

ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION



OFFICIAL CHESS YEARBOOK 2023

English Chess Federation

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REPORT OF THE BOARD TO COUNCIL - OCTOBER 2022

Approved by the Board in September 2022



CEO Mike Truran

INTRODUCTION

This report has, as in previous years, been prepared in accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission that “instead of individual Directors reporting to Council, there should be a single report of the Board, approved by it beforehand”. The report focuses on what has been achieved during 2021/2022. The Board has reviewed and updated the Strategy and Business Plan document and is happy that it sets out the Board’s proposed direction of travel over the coming years and the objectives that the Board has set itself for 2022/2023 and beyond.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

It’s very pleasing to be able to report that the ECF’s finances and operations have recovered remarkably well from the ravages of the pandemic, thanks in the main to the support of our members and supporters and of our tireless volunteers who do so much hard work (often unsung) on behalf of the ECF. Membership numbers as at the end of August 2022 stood at record levels, with 14,146 members in total (11,411 paying members) compared with 9,391 (8,301) as at the end of August last year.

In general 2021-2022 has been a year of solid progress. Highlights include the following:

- We have continued to support the return of over the board chess, with the full return of the Chessable British Chess Championships in August undoubtedly the highlight of the ECF’s over the board events calendar.
- Our online chess presence remains strong, with weekly ECF Club tournaments, national online championships and teams in a number of international leagues.
- We have worked hard on improving our benefits package, with our monthly magazine *ChessMoves*, the ECF yearbook, JustGo Rewards, and Chess & Bridge discounts worthy of particular mention.
- Rolling membership went live in September, offering members a full year’s worth of benefits in return for a full annual membership, thereby at last ending the frankly ridiculous arrangement whereby players could in some cases receive as little as only three months’ benefits for a full annual subscription.
- Monthly ECF blitz ratings are now being produced, complementing our standard and rapid play rating offerings.
- Last April’s Finance Council meeting at last saw approval for the Permanent Invested Fund (PIF) to be donated to the Chess Trust, and work to complete the transfer has continued since then. The Chess Trust has agreed to hold £100,000 of PIF assets as a ‘rainy day’ reserve should the ECF fall on hard times, and we have accordingly taken the opportunity to reduce our reserves target from £100,000 to a more realistic £50,000.
- The ECF and the Chess Trust have worked together more closely than ever before to provide financial support to strategic and developmental initiatives.
- We have carried out a fundamental review of our junior strategy, with a Junior Development Pathway launched, a

National Curriculum in development, and a rethink of our Academy approach such that individual junior organisations will be able to apply for Academy status on an 'open market' basis.

- We have strengthened our arrangements for ensuring that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place, with a new Safeguarding Lead appointment and the presence of a Board member on the team.
- And last, but very much not least ... it was a golden year for our English silver surfers as we had one of our greatest ever international successes, with no fewer than three team gold medals at the World Senior Chess Teams Championships in Acqui Terme.

A more detailed review of some of the above topics follows:

- **Over the Board Chess**

This year has seen a return to an expanded programme of ECF national events together with a number of new championship events which we look forward to running on an annual basis. We benefitted from a generous sponsorship agreement with Chessable (for the 2022 English Championships, British Championships and Grand Prix events) and grants from the Chess Trust and John Robinson Youth Chess Trust (for the British Championships). A summary of our over the board activity follows:

- a) As lockdown restrictions started to reduce the ECF ran the 107th British Championships in October 2021 at locations in Hull and Milton Keynes with a full set of championships (although no supporting events). This was the first over the board British since the prelockdown Championships in 2019 and re-established the competition ready for a full return in 2022.

- b) We organised and ran the main 2022 Chessable English Championships, English Women's Championships and English Seniors Championships at the Kenilworth Holiday Inn in May. The events were extremely well received and have established a set of English Championship events which we are now planning to run annually in the run-up to the British Championships.
- c) The regional stages of the Counties Championships started up in autumn 2021, with the final stages starting in April 2022 and leading to the English Counties Championships finals which took place at four different locations across England on 2 July. These were the first finals to be run post-pandemic.
- d) We ran the 2022 Chessable British Championships in Torquay over two weeks from 8 – 21 August. Entry levels were above pre-pandemic 2019 levels for the 108th British Championships, with a full set of events which were all well attended and very successful.
- e) This year has also seen a welcome return for the Chessable ECF Grand Prix. As in previous years since the original events of the 1970s, this offers for prizes for players based on their results in ECF rated events from July 2022 to June 2023.
- f) Finally, we have restarted the UK Open Blitz Championships with a very successful set of eight qualifying events in August and September and finals to be played in December. As with other ECF events these were ECF and FIDE rated and coincided with the introduction of an ECF national blitz rating list which went live in September 2022.

We have also put considerable effort into supporting our clubs during the return to over the board chess including sharing of best practice, support for clubs wanting to set up

their own websites and social media presence, provision of sets and clocks at discounted prices, and a number of related initiatives.

- **Online Chess**

Participation in online chess has continued to increase during the year despite the return to over the board chess. Our online clubs have reached record membership levels with over 3,000 ECF members in ECF Online Clubs, and more than 5,000 members in the ECF Open Club. We are amongst the largest national clubs on the chess.com and lichess platforms and have one of the fullest programmes of competitive club events, together with participation in numerous online international leagues.

Other online activities have included the following:

- a) Our weekly online rated club tournaments which continue to be well attended, with seven blitz and rapid tournaments each week on chess.com and lichess. We also now run a fortnightly standardplay competition on alternate Sundays in response to user requests.
- b) An online marathon in support of Ukraine on 2 and 3 April.
- c) Participation in various online internationals.
- d) The annual online blitz and rapid Grand Prix, with events on the first and third Sunday of each month over ten months.
- e) A number of instructional Endgame Challenge online events supported by GM Keith Arkell and IM Lorin d'Costa consisting of Zoom coaching events over one or two days and regular thematic endgame tournaments.

- **Junior**

The Junior Development Pathway will have been launched by time of the ECF Council Meeting, with the prospect for further expansion into other exciting areas such as the National Curriculum. The Pathway will provide an opportunity for clubs to have ECF recognition at no cost, and we intend to develop an extensive series of benefits for them during 2022-23. It will also enable the expansion of the Academy concept to more than one provider.

English juniors have been very successful in international tournaments in 2022 so far. At the time of writing, we have seen:

- a) English teams winning all four sections of the Glorney Cup;
- b) Three European and four World gold medals;
- c) Two European and one World silver medals;
- d) Two European and five World gold medals;
- e) English juniors at number 1 in the world rankings for Under 7 Boys and Under 7 Girls and two eight-year olds ranked second and fourth respectively in the September 2022 FIDE rating list.

- **Women**

Women's chess received a significant boost this year, with FIDE announcing 2022 as 'Year of the Woman in Chess'. In February our Director of Women's Chess participated in the European Chess Gala in Monaco, the theme of which was 'supporting women in chess', and which brought together many leading lights of women's chess in Europe. Two women's norm events were held in London in April, the 'She Plays To Win' international and an ECF women's norm event, both supported by a very strong team: GM Danny Gormally, WIM Natasha Regan, GM Peter Wells, GM Matthew

Sadler, Rayelynn Posadas and Ellie Gamal. At the same time the first of four 'Women in Chess - Global Exchange Forums' was held, led by GM David Smerdon and organised by FIDE's Women's Commission in partnership with the ECF. June saw the Caplin Menchik Memorial tournament, streamed live on Chess24 and with WIM Natasha Regan, IM Harriet Hunt and National Instructor Matt Ball commentating.

We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from sponsors and supporters, in particular Caplin Systems, The Chess Trust, The Friends of Chess, FIDE's Women's Commission, Chess & Bridge and the MindSports Centre.

- **International**

2021-2022 was a busy year for International Chess because of the timing of two international team events in the same period: The European Team Championships in Slovenia in November 2021, and the Chess Olympiad in Chennai in July-August 2022. At the former event both the Open and the Women's teams performed creditably; although the Open team's final standing was diminished by a 1½-2½ last round defeat by Russia, Ravi Haria's GM title and Gawain Jones' individual silver medal on board 3 were stand-out performances, as described in more detail by Director of International Chess Malcolm Pein at the end of this report. At the Olympiad both the Open and Women's teams again performed creditably, with this time David Howell securing an individual gold medal on board 3. David's 7/11 and 2764 performance at the FIDE Grand Prix in Riga will also live long in the memory.

Nearer to home it was good to see a revival of closed international tournaments with more norm opportunities than in previous years, and the ECF is proud to have provided financial and operational support wherever possible to these events. It's very pleasing to see the success that many of our juniors are now

achieving, and again Malcolm's detailed report highlights some of these. Our long-term weakness has been the lack of emerging junior talent, so (as noted in the Junior section above) England having two world number 1 ranked seven-year-olds and two eight-year olds ranked second and 4th respectively is particularly noteworthy.

At the other end of the age scale we should celebrate the triple gold success of our Open Over 50, Open Over 65 and Women's Over 50 teams at the World Senior Teams held at Acqui Terme, Italy in July, as well as further success at the European Senior Over 65 Championship in Lublin with Terry Chapman and Tony Stebbings claiming the silver and bronze medal respectively.

