to find a further set of schemes such as 'removal of the defender', or 'overworked piece'. These are not fundamentally different, but they perhaps require more reflection on the position as a whole. After all, to remove a key defender we need first to establish which pieces are performing vital defensive tasks and this is unlikely to jump out at us as quickly as, say, a standard pin or fork.

There is a further set of important elements which work especially well as prompts. These include 'loose pieces', tension on the files and diagonals, potentially trapped pieces and so on. Whereas you will often hear coaches asking players to ensure that they 'consider all checks and captures before making a move', you don't hear them suggesting that they should routinely check for all forks, skewers and so on. This could easily become unmanageable.

However, the more general advice to be on the lookout for loose pieces, or pieces short of safe squares (whether one's own as a precaution, or one's opponent's as an opportunity) is wise and should be absolutely standard practice. This is one step towards addressing the difference between solving problems and playing games which I alluded to in *Chess Improvement: It's all in the mindset*. When playing a game we (hopefully) have no one tapping on our shoulder telling us that this is a moment of tactical opportunity. We have to use whatever resources we can find to alert ourselves



and apportion more time accordingly to checking all tactical possibilities. The prompts I have described are pivotal to this process.

Some great tactics can be well described using these elements. The following appeals to me as an example of a position involving mixed themes which can nonetheless be defined in very straightforward terms. I also find it exceptionally beautiful.

### Milan Matulovic – Alexandar Tsvetkov

Varna, 1965



From the diagram White played **32.Qc1!!** with the delightful point that **32...Nxd4+** (32...Na5 33. Qc7 Nc4 34.Qxa7 would lose just a pawn but shouldn't hold out much hope for the defence.) **33.Kd3 Qxe5** can be met by **34.Qc8+!** (34.Qc3?! Qe2+ 35.Kxd4 Qxf2 is fine for Black) **34...Kg7 35.Qh8+!! Kxh8 36.Nxf7+ Kg7 37.Nxe5** and the black knight is trapped. There are only two motifs in play here – fork and trapped piece - and 35.Qh8+, whilst spectacular, may be quite familiar due to (amongst others) the well-known game from the Spassky-Petrosian match played just a year or so later. Still, I am fairly confident in asserting that the aesthetic force comes from the efficiency with which the one theme enables the other and the way this jars with our expectations. OK, the trapped piece theme does come to mind at the start, since after 33.Kd3 the knight has no safe squares. However, not only does 2...Qxe5 appear to deal with this problem, but we would also suppose at first sight that exchanging the queens in the course of the tactic will solve the knight's issues. The fact that the combination results in the white knight landing on just the square – e5 – which ensures its counterpart's misery looks like the stuff of compositions, not practical play.

By contrast, some tactics are much harder to describe. Sincere apologies to David Howell for the following example, tactlessly drawing attention to a combinational possibility which his opponent missed in the course of David's otherwise stellar performance for Guildford at the recent European Online Club Championships. It does, however, offer an instance of a fascinating tactic which poses a real challenge in trying to capture what is going on.

## Robert Svane – David Howell

European Online CC Final March 2021



Here in what I assume was mutual time pressure, White overlooked the delightful but not tremendously difficult possibility 24.Rxf7! Rxf7 25.Rd7! which wins significant material on the spot. Black's least materially damaging response is arguably 25...Rxd7 26.Nxa5+ Kh7 27.Nxb7 c6 which traps the knight but leaves his position utterly wrecked.

We have quite a mixture here. Pins are certainly at the heart of this. It is not just the pin on the c7-pawn which ensures that 25...Raf8 is no solution to Black's problems, but also that the initial 'removal of the defender' with 24 Rxf7! is really all about how vital this bishop's pin is to the defence. There are also discovered checks and even double checks (since 25...Qc6 is refuted by 26 Rxf7 Kxf7 27 Ne5+! first and foremost) and we could talk about the queen on b7 as a loose piece if that helps as well.

Most of the time we are not attempting a scientific description of tactics. We are rather approaching them as players and coaches trying to guide ourselves or others to improvement. For this purpose the best description is simply the one that works, the one that gives the greatest likelihood that we will exploit similar opportunities the next time they are available. With this tactic though, I find it easiest to explain simply why I find it so attractive. I think it is the paradox of giving up material to replace an invading rook, which is in no danger, with one which is under attack. There should be otherwise no difference in the attacking qualities of the first rook on d7 and the second. Yet in fact they are entirely different, precisely because far from endangering our second d7 invasion, replacing the effective bishop on f7 with a hapless rook actually liberates all the supporting troops to transform the rook's experience.

I suspect that many players are busy practising so many tactics these days, that they often forget to pause and contemplate them in a way which brings out their magic. For those describing tactics, it is worth trying to express what makes them so attractive. Not a bad idea in terms of trying to get others to share our enthusiasm either – for it is worthwhile spreading the message that shuffling these (preferably) wooden pieces around a board can generate real aesthetic pleasure to as many people as are willing to listen.

## A return to over-the-board chess – and its perils...

Although a few of my colleagues have managed to track down some over-the-board chess during the past 16 months, for the majority of us it has been a very lengthy period of enforced inactivity. I never doubted that I would miss the special atmosphere of playing competitive chess in person but having previously navigated breaks of 6 months or more with relative ease, I was surprised by how much I craved the opportunity to play again this time. For this reason - especially amongst those of us for whom online chess will always be very much second best - the prospect of a 4NCL OTB Congress in July has been the focus of a good deal of anticipation for several months. The problem with building such expectations, of course, is that the reality might not quite match up...

I should hasten to add that the responsibility for any disappointment I felt was very definitely mine alone. In terms of organisation I have nothing but praise for the efforts made by all concerned. The venue in Leamington Spa is excellent – the first UK chess venue, to my knowledge, where it has been possible to enjoy a campfire in the grounds on the Saturday night – and the organisers implemented what sounded on paper like some rather stringent rules with common sense and good humour. Playing in a face mask is not ideal, but it feels like a small price to pay for a substantial step along the road back to ‘normality.’ No, the problems lay entirely with the quality of my moves. I was tentative, nervy and quite obviously out of practice. Following this sort of bruising, I guess I have to look for some positives amongst the doom and gloom.

The first one – for me, whether or not for anyone else – is that I emerged determined to keep playing, to work harder and to learn from this experience. Some players have chess styles which age relatively painlessly, but those who tend to seek sharp positions and choose critical moves will feel more acutely the need to keep working and keep researching. Quite simply, they rely heavily on faculties which are more liable to decline with age. I am sure that I fall into this category, and I believe that so does Peter Sowray, who was, incidentally, generous in response when I indicated my desire to annotate the painful Sunday morning loss that follows.

The second positive I think, is just to be reminded how much more difficult it can be to have to work things out in the heat of the moment at a chessboard, than when enjoying the relative comfort of watching or analysing chess at home. If nothing else, I hope the jolt which I received in this respect will make for an empathetic commentary. There were some significant mistakes in this game, but they took place in the context of considerable complexity, generated by the admirable creativity and fighting spirit of both players.

### **Sowray, Peter - Willow, Jonah**

4NCL Open Leamington Spa, Round 4

#### **1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3**

This will often end up transposing to the more popular 3 Nf3 and 4 e3. However it can be irritating to those players who are keen to play set-ups involving ...Bg4 in the main line and amongst these, take-up of the interesting option of defending an isolated queen pawn position with a fully open e-file is likely to be especially high.

#### **3...e5 4.Bxc4 exd4 5.exd4 Bd6 6.Nf3 Nf6 7.0–0 0–0**



### 8.h3

To prevent ...Bg4 and thereby help to secure the d4 pawn certainly, but also presaging a more ambitious strategy of trying to deny the c8 bishop any attractive options. In general, when studying an opening, I think it is a useful reaction to any prophylactic pawn moves to ask whether they were necessary. Given that Black replied with a precautionary move of the h-pawn as well, it therefore makes sense to check whether White might have pre-empted this with 8 Bg5!?. This seems logical enough to me, given that Black has selected d6 rather than e7 for his bishop. In any case, I am fairly sure that Jonah would have had an improvement ready over A. Maly – J. Willow, Titled Tuesday (blitz) 2020, which continued 8.Bg5 h6 9.Bh4 Nc6 10.h3 Bf5 11.Nc3 Re8 12.Qb3 Qd7 13.Bxf6 gxf6 14.Rfe1!? Na5 15.Bxf7+ Qxf7 16.Qb5 Bxh3 17.gxh3 Nc4 18.Kh1 c6 19.Qf5 when Black's light-square weaknesses on the kingside make for a difficult defence.

### 8...h6 9.Nc3 Nc6 10.Qc2!?



An interesting approach. Peter wants to complicate the task of developing the c8 bishop by controlling f5.

### 10...Na5

This makes sense. An argument could be made for the disruptive qualities of 10...Nb4 given that 11 Qb3 Bf5 would prove a bit awkward. However, if White remains consistent and realises that after 11 Qb1! his queen can easily emerge from her temporary misplacement, I think he keeps an edge.

### 11.Be2!?

White is obliged to cede the a2-g8 diagonal to his opponent's bishop, but it is not so clear where he wants his own. It is arguably more natural to go to d3 which has been a much more common choice here and in similar positions. However, there are arguments for e2. Firstly it clears the way for a more effective defence of d4 by a rook which might then enable the knight to play to e5 too. Also, as we shall see, whilst d3 looks like the square to 'team up' with White's queen, from there the bishop does also block the queen's progress along the diagonal.

### 11...Be6 12.Ne5 c5!?

This doesn't feel like a pawn break which naturally forms part of Black's plan, but as a specific attempt at undermining White's knight it makes sense. It also invites a clearance of all the centre pawns, a scenario in which the activity of the pieces and their security become of overwhelming importance.

### 13.Be3 Nd5?!

I don't really like this, partly because it lines minor pieces up on a file which is soon to be opened, but also because it somewhat deserts the king-side. On the other hand, this exchange does ultimately enable Black's bishop to settle on d5 where it proves of huge worth to both attack and defence. So a different narrative could no doubt be constructed. Still, 13...Rc8! seems much more logical since after 14.Rad1 Black could then try 14...Nd5 with the neat intermezzo 15 Nxd5 cxd4! in mind.

### 14.Nxd5 Bxd5 15.Qf5!? Be6 16.Qh5 Qf6



seriously test the defences although the complicated 20...Bxb4 21 f5 f6! does keep him very much alive.

### 19...Nc6



In fact this is the only move, but I passed the game at this point and assumed that Jonah was in grave danger. In fact, neither of the lines I thought about give an advantage - the one played in the game should lose - and the coming moves are anyway heavily influenced by time pressure, especially Black's.

### 20.Nxc6 bxc6 21.f5?!



I think it is very difficult to resist making this move, since it looks as though Black's king-side will be broken up, whereas delaying would allow a move of Black's f-pawn to limit the damage. In fact the bishop on d5 will be a terrific piece for the remainder of the game and Black has sufficient resources to meet all of Peter's critical tries.

### 21...Bd5 22.Bxg7?

This looks natural, but should actually lose. 22 f6! does less damage, but Black can exchange queens with 22...Qe4! forcing 23 Qg4, or even go for 22...Bxg2+ 23 Kxg2 Qe4+ and even with queens on, it is not clear his king is in a worse state than White's.

### 22...Qe4! 23.Rf3

I think it was here that Peter realised that after 23 Bf3 Qf4!, it is Black's attack which lands first. Incidentally the counter-attack rests on the fact that the g7 bishop is blocking the g-file, which is why 24 g3 Qxg3 25 Be5 must be captured with the queen, rather than 25...Bxe5?? 26 Rg1 Bxf3+ 27 Qxf3!



### 23...Qxe2?

Wow – a massive let off which triggers another fascinating and complex phase. Black could simply take on g7 here since the f6 advance which is so pivotal to White's mating threats at once allows his opponent's queen to defend along the fourth rank, so 23...Kxg7! 24 Bd3 (if 24 f6+ Kg8 25 Qxh6 then 25...Qg6 covers everything) 24...Qe5! defends, since there is no mate with 25 f6+ Kg8 26 Qg4+ due to 26...Qg5 and otherwise White faces threats himself.

### 24.Qxh6?!

Again very natural, but not the best. I guess Peter saw that 24 Bxh6! threatens both a mating invasion on g7 and the queen by a discovered attack, but thought that 24...Qb2! (uniquely) covers both. However, after continuing energetically with 25 Rg1! Qf6 26 Qg4+ Kh7 27 Bg5 for example, it becomes clear that the ongoing attack here is more meaningful than the material which he is able to recoup in the game.

### 24...f6 25.Bxf8 Bxf8 26.Rg3+?!

The wrong decision with, I suspect, an interesting psychological dimension underlying it. Especially in mutual time trouble, I think many of us enjoy the sensation that we are driving our opponent's king into the perils of the middle of the board and are prone to overlook that it may actually be safer there than where it started. The key here is to keep the king on g8, when the engine confirms that the direct and readily comprehensible plan of swinging the rooks into the attack is strong enough, at least to hold the balance. A sample line after 26.Qg6+ Bg7 27.Rg3 Qe7 28.Rd1 Rb8 29.Rd4 Rb7 30.Rdg4 Kf8 31.h4 indicates that Black cannot easily free himself and will have to proceed carefully. Instead of this, immediately challenging the queen with 28...Qf7! 29.Qh6 Qc7! looks more accurate, when it is possible that 30 Qg6 Qf7 repeating, is 'best play' – although it should be noted this was not really in keeping with the aims of either side.

### 26...Kf7 27.Qh7+ Ke8 28.Qb7 Rd8 29.Qxa7



Interestingly, Peter still thought that White should be doing fine here, a misjudgement which clearly contributed to his error on move 28. I must say, my feeling was that the bishop on d5 is such a monster - forcing one of White's rooks into a miserable role defending g2, whilst at the same time keeping the g8 square from the other one - that I would definitely rather be Black. Still, I am also surprised at the leeway Black enjoys here. For example the engine suggests that Jonah could have preferred 29...c5!?, followed by playing his bishop to d6 instead of 29...Be7 next move, which to the human eye definitely smacks of overambition.

