

January 2023

GM Sarunas Sulskis vs GM Mark Hebden (Round 9)



GM Bence Korpa v IM Brandon Clarke (Final Round)



Hastings Special --- including a full report on the 96th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress

Also - an arbiter's perspective on the World Rapid and Blitz, secrets of how to solve studies, all our usual columns, and more ...

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EDITORIAL



Happy New Year to all our readers.

This month we feature a bumper issue for those who love getting stuck into chess! The outstanding columns from our titled players and regular contributors will keep you occupied for quite some time, whatever your preferences. In addition, we have a comprehensive report from Hastings, which remains one of our most beloved and important congresses.

We also have details of the English Seniors and English / English Women's Championships in May, together with this year's 109th British Chess Championships which will be held at The Venue, De Montfort University in Leicester from 21st to 30th July.

We interview Tallulah Roberts, a well-known chess influencer and ambassador for women and beginners from Jersey, and round up chess news from across the country, both past and future. It's an exciting edition.

Before I go, I must mention a couple of beginners' booklets, free to download, which were produced by the ECF during the pandemic and sponsored by St Catherine's School in Bramley. They will be useful to all beginners and novices as well as parents, coaches and teachers. Do take advantage of this opportunity!

[An Introduction to Chess | Booklet One | Newcomers](#)

[An Introduction to Chess | Booklet 2 | Improvers](#)

--- IM Andrew Martin Email: a.martin2007@yahoo.co.uk

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COVER STORY

The 96th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress

CAPLIN

All photographs by Brendan O’Gorman



Horntye Park Sports Centre, Hastings

Hastings has a long association with English chess going back to the days of William the Conqueror (below), who was a chess player, and by all accounts a sore loser, having apparently thrown the board at his nephew Louis of France, whom he suspected of cheating in one of their games.



The Hastings chess community established an annual festival in the 1880s which led to the first great Hastings tournament in 1895, won by Harry Pillsbury and including the famous Steinitz - Von Bardeleben game where Steinitz established a ‘magic rook’ on the seventh rank which could not be taken. After studying the position Von Bardeleben allegedly walked out of the tournament without resigning and allowed his clock to run down.

The Hastings Congress proper started in 1920 with the first event won by British Champion Frederick Yates, followed by an almost unbroken series of 96 events with many famous winners over the years including a number of World Champions.



Max Euwe (1923/1924), Alexander Alekhine (1925/1926), Jose Raul Capablanca (1929/1930), Vasily Smyslov (1954/55 and 1968/69), Mikhail Botvinnik (1966/67), and Mikhail Tal (1973/74). There have also been a number of English winners - Frederick Yates (1920), Harry Golombek and Jonathan Penrose (1952/53), John Nunn (1979/80 and 1996/97), Jon Speelman (1983/84), Nigel Short (1987/88 and 1988/89), Mark Hebden (1996/97, 2009/10 and 2013/14), Matthew Sadler (1997/98), David Howell (2009/10), Gawain Jones (2012/13), Danny Gormally (2018/19), and David Howell (2020/21).

Hastings is the most prestigious and long-running of the English chess congresses and has recently benefitted from generous sponsorship by Caplin Systems.

This year’s Caplin Hastings International Congress took place from Wednesday 28th December to Sunday 8th January at the Horntye Park Sports Centre in Hastings, and included the main Caplin Hastings Masters tournament running as a 10-round Swiss event from Wednesday 28th December to Sunday 6th January. Other events in the festival included the five-round Christmas tournament with morning and afternoon events from Wednesday 28th December to Sunday 1st January, the New Year morning and afternoon tournaments from

Monday 2nd January to Friday 6th January and the Hastings Weekender from Saturday 7th to Sunday 8th January.

The Hastings Masters for 2022/23 was won by GM Sarunas Sulskis on 8 points out of 10, with a pack of English players following closely, including GM Mark Hebden on 7½ points, and IM Brandon Clarke and GM Danny Gormally on 7.

Hastings 2022- 23

(top 10 in the field of 95 players)

1	GM	Sarunas Sulskis	LTU	2492	8
2	GM	Bence Korpa	HUN	2516	7½
	GM	Oleg Korneev	ESP	2481	7½
	GM	Mark L Hebden	ENG	2448	7½
5	GM	Edouard Romain	FRA	2537	7
	GM	Petrov Martin	BUL	2535	7
	IM	Brandon Clarke	ENG	2484	7
	GM	Daniel Gormally	ENG	2450	7
	IM	Conor E Murphy	IRL	2422	7
	FM	Timo Kueppers	GER	2249	7



Second equal - Mark L Hebden on 7½ points



Fifth equal - IM Brandon Clarke on 7 points



First place – GM Sarunas Sulskis on 8 points

IM Brandon Clarke provides his perspective on the event in the report below, including his game against the winner, GM Sarunas Sulskis.

Hastings Perspective – IM Brandon Clarke

The 96th Caplin Hastings International Congress came to an end last week after 12 days of various events.

The Masters was won by Lithuanian GM Sarunas Sulskis, which wasn't too surprising given his remarkable start of 6/6. I kindly contributed to that score, but not without my chances to land a fatal blow in our six-hour thriller!

Clarke, Brandon (2484) - Sulskis, Sarunas (2492) [C80]

Hastings Masters (6), 02.01.2023



Clarke v Sulskis

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4

Sulskis goes for the Open Spanish, a reliable variation that gives Black good attacking chances.

6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Nbd2

White has a few playable options, but I always had a preference for this move since it prevents the dangerous Dilworth Variation, which occurs after 9.c3 Bc5 10.Nbd2 0-0 11.Bc2 Nxf2!?. This has been known for a long time but is still holding up with the modern engines.



9...Nc5 10.c3 d4!?

Not the main line (10...Be7), but a decent alternative. My first memory of it was from the famous Kasparov – Anand World Championship game in 1995, where Garry won a very fine game after some impressive preparation with 11.Ng5. Unfortunately, Black has found improvements since then and, as a result, what I played stands as the main line.

11.Bxe6 fxe6?!

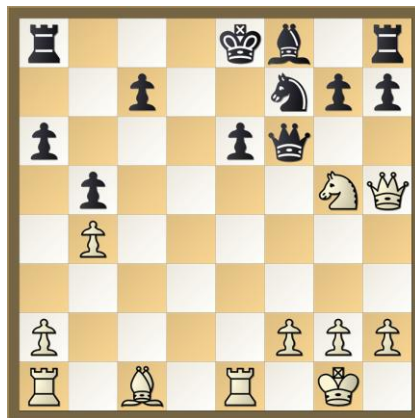
I was only familiar with the main move 11...Nxe6. After a long think, Sulskis decided to give it a go. He mentioned after the game that he was aware it wasn't the best move, but couldn't see what was wrong with it, and wanted to

get me out of book. It worked; unfortunately for him, I did manage to find the best moves, at least to start with!

12.cxd4 Nxd4 13.b4!

My knight wants the e4 square, so this is necessary.

13...Nd3 14.Ne4 Nxf3+ 15.Qxf3 Nxe5 16.Qh5+ Nf7 17.Ng5 Qf6 18.Re1



I must confess I thought he was busted here and presumed to walk around, rather confident that resignation was nigh, and his reign of winning terror would finally be put to an end! However, it wouldn't be that easy...

18...0-0-0!

Sulskis digs deep and senses his best chance of survival lies in the murky waters ahead. A well-known strategy when players find themselves in a bad situation.

19.Nxf7 Qxa1 20.Qf3 Rd5 21.Qe4?!

Probably trying to be a bit too clever, I would later regret not taking the material on offer sooner...

21...Bxb4! 22.Qxe6+ Kb8 23.Rf1

I thought I was heading for a no-risk position with very good winning chances, but I had missed my opponent's reply from a distance.

23...Rd6!

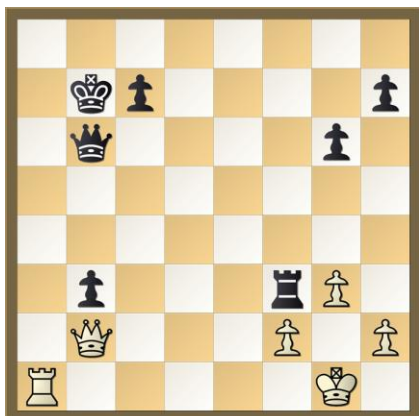
I assumed 23...Rhd8 was forced, which gives White a winning position with the simple 24.Nxd8 Rxd8 25.Qxa6 Qe5 26.Be3 +-.

24.Qb3 Re8 25.Nxd6?! Bxd6

It was only now I realised my original intention of 26.Bb2 doesn't trap the queen for long on account of 26...Bxh2+! But unfortunately, I realised too late and now I must find solace a pawn down in an endgame. A rather difficult

prospect to face, given how promising my position was a few moves earlier...

26.g3 Qe5 27.Be3 g6 28.Rc1 Qe6 29.Qc3 Qe4 30.Bc5 Bxc5 31.Qxc5 Qe5 32.Qc6 Re6 33.Qd7 Re7 34.Qc6 Qe6 35.Qc5 Rf7 36.a4 Qb6 37.axb5 axb5 38.Qc2 b4 39.Ra1 b3 40.Qd2 Rf8 41.Rb1 Rf5 42.Qb2! Rf3 43.Ra1 Kb7



White to play

44.Qa3!

I didn't believe I could survive for long by just sitting, nor did I want to. I was eager not to let my opponent have everything his own way!

Sulskis thought for 18 minutes, contemplating whether to take the bait with 44...Qxf2+ and hope his king will survive the coming storm or to bail out with 44...c6, which leads to an immediate draw after 45.Qe7+

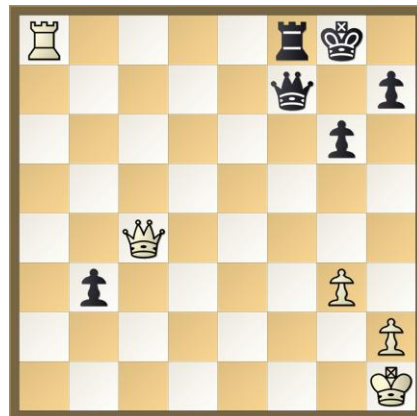
44...Qxf2+!

Sulskis goes all in! There's no turning back now...

45.Kh1 Kc8 46.Qa8+ Kd7 47.Qd5+?

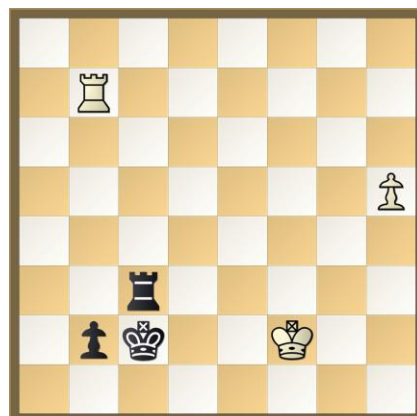
I missed my chance with this natural move. I had overlooked that his king will eventually hide on g8. The draw was not surprisingly very computer-like with 47.Rd1+ Ke6 48.Qe8+ Kf6 49.Qh8+! (I missed this) Kg5 50.Qxh7 as calm as a cucumber, 0.00!

47...Ke7 48.Qe5+ Kf7 49.Qxc7+ Kg8 50.Ra8+ Rf8 51.Qc4+ Qf7



I spent a while deciding whether to try to hold the queen or rook endgame; it turns out they are both lost! The game concludes with some instructive endgame play from the tournament winner.

52.Qxf7+ Kxf7 53.Ra7+ Ke6! 54.Rb7 Rf3 55.Kg2 Rd3! 56.Kf2 Rc3 57.Rxh7 Kd5 28.Rb7 Kc4 59.h4 Kd3 60.g4 Kc2 61.h5 gxh5 62.gxh5 b2 0-1



A disappointing result given the chances I had in the game. But impressive resilience from my opponent; there's a reason GMs are hard to beat!

It was my first time in Hastings. I decided to play in all the events I could, meaning I clocked up 25 games in four different events in 12 days...

I managed to win the Christmas Morning Open, New Year Morning Open and Weekend Open with 5/5 in each, and finished on a respectable 7/10 in the Masters, earning me =5th with many others!

After his perfect start, Sulskis seemed to stumble across the finish and avoided defeat at the hands of Mark Hebden, who missed a win against him in the penultimate round.

To win events as strong as these, you often need a bit of luck! Congratulations to him; I think on the whole it was very well deserved.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in making the tournament possible, from the Sponsors to the control team who made the event(s) run very smoothly.

--- IM Brandon Clarke

The best game prize for the event went to a round 10 scrap between the reigning English and British Champions – GM Mark Hebden and IM Harry Grieve.

Round 10

(11226) Hebden, Mark L (2448) - Grieve, Harry (2438)

[D35]

Caplin Hastings Masters chess24.com (10.5), 06.01.2023



IM Harry Grieve

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3



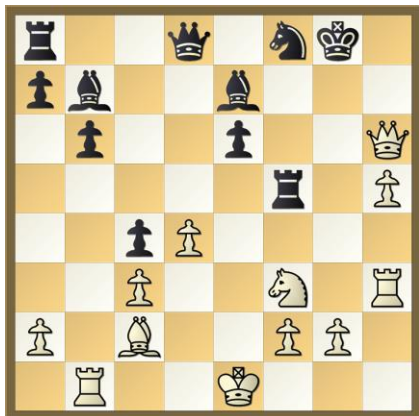
6...c5 7.Rb1 Be7 8.Nf3 0-0 9.h4



**9...b6 10.h5 h6 11.Be3 Nd7 12.Bd3 Bb7 13.Qd2 c4
14.Bc2 f5 15.exf5 Rxf5?!**



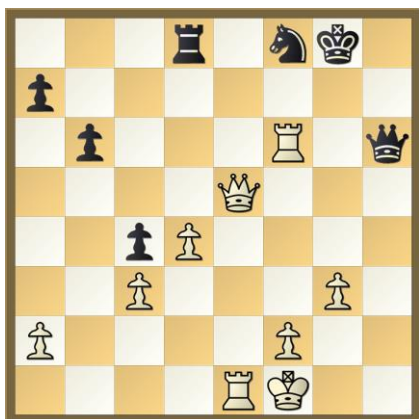
16.Bxh6!? gxh6 17.Qxh6 Nf8 18.Rh3



18...Bxf3 19.Bxf5 exf5 20.Rxf3



20...Bh4 21.Kf1 Qc7 22.Re1 Qh7 23.Qf4 Qxh5 24.Qe5 Rd8 25.Rxf5 Qh6 26.g3 Bf6 27.Rxf6



1-0

Read Leonard Barden's article in the FT here - <https://www.ft.com/content/1d5f8a59-a082-43ae-b2c0-6fc7c38f244d>

Cambridge International Open

The English Chess Federation is organising the Cambridge International Open Chess Tournament from 15th to 19th February 2023 in Cambridge. This will be a 9-round Swiss system tournament, open to all English and foreign

players with a valid FIDE ID. The event will provide an opportunity for participants to achieve international title norms. The event is supported by the [University Arms Hotel, Cambridge](#) – you can book your accommodation for this event via the link above or [here](#)

British Rapidplay Championship



We're pleased to be able to confirm that after a break of nearly four years the ECF are supporting the 4NCL in organising the 2023 edition of the British Rapidplay Championship on 15-16 April 2023 at Mercure Bradford, Bankfield Hotel. Both organisations are grateful to the British Isles Coordinating Committee (the coordinating body for the various British Isles federations and associations) for endorsing the event.

Further information can be found here -

<https://www.4ncl.co.uk/rp/2023/information.htm>

- and here's the entry form -

<https://form.jotform.com/223443869862367>

English Seniors Championships 2023



The English Seniors Championships take place between Thursday 4th May and Monday 8th May 2023 at the Woodland Grange, Old Milverton Lane, Leamington Spa, CV32 6RN.

Eligibility

Over 50 - players must be aged 50 or over on 31st December 2023; Over 65 - players must be aged 65 or over on 31st December 2023. Players must be born in England or have lived in England for at least the preceding 12 months. In addition, if they have a FIDE registration, it must be ENG.

Rating

Both sections will be FIDE-rated and ECF-rated.

Tournament rules - [2023 English Seniors Tournament Rules](#). For more information, please go to: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships-2023/>

English Championships and English Women's Championships 2023



The English Championships and English Women's Championships take place between Friday 26th May and Bank Holiday Monday 29th May 2023 at the Holiday Inn Kenilworth-Warwick, 212 Abbey End, Kenilworth CV8 1ED.

Eligibility

Players must be born in England or have lived in England for at least the preceding 12 months. In addition, if they have a FIDE registration, it must be ENG.

Capacity

We will be implementing a venue-based limit on player numbers across the two championships.

Qualification for the English Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players where:

- They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st March 2023; or
- They have a rating over 2000 ECF or FIDE in the respective March rating list and have registered for the event and been awarded a rating wildcard entry by the organisers.

The minimum rating of 2000 will be lowered to 1900 ECF or FIDE if there is still space available based on entries received up to 5th May.

There will be up to eight reserved places for general wildcard entries from players who have not otherwise qualified regardless of their rating.

Qualification for the English Women's Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players where:

- They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st March 2023; or
- They have a rating over 1800 ECF or FIDE in the respective March rating list and have been awarded a rating wildcard entry by the organisers.

The minimum rating of 1800 will be lowered to 1600 ECF or FIDE if there is still space available based on entries received up to 5th May.

There will be up to four reserved places for general wildcard entries from players who have not otherwise qualified regardless of their rating. An online qualifier event will be organised at the start of May to allow qualification via this route in the event that more than four wildcards requests have been received and agreed by the organisers.

Ratings

The higher of FIDE rating and ECF rating will be used in determining potential qualification. In the event that a player has neither an ECF nor a FIDE rating, the organisers will assign an estimate based on available data on a case-by-case basis.

Tournament rules - [2023 English Championships Tournament Rules](https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2023/)

For more information, please go to <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2023/>

British Chess Championships 2023



We are pleased to announce that this year's British Chess Championships will be held at **The Venue, De Montfort University** in **Leicester**, with events running from 21st to 30th July 2023.

The Venue at DMU is located at the edge of the De Montfort University Campus and is close to the centre of Leicester. This will be the 109th British Chess Championships in a series, which has run almost unbroken since 1904. This year's Championships will be played over 10 days. The **provisional** summary schedule is below.

Further details will be published shortly, including the full playing schedule for all competitions, eligibility rules, tournament regulations, and entry forms.



The Venue, De Montfort University in Leicester

BCC 2023	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	20/07/23	21/07/23	22/07/23	23/07/23	24/07/23	25/07/23	26/07/23	27/07/23	28/07/23	29/07/23	30/07/23
	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E	A P E
Championship			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9 PO
Major Open			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Senior Championships (50+ and 65+)					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Junior Championships											
Under 16						1	2 3	4	5 6	7	
Under 14						1	2 3	4	5 6	7	
Under 12						1	2 3	4	5 6	7	
Under 10						1	2 3	4	5 6	7	
Under 8						1	2 3	4	5 6	7	
AM/ PM Rating limited British Tournaments					1 1	2 2	3 3	4 4	5 5	6 6	
Weekender (Atkins, Penrose, Soanes, Yates)			1 2 3	4 5							
Speed Events											
Rapidplay		1-7			1-7					1-7	
Blitz	1-9					1-9		Jun			

Time Controls

- 40/90 + G/30 + 30'
- G/90 + 30'
- G/15 + 10'
- G/10 + 5'
- G/3 + 2'

Key

(A = am; P = PM; E = evening. Numbers denote round numbers. PO = playoff if required)

Session Times

A = 09.15 start (except morning rapidplays which will start at 10.30)

P = 14.30 start

E = 19.00 start

FEATURES

Michael Adams' Game of the Month



John Nunn rounded off a great year for England in Senior's chess by winning the World Senior 65+ event. The Doc won some typically attractive attacking games in the early rounds but showed his all-round game with some more technical victories in the key concluding rounds. This one shows the strength of a powerful central knight against a dark-squared bishop and looks very smooth, but it is surprising how much complexity was concealed in the concluding phase.

J. Nunn – J. Fernandez

World Senior Championship 65+ 2022

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 Na5 A rare side-line: 8...0-0 is normal.

9.Bc2 c5 10.d4 cxd4 10...Qc7 was possible, with good chances to transpose to more familiar territory.

11.cxd4 Bg4 Black's idea, but it does not solve all his problems.



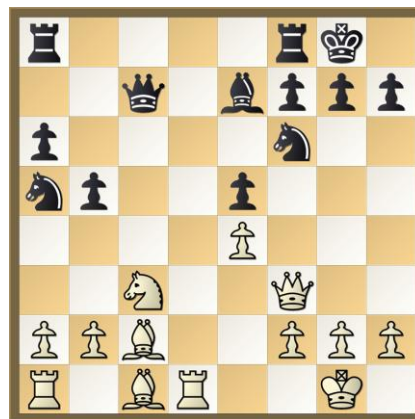
12.dxe5 12.d5 was also playable, but against a rare continuation it makes sense to keep it simple and secure a safe edge.

12...Bxf3 Necessary due to 12...dxe5 13.Qxd8+ Bxd8 14.Nxe5.

13.Qxf3 dxe5 14.Nc3 14.Qg3! 0-0 15.Bh6 Ne8 16.Rd1 was a bit more precise.

14...0-0 15.Rd1 If 15.Bg5, both 15...Nc6 and 15...Rc8 are interesting.

15...Qc7 15...Qc8 is also met by 16.Bd3.