- **Membership Benefits**

We continue to work hard to developing our benefits package for members so that joining the ECF is an attractive proposition regardless of whether rated games are played or not. For example:

- a) Our monthly online magazine *ChessMoves* goes from strength to strength, with Michael Adams, Keith Arkell, Danny Gormally, Paul Littlewood, Andrew Martin, John Nunn and Peter Wells now all regular contributors. Our thanks go to our recently retired editor Danny Rosenbaum, an absolutely key player in the magazine's development.
- b) Our new format yearbook is also an excellent read, comprising as it does a selection of the very best *ChessMoves* articles from the previous year.
- c) So far 881 members have already signed up to JustGo Rewards, which offers our members thousands of discounts from a wide range of online and high street retailers; we encourage Council members to promote JustGo Rewards with their constituencies, as

both members and the ECF itself benefit financially from the scheme.

- d) Chess & Bridge offer all members 50% off CHESS Magazine for the first year, and staggered discounts off online purchases according to your membership level.
- e) Finally, we have introduced a rolling membership arrangement as from the start of September so that new members get a full twelve months' benefits for their subscription, so moving away from the antiquated arrangement whereby new members would in many cases receive only part of a year's benefits in return for a full annual subscription.

- **Annual Awards**

Finally, annual ECF awards recognise the achievements of many of our volunteers during the year. This year awards were made to Jimmy Adams, Richard Freeman, Colin Green, Ray Pomeroy and Mick Riding (President's Award for Services to Chess), Lorin D'Costa (Contribution to Women's Chess), Dale James (Contribution to Women's Chess), Gosforth Chess Club (Club of the Year), Holmfirth Chess Club (Small Club of the Year), Durham (Congress of the Year), and John White, Chris Skulte and Warwick University Chess Club (Contribution to Community Chess). Our thanks go to them and as always to all our other volunteers who work so hard in the cause of our great game.

- **Appendix: Report by Director of International Chess Malcolm Pein**

2021-2022 was a busy year for International Chess because of the timing of two international team events in the same period. In November 2021, with international chess still heavily affected by Covid and many players out of practice, England played in the European Team Championships in Slovenia.

Although the Open team's final standing was diminished by a 1½-2½ last round defeat by Russia, there were two notable successes. Ravi Haria became our latest GM by inching over 2500 at the event and Gawain Jones had a storming tournament, scoring an unbeaten 5½/7 for a 2782 performance and securing the silver medal on Board 3.

Lack of player availability left our Women's team depleted and all were completely out of practice - one hadn't played for years ! - and it wasn't a complete surprise when they lost the first six matches and only won an individual game in round five.

I want to put on record my gratitude to our Director of Events Shohreh Bayat for agreeing to play after a long break from chess and she scored a creditable 3½/7, with Zoe Varney also making her debut with 3½/6. On top board, Katarzyna Toma was out of practice, and this was reflected in her losing her first four games and then winning four in a row. After winning the last three matches, the team ended almost exactly in line with their seeding.

The Chess Olympiad, moved at short notice from Moscow to Chennai, was a logistical nightmare with visas and flights. Huge thanks are due to the Director of Women's Chess Aga Milewska for volunteering to stand for many hours at Indian visa offices.

After weeks of frantic activity, nearly everyone made it to Chennai on time, but we had to do without our board 3 Lan Yao for a couple of rounds due to the delays. Lan made a tremendous debut and I hope our new British Women's Champion is a fixture of the team for many years to come. It was nice to have a Women's team that was very competitive and started with a high seeding, which meant relatively easy early pairings. The team's final result does not reflect the fact that England came quite close to defeating India, and the Armenian captain had some anxious moments

too. Despite only being a part time player, Jovanka Houska made a positive score on board one.

I was delighted with the performance of the Open team, who it should be remembered have only two full time players out of five. The standout performance was that of David Howell who scored $7\frac{1}{2}/8$ and won a gold medal for individual performance on board three. The team also has a relatively high average age, and it was youth that dominated the 11-round event with the Uzbek teenagers and Indian prodigies finishing in gold and bronze medal positions respectively. I must pay tribute to Mickey Adams who went through undefeated on top board and played 10 games.

England started with four straight match wins which included a drubbing of a strong Serbian team $3\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, and it could easily have been 4-0. In round five we were outplayed by a superb Armenian team who still took silver despite the migration of Levon Aronian to the USA. After some ups and downs, a last round victory over Moldova would have seen us finish fifth ahead of the top seeds USA or a 2-2 draw would have placed us seventh or eighth.

In the end Luke McShane's big advantage disappeared in the time scramble and we lost the match but still finished in line with seeding. Arriving a couple of days early clearly helped the performance of the team and I'm indebted to the generosity of our performance coach Benjamin Portheault who assisted us gratis and who was able to help many of our players in a variety of ways. Many of the extra costs were covered by individual sponsors, to whom I would like to record my thanks.

Nearer to home it was good to see a revival of closed international tournaments and thanks to the efforts of the 4NCL, Lawrence Cooper, Adam Raof and particularly Tim Wall there more norm opportunities than in previous

years. In August Harry Grieve secured a GM norm by winning the British. Earlier in the summer Brandon Clark won an open tournament in Spain having earlier won an all-play-all tournament in Hamburg and I hope that Brandon and Marcus Harvey too can push on and swell the ranks of English GMs.

I managed to run a scaled-down London Chess Classic in December and it was an honour to be able to have Boris Gelfand with us, but it was a shame that the shadow of Covid hung over the event and affected attendance. England's Michael Adams, Luke McShane and Gawain Jones lost narrowly to the Rest of the World team of Gelfand, Nikita Vitiugov and Maxime Lagarde in the main event which unusually was a Scheveningen tournament (we haven't had one of those for some time).

David Howell wasn't at the Classic but did play at the FIDE Grand Swiss in Riga at the end of the autumn - and how well he did. While Alireza Firouzja and Fabiano Caruana qualified for the Candidates, David was right up there, sharing the lead with those two superstars with two to play. He was defeated by Caruana in round 5, then won four games in a row, a staggering performance in such a strong tournament. Those wins were over Nodirbek Yakubboev, Ruslan Ponomarev, Andrey Esipenko and Anton Korobov. David was then outplayed by Firouzja and held by Vincent Keymer, but his $7/11$ and 2764 performance will live long in the memory.

As our enduring weakness has been the lack of talent coming through, I'm delighted to report that at the very end of August, Shreyas Royal got over 2400 for the first time at the age of 14. In addition, as I'm sure my colleague Alex Holowczak has written elsewhere, England now has two world #1 ranked seven-year-olds and two eight-year olds ranked second and 4th respectively. It's essential that these talents and others we have at the younger age groups are all nurtured and that the money be found

to support them and their development. The John Robinson Youth Trust and Chess Trust will be essential in that regard. The taps should be opened wide while we have this almost unprecedented opportunity.

At the other end of the age scale we should celebrate the triple gold success of our Open Over 50, Open Over 65 and Women's Over 50 teams at the World Senior Teams held at Acqui Terme, Italy in July. I was delighted to be able to pop in and watch the very competitive match between England 1 and England 2 when Glenn Flear took Mickey to the brink of defeat. England had by far the biggest delegation and this unprecedented success is due largely to the initiative and huge amount of work – including fund-raising - put in by the acting Manager of Senior Chess IM Nigel Povah, who worked in tandem with Stewart Reuben. We look forward to more success at Dresden in November for the European Championships and indeed there has already been further success with Terry Chapman finishing second in the European Senior Over 65 Championship in Lublin, where Tony Stebbings claimed bronze. We have started a roll of honour section on the ECF website and look forward to more entries in 2022-23.

Malcolm Pein
2 September 2022

STRATEGY STATEMENT AND BUSINESS PLAN

STRATEGY

Furthering the Cause of English Chess

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

- Extending the number of active competitive and social chess players in England, building on the wave of interest in chess on both nationally and internationally.
- Increasing the number of juniors playing competitive chess and transitioning to becoming adult competitive players.
- Providing a clear pathway for junior chess players to learn and develop their chess playing from beginners through to national squad level, and hopefully achieving titles in due course.
- Encouraging the development of women's, student and social chess as part of a wider commitment to increasing the diversity of participation in chess.
- Supporting and encouraging the continuing return to over the board chess across the country.
- Embedding the development of online chess.
- Increasing the awareness of chess and its wider social benefits outside the ECF membership.
- Working with HM Government and other organisations to improve funding, support, and ideally recognition of chess as a sport.
- Supporting the promotion of chess as a national game/ sport with much increased levels of chess content available and shared via the ECF's website, magazine, social media and broadcast/streaming platforms.

- Supporting other chess organisations including leagues, clubs and congresses.
- Continuing to develop our four-digit Elo rating system.
- Developing the number of elite players and individual players of exceptional talent.

Priority areas

Our ambition is to increase participation in chess among women of all standards, with a stretch target of 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within five years, and to facilitate the transition from junior to adult to senior.

We will develop and refine programmes to encourage participation among female players, students and junior players and to help them achieve their potential.