**29...Be7 30.Rg1 Rd7 31.Qb8+ Rd8 32.Qb6**

Afterwards Peter suggested that he could have repeated here with 32. Qa7 and it is an interesting question whether Jonah would have already realised that in this case he should play on with 32...Rd7 38 Qb8+ Bd8! My guess is that he may well have, since he had very sound practical reasons for repeating once in any case.

**32...Kf7 33.Re3 Rh8!?**

A cute tactic, but absolutely not a necessary one 33...Qd2! intending to meet 34 Qa7 with 34...Rd7 is arguably rather simpler.

**34.Qa7 Be4**

The only move, but you (hopefully) only play 33...Rh8 if you have this follow-up covered!

**35.Kh2?!**

35 Qd4 would have forced 35...Rh4 and kept the last vestiges of hope alive since after 36 Kh2 Qf2 White can give the exchange to exchange queens with 37 Rxe4 Qxd4 38 Rxd4 Rxd4. However, the piece should outweigh the pawns here, not least because White's king remains uncomfortable. Now it is all over.

**35...Qf2 36.Qd4 Qf4+ 37.Rg3 Bd6 38.Qa7+ Bc7 39.Qa3 Rxh3+!**





0-1

Mistakes, yes, but also great fighting chess and instructive moments. Certainly for me, this stood out as the most interesting game of the weekend.



### **Appreciating chess with an engine – reflections from the Northumbria Masters 2021**

I guess I should begin by explaining the rather strange title. After being involved in an event as enjoyable and significant as the Northumbria Masters, it seemed obvious that this should be the focus of my next article. However, the intense and demanding schedule of the tournament had afforded little time to look beyond my own section. I was aware of some great performances unfolding around me, but this was largely related to results rather than the details of games. For sure, there were plenty of observers speaking in glowing terms about the quality of the play, especially from the GM group. Still, I was keen to see for myself, but had limited time or energy to do so.

If checking over games at speed with the assistance of an engine were the preserve of authors seeking material, it probably wouldn't be worth writing about. However, I am confident that it is a much more widespread habit. We discussed engine use – with all its attendant opportunities and pitfalls – at some length in *Chess Improvement: It's all in the mindset*, with particular reference to studying our own games and preparing openings. Yet it is now the way that many of us consume much of our chess for enjoyment as well. In itself, I don't have a very strong view against this, but I have much to say about how to interpret what we find and about some of the conclusions which we definitely *shouldn't* take away from it.

Before discussing what I found when examining the GM group games in this way, a few words are due regarding the event itself. I want to echo all those who have praised the organisation, the value of holding an event of this status in the North East and the tremendous success which the event represented for title opportunities. Conor Murphy's triumph in scoring a GM norm before his IM title had even been ratified(!) and the young Slovenian Zala Uhr's great achievement in registering an IM norm and securing tournament victory as the lowest rated player in the IM group speak for themselves. Still, the focus on the English players in much of the coverage doesn't feel entirely misplaced, for this really did feel like a pivotal moment for the young generation of English players in their early to mid-twenties. Ravi Haria's final GM norm – hot on the heels of another in Stafford –

obviously represents a breakthrough for this hard-working and very likeable young talent. Yet he was far from alone. Matthew Wadsworth – Ravi’s last round opponent – was himself still playing for a GM norm in their tense, but high-quality encounter. Marcus Harvey again showed what a dangerous practical player he is to win his last three games and miss a GM result by only half a point. And in the Masters section, Brandon Clarke’s narrow victory ahead of a quartet of GMs (myself included) looked to me simply like the well-deserved consequence of playing the most convincing chess of anyone in the group.

So what did engine analysis reveal about the games in the GM section? Well, the first impression I had was that there were relatively few ‘steady’ positional grinds. Instead, there were many games featuring quite dramatic swings in fortune, lots of significant tactical moments and tense battles full of excitement, with doubt persisting until late in the contest as to which side would ultimately prevail. This sounds great for the spectators, but it is worth just asking whether this impression reflects something genuine about this event or whether – by spotting a range of concealed tactical possibilities which would once have gone unnoticed – the engine just gives the impression that chess generally is like that? A fair question, but even when that is factored in, this was definitely a tournament characterised by lots of sharp, fighting chess.

So what of missed tactics and large swings in fortune? Well, we should of course reserve the right to note tactical opportunities which really should have been seized upon. However, these can and must be distinguished from tactics which hang upon some detail at the end of ten or so scarcely foreseeable moves. The worst reaction of all from online chess spectators is the assumption that because their engine has spotted an obscure detail, the players’ failure to do so is somehow unforgivable. More seasoned observers can distinguish what is reasonably within human capability and even then should factor in the reality – which I mentioned in relation to my own feeble efforts in Leamington Spa a month ago – that this is all so much harder at the board in the heat of the (often time-pressured) moment.

Where this kind of analysis can be very revealing and therefore potentially of great use as a training tool, is in enabling us to observe common features in the kind of tactics that we tend to miss. The following moment struck me as particularly instructive, since the quite comprehensible key move must have been missed by both players.

### **Peter Roberson – Matthew Turner**

Northumbria Masters GM 2021 Round 2.



Peter Roberson had one of those frustrating tournaments which I know so well – building up a series of excellent positions several of which were then ruined in time trouble. From the diagram, he played **21 Rb1** and in fact gained more initiative than he really should have, before Black somehow escaped with a draw. Of course, we don't need the engine to alert us to the possibility of 21 Nd7, but interestingly whilst 21...Qxc3 evidently falls short after either 22 Rc2 or 22 Rc1, both players must have believed that 21...Qc4 – counter-attacking White's rook on e2 – was a sufficient resource. Capturing on e8 or f8 then only run into trouble, but I suspect the players would also have checked that White doesn't make any devastating inroads after 22 Raa2 Rxe2 23 Rxe2 Rd8. The key move, which both players presumably missed, is the deceptively simple 22 Re1! This takes advantage of the fact that the rook on f8 has no flight squares to continue supporting e8, so Black is obliged to concede the e-file. The key point is that the queen on the e-file is a very different proposition. Threats of smothered mate abound after 22...Rxe1+ 23 Qxe1 Ra8 ((where else!) 24 Qe6+ Kh8 25 Ne5. Black can defend against the initial catastrophe with 25...Qc8 26 Qxd5 Qc7, but 27 Re1! threatening to come to f7 and then d8 with the knight forces further weaknesses to Black's already heavily compromised position.

To an extent this just confirms something which we already know. Backward moves are harder to find – it somehow comes more naturally to consider supporting the rook on e2 than to look at retreating it. It probably doesn't help that the rook had hitherto needed to stay on e2 to defend the f2 pawn either. Beyond that, we are in the precarious game of ascribing psychological reasons for missed tactics – although one recent attempt I made to do this received a very positive reception from my friend and co-author Barry Hymer and bore fruit in a fascinating edition of his blog for Chessable – see <https://www.chessable.com/blog/why-move-trainer-dumb-stuff/>. So I will have a go! I wonder whether we subconsciously expect too much of tactics and are therefore too quick to dismiss their (possibly very substantial) positional side-benefits. Perhaps we learn of too many cases in which unjustifiably seeking tactics can compromise our positions that we can forget that – as here – a tactic which fails in its primary goal (winning the exchange) can still be worth pursuing for its secondary benefit (forcing the opponent to concede a file). This may or may not turn out to be a fruitful thought, but if analysing with an engine leads us to ask such questions it is hopefully at least a sign that it is not encouraging us to disengage our brains.

One other interesting case saw Peter on the winning side.

**Peter Roberson – David Eggleston**  
Northumbria Masters GM Round 6



White's plan from the diagram is pleasingly simple – to attack g7 with Rdg1 and then to try and remove the defender of that square using his purposefully placed minor pieces – taking advantage of the fact that any attempt to defend g7 with the rook is liable to leave Black's king short of squares and run into a very attractive Qg6+ tactic. So play continued **24 Nf4! axb3 25 Rdg1**. Things look quite critical defensively for Black here and his only hope is to make something of his queenside play. In the game he lost quickly after **25...bxc2+? 26 Kc1 Bf6 (26...Rg8 27 Qg6+!) 27 Nd5** when he had to sacrifice his queen with **28...Qxd5 28 exd5 b3** and White finished off energetically **with 29 f4! Ra2 30 fxe5 dxe5 31 Rf1! Bd7 32 Rxf6 gxf6 33 Rg1 1–0**

This was a powerful finish, but the engine points out that sacrificing the queen without enabling the White king to shelter behind his opponent's pawns was considerably more testing. Black could have played **25...Bf6! 26 Nd5 Qxd5! 27 exd5 Bf5** when, for example, after **28 Rh2 Bxc2+ 29 Kc1 Rfc8** it is easy to see that his counter-chances are much more promising than in the game.

Again, this feels like a move which Black should have found, yet it is not hard to see where the confusion enters in. Yes, we know of numerous positions in which kings successfully use their opponents' pawns as a shield. Yet at the same time, in sharp positions with races between the respective sides' attacks, when you can see the force of the attack which you are up against, there is a great impulse to land a blow first and Black is only a tempo or two away from making waves on the queenside, even after **25...bxc2+?**. Again, the error is serious, but kind of reassuringly human.

A couple of closing thoughts. Much as I mentioned when analysing the game Sowray-Willow last month, hard-fought, sharp battles in which both players have ambitions will inevitably contain some mistakes. By contrast, whilst not all games in which the winner's play appears flawless will be overly one-sided, these are frequently the product of a lack of tension. The engine helps to magnify missed tactics, but fluctuating, imperfect games can still be great, creative and hugely entertaining battles and for me this GM group indeed produced lots of wonderful chess.

Precisely because these errors are 'reassuringly human' ones, the sources of them are probably best found in the analysis of typical human failings. Nonetheless, the engine used in the right way can be an invaluable diagnostic tool. In terms of how we apportion our chess study time, it is worth throwing in the realistic observation that without some knowledge of the opening phase players will struggle to reach these high-pressure moments. However, reflecting on a tournament so rich in tactical moments is a useful reminder whilst we are accustomed to the idea that tactics are likely to decide chess battles 'until a certain level', they honestly play an incredibly important role thereafter as well. Time spent practicing and honing tactical skills in a way which reflects the difficulty of practical play is likely to be time well spent for players at all levels.



### **New and creative pastures? The wider lessons of an extraordinary miniature**

So far in these columns I have deliberately focused on games played over-the-board rather than online or hybrid, on non-elite games which might otherwise fall under the radar, and on ones which were heavily contested rather than one-sided. Occasionally though, something catches your eye which undermines the best laid plans and who better to produce it than Magnus Carlsen.

I suspect many of you will have already seen the World Champion's astonishing 18-move victory over Jan-Krzysztof Duda, a player who had dealt Magnus a deeply unpleasant blow in the FIDE World Cup less than a couple of months previously. However, I have reflected on this miniature at some length - certainly for much longer than Duda was able to ponder his rapidly imploding position - and I think it tells us things both about Magnus and about the state of modern chess which are worth considering here.

First - the game. I had the pleasure of watching the drama unfold in real time and whilst Magnus's first offer of his c-pawn seemed to fall within the realm of known ideas, the second offer - together with the implications for his own king - felt like something extraordinary and quite fresh. I was entirely with David Howell's commentary at this point: this was a pawn sacrifice which simply had to be accepted. In fact I still believe that - theoretically at least - this was the right choice. However, what came next was simply astonishing.

### Magnus Carlsen - Jan Duda

Meltwater Tour Final Rapid 2021

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Nf3 c5 6.e3 cxd4 7.exd4 Nxc3!?**

This feels right in principle. There is some similarity with the more familiar Panov Attack in the Caro-Kann where, after 1 e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 White sensibly plays 6.Nf3 before exchanging on d5 which denies Black this possibility. After all, it can't be wrong to attack c3 when White has no very convenient way to defend it - can it?

**8.bxc3 Qc7 9.Rb1!?**

Already unusual, but it isn't hard to see that 9...Qxc3+ 10 Bd2 will generate a significant initiative for the pawn while Black's more restrained next move appears to force White to deal with the threat before continuing with his desired development. 9 Rb1 - by preventing a check on b4 - could look like an innocent preparation for 10 c4 and Duda probably rightly realised that this would not have been especially threatening. So...

**9...Nd7**



**10.Bd3!?**

A real shock to me, to David Howell commentating as previously mentioned and (in spite of his impressive efforts to maintain a poker face) most likely to Duda as well. It is easy enough to envisage the compensation for a pawn if White's development flows naturally, but surely the whole point of Black's play is that now the White king will be displaced, which must impact upon his ability to press his initiative. Of course, I am not party to Magnus's analysis here, but from what I can see I suspect that this may be a 'single-use' idea. However, as a practical weapon in a fast game it turns out to be fearsome, forcing Black to make tricky decisions from very early in the game.

### 10...Qxc3+ 11.Kf1 Be7?!

That this - the most natural development of the bishop in the majority of isolated queen's pawn positions - turns out to be a serious step in the wrong direction, is testimony to the force of Magnus's concept. During the game, I expected 11...Qc7 - despite being mindful of Znosko-Borovsky's dictum that when you are behind in development from having grabbed a pawn with your queen in the heart of your opponent's position, you should usually maintain the queen's advanced position to try and hinder your opponent's pieces! As Duda's position went rapidly downhill, I began to wonder if this represented a counter-example. In fact Black's move is just a case of 'right piece, wrong square.'