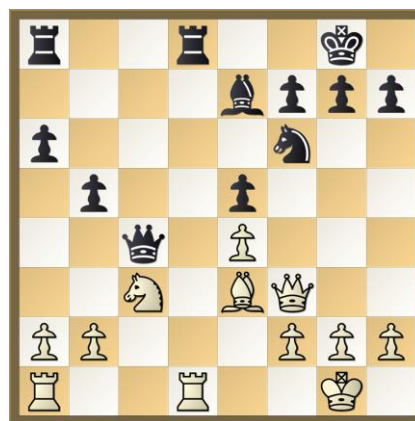


16.Bd3 The speculative 16.Bg5 b4 17.Bxf6 Bxf6 18.Nd5 Qxc2 19.Rac1 Qxb2 20.Nxf6+ gxf6 21.Qxf6 Rfc8 22.Rxc8+ Rxc8 23.Rd8+ Rxd8 24.Qxd8+ Kg7 25.Qg5+ secures perpetual check; but White has no chances for more, so the bishop is nudged to a safe square instead.

16...Rfd8 Recycling the knight with 16...Nc6 17.Be3 Nd4 18.Bxd4 exd4 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5 also gives White a significant advantage despite the opposite-coloured bishops. White will be able to plant a rook on c6 as 20...Rac8 21.Bf5! dislodges Black's rook, 21...Rcd8 22.Rac1. The alternative 16...b4 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.exd5 Nb7 19.Be3 followed by Rac1 isn't tempting.

17.Be3 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.exd5 Nc4 19.h4 keeps the initiative but allows Black's knight to settle on d6.

17...Nc4 18.Bxc4 Qxc4



19.Bg5 The computer prefers 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5, but this is not at all intuitive. 20...e4 (20...Bd6 21.Rac1 Qxa2

22.Bb6 Rdc8 23.Rc6!) 21.Qf5 Bd6 (21...g6 22.Qe5!) 22.Rac1 Qxa2 23.Bb6 Re8 24.Rc6 Qb3 25.Qg4 and the White d-pawn is a big asset. John's choice is much more practical - White keeps control.

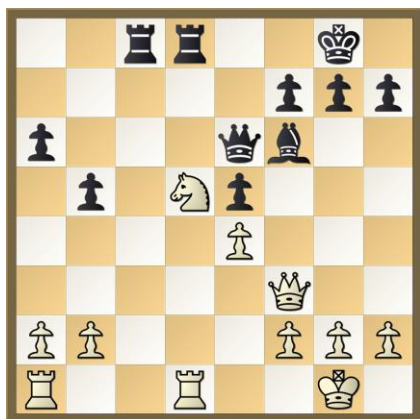
19...Qe6 There was a chance to escape with 19...Rxd1+! 20.Rxd1 b4 21.Bxf6 Bxf6 22.Nd5 Qxa2 23.Nxf6+ gxf6 24.Qxf6 Qxb2 25.h4; this looks dangerous, but there is too little material left to win, and the passed b-pawn must be taken seriously. After 25...Qc2 26.Re1 Rc8 27.Qg5+ (27.Re3 Qd1+ 28.Kh2 Rc3, an important defensive idea, 27.h5 Qd2 28.Re3 Rc3 29.h6 Kf8 30.Qh8+ Ke7 31.Qxe5+ Kd7 also survives) 27...Kf8 28.Qxe5 b3.

It was clearly hard to make such a committal decision, but the position in the game is a rather thankless task so perhaps it was more practical to try this and hope for the best.

20.Nd5! A tactical finesse; this is a bit stronger than 20.Bxf6 Qxf6 21.Qxf6 Bxf6 22.Nd5 Kf8.

20...Rac8 20...Nxd5 21.exd5 Qd6 22.Bxe7 Qxe7 23.d6! Qe6 24.Rac1 is very tough for Black. 24...Qxa2? loses immediately: 25.Qxa8! Rxa8 26.d7.

21.Bxf6 Bxf6



The Doc has achieved his aim. The knight on d5 dominates proceedings from a perfect central outpost while Black's bishop can't find a good role. Surviving this kind of passive defence is rare.

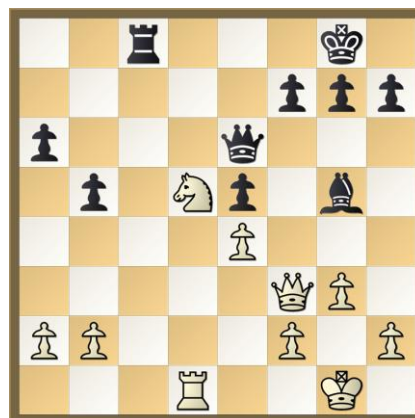
22.g3 22.a4, levering open the queenside, is also logical, but this multi-purpose move makes space so that White's king can find a comfortable light square, and gets ready to control g5.

22...Be7 22...Bg5 23.h4 Bh6 24.a4! would now be a real problem, with the bishop on h6 side-lined.

23.Rac1 Bg5 The bishop returns, but there was nothing better: 23...Bc5 24.Rc2 Bd4 25.Rdc1 Rxc2 26.Rxc2 and

now the bishop on d4 looks pretty but doesn't do much: 26...h6 27.Kg2. Or 23...g6 24.h4 h5 25.Qe3 Kg7 26.Kg2 keeps on squeezing.

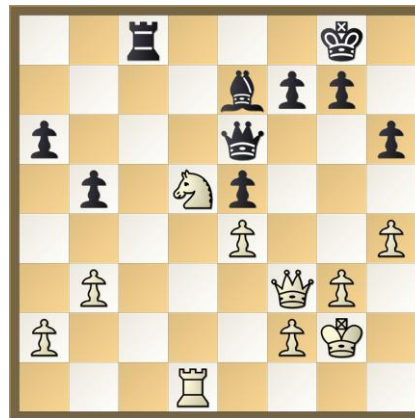
24.Rxc8 Rxc8



25.h4 Bd8 The bishop is passive here, but remains out of harm's way, and it does prevent White's knight from moving forward.

26.Kg2 h6 I would have preferred 26...g6, and if 27.h5 Bg5.

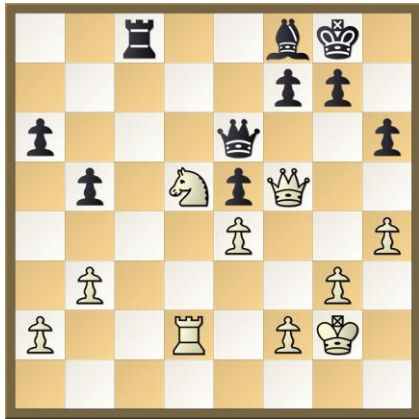
27.b3 Be7 27...Rc2? 28.Ne3! is already winning: 28...Rc8 29.Nf5, planning Rd6, 29...Be7 30.Qg4 Bf8 31.Nxh6+.



28.Rd2 28.a4 was possible, but White does not need to hurry.

28...Bf8 28...Rc1 was worth a try.

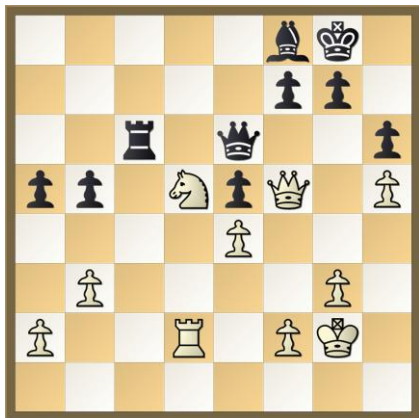
29.Qf5 Swapping queens allows White's king a route into the game, a winning plan that works like a charm in the game, but the more patient 29.Qd1, or 29.h5 maintaining the pressure, were good alternatives. Judging the merits of the queen trade is clearly not easy over the board; both players seem to underestimate Black's defensive resources in that scenario.



29...Rc6 Fernandez has resisted well so far, but over the next few moves had to try to seek relief through exchanges. It's tempting to avoid irreversible decisions by maintaining the tension instead, but this isn't sustainable in the long term. Here 29...Qxf5! 30.exf5 h5 is not that bad for Black; there aren't many targets to aim at, and it is not so simple for the white monarch to penetrate: 31.Ne3 (31.Kf3 f6) 31...f6 32.Kf3 a5 33.Rd5 Bc5.

30.h5 30.Qxe6 fxe6 31.Ne3 Bb4 32.Rd8+ Kf7 is OK; the bishop will head to c3, and maybe d4 later.

30...a5 The ugly-looking 30...Qxf5! is not so bad: 31.exf5 f6 32.Ne3 Bd6 33.Kf3 Kf7 34.Ke4 Ke7 is still not simple to crack (35.Rc2 Rxc2 36.Nxc2 Bc5 37.f3 Kd6).



31.Ne3 31.Qf3 was a good alternative, heading to d3 or e2; now the pawn on b5 is a bit more vulnerable due to Black's last move. John's move is also on point; the rook will land on d5, eyeing a lot of undefended pawns on the fifth rank.

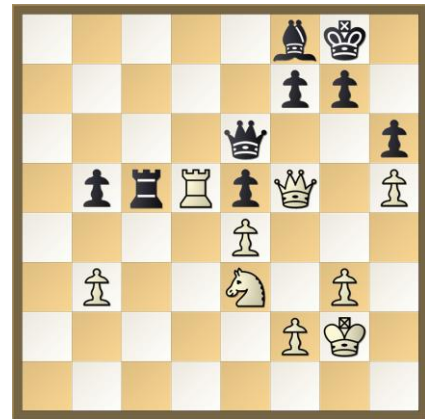
31...a4 31...Qxf5 was still a better idea.

32.Rd5 Swapping queens was also good: 32.Qxe6 fxe6 (32...Rxe6 33.Rd5! axb3 34.axb3 b4 35.Nc4 f6 36.Kf3 leaves the light squares too weak). However, the doubled e-pawns are a long-term liability: 33.Rd8 axb3 34.axb3 Kf7 (34...Rc3 35.Ng4!) 35.Rd7+ Kg8 36.Ng4 Bd6 37.Rb7 b4

38.Rb5 Rc3 (38...Kf8 39.Nxe5 Bxe5 40.Rxe5 Rc3 41.Rxe6 Rxb3 42.Rb6) 39.Rb6.

32...axb3 Black had one last resource: 32...Qxf5! 33.exf5 (33.Nxf5 Rc2!) 33...Bc5 34.Rxe5 Bxe3 35.Rxe3 b4! 36.Re4 (36.bxa4 Ra6!) 36...a3! 37.Re8+ (37.Rxb4 Rc2) 37...Kh7 38.Re2 g6 gives Black hopes to survive.

33.axb3 Rc5 33...Qxf5 34.Nxf5! b4 35.Rxe5 Rc3 36.Rb5! converts cleanly: 36...Rxb3 (36...Bc5 37.f4 Kh7 38.e5) 37.Rb8! f6 38.Nd4! Rc3 39.Ne6, winning the bishop.

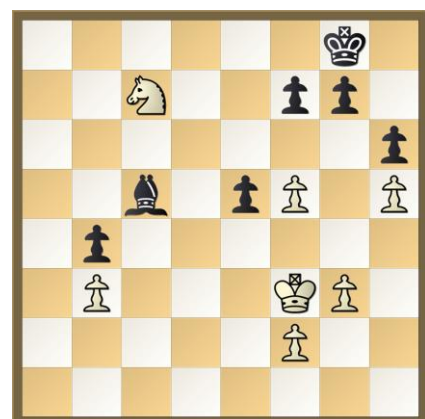


34.Kf3 34.Rd8! is the most conclusive: 34...Rc3 (34...Qxf5 35.Nxf5 Rc7 36.Rb8 b4 37.Ne3 Rc3 38.Nd5 Rxb3 39.Ne7+, 34...Qxb3 35.Nd5!) 35.Qxe6 fxe6 36.Ng4!; the alternative 34.Qxe6 fxe6 35.Rd7 Rc3 36.Ng4 is also good enough.

34...Qxf5+ 34...Rxd5 35.Qxe6 fxe6 36.exd5 exd5 37.Nxd5 Bc5 38.Nc3 Kf7 39.Nxb5 e4+, and 34...Qe8 give chances to fight.

35.exf5 Rxd5 Once the rooks are swapped White plays with two pieces against one as Black's king is too remote: 35...b4 36.Rxc5 Bxc5 37.Ke4 f6 38.Kd5 Ba7 39.Kc4. The rook can't move as 35...Rc3 36.Rxb5 Bc5 37.Rb8+ Kh7 38.Rc8 is easy with the extra pawn.

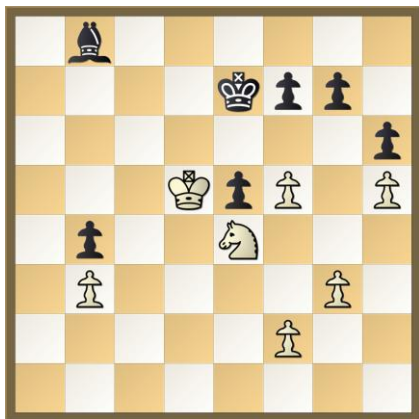
36.Nxd5 Bc5 37.Nc7 b4 Or 37...e4+ 38.Ke2 b4 39.Na6 Bd6 40.Ke3.



38.Na6! Bd6 38...e4+ 39.Ke2 Bd6 40.Ke3 collects one pawn before moving over to the one on b4.

39.Ke4 Kf8 40.Kd5 Ke7 41.Nc5! Not 41.Kc4 Kf6, although 41.g4 is also good.

41...Bb8 42.Ne4! Total domination; the knight and the pawn on f5 control the black king, allowing no counterplay, so the b4 pawn can be picked off at White's leisure.



42...Bc7 After 42...Ba7 both 43.Kc4 or 43.Kxe5 are good.

43.Kc5

Black resigned. If 43...Ba5 44.Kb5 chases the bishop away; otherwise White wins slowly but inevitably: 43...Kd7 44.Kxb4 Kc6 45.Kc4 f6 46.b4 Bb6 47.b5+ Kd7 48.Kd5 Bd4 49.f3 Bb6 50.Nc5+ forces the king to concede something: 50...Ke7 51.Kc6 or 50...Kc7 51.Ne6+ Kd7 52.Nxg7.

Arkell's Endings

The Hierarchy of Pawns



Even in the heat of a middlegame battle the master still has to bear in mind the outlines of a possible future ending - David Bronstein

Burdened with the marginally worse pawn structure, the following game demonstrates how easy it is for White to drift into difficulties against the Caro-Kann when seemingly not much is happening.

D. Tan - K Arkell [B15]

Hastings Challengers 1997

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 g6 4.h3 Bg7 5.Nf3 dxe4 6.Nxe4 Nd7 7.Bd3 Ngf6 8.Nxf6+ Nxf6 9.0-0 0-0 10.c3 Qc7 11.Re1 c5 12.dxc5 Qxc5



According to my 'Hierarchy of Pawns', in positions where both players have castled on the kingside the pawns increase in value from the a- across to the f-file. Therefore, if Black can exchange the d-pawn for an e-pawn and then the c-pawn for a d-pawn, a small gain has been made. Sicilian players also understand this principle very well. In that case the exchanges occur the other way round; first Black swaps the c-pawn for White's d-pawn - an exchange which, incidentally, put

Bent Larsen off playing 1.e4 - and then it is considered a great success if they can break with ...d5!, exchanging the d-pawn for White's e-pawn. All this is known in bits, but I'm not aware of anyone laying it out as a general principle and extending the rule all the way across from the a- to the f-pawn. Regarding the difference in value between the e- and f-pawns, I only need draw attention to White's objective against the Dutch Defence of aiming for the push e4 without allowing the reply ...f4. And as for the b- and c-pawns, take a look at the line 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 when Black is prepared to lose a few tempi with the move 5...b5!? so as to swap the b-pawn for White's more valuable c-pawn.

13.Be3 Qc7 14.Bd4 Be6 15.Qc2 Bd5 16.Qe2 e6 17.Be5 Qb6 18.Bd4 Qc7 19.Be5 Qe7 20.Nd4 b6 21.a4 Nd7 22.Bxg7 Kxg7 23.Be4 Bxe4 24.Qxe4 Nf6 25.Qe2 a6 26.Rad1 Qc5 27.Nb3 Qc6 28.Nd4 Qc5 29.Nb3 Qc7 30.Nd4 Rfe8 31.Nf3 Nd5



When you have an e-pawn you can use it to anchor a piece on d5, and support it with a pawn on b5, preventing c4.

32.Qe5+ Qxe5 33.Nxe5 b5 34.axb5 axb5

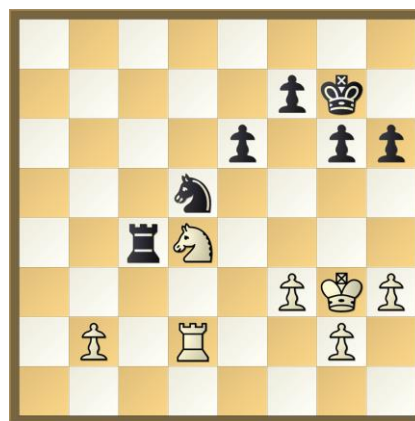


There can be no doubt that with best play this position would result in a draw. However, engines are teaching us that many apparently difficult positions are holdable in principle, but when you listen to the World Champion Magnus Carlsen analysing his games he is not concerned about winning by force but rather creating an environment where his opponent might go wrong. In this position White lacks a plan, whereas Black can play against the weaknesses on b2 and even sometimes f2. You might ask why White can't play against the equivalent weaknesses on f7 and b5, but the b5 pawn is more of an aggressor than a liability, being used to isolate White's remaining queenside pawn. By then Black will have the more active pieces because White will simply be on the defensive trying to guard that remaining pawn. He will then be at liberty to advance the kingside pawns carefully while eyeing the isolated b- or c-pawn and the slightly rigid White kingside structure. It is worth noting here that while R+4 v R+3 on the kingside can often be held with patient and careful defence, R+N+4 v R+N+3 is often winning and certainly is extremely difficult to hold in practice. And when you're playing the game rather than philosophising about it, the 'in practice' bit is all that really matters!

35.Ra1 Rec8 36.Nf3 Rxa1 37.Rxa1 b4 38.cxb4 Nxb4

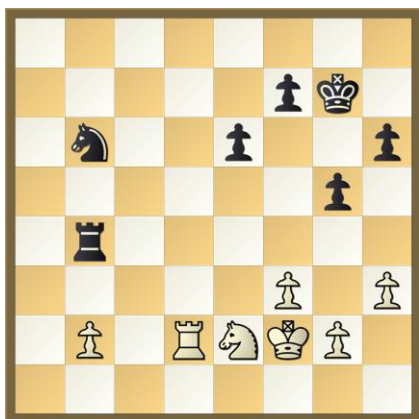
Now I am ready to focus on the targets at b2 and f2. Meanwhile f7 is immune from pressure. If, for example, 39.Ra7 Kf6 40.g4 g5, and White will have to go scurrying back to defend his more significant weaknesses.

39.Rd1 Rc2 40.Rd2 Rc1+ 41.Kh2 Nd5 42.Kg3 h6 43.Nd4 Rc4 44.f3



I mentioned earlier that White's kingside is more rigid than Black's. Even this one simple move exposes further weaknesses, as a pawn on g5 and a Knight on f4 now beckons.

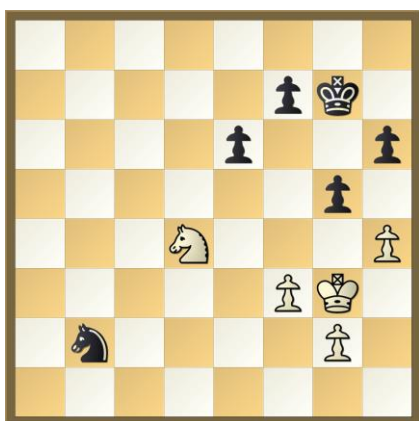
44...g5 45.Kf2 Rb4 46.Ne2 Nb6



47.Kg3

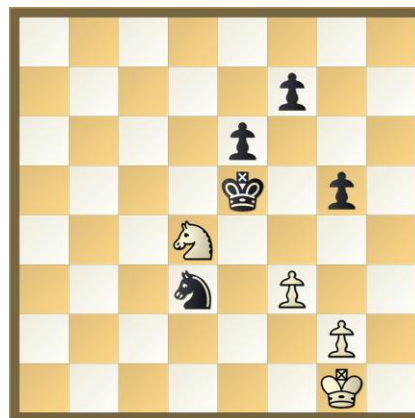
Jettisoning the b-pawn in the hope of finding salvation in a Knight ending a pawn down. I have just switched on the engine evaluations and it is curious to see how over the last 11 moves White has drifted from almost equal to minus 1.5 by simply playing natural moves. My opponent should have played 49.Nc1 Nc4 50.Nd3 Rb3 51.Rc2! when I must choose between R+4 v R+3 or retreating my Knight in order to keep all four pieces on the board.

47...Na4 48.Rd4 Rxd4 49.Nxd4 Nxb2 50.h4



Is this ending winning by force? I have no idea! Paradoxically I must allow exchanges in order to make progress, but I can't allow too many as N+P v N would be no use.

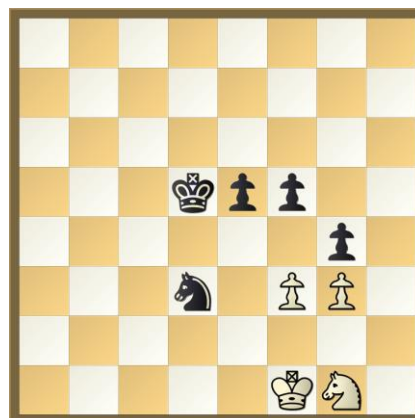
50...Nd3 51.hxg5 hxg5 52.Kh2 Kf6 53.Kg1 Ke5



The first bit is easy: I just have to go as far as I can with my King.