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

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

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

Our biggest asset is our membership. We will improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings for all forms of chess that make joining the ECF an attractive proposition independently of playing rated games. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and

improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future. The Board will continue to focus on these targets.

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

We will keep the operation of the membership system under review, ensuring the system is well maintained, remains fit for purpose and provides additional benefits to members. In particular, we will implement rolling twelve-month membership so that new members in particular receive a full year's benefits for a full year's subscription.

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

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

We will work with HM Government and other organisations to improve funding, support, and ideally recognition of chess as a sport.

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

We will actively engage with other chess organisations in England and elsewhere to

improve coordination, efficiency and knowledge-sharing across English chess.

Business Planning

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

The Board

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

Funding

Our core activities will continue to be funded through membership fees. We will use sponsorship and donations/bequests to support strategic and developmental projects and initiatives, ensuring that sponsors' own objectives are addressed. We will avoid the use of external funding as a substitute for core activity funding. We will work closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in particular regarding funding for strategic and developmental projects and initiatives.

Office

We are committed to maintaining the central functions of an ECF Office, whether physically or remotely. The Office endeavours to provide a high quality and efficient service to ECF members and other chess organisations and gives support to ECF directors and officials as

required. Staff will be offered opportunities for professional development on an individual basis.

Communications

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

BUSINESS PLAN

Finance

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

- Ensure that the ECF's finances are sufficient to enable the ECF's infrastructure to be maintained and developed.
- Grow income in such a way as to enable the Board's plans to be achieved, taking into account funds received from donations, sponsorship and other sources.
- Use membership income to fund ongoing operational expenditure, using sponsorship, bequests and donations for new initiatives and developments.
- Maintain a reserve of £50,000 over the five year planning cycle.
- Seek to achieve an annual break-even financial position over the five year planning cycle.
- Ensure that all finance activities are performed transparently, efficiently and effectively.

- Ensure an appropriate division of financial processes between the Office and our external bookkeepers.
- Continue to develop our use of Xero functionality.
- Complete the implementation of rolling membership.
- Ensure that accounting records and accounts are maintained in an accurate and timely manner.
- Once the process of transferring the Permanent Invested Fund to the Chess Trust is complete, simplify the overall financial structure of the ECF, the BCF, Chess Centre Ltd and the Permanent Invested Fund.
- Promote our direct debit facility for the membership scheme.
- Continue to improve the presentation of financial information to directors and to members.

Governance

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

- Maintain compliance with most appropriate governance practice.
- Keep constitutional documentation under regular review.

Junior

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

- Implement the Junior Development Pathway to create a structured and formal progression plan for junior chess players which incorporates existing coaches, junior clubs, associations and programmes.
- Support the Chess Trust as it continues to develop its Accelerator Programme for our

elite junior players and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in its support for the British Championships and a range of other junior initiatives.

- Develop and embed the National Curriculum as a basis for a clear learning and development pathway.
- Put in place the processes whereby junior organisations can apply for Academy status on an 'open market' basis.
- Encourage junior chess organisations' activities in England and promote the development of collaborative working.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve the quality of support to junior players.
- Develop competitive chess in schools with a particular emphasis on those pupils aged over 11.
- Develop chess playing opportunities that encourage girls to continue playing chess in adulthood.
- Encourage adult chess clubs and leagues to integrate, support and develop junior players.
- Identify and work with top junior players to increase participation in non-ECF events, in particular FIDE-rated tournaments.

Women

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

- Increase participation in the English Women's Championships.
- Work with independent organisers to increase female participation in non-ECF events and in particular FIDE-rated events.
- Increase the profile of women's chess so that girls/teenagers/women have something to aspire to.

- Reach out to non-chess women's organisations to encourage female take-up of and participation in chess.
- Extend take-up of the Supporter category among girls and women.
- Continue to implement the proposals in the paper 'Development of Women's Chess: Progress Plan' that was presented at the October 2020 Council meeting.

Home

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

- Continue to run a programme of ECF national competitions including the British Chess Championships, the County Championships, the English Women's Championships, the English Seniors Championships and the UK Open Blitz Championships, with additional competitions added where there is sufficient demand from players.
- Complete the relaunch of the Grand Prix.
- Maintain and develop the National Coaches Register.
- Improve support to clubs (improve Club Finder functionality, continue to promote our website facility for clubs without their own websites, provide advice/guidance modules on specific topics etc).
- Continue the development of and support for the ECF's LMS (League Management System) as a core system for club and league organisers who run over the board or online events.
- Continue the development of official ECF online chess events at national and international level, widening participation among junior, female, student and social players in particular.
- Support initiatives that encourage the return to OTB chess during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.
- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.
- Maintain official anti-cheating procedures for ECF-organised events. Extend take-up of the Supporter category across the student/casual/social/online chess playing population.
- Increase use of social media.

Events

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

- Take overall responsibility for the operation of ECF events, working closely with event organisers.
- Ensure best practice approaches are deployed across all ECF-organised events.
- Monitor and review how events have run and identify and address improvement opportunities.
- Consider bidding for FIDE online events at youth level.

Membership

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

- Complete the implementation of rolling membership.
- Review whether JustGo is still the most appropriate membership system for the ECF.
- Extend special offers for ECF members with third party companies as a membership retention/acquisition initiative.

- Improve communication to and facilities for consultation with corporate and individual members.
- Improve the documentation of the requirements for the administration of membership and of the operation of the new system.
- Identify selling points which might make membership attractive to individuals who are not themselves competitive players.
- Continue to develop the monthly rating system's functionality.
- Review junior membership arrangements, including the effectiveness of our free first year membership offer, with a view to improving junior membership retention.
- Complete the move to a full membership organisation and review whether game fee and pay-to-play fees can be replaced with a flat fee per event approach.
- Promote our Supporter category.
- Promote the use of the ECF League Management System by affiliated leagues, and consider enhancements to the system, including those necessitated by its increasing use for online chess.

International

Objective: Improve the performance of our international teams and encourage the development of our top players.

- Work with the Directors of Junior and Women's Chess to identify and nurture top talent.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve conditions, training etc for international players.
- Develop England's presence in online international events.
- Review how the ECF can better capture the views and insights of top players in England.
- Funding permitting, organise more norm events for our players who have potential to reach GM/WGM or IM/WIM level.

- Seek to foster an environment that supports our leading players to develop a career in chess while also supporting others to maximise their potential while developing a career outside chess.

External Relations

Objective: Increase public recognition of and funding for chess.

- Continue to engage with HM Government and other organisations to secure recognition of and funding for chess, including if possible recognition of chess as a sport, so that chess can be developed more effectively in England.

Online

Objective: Continue to build on the strength of our online presence developed during the pandemic.

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

- Organise and publicise participation of English teams in online international events.
- Promote daily chess at international level including participation in World and European online daily leagues.

Office

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

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

HOME NEWS 2022

Courtesy of *Chess Magazine*

January 2022

4NCL – We were delighted to learn, as we went to press, that the February 4NCL weekend would be going ahead as planned, January's having been cancelled (possibly postponed), due to concerns over Omicron. That Covid wave did not, of course, get in the way of the conclusion of season four of the 4NCL Online, which had begun back on August 24th.

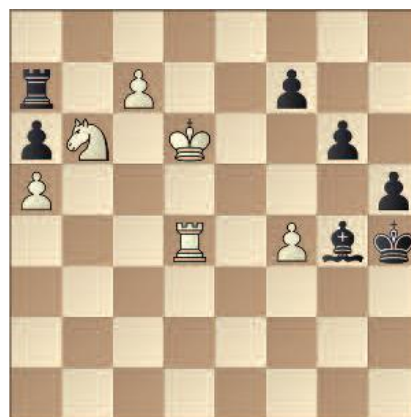
Our congratulations to the five divisional champions: Guildford Young Guns, Stroud Youngies, Charlton Cobras, Eagle & Child, and Hebden Bridge. Being youthful clearly did no harm and the final of Division One saw a repeat of the final of the very first online season, as Guildford took full revenge over Chessable White Rose, winning 3-1 to claim their first 4NCL Online title. Oskar Hackner outplayed Harry Grieve on board 4, but that was to be the Yorkshire side's only point after a dramatic endgame on board 2.



GM Mark Hebden

J. Adair - M. Hebden

Chessable White Rose v Guildford Young Guns



49 f5!

Seemingly decisive, but one should never write off such a resourceful GM just yet.

49... ♖xc7 50 ♔xc7 gxf5 51 ♖d5

Heading back to help the pawns, but the engines prefer 51 ♔b7! ♔g3 52 ♖d3+! And only then ♖d5.

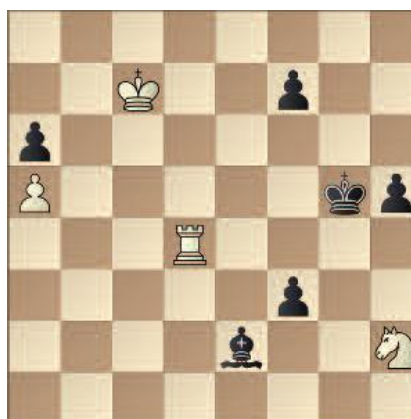
51... ♔g5 52 ♖e3?! f4 53 ♖f1?