It is easy to say with hindsight that 11...Bd6! would have been more logical, since it covers the g3 square - a destination of choice for White's king's rook. However, it was far from self-evident that this was White's intention. He has other ideas such as d5 followed by Bb2 and whilst these appear, on examination, to be found wanting, 11...Bd6 rather than 11...Be7 undeniably adds to their force. I offer just a few lines to illustrate White's possible ideas, but they suggest that White can find some compensation and a role for his king's rook in many lines, even without access to the g3 square, after 12.Qe2!? Qc7 (now 12...b6?! 13 d5! would be problematic. 12...0-0 is interesting, but this is always a cue to begin the same king-side assault, and here 13.h4 Qc7 14.Rh3 b6 [14...e5!?] 15.Ng5!? Nf6 is met strongly with 16.Rf3! - a new role for the white rook. ) 13.Bd2 0-0 14.Rc1 Qd8 15.h4 with reasonable attacking prospects since after 15...Nf6 16.Ne5, for example, White will follow with Bg5 and this bishop will be difficult to drive away.

### 12.h4! 0-0 13.Rh3



### 13...Nf6

It is not so hard to see that the position of Black's queen is starting to play a role - White was threatening 14.Bxh7+ followed by 15.Ng5+. However, my feeling at the time - that this was probably taking Znosko-Borovsky's advice a bit too far - was probably correct. Enabling the white knight to land so easily on e5 affords White's attacking pieces an astonishingly venomous harmony. Still, Duda is treading very dangerously anyway as 13...Qc7 14.Qe2!? b6? 15.Bg5! confirms since after 14...Nf6 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Qe4 g6 17.Qxa8 the queen can escape via a7 and b6. Perhaps 14...Rd8 is the best chance, since it is worth noting that any Greek gifts must always reckon with the unusual defence of h7 along the diagonal by ...Qc2, but still White clearly has dangerous compensation for a pawn.

**14.Ne5 Qa5 15.Rg3 Kh8 16.Bg5 h6**

To call this a 'move Black would rather not have to play' would be an understatement. Unfortunately, there was no longer a decent defence against the straightforward threat of Bxf6 and Qh5.



**17.Bxh6! gxh6 18.Qf3!**

The fact that Magnus has time to approach the h6 pawn in the optimal manner via f4 is testimony to his domination. It is also extremely elegant in that after 18...Qd2 19.Rd1 the black queen can only hinder this by giving herself up, whilst there is no reasonable way to prepare to meet 19 Qf4 with 19...Ng8 that doesn't allow 20 Qxf7! It is not surprising that Black decided he had seen enough.

**1-0**

A breathtaking annihilation of a world-class player which prompts a few thoughts. Firstly, on an optimistic note, it could remind us that the ever increasing and oft-lamented depth of opening preparation in the modern elite game not only closes off creative avenues but opens them up as well. Yes, the engine has essentially 'solved' some very sharp lines which can now be used as little more than memory tests. Furthermore, the pivotal role engines now play has certainly led some players either to eschew heavy preparation altogether in favour of solid and less concrete lines – witness the rise of the London System – or, in the case of creative forces such as Jobava, to work on bringing a new twist to these.

However, others have persisted with sharp theoretical variations, exploring them in greater depth, often examining the engines' 2<sup>nd</sup> or even 3<sup>rd</sup> choice moves where these seem plausible and have

discovered that beneath their apparently innocuous theoretical status lie considerable possibilities in practical play. Not all of this work unearths new and exciting terrain, but a fair portion does and players are sometimes examining and playing ideas which ten or twenty years ago would scarcely even have been considered.

For sure the increasingly ambitious use of king-side pawns pre-dates this, but the renewed focus on the possibilities of an early h4 probably have much to do with computers. Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan offer us an extraordinary statistic in their fascinating book *Game Changer*, which supports this. “As White, when left to choose its own opening, AlphaZero pushed its h-pawn to h4 before the 25<sup>th</sup> move in 48% of its games in our sample”. 48%! OK, we were accustomed enough to seeing this in the French Defence and fianchetto openings (even before the recent craze for 3 h4 as an anti-Grunfeld/King’s Indian weapon). However, this feels like something more. As a further example, take a look at the brutal directness of White’s approach in the following opening.

### Travadon, Loic - Fy Antenaina Rakotomaharo

Barreau de Paris Elite 2021

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 c5 7.Rb1 Be7 8.Nf3 0–0 9.h4**

OK, so this move already has the stamp of approval of Giri and Aronian, amongst others. Still, the single-mindedness of White’s aggression over the coming moves commanded my attention.

**9...b6 10.h5 h6 11.Rh3!? Kh8 12.Rg3 Bb7 13.Bd3 Nd7**



**14.Qd2!? Rg8**

Routine moves (including 14...Nf6) already succumb to a devastating sacrifice on g7 here. Rakotomaharo’s caution is well-advised, although 14...e5!? might have been an interesting bid for some activity too.

**15.Qf4**

That f4 square again! Now, in the game Black again reacted prudently with **15...Qf8**. However, as an illustration of the potential of White’s set-up, I can’t resist sharing the wonderful and quite well disguised horrors which lay in store for an incautious 15...Nf6? 16.e5 Nxh5...





when White could unleash 17.Rxg7!! Rxg7 18.Qxh6+ Kg8 19.Qxh5 cxd4 20.Bh6 Rxg2 21.cxd4 Bxf3 (21...Qd5 runs into another rook lift 22.Rb3! which holds his position together well enough to keep a powerful attack) 22.Qxf3 Qd5 23.Be4 Rg1+ 24.Ke2 Qxa2+ 25.Ke3 Rg7 (since 25...Rg5 allows a devastating 26 Bh7+!) and now Black might be escaping, but for the beautiful 26.Qh1!! defending and attacking together with awesome efficiency.

As for Magnus, it is worth reflecting too on the fact that he is definitely not known as one of those players most determined to ensure that his openings pack the maximum punch, but rather as one supremely self-confident in his ability to play simple positions and grind out even minimal advantages. Indeed, as if we needed any evidence on this point he had won the following seemingly dry endgame less than two weeks before.



It is indeed arguably in this area that his ascendancy is most easily observed. It is beyond our scope here, but his win from the diagram position against Firouza in Norway Chess 2021 is well worth checking out.

So where does Magnus's super-direct approach in the opening against Duda fit in? Well, one appropriate reaction is to marvel at his versatility – the kind of 'universality' which so many players value highly, even though they personally may find it elusive. Magnus can certainly lay claim to this coveted quality.

At the same time, though, I think there is a real sense in which these two facets of his play are by no means at opposite ends of a spectrum. Whether he is setting original problems in a very sharp opening (theoretically watertight or not) or playing to squeeze every last drop out of a position in which winning chances appear severely limited, I think the key to Magnus's strength lies in his tremendous appreciation of the difficulties which his opponent will be encountering. Of course, all

chess played by humans is imperfect and all of us are aware of the possibility that our opponents will make some mistakes. However, I think this is much more central to Magnus's psyche. This is really what we mean by a 'practical' approach – the realisation that the objective merits of a position may not be all important and that an objectively drawn or even a slightly better position for the opponent may nonetheless not be easy for them to handle under pressure.

Of course, the route to putting the least pressure on the opponent is to decide that a draw offer is the correct response to their having gradually achieved objective equality! It is surprising indeed to reflect on how many games essentially went like this in former times and sometimes still do. However, even if this is obvious, the decision to squeeze every last possible ounce of life out of a position requires not just technique, but also tremendous determination and patience. This, I believe is a huge component of Magnus's strength. Moreover, World Champions have a tendency to lead by example, with whatever degree of intent. It is a paradox for which we can be thankful that, in the era in which the theory of the game is being explored in hitherto unimaginable depth, players have probably never been so aware of the practical side of chess - of chess as a struggle between technically proficient, but ultimately fallible human beings.



### **Littlewood's Choice**

A selection of articles by IM Paul Littlewood from ChessMoves in 2021



If further proof is needed that chess is a young man's game, then 15 year old Aaravamudhan Balaji provided it recently by coming joint first in the 25th 4NCL Congress and spearheading England's win in the Glorney Cup. He is a real competitor who is not afraid to go into an ending if he thinks that is objectively the best course. Consider the following position which he reached against Peter Wells as White in the 4NCL Congress.



(Diagram after 15...Nx5) White has a slightly better ending but against a player of Peter's class it should prove hard to win. However Aaramahudhan played well and reached the following position where he still holds a small advantage -



(Diagram after 21.Kg3) Here Peter should have continued 21...Bxb5 22. Rxb5 Nc4 with chances of equalizing but instead he made a mistake, playing 21...Nc6? and after 22.Ba4! he was in trouble. The game continued 22...Rc4 23. Bb3 Na5 24. Ba2! b5 25. Rhd1 Rd8 26. Bxc4 and White went on to win.

In the final round of the Glorney Cup, Aaramahudhan needed to win to secure England's victory and again he outclassed his opponent in an ending.



(Diagram after 13...Bc5) The immediate win of a pawn by 14.Nxd5 Nxd5 15.Bxd5 Bxd5 16. Rxd5+ Ke6 leaves Black's pieces well placed and he has at least equal chances. However he played 14.Na4! Bb4 15.Bg5 Rc2 16.a3 Be7 17.Bxf6 Bxf6 18. Bxd5 Bxd5 19.Rxd5+ Ke6 20.e4 and his extra pawn was sufficient to win.

If necessary, though, he can fight like a tiger when under pressure. A key game in the 4NCL Congress was against Keith Arkell. He was under the cosh for most of the game and in the following position he is only a few moves away from defeat.



(Diagram after 29.Rc1) However 29...f4! put a spanner in the works and although Keith played reasonably well he missed a few opportunities to finish his young opponent off and allowed Aaramahudhan to escape with a draw. The simplest way to continue for White after 29...f4 is 30.Bd4 ! ...and in a short while Black's position will crumble. Instead Keith played 30.gxf4 and this gave Black some counterchances, which he took full advantage of.



My father, who wrote this column for many years, was a great lover of swashbuckling attacks involving castling opposite sides. Two famous examples were his exciting loss to Botvinnik and his brilliant win against Tony Miles, both in the Sicilian Dragon. He would therefore have appreciated the following game between two young stars.

### Arjun Kolani vs Yichen Han

World Youth Cup 2021

**1.e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 h6 5.0-0 d6 6. c3 g5!?**

This is a provocative idea which clearly suggests that Black has no intention of castling K-side! White reacts classically by advancing in the centre but this isn't the best. The simple developing move 8. Nbd2 is recommended when White has a slight advantage.

**7. d4?! g4 8. 8.dxe5?! (better is 8. Nfd2 sacrificing a pawn for the initiative) gxf3 9. exf6**

...and already Black stands better. However the position is sharp and any error could easily swing things around.

**9...fxg2 (even stronger is 9...Ne5!) 10. Re1 Qxf6 11.f4**

White is trying to complicate matters and leave the pawn on g2 as protection to his king. The simplest move for Black is now 11...Rg8 followed by 12...Bd7 and castling Q-Side.

**11...Be6 12. Bb5**

Amazingly this position has occurred before and that game continued 12. Bd5 Bxd5 exd5+ Ne7 14. Qg4 Qg6 15. Qh3 h5 16. f5 Qg4 17. Qxg4 hxg4 18. f6 and was eventually drawn – A.Nurmanova vs W.Guimaraes 2021.

Black now makes a mistake which leaves the position equal but gives White all the chances.

**12...0-0-0?** (12...Bd7 is best) **13. Bxc6 bxc6 14. Be3** [www.englishchess.org.uk](http://www.englishchess.org.uk) 37

Suddenly Black's Q-side looks vulnerable and he is also threatened with 15. Bd4. However he finds a tactical way to cope with this threat and plays the best move:

**14...d5!**

Now if 15. Bd4? then 15...Qxf4 16. Bxh8 Bd6 17. Qh5 Rxh8 gives Black a winning attack. However White is having none of that and continues with his own attack.

**15.Qa4 Qh4?**

Black misses his last chance which was 15...dxe4, when with careful play he can hold the balance.

**16. Nd2 dxe4 17. Nxe4 Bd5 18. Qa6+ Kd7 19. Rad1**

Black is now in all kinds of trouble, with his king caught in the centre and under fire from all of White's pieces.

**19...f5 20. Bf2 Qe7 21. Rxd5+! cxd5**

**22. Nf6+**

This is sufficient to win but White misses the beautiful 22. Nc5+! when if 22...Qxc5 then 23. Qe6 mate or if 22...Ke8 then 23. Qg6 mate.

The rest of the game needs no further comment as White makes no mistake in converting his material advantage.

**22... Qxf6 23. Qxf6 Bd6 24. Qxf5+ Kc6 25.c4 dxc4 26. Qe4+ Kd7 27. Qe6+ Kc6 28. Qxc4+ Kb7 29. Qb5+ Kc8 30. Bxa7 Rhf8 31. Be3 Rde8 32. Qa6+ Kd7 33. Qa4+ Kc8 34. Kxg2 Re6 35. Bf2 Rg6+ 36. Bg3 Rgg8 37. Qa8+ Kd7 38. Qe4 Kc8 39. Kh1 h5 40. Qe6+ Kb7 41. Re3 Ra8 42. Rb3+ Kc6 43. Rc3+ Kb7 44. Qd5+ Ka7 45. Qa5+ Kb7 46. Rb3+ Kc6 47. Qb5 mate.**

The winner of this game, Arjun Kolani, is one of our up and coming stars, who won the British Online U14 Championships recently with the excellent score of 7/7. Clearly a name to watch out for!



The UK Chess Challenge Terafinal Challengers took place recently, and the following game caught my eye ...

**Luca Buanne vs Dimitrios Zakarian**

U14 Section

**1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. b3 a6 4. Bb2 d6**



White has adopted an unusual formation but the game starts to look more normal again when he continues

**5.d4 cxd4 6.Nxd4 Nf6 7.Bd3 Qc7 8.0-0 Nbd7 9.c4 b6 10.Qe2 Bb7 11.Nc3 Be7**



Black has adopted a hedgehog-like defensive set-up and this gives White a comfortable advantage. Personally I would play f4, intending a frontal assault on the black king, but Luca adopts a slower but nevertheless quite sensible approach.

**12.Rad1 0-0 13.Bb1 Rfe8 14.Kh1 Rac8 15.Nc2 Nc5 16.f3 Qb8 17.Ne3**



Eyeing the d5 and f5 squares and looking to take advantage of the absence of the black queen from the kingside.