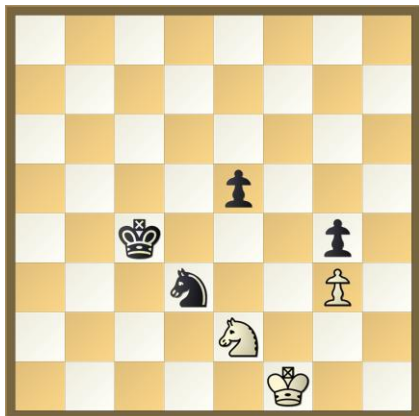
54.Ne2 f5 55.g3 He should not be weakening f3 unnecessarily. Better to wait with 55.Kf1, when I intended 55...Nf4 (probably the move he wanted to prevent by playing f3) 56.Nc3 Kd4 57.Nb5+ Ke3 when one plan is to try to organise a winning push with my e-pawn.

55...Kd5 56.Kf1 e5 57.Ng1 g4

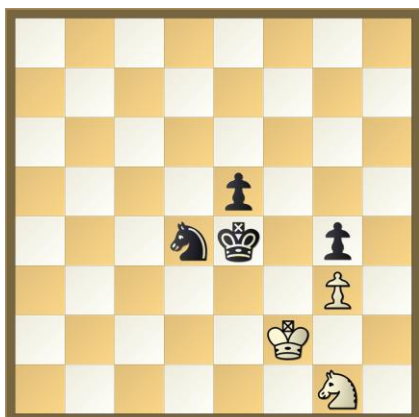


Black's initiative and passed e-pawn should be enough to get the win.

58.fxg4 fxg4 59.Ne2 Kc4



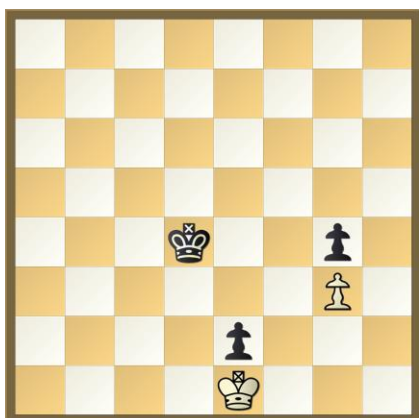
60.Ng1 Kd4 61.Ke2 Ke4 62.Kd2 Nc5 63.Ke2 Ne6
64.Kf2 Nd4



65.Ne2

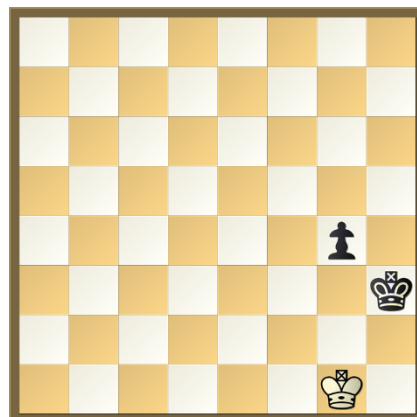
Or I march into his position through a series of Zugzwangs after 65.Kf1 Ke3 66.Kg2 e4 67.Kf1 Kd2 68.Kg2 e3.

65...Nxe2 66.Kxe2 Kd4 67.Kd2 e4 68.Ke2 e3 69.Ke1 e2



It's worth knowing that when the two remaining pawns are on g3 and g4 there can be no draw through the opposition after Black captures the g-pawn.

70.Kxe2 Ke4 71.Kf2 Kd3 72.Kf1 Ke3 73.Kg2 Ke2
74.Kh2 Kf2 75.Kh1 Kxg3 76.Kg1 Kh3



0-1

Great British Chess Players by Dr John Nunn



Amos Burn (1848-1925)

Amos Burn was born in Hull on New Year's Eve 1848 but moved to Liverpool as a teenager, and retained a connection to that city his whole life. He learnt to play chess at the relatively late age of 16, and in some respects this paralleled the chess development of Blackburne. One major

difference was that Burn remained a lifelong amateur, working in the shipping industry and dealing in commodities. His work commitments meant that he participated in relatively few tournaments and there were periods of chess inactivity, but when he did take part in major events he achieved considerable success.



His best result was at Cologne 1898, where he won a point ahead of Cohn, Charousek and Chigorin, with Steinitz, Schlechter and Janowski further down. In view of his age, his fourth place in the mammoth Ostend 1906 event, level with Rubinstein and ahead of Teichmann, Marshall and Janowski, was a very good result. Burn retired to London and was editor of the highly regarded chess column in *The Field* from 1913 until his death. From all accounts, he had a great love for the game and was a regular visitor to the City of London Chess Club. On 24th November 1925 he attended the club and appeared in good health, but after returning home he suffered a stroke and died the next day.

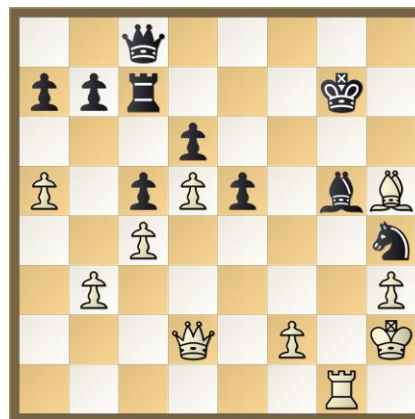
Perhaps because of his limited appearances in international play, Burn is not as well remembered today as he should be. Another factor might be his style of play,

which tended toward solid defence. He played few spectacular games, and his best achievements were in counterattack and in the endgame, which he played to a high standard. In the openings, he contributed a line in the French Defence (1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxe4) which remains highly regarded today.

I can't write about Burn without mentioning his most famous move.

Edmund Macdonald – Amos Burn

Liverpool, 1910



It's Black to play and at first sight he should resign. His bishop is pinned and undefended, while White is attacking it twice and threatens to take it with check. There's only one way to continue the game and Burn found it.

33...Qg4!!

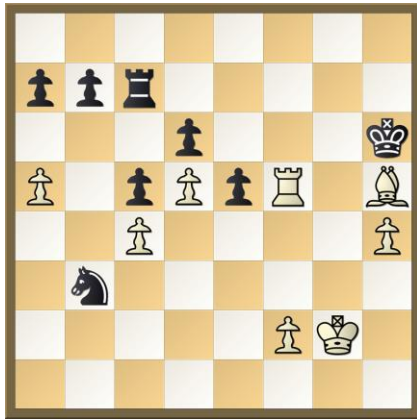
This triple queen sacrifice may not save the game against the most accurate play, but it certainly causes White the most difficulty and one can imagine the shock value. It's an example of what problemists call a Novotny interference, in which a piece lands on the intersection of two enemy lines of attack. Taking with bishop or pawn unpins the bishop to allow ...Bxd2, so the reply is forced.

34.Rxg4 Nf3+ 35.Kg2?

White should have preserved an extra pawn by 35.Kg3 Nxd2 36.Rxg5+ Kf8 37.Rf5+ Kg7 38.Bd1. However, even here Black can resist by 38...b5! and it won't be easy for White to win since his bishop is restricted by the many white pawns on light squares.

35...Nxd2 36.Rxg5+ Kh6 37.h4 Nxb3 38.Rf5?

White should have settled for equality by 38.a6 bxa6 39.Bg4, with a likely draw.



38...Nxa5?

Missing a clear win by 38...Rg7+ 39.Kf1 Nd4 40.Rf7 Rxf7 41.Bxf7 a6, followed by ...Nb3. Black's advantage is much larger once the rooks are exchanged since his king cannot be harassed.

39.Be2 Kg7 40.h5 Rf7 41.Rg5+ Kh8 42.h6?

White should have played to imprison the black knight by 42.Kf1 Rf6 43.Rg3, still with good drawing chances. After the move played, Black has a large advantage and Burn won comfortably.

42...Rf6 43.Rh5 Rf4?! 44.Rg5 Nxc4 45.Bd3?! Nb2 46.Bc2 c4 47.Rg7 Nd3 48.Bb1 Rxf2+ 49.Kg3 Rb2 0-1

Here is one of Burn's best performances, combining positional play with a slow-burning(!) attack.

Georg Marco – Amos Burn

Hastings 1895

French Defence

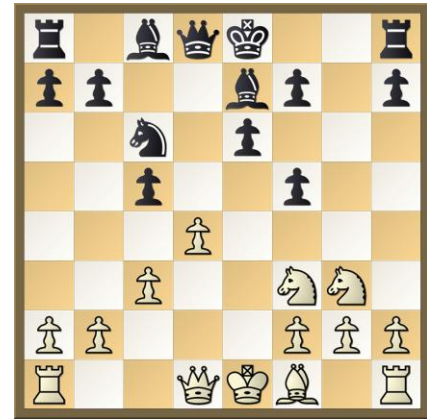
1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 dxe4 5.Nxe4 Be7 6.Bxf6 gxf6

The pawn recapture is Burn's contribution to the opening and these days it is by far the most popular choice.

7.c3?!

An unnecessary move, as pointed out by Blackburne in the tournament book. Today White almost invariably plays 7.Nf3 f5 8.Nc3, to meet 8...c5 by 9.d5.

7...f5 8.Ng3 c5 9.Nf3 Nc6



It's the traditional struggle of two bishops against doubled pawns, a battle which occurs in several openings, such as the Exchange Ruy Lopez, French Winawer and Nimzo-Indian.

10.Bb5 Qb6

10...cxd4 11.Nxd4 Bd7 is a sound alternative, but Burn is playing to get two bishops against two knights.

11.Bxc6+ bxc6

Another exchange of bishop for knight and another pair of doubled pawns. The notes by Blackburne in the tournament book and the more modern coverage by Colin Crouch (in *Hastings 1895, the Centenary Book*) both portray the rest of the game as an unequal struggle in which the bishops slaughter the knights, but the truth is far more complex.

12.0-0 h5 13.Qd2?!

At this point, time is on Black's side, and White could have played to exploit Black's lagging development by 13.dxc5 Bxc5 14.Qe1! (threat Nxf5) 14...Be7 15.Qe5, trying to destabilise the position before Black can castle.

13...h4 14.Ne2 Ba6

In the long run the bishop clearly belongs on the long diagonal, so 14...cxd4 15.cxd4 Bb7 was better, with an eventual ...c5 to come.

15.Rfe1 0-0-0 16.a3

White correctly aims for queenside play.

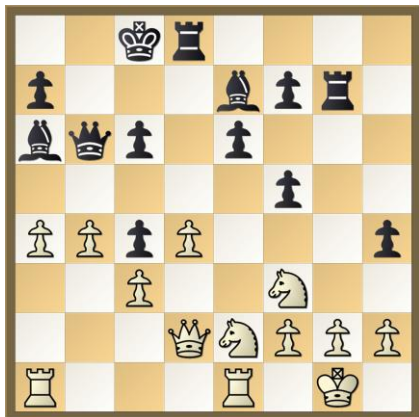
16..Rh7?!

An artificial way to double rooks. 16...Rhg8 is better, so that 17.b4 cxd4 18.cxd4?! c5! 19.bxc5 Qc6 puts White under severe pressure.

17.b4!

Now this is unpleasant for Black. He doesn't want to open lines by 17...cxd4, but after 17...c4 the a6-bishop is obstructed and it will be hard to achieve ...c5.

17...c4 18.a4 Rg7



19.Reb1?

The start of a faulty and passive defensive strategy. The correct plan involves Qe3, Nf4 and Kf1, taking time out to neutralise Black's kingside play before proceeding further on the queenside. So long as White prevents a tactical breakthrough involving ...c5, the well-placed knights at least balance Black's relatively inactive bishops.

19...Rdg8 20.Ne1 Bb7 21.f3 Qd8

From this square, the queen can switch to the kingside or, should the long diagonal be opened, to d5.

22.b5?

Opening the diagonal is suicidal. As Blackburne comments, 22.Qa2 would have offered some defensive chances.

22...c5 23.Qe3 Qc7 24.a5 Bg5 25.f4

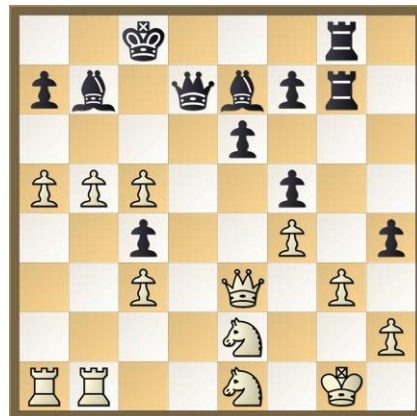
25.Qe5 is strongly met by 25...Bd2, but playing f4 opens another line to the sensitive g2-square.

25...Be7 26.g3 Qd7?!

26...hxg3 27.hxg3 Bd6 would have been decisive as White cannot prevent a breakthrough on f4 or g3.

27.dxc5?!

27.Kf2 was the last chance, to block the diagonal by Nf3.



27...hxg3! 28.hxg3

The key line is 28.c6 gxh2+ 29.Kh1 Qd5+ 30.Nf3 Ba8, when the threats of 31...Bc5 and 31...a6 are decisive. It's ironic that the small move of the a-pawn should be a way for Black to break through on the kingside. After the move played Burn crashes through.

28...Qd5 29.c6 Bc5 30.cxb7+ Kxb7 31.Nd4 Rg3+ 0-1

Books of the Month by Ben Graff



The best new writing and the greatest classics under one roof ... in association with Forward Chess

'I always urge players to study composed problems and endgames.'
Pal Benkő

This month we leave behind the world of the tournament hall to focus on three books that explore chess endgames and more abstract compositions.

The seminal *The Pawn Study Composer's Manual* by Mikhail Zinar was a sensation in its day. Now updated, it provides a wealth of fresh insight, not only on pawn studies, but also on how to approach the art of composition. *Battle of Endgames*, by Ray Cannon, covers a variety of practical puzzles that are guaranteed to interest any player. Our classic, *The Chess Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes*, by Raymond M. Smullyan, takes us into the world of 'retrograde analysis', a fiendishly difficult place for even the finest of minds such as Holmes's.

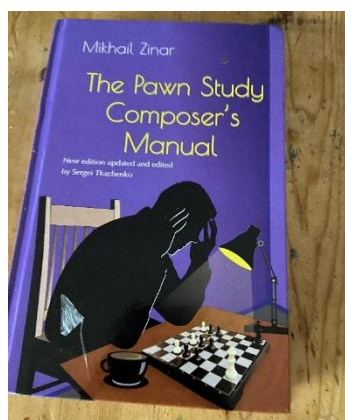
Chess compositions have a long and distinguished history stretching back over 1000 years. Perhaps conventional over the board players are like novelists who toil away for hours on end, while those who create studies are the poets, often gripped by fleeting moments of inspiration. For me, composers are artists who take abstract fragments from our game and turn them into something magical. They have an imagination and creativity, a spark about them – and the problems they create can inspire, entertain, and educate the rest of us.

Marcel Duchamp once remarked, 'I always loved complexity. With chess, one creates beautiful problems.' Yet we will see (particularly in *The Pawn Study Composer's Manual*) that very often beauty on the chess board is derived from an apparently impossible simplicity...

When we consider more practical endgame studies, the benefit of study is even more obvious. José Capablanca once remarked, 'In order to improve your game you must study the endgame before anything else.' Just about every other World Champion has echoed this advice to club players. Another strong player, Edmar Mendis, wrote: 'After a bad opening, there is hope for the middle game. After a bad middle game, there is hope for the endgame. But once you are in the endgame, the moment of truth has arrived.'

Our 'moment of truth' is now upon us. It is time to delve into these works, with their wonderful combination of the practical and the miraculous.

The Pawn Study Composer's Manual
by Mikhail Zinar (updated and edited by Sergei Tkachenko) – Elk and Ruby



'Everything ingenious is simple.'
Mikhail Zinar

There are many books on offer that are filled with endgame studies. What makes this one different is that, as well as containing over 400 compositions, Zinar also

teaches the readers how to create studies of their own. First published over thirty years ago and now updated, this is a highly original and innovative work that is worthy of serious examination.

Zinar led a fascinating life. He started out as an aeronautical engineer before his passion for chess composition led him to focus on the game. He took up the post of trainer at a youth sports school, and it appears for a while that his circumstances were such that, in the evening, he would clear away the chess tables and sleep on the floor. Zinar would build a reputation as one of the finest composers in the world, revered both by his peers in the field and by the more general Soviet chess-playing public.

In 1987 the USSR would award Zinar the Master of Sports title, but around 1990 he disappeared, and rumours abounded that he was dead. Fortunately, this proved not to be the case, but Zinar's talent appeared to bring him little in the way of material gains. He was still working as a teacher on very poor money and told Siegfried Hornecker that the cost of postage to submit his work was beyond him, lamenting 'Who needs our illusionary art nowadays?'

A renaissance would follow, during which much new work would be created, and Zinar won a bronze medal in the 3rd FIDE World Cup in Composing, in 2013. He would be involved in the discussions regarding the update of this book, but sadly, 'an inveterate smoker,' he would pass away for real before this project came to fruition.

Zinar highlights that the formal requirements of a study are 'legality, solvability, and uniqueness of solution'. The key artistic obligations are: '(1) Expressiveness of the idea – the clear identification of the main line, which explains the very purpose of the main line... (2) Efficiency of the form... The author's idea should be executed with the minimal possible means... (3) The Beauty of the solution. The hardest possible idea to explain... Nobody is stopping you from constructing unwieldy, obviously artificial structures, and if an unusual position is won by unusual moves, then so be it. However, when "miracles" start to happen in a simple-looking position, it looks much more spectacular!'

What I particularly liked was the way in which the chapters of *The Pawn Study Composer's Manual* are structured to step through the formal and artistic requirements of composition in a way that builds logically. The sections cover in turn: 'Basic Tactics, Study Ideas, Artistic Requirements for Endgame Studies, The Practice of Study Composition and Composition Tests.'

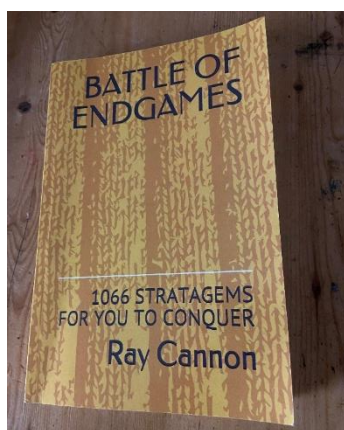
Concepts analysed within these segments include basic manoeuvres, the tortoise move, roundabout way, feint, and the double king threat. Richard Réti's contribution to the genre is also explored. Zinar says of Réti's double-threat composition (white king h8, white pawn c6, black king a6, black pawn h5 – White to play and draw): 'The creation of this masterpiece was built on top of the entire history of chess composition... The idea that Richard Réti used as the foundation of his immortal study, as with any other idea in life, spreads its threads both into the past and into the future. It had a long pedigree and served as a source of inspiration for many copiers and followers.'

This single puzzle seems to defy logic and is worthy of deep study if you are not already familiar with it. Zinar notes that the 'miracle' of the draw occurs because 'We are accustomed to the notion that the shortest way between two points is a straight line. However, on the chess board, the shortest way need not be straight.'

Not only was *The Pawn Study Composer's Manual* originally published in Ukraine, but Tkachenko notes also that the update was created '...in conditions of war, with my city [Odesa] being regularly bombed, which considerably slowed progress!' So this effort must stand as another tribute to the creativity and resilience of the Ukrainian people, who continue to produce first-rate art in the face of war and oppression.

Battle of Endgames – 1066 Stratagems For You To Conquer

by Ray Cannon



'The endgame is a prime arena for the emergence of error through lack of practice, and even elite grandmasters can miss the unsuspected anti-initiative resource that would have secured the rescue draw or shock win.'
Julian Simpole – quoted in '*Battle of Endgames*'

Ray Cannon has been a regular presence on the tournament circuit for many years. As a well-respected

coach at Richmond Junior Chess Club for over a decade, his love of the game and desire to educate others runs deep.

Ray's passion for practical endgame stratagems is long-standing, and the positions he has identified for study have captured the imagination of solvers for many years. As far back as the Karpov vs Kasparov world title match in 1986, Ray noted that he was '... surprised to see that photocopied sheets of puzzle positions that I had produced were being used in special competitions laid on for spectators.' It could be argued that his book has been a long time coming, and it is definitely worth the wait.

Battle of Endgames takes positions from various sources including newspaper cuttings, books, and magazines, in some instances simplified and modified by Ray, along with several original compositions. The studies are quite practical in nature, and this is the sort of book that you could happily work through on a train or a bus without the need of a chessboard. Without question, doing so will inevitably improve the reader's endgame play, as well as giving many hours of entertainment.

Books must ultimately be judged on their substance, rather than their form, and I think this is an instance where the content is superior to the presentation. The puzzles themselves are compelling, and Ray sets the solutions out very lucidly. However, I think co-ordinates on the diagrams would have been helpful, and I'm not sure that it necessarily makes it easier for the reader that half the puzzles are for Black, with the black pieces at the bottom of the page. The 1066 theme does not really extend beyond the title, and it is possible that Ray could have done more (or perhaps less) with this.