The knight is about to find itself on a bad circuit. Undoing the damage of the previous move with 53 ♖d5! f3 54 ♖c3 would still have been winning, as would have 53 ♖d1.

53... ♗e2! 54 ♖h2

Trying to block the h-pawn, which suddenly looks powerful after 54 ♖d2 f5!.

54...f3



55 ♖e4

Manfully trying to win, but objectively 55 ♔d6! f2 56 ♔e5 was correct, leading to a

likely draw after 56...f1 ♖ 57 ♜xf1 ♙xf1 58 ♖f4 ♙d3 59 ♖xf7 h4.

55...f5 56 ♖e7? ♜f4 57 ♜b6?

Completing the turnaround. 57 ♜d6 h4 58 ♜e6 would still have offered some chances to draw.

57...♜g3 58 ♜xf3 ♜xf3?

Such a slip can be forgiven at the end of such a long and dramatic game. Black had no need to save the a-pawn and would have had a simple win after 58... ♙xf3! 59 ♜xa6 h4.

59 ♖xe2?

Returning the favour, just when 59 ♜c5 h4 60 ♜d4 would have retained some chances to hold.

59...♜xe2 60 ♜xa6 h4 61 ♜b6 h3 0-1

That impressive save-plus saw Hebden finish the season with a most impressive 7/7 for Guildford. Their other winners were Matthew Wadsworth, who overcame Yichen Han in a long game on top board, and his fellow IM Brandon Clarke.

B. Clarke - A. Raetsky

Guildford Young Guns v Chessable White Rose
Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜f6 3 d4 ♜xe4 4 ♙d3 d5

5 ♜xe5 ♜d7 6 ♜c3!? An uncompromising choice and one recommended in Gawain Jones's 1.e4: Coffeehouse Repertoire.

6... ♜xe5 7 dxe5 ♜xc3 8 bxc3 ♙e6?!

Black runs into trouble surprisingly quickly after this, which is presumably why Gawain focussed his coverage on 8... ♙e7 and 8... ♙c5.

9 ♖b1! ♖c8 10 0-0 ♙c5 11 ♜h1 ♙b6 12 ♖h5

By no means the only tempting move, with a very good case able to be made too for 12 f4.

12... ♖d7 13 f4?!

Consistent, but 13 ♙g5! h6 14 f4 would have been stronger.

13...g6! 14 ♖g5 ♖e7



Good defence from the highly experienced Russian Grandmaster. Clarke now responds well, finding a way to maintain the initiative.

15 f5! ♖xg5

15...gxf5 16 ♙xf5 h6 was perhaps a slightly better try, if still quite pleasant for White after 17 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 18 g4.

16 ♙xg5 gxf5 17 ♙xf5 ♖g8?!

Natural enough perhaps, but it quickly helps White create accessible targets on the kingside.

18 h4! h5 19 ♙xe6 fxe6 20 ♖f6 ♜d7 21

♖bf1 ♖ae8 22 ♖h6

Powerful and straightforward play by Clarke.

22... ♖h8 23 ♖f7+ ♜c6 24 ♖fh7

This is far from terrible, but the neat 24 ♖e7! would have been stronger, simply picking off e6 of h5 after 24... ♖xe7 25 ♖xh8.

24... ♖xh7 25 ♖xh7 ♙a5

White must be somewhat better after 25... ♜b5!? 26 ♖xh5 ♜c4 27 ♙d2, but anything could yet have happened here as time began to run low.

26 ♖xh5 ♜xc3 27 ♜f6!

A good move from both an offensive and defensive perspective, and now Raetsky is forced to scramble before the h-pawn can land on h8.

27... ♜g8 28 ♜h7 ♜g4! 29 ♜e7 d4 30 h5



30 ♜xe6+! ♚d5 31 ♜e7 is a little greedy, but White should be winning easily enough after 31...c5 32 ♚h2 c4 33 ♚h3.

30... ♜e1?

Preparing to set a sly trap, but objectively Black should have preferred 30... ♜d2! when 31 ♜xe6+ ♚d5 32 ♜e7 ♜g5! would still have offered definite defensive hopes.

31 h6! ♜g3 32 ♜g7! 1-0

The only way to win, but one which is more than sufficient. In contrast, 32 h7?? ♜e4 would have seen the result doing a sudden about-turn.

HULL – Paul Townsend triumphed at the Hull Rapidplay on January 9th, which saw a small Open and a relatively large Minor, featuring many new players.

Open: 1 Paul Townsend (York) 4½/5, 2 Nigel Birtwistle (Grantham) 3½, 3-6 Andrei Ciuravin (Hull), Joe Kilshaw (Grimsby), Thomas Wills, Jonathan Arnott (both Sheffield) 3.

Major: 1 Jack Walker (Hull) 5, 2-4 Daniel Shek (Crowthorne), Paul May (Wetherby), Roger Greatorex (Llangollen) 4.

Minor: 1 Eldars Gulijev (Nottingham) 4½, 2-5 Tim Lounds (Kendal), William Egan (Scunthorpe), Graham Reid, Steve Thrower (both Hull) 4.

LONDON – Unusually we only have the one Golders Green Rapidplay to report on, none being scheduled for January, with top seed Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) triumphing with 5½/6 on December 18th. Julian Llewellyn, Frankie Badacsonyi (both Muswell Hill), and Connor Clarke (Harrow) shared second, a point in arrears. The rating prize went to Orla Dorman (Petts Wood) with 3½ points, while in the Under-1450 section Adam Brittain (Hillingdon) racked up a fine 5/5.

One of the first events held at the London Mindsports Centre was the London Chess League Blitz on December 16th, put on by John Sargent and Adam Raof in conjunction with Hammersmith Chess Club. Sam Walker (DHSS) topped the 42-strong field, his 9½/12 seeing him home half a point ahead of David Maycock and Thomas Bonn.

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE – Tim Wall continues to create norm opportunities for others to exploit, with two more IM norms scored at his second EJCOA Forest Hall Invitational, which took place just before Christmas (December 17-21). IM Matthew Wadsworth proved a cut above as he largely dominated the tournament to finish on '+5', his only loss coming against Yichen Han who continues to edge closer to a norm. 14-year-old Han finished on 5½/9, thereby coming up half a point short, unlike Tarun Kanyamarala and William Claridge-Hansen who both finished on 6. For the Exeter University student it was his first norm, for the 17-year-old Irish FM his third norm, meaning that Kanyamarala now needs only to reach 2400 to become an IM.

M. Czopor - T. Kanyamarala
Forest Hall 2021



21... ♗g3!?

Tempting, but objectively Black should have preferred the simple 21... ♖f6 with a strong attack in the offing.

22 hxg3 fxg3 23 ♖e1 ♚h4 24 ♗xg3 ♚xg3 25 ♚xe3??

Oops! The young Polish FM wasn't at his best in this tournament and completely misses the point of Black's play. Instead, after 25 ♗d1 the defence would have been holding and everything left to play for, as after 25... ♗f5 26 ♗d4 ♖xa5 27 ♗e2 ♚h4 28 ♚xe3 ♗xc4 29 ♚d4.

25... ♗g4! 0-1

NEWMARKET – The EACU Closed Championships were the first OTB Chess Union Congress held since the start of the pandemic and attracted 47 players to Newmarket (Jan 8-9). Our thanks to Chief Controller Richard Freeman and his team for helpfully supplying the club or hometown of each player on their chess-results online reporting.

Open: 1 Matthew Payne (Worthing) 4/5, 2-3 Neil Bradbury (Welwyn), Philip Bonafont (Norwich) 3½.

Major: 1 Oliver Lenton 4, 2-5 Yi Guanxing (both Ely), Antony Hall (Streatham), Francis Bowers (Peterborough), Samuel Gaffney (Lowestoft) 3½.

Minor: 1 Gert de Block (Cambridge) 4, 2-3 Rob Davies (Linton), Lucian Cox (Bedford) 3½.

RENFREW – We were delighted to see some over-the-board chess happening north of the board on December 12th when the Renfrewshire Allegro took place, it being the first Scottish non-online weekend tournament since March 2020. 64 players, many young and several new to the OTB game, took part in Renfrew with teenager of the moment, Freddy Gordon, fighting back to share first place with Prateek Wadhwa in the top section.

Open: 1-2 Freddy Gordon (Edinburgh), Prateek Wadhwa (Glasgow) 4/5, 3-5 Mark Sanger, Jake Sanger (both Prestwick), Austin Connor (Glasgow) 3½.

Major: 1-2 Ross Blackford (Dunbar), Aryan Munshi (Glasgow) 4½, 3 Alistair Ahmed (Renfrew) 4.

Minor: 1-2 Aiden McNally (Kirkintilloch), Peter Knak 4½/5, 3-6 Tushar Roul (both Edinburgh), Elliot Lawrence (Glasgow), Supratit Banerjee (Kirkintilloch), Alistair Muirhead (Maybole) 4.