**17...Qa8 18. Qf2 Rcd8 19.Qg3 Bc6 20.Ncd5 !**



This must have come as a bit of a shock to Black as White's attack suddenly springs into action. If 20...exd5 then 21.Nf5 Nh5 22.Qg4 g6 23.exd5 Bd7 24.Nxe7+ Rxe7 25.Qh4 with a vicious attack. Nevertheless Black should have tried this because his choice in the game gives him no material compensation for his bad position.

**20....Bxd5 21.cxd5 e5 22.Nf5 g6 23.Nxe7+ Rxe7 24.Qh4**



White now dominates the black squares and this gives him a winning advantage.

**24.... Kg7 25.f4 Ncd7 26.fxe5 dxe5 27.Bc1 Ng8 28.Bh6+!**



Another clever move, Black should have tried 28....Nxb6 but after 29.Qxe7 White is clearly winning.

**28....Kh8 29.Rd3?!**

Not the best, 29.d6 would have won immediately as if 29...Re6 then 30.Rxf7 is a killer. However White's position is so strong that this only delays matters.

**29...f6 30.Bc1 Nf8 31.Rxf6! Rc7 32.Bb2 Nxf6 33.Qxf6+ Kg8 34. Qxe5 Ra7 35. Rf3 !**



...and mate follows shortly.

It is difficult to believe that the two players in this game are under fourteen years old. Luca's mature play was particularly impressive!

As a teenager I always wanted to play swashbuckling chess involving sacrifices and combinations. Consider the following game from the Hoylake Open in 1972.

**P. E. Littlewood - P. C. Griffiths**

Round 4

**1.e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4**

This aggressive choice favoured by Fischer was right up my street as it gave White exciting attacking possibilities.



**6...e6 7.Bb3 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9.f4 Qc7 10.Kh1 b5 11.a3 Bb7 12.Qf3 Nbd7 13.f5 e5 14.Nde2 Nc5**





Black has played the opening quite sensibly and has equalised. The best choice for White is now 15.Ng3 but after 15...Nxb3 16.cxb3 Black is doing fine. I chose another option, hoping to set Black some problems, but in fact it should be inferior if Black counters correctly.

**15.Nd5 Bxd5 16.Bxd5 Nxd5 17.exd5 Nd7 18.Nc3 Rab8 ?!**



This is rather slow... a better choice would be 18...Qb7 putting pressure on the d-pawn. White's attack now gathers some momentum.

**19.g4**

This threatens g5 with dangerous threats, but Black should have countered with the solid 19...f6 when he should be able to hold the balance. However White does have the initiative after 20.Rg1. Worried by this, Black now plays an inferior move and White is then clearly better.

**19....g5? 20.f6! Bxf6 21.Qf5**

Black has underestimated the response 20.f6 and is clearly worse.

**21...Bg7**



**22.Ne4?!**

Typical of my style at the time ... however the simple 22.Bxg5, as pointed out by my Dad, was much stronger.

**22.....h6 23.h4 f6 24.Be3 Kh8 25.Rf2 Nb6 26.Bxb6 Rxb6 27.Raf1**



White has lots of threats and it might have been sensible for Black to bail out now with 27.....Qc8, however the ending after 28.hxg5 Qxf5 29.Rxf5 hxg5 30.Nxg5 fxg5 31.Rxf8+ Bxf8 32.Rxf8+ Kg7 33.Rd8 is much better for White.

**27....Rbb8 28. Qg6 Qc4 29.hxg5 fxg5**



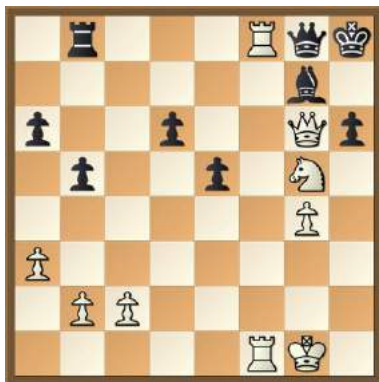
**30.Nxg5!**

and Black is now lost as if 30...hxg5 31.Rh2 + and mate follows.

**30...Qxd5+**

30...Qxf1+ 31.Rxf1 Rxf1+ 32. Kg2 hxg5 33. Kxf1 is also winning for White.

**31. Kg1 Qg8 32. Rxf8**



**Resigns**

because if 32...Rxf8 33.Rxf8 Bxf8 34.Nf7+ wins

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.



## **The Interviews 2021 – Mark Rivlin**

### **The Cheater Hunter**

Mark Rivlin interviews Andy Howie

Andy Howie is FIDE international arbiter and organizer, executive director of Chess Scotland and a Secretary/Delegate of the European Chess Union. He is at the heart of the battle against online and OTB cheating. In August 2020 he said on the English Chess Forum, “I can’t speak for other federations, but Scotland takes online cheating in organized tournaments very, very seriously. Anyone caught and proven to be cheating faces up to a 5 year ban depending on age.”

*You are a well-known and respected International Arbiter with a very impressive portfolio of tournaments, leagues and congresses. Tell us about your chess background and how you became an arbiter.*

Not sure about respected, infamous would probably be the adjective used by players up here in Scotland as I have a habit of arbiting in sandals and shorts even in the middle of winter! I started playing when I was seven, my dad taught me how to play. I won a few tournaments in Germany (I was brought up there as my father was in the armed services and we were based out there). I

played with friends and work colleagues through the years and was a lot better than them so tried my luck in a local tournament and fell in love with it completely. I became an arbiter because a friend of mine was wronged in a tournament, and I didn't know the rules well enough to argue. I swore I would never be in that position again, took the arbiters course and the rest, as they say, is history.

*What are the keys skills required for being an arbiter?*

Patience is key. You are often dealing with very frustrated players who are not always going to like what you have to say. Common sense is another great attribute. And as the players I have been dealing with in the Online British Championship will tell you, a sense of humour goes a long, long way. I'm old enough to remember the magnificent 1967 Scotland football team that beat England 3-2 at Wembley - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSfA7xxBM3w>.

*Will there be any eyebrows raised that as Chess Scotland Executive Director you are doing an interview with the ECF?!*

I am not quite that old, but not too far from it! I don't think it will come as a great surprise to them as they know I have been working with the ECF in the last year. We have built stronger relationships between the ECF and Chess Scotland and long may that continue!

*Tell us about young Scottish players to watch out for in the coming years.*

Freddy Gordon, aged nine, is a phenomenal talent. We played him in the U16 team for the Celtic nations at the start of December to give him a bit of a challenge. He played three games on board two and three on board one and scored a perfect 6/6. He is probably the most exciting talent we have had in Scotland for a long time. Magnus [Carlsen] is just keeping the chair warm for him.

*On your Lichess handle Wellfan your intro line includes the phrase the scourge of players that cheat! With an enforced proliferation of online chess, cheating has become part of the game's lexicon. How much of a problem is cheating, both over-the-board and online?*

I put that up to scare the juniors I was arbiting for over the summer and to hopefully make them think twice! It is harder to cheat over the board as arbiters are now wise to the 'hows' and 'whys'. Online it is simpler as there is no arbiter watching over you. As you are alone, the temptation is there. It is certainly more of an issue in online than OTB but we are making big strides into making online clean, and it is not uncommon now for a tournament to have no-one cheating in it. If I am being honest, the biggest problems are perception and false accusations by players. There is a perception that there is a lot of cheating going on and whilst I would agree that used to be the case, with what Fair Play Arbiters and the platforms have been doing, the number of people cheating has been going down as they know they are going to be caught. False accusations by players can range from a general concern to what we would term a manifestly unsound accusation. It dismays me that there are so-called titled 'experts' out there who are happy to spout their unsubstantiated accusations all over social media and even in live broadcasts, not realising the damage it can potentially do to the person being targeted. I am grateful there are remedies for this when we are faced with it at a tournament.

*For club players who are not aware of the anti-cheating software available to arbiters, please explain how these programmes work.*

We generally use the FIDE approved system developed by Dr Ken Regan. It takes the games of a tournament as an input and compares the moves the player makes against computer engines we are interested in (usually Stockfish and Komodo). That will produce an initial scan and will give us three variables: Move Match (how often the player matches the computer), Average Scaled Difference (when a non-first choice move is made, what the average difference is between it and the computer move) and ROI. ROI is a scale that gives an indication of fairness. Normal play will be between 40 and 60, 60-65 is still normal but suspicious, 65-70 is take notice and 70-plus is an indication of potential cheating. Please note it is only an indication. We would then send the games off to Dr Regan for a full scan to be performed, which will determine if the person has been cheating.

*What are the difficulties in getting the balance right between catching the cheats and falsely accusing the innocent?*

The system is actually set up to measure fair play not cheating. Someone cheating is an outlier. Due to this it is biased towards letting a cheat go. We would rather that a cheat gets away with it than someone is falsely accused, which is why we always use two sets of evidence before we remove a player from a tournament. If there is only one then the person is allowed to continue. For most events there are three sources, and you are looking for two out of the three. The sources are normally FIDE software, Provider and a strong and trusted GM.

*What is FIDE's approach to tackle cheating?*

FIDE have made it their priority to reduce cheating in chess. It was one of the promises the current president made. They are taking it very seriously and have been supportive of most of our needs. It has certainly been a big change on the previous regime that unfortunately only ever gave it lip service.

*Are anti-cheating measures employed by the ECF, Chess Scotland, the UKCC and the 4NCL consistent with the FIDE approach?*

At this moment Chess Scotland measures are probably somewhat tougher than other UK-based chess organisations. We have taken it very seriously and this has been borne out with the very low numbers we have had cheating in our tournaments. The players know if they cheat in a tournament in Scotland they are going to get a lengthy ban. That said, I have been closely involved in setting up the ECF and 4NCL policies, and the policies of other organisations such as UKCC are closely aligned with the ECF and 4NCL policies as well. So I think that even allowing for some local differences the various policies are proportionate and strike a reasonable balance between catching those who cheat and wrongly accusing the innocent. Yes, we have consistency between our collective ideals and FIDE.

*As a club player lurking between 1600-1700 I regularly lose and sometimes win. Putting three-minute online skittles to one side, I have never thought an opponent has cheated to win against me*

*because I know there are many weaknesses in my game. What are the telltale signs players of my ability may have cause to think their opponent has cheated?*

The honest truth, and this is something I cannot emphasise enough, is that with a single game you are never going to know. Despite what anyone tries to tell you, without physical evidence from cameras, you will not ever be able to tell if someone is cheating from a single game. This is the same for OTB and online and the reason is that everyone is capable of a perfect game. Anyone who comes to you and says a person has been cheating in a game should be ignored – they do not know what they are talking about. Without physical evidence, detection takes several games as you need a minimum number of moves to make it statistically significant. Normally by Round Three of a tournament we know who to watch for. Over-the-board cheating is also not isolated. With powerful engines do we really have irrefutable measures to stop players 'visiting the bathroom' and as I call it, trying to beat the cistern? We most certainly do. At the Candidates Tournament 2020-21 the players' toilets had 12 cubicles. I had to go round them and check them multiple times per round. To get to the toilets, the player had to go through an airport-style metal scanner. I also have means to detect electronically and by using metal detectors. Someone trying to beat the cistern is going to be caught and flushed out very quickly.

*We know that footballers, managers and referees occasionally air a difference of opinion. In your experience how do chess players of all levels view arbiters?*

Most of the players I deal with are very polite and respectful. Whether this is because I am a six-foot, 20-stone ex-rugby player is not a coincidence.



## **All's Wells**

Mark Rivlin interviews GM Peter Wells

A prolific chess author, GM Peter Wells has written nine books, including the recently published *Chess Improvement – It's All In The Mindset* (co-authored with Barry Hymer, an expert in psychology and education) which has received excellent reviews. Peter has an impressive portfolio of training success with the England Open and Women's squads and with England's top young players through the Chess Trust's Accelerator Programme. We are delighted that he is providing a monthly column for Chess Moves.

*Tell us about your playing career, the highs and lows.*

I was lucky to be part of a very strong generation of players in the UK: Nigel Short is just a couple of months younger than me and Julian Hodgson, Danny King, Joe Gallagher, Stuart Conquest, John Emms, Willy Watson, and James Howell (amongst others – apologies to anyone I have missed out!) were all just a couple of years either side. I think this provided a very healthily competitive environment growing up. My career overall has had more than its share of frustrations – as happens to players who never quite solve the time management issue. I guess the two lowest points that spring to mind are the failure to even minimally control my nerves in the first round of the 1997 World Championship knockout (my only appearance at this level) and the very simple win I missed (35...Nf2!) – again, with the help of that deadly combination of nerves and time-trouble –

against Julian Hodgson in the final round of the British Championship in Scarborough 2001. To be fair, some of the high points occurred in Scarborough too, including two of my three runner-up spots at the British Championships. Various tournament victories as well as my qualification from the 1995 zonal in Linares have meant a lot too, but as I get older, it is probably my reasonable number of attractive games which I appreciate most, as well as the fact that I have had a decent strike-rate against very strong players over the years.

*You have been a prolific chess author with several titles to your name. Tell us more about Chess Improvement - It's All in the Mindset which has received critical acclaim and includes an excellent foreword from Henrik Carlsen, father of Magnus.*

I was fortunate to be introduced to my co-author Barry Hymer by our mutual friend Tim Kett (who was subsequently heavily involved in the project as well) at the British Championship in Bournemouth in 2016. The timing was excellent. Barry was looking to make a return to chess after a decades-long break and I was (belatedly) getting interested in the psychological causes of the kind of career ups and downs which I described above. This had already led me to the work of Carol Dweck which had made quite an impression on me, and Barry has been one of the leading UK advocates of her 'mindset theory' for many years.

I was delighted when he followed up our excellent dinner with the suggestion that there could be an interesting book to write about the role of mindset in chess improvement. This appealed to another feeling I had at the time – that I was tiring of writing somewhat 'transient' theoretical opening books and keen to embark on a writing project which might better stand the test of time. So we explored a number of themes under the broad umbrella of mindset: the importance of being motivated by a genuine love for the game, the benefits of embracing different types of feedback and of developing resilience, as well as considering how best to work on the game and how we do all of this within the social context of the chess world.