However, these are minor quibbles. This is still a nicely presented book which any chess player will enjoy. In the age of the computer, Ray has demonstrated the enduring power of an endgame problem on the printed page. This is a great opportunity to enter the world of a true practitioner and coach, and to learn with him. I would recommend *Battle of Endgames* to anyone who wants to either consciously improve their endgame play or to simply have fun with a host of interesting endgame positions.

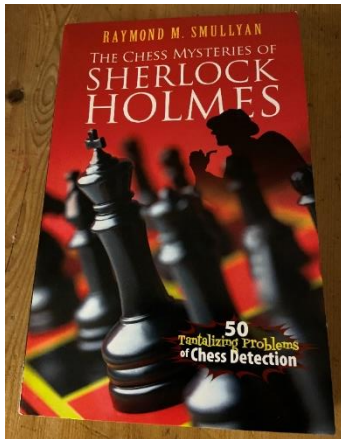
The Chess Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes

by Raymond M. Smullyan - (Alfred. A. Knopf, Inc)

'Holmes's expression grew grave. "Logic," he replied, "is a most delicate – a most fragile – thing. Powerful as it is when used correctly, the least deviation from strict reasoning can produce the most disastrous

consequences.”

Dr Watson



It should come as little surprise to learn that Sherlock Holmes had a keen interest in chess. Who could have guessed, though, that the conventional game was not entirely to his taste? Rather, he focused his attention on ‘retrograde analysis’ – problems concerning the history of the encounter.

In other words, ‘...you might exhibit a position in which one of the pieces is dropped ... and the problem is to figure out what piece it is... It is even possible ... to prove that White has mate in two moves from a certain position, while at the same time, it is *impossible* to show the mate! Unbelievable as this may sound, it is true.’ It is difficult to argue with Holmes’s view that such problems ‘live on the borderline between logic and chess’.

I had not previously heard of Raymond Smullyan’s book, but my interest was piqued by a discussion on the English Chess Forum, and I very much enjoyed reading this over the holiday period. Raymond Smullyan was a renowned mathematician who wrote more than thirty works, many of which focused on recreational mathematics – *The Chess Mysteries of the Arabian Knights* is his other chess offering. Smullyan was also a philosopher, musician, and historian, who lived to the age of ninety-seven and has undoubtedly left an impressive legacy behind. *The Chess Mysteries of Sherlock Holmes* is not a traditional problem book, but is very enjoyable, nonetheless.

Narrated by Dr Watson, Smullyan nicely captures the tone of Conan Doyle. Many problems are solved in gentlemen’s clubs or the grand libraries of country houses over port and cigars, and the writing style is excellent. The story culminates in a sea voyage to recover stolen treasure, which is nicely done and will most likely make the reader smile. In terms of the actual chess, consisting of fifty retrograde puzzles, this is the sort of book that it is easy

to dip in and out of, and it certainly had me scratching my head.

I was not alone on this front. Dr Watson, when faced with one particularly difficult puzzle, remarked: ‘Really, Holmes, this is the most remarkable problem you have shown me yet! Who invented this masterpiece? “Moriarty,” was the thunderously unexpected reply. “Good God, no!” I gasped. “Oh yes, Watson! And it is hardly surprising, you know. The problem has the sort of diabolical simplicity which was so much a part of Moriarty’s nature.”’

The retrograde problems span scenarios where the solver is invited to establish the direction of travel, the last move, the square a captured piece was on, and challenges where no piece has moved from a white square to a black square (or vice versa), which are known as monochromatic problems. In addition, questions as to whether a player can legally castle, and about ambiguously placed pawns and promotion are also explored.

How much the reader will get from a book like this really depends on your level of fascination with the more abstract possibilities inherent in our game. I must confess, as someone who struggles enough with normal chess, that there were various problems that I half-looked at and was happy enough to then jump to Holmes’s very eloquent answer. While some readers will undoubtedly care more about the puzzles than others, it seems likely that a thorough study of these challenges would most likely sharpen up any over-the-board player.

I did have a quibble with the Dover edition reprint of the original Alfred. A. Knopf, Inc publication that I purchased, namely that the diagrams are not of great quality. There are several positions where if a white piece is on a black square, it is not always easy to immediately ascertain that it is in fact a white chess piece. It is no huge issue if you take the time to look carefully or are working through the problems with an actual chessboard, but it could be more of a challenge for those analysing the problems straight from the page.

That said, this is a delightful and intriguing book, well outside the mainstream and all the better for its sheer quirkiness and originality. At one point Holmes suggests to Watson that they take ‘another stroll to the chess club?’ Watson replies, ‘Why, certainly’ ... ‘delighted with the possibility of another little adventure.’ There are many such little adventures to be had in the company of Holmes and Watson within the pages of this fascinating work.

It's a Puzzlement!



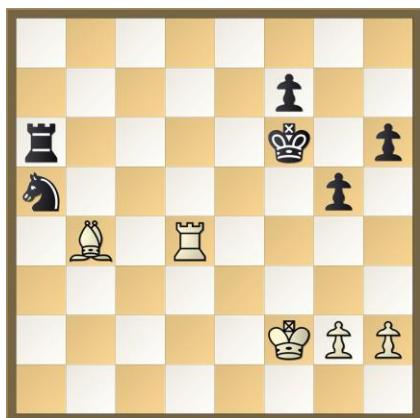
Welcome to our puzzles section! Here are this month's puzzles - all hand-picked by [ChessPuzzle.net](https://chesspuzzle.net)

We provide a link to the relevant ChessPuzzle.net page and a QR Code so you can try the puzzles interactively and get hints if needed or even the solutions!

The puzzles are arranged in order of difficulty (easiest first). We would be interested in your views about the level of difficulty and whether we have graded them about right. When you click on the links below you need to play a move to see the hint and/or solution.

Puzzle 1

GM Gawain Jones (2626) – GM G. Kjartansson (2456)
TCh-ISL Kvika 2022-23 Reykjavik ISL

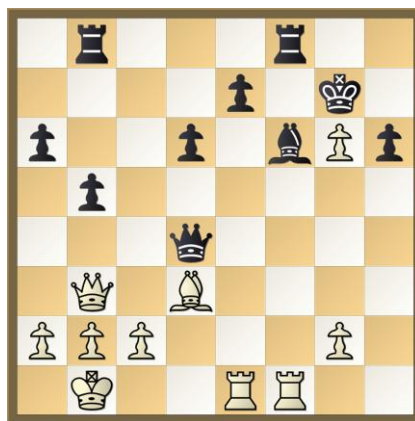


White to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 2

WIM Lan Yao (2271) – WGM Anastasya Paramzina (2227)
World Rapid Women 2022, Almaty, KAZ

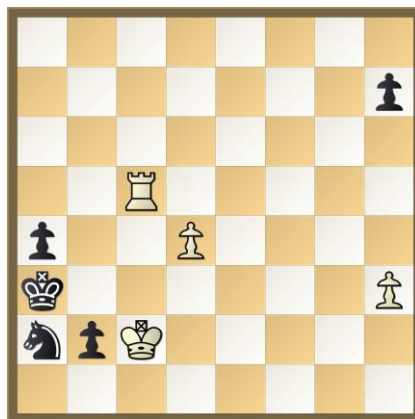


White to checkmate

[Click here for solution](#)

Puzzle 3

Dale Westcott (1610) – Kushal Jakhria (1726)
Hastings Masters 2022-23, Hastings ENG



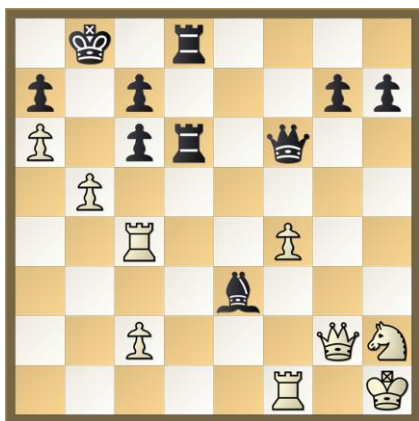
Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 4

Neil Coward (1697) – Laurence Butt (1740)

Hastings Masters 2022-23, Hastings, ENG



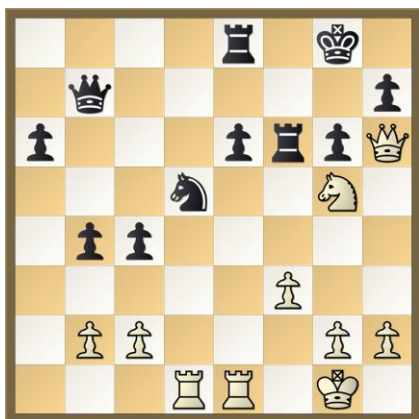
Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 5

GM Gawain Jones (2626) – GM Leandro Krysa (2524)

Titled Tue 25 October Early, Chess.com



White to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 6

GM Alexander Cherniaev (2374) – IM Brandon Clarke (2484)

Hastings Masters 2022-23, Hastings, ENG



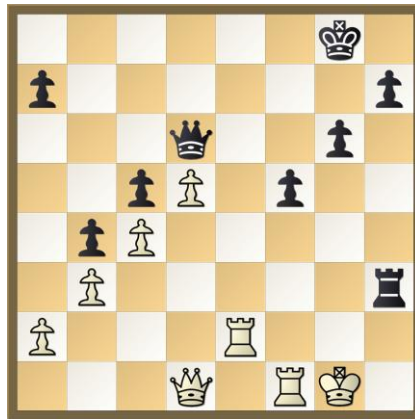
Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 7

Paul Madden (2082) – IM P. Littlewood (2347)

4NCL Online S6 Div1A 2022, Lichess.org



Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 8

Julien M Shepley (1848) – Oliver W Howell (1804)
Hastings Masters 2022-23, Hastings ENG

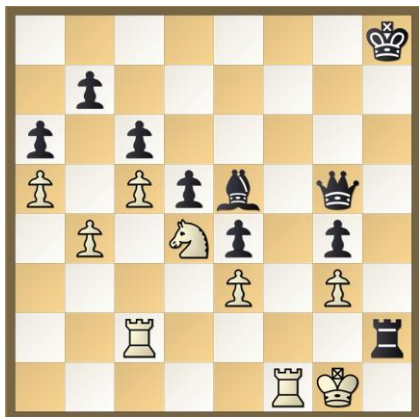


White to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 9

FM Stephen Dishman (2251) – IM Alexander Alexikov (2223)
Titled Tue 18 Oct Early, Chess.com

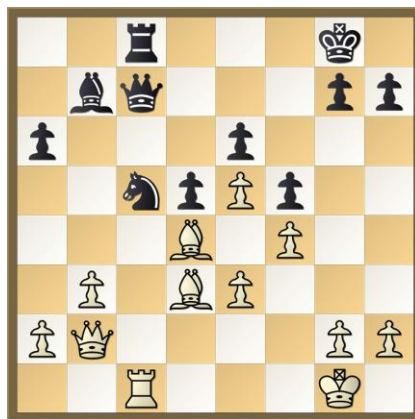


White to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 10

FM P. Byway (2013) – J. Menadue (1960)
4NCL Online S6 Div 1B 2022, Lichess.org

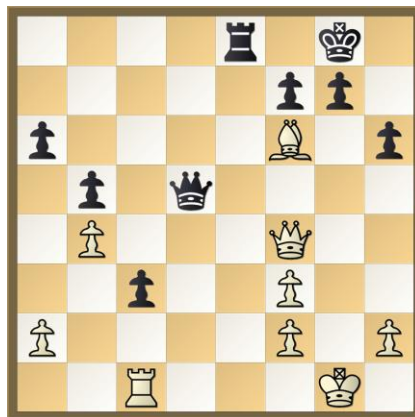


Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 11

WFM Ana Kuchava (2101) – Edmund C. Player (2203)
Titled Tue 3th Oct Early, Chess.com



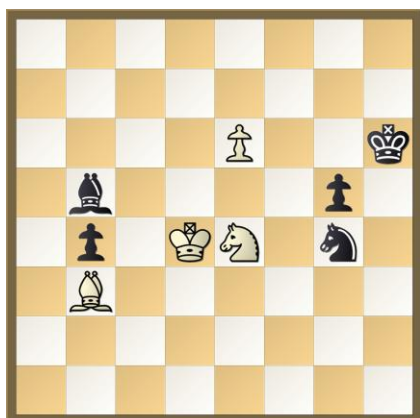
Black to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

Puzzle 12

GM Simon K. Williams (2464) – IM Khazar Babazada (2463)

Titled Tue 18th Oct Early, Chess.com



White to win

[Click here for the solution](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit [ChessMoves January Puzzles](#) by clicking the link or via the QR Code below



Interview with Tallulah Roberts

Questions by Mark Rivlin



Tallulah Roberts (@lularobs) has taken the chess world by storm since starting to play during the pandemic in 2020. Prolific on social media and Board 1 of the Jersey women's team at the 2022 Olympiad in Chennai, Lula is an influencer and ambassador for women and beginners in chess. In this interview she speaks candidly about misogyny in chess, how we all have a role to play in making chess a safe environment for all players, and how the 'cool' tag is slowly having an influence. Lula's social media links are here: <https://linktr.ee/lularobs>

When you took up chess in 2020, could you imagine that three years later you'd have 21k followers on Twitter, 7k on Instagram, a streaming channel on Twitch (which includes an excellent instructional video on the Smith-Morra Gambit), as well as captaining the inaugural Jersey women's team in the 2022 Olympiad in Chennai? And let's not forget IM Lawrence Cooper endorsing you as Breakthrough of the Year, 2022.

I had absolutely no idea! When I started playing chess, it was never with the design to make it a job or something I took even remotely seriously. It's funny how things work out sometimes, but I had graduated from my undergraduate degree in the summer of 2020 and was in the process of figuring out what I was going to do after university when suddenly I fell in love with both chess and streaming in such quick succession. I feel so grateful that people became interested in what I was doing, because that's what inspired me to keep going and trying to improve.

To be honest with you, I had never heard of the Chess Olympiad before around December 2021. I joined my local chess club and found that they were quite keen to have more women involved, so I put a lot of time and energy into helping with that and we got a team together. I managed to get the team sponsored by both Chess.com and Chessable, which was kind of unprecedented. In the end, I played on board 1 for the women's team.

IM Lawrence Cooper actually helped to commentate on some of my Olympiad games last summer. He has been very supportive of me since quite early on in my chess journey, and I see he's a great advocate for women in chess in the UK.

Was it the pandemic and Queen's Gambit combo that brought you into chess in 2020?

The short answer is: 'Yes, that is the reason I started playing.' The long answer is that I was in lockdown with my then-boyfriend (now best friend, and we play tournaments together); he had been very involved with our university chess club but had never been able to convince me to start playing.

After *The Queen's Gambit* came out, I binge-watched it twice before picking up a chess piece. It really did spark my interest, though, and I downloaded the Chess.com app. I was terrible at first, of course, but my boyfriend taught me everything from how to set up a board, how to castle, how en passant worked, even basic openings. He was incredibly patient, and we spent a week or two just doing chess stuff all day. I don't think I would have gotten into chess in any meaningful way without having somebody hold my hand through the beginning stages.

In Chennai, the Jersey women's team finished a creditable fourth in their category and achieved plus-10 places from the initial seeding. Dr Rachel Ruddy, Daisy Carpenter and you achieved individual conditional WCM titles. How did the team manage such impressive results? And how much of an influence was coach GM Alfonso Zapata?

Yes, sadly we missed out on a medal on tiebreak, but I think our team did very well. We had a few coaching sessions with GM Alonso Zapata prior to the Olympiad, as well as a lot of support elsewhere. Chessable provided us with a coach, Mr Dodgy, who gave us weekly lessons as well as a ton of Chessable courses so that we could study independently. Chess.com also set up a series of lessons with GM Irina Krush that I had live on stream (they're now uploaded in full on my YouTube channel) and the team also played over the board against one another and ran

our own prep sessions. Zapata and Dodgy also came to Chennai with us to help prepare in the mornings and analyse in the evenings.

When you started out on your chess journey, did you have any personal aims in mind?

I am an incredibly competitive person, but when it came to chess I realised very early on how much I had underestimated the complexity of the game. There were a lot of tears in my first weeks of playing, and a lot of 'I'm just going to quit'. I don't think I really saw beyond that, because all of a sudden a board game was making me question everything I thought I knew about my intelligence and my capacity for logic and strategy.

Is chess the new cool?

So actually, there's a video of me in my second year of university telling my then-boyfriend that chess isn't cool, it never has been, and it never will be. As someone who hates admitting they're wrong, it's funny to think about now, but I think chess is totally under-rated. It's still not mainstream, but I guess when I tell people who don't play chess that I play chess, they think 'That's kind of cool', rather than 'That's so uncool'.

When I was growing up chess was portrayed in the media and pop culture as something that was deeply uncool and nerdy (but nerdy things are cool now), and ONLY for boys. Chess has definitely had a 'glow-up' of how the general population perceives it, but I think there's still a way to go.

What are your chess goals for 2023?

I tweeted the other day that 2023 will be the year we don't make rating-based chess goals, because I did that both of my first two years of chess and was, of course, dissatisfied when I didn't reach them. I feel like I was really spoiled last year with my chess and chess progress. I played my first ever over the board tournament (Reykjavik Open), I got a FIDE rating, I played the Olympiad, and now I feel, 'What does that leave for this year?'

I definitely want to keep playing OTB. I'll be playing at the Festival International des Jeux in Cannes next month. It will actually be the only time I've played a Minor category (Under 1600). I've only played Opens before. They can be scary, but there's less pressure, so this is going to be weird for me. Other goals are to work more on my chess content this year, especially on YouTube. I spent a lot of time last year playing real-life chess, so content creation needs to get a bit more of my attention this year.

What is your preference: standardplay, rapidplay or blitz?

When I fell in love with chess, I fell in love with slow chess. I love classical chess, and the love-hate relationship we all have with it. It's such an intense, focused experience that I think is so unique. Everyone's attention spans are getting shorter these days – especially in my generation, with TikTok and microtrends and social media. There's something special about just sitting at a table playing a board game for five hours, even though it's gut-wrenching to lose.

Over the board or online?

Over the board. I only really play online when I'm streaming.

Who are your chess influencers?

When I was a beginner, I only watched chess on YouTube and it was only Agadmator and GothamChess. I think they're both great content creators when it comes to making chess accessible for beginners. Now I love seeing other women thriving in chess content creation. I think what WFM Anna Cramling and the Botez sisters are doing is great.

Take us through one of your favourite games

This game is against [Sigurdur Pall Gudnyjarson](#) from Round 2 of my first ever rated tournament, the Reykjavik Open (2022).

Roberts Tallulah v Gudnyjarson, Sigurdur Pall

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c5 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 d6 5.Nf3 Bg7 6.d3 O-O 7.O-O Nc6 8.Rb1 a6 9.a3 Nd7 10.Bd2 Rb8 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Qc1 Qc7 (I actually missed 15.Nd5 here, which wins a pawn.) It looks like I am winning the c6 knight, but after 15...Qd8 16.Qxc6 Bb7 17.Qxb5 e6 Black regains the piece.

15.Bh6 Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Nxb4 (My opponent thinks he is winning a pawn after Rxb4 Qxc3, but he has left his king undefended.) **17.Ng5** (Threatening mate).

17... Nf6 18.Rxb4 (18.Nce4 immediately is also possible, but this allows Black the extra resource of Nbd5.) **18...Qxc3 19.Rh4 e6** (There are no good moves for Black). **20. Ne4** (20.Nh7 is also winning; however, this felt simpler, as it is either the queen or checkmate). Black resigned here. This was my first ever win in rated over the board chess.

Here is a link to the game -

<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=2267035>

You are clearly a great ambassador for women's chess, and last year you posted on Twitter about harassment at the Reykjavik Open. 'Feels safe to talk more about this stuff now I'm home. Myself + other female players were consistently disrespected by a minority of men at the tournament. One even pinched me on the waist when I walked past him in the tournament hall (games were going on, incl my own)'. How can chess deal with misogyny?

Yes, misogyny in chess is undeniably a problem. As someone who has comparatively little experience in over the board tournaments, I was shocked to have been disrespected by men at a number of chess events in 2022. Regarding that Tweet, I did end up speaking with the organisers at Reykjavik who were very good and took things seriously.

Chess, though, is also in a weird formative stage of becoming an e-sport. E-sports and gaming are, like chess, male-dominated and have problems with misogyny and sexism. The Internet is an even trickier terrain for moderating this kind of behaviour, and I can see how dealing with sexism in an ever-changing landscape can feel overwhelming. It's also especially scary given the rise of extreme misogynists like Andrew Tate, who are influencing young boys for the worse.

I think one thing to be mindful of is that each of us is equally responsible for creating a safe environment for one another, both in chess and the wider world, in real life and online. It's hard not to be critical of FIDE when it feels like they could be doing so much more to safeguard female players and minorities, and they aren't setting the best example for national federations.

On the other hand, it's great to see so many female chess content creators thriving online, even though we seem to receive a disproportionate amount of gender-based hate. Personally, I was attacked online throughout 2022 by many male chess players, several of whom were titled and had been established in chess for decades longer than I had, which felt totally unfair. I think some people are afraid of what chess is becoming (accessible, diverse and cool), but in order to grow the game and encourage new generations of players chess has to change to some degree. There are always people who will want to gatekeep chess, but they are the past and not the future.

You have a FIDE rating of 1493; what are your over the board plans this year?