February 2022

BELFAST – A hard-fought Williamson Shield at the Maynard Sinclair Pavilion (February 4-6) ended in victory for Mandar Tahmankar with 4/5 after a final-round victory over Civil Service colleague Danny Roberts, who thus finished on 3½, with former champion Gareth Annesley (Belfast South) back on 3, as were Cathan Gormley (Queen's University) and Michael Sheerin (Ballynafeigh). Over in the Intermediate, Matthew Smyth (Belfast) triumphed with 4½/5, finishing half a point ahead of Tiarnan Ó Muilleoir (Fruithill).

COVENTRY – The University of Warwick continues to boast an active and sizeable chess club, and they staged a strong rapidplay (with a 15+10 time control) on February 5th, which landed up in a four-way tie for first in the Open after Keith Arkell and Max Turner drew in the final round, allowing Mark Hebden and Yichen Han to catch them up.

Open: 1-4 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Keith Arkell (Paignton), Yichen Han (Oxford), Max Turner (Warwick University) 5½/7.

Major: 1 Billy Fellowes (Kenilworth) 6, 2 Alex Zhou (Warwick University) 5½, 3 Chris Hankey (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 5.

Minor: 1 Anuman Goel (Warwick University) 7, 2 Luke Honey (Exeter) 6, 3-6 Krish Keshari (Reading), Liam Rai, Jamie Read, Jordi Smith (all Warwick University) 5.



DAVENTRY – The Northamptonshire town played host to the top flight of the 4NCL over the weekend of February 12-13. It was the second actual weekend of the season (the planned January one had to be cancelled), following on from the start of the 28-team Swiss at the end of November in Milton Keynes, as we briefly reported on in our January pages. There Wood Green were slightly fortunate to scramble home 4½-3½ against Blackthorne Russia, as Richard Bates outplayed fellow IM Marcus Harvey, with Harriet Hunt and Neil McDonald sparing Wood Green’s blushes with wins on the bottom two boards. Two entertaining miniatures from that opening weekend:

F. Zulfic - G. Wall

Celtic Tigers v Gonzaga
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5 2 e4 fxe4 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♙g5 ♘c6 5 d5 ♘e5 6 ♚e2 c6 7 0-0-0 ♘xd5 8 ♘xd5 ♘f7!

A handy intermezzo and one which makes Black’s position fully viable in this sharp Staunton Gambit.

9 ♘f4 ♘xg5 10 ♚h5+ ♘f7 11 ♙c4 g6

Giving up the exchange rather than get demolished by 11...e6? 12 ♘xe6 or 11...d5? 12 ♘xd5! cxd5 13 ♚xd5, with a pretty scary initiative for White.

12 ♙xf7+ ♚xf7 13 ♘xg6 hxg6 14 ♚xh8 ♚a5

15 ♘h3!

Correctly continuing to prioritise White’s own attacking chances, not switch to defensive mode and see Black beginning to take over after 15 ♚b1? ♙g7 16 ♚h4 ♚b6 17 ♚f4+ ♙g8 18 ♚c1 d5.

15... ♙g7 16 ♚h4 ♚xa2 17 ♘g5+ ♙f8 18 c3 d6 19 ♚f4+?

The first real slip and remarkably an actual novelty, not that either player was surely aware that 19 ♚he1 ♙xc3! 20 bxc3 ♚a1+ had led to a draw in Bezemer-Froeyman, Ghent 2013.

19... ♚g8?

Missing 19... ♙f5!, and if 20 g4 ♙e5 21 ♚e3 ♙xg4 when White is just getting crushed.

20 g4! ♚c4 21 ♚he1



21...e5?

It was much more important to rely on Black's dominant bishops than his central majority, and 21... ♖e5! 22 ♙d2 (22 ♙xe4? ♗f4+ 23 ♚c2 ♙xe4+ 24 ♜xe4 ♗xg4 leaves the bishops too strong) 22...e3! would have retained the initiative.

22 ♙g3 d5 23 ♙h4! d4

This is far too slow, but 23... ♗f8 24 ♙h7 ♗xg4 25 ♙xg6! d4 26 ♜h7+ is also rather crushing.

24 ♜xe4 ♗e6 25 ♙h7+ ♗f8 26 ♙xg6 ♗d5



27 ♜dxd4!

Prettier than the also decisive 27 ♜h7+ ♗g8 28 ♜f6+ ♗f8 29 ♜h5.

27... ♗xe4

Now the black queen falls, but 27...exd4? 28 ♜h7+ ♗g8 29 ♜f6+ is mate in two.

28 ♙d6+! 1-0

S. White - C. Mackenzie

Alba v Kings Head

Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♜f6 3 ♜f3 b6 4 g3 ♗a6 5 b3 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♗e7 7 ♜c3 c6 8 e4 d5 9 ♗d3

Suddenly a once-quiet opening quickly becomes something of a dogfight.

9...dxe4 10 ♜xe4 ♜bd7 11 ♙e2! c5?

11...0-0 12 g4!? might have scared Black, but better this than the game.

12 d5! exd5? 13 ♜d6+ ♗f8 14 ♜xf7!

Olé! White rips open the flimsy black defences and prepares a decisive attack on the light squares.

14... ♗xf7 15 ♜g5+ ♗e8



16 ♙e6?

But this is not the right follow-up, unlike 16 ♜e6 ♙c8 17 ♜xg7+ ♗f7 (17... ♗d8 18 0-0-0 followed by ♜he1 is just rather crushing too) 18 ♙e6+ ♗f8 19 ♗h6 and 1-0 in Tanriverdi-Zhukonov, Porto Carras 2018. Is nothing new under the sun these days?

16... ♜f8?

Missing his chance. 16... ♜e5! would have returned the extra piece to gain time with 17 ♙xe5 dxc4 when 18 ♗e2! ♙d5 19 ♙xd5 ♜xd5 20 bxc4 is only slightly better for White.

17 ♙f7+ ♗d7 18 ♗f5+?

Such sharp positions are never that easy to navigate. Here the engines once again just want 18 0-0-0 followed by ♜he1, inviting the final pieces to the party.

18... ♗c6 19 0-0-0 ♙e8?

Backwards moves are never easy to spot, but here Black really needed to find 19... ♗c8!, and if 20 cxd5+? (20 ♗c2!? followed by ♜he1

retains full compensation for the piece according to the silicon oracle) 20... ♖xd5 21 ♙e4 ♙xg5 22 ♙xg5 ♚xg5+ 23 f4 ♙e6!. This secondary rather essential resource leads to a large advantage for Black after 24 ♚xd5 ♚xd5 25 ♙xd5+ ♙xd5 26 ♚xg7 ♖e6.

20 cxd5+ ♖xd5?



Losing in style, although 20... ♚b7 21 d6 would have been pretty hopeless too thanks to Black's bedraggled pieces.

21 ♚xd5+!!

Cue the gold coins!

21... ♚xd5 22 ♙e4+ ♚d4 23 ♙a5+ ♚e5 24 ♙c3# 1-0

The big news was that Manx Liberty swatted aside Cheddleton 5½-2½ but were then held 4-4 by Wood Green. That meant those two sides are on 7/8, a point behind Guildford Young Guns, who dispatched Oxford 5½-2½ then Barbican 5-3, despite Peter Sowray landing one of those finishes which remind us why we love to play chess.



FM Peter Sowray

N. Povah - P. Sowray

Guildford Young Guns v Barbican 4NCL



22... ♙d6 23 ♖f1

Even 23 f4 ♙xf4 24 ♖f3 allows the same pretty finish.

23... ♚h2+!! 24 ♖xh2 ♖g3# 0-1

HARROGATE – Keith Arkell had a rather unusual route to success at the 4NCL Harrogate Congress (January 21-23). Arkell outplayed Harriet Hunt to reach 3/3 but can have had fewer easier Sundays as Gediminas Saraukas defaulted against him and then Borna Derakhshani was surprisingly happy with a six-move draw as White, despite trailing the leader by just half a point.

Open: 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 4½/5, 2-6 Brandon Clarke (Ely), Jonah Willow (Nottingham), Borna Derakhshani (Canterbury), Alfie Onslow (Ealing), Andrew Smith (Bourne End) 4.

Major: 1-2 Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Dominic Gibbs (Bath) 4, 3-11 John Mildenhall (Sutton Coldfield), James McDonnell (London), John Garnett (Stockton-on-Tees), Sydney Jacob (Lewisham), Oleg Cukovs (Poulton-le-Fylde), Nigel Livesey (Marple), Jack Erskine-Pereira (Gosforth), Kieran MacPhail (Newquay), Julie Oh (Hendon) 3½.

Minor: 1-4 Dave Patterson (South Shields), Mike Maher (Lichfield), John Belinger (New Milton), Con Carey (Heywood) 4.

The game of the tournament was arguably the topsy-turvy last round battle between Peter Wells and Jonah Willow, with plenty at stake.

P. Wells - J. Willow

Harrogate 2022
Queen's Gambit Vienna

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 dxc4 5 ♙g5 ♙b4 6 e4 h6

The modern preference, rather than the older and sharper 6...c5 7 ♙xc4 cxd4 8 ♘xd4 ♙xc3+ 9 bxc3 ♗a5.

7 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 8 ♙xc4 0-0 9 0-0 c5

Seemingly undermining White's centre, but there's now a strong pawn sacrifice which enables the first player to maintain control.