Since we believe that hard work is a more fundamental component of success than anything that might be captured by the notion of 'natural talent', we suspected that the methods which have worked for those at the top of the game should also offer valuable insights for those at an earlier stage of their chess journeys. Consequently, we were delighted and very grateful that so many of the top English players gave very extensive interviews which we used to help enrich each of these topics.

Probably my very favourite section was on metacognition – the interviews led us gradually to the tentative conclusion that serious reflection on our chess experience, and a tailoring of our training regimen in line with the self-awareness which should flow from this, is perhaps the single most important factor in chess improvement.

The writing of the book was a major collaborative undertaking. I was keen to immerse myself in the theory as well as its application, which I think improved my contribution but also undoubtedly lengthened the process. However, it has been great to be involved in a project where I am even more convinced of the validity of our basic argument than I was at the beginning, and we have been delighted with much of the reception too.

We were also thrilled that such a fast-growing and respected publisher as Crown House was sufficiently convinced of the educational value of the book to take their first venture into the chess world – we have been delighted with their contribution. It was also great, of course, that Henrik Carlsen agreed to write the foreword and hugely flattering that his genuine enthusiasm for the work was so evident in what he wrote. His expression of regret that such a book had not been around when Magnus was a child did make me smile a bit – somehow, I felt that they had muddled

through rather well without it! Nonetheless we were very gratified that someone whose own priority as the parent of a high-achieving child could be summed up in the words 'do no harm', felt that our approach was flexible enough that he could strongly embrace it.

*You worked with Michael Adams and Luke McShane in their rise to prominence. Tell us about their approaches and the reasons behind their success.*

To be honest, by the time I formally worked with Michael – first in 1999 at Linares – he was already pretty prominent – I can't take any credit for his rise! As I said in the book, the thing which impressed me most was his filter – vitally important when dealing with vast quantities of information. He seemed to sense very quickly which ideas/pieces of analysis could be useful to him and to dismiss the rest with admirable efficiency. I'm not sure he was always very industrious growing up, but in this period – and even more when we worked together again in about 2005-6 – he was very methodical and disciplined in his work, as well as fiercely objective. At this time this helped to steer the work towards a heavy concentration on demanding analysis of main lines and lines which were likely to prove of enduring value even against the world's best. Part of the key, I think, is that he replicates this discipline and focus at the board as well. That sounds simple, but plenty of players struggle to achieve that.

I did work with Luke at the end of his junior career – seconding him when he won the silver medal in the World Junior 2002 in Goa and also some very enjoyable tournaments in Switzerland. We then teamed up again around 10 years ago for work which culminated in the Tal Memorial in Moscow in 2012. Luke was kind enough to say in our interview that I have been around for many of his best results and certainly I have the sense that this has been a successful collaboration. He is not a natural theoretician in two senses. He has clearly dabbled in various sideline openings over the years and his fiercest weapon probably lies in his practical skills – not least his acute sense of what will create problems for an opponent. We did produce serious opening work in a fairly systematic way in the later years, but I especially valued the moments when we permitted ourselves to think a little outside the box. Every now and again in our analysis, Luke would pause the process and take a step back. The outcome was, almost invariably, some pretty profound and often actionable reflections.

*Latterly you have been coaching and mentoring some of England's best juniors and in a recent Perpetual Chess podcast you said there are reasons to be optimistic about the future. Please expand on this.*

I think a few years ago things seemed a bit bleak for professional players here and I was concerned that, over time, this will necessarily impact negatively on the ambitions of the very top juniors. Now I am rather more optimistic about both of these groups, at least in the UK.

I think we have two slightly dangerous habits with regard to our top juniors. We tend to look to very strong generations such as my own or the decade or so which produced Luke McShane, Gawain Jones and David Howell and assume that these are 'the norm', when actually such players are produced relatively rarely. We also tend to lavish public attention on 'young talents' at a very early age, after which – more often than not – this weight of expectation and all that goes with it, does not work in their favour.

Right now, it seems to me that we have some very promising young players. Moreover, a number of them exhibit a truly impressive work ethic, which I believe (as I suggested above) is often the decisive ingredient in the mix. On the Accelerator it is no exaggeration to say that one of my chief



tasks with maybe 3-4 of the players (I won't mention names – I think they know who they are!) was not to 'get them to work', but rather to try to stop them working excessively in ways which were not optimally productive. Especially in opening study, it is possible to be too systematic and to make too few judgements about which bits of theory are really 'essential knowledge'. This is an important issue to solve, but a luxurious one – it means that a high level of commitment and ambition are clearly in place already. This is why I am quite optimistic and, incidentally, the gender balance amongst those willing to go the extra mile is noticeably healthy too.

*There has been a phenomenal rise in people taking up chess during the pandemic. How can the game adapt to include those who have been drawn to it, especially as a result of The Queen's Gambit.*

I think this is a great opportunity, but one which needs to be carefully handled. I sense on social media some tension between those speaking for the new enthusiasts who are concerned that chess should simply be fun and the traditionalists whom they perceive as somehow stuffy and elitist. I think we should do everything possible to prevent this rather artificial division from becoming a 'thing'. At the same time, I do think that the long and rich history and literature of chess are a big part of what makes it special. We should be very wary of downgrading these elements for the sake of those whose enthusiasm may not prove so enduring.

One big test will surely be the return to over-the-board chess. I guess the focus of some of those recently drawn to chess will remain firmly online. However, for those who wish to play in a social setting, I suspect much could be done to make things more inviting and welcoming. Conversations which focus on the positive experience of playing and enjoying chess rather than fixating on the results, ratings and rankings which accompany it might be a positive start.

Lastly, courtesy of The Queen's Gambit, a large proportion of the newcomers are likely to be women. This is a very welcome development, and a great chance to break out of the vicious circle by which the low number of women in chess has then deterred others with potential interest in the game. However, whilst at present we can boast high female representation amongst the streamers and commentators, at some point there will be questions about the lack of female players at the pinnacle of the game. This was precisely the positive message of *The Queen's Gambit* – that a female player could take on the very best in the world and win – and I think, frankly, that at some point people will become a bit sceptical of all these articles in which various players ranked in the many 000s are hailed as the 'real Beth Harmon'.

First of all we need to accept that there is an issue – that this problem is partly explained by the low numbers of female players, but by no means entirely – and then set about helping girls with the determination and skill to be champions, without taking short cuts. With regards to how to do this, I think my view is close to that of Judit Polgar – who has herself done so much to show what is possible. The greatest impediment to girls achieving the heights in chess has probably been a limiting of ambition. By all means use women's events and titles as great resources, as stepping stones on the road to success, but the end goal should be the achievement of a level of mastery which is, essentially, blind to gender.

*What advice can you give a 1600-1700 club player who is finding it difficult to break into the 1800-plus cohort?*

I think at any level it is possible to identify some 'typical' areas needing improvement, but there are usually individual quirks which make it difficult to generalise. This is why – again at most levels of

the game – the kind of self-awareness I talked about above is so important. It is very useful – ideally together with a coach or mentor – to identify where your strengths and weaknesses lie. Work is essential on both of these, but there is a difference in how to go about addressing weaknesses or leveraging strengths respectively. At all costs, do not try to deal with your weaknesses by essentially avoiding the positions in which they arise. This will surely come back to haunt you at some stage!

For players around 1600-1700 I think it is vital to be crystal clear about the role tactics are playing in your games. If your games are still being frequently decided by blunders/tactical tricks then this should be the area to focus on. I think it is true in general that there is a complex relationship between knowledge and skills in chess. I have come across many players who are working hard acquiring knowledge, but still struggling to put this into practice. This is probably not a question of deficient 'talent'. It is far more likely an issue of too much passive learning rather than actively practising to develop skills. As I said in the book, this issue is magnified with relation to tactics. Tactical exercises set up an artificial situation which alerts you to the presence of a tactic (frequently, even to the specific type of tactic). They still have their uses for sure, but part of your tactical training should be about developing tactical alertness – spotting the warning signs that tactics are present and thereby reacting with heightened vigilance.

*What are your interests outside of chess?*

I have two wonderful daughters aged 10 and 4 and – as any parent will know – this determines how a fair portion of my non-work time is spent. As a family I am delighted that we do a lot of outdoor stuff – country walks, camping etc. I haven't been in the greatest health over the last couple of years, but these things certainly help. My elder daughter Emily has got very enthusiastic about football lately and I am very pleased to still be playing a (surprisingly active!) role in fostering this interest.

In my own time I read a lot of non-fiction. I used to select my academic subjects largely according to what interested me and my passion for these: politics, philosophy and history is undiminished. My collaboration with Barry has further fostered my interest in psychology, education and learning as well. Perhaps playing the piano remains my best route to pure relaxation, though. As Tartakower said, 'every chess player should have a hobby.'

*Your game against Jonathan Speelman in 2006 is certainly one to watch with excellent analysis from Simon Terrington - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5\\_ovDaQM0w&t=761s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5_ovDaQM0w&t=761s) - Tell us more about this game.*

I really enjoyed Simon's videos and was rather touched that he devoted three of them to my games. This is my favourite of the three, in part since it owed the least to theory. It was really a case of creativity borne of desperation. The tournament had started very badly and I guess I was in the mood to take risks to try and snap out of this. However, the truth is that by the time I played 14 Bxc4!!? I already didn't like my position very much after routine moves. It sounds odd, when playing Jonathan Speelman, to look for randomness to try and take him out of his comfort zone – he is in many ways uniquely qualified to handle it. Still, I think he prefers to be the one with the initiative, the one calling the shots.

In fact, he didn't handle the shock of this very well. At the point I played 14 Bxc4 – sacrificing two pieces, even though Jonathan only took one of them – Ray Keene walked past and after the game told me that he thought I had gone completely crazy. I guess that is kind of flattering. Certainly, I

saw quite a lot at this point – all the key Rxb7 ideas which are essential to its soundness of the thing. However, as always with these sacrifices, a fair bit was left to intuition. I remember being a bit concerned about some 15...g5 idea to try and enable Black's king to wriggle out to the king-side, but my engine now tells me that 16 Nxb5+! just wins. Bonkers – I certainly didn't have that covered. Still, the whole thing was a lot of fun, and I was very chuffed to win the brilliancy prize in a field of that calibre.

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## **Nurse with a finger on the chess pulse**

Mark Rivlin interviews Rayelynn Posadas

A critical care nurse with a Masters degree, Rayelynn is a 1900-graded player who has won national titles in her native Philippines. Now living and working in North Carolina, USA, Rayelynn continues to play online for The Buffs in Stockton and White Rose in 4NCL. She secured second place in the Teeside International Women's Invitational 2019 and is active on social media promoting women's chess - <https://twitter.com/FemaleNurse27>

*Tell us about your background and how you got into chess*

My first exposure in chess was at the age of three watching my brothers play. After defeating the school coach I played Board 1 but did not take chess any further. But I studied chess and that was when I realised I had a future in this game.

*You spent four years working and playing chess in England. How was that experience?*

When I moved to England in 2017, I started looking for opportunities to join a club. It was only in 2018 when I got an invitation from Sean Cassidy, a Chess in Schools teacher to join The Buffs. There I met Sean Marsh, one of the top CSC chess coaches/teachers who has always been supportive of my journey in chess.

Before the pandemic, I participated in the English Women's Championship and UK's Women Blitz for two consecutive years (2018 and 2019). In 2018, I played in Solihull – it was my first tournament after seven years of inactivity and my first FIDE-rated games. In 2019, IM Richard Palliser invited me to play with 4NCL White Rose. I wasn't sure I was ready to play in such an illustrious company but eventually I joined White Rose.

I also regularly participated in online tournaments organised by the Professional Chess Association of the Philippines where I joined my local team Negros Kingsmen.

*What are your notable chess achievements?*

I won two national championships in the Philippines; The Philippine Youth Chess Championship (Under 12s) in 2001, and the Philippines National Olympic Festival (Women's Open Category) in 2008. I also played and won medals in numerous regional and national level tournaments, too, in the Philippines. In March 2020, just before lockdown, I won the Project 30 KO organised by Sean Marsh in Stockton.

*It's been a difficult 18 months for chess. How have you coped during the pandemic?*

The pandemic did not hinder me from getting further training in chess, this time, with my childhood friend and coach, IM Joel Pimentel. I was also one of the organisers of the England Women Lichess team where we organised a match between Philippines and England.

*What do you like most – standard play, rapidplay or blitz – and why?*

I like standard play. I loved to play 180|0 when I was young and did not have any opening theory. When I started to study chess, my coach told me that whenever your opponent moves, just think of your response, making sure to develop the knight and bishop and castle. Playing in longer games helped me to think about strategy. I used to spend too much time on openings, but now I focus more on opening theory. I play rapid and blitz to practice my repertoire. For variations, I play bullet.

*Which people have had an influence on your chess career?*

I am blessed to have family and friends who have supported me. My work colleagues have been very supportive in adjusting my work schedule to enable participation in longer tournaments. The person who has most influenced me is Sean Marsh. After years of not playing, I had lost my appetite and confidence for chess but he always accentuates the positive aspects of my game. Joining the England Women's Lichess team was a great confidence booster, particularly, through IM Jovanka Houska, IM Lawrence Cooper, and Jo Hutchinson. I can proudly say that I am part of a great team with great friends.

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

I am a full-time ICU nurse. I earned a master's degree in nursing in the Philippines. I play various musical instruments (piano, guitar, bass guitar, drums and beatbox). I sing in a choir, compose songs, and have participated in musical theatre. I also make videos and help promote the England Women Lichess Team. I have also done promotional work for ECU and the FIDE Women's Commission too.

*What is your most memorable game?*

<http://chess-results.com/partieSuche.aspx?lan=1&art=4&tnr=467011&rd=4>

I beat WFM Kanwal Bhatia. This was the first time I played a standard play against a titled player over the board in England and I feel blessed and humbled to have this great experience.