After France next month I have no concrete plans. I lost about 50 rating points at the Olympiad because I'm still on k40 and playing board 1 was pretty brutal. I then lost another 30 points at the Guernsey Chess Festival which was a tough tournament for me. I'm a bit nervous to get back to over the board because the Olympiad really knocked my confidence. I've spoken about this a bit online, but in a lot of ways I feel that playing such a tough tournament so early on into my chess career damaged my relationship with the game. I don't want to sound ungrateful, and I know I'm so lucky to have had the opportunity to play the Olympiad, but I wasn't psychologically prepared for the pressure of playing top board for my country. There were a lot of times when it felt like I was playing a completely different tournament to my team-mates, and I really felt my impostor syndrome creep back in and take hold as the event went on.

I want to heal my relationship with over the board chess this year, so I'm going to be playing some more accessible tournaments.

I will almost certainly return to Guernsey in October to play the Guernsey Chess Festival again. I think this time around, I'll be more ready. It's probably the friendliest tournament I've played, and it's so close to me that it's silly not to go. On the other hand, the average rating last year was something like 1850, and I got really unlucky with my pairings, so I'm a bit scared to return! But after a year, I want to go back and do better than last time.

Who are your favourite chess commentators?

It depends on the type of chess. I think GM Irina Krush is great – she did some commentary for women's chess on Chess.com in 2022. I'd love to see more female chess commentators in 2023, and it'll be interesting to see what happens to commentary now that Chess.com has acquired Play Magnus Group. Hopefully we'll see new combinations of commentators!

Tweet of the Month



GingerGM
@GGMchess · Follow



We're celebrating the Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress with puzzles from historic Hastings tournaments! [@hastingschess](#) [@Ashwoja](#)

Let's begin with a famous game, with White to play. Who were the players? What was the final move from White, and how did black resign? 🧐



1:47 PM · Jan 4, 2023



21



Reply



Copy link

[Read 4 replies](#)

NEWS and VIEWS

English Seniors Chess – a Retrospective for 2022



2022 has been an outstanding year for English seniors chess. WIM Natasha Regan has put together a retrospective look at English seniors chess during the course of the year, including a selection of our top players talking about seniors chess, and analysing games played by English seniors in 2022. The broadcast is available for viewing on the ECF's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@EnglishChessFederation/videos> where you can also view a selection of this year's chess broadcasts.

European Cities and Towns Chess Championship

European Chess Union announces the 1st European Cities & Towns Chess Championship which will now take place on **Sunday 29th January 2023**, in various city venues using a hybrid format. The event consists of four categories: Open; Women; Seniors; Youth (U12). The first edition of the new European Competition is supported by the FIDE Development fund. Each city or town has the right to nominate one team of four players in each of four categories ---

Open Tournament (any age); Women's Tournament (female participants); Seniors Tournament (players over 50 years of age, born in 1972 or earlier); Youth Tournament (players up to 12, born in 2010 or later).

For more information and to register – <https://www.europechess.org/european-cities-towns-chess-championship-2022/>

World Rapid and Blitz Championship – from Alex Holowczak

I was fortunate enough to be invited as a pairings arbiter to the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in Almaty, Kazakhstan between 26th and 30th December. It is one of my favourite tournaments to attend, because the team of arbiters is quite large and you see a number of friends and colleagues that you rarely get a chance to meet up with.

The work started early in December. When you are working on your own tournaments, you know what to expect from the organisers and the venues, but with tournaments where the venue changes every year and the staff change every year far more preparatory work is needed. Early December was filled with Zoom meetings with my colleague to check the tie-breaks were calculated correctly, putting entry lists online, and other technical matters. We had a meeting with the Chief Arbiter to agree on processes, and off the back of that I sent a stationery order through to the organisers together with the specifications for our office.

After all that, I nearly wasn't able to attend it all! Turkish Airlines managed to take the money for some flights but not give me any tickets on an aeroplane, which was only resolved a few days before the tournament, by which time I already had flights with Air Astana. I was further hindered by the rail strikes, meaning an overnight stay in London was required. I then arrived at the Picadilly Line to Heathrow, just in time for TfL to close it! Despite the best efforts of public transport to stop me, I made it to Heathrow in the end, where I was met by Ameet Ghasi who was playing in the Open section, and Milan Dinic who was attending as Press Officer. The 11-hour flight, with a pitstop in Aktau, was extremely tiring, and we were lucky to have a day before the start of the tournament to recover.

The part when you actually get to the tournament is probably the most boring part to report on! Pre-tournament the major sigh of relief is when you get the printers to install. You then get instructions from the organisers as to who arrived and who didn't, and you take notes at the opening ceremony to make sure you know if the number 1 seed is white or black in round 1 for each tournament. Once the tournament is underway, to some degree the hard part is over, and you are then in your normal mode of entering results and doing pairings - even to the point where you have to stick up acetate wallets with Blu Tack to slide the pairings into, which usually requires some explanation to the organisers as the magic of Blu Tack hasn't yet made it to parts of Eastern Europe and Asia, and as such is the one stationery item that I always take with me. The pairings job really is sitting in an office waiting to be fed results by arbiters, and so you are fortunate to be shielded from most of the major public disputes – you can't get much camera footage out of typing results into a software programme – but you can also take a detached look at things that are happening and provide useful input. For example, the pairings team

found some mistakes in the broadcast PGN so we were able to talk to that team so they could fix them.

Play each day started at 3 pm, which meant there was time to go into the city and look around on some of the mornings. I don't normally do that on these trips because it is too tiring, but there was a good reason to this time. The air in Almaty is very polluted, and the best way to get clean air is to go up into the mountains. On the second morning, I went to the Kok Tobe resort with some colleagues, which necessitated a journey on Almaty's one underground line. After passing through an airport-style security check, you have to pay for a token. You then put the token in to go through the ticket barrier. Whether you are going one stop or the length of the line, the token is the same. There were no printed tickets. The other slightly confusing element is that the stations are named after people or things, rather than the places where they are. We went to Abai station, named Abai Qunanbaiuly, a poet and philosopher credited with being extremely influential in Kazakh culture. We then went up to Kok Tobe in a minibus. Kok Tobe is only open in a limited way during the winter, but we were able to see the city of Almaty and the mountains nearby. There was a small wildlife reserve, although the most unexpected sight was a monument to The Beatles – not what you expect to see at the top of a small mountain in Kazakhstan!



On the first day of the blitz, there was an excursion to Shymbulak, a ski resort. This was a slightly nervous experience, as the night before the trip, a little further into the mountains over the border in Kyrgyzstan, there had apparently been an earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richter Scale. This made it 2/2 in my lifetime for sleeping through earthquakes, having slept through the 2002 Dudley earthquake, which while smaller was centred less than two miles from where I lived...

If you watched the tournament at home, Shymbulak was where Magnus Carlsen had gone on the fateful day when he nearly missed the first round of the Blitz – he had gone skiing but not with the official tour, so he wasn't on the organiser-provided transport. Shymbulak was much higher than Kok Tobe, and required the use of three cable cars to reach the top. Temperatures were below -10 C at the second stop, which was completely in shade. Along the way there was another unexpected sight – one of the largest betting companies operating in Kazakhstan apparently has a commercial relationship with Aston Villa?!



Once at the top of the mountain, there were extensive views of the surrounding mountains and the city. There was also a cabin where you could sit and eat lunch. Somehow the wifi in the middle of nowhere at the top of a mountain in Kazakhstan was far better than the wifi in a typical coffee shop in a British city!





The final tasks at the tournament included generating prize lists in time for the prize giving, but also money lists for the FIDE Office so that they can send out the prize money post-tournament. When the total prize fund is \$1 million, there is rather more pressure to get this correct than there is at a typical weekend congress! We also have to preserve the original copies of results, which meant we stored them in lever arch files and make arrangements for them to be sent to the FIDE Office in Lausanne. The final task was to make sure the tournament was correctly submitted for rating, since the tournament ended only a few hours before the January rating list was due to be published.

Apparently this was the second most-watched FIDE tournament of the year after the Candidates tournament, so on the assumption that many of you were watching it, I hope you enjoyed watching as much as I did working at it! I hope I get the chance to do it again one day.

Jonah Willow at Sitges

Jonah Willow finished 4th= in IX CHESSABLE SUNWAY SITGES CHESS FESTIVAL 2022 - Group A after finishing with 2.5/3 against GMs rated 2597, 2626 and 2607 --- <https://chess-results.com/tnr676762.aspx?lan=1&art=9&fed=ENG&turdet=YES&flag=30&snr=72>

ECF Online

Nigel Towers reports on this month's ECF online club tournaments and internationals

ECF Online Clubs

The ECF Members clubs are open to all ECF members and supporters on Chess.com or Lichess and provide regular ECF online rated tournaments most days of the week where you can get an ECF online rating, together with online internationals.

Chess.com – <https://www.chess.com/club/english-chess-federation-members>

Lichess – <https://lichess.org/team/english-chess-players>

We also have an ECF Open club on Chess.com with regular ECF tournaments and a chance to play for the ECF England team in the Live Chess World and European Leagues.

Chess.com - <https://www.chess.com/club/english-chess-federation>

Chess.com Internationals



The England teams for the Live Chess World, European and Mediterranean Leagues are drawn from players in the ECF Open club. Club members can register for events from an hour before each fixture and are allocated to boards depending on their chess.com rating.

LCWL Season 10 --- The Live Chess World League Season 10 started in September alongside LCEL Season 6, with the ECF entering both events from the ECF Open team and completed in December just before Christmas.

We played seven rounds in the all play all stage one with five wins, a draw against Nicaragua and a single loss against Bolivia. We then played three more matches in the Championship pool to finish second overall to Bolivia with the stage two cross-table and cumulative points as shown below. All matches were played over two legs (rapid and blitz) with two games per board with colours reversed.

LWCL Season 10 Second Stage						
Championship Pool						
		1	2	3	4	
		BOL	ENG	BEL	PRI	Points
1	Bolivia		W	W	L	20
2	ECF	L		L	W	15
3	Belgium	L	W		W	14
4	Puerto Rico	L	L	L		9
		5	6	7	8	
Relegation Pool						
		SLV	BGR	COL	NIC	Points
5	El Salvador		L/ W	W	W/ L	13½
6	Bulgaria	W/ L		L/ W	L/ W	11
7	Colombia	L	W/ L		L/ W	9½

LCEL Season 7 --- We played six rounds in Division Two of the Live Chess European League to finish top of our division with the cross-table as shown below. For this league matches were played over three legs (bullet, blitz and rapid) each match with two games against the opposing board.

LCEL Season 6								
Division 2		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		ECF	DK	BEL	HN	TUR	SV	CT
1	ECF		W	W	L	W	W	W
2	Denmark	L		W	W	D	D	W
3	Belgium	L	L		W	L	W	W
4	Hungary	W	L	L		W	L	W
5	Türkiye	L	D	W	L		L	L
6	Slovenia	L	D	L	L	L		W
7	Catalonia	L	L	L	L	L	L	

LCML Season 3 --- We also played in the Live Chess Mediterranean League following an invitation from the organisers, with wins against Turkey and Slovenia during December and January.

Friendlies



ECF v Team France

Lastly, we played a friendly 'Jour de L'An' match against Team France on New Year's Day, winning 2-1 across three legs as follows:

- Bullet - 8½-15½ loss
- Blitz - 19-9 win
- Rapid - 25½ - 10½ win

You can find the match cards and games here --- <https://www.chess.com/clubs/matches/live/english-chess-federation>

Well played all and congratulation to ECF Open club players on a fine win to start the New Year.

Lichess Internationals/ Team Battles

Lichess team battles continue to be very popular with English Chess Players team members. These provide an opportunity to take part in some of the biggest Lichess events, with team members paired in Arena format against players from opposing teams. The weekly schedule includes the Bundesliga on Sundays and Thursdays where we move between Ligas three and five, the Liga Ibera on Sundays, and the Champions League on Tuesdays.

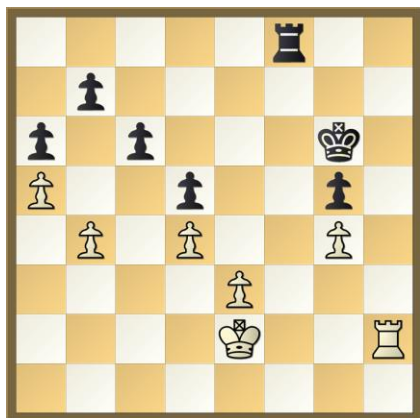


This month's Bundesliga saw the English Chess Players team moving between Ligas 3 and 4. We managed to win promotion to Liga 3 on Sunday 8th January, with GM Keith Arkell top scorer on 55 points followed closely by Tryon Gavriel (Kingcrusher Youtube) as second top scorer on 44 points.

Here is one of Keith's games against the renowned chess content creator and Chessable author IM Christof Sielecki (ChessExplained). Keith plays his usual Queens Gambit line heading for a Carlsbad structure which this time leads to a drawn rook ending.

Atomrod (2445) - ChessExplained (2498) [D02]
Lichess Liga 4A Team Battle lichess.org, 08.01.2023
<https://lichess.org/HsUPOFQ8/white>

1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 Be6 7.e3 Nbd7 8.Bd3 c6 9.Qc2 Bd6 10.0-0 h6 11.Bh4 Qc7 12.Bg3 0-0 13.Bf5 Bxf5 14.Qxf5 Bxg3 15.hxg3 Rfe8 16.Rac1 Qd6 17.Qf4 Qe7 18.a3 Nb6 19.Ne5 Nfd7 20.Nxd7 Qxd7 21.b3 Qe7 22.a4 Rac8 23.a5 Nd7 24.Na4 Nf6 25.Nc5 Ne4 26.Nxe4 Qxe4 27.Qxe4 Rxe4 28.b4 Re6 29.Rc5 Rd8 30.Rfc1 Rdd6 31.R5c2 h5 32.Kf1 g5 33.Ke2 Kg7 34.Rh1 Kg6 35.Kd3 f5 36.Rh2 Re4 37.Rc1 h4 38.gxh4 Rxh4 39.Rch1 Rxh2 40.Rxh2 Rd8 41.f3 Re8 42.g4 fxg4 43.fxg4 Kg7 44.Rh5 Kg6 45.Ke2 Rf8 46.Rh1 Re8 47.Kf3 Rf8+ 48.Kg3 Re8 49.Kf2 Rf8+ 50.Ke2 Re8 51.Rh2 Rf8



½-½

ECF Online Grand Prix Series 2023



The Online Grand Prix series is up and running for 2023, with the full series of 10 blitz and 10 rapid events scheduled for the first and third Sundays of the month from January to October 2023, and the January blitz and rapid events completed. GM Keith Arkell won the first online blitz event with an unbeaten run of 16 games, with 14 wins, two draws, and 48 Arena points in total. QueenCrusher won the six round rapid Swiss with a total of 5 points out of 6. You can find further details and the 2023 entry form at the link here together with the leader boards following the first two events --- <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-online-grand-prix-2023/>

Coming Soon



We are planning an Endgame Challenge with GM Keith Arkell (above left) and IM Lorin D'Costa during the second week of February. This will follow the established schedule of a Zoom group coaching session with thematic endgame tournaments and an evening simul.

Further details will be published on the ECF website shortly.

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



I noticed on Facebook a table showing the rankings of the U7s playing in England at the moment, and at the top of the table was Liam Jesunas (pictured below).

This was a name I was unfamiliar with, so I contacted him and discovered that he lives in the USA but has been taking online chess lessons at Colchester Junior Chess Club, which has given him an opportunity to improve his game and also to play in online events for them.



He has really enjoyed having lessons with Michael Catabay and was grateful for the opportunity to compete in the 4NCL and the Worldwide Junior Chess U12 League.

His father, Bill, has sent me a couple of Liam's games and I was impressed with the tactical acumen he shows for one so young.

Consider the following -

Liam Jesunas – Noah Migraia

1.d4 d5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Bf4 a6 4.e3 Nc6 5.Nf3 e6 6.Bd3 h6 7.Qd2 Bb4 8.O-O-O 0-0 9.g4!



Black has castled into White's bayonet attack and now needs to be very careful. The safest option is 9...Ne4 which leaves everything to play for with chances about equal.

9....Nxe4?! 10.Rhg1



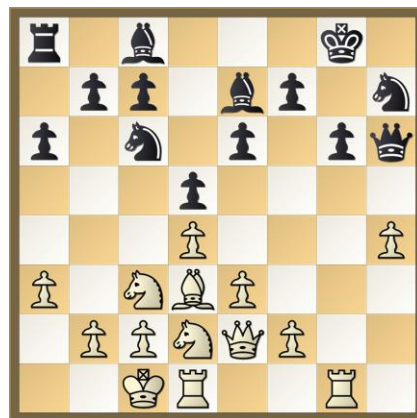
...Nf6?

A fatal mistake... the only chance for Black is a counter in the centre with 10...e5! when the game could continue 11.dxe5 f6 12.exf6 Qxf6 13.h3 Bxc3 14.bxc3 Nge5, which is slightly better for White.

11.Bxh6 g6

If 11...Ne8 then White can continue with the sacrifice 12.Bxg7! Nxe7 13.e4, with a vicious attack. The game could continue 13...f5 14.Qh6 Qf6 15.Rg6 Qf7 16.Ng5 winning.

12.Bxf8 Qxf8 13.h4 Qh6 14.a3 Be7 15.Qe2 Nh7 16.Nd2



Liam does not worry about sacrificing material to further expose the black king.

16...Qxf8 17.Rh1 Qf6 18.Rdg1 Kg7?



The final error... Liam now finishes off efficiently.

19.Qh5! Nf8 20.Qh8 mate



Liam recently competed in the World Open U13 Division in Philadelphia and did remarkably well for his age - at one stage battling for 1st place.

Clearly, at just seven years old he is a tremendous prospect for the future, and I wish him well.

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. I cannot promise that they will appear, but I will give them every consideration.

--- Paul Littlewood

My Year in Chess by Zoe Veselow

2022 has been a busy and absolutely exciting year for me and my chess journey, with many national and international chess events.

Like many children of my age (I am eight), I started learning and playing chess in COVID times just over two years ago with a computer and Zoom, but 2022 was an eye-opener with so many new and fresh over the board chess experiences.

Highlights of my chess life in 2022: Rhodes - the European Schools Championship (I won Gold in the U9 Girls with 8½/9); Batumi - World Cadets (I came 7th in the U8 Girls with 7½/11); and finally –the European Youth Championship in Antalya in November (I won Silver in the U8 Girls with 7/9).



Out of all three International events, the most recent European Youth Championship in Turkey was the most special for me. Why? Because it was at the European Youth Championship a year ago (October 2021) in Basingstoke that at the age of seven I debuted in

International chess playing for England for the very first time! In the same event a year ago I was fighting for Silver in my final 9th round, but lost to a strong girl from Russia and finished 5th instead. I also was a year younger than the top ten achievers.

I remember how heartbroken I was to lose in the final round when I came so close, but at the same time it was a great inspiration to come back with my best efforts in 2022 and bring a medal home for England.



Today I am very happy to be writing this story, having come back with Silver for England from the European Youth Chess Championship in Antalya where amongst other victories I also won my final ninth Round.

The biggest lesson I have learned was to never give up and in 2023 I look forward to future chess competitions.

Below I share my game in round 8, where I played against the U8 Girls Champion of France, Yi Xuan Wang:

<https://chess24.com/en/watch/live-tournaments/european-youth-championship-2022-g8/8/1/3>

(1) Wang, Yi Xuan (1138) - Veselow, Zoe (1435) [B22]
G8 European Youth Championship chess24.com (8.3), 13.11.2022

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.c3 Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.Bc4 Qc7



This is an inaccuracy. I've recently been playing the Sicilian Kan variation where Qc7 is usual and played this move a little automatically. Since White has already played e5, my plan should have been to break with 5...d6.

6.Bxd5 exd5 7.d4



7...c4 This move was dictated by my unwillingness to get doubled and isolated pawns on the d-file – but it closes the position and weakens the pressure on the b2 to e5 pawn chain. Better was 7...d6.

8.0-0 Be7 9.Re1 0-0 10.Qc2 d6 11.Bg5 h6



This is an unnecessary loss of tempo. Black should have caught up in development.

12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Nbd2 Be6 14.Re3 dxe5 15.Nxe5 Nd7 16.Ndf3



16...Rfe8 16...Nf6 This move would have shown why Ndf3 was not a very accurate move. By avoiding the

exchange of knights, Black could show that one knight was enough for controlling the e5 square. But now both knights are fighting for the same spot: 16...Rae8 17.Nxd7 Qxd7 18.Ne5 Qc8 19.Rae1 f6.

17.Rae1 Nf6 18.Nd2 Qc7 19.Qd1 b5 20.Rg3



White is regrouping pieces, trying to send more pieces to the kingside. But Black has no weaknesses there, so the counterattack on the queenside can be continued without worries.

20...a5 The counterattack would be quicker with a direct breakthrough: 20...b4 21.cxb4 Qb6.

21.Qf3 White continues to regroup pieces closer to the king but as above, this plan should not work.

21...Kh8 22.h3 b4 23.Qf4 If the black king had gone to h7 on the 21st move, now it would be possible not to waste the tempo (due to the discovered attack threat with Ng6+). Qf4 could then have been met with the Nh5 fork.

23...Qb7 24.Qf3 The queen is back to its awkward square. 24.Rge3.

24...a4 Both a strategic and tactical inaccuracy. Strategic - because there was no need to push the a-pawn. Black had to open up the b-file and try to infiltrate White's queenside. Tactical - because it blunders the c4 pawn (something both sides continue to overlook for the next couple of moves). Although Black would have remained with an advantage, it would have been considerably reduced. 24...bxc3 25.Qxc3 a4 26. Rf3 Rab8 27.Rb1 Rec8.