10 e5 ♗d8 11 ♘e4! cxd4 12 ♖c1



The immediate 12 ♗e2 is a little more vigorous and 12... ♙e7 13 ♖fd1 ♗a5 14 a3 supplied decent compensation in Mamedyarov-So, Saint Louis (rapid) 2021, where 14... ♖d8 15 b4 ♗b6 16 ♘g3!? ♙d7 17 ♖xd4 ♙c6?! (17... ♙e8! 18 ♖g4 ♙f8 appears to hold everything together) 18 ♖g4! ♙xf3 19 ♗xf3 ♘c6 20 ♘h5 gave White a dangerous attack.

12... ♘c6

12... ♙d7!? 13 ♗e2 ♙c6 is also possible, and if 14 ♖fd1 ♗c7 (counterattacking against e5) 15 ♖xd4 ♖d8, but not here 15... ♘d7? 16 ♘f6+!.

13 ♗e2 ♗e7?

Taking away the bishop's natural retreat square and, indeed, the immediate 13... ♙e7 was a better try, although even here 14 a3 ♙d7 15 b4 feels like control and rather pleasant compensation for White.

14 ♙d3 ♖d8 15 a3 ♙a5 16 ♘g3!

Having forced one black bishop offside, it's high time for White to begin to exploit his superior firepower on the kingside.

16... ♙c7 17 ♗e4 g6



A critical position and a good one for training purposes. What would you play here?

18 ♖h5?

This runs into a counter-resource. A better version of the same idea is 18 h4!? ♜d5 19 ♖h5 when 19... ♖xe5 20 ♜xc7! ♞xc7 21 ♖f6+ is now possible, regaining the exchange on d5. However, as pointed out by Danny Gormally, White does best to first strengthen his position with the unhurried 18 ♜fe1!. Black's kingside would now begin to rather creak after 18... ♗d7 19 h4, so he'd like to react with 18... ♜d5, but then 19 ♖h5! is pretty powerful.

Here 19... ♗xe5 (alternatively, 19... ♖xe5? fails to 20 ♜xc7 and 19... ♜xe5? 20 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♜xc6! bxc6 22 ♞xe5 gxh5 23 ♞xd4 is also extremely dangerous for Black) 20 ♜xc6! bxc6 21 ♖xe5 (threatening ♖xg6)

21...f5 is a fairly forced line, leaving White with a couple of routes to a large advantage. One is 22 ♖xg6 fxe4 23 ♖xe7+ ♗f7 24 ♖xd5 cxd5 25 ♗e2 d3 26 ♗d1, but this isn't as clear as one might like thanks to Black's unusual clump of central pawns, so 22 ♞f3!? gxh5 23 ♖xc6 might be preferred, and if 23... ♞d6 24 ♖e7+! ♞xe7 25 ♞xd5! exd5 26 ♜xe7 when White must have good winning chances with Black's position so ragged.

18... ♖xe5!

Willow defends coolly, and naturally not 18...gxh5?? 19 ♞h7+ ♗f8 20 ♞h8#.

19 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 20 ♞xe5 gxh5 21 ♞xh5 ♞g5 22 ♞e2?!

22 ♞f3 feels like a better square, still keeping ♞e4 options open while enabling 22... ♗d7 to be met by 23 ♜c7.

22... ♗d7 23 f4

Necessary, as unfortunately for White, after 23 ♞e4? ♗c6! 24 ♞h7+ ♗f8 25 g3 ♗e7 his king would now have been much the weaker of the two.

23... ♞f6 24 ♜c5 ♜ac8 25 ♜e5 b6



26 f5?!

Upping the pace as time began to run low, but in view of Black's next, 26 ♞e4 was likely a better try, and if 26... ♜c5 27 b4.

26... ♜c5! 27 ♜xc5 bxc5 28 ♞c2?!

Another natural move, but Black would have had more work to do had White not feared an exchange of queens and calmly remained fairly well co-ordinated with 28 fxe6 ♞xe6 29 ♞f2.

28... ♞e5

Powerful centralisation and rather good too would have been 28...e5!? 29 ♞xc5 ♗c6, looking to roll the centre pawns.

29 f6?! ♗c6 30 b4 cxb4

Giving White more hopes of survival than 30... ♞e3+! 31 ♗h1 (31 ♜f2 e5 also feels pretty hopeless) 31... ♗h8 would have done

when ... ♖g8 would have quickly overloaded the defence.

31 axb4 ♘a4? 32 ♘h7+! ♙h8 33 ♚xa4 ♙xh7 34 ♚xa7

Wells has seized the tactical chance presented and now Willows falters.

34... ♙g8?

After 34... ♙g8! Black would have retained good winning chances, since 35 ♚e7? ♚e3+ 36 ♙h1 ♜c8 wins thanks to the upcoming invasion on c1.

35 ♚e7 ♚d6

A backwards step, but he had to avoid 35... ♚e3+ 36 ♙h1 ♜c8 37 ♚d7 ♜c1?? On account of 38 ♚e8+ when it's now White who gets to mate.

36 ♜d1 e5 37 ♙f2?

The players continue to live on just the 30-second increment, which did not make finding 37 ♜e1! (or 37 ♜c1!) at all trivial, and if 37...d3 38 ♚xd6 ♜xd6 39 ♙f2 when the active king and b-pawn will hold the draw.

37... ♚xe7 38 fxe7 ♜e8?

38... ♜b8! 39 b5 f6 and ... ♙f7 was the calm and correct way to do things.

39 ♙f3 f5?!

Easy to criticise when you see White's next, but even 39... ♜xe7 40 b5 ♜b7 41 ♜b1 ♜b6 42 ♙e4 f6 43 g4 ♙f7 44 ♙f5 should really just be a draw.

40 g4!



Breaking up Black's powerful looking pawn armada just in the nick of time.

40...e4+ 41 ♙f2 f4!?

The pawns would have become weak and set to be battered on their voyage north around the Scottish coast after 41...d3 42 gxf5 ♜xe7 43 ♙e3 ♙g7 44 b5 ♙f6 45 b6 ♙xf5 46 ♜b1 ♜b7 47 ♜b5+.

42 ♜xd4 ♜xe7 43 ♙e2 ♙g7 44 b5

Black has managed to maintain two pawns side by side, but by now it's clear that White has easily enough counterplay on the flanks.

44... ♙f6 45 h4 ♙e5 46 ♜b4 ♜d7 47 b6 f3+ 48 ♙e1 ♜b7 49 ♙f2 ♙f4 50 g5 hxg5 51 hxg5 ♙xg5 52 ♜xe4 ♜xb6 53 ♙xf3 ½-½

HORSTEAD – The Norfolk Rapidplay Congress on January 30th took place on the edge of the Broads and saw IM Alan Merry demonstrate that the journey from Bury St Edmunds was worth it as he racked up 6/6. Some two points behind, sharing second, were Roy Hughes (Broadland), Francis Bowers (Peterborough), David LeMoir (Fakenham), Jeff Dawson and Stephen Orton (both Norwich).

David LeMoir found Merry too strong, but did land a trademark tactical blow or three in his first game back at the board after a near two-year absence.

D. LeMoir - J. Collins
Horstead (rapid) 2022



21 ♖gh6+!

This knight as, of course, it cannot be captured due to the check on g3.

21... ♜f8 **22** ♗xg7! ♜xg7 **23** ♚g3+ ♜f8?

Now it's mate, but, of course, 23... ♗g4 24 hxg4 would have been pretty hopeless.

24 ♗f5! ♗g4 **25** ♜h6+! ♜g8 **26** ♚xg4+ ♜h8 **27** ♚g7# 1-0

LONDON – The Golders Green Rapidplay returned to St Luke's Church on February 12th and saw IM Peter Large (Epsom) rack up 6/6 to pick up the £100 first prize, with Sam Walker (Wycombe) and Peter Koiza (Linton) each receiving £25 for their 5/6. This time Adam Raooof went with three sections, the Under-1800 seeing Abinash Ravithas (St Albans) and Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) scoring 5/6, while Frank Gillespie (Beckenham) won the Under-1450 with 5½, finishing half a point ahead of Max Xue (north London).

There's also been some sad news from Surbiton chess club that their long-time stalwart Stefano Bruzzi (1936 - xxx.i.2022) is no longer with us. A one-time Italian international who competed in the 1960 Claire Benedict Cup, where was ground down by future British Champion Michael Haygarth, Bruzzi was one of the club's strongest players for many years,

renowned especially for his endgame skills and favourite French McCutcheon.

NEWCASTLE – Forest Hall Social Club and Tim Wall played host to the Northumberland Rapidplay Championships on February 6th, where top seed Danny Gormally drew in the final round with Scottish FM Andrew Burnett of Streetfighting Chess fame to claim outright first.

Open: 1 Daniel Gormally (Alnwick) 5½/6, 2-4 David Mooney (South Shields), Nathan Ekanem (Gateshead), Andrew Burnett (Byker) 5.

Minor: 1 Michael Allen (South Shields) 6, 2 Ben Robinson (Gosforth) 5, 3-4 Graham Marshall (Hartlepool), Ethan Tatters (Forest Hall) 4.