*The Queen's Gambit Netflix series resulted in people all over the world getting into chess. Why do you think it was so popular?*

The series embraced women's empowerment with a message about harnessing one's inner strength, abilities and talents to succeed.

*What can the ECF do to attract more girls and women to play chess?*

For me, ECF should strengthen its online chess programme. I was surprised to learn that there are many women around England who are very strong but don't have the resources and time to play in OTB leagues and tournaments. By reaching out to them online, more of them can be actively

involved in chess. It would also be good to make an online community where we can develop stronger ties.

*You are currently rated 1915 in standard play OTB. Now the Leagues and Tournaments are starting up again, what are your rating aims for the next two years?*

I am praying and hoping to become a titled player in the next two to three years. It's not easy balancing chess with nursing commitments. But my colleagues in North Carolina are extremely accommodating and I will be back playing OTB tournament in October.

*How would you advise players rated around 1500 to get to 1800-plus?*

Improving at chess is so much easier now with computer analysis and immediate access to Super GMs' games. My two tips are work hard and find a good coach.

*Who are your favourite chess commentators?*

I have learned a lot watching the Champions Chess Tour analysis with GM David Howell, IM Jovanka Houska, and Kaja Snare. I also watch ECF streams, especially GM Matthew Sadler and WIM Natasha Regan.



## **The Interview**

Mark Rivlin talks to Callum Kilpatrick

*How was it getting back over the board and securing your final IM norm at the recent Northumbria Masters?*

Rather intense – with two rounds of 90-mins (+ 30 secs increment) each day, you'd sometimes have less than one hour between games. After such a long period of online-only chess, you forget how stressful it is playing OTB. As it happens, this was actually my fourth IM norm, with my third secured long ago in January 2014. I then proceeded to graduate from university, head into the world of finance and never cleared 2400. Northumbria was the next 'proper' tournament (bar 4NCL games) I played and I needed to win my last two games to cross this rating barrier, which by coincidence would also nab a fourth IM norm. Not wanting the wait to extend into an eighth year, I adopted a rather gung ho attitude and rode my luck in a wild final game to literally win in the dying seconds. "Rather intense" indeed – honestly it's hard to describe the euphoria I felt after.

*You got your FM title in 2011. Tell us about your chess journey since then.*

This was well-timed as it happened just before I enrolled at Durham University. I then managed to play several tournaments during the long summer breaks and made decent progress, picking up two further IM norms and playing in events such as the World U20 Championships in Athens in 2012. I think I was still improving through to 2014, but then after graduating and joining an investment banking job, found little time for chess and largely flatlined at circa 2350 FIDE. I've always felt I had unfinished business to not at least achieve the IM title, which the combination of

lockdown and post Queen's Gambit mania helped exacerbate. I was then invited to play in the Northumbria Masters a few weeks prior after a late drop-out, which felt too good to turn down.

*You earn a living outside of chess. Tell us about your work with Pantheon Ventures.*

Pantheon is a global private markets investment firm, which manages over \$70bn. My role is centred around 'co-investing', alongside different private equity firms we partner with, into specific companies across pretty much any industry, size or geography. It is interesting to review so many different businesses and see what makes them either tick or toil. Perhaps there are some parallels to chess, often you see similar patterns (or puzzles) arising in situations that ostensibly seem quite different.

*With a full-time job, how much time can you devote to chess?*

Not much. There are usually free weekends, but two days can quickly get lapped up by other plans. In midweek evenings I've generally found it difficult to focus as you'll be too tired to cram in 1-2 hours of chess study. The other issue is that larger tournaments will often span two weeks and I've historically used my holiday days to either relax or explore new places.

*You are a regular on the League circuit playing for Guildford 2 in 4NCL and Richmond & Twickenham in the London Chess League. A question rarely asked is whether there is a difference in playing for club and country against individual tournaments? Or in football-manager speak, do you take every game as it comes?*

I'd say a big difference. I've always preferred individual tournaments, as I find both players have more at stake and usually a greater desire to win. It doesn't help that I am a slow starter – in three of the four tournaments where I scored IM norms, I had two back-to-back defeats early on – so I usually need the extra games!

*Ten years ago you scored a GM norm at the Livigno Open. Tell us about that tournament - <https://theweekinchess.com/malcolmpein/callum-kilpatrick-scores-gm-norm-in-livigno>*

This was certainly unexpected; at the time I was just 2256 FIDE and had not played chess for almost a whole year (following a gap year work scheme and time spent backpacking). I suspect my lower rating helped as my opponents would invariably want to win too, meaning results could go either way. In the final round I faced a strong 2569 GM with black, needing a full point to reach the GM norm. Midway through this encounter, I had a bizarrely powerful feeling that I just knew I would win and soon after I did so in relatively straightforward fashion. The trip back to my apartment, a pleasant downhill stroll in the Italian Alps, was satisfying to say the least. One year later, filled with confidence, I would return to play the Livigno Open again. My nostalgia was short lived and this time round I lost rating points – chess is certainly unforgiving!

*You have a standard-play FIDE rating of 2406 and ECF rating of 2453. Now we are back over the board, what are your grading ambitions for this season?*

My ultimate 'chess goal' (or more accurately 'chess dream') would be to one day make GM. However, to even attempt that requires a gargantuan amount of dedication and skill, so for now I'd

love to simply keep my FIDE rating above 2400. I last recall my ECF rating being around 220, so keeping that above 2400 would be lovely too.

*Online blitz: Good or bad for average club players?*

Good overall, but it would be prudent to steer clear of the arcade-like (albeit addictive) 1-minute. You can play a lot of high-quality games even at the 3-minute mark. To truly improve, however, I think individual study is essential – I am still trying to come to terms with this unfortunate reality myself.

*There has been a lot of talk about chess becoming cool following the uptake of the game over lockdown and The Queen's Gambit. How can the ECF embrace this?*

That certainly did a lot for the game and it is only one year on that my friends, family and colleagues have all finally stopped asking if I've watched it. For full disclosure, I have indeed watched it and it is fantastic. From my (biased) perspective, chess has always been a 'cool', hugely popular pastime for many, but something people have often later deprioritised for various reasons. I think the ECF could embrace this renaissance by really focusing on grassroots chess and making it accessible to the masses. I recently had the good fortune to volunteer at the ChessFest event hosted in Trafalgar Square by CSC, where circa 6,000 people from all walks of life attended. After an exhausting day (even before the 30C and constant sun), I left feeling a quite profound impact after seeing the passion so many had for the game. For me, this underlined why I fell in love with chess in the first place.

*What makes a good chess commentator?*

Those that keep it simple. I'm embarrassingly bad at following variations being discussed out loud, or calculating lines when I'm not playing myself. I really enjoy watching streamers like the Chessbrahs, Eric Rosen or the Botez sisters, and think they do a fantastic job in both marketing chess and making it more accessible.

*Which online resource or book would you recommend for an 'advanced beginner' to get to a level where he or she could play in an U1000 tournament?*

There is a relatively old book (published in 2004) called *Learn Chess in 40 Hours* by Rudolf Teschner, which I recall as helpful. Otherwise, nowadays YouTube has a ton of great resources, or simply using the different tools on Chess.com or Lichess.org. The best advice I'd give, however, is to play and try your best – you can't beat the feeling of a real-life OTB tournament!

*Outside of work and chess, what other interests do you have?*

Always a tough interview question. I enjoy a range of things, for instance travelling, cooking and either playing or watching sports. Most recently the latter included an interesting two-week trip around Russia for the 2018 World Cup and seeing England's epic Euro 2020 run end in penalties heartbreak from the Wembley stands.

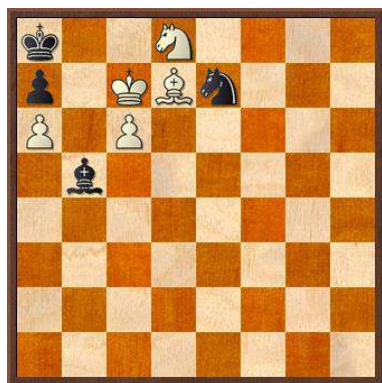
## **Endgame Studies**

by Ian Watson

Endgame study composing continued apace during 2021. The COVID pandemic again forced people to focus on home-based activities and again gave them the time needed for composing endgame studies. Constructing a sound study is a slow process, but, for that very reason, so satisfying when your composition is complete. We'll look at five of the studies published in 2021, but first we have one from over half a century ago.

We all know of Jonathan Penrose as one of Britain's strongest-ever players, and you've probably recently read his obituaries - he died in November. Perhaps, however, you don't know that he also did some chess composing. Here's a study that he composed when he was 29 years old.

### **J Penrose 1963**



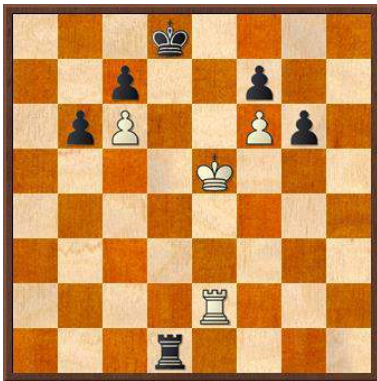
### **Win**

You'll find the solutions to all the studies at the end of this article, but do try to solve some of them – the sixth one is really difficult, but the other five aren't. As usual in studies, it's White to play, White is moving up the board, and White's task is given underneath the diagram.

Our next two studies appeared in my monthly studies column in British Chess Magazine. They are by the two Pauls - the most frequent contributors to the column are Paul Byway and Paul Michelet. Paul Byway's is based on a study composed by TRD – Thomas Rayner Dawson, one of the greatest of all chess problem composers, but who also composed some studies. Dawson's study, published in 1923, was considered a classic, but later found to have some defects, and Paul has both corrected it and enhanced it.



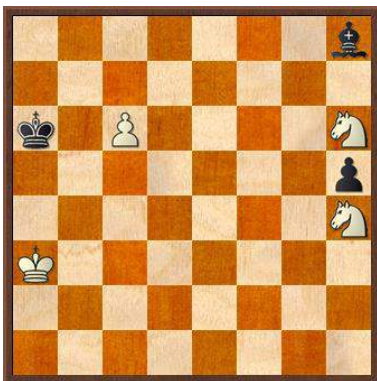
### P Byway *BCM* 2021



**Win**

Paul Michelet's *BCM* study is also based on a study from early last century, this time on a 1935 composition by Rinck.

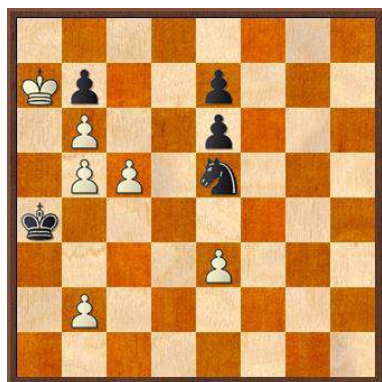
### P Michelet *BCM* 2021



**Win**

In 2021, I also started writing a studies column in *ChessMoves*, the monthly ECF newsletter. Our fourth composition is from the November issue, and is again by Paul Michelet. He is once again improving on an older study, but this time that older study was one he himself composed!

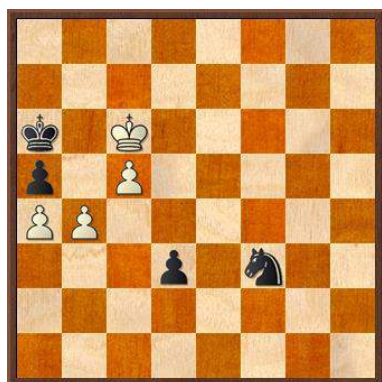
### P Michelet *ECF Newsletter* 2021



**Win**

Now a position by John Nunn. John is one of the great figures of British chess, as a player, writer, analyst, one of the world's leading chess solvers, and a composer of studies.

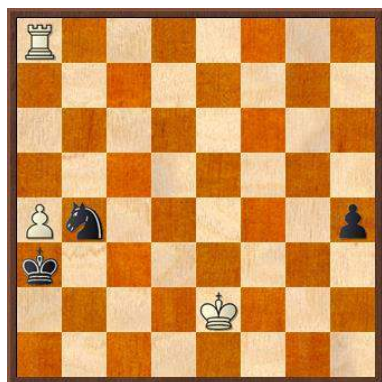
### J Nunn *The Problemist* 2021



**Win**

Our final study is by Rosalie Fay. She is already known as a composer of chess problems, but this is her first published study. There have been very few female composers of chess problems, and even fewer of studies. There is, however, increasing interest by women in playing chess, and this will surely over time result in composers too. Rosalie's study may be her first, but it is complex and subtle (and very difficult to solve). Play through the solution; maybe don't attempt to solve it but you will enjoy its nuances.

## R Fay *The Problemist* 2021



### Win

To see more endgame studies, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at [www.theproblemist.org](http://www.theproblemist.org) or the ARVES site [www.arves.org](http://www.arves.org).



### Solutions

**(Penrose) 1.Kd6 Nxc6 2.Kc7 Nd4 4.Bc8 Bxa6 4.Bxa6 Ne6+ 5.Kd7 Nc5+ 6.Kc8 Nxa6 7.Ne6 Nc5 8.Nc7** mate. Black tries to leave White with a position in which the black king can't be driven from the corner and will be stalemated. White counters with a 'switchback' – a piece moves away from a square and then returns to it. Notice too the zugzwang-avoidance play of the white king, 5.Kd7 and 6.Kc8. One pleasant sideline is 2...Ba4 3.Bc8 Nxd8 4.Bb7+ Nxb7 5.axb7 mate.