25.Rb1



25...b3? A big strategic mistake, shutting down everything. Of course, the pressure along the b-file had to be continued by playing. 25...Reb8 26.Qe3 bxc3 27.bxc3 Qc8.

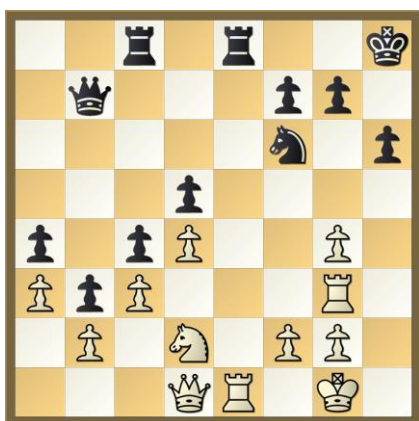
26.a3 Rac8 26...Re7 would be a better defence against Nxc4.

27.Re1 Rf8 Protects the f7 pawn and prepares Bf5.

28.Qe2 Bf5 29.Ng4 This is a strategic mistake with White exchanging probably the most active, strongest piece for... nothing.

29...Bxg4 The right choice! Keeping the bishop and hoping that in the endgame the bishop is often stronger than the knight would be a mistake: 29...Nxg4 30.hxg4 Re8 31.Rxe8+ Qxe8 32.xe8+ Rxe8 33.Re3.

30.hxg4 Rfe8 31.Qd1



31...Qd7

32.g5?! White missed a good chance to (almost) equalize with 32.Re5.

32...Rxe1+ 33.Qxe1 Re8 34.Qd1 Nh7? This move allows White to open the g-file, create weaknesses, and bring the queen into the attack, while 34...hxg5 would be absolutely safe. Black has no big weaknesses and Nf6, the devoted guard which stops all attempts at attack, would stay on its best square. 35.Rxg5 Qd6 to stop Re5 and target the f4 square.

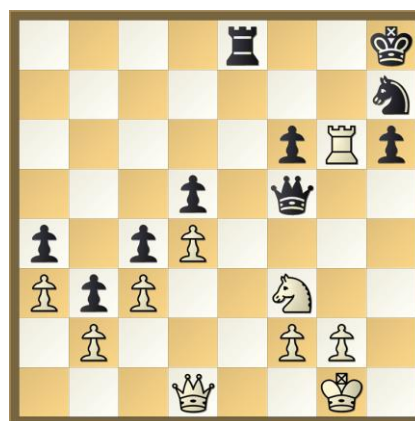
35.gxh6 gxh6 36.Nf3? I don't know what made White reject 36.Qh5.

36...f6 Attempting to stop Ne5. The knight on e5 was not as scary as the now weakened g6 square. Instead, Black could play 36...Qf5.

37.Rg6

White had to exploit Black's mistake by playing 37.Nh4.

37...Qf5



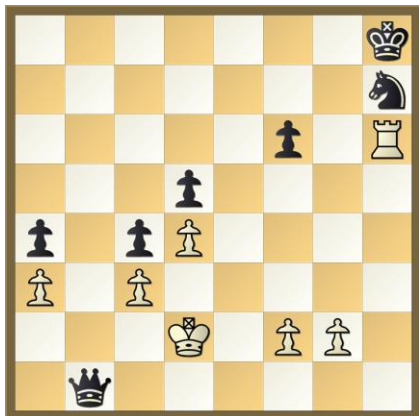
A bit late, but still a good practical chance. The best move was probably 37...Qe6.

38.Rxh6?? There it is! White falls into Black's plan. The best move was 38.Nh4 Qe4 39. Qh5 Qe1+ 40.Kh2 Qxf2 41.Rg3, freeing up the g6 square for the knight or queen.

38...Qc2! After this move suddenly the position becomes hopeless for White.

39.Qd2 Qxd2 After the exchange of queens Black's winning plan is even easier.

40.Nxd2 Re2 41.Nf3 Rxb2 42.Kf1 Rc2 43.Ke1 b2 44.Nd2 Rxd2 45.Kxd2 b1Q



And Black won.

0-1

Junior Development Pathway

The ECF has recently set up the Junior Development Pathway. This aims at providing a structured approach for the development of juniors from school clubs at one end to the Accelerator Programme at the other. In between these, there are three levels of recognised junior organisation: Junior Clubs, Centres of Excellence and Academies. In broad terms the first should correspond to local organisations, the second to regional ones and the third to national-level organisations.

Detailed information about the Junior Development Pathway can be found here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Juniors/development-pathway/>

The first applications were received in September 2022. All applications received were evaluated in December 2022, with the result that eight applications were approved for Junior Club status and one for Academy status.

The successful applicants are shown here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Juniors/development-pathway-2/>

More applications are welcome in 2023; the intention is to consider applications roughly four times a year.

--- Joseph Conlon

World Schools Championship and European Schools Championship

Parents are invited to register their children for the World Schools Championship and European Schools Championship. The links to more information and to register are here ---

- <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/world-schools-chess-championship/>

- <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/european-schools-chess-championship/>

National Schools Chess Championships 2022/23

A total of 250 teams from 147 schools entered this year's national school chess championship – the largest entry this millennium! The growth has come from state schools, which now make up the majority of entries. The strongest first teams qualified for the regional stage (in the spring term) by virtue of playing at last year's finals or by having an average ECF rating of 1600. The other teams played at regional events or in small local leagues. At the end of the autumn term there were also some online repêchage events. Details of these events can be found on the National School Chess Championships website at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/under-19-championships-2022-23/>

Just over half the teams which entered (133 teams from 96 schools) have qualified for the regional stage this term. With such a large number there is an increase in the number of regions to 21. Each region is played as a knockout tournament of normally three rounds. Details of these events can be found on the National School Chess Championship website, as noted above. The team winning the regional final will automatically qualify for the National final to be played at the University Park Campus, University of Nottingham on Thursday 29th, and Friday 30th June 2023. Further places will be offered to other teams at various repêchage events to be held early in the summer term. This means that this year's National School Chess Championship final will be the largest ever.

ECF National Girls School Team Championship Finals

This event will be taking place over the weekend of 15th/16th April at St Catherine's School in Bramley. The following teams have qualified ---

U11

Bancroft School A Woodford Green
City Junior School A.
Putney High
Haberdashers A
North London Collegiate
Sutton High
Latchmere School, Kingston Upon Thames
Nottingham High School

U19

North London Collegiate A
St Paul's Girls School
NLC B
Beaumont School

Denmark Rd
James Allen's Girls School
SPGS B
Nottingham High School

ECF Under 19 National Schools Chess Championship

The final entry for this year's competition was a very healthy 250 teams from 147 schools. The number of state schools entering was greater than the number of independent schools, and the largest increase was in the number of schools which are not academically selective. This year the event therefore has 21 regions and the full pairings can be seen at -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/u19-regional-2022-23/>

Secondary Schools Chess News

Below are details of upcoming inter-school chess events from Neill Cooper.

Team Chess Challenge

In Team Chess Challenge schools enter teams of 4 players in local regional afternoon events. So far 8 Regional finals are arranged as listed here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/team-chess-challenge-22-23/>. Top-scoring teams qualify for the national final.

Junior Team Chess Challenge

This is similar to Team Chess Challenge, but players must be in year 8 and below. So far 10 Regional finals are arranged. More details can be found here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/junior-team-chess-challenge-22-23/>

Team Problem-Solving Chess Challenge

23 schools submitted their solutions to the first-round problems last term, but any school can submit second-round solutions. The problems can be found here - <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/team-problem-solving-22-23/>

Ivan Gromov Online Schools Chess League

This is a fortnightly inter-school league played online on Thursday evenings. 33 teams from 23 schools have entered this year. Match results can be found here - <https://ecfms.org.uk/lms/node/124601/efixtures>

National Online School Chess League

This is a fortnightly 'in school' online league played on Mondays from 4.15 to 5.15pm, for teams of 6 players. The league now has a dedicated Lichess club at - <https://lichess.org/team/noscl>

Inter-school Lichess Battles

There are online Lichess Battles which take place on Fridays from 6 to 7pm on Lichess club Secondary School Chess - <https://lichess.org/team/secondary-school-chess>
These events will continue fortnightly this term with the first event on 13th January at - <https://lichess.org/tournament/Y1ig6VT1>

Finally, two events that are no longer taking entries this academic year:

National School Chess Championships

147 schools entered a total 250 teams of six players in this year's competition. After autumn's qualifying events 96 schools have one or more teams playing this term. Details of the regions will be circulated very soon to the qualifying schools.

National School Girls Chess Championships

The Semi-finals for this competition for teams of 3 players were held in the Autumn term and are described at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/girls-championships-2022/>

A record 42 teams from 21 schools took part.

Please email me at manager.secondary@englishchess.org.uk for more information about any of these events

IMPROVERS

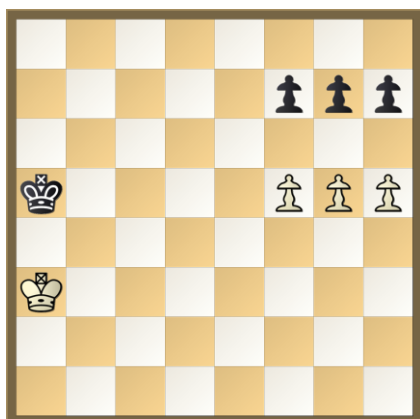
Paul Littlewood on Tactics

'The pawn is the soul of chess.'

This is the best-known quotation from one of the pioneers of chess theory – André Philidor. In fact, he probably laid too much emphasis on the pawn's role, but it still has a very important part to play.

In the opening it lays the foundation for control of the centre, in the middlegame it is often the spearhead for any attack, and in the ending its possible promotion often dominates the play.

Consider the following position as an example of a pawn's breakthrough in an ending -



White wins by 1.g6 with two variations:

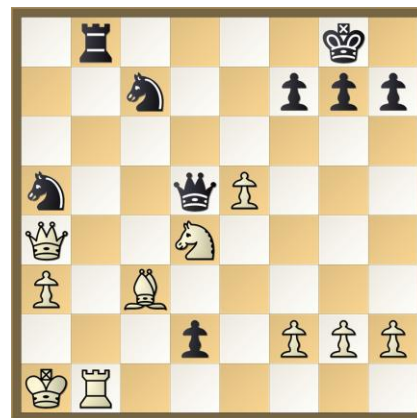
(a) 1...hxc6 2.f6 gxf6 3.h6

(b) 1...fxg6 2.h6 gxh6 3.f6

... and in either case the remaining white pawn queens.

This is in fact one of the first endgame positions my father showed me. It is a vivid illustration of the possibilities for breakthrough.

However, it is not always in the ending that pawn promotion has a part to play. Consider the following position from one of my own games.



M.Chandler vs P.E.Littlewood

British Championship 1981

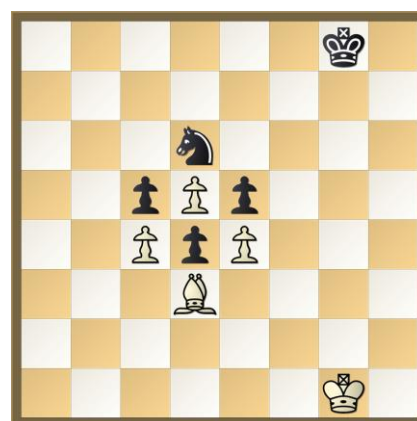
Black wins by 1...Rxb1+ 2.Kxb1 Qc4! 3.Qc2 (if 3.Qxc4 d1=Q+ wins) 3...Qf1+ and White resigned because if 4.Ka2 d1=Q and wins.

In defending against pawn promotion ideas, the important point to bear in mind is not to allow a passed pawn unless you are sure you can cope with it.

Sometimes, though, you have no choice and in such cases it is important to make sure the pawn is firmly blockaded.

The ideal piece for this is the knight, as then the pawn does not interfere with the knight's square control.

Consider the following position -

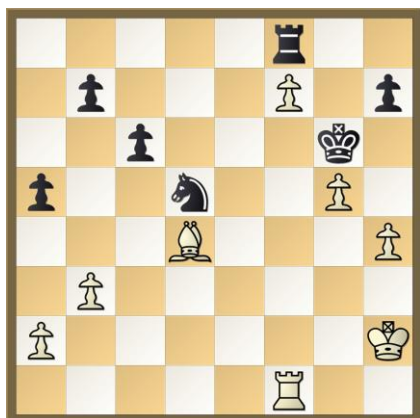


The black knight still has full access to all the possible eight squares it can move to, whereas the white bishop is severely hampered.

These are the bare bones of a position and of course there are other factors to take into account. The basic principles are very important, though.

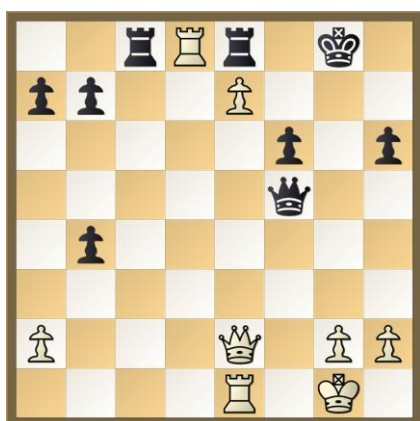
Anyway, here are two examples to solve yourself, with the answers at the end of the article.

P. E. Littlewood vs Burnett
Islington 1982



How did White win a rook?

Florian – Kosko
Czechoslovakia 1950



How did White forcibly remove the blockade of his passed pawn?

Answers

P.E.Littlewood – Burnett

White wins by 1.h5+ Kxh5 2.Bc5.

Florian – Kosko

White wins by 1.Qc4+! Rxc4 (if 1...Kg7 2.Qxc8 Qxc8 3.Rxc8 Rxc8 4.e8=Q) 2.Rxe8+ Kg7 3.Rg8+ Kxg8 4.e8=Q+ Kg7 5.Re7 mate.

--- Paul Littlewood Email: plittl@hotmail.com

4NCL positions- Attacking to Win by Danny Gormally



The recent 4NCL season continued at Daventry and I want to show you some positions to test your abilities. Some people complained, rightly or wrongly, about the

difficulty of getting to and from the venue. To give you an idea, I travelled from the market town of Alnwick in Northumberland to Daventry. To get there I must get on a bus or get a lift to Alnmouth, the nearest station. Then you eventually get to Long Buckby, which is the nearest station, and from there order a taxicab which costs around £16. Given the train fare was £145, this is no cheap trip. I do accept though that the argument in favour of using the hotel in Daventry is that it is probably cheaper than using one in a town centre. There isn't a lot around there, it has to be said, and the one area of beauty, the local lake, is only available to those with a fishing licence. But that doesn't stop it throwing up some interesting chess!

On Friday night I had the usual discussion with Keith Arkell and others about whether or not there is deflation in the rating system and how this is affecting players like us and those higher up and lower in the rating list. In my view it is now harder than it ever was to reach 2500, which makes it problematic for younger players who have aspirations to improve to reach the grandmaster title. If you mention the name Harry Grieve, then I would say he is more likely than not to get to grandmaster. There are very few players who achieved the British Championship title in modern times who did not at some point get the GM title. (Although on the flip side there are plenty of GMs like me who haven't got the British title, which is arguably harder to gain.) Twenty years ago, I would have said he was a certainty, but now it is problematic because there are so many good young players around who are playing off say 1800 or 1900 rating but are much stronger than that. Because of the various lockdowns caused by the pandemic, the entire rating system seems broken, and everyone's rating seems to be getting sucked down inevitably.

History is also littered with names of players who looked like they would eventually become GM, but never quite achieved it. Lawrence Trent and Richard Pert are two names that spring to mind and at least part of that 'failure' can be put down to the distraction of full-time

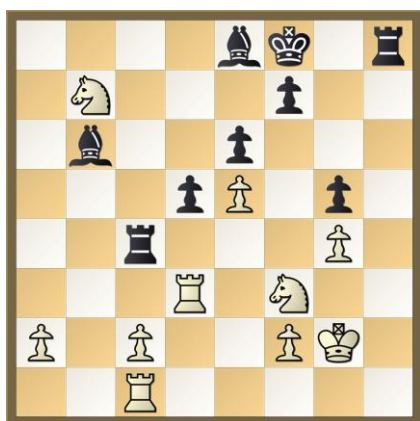
work. Another player who has a chance at the GM title in the near future is Jonah Willow, and Keith tells me that he recently achieved a GM norm in a tournament in Bulgaria. (Jonah achieved one, that is, not Keith.)

However, we now see another problem that young GM norm aspirants have in achieving their goal. Not only do they have to worry about people their own age, they also can't completely write off old-stagers like myself, who are still capable of taking points off them. Such was the case in the following example when Jonah was on the wrong end of a game against Matthew Turner. This is the first position that we will consider.

Willow, Jonah B (2431) - Turner, Matthew J (2451)

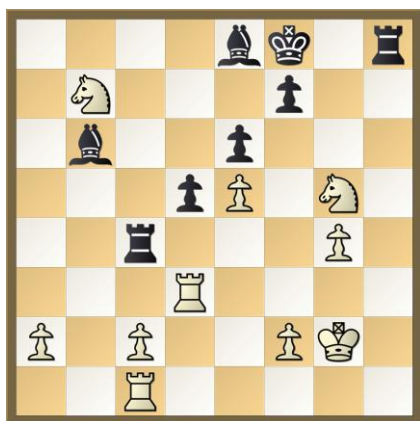
4NCL Division 1 chess24.com (3.4), 14.01.2023

26...Rc4



Now the difficult question. What is the best way to deal with the attack on g4?

Answer below ...



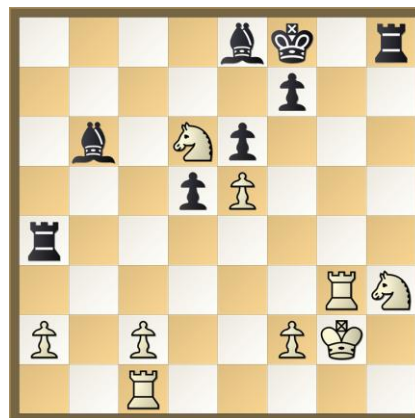
27.Nxg5!

This is the only way.

27.Kg3? this was played in the game and runs into a nasty surprise after which the game was soon over: 27...f5! No doubt Turner played this fairly quickly. One of his great strengths has always been a sharp eye for tactics. 28.Nh2 (28.exf6 Bc7+ 29.Kg2 Rxc4+ 30.Kf1 Rh1+ 31.Ke2 Rxc1; 28.gxf5 exf5 29.Nh2 Rch4 30.Rh1 Bc6 looks like a real mauling.) 28...Bxf2+ 29.Kg2 Bd4 30.gxf5 Bxe5 31.Nf3 Rg4+ 32.Kf2 Bg3+ 33.Ke2 Re4+ 34.Kf1 Bb5 35.Kg2 Bf4.

27...Rxc4+ 28.Rg3 Rf4 This still looks fairly unpleasant for White. Black has the two bishops and active rooks.

29.Nh3! Ra4 30.Nd6



White is surviving, for now.

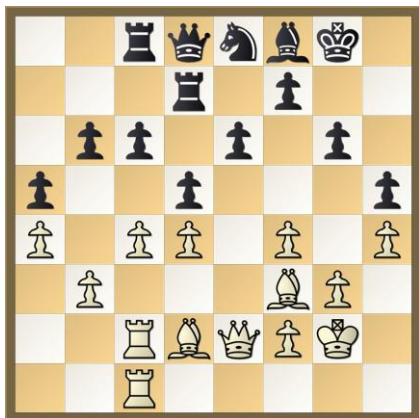
Wadsworth, Matthew J (2477) - Chow, Samuel (2318)

4NCL Division 1 chess24.com (3.1), 14.01.2023

The next position we'll consider comes from a game of Matthew Wadsworth, who has made excellent progress of late and is on the verge of the 2500 barrier. I played him on the Sunday and the game didn't last particularly long because we drew around move 40 with the game looking very drawish, and then had a fairly quick post-mortem. And yet even though I left the hotel at a reasonable hour (3pm), I still struggled to get back. I ended up at a frozen bus stop in Alnmouth at 10.30 wondering what I was doing with my life. Staring up into the sky on a frosty January all you could see were the fiery stars which seemed to go on forever.

Eventually, a light-filled spaceship came to pick me up - the X18 bus from Newcastle. Which was just as well, as I dreaded the idea that it might have broken down on route or been cancelled, meaning my only recourse for getting into town would mean walking three miles down a dark country road with no pavement. After getting on the bus, I eventually reached home at around 11.30, which meant the journey had taken over eight hours. Getting away from my favourite subject (myself) and back to Wadsworth, he reached 3/3 on the Saturday against

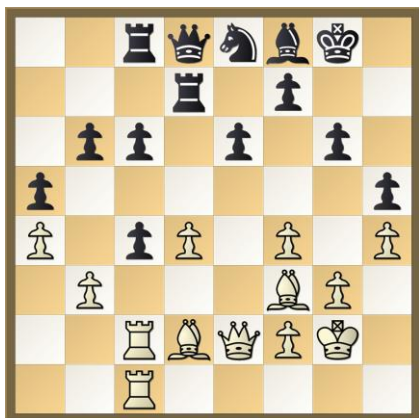
Samuel Chow, which means another GM norm is within reach.



31.Bd2 Now I'm going to give you two candidate moves. 1... Ba3 and 1... dxc4. Please assess these moves and choose which one is best.

Answer below ...