Junior: 1 Daniel Tong 10/12, 2-3 Bruno Szczygielski (both Gosforth), Aaditya Bethanbatia (Newcastle) 8.

March 2022

BATTLE – Exploiting a slightly bare looking weekend in the domestic calendar, the ECF have seized the initiative and elected to hold another of their popular 24-hour marathon online blitz events, this time raising money for the DEC Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal via the British Red Cross.

Play is scheduled to begin at 5pm on Saturday 2nd and we dare say that a number of titled players will once again both participate and also commentate. Keep an eye on www.englishchess.org.uk for further announcements.

We also couldn't help noticing that the English Championships are no longer part of the British Championships, which themselves are scheduled to be held in Torquay, August 8-21. Indeed, the English Championships and English Women's Championship Finals will take place over seven rounds in Kenilworth (May 19-22). It will be very interesting to see how strong the events turn out to be, something which may well depend on any sponsorship and the prize fund. The same venue, the Kenilworth Holiday Inn, will also be hosting the English Seniors

Championships a little earlier in May, the 4th to the 8th.

BLACKPOOL – Britain’s last major chess event before Covid restrictions hit was the 2020 Blackpool Congress and last month it was back (March 11-13), even with a restricted entry still attracting many to the Imperial Hotel. Perhaps the biggest story was six-year-old Kushal Jakhria taking a halfpoint bye then racking up 4/4 to tie for first in the Intermediate.

Open: 1-7 Stephen Jones (Basingstoke), Andrew Ledger (Sheffield), Chris Duncan (Watford), Andrew Burnett (Byker), Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Shrayan Majumder (Southampton), Tim Wall (Forest Hall) 4/5.

Major: 1 Barry Hymer (Lancaster) 4½, 2-4 Richard Hardy (Selby), Chris Doran (Chester), Dave Shapland (Hebden Bridge) 4.

Intermediate: 1-3 Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster), Ethan Norris (Atherton), Kushal Jakhria (Charlton) 4½.

Minor: 1-3 Alec Grice (Beverley), Jon Reese (Runcorn), Martin Beardsley (Gosforth) 4½.

Standard: 1-6 Hunain Malik (3Cs), Stelio Jerome (Pinner), Michael Springett (Epsom), Callum Robertson (Northumberland), Alzbeta Kluckova (Castleford), Shambavi Hariharan (Nottingham) 4.

DONCASTER – Another ever competitive congress, this time in Doncaster (February 25-27) attracted 205 OTB-starved players from all over the country.

Open: 1 Daniel Kozusek (Pontypridd) 4½/5, 2 Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 4, 3-7 Virgil Szekely (Great Ayton), Alan Agnew (Shepshed), Philip Holt (Olton), Nigel Birtwistle (Grantham), Svetlana Sucikova (Castleford) 3½.

Major: 1 Gary Jackson (Banbury) 5, 2-6 Oliver Lenton (Ely), Luke Gostelow (Leeds), Neil Irving (Edinburgh), Tim Turner (Driffield), Peter Davies (Pontypridd) 4.

Intermediate: 1 Alejandro Lopez-Martinez (Sheffield) 4½, 2-4 Noel Boustred (Gosforth), Trevor Holt (Olton), Mike O’Mahony (Wallasey) 4.

Minor: 1 Alistair Gear (Market Harboro) 5, 2-3 Stephen Farry (Wallasey), Sam Wood (Gloucester) 4½.

ILKLEY – The third EJCOA Invitational took place at the Chess Centre in Ilkley (February 23-27), but for once star organiser Tim Wall was out of luck as no IM norms were made. Top seed Jose Camacho Collados (Cardiff) bounced back from a first round defeat at the hands of Slovenian WIM Zala Urh to claim a deserved overall success with ‘+3’. Heading into the final round, Yichen Han (Oxford) needed to win for a norm, but was defeated by Jonah Willow (Nottingham), who thus shared second with Shreyas Royal (Battersea), the 13-year-old impressively remaining unbeaten en route to 5½/9.



Dave Robertson (picture via Phil Crocker)

LIVERPOOL – We were saddened to hear of the death of Dave Robertson (xxi.ix 1947 - ii.iii.2022), a man who did so much to bring major chess events to Liverpool in the first decade of this century. By then Robertson had long left his mark on chess in Birmingham, where he went to school, and especially in Liverpool, where he arrived as a student in 1966.

Along with John Carleton and Geoff Hall (nowadays a knight for services to education), Robertson helped to set up Kirkdale Chess Club in 1972, which quickly became Atticus Chess Club, who were National Club Champions by 1977!

By 2004 Professor Robertson of John Moore's University was keen to celebrate Liverpool being awarded City of Culture status for 2008, which he did in style as the city hosted the European Union Championship in 2006, followed the next year by a special England-China match alongside another strong Swiss. Then in 2008 came the return of the EU Championship at the Liverpool World Museum, as well as the British Championships at the iconic St. George's Hall. Despite long suffering from a degenerative illness, Dave Robertson was not just a superb servant of chess, but a popular, witty and knowledgeable man.

LONDON – 14-year-old FM Yichen Han (Oxford) powered away to victory at the Golders Green Rapidplay on March 12th, racking up a perfect 6/6, while finishing a point clear of Tom Quilter (London) and Andrei Ciuravin (Hull). The Under-1800 section fell to Ivan Omelchenko (DHSS), who also made 100%, while in the Under-1450 Kevin Martin (Chessington) and Daniel Sokol (London) both scored 5½/6.

On the same day and despite being outrated by on average 40 points a board, Oxford defeated Cambridge 4½-3½ in the annual Varsity match at the RAC Club on Pall Mall, with Irish FM Tom O'Gorman defeating Matthew Wadsworth on top board. Dominic Miller and Dominic Miller also won for the Dark Blues who now trail 58-60 in the annual contest which dates back to 1873. Both Oxford and Cambridge had earlier been absent from the British Universities Chess Championship, which took place online on March 5th, resulting in success for Warwick who won all nine matches to finish well ahead of LSE and Exeter.

NOTTINGHAM – The Nottingham Rapidplay saw a record attendance of 151 players on February 20th, with Mark Hebden unusually having to settle for a share of third.

Open: 1-2 Gediminas Sarakauskas (Manchester), Shabir Okhai (Syston) 5/6, 3-6 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Andrei Ciuravin (Hull), Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield), Owen Crawford (Derby) 4½.

Major: 1 Stuart Humphreys (Radcliffe) 5½, 2 Musa Peer (Wigston) 5, 3-5 Stephen Mason (West Nottingham), Christopher Lewis (Newport), Cameron Rehman (Bloxwich) 4.

Intermediate: 1-3 Nick London (Radcliffe), Daniel Clayton (Sheffield), Lewis Jeffrie (Loughborough) 5.

Minor: 1 Benjamin Humphreys (Nottingham) 5½, 2-4 Luke Sullivan (Rugeley), Ray Bettam (Coleshill), Richard Lee (Nottingham) 5.

APRIL 2022

BATTLE – Organised by ECF Director of Home Chess Nigel Towers and with star commentator Natasha Regan helping persuade a large number of players to provide some commentary, including Mickey Adams and Mr Dodgy no less, the 24-hour ECF Charity Marathon for Ukraine on Chess.com was a huge success over April 2nd and 3rd. Keith Arkell racked up a whopping 728 points (or 215½/248) to finish a very long way clear, while the likes of Simon Williams, the Odessabased Mikhail Golubev and Mark Hebden were but some of the other GMs who took part. In total over 6,000 blitz games were played, with £18,000 raised for the Ukraine DEC appeal. We were also delighted to see the ECF announcing their new partnership with Chessable, a deal which will provide some sponsorship for both this year's English and British Championships, as well as the revamped ECF Grand Prix, which is due to begin in July and run through until June 2023. The aforementioned English Championships take place this month (19-22 May), and have a first prize of £2,000, with Gawain Jones the biggest name to have entered as we went to

press, while Katarzyna Toma and Yao Lan head up the field for the Women's Championship.

BOTHWELL – IM Andrew Greet racked up 5/5 and had to be happy with just £100 at the Hamilton Open, which took place at the Bothwell Bowling Club (April 2-3).

Leading scores: 1 Andrew Greet (Bearsden) 5/5, 2-5 Calum McGillivray (Edinburgh), Michael Ridge (Edinburgh), Mike Chisholm (Edinburgh), Derek McCormack (Paisley) 4.



IM Andrew Greet

CARDIFF – Over-the-board tournament chess has finally returned to Wales, with Cardiff academic IM Jose Camacho Collados triumphing with an unbeaten 5½/7 at the Welsh Championship (April 15-18), finishing half a point ahead of FM Daniel Kozusek, with Grzegorz Toczek, Tim Kett and Alex Bullen a further half point back in this 20-player Swiss. Alongside there was a 62-player Open, won by Miguel Espinosa Delgado and Hugo Fowler with 6/7.

DAVENTRY – Mark Hebden defeated Danny Gormally in the final round to catch him up at the 4NCL Easter Congress (April 15-18).

Open: 1-2 Mark Hebden (Leic), Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 6/7, 3 Yichen Han (Oxford) 5½.