**(Byway) 1.Ra2 Ke8 2.Rh2 Re1+ 3.Kd4 Kd8 4.Ra2 Rd1+ 5.Ke3 Ke8 6.Rh2 and 6...Re1+ 7.Kd2** wins. Notice the mirrored try: 1.Rh2? Re1+ 2.Kd5 Re6 3.Rh8+ Re8 4.Rh7 Re6 5.Rxf7 Rd6+ 6.Ke5 Rxc6 7.Rh7 Ke8 draws. In the main line, 2.Ra8+? Rd8 3.Ra7 Rd6 4.Rxc7 Re6+ 5.Kd5 Rxf6 6.Ra7 Kd8 draws. This is based on a famous study, by T.R.Dawson, which unfortunately had a dual, an alternative solution. Amongst an extraordinary range of chess activities, Dawson was the editor of the problem section of BCM from 1931 to 1951. He invented many new types of chess piece, and many chess variants. In 2021, a problem-composing tournament was started by the British Chess Problem Society to mark the 70th anniversary of his death in 1951. Paul's study is a fine tribute to one of the greatest of chess composers.

**(Michelet - BCM) 1.c7 Kb7 2.Nf7 Ba1 3.Ka2** and the bishop is dominated because White will play 4.Nd6+ and fork the king and bishop after 4...Kxc7. In the resulting position, the black pawn is blockaded far enough back that White can use his other knight to gradually force the black king into a corner and then bring his blockading knight across to deliver mate before Black can promote his pawn and disrupt the mating net.

In the Rinck study, White began by attacking the bishop with 1.Nf7, but that doesn't work here because Black can move his bishop to, say, g7 and then after 2.c7 he will remove it from g7 with a check before playing ...Kb7.

**(Michelet – ECF Newsletter) 1.c6 bxc6 2.b7 cxb5 3.Kb8 Nc6+ 4.Kc7 Nb4 5.Kb6 Nd5+ 6.Ka7 Nb4 7.b3+ Ka5 8.b8N** with mate in three: 8...e5 9.e4 e6 10.Kb7 and 11.N(x)c6 mate. The white king

performs a circular tour around his b7 pawn returning to its diagram square. Paul's earlier study also had that, but here he has added a knight promotion with zugzwang forcing mate. A few notes: 1.Kxb7 Kxb5; 3.Kb6? Nd7+ 4.Kc7 Nc5 draws; 7...Kxb3 8.Kb6 Nd5+ 9.Kxb5 wins.

**(Nunn) 1.b5+ Ka7 2.Kc7 Ne5 3.b6+ Ka6 4.b7 Nd7 5.c6 Nb8 6.Kxb8 d2 7.c7 d1Q 8.c8Q Qd8 9.Ka8 Qd5 10.Qd7 Qxd7 11.b8N+ Kb6 12.Nxd7+ Kc6 13.Ne5+ Kc5 14.Nd3+ Kc4 15.Nb2+ Kb3 16.Kb7/a7** and White is the one tempo up that he needs to be able to win.

There's another thematic line too: **5...d2 6.cxd7 d1Q 7.b8N+ Ka7 8.Nc6+ Ka6 9.d8Q** wins after for example 9...Qxa4 10.Qd3+ Qb5 11.Nb8+. In both lines, White promotes to a queen and to a knight, but the order of those promotions is reversed in the second line.

**(Fay) 1.Kf1 h3 2.Kg1 Nc6 3.Ra6 Nb4 4.Ra5 Na2 5.Ra8 Nb4 6.Kh2 Nc6 7.Ra6 Nb4 8.Ra5 Na2 9.Ra8 Nb4 10.Kxh3 Nc6 11.Ra6 Nb4 12.Ra5 Na2 13.Ra8 Nb4 14.Kh4 Nc6 15.Ra6 Nb4 16.Ra5 Na2 17.Ra8 Nb4 18.Kg5 Nc6 19.Ra6 Nb4 20.Ra5 Na2 21.Ra8 Nb4 22.Kf5 Nc6 23.Ra6 Nb4 24.Ra5 Na2 25.Ra8 Nc3 26.a5 Ka4 27.Ke6** and White has achieved his aim of approaching with the king. Play could continue 27...Kb5 28.Ke5 Na4 29.Kd6 Nc3 30.Kc7 Na4 31.a6 Nc5 32.Rb8+ Kxa6 33.Kc6 Ka7 34.Re8 Nd3 35.Re7+ Kb8 36.Kb6 Kc8 37.Re4 Kd7 38.Rd4+ Ke7 39.Rxd3.

There are of course very many sidelines, which we don't have space to give. The key to understanding this is that Black is trying to manoeuvre to win the a-pawn while White is distracted by the h-pawn. White's king has to adopt a careful and circuitous route that avoids squares where the Black knight could check it and then leap to a better square. Examples are 1.Kf3? Nc6 2.Ra6 Nd4+ 3.Kg4 Nb3 4.Ra8 Kb4 5.Kxh4 Na5, and 1.Kf2? Nc6 2.Ra6 Nb4 3.Ra5 Nd3+ 4.Kg2 Nb2. It's surprising that all White's moves are 'only-moves', but the endgame table-bases confirm them. There are several moments where White has an alternative, but those are all 'time-wasting' alternatives, meaning that White then has to return to the solution line in order to win.

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



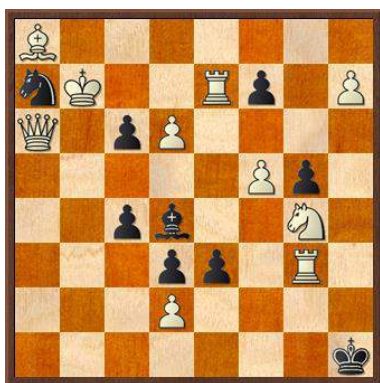
## Chess Problem News

by Ian Watson

The chess problem world has two aspects: solving problems and composing problems. In 2021, COVID meant no British Chess Solving Championship, but it also led to a boom in online chess solving events. Indeed, there is now the BOOM Grand Prix – the British Open Online Masters, a series of top-level solving competitions in which the competitors solve chess problems against the clock but from their own homes. You can find details of online solving events at [netchex.club](http://netchex.club) where there are also daily and monthly solving challenges for you to hone your skills on.

Composing chess problems has been unhindered by COVID. It's a home-based activity, so lockdowns have encouraged it, and many composers have been unusually prolific. The composer of our first problem here, John Rice, has no need of enforced home stays to persuade him to compose. A Grand Master of chess composition, he produces problems of high quality for every issue of *The Problemist*, the major British chess problem magazine.

**J Rice *The Problemist Supplement 2021***

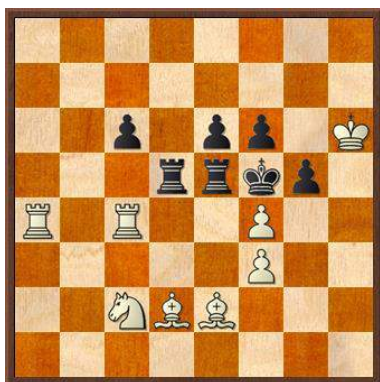


Mate in 2

This composition is a two-mover (White to play and force mate in two moves). Your task is to find the key move (White's first move). Of course, to be sure you have found the correct key move, you need to examine all Black's possible replies to make sure there's a mate against each one.

Now try two problems by Colin Russ, another stalwart of the British chess problem community, who sadly died in September. The first is a two-mover that was published in May.

### **C Russ *The Problemist Supplement* 2021**



Mate in 2

The second Colin Russ problem is a four-mover. White is to play and force mate on his fourth move at the latest. I've chosen it because it was published in the 1980s, when I used to play chess in the Thanet and the Kent leagues, where Colin was a regular player. He had an infectious sense of humour and this problem shows it; yes, chess problems can be amusing!

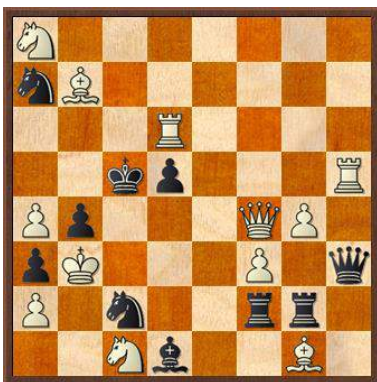
**C Russ *The Problemist* 1988**



Mate in 4

Now for a selfmate. This one is by Brian Chamberlain and Stephen Taylor. In selfmates, White is trying to get himself checkmated and Black is trying to avoid giving mate. The move sequence goes, WBWB, with Black's second move giving mate. Here you want to force Black to move his knight and give discovered checkmate to the White king.

**B Chamberlain & S Taylor *The Problemist* 2021**



Selfmate in 2

The problem below is a helpmate, which means White and Black are cooperating together to give checkmate to the Black king. In helpmates, the move sequence is unusual in that Black plays first; in this three-move helpmate the move sequence is BWBWBW, with the third White move giving checkmate. This problem has two solutions, and you can expect them to have a thematic relationship without being near-identical. The composer is one of the world's leading helpmate composers, Christopher Jones, a Grand Master of chess composition.

## C Jones *The Problemist Supplement 2021*



Helpmate in 3 – two solutions

Like the last two years in this Yearbook, I challenge you to solve what is called a “proof game”; you have to find a legal game that would lead to the diagram position; the moves may be ones that would never occur in an over-the-board game, but they must all be legal moves. In Richard Dunn’s composition, you are told that the position arose after Black’s sixteenth move. In proof games, there is only one sequence of moves that is possible, which is very useful information to help you solve it. Of course, it’s very likely that the composer has built in some surprises; one such devious device is for a pawn to have promoted and the promoted piece to have replaced an identical one that has been captured by the opponent.

## R Dunn *The Problemist 2021*



Position after Black’s 16th move. What were the moves of the game?

To see more chess problems, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at [www.theproblemist.org](http://www.theproblemist.org)

### Solutions

(Rice) **1.Rxe3** and Black is in zugzwang, and must allow a mate. 1...c5 2.Kxa7; 1...c3 2.Qa1; 1...f6 2.h8Q: 1...Bb2 etc. 2.Re1; 1...N~ 2.Qxc6. This key move is not very attractive to problem specialists but is justified because the play is spectacular.

**(Russ – 2-mover) 1.Rc5** (no threat – zugzwang). 1...Rxd2 2.Ne3; 1...Rd3 2.Bxd3; 1...Rd4 2.Nxd4; 1...Rxe2 2.Nd4; 1...Re3 2.Nxe3; 1...Re4 2.fxe4; 1...g4 2.fxg4; 1...gxf4 2.Rxf4.  
Not 1.Ra5? c5! Nor 1.Re4? (threat 2.Ne3) Rd3!

**(Russ – 4-mover) 1.Na3 b3 2.Nc2 b2 3.Na1 bxa1~ 4.Rb8** mate.  
1.Nc3? doesn't work because Black will have 3...bxc1N+.

**(Chamberlain & Taylor) 1.Ra6** (threat **2.Qe3+ Nd4/Nxe3** mate). The defences are: **1...Be2 2.Qc4+ Bxc4; 1...Bxf3 2.Rxd5+ Bxd5; 1...Nb5 2.Qxb4+ Nxb4; 1...Nc6 2.Ra5+ Nxa5; 1...Rxc4 2.Bxf2+ Nd4/Ne3; 1...Qxf3+ 2.Nd3+ Qxd3; 1...Qxg4 2.Qc4+ Qxc4; 1...Qxh5 2.Qc4+ dxc4.**

**(Jones)** In helpmates, because Black moves first, it's conventional to write the solutions like this, with the Black moves after the move number: **1.Qd4 Bxg6+ 2.Nxg6 Rxc4 3.Ne5 Rxd4** and **1.f5 Rxc4+ 2.Nxc4 Bxg6 3.Ne5 Bxf5**. Barry Barnes commented on this problem: "Great beauty in the carnage, before the calm brings model mates!"

**(Dunn) 1.d4 h5 2.d5 Rh6 3.d6 Rf6 4.dxc7 d6 5.b4 Bg4 6.c8B Qa5 7.Bxb7 Kd7 8.Bc6+ Ke6 9.Ba4 Qe5 10.Qd5+ Kf5 11.Nd2 Bxe2 12.Rb1 Kg4 13.Rb3 Rxf2 14.Rf3 Ba6+ 15.Be2 Bc8 16.c3 Rxe2+.**

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



## **Remembering – from British Chess News**

A selection of articles from the British Chess News website made and maintained by Dr John Upham at <https://britishchessnews.com>

### **Remembering GM Dr. Jonathan Penrose OBE**

(07-x-1933 30-xi-2021)

In the 1971 New Years Honours List Jonathan was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) The citation read "For services to chess."

From British Chess (Pergamon Press, 1983) by Botterill, Levy, Rice and Richardson (article by George Botterill)

Penrose is one of the outstanding figures of British chess. Yet many who meet him may not realize this just because he is one of the quietest and most modest of men. Throughout the late 1950s and the whole of the 1960s he stood head and shoulders above any of his contemporaries. His extraordinary dominance is revealed by the fact that he won the British championship no less than ten times (1958-63 and 1966-69, inclusive), a record that nobody is likely to equal in the future.

At his best his play was lucid, positionally correct, energetic and tactically acute. None the less, there is a 'Penrose problem': was he a 'Good Thing' for British chess? The trouble was that whilst this highly talented player effectively crushed any opposition at home, he showed little initiative in flying the flag abroad. There is a wide-spread and justifiable conviction that only lack of ambition in



the sphere of international chess can explain why he did not secure the GM title during his active over-the-board playing career.

It would be unjust, however, to blame Penrose for any of this. The truth is simply that he was not a professional chessplayer, and indeed he flourished in a period in which chess playing was not a viable profession in Britain. But even if the material awards available had been greater Penrose would almost certainly have chosen to remain an amateur. For he was cast in that special intellectual and ethical tradition of great British amateurs like H. E. Atkins, Sir George Thomas and Hugh Alexander before him.

His family background indicates early academic inclinations in a cultural atmosphere in which chess was merely a game; something at which one excelled through sheer ability, but not to be ranked alongside truly serious work. It is noteworthy that Penrose, unique in this respect amongst British chess masters, has never written at any length about the game. He has had other matters to concentrate on when away from the board, being a lecturer in psychology (his father, Professor L. S. Penrose, was a distinguished geneticist). Being of slight physique and the mildest and most amiable of characters, it is probably also true that Penrose lacked the toughness and 'killer instinct' required to reach the very top. Nervous tension finally struck him down in a dramatic way when he collapsed during play in the Siegen Olympiad of 1970. We can take that date as the end of the Penrose era.