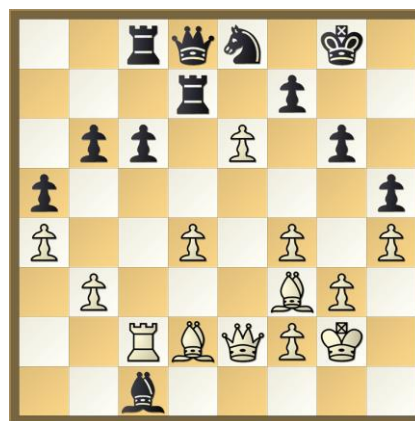
When we talk about getting to grandmaster level, then flexibility of thinking is obviously very important and in this case...



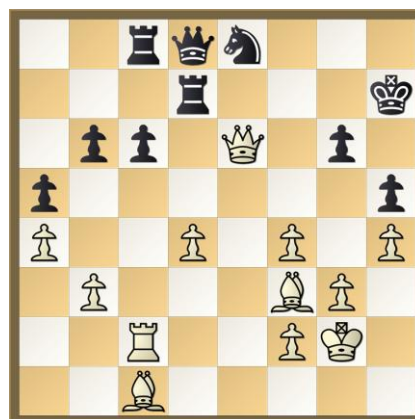
31...dxc4! is the better choice. Samuel Chow is a fine player himself and I lost to him some years ago in the 4NCL, so was perfectly capable of finding this move but may have been reluctant to make this exchange as Black gives up on the central structure blockading White (the pawns on c6, d5 and e6) and potentially makes c6 a target. However, the computer loves this choice for a very typical reason, which is a concrete reason. It is true that weakening c6 is not really what Black wants but over the next couple of moves, he can find tactical ideas to really test White and justify this idea in the short term.

31...Ba3? This was what Samuel played and he is tempted into a move that he really should have refrained from. The whole point of playing ...Ba3 was because White was threatening to take on d5 and then c6, so Black wants to

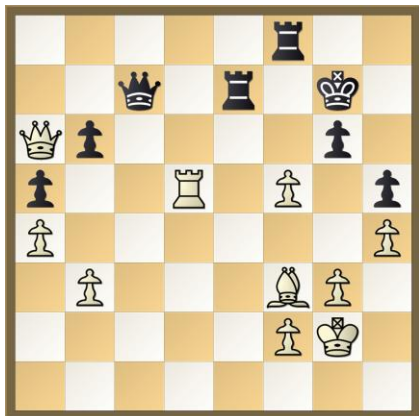
drive the rook away to make this plan less dangerous. The problem is it runs into a refutation. 32.cxd5! Another important element of becoming a grandmaster is what we already saw in the Turner example; you need to find unexpected ideas and tactical opportunities. This must have come as a shock to Black, because it is always a bad sign when you play moves to prevent your opponent's plans and they carry them out anyway. 32...Bxc1 (32...exd5 33.Ra1 Bf8 34.f5! causes uncomfortable disruption to the Black Kingside structure: 34...Ng7 35.fxg6 fxg6 36.Qd3) 33.dxe6.



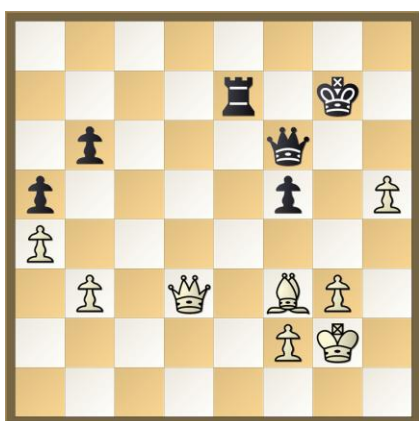
The tactical point is revealed and the light-square blockade that Black so proudly maintained just a few moves ago is rudely smashed to pieces. 33...Re7 (33...Bxd2 34.exd7 Qxd7 35.Qxd2+; 33...fxe6 34.Qxe6+ Kh7 35.Bxc1) is rather typical of this whole tactical operation as the two bishops will run rampant.



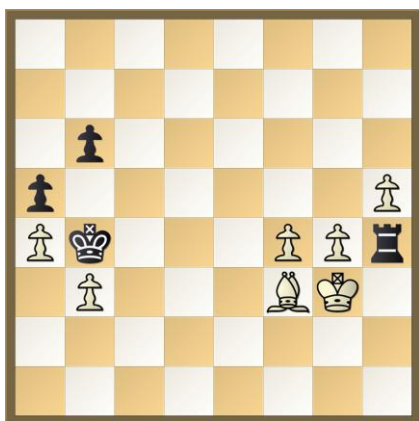
34.exf7+ Kg7 35.fxe8Q Qxe8 36.Qa6 Bxd2 37.Rxd2 Qd8 38.d5 and White has two pawns for the exchange and an unstoppable initiative. 38...cxd5 39.Rxd5 Qc7 40.f5 Rf8!



41.Qd3? (41.fxg6 Qc3 42.Rd3 and the Black king is too exposed.) 41...Rxf5 42.Rxf5 gxf5 43.Bxh5 Qe5 44.Bf3 Qf6 45.h5



45...f4? when defending it is tempting to go for activity, but this doesn't really inspire a counter-attack and just gives White two connected passed pawns. (45...Re6= White wouldn't have had much to hope for.) 46.g4 Kh6 47.Qd8 Re6 48.Qg8 Re5 49.Kh3 Rg5 50.Qb8 Re5 51.Qb7 Qe6 52.Kg2 Qf6 53.Qa8 Kg7 54.Be4 Kh6 55.Kh3 Kg7 56.Qb7+ Re7 57.Qd5 Re5 58.Qa8 Qe6 59.Qb7+ Kf8 60.Qb8+ Kg7 61.Qc7+ Kf8 62.Qd8+ Kg7 63.Bf5 Qf6 64.Qd4 Re1 65.Qxf4 Rh1+ 66.Kg2 Rh4 67.Qc7+ Kf8 68.Kg3 Kg8 69.Qc8+ Kg7 70.Qd7+ Kf8 71.Qe6 Qxe6 72.Bxe6 Rh1 73.f4 Ke7 74.Bc4 Kd6 75.Kg2 Rh4 76.Be2 Kc5 77.Bf3 Kb4 78.Kg3

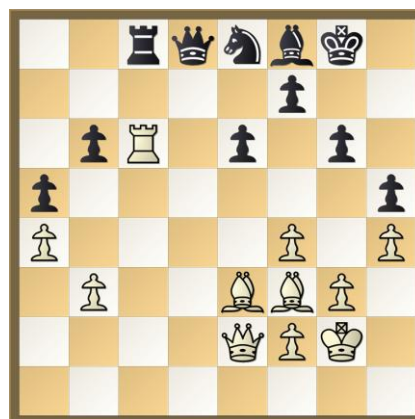


Black resigned. If Black wanted to maintain the Blockade, then 31...Nf6 32.cxd5 Nxd5 33.Rxc6 Rxc6 34.Rxc6 Ne7 was a better choice, when the White d-pawn will shortly drop off with equality.

Returning to the preferred line after 31..dxc4...

32.Rxc4 c5 This was the main idea behind taking on c4. For a tactical reason (the bishop would hang on d2) White can't take on c5.

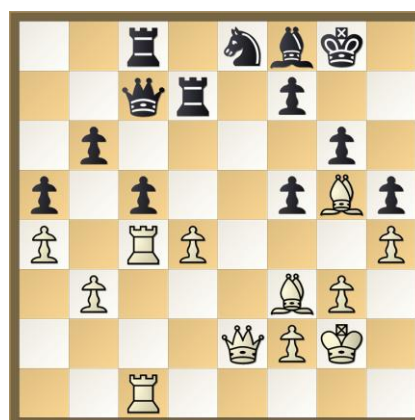
32...Rxd4 33.Rxd4 Qxd4 34.Be3 Qd8 35.Rxc6



is definitely an inferior choice. I still have nightmares of a recent game against Bence Korpa at Hastings, to remind me of how deadly the bishop pair and an active rook can be against a vulnerable black queenside.

33.f5!? 33.Be3 Nd6 34.R4c2 Nf5 35.dxc5 Nxe3+ 36.Qxe3 Bxc5 is quite comfortable for Black.

33...exf5 34.Bg5 Qc7



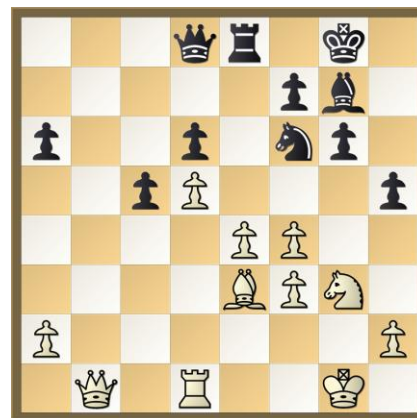
The game is fairly unclear.



Keith Arkell has been playing 4NCL for as long as any of us, and it would seem that of late he has had more success than at any time because according to the man himself, he has won his last seven games in that competition. I must admit that in my own hugely competitive mind this has caused some consternation and jealousy, especially as if you run into Keith in the bar on the Friday night then he doesn't seem to have the most religious and professional approach and is letting his hair down just like any other human being. Then there's me, making the mistake of going back to my hotel room with an orange juice. Who needs preparation?!

I have to go way back to 1997 to find a similar result in my own 4NCL history, when I began with 7/7 and eventually made my first international master norm. Of course, those were the days when I really WOULD go back to the hotel room with an orange juice and was devoted to chess. Sadly, shortly afterwards I discovered alcohol. It is true that Keith generally plays on a lower board than you might expect for the strong Cheddleton team, but winning seven games in a row is never easy and as we have already discussed there are many underrated players around in chess these days. On the Sunday he faced a dangerous opponent in Harry Li, and we pick the game up on move 22.

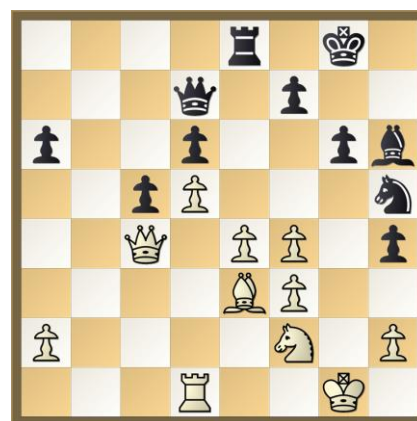
22...h5!



A typically strong positional move from Keith and the plan is to play ... h4, and lever the square on h5 for the knight from where it will target f4 and also serve as a useful attacking base. White's problem here is he is slightly worse because of his airy king and lacks the dynamic central play to compensate for this. In Benoni structures like this one then the e5 break is very thematic but at the moment this is being easily contained by Black.

23.Qb7?!

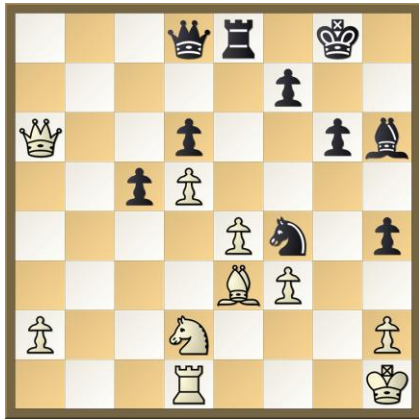
It is interesting that one of the engine's top choices is 23.Nh1!? pre-empting the plan of ...h4. Nimzowitsch would approve! 23...h4 24.Nf2 Qd7 25.Qc2 Nh5 26.Qc4 Bh6



27.e5! The computer is ridiculously resourceful. Us humans would probably flatly defend f4 and lose in silence. 27...dxe5 28.Ng4 Bg7 29.fxe5 the game has become a mess.

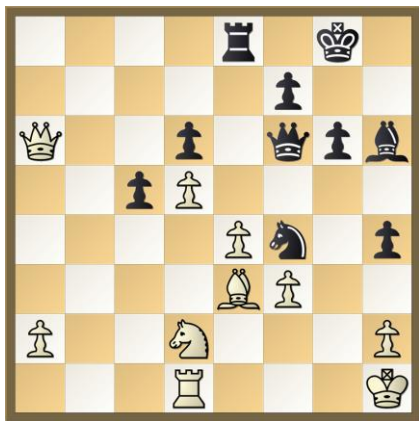
23...h4 24.Nf1 White plans Nd2-c4, which is far too slow and Black is landing first.

24...Nh5! 25.Qxa6 Bh6 26.Kh1 Nxf4 27.Nd2



Now we reach our final question. Black has two winning moves here so the question to you the reader is, what are they? If you can find both I'll be impressed.

Answer below ...

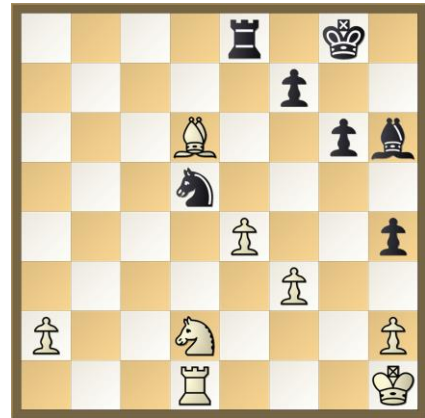


27...Qf6! congratulations if you found this. This does 'blunder' a pawn, but Keith had already seen the refutation to taking on c5.

27...Qg5! is also terribly strong. 28.Rg1 Qf6 is a nice finesse, as now the threat of playing ... Qc3 is even stronger than before. As Keith himself said to me on Facebook, it doesn't matter how much you think you see as the engine always sees a hell of a load more. However, I probably wasn't being completely accurate in saying there were two ways to win the game. 27...h3 also seems close to winning. It reminds me of those Kasparov games from the 1990s where he would push the pawn to h3, weaving a mating net around the opposing king. 28.Qb5 Rf8 doesn't feel as convincing as the game continuation; 27...Nh3!? 28.Qe2 Bf4 29.Bxf4 Nxf4 and once again the White king looks too exposed to survive in the long run.

28.Bxc5 Nh3 Breaking the shoddy blockade, as d2 is crumbling and with f3 falling subsequently, the White king will not be long for this world.

28...Nxd5 for the same reasons is also winning: 29.Qxd6 Qxd6 30.Bxd6



30...Nc3!

29.Qf1 29.Qxd6 Qxd6 30.Bxd6 Nf2+—+

29...dxc5 30.Qxh3 Qc3 31.Nb3 Rxe4 32.Nxc5 Re1+ 33.Rxe1 Qxe1+ 34.Kg2 Qe2+ 35.Kh1 Be3 36.Qc8+ Kh7

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

Solving Chess Problems is Fun!

by Ian Watson

If you like crosswords, or Sudoku, or any type of puzzle, you can enjoy chess problems; all you need to get started is a few 'tricks of the trade'. Ian Watson's short article below gives you just that.

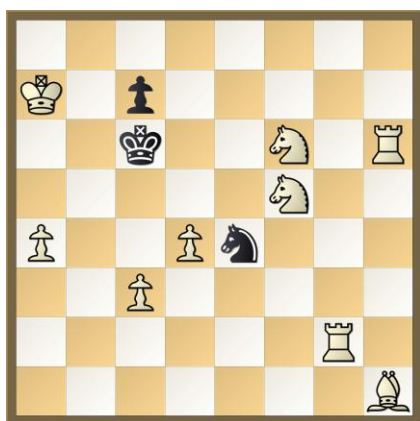
You can find many more chess problems at theproblemist.org (that's the British Chess Problem Society site).

To hone your solving skills online, go to the netchex.club site - www.ihandicap.mobi/chess/chess202301.htm - where there are new chess problems to solve every day. The site also runs online solving tourneys which are free to enter. There are tourneys to suit every skill level. Try the informal ones first to get used to the software; when you're fluent with it, you could also try the regular formal tourneys. If you get strong enough, you can pit your skills against some of the world's leading solvers.

If you'd like to take part in a physical solving tourney rather than the online ones, there's one at the end of this month in Sheffield. It's the ISC (International Solving Contest), which is held simultaneously at many venues across the world. It's on Sunday 29th January, and you can find all the details at www.theproblemist.org/abcps.pl?type=news&yr=2023

You can choose which Category to compete in, according to your solving skill level.

Part One – Where to Start



White to play and mate in two moves

Where would you start when faced with this diagram?

If you're a player, rather than a problemist, you'll probably look first at the checks. If you're a problemist, the checks will probably be the last thing you'll look at! Why? Because composed positions are supposed to be difficult and to be elegant, and the **key** move - White's first move - is usually an unexpected one.

A problem-habitué would notice first of all that bishop in the corner, blocked by the rook. So, they would think of moving the g2 rook, but of course that gives stalemate. So, they say to themselves that the problem must be based on Black moving the knight and then the white rook giving a discovered mate. That doesn't solve it, but it's major progress. Suppose the black knight moves, what mates have I got? There's a mate for everyone. OK, so that means that if it were Black to move, I know what to do. All I need is to begin with a **waiting move** by White – one that doesn't disturb anything. The solver looks at every possible move – how about 1.Ka6? Oops! Black goes 1...Nc5! and that's check to the white king, so White can't play the 2.d5 he wanted to. 1.c4? Nope – 1...Nc3: I need that pawn to stay on c3 so if Black captures it I can play 2.Rc2, pinning. Must be 1.Rhg6?, then. That seems to do the job. Just check it one last time... dammit, if he goes 1...Nxf6! I can't play the rook from g2 to g7 to guard d7. Wait... I could've guarded d7 with the other rook. Ah-hah! **1.Rh7** does it. I didn't need that rook and knight **battery** pointing at the black king after all – it fooled me into not trying the right key move earlier. So it's solved.

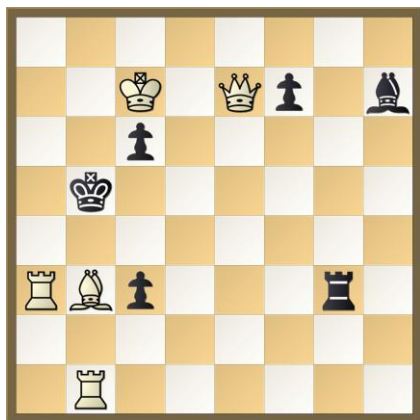
By the way, a top solver would have noticed that 1.Rhg6 Nxf6 would let White have multiple mating moves (here as many as 11 of them) – if he overlooked that d7 wouldn't be guarded – and that is considered really inelegant, so he would have automatically rejected 1.Rhg6 as a candidate solution.

That problem was composed by Comins Mansfield, Britain's first ever grandmaster (he got his title for his composing); it was published in the *Morning Post* in 1933.

Another aspect of the problem is that it shows a complete **knight wheel** – Black's knight moves to the maximum possible number of squares (eight) in the solution, and each one is met by a different white reply. This problem is a splendidly efficient demonstration of a mate in two with a knight wheel – there are lots of such problems, but it's very hard to compose one with as few pieces as Mansfield managed here.

Part Two – Finding a threat

In Part one, I showed you a problem by Mansfield which was what's called a '**complete block**' - there's a mate set up for every black move if Black moves first. More common are problems in which there isn't a mate already set for every black move, and in that case, you need to find a '**threat**' - a first move by White that threatens a mate if Black were not to reply. Here's one:



White to play and mate in two moves

This time you've learned that the checks are unlikely to solve it! (Although just occasionally a composer will make a two-mover that does have a checking solution – it keeps skilled solvers on their toes!) It's not a complete block, not least because Black has lots of neutral moves with his rook or bishop. So, what could the threat be? What about 1.Rba1, intending 2.Ra5? Black has 1...c5!. 1.Ra4 perhaps, intending 2.Qb4 or 2.Bc2? Looks too crude, and indeed Black has the defence 1...Rg4. So, it has to be a queen move? Try them. Unfortunately, there are quite a few, but you work through them and after several false dawns you finally realise none of them work. The solution is instead the extraordinary **1.Kd6!** which allows Black two checks. Both are met by unexpected cross-checks, which work because Black's rook, in giving the checks, has blocked the bishop from capturing the rook on b1.

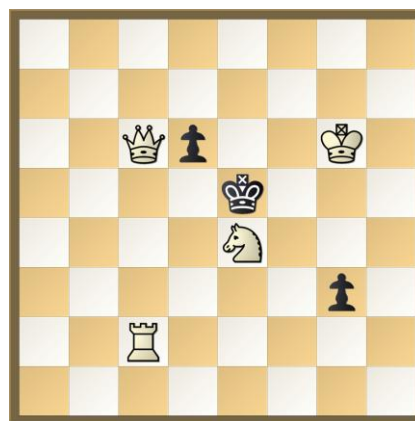
Really hard for a problem newcomer to solve. Not too tough for a regular solver, however, because in problems the kings very often move - composers often like to have the white king playing a big role in the solution. I think that a top solving-grandmaster would take less than 15 seconds to solve this one! He'd see the interferences between the rook and the bishop, and immediately try 1.Kd6. For the rest of us, it's a tough nut. Notice that White's key move grants the black king two moves, whereas in the diagram it didn't have any – the opposite of that (where the key move reduces the number of '**flight squares**' the black king has) is very rare in problems, being

considered a crude key. So, a **flight-taking key** move is very unlikely to be a solution to a problem.

Gerry Anderson (not the one who wrote *Thunderbirds*!) composed this and it was first published in *Il Secolo* in 1919. In the total trivia department, he was the last person to play chess against Alekhine.

Part Three – Tries

'Tries' are white first moves that very nearly solve but fail to only one black reply. Composers love tries because they make the solver think he's done the job when he hasn't. This one is a hornet's nest of tries:



White to play and mate in two moves

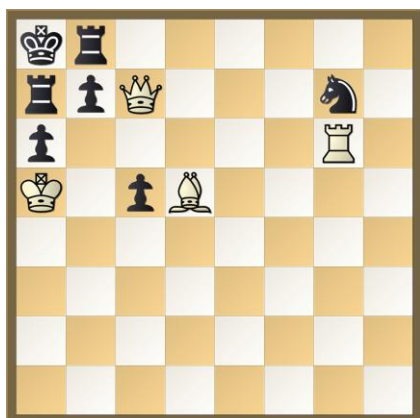
This is a 'miniature', meaning that the total number of men is less than eight. Should be easier? Not always, as fewer pieces mean more scope for each one! It's soon clear here that you need to move the knight on e4 to be able to mate against moves by the black king, but where to? The tries are 1 Nxd3? Kf4!; 1 Nf2? gxf2!; 1 Nd2? Ke6!; 1 Nc3? Kd4!; 1 Nc5? dxc5!; 1 Nxd6? g2!; and 1 Nf6? d5! So the solution is **1 Ng5!**

There's little you can do with a problem like this other than carefully work through all the tries until you have eliminated all but one, although capturing key-moves are rarely correct, so at least you can guess that Nxd6 and Nxd3 are probably wrong. Notice that in this one the white knight visits all its eight squares between the tries and the solution. This is a **knight tour**. White knights tour and black knights wheel – as in the Mansfield problem in Part 1. This problem is by G. Latzel and appeared in a well-known solvers' magazine, *Die Schwalbe*, in 1956.

Part Four – Three-movers

Three-movers - White to play and mate in three - are usually much harder than two-movers, but, surprisingly, longer problems, such as mates in four, five, or even more, are often easier than three-movers. That's because

they usually have a single main line and frequently a recognisable theme, and although it may be tricky to find the key or the threat the subsequent play is often straightforward. Three-movers, however, can be really nasty. Here's a not-too-hard three-mover:



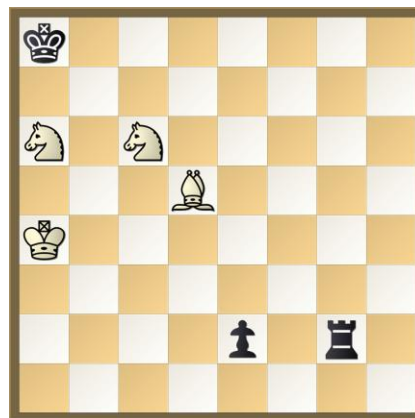
White to play and mate in three moves

This is a famous problem by Otto Würzburg, from the *American Chess Bulletin* of 1947. It looks clear that there are going to be mates by the bishop and rook, but 1 Qxb7 is met by 1...Rxb7. What will the threat be? 1 Rg7 would work if Black had to move his b8 rook and didn't have the pass move 1...c4, so that explains what the c-pawn is there for. So, what about 1 Rd6 (intending 2 Qxb7)? It's a good try, met only by 1...Ne6! It's hard to see the key, but you can get there by eliminating any other plausible key moves. **1 Rc6!** threatens 2 Qxb7 – a tough threat to visualise – with the lines 1...bxc6 2 Qxc6, 1...Rb any 2 Qc8, and 1...b6 2 Rxb6.

Notice that the white king is on a5 because it needs to guard b6 in the threat line 2 Qxb7 Kxb7 3 Rxc5. The mates are elegant and economical; most three-movers have unusual and pleasing keys and mates and so looking for the obvious is not likely to get you far. If, however, you happen to spot an unusual and pleasant mate you are almost certainly on the right track and only need to fine-tune your proposed solution.

Part Five – What is that piece for?

One of the most useful things that help you solve problems is that **all the pieces are relevant** - they all have to have a role. If they don't, then the composer doesn't include them - there are no superfluous pieces in a composed problem. That isn't always useful, but very often is: suppose there's a pawn a long way from the action - ask yourself how it could possibly be needed. Take this example, composed by Cyril Kipping and first published in the *Manchester City News* in 1911:



White to play and mate in three moves

White can't mate without bringing his king nearer, so the pawn on e2 must be there to prevent 1 Ka5 because then Black queens with check. So, the solution must be 1 Kb5? Obvious - trivial, even. (Unfortunately, you haven't yet realised that the composer has set you a demonic trap! That idea of using the apparently irrelevant pieces as the guide to the solution does usually work well, but not here!) 1 Kb5 threatens both 2 Ne7 and 2 Kb6 and the defences 1... Rg5 and 1... Rg6 are both met by the second of those two threats. Quite easy, wasn't it? You check your solution, because it seemed a little too simple, and suddenly you notice that 1... Rg8 2 Kb6 Rc8 defends cleverly. The white king blocks the b5 square that he would need for his knight in the line 1... Rg8 2 Nd4. Still, your logic was impeccable, and you go through that several times before being convinced that it doesn't work.

What now? You try all sorts of futile ideas, before looking in desperation at **1 Ka5!** which you know allows Black to queen with check. It works, however! 1... e1Q+ 2 Kb6 and you slowly realise that every black check can be handled by the knight giving discovered check. Barely credible, and with no superfluous material on the board. There is a wonderful satisfaction from solving a problem of this quality.

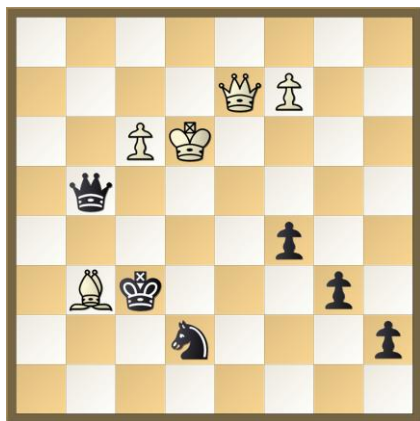
(This was first published in *The British Correspondence Chess Association* magazine 'Correspondence Chess' in 2010. The BCCA site is www.bcca.info)

HOW TO SOLVE A STUDY

by Ian Watson

Queens Amok

Last month I gave you an extremely difficult challenge: to solve this study by Janos Mikitovics. It was published in *Springaren* in 2009 and was set to solvers in the recent World Chess Solving Championship, but no-one in the competition succeeded in fully solving it.



White to play and draw

Whenever I see an open position with queens, I expect difficult solving. It's the same as with queen endings in over the board chess - lots of checking options mean the tree of variations can get very big very quickly. You need to find ways to reduce the number of branches, but that's easily said.

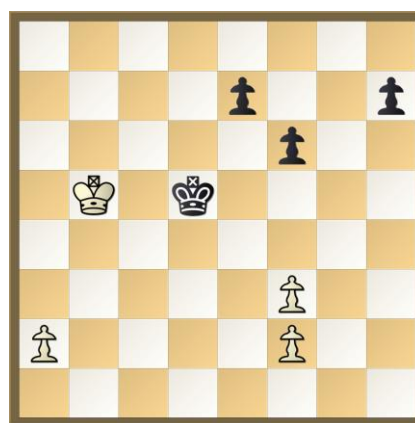
I'll show you the whole main line, then look at how you might find those moves. **1.Bd5 Nc4+ 2.Bxc4 Qb4+ 3.Kd7 Qxe7+ 4.Kxe7 h1Q 5.f8Q Qxc6 6.Qxf4 g2 7.Bf1 Qc5+ 8.Kd7 Qd5+ 9.Kc7 g1Q 10.Qc1+ Kd4 11.Qf4+ Qe4 12.Qd2+ Ke5 13.Qd6+ Kf5 14.Bd3 Qg7+ 15.Kd8 Qh8+ 16.Kd7** draws, e.g. repetition by 16...Qg7+ 17.Kd8.

1.Bd5 isn't hard - the bishop is en prise and rescuing it while stopping the black h-pawn looks right because 1...Qxd5+ is too big a sacrifice. 2.Bxc4 isn't so obvious, though; there are also 2.Kc7 and 2.Ke6 to consider. 2.Kc7? Qxd5 3.Qe1+ Kc2 4.f8Q h1Q 5.Qxh1 Qxh1 6.Qxf4 Qh7+ wins, and 2.Ke6? Qxd5+ Kxd5 h1Q+ wins. Black's 2...Qb4+ is obvious and if 3.Ke6? then the bishop falls with check. 3...Qxc4 allows 4.Qe1+, so Black exchanges queens; that's straightforward. Then Black needs to approach with his new queen and taking the c6 pawn is natural, as is White's taking the f4 pawn. 7.Bf1 however is another matter... not easy to even notice that it's legal.

If instead 7.Qc1+? we get 7...Kb4 8.Qf4 Qc5+ 9.Kf6 g1Q winning. 8.Kd7 rather than 8.Ke6? g1Q is clear, as is 9.Kc7 instead of 9.Ke7? g1Q. There are other white options at move eleven: 11.Qb2+? Ke3 or 11.Qd1+ Ke5 12.Qh5+ Ke4 winning. Also at move 14: 14.Qf8+? Kg5 15.Qg8+ Qg6 and 14.Bh3+? Kg5. At move 15 there's 15.Kc8? Qc3+. But it does get easier towards the end.

So, not so hard after all? Humph. I haven't mentioned a lot of other black options in the sidelines. And it's *so* easy to miss some minor details in the morass of meandering checking moves. Above all, there are no stunning moves other than 7.Bf1, so as you go further along the solution, you have nothing to confirm that you are on the right path; indeed the absence of such artistic moves makes you think you've gone wrong and so you keep going back to the start to find what you might have overlooked. There's a fuller analysis at <https://wccc2022.wfcc.ch/wp-content/uploads/WCSC-2022-Solutions.pdf> where the other black options are given.

Don't worry; now that the long Christmas holidays are over, I won't give you such a tough challenge. Instead, a gentle task to usher in the New Year: it's a study by our regular contributor Paul Byway. It took part in a composing tournament in 1995, the *Philidor 200* event, but apart from the tourney report this is its first appearance in publication. It's a fine composition and deserves to be better known.



White to play and win

That 1995 tourney celebrated Francois-André Danican Philidor, the greatest chess player of his era, who died in 1795. In addition to playing chess, he was also a composer, both of music (notably comic opera) and of chess positions. Philidor was especially well-known for his handling of the pawns, and so Paul's composition is naturally a pawn ending. It has two main lines - after White's first move, Black has two reasonable replies, and they lead to echoed play.

How to Solve a Study – solution

(Byway)

1.a4 with:

1...Kd6 2.Kb6 Kd7 3.Kb7 h5 4.a5 h4 5.a6 h3 6.a7 h2 7.a8Q h1Q 8.Qc8+ Kd6 9.Qc6+ Ke5 10.f4+ wins

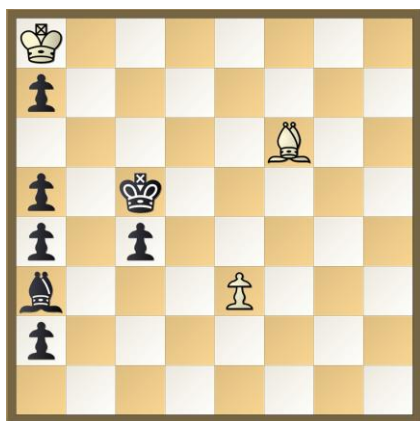
1...Ke6 2.Kc6 h5 3.a5 h4 4.a6 h3 5.a7 h2 6.a8Q h1Q 7.Qg8+ Ke5 8.Qd5+ Kf4 9.Qe4+ Kg5 10.f4+ wins.

Unlike the Mikitovics study, the checking options in this Byway study are limited, and, most importantly, the black queen doesn't get a chance to go on the rampage. So, it's not difficult to solve; but solving it is nonetheless satisfying. The second win of the queen is sufficiently different to not feel repetitive, yet similar enough to harmonise - that is what makes the most pleasing echoes.

PROBLEM CORNER

Christopher Jones with his monthly conundrum

Last time I left you with this problem to solve -



Series helpmate in 23

George Sphicas (dedicated to Sir Jeremy Morse)

The Problemist 2012

Repeating what I said last time, 'the final goal, after all Black's helpful moves, is to enable White to checkmate Black. In the diagram position, Bd4 looks a very likely possibility for the eventual mating move! But how to block all the potential flight squares of the black king? It looks like that vertical column of black pawns will have to provide, by promotion, the necessary building blocks. And if you know anything about composers' ways you have an idea of the task that they like to achieve with *four* promotions...'

That broad hint was intended to suggest that the

composer may have showcased all four possible promotions – which is indeed what happens, as the solution (in which I especially admire how the play of each black pawn and its promoted incarnation has to be completed before the next pawn takes its turn) reveals – 1.a1=N 2.Nc2 3.Nb4 4.Nd5 5.Bb4 6.a3 7.a2 8.a1=Q 9.Qa4 10.Qb5 11.a4 12.a3 13.a2 14.a1=R 15.Ra6 16.Rc6 17.a5 18.a4 19.a3 20.a2 21.a1=B 22.Be5 23.Bd6 and now 23...Bd4 is indeed mate.

For chess problem composers and enthusiasts there's a three-yearly landmark: the publication of FIDE Albums containing what are judged to be the best new problems and studies that were published in those three years. There's always a substantial time-lapse, as it takes a long time for all the judging to take place, and then for all the production work, and compendious indexing of the eight sections that cover all the manifold genres of composition, to take place. These Albums are beautifully produced, to the highest standards, so that they are a pleasure just to handle and riffle through (albeit too arcane perhaps to serve as coffee-table books!).

The latest Album, for the years 2016-18, has just been published. I still turn quite frequently to its predecessor and would like to quote two out of the multitude of problems selected from 2013-15. Some of the problems (one of the eight sections is populated by pieces not used in over-the-board play, and diverse bizarre stipulations) are hard-going, but there are many that are very approachable and, if you like this sort of thing, quite delightful. I've selected two for this column, and, although they're not in the most basic of problem genres ('mate in x moves'), they illustrate two genres that are readily accessible to those who (like me) come from a chess-playing background.

First, a selfmate. In a selfmate, we have to suppose that White wants to force Black to mate White, while Black resolutely opposes his efforts –

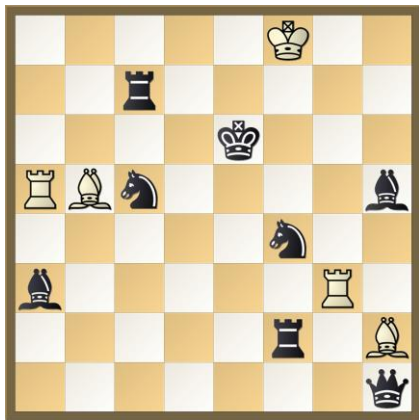


Waldemar Tura

1st Prize, Wola Gulowska 2015

Selfmate in 2

In case you want to have a go at solving Tura's selfmate, I'll delay giving the solution (and the various tries – there are a number of tempting possibilities that fail for subtle reasons), and give you the diagram for my other selection, which is a *helpmate*. As you may know, in a helpmate White and Black cooperate fully in order to produce a position in which Black is mated in the specified number of moves. So, in this one the solver is looking for two bwbw# sequences of moves. (By convention, Black plays first in helpmates, and so black moves precede white moves in the notation of the solutions.)



Vitaly Medintsev and Nikola Predrag

2nd Prize. KoBulChess 2014

Helpmate in 2 – 2 solutions

Going back to the Tura selfmate, we'd like to force Black to move his bishop from b8, discovering checkmate. So a natural try is 1.Qf8, threatening 2.Qxd6 Bxd6#. This however fails to 1...dxc5!. So we try to threaten 2.Qxd6+ without allowing that defence and instead try 1.Qf6. Now the d6 pawn is pinned, but the downside is that the white queen is attacking the black rook and so by playing 1...Bc7+ Black forces 2.Qxd8. A neater try is 1.Qf4. No attack on the d8 rook, and now 1...dxc5 would open up

the path for 2.Qc7+ Bxc7#. However, this try has a splendidly un-obvious downside. Until now it has been the case that if black played 1...a6, to make a7 available to the white king after 2.Qxd6+, white had the clever rejoinder 2.cxb5+, forcing the black pawn now at a6 to capture, which effects mate by the less obvious battery on the a-file. However, when white's queen is on f4 this doesn't work because after 2...axb5+ white can play 3.Qa4! The fourth try is akin to this. 1.Qg3 is similar to 1.Qf4, and seems to be better because from g3 the white queen doesn't have access to a4, but it turns out that 1.Qg3 nonetheless fails, and for a comparable reason – 1...a5!, when 2.Nb4+ axb4+ leads to 3.Qa3!

Finally we arrive at the key move – 1.Qh2!. Now you will see that all the intended follow-ups by White succeed, and Black has no further ingenious resources. Once you get into a 'selfmate frame of mind' the logic of this can be amusing and appealing.

I'm not sure if the same kind of logic can be ascribed to helpmates. But you do have to look discerningly at the most prominent features of the position. In the helpmate I've diagrammed above there are clear geometric patterns, masked R/B and B/R batteries of White, albeit not lined up against the square on which the black king presently stands; and black batteries along the lines a3-f8 and f2-f8, which will have to be allowed for. It's tempting to think that the black king will move on to the lines of the white batteries and a double-check mate will ensue – double-check mates of course are a very effective way of not having to worry about defenders guarding key squares. However, inspection reveals that efforts to set up double-check mates fail, and so the potential lines of guard, notably by the black knights and queen, have to be neutralised in much less crude and so much more interesting ways. You'll see that there is a close equivalence between the two solutions – things that happen orthogonally in one happen diagonally in the other, and *vice versa*; it's *de rigueur* in helpmates with more than one solution that there should be a relationship of some sort between the solutions. Kudos then if you found the solutions – 1.Kf5 Rg6 2.Ng2 Bd3# and 1.Kd6 Bd7 2.Ne4 Rd3#.

I hope I may have whetted your appetite for some of the diverse areas of chess problem composition. Aside from any aesthetic appeal, the mental stimulation of solving such problems will stand you in good stead if you ever enter a solving tourney. For further information, either about solving tourneys or more generally about what is 'out there' in the 'problem world', don't hesitate to contact me.

Christopher Jones Email: cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

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EVENTS CALENDAR December 2022/January 2023

For details on all the events listed below visit <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>

20th-22nd January 2023	World Chess League.Live 2022-2023
20th-22nd January 2023	29th 4NCL Congress
20th-22nd January 2023	Castle Chess 20th Fareham Congress
20th-22nd January 2023	London FIDE Congress
21st January 2023	2023 Kenilworth Junior Open
21st-22nd January 2023	EACU Closed Championships
21st January 2023	Second Lancaster Rapidplay
21st January 2023	Coulsdon Chess Rapidplay
21st-22nd January 2023	Mill Hill Congress
21st January 2023	Newham Junior Grand Prix
22nd January 2023	Wey Valley Surrey New Year Squad Selection Event
22nd January 2023	West London Chess Academy
24th January 2023	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid
24th January 2023	4NCL Online Season 7 Round 1
25th January 2023	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess
28th-29th January 2023	Ealing FIDE Congress
28th January 2023	Poplar Rapid Tournament
28th January 2023	Under 9 Jamboree
29th January 2023	Colchester Junior Chess Event
29th January 2023	Norfolk Rapidplay Congress 2023
29th January 2023	32nd Nottingham Rapidplay
29th January 2023	35th Stockport Rapidplay Congress
29th January 2023	Competition National Youth Championships Qualifier
31st January 2023	3rd 4NCL Online Spring Congress
1st February 2023	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess
2nd February 2023	Junior 4NCL Online Season 7 Round 2
2nd February 2023	Hendon FIDE Blitz
3rd-5th February 2023	London Chess League Weekend Congress
3rd February 2023	2nd Hammersmith Friday Evening FIDE Rapidplay
3rd-5th February 2023	Sligo Spring Tournament 2023
4th February 2023	4NCL Rounds 5 and 6
4th-5th February 2023	44th Kidlington Chess Tournament
4th February 2023	Horsham Junior Rapidplay
4th February 2023	Coulsdon Chess Junior Grand Prix Spring 2023
4th February 2023	Maidenhead Junior Tournament
5th February 2023	5th Desert Penguins Junior Chess Championships
5th February 2023	4th Bristol League Open Blitz Championship
6th February 2023	2022/23 Birmingham League Blitz Grand Prix Event 5
7th February 2023	4NCL Online Season 7 Round 2
8th February 2023	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess
10th February 2023	2022/23 Birmingham & District Junior Chess League - Tournament 3 Blitz

10th-12th February 2023	Blackpool Chess Conference
11th-12th February 2023	4NCL Rounds 5 and 6
11th February 2023	Leicestershire National Youth Championships Zonal
11th February 2023	YJCA Grand Prix Event 2
11th February 2023	Golders Green FIDE Rapidplay 2023 Open
11th February 2023	Under 11 Jamboree
12th February 2023	2nd Northampton FIDE Rapidplay
14th February 2023	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid
14th February 2023	3rd 4NCL Online Spring Congress
15th-19th February 2023	Cambridge International Open
15th February 2023	Beckenham FIDE
15th February 2023	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess
15th-19th February 2023	II Mindsports Masters IM Norm Festival & FIDE Rated All-Play-All
16th February 2023	Junior 4NCL Online Season 7 Round 3
18th-19th February 2023	2023 Coventry Open
18th February 2023	Newham Junior Grand Prix
18th February 2023	20/20 Chess Tournament
21st February 2023	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid
21st February 2023	4NCL Online Season 7 Round 3