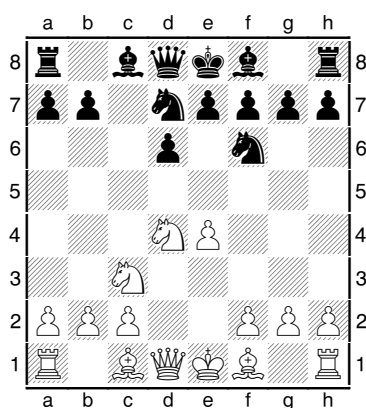
Since then, though he has not by any means entirely given up, his involvement in the nerve-wracking competitions of over-the-board play has been greatly reduced. Instead he has turned to correspondence chess, which is perhaps the ideal medium for his clear strategy and deep and subtle analysis. So Penrose's career is not over. He has moved to another, less stressful province of the kingdom of chess. For this game, however, we shall turn the clock right back to 1950 and see the Penrose in the role of youthful giant killer.

### (1) Penrose, Jonathan - Bogoljubow, Efim [B56]

Southsea Southsea (3), 1950 - Jonathan was 17 years old when this game was played.

[*British Chess News*]

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nbd7**



A pretty rare continuation, not hitting White's centre but maybe aiming for c5 at some point.

**6.g3N** Relevant: 6.Be2 a6 7.0-0 b5 8.f4 Bb7 9.Bf3 e6 10.f5 e5 11.Nde2 b4 12.Nd5 Bxd5 13.exd5 Qb6+ 14.Kh1 e4 15.Nd4 exf3 16.Re1+ Ne5 17.gxf3 Qc5 18.f4 Qxd5+ 19.Qf3 0-0-0 20.Qxd5 Nxd5 21.fxe5 dxe5 22.Nc6 Re8 23.Rxe5 Rxe5 24.Nxe5 f6 25.Nd3 Bd6 26.Bd2 Kd7 27.Kg2 g6 28.fxg6 hxg6 29.h3 Rc8 30.Rc1 Rc4 31.Kf3 Rh4 32.Kg2 g5 33.Nf2 Rd4 34.Nd3 a5 35.Rf1 Ke6 Bluemich,M-Bogoljubow,E Krakow/ Krynica/Warsaw 1940 0-1

**6...a6 7.Bg2 e6 8.0-0 Be7 9.b3 9.Be3**

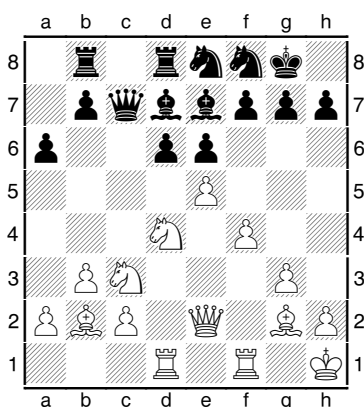
**9...Qc7 10.Bb2 0-0 11.Kh1N** This was a novelty in 1950. 11.a4 Rb8 12.a5 b5 13.axb6 Qxb6 14.g4 was Dubov - Korobov, 2017.

**11...Rd8 12.Qe2N** 12.f4 Nc5 was Rayner - Arakhamia Grant, 2001, 0-1.

**12...Nf8?** "With a knight on f8 I cannot be mated", as Larsen is fond of saying. But here it is more important that Black loses control over e5. 12...Bf8 to be followed by ... Rb8, ...b5 and ...Bb7 seems a better scheme of development. With the rooks on d8 and b8 Black must beware of White's little tactic e5 dxe5 Nc6 forking the rooks. But in most cases Black should get at least one pawn and fair value for the exchange.

**13.f4± Rb8 14.Rad1 Bd7 15.e5 15.g4 d5 16.e5**

**15...Ne8**



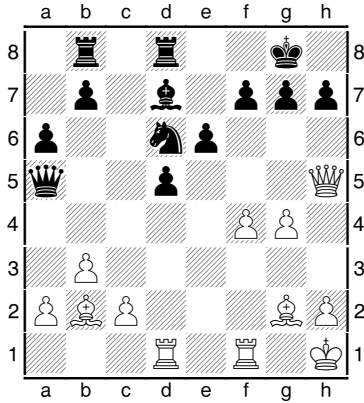
**16.Nf5!** A familiar trick in the Sicilian

**16...Ng6** if 16...exf5 17.Nd5+—

**17.Nxe7+ Nxe7 18.Ne4 d5 19.Nd6! Qa5? 19...Bc6**

**20.Qh5 20.g4**

**20...Nxd6 21.exd6 Nf5 22.g4 Nxd6**



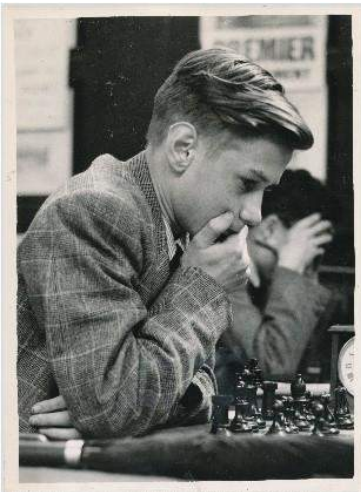
Of course not 22...Ne3?? 23.Qe5+- with a double attack on g7 and e3 (23.Qg5 is crushing also 23...g6 24.Qf6 d4 25.Bxd4 e5 26.fxe5 Nxf4 27.Qxf7+ Kh8 28.e6+ Ne5 29.Qf6+ Kg8 30.Bxe5 and its mate in 6.)

**23.f5! Qxa2 24.Be5 24.fxe6 Bxe6 25.Qe5**

**24...Ne8** Giving up the exchange does not help much. 24...Bb5 25.Rf2 threatening Ra1 25...Qa5 26.fxe6 wins quickly

**25.fxe6 Bxe6 26.Bxb8 Rxb8 27.Qe5! Rc8 28.Bxd5 Nf6 29.Bxe6 Re8 30.Bxf7+ Kxf7 31.Rxf6+!**  
**1-0**

From The Encyclopedia of Chess (BT Batsford, 1977) by Harry Golombek



British international master and ten times British Champion, Penrose was born in Colchester and came from a chess-playing family. His father and mother both played chess and his father, Professor Lionel Sharples Penrose, in addition to being a geneticist of world-wide fame, was a strong chess-player and a good endgame composer. Jonathan's older brother Oliver was also a fine player. Jonathan learnt chess at the age of four, won the British Boys championship at thirteen and by the time he was fifteen was playing in the British Championship in Felixstowe in 1949.

A little reluctant to participate in international tournaments abroad, he did best in the British Championship which he won a record number of times, once more than HE Atkins. He won the title consecutively from 1958 to 1963 and again from 1966 to 1969. He also played with great effect in nine Olympiads. Playing on a high board for practically all the time, he showed himself the equal of the best grandmasters and indeed, at the Leipzig Olympiad he distinguished himself by beating Mikhail Tal, thereby becoming the first British player to defeat a reigning World Champion since Blackburne beat Lasker in 1899.

## Penrose, Jonathan - Tal, Mikhail

Olympiad-14 Final A11

8 November 1960 Leipzig | Annotated by Knaak, R



Jonathan Penrose was one of the leading English players for years. In 1979 he played his last over-the-board games, which are also included in Mega Database; however, his chess career was far from over, because he then rose to the very top of the world in correspondence chess. But in over-the-board chess his name will probably always be associated with this one game from the Chess Olympiad in Leipzig. The

Soviet Union was on an unparalleled triumphal march - every single match was won and up to the last round there was not a single defeat in an individual game, until this one.

**1. d4!** Penrose was an e4 player and so this took Tal out of his preparation.

**1...Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c5** Tal wants the full point. Objectively, however, the Benoni is inferior.

**4. d5 exd5 5. cxd5 g6 6. e4 d6 7. Bd3 Bg7 8. Nge2 O-O 9. O-O** I play this setup myself and believe in it. White will protect the square g4 with h2-h3 and is then ready for f2-f4. Black suffers from lack of space - a move like Bg4 is not available here.

**9 ... a6** Alternatives like Na6-c7 and only then a6 as well as 9 ... b6 are considered more promising nowadays. (Editor: This pessimistic assessment from Black's point of view is outdated since John Watson's book on the Benoni defence. The setup with 9 ... a6 seems much more likely to be the best.)

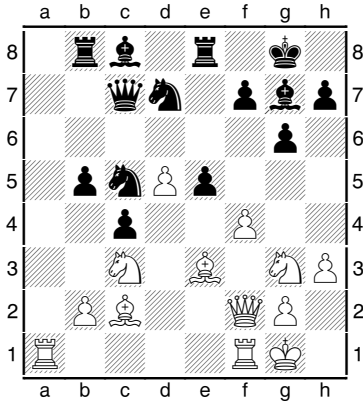
**10. a4 Qc7 11. h3 Nbd7 12. f4 Re8 13. Ng3 c4 14. Bc2 Nc5** 14... Rb8! 15. Be3 Nc5 is the main variation.

**15. Qf3** 15. Be3 Nfxe4 16. Ncxe4 Nxe4 17. Bxe4 f5 18. Qe2 fxe4 19. f5 is unclear

**15... Nfd7** Black should play 15... Rb8 to force through b5 as quickly as possible. After 16. e5 dxe5 (16... Nfd7 17. Nce4 Nxe4 18. Nxe4 dxe5 19. f5 with the attack) 17. fxe5 Rxe5 18. Bf4 Nfd7 Black gets play for the exchange.

**16. Be3 b5 17. axb5 Rb8 18. Qf2 axb5** The pawn sacrifice that follows has become standard practice for this type of position and the whole variation with Bd3 and Nge2.

**19. e5! dxe5**



**20.f5!** 20. fxe5 Rf8 21. d6 Qc6 22. Nce4 Bxe5 is unclear.

**20... Bb7 21. Rad1 Ba8?** There is a basic rule with this pawn structure: if Black can sacrifice back the obstructing pawn on e5, he should do so. 21... e4! with an unclear position; for example, after Bf4 Black can always happily sacrifice the exchange because the Bishop on g7 then becomes even more of a giant.

**22. Nce4** With advantage. A dream square for every Knight.

**22 ... Na4?** Loses outright.

**23. Bxa4 bxa4 24. fxg6 fxg6 25. Qf7+ Kh8 26. Nc5 Qa7 27. Qxd7 27. Nge4!**

**27... Qxd7 28. Nxd7 Rxb2 29. Nb6 Rb3 30. Nxc4 Rd8 31. d6 Rc3 32. Rc1 Rxc1 33. Rxc1 Bd5 34. Nb6 Bb3 35. Ne4 h6 36. d7 Bf8 37. Rc8 Be7 38. Bc5 Bh4 39. g3 1-0**

A deep strategist who could also hold his own tactically, he suffered from the defect of insufficient physical stamina, and it was this that was to bring about a decline in his play and in his results. He collapsed during a game at the Ilford Chess Congress, and a year later, at the Siegen Olympiad of 1970, he had a more serious collapse that necessitated his withdrawal from the event after the preliminary groups had been played. The doctors found nothing vitally wrong with him that his physique could not sustain. He continued to play but his results suffered from a lack of self-confidence and at the Nice Olympiad of 1974 he had a wretched result on board 3, winning only 1 game and losing 6 out of 15.

Possibly too his profession (a lecturer in psychology) was also absorbing him more and more and he took part less and less in international and national chess. Yet, he had already done enough to show that he was the equal of the greatest British players in his command and understanding of the game and he ranks alongside Staunton, Blackburne, Atkins and CHO'D Alexander as a chess figure of world class.

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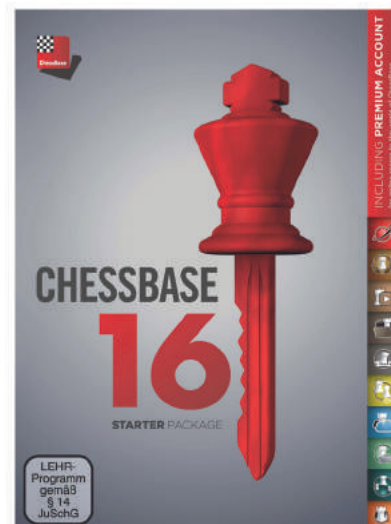
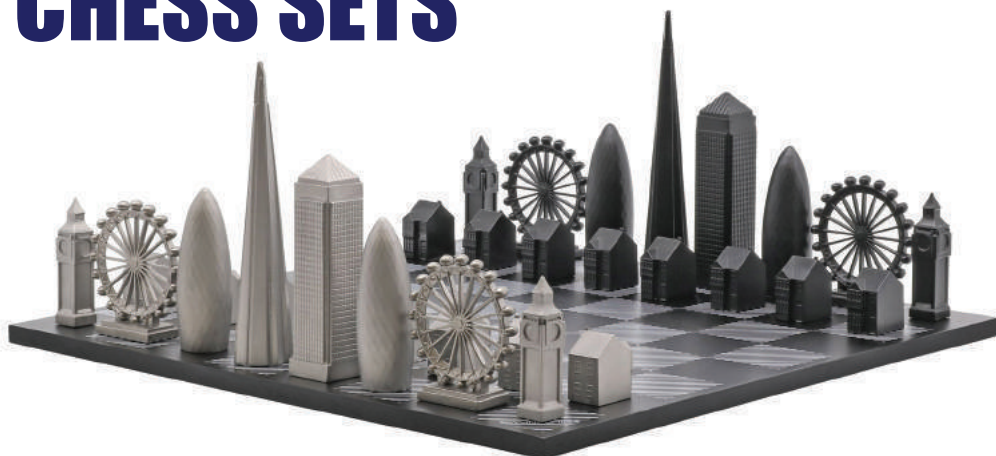


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