Under-2000: 1 Jonathan McKay (Perth) 7, 2 Dilhan Manawadu 5½, 3-5 Tashika Arora (both Oxford), Peter Tart (Camberley), James McDonnell (London) 5.

Under-1700: 1 Neil Homer (Northampton) 6, 2-4 Theo Jenkins (Bedford), Stelio Jerome (Pinner), Shambavi Hariharan (Nottingham) 5½.

Some three weeks earlier at the same venue, the Daventry Court Hotel, the latest rounds of Division One of the 4NCL had seen Wood Green move to the top of the table, as they edged past Chessable White Rose 4½-3½ before overcoming Guildford Young Guns 5-3, thanks to wins from new signing Michael Adams, as well as Jon Speelman, Neil McDonald and Katarzyna Toma. Chess.com Manx Liberty now find themselves a point behind their main rivals, for while they walloped Barbican 7-1 they were held to a draw by the Young Guns. Alexei Shirov outclassed Matthew Wadsworth on top board, but Guildford hit back through IM Alberto Suarez Real, who overcame Polish GM Pawel Jaracz in what was a very close match. We'll have much more from the 4NCL next month.

EDINBURGH – There was no Edinburgh Congress this year, but instead at Stewart's Melville College the Scottish Chess Tour Blitz and Allegro took place (April 8-9). The rapid event saw Keith Ruxton (Edinburgh) top-score with 5½/6 to finish a point ahead of Ross Blackford (Dunbar), while the blitz went to American FM Christopher Wu, whose 8½/9 was half a point more than Andrew Greet could muster, with Ruxton a further point back in third.

LONDON – Not one, but two WIM norm tournaments took place at the Mindsports Centre in Ravenscourt Park (April 7-11), organised by ECF Women's Director of Chess, Aga Milewska, and She Plays to Win supremo, Lorin D'Costa. WIM Yao Lan won the ECF tournament with an unbeaten 7½/9, while the SPTW event was won by Machteld van Foreest, who racked up a huge 8/9 for a 2431 performance.

Mike Healey (Richmond) had an excellent result at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on

April 9th, sharing first place on 5½/6 with FM Maciej Czopor (Wood Green). They both won £75.00, while Gaurav Kamath (Reading) picked up £50 for his rating prize. Meanwhile Lucas Oliveri (Haywards Heath) won the Under-1800 section with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Tim Gardner (Barnet) and Rohan McCauley (Surbiton), while the Under-1450 saw Steve Phillips (London) and Nikhil Dsouza (Battersea) both make on 5/6.

WALSALL – We were very saddened to learn of the passing of David Anderton (ii.viii.1941 - i.iv.2022), truly one of the good guys of the chess world, as well as a perfect gentleman and pillar of the Midlands and national chess scenes. He was awarded an OBE for services to chess in 1977, captained with some success the England national team from 1972 until 1990 – during which time they won two silver and three bronze medals; no mean feat in such a USSR-dominated era – and also had spells serving as BCF President and on the FIDE Executive Board.



David Anderton

Born in Walsall and educated at Tettenhall College, David Anderton lived and worked locally as a solicitor, as well as later also as a Deputy District Judge. He regularly made use of his legal skills to help both the BCF and various leading events of the 1970s and 1980s obtain sponsorship, such as with Phillips & Drew and in dealing with the GLC ahead of the 1986 world championship match in London. Not only was David a regular player and captain for Walsall Kipping and Staffordshire, he was also a strong player, winning the British

Senior Championship on some five occasions, as well as the 1979 Midlands Championship.

MAY 2022

4NCL – Guildford Young Guns defeated Blackthorne 3½-½ in the final of the top flight of a fifth season of the 4NCL Online League. Mark Hebden defeated Laurence Webb on top board and while Matthew Wadsworth was held to a draw by Adam A. Taylor, both Brandon Clarke and Harry Grieve also won. Our congratulations to the Young Guns and also the other divisional winners, Farnham, Hebden Bridge, Dundee City C and Beckenham.

AYR – The Ayr Congress (April 22-24) saw IM Andrew Greet defeated by rising teenage star Rajat Makkar, who in turn lost to veteran IM Roddy McKay. That resulted in a threeway tie for first in the Open, while Greet had to settle for success in the Saturday night blitz tournament which he won with 7/7.

Open: 1-3 Roddy McKay (Cathcart), Jamie Malkin (Kilmarnock), Nicolas Skettos (Glasgow) 4/5.

Major: 1 Peter Clarke (Glasgow) 4½, 2 Daniel Kitaev (Grangemouth) 4, 3-6 Ryan Wood (Rugeley), Shea McPherson (Bellshill), Zizheng Liu (Strathclyde University), Alex Keenan (Hamilton) 3½.

Minor: 1 Rodriguez Rosales Alvaro (Bearsden) 4, 2-3 Duncan McAlister (Carrick), Andrew Gillies (Hamilton) 3½.

DARLINGTON – The County Durham Congress filled the Dolphin Centre (May 6-8), with the event opened by the Mayor of Darlington, Cyndi Hughes, while one honoured guest was Baroness Hale of Richmond, the widow of the much-missed Julian Farrand. At the board, Brandon Clarke held in the final round against Danny Gormally en route to first place in the Open, while 8-year-old Ukrainian refugee Maksym Kryshtafor survived a couple of suspect positions to finish on an impressive 5/5 in the Minor.

Open: 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 4½/5, 2-7 Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Daniel Gormally (Alnwick), Peter Large (Epsom), David Walker (Leam Lane), Clement Frederic (France), Zoe Varney (Durham University) 4.

Major: 1 Luke Remus Elliot (Durham University) 5, 2-3 Anthony Sweeting (South Shields), Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster) 4.

Minor: 1 Maksym Kryshtafor (Odessa/York) 5, 2 Rojus Lukasuskas (Lithuania) 4½, 3-6 Luke Owen (Darlington), Bruno Dos Santos Silva (Birmingham), Graham Wilson (Harrogate), Michael Allen (South Shields) 4.

EDINBURGH – Should you be visiting Edinburgh this summer, we're delighted to announce that Chess in the Park has returned for the summer to Princes Street Gardens. Simply visit the Fountain Cafe for a game should you be there between 2 and 5pm on a Thursday or Sunday.

KENILWORTH – The Chessable English Seniors Championships proved quite a success in Kenilworth (4-7 May). Mark Hebden drew with old rival Keith Arkell then managed to remain half a point ahead to pick up the £650 first prize in the Over-50s, while a closely-fought Over-65s section landed up in a three-way tie.

Over-50: 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 6½/7, 2 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 6, 3-5 Don Mason (Birmingham), Mark Josse (Surbiton), Jonathan Nelson (Sheffield) 4½.

Over-65: 1-3 Cliff Chandler (Maidstone), Ian Snape (Beckenham), Paul Littlewood (St Albans) 5½.

Dinah Norman became Women's Over-65 Champion, while WIM Natasha Regan took the Over-50s Women's title and finished on 50%, in part due to a fine win over IM Andrew Ledger.

N. Regan - A. Ledger

English Over-50 Championship, Kenilworth 2022

Reti Opening

Notes by Natasha Regan and Matthew Sadler

1 ♖f3 ♗f6 **2** c4 g6 **3** b4

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

3... ♗g7 **4** ♗b2 **0-0** **5** g3 c6 **6** ♗g2 d5 **7** cxd5
♗xd5

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

8 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 **9** ♖b3

9 0-0!? is an idea the engines are very keen on, sacrificing the b-pawn and grabbing central space in return.

9... ♖b6 **10** a3 a5 **11** b5!?

A bold sacrifice. **11** ♗c3 axb4 **12** ♗xd5 cxd5 **13** 0-0 was the safer way to play.

11...a4

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

12 ♖c4 ♖xb5 **13** ♖xb5 cxb5 **14** ♗d4



Knight action that uncovers an attack on Black's knight on d5 and eyes the b5-pawn.

14... ♖c7

Not a favourite move of the engines who all prefer returning the pawn immediately for easy development with 14... ♜d8.

15 ♗c3 ♜a5

15... ♞d7 16 ♞xb7 ♜a7 followed by ...e5 seems like a more efficient approach for Black. We reach a similar position in the game, but with White's rook active on b1 and Black's rook a little oddly placed on a5.

16 ♜b1 ♞d7 17 ♞xb7 e5 18 ♗c2

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

18... ♞h3

This seems like a step in the wrong direction. Black prevents the white king from castling and frees d7 for the knight on b8 but weakens his coverage of the queenside light squares which turns out to be significant.

19 ♗b4! ♜d8

19... ♗d7? 20 ♗c6 traps the rook on a5, so Black's knight is still pinned to b8.

20 d3 ♜d6 21 ♞f3

The threat of g3-g4 is now in the air.

21... ♞e6 22 h4

A familiar strategy, gaining kingside space, is cute in this position, looking to create advantages on the opposite wing in addition to White's solidly-entrenched pieces on the queenside. 22 ♗e4 is also quite scary.

22...f5 23 h5 ♞b3 24 g4



A really good move, exploiting Black's last move to put more pressure on the black kingside. The threat of h6 followed by opening the g-file and then invading along it is very attractive.

24... ♗e6 25 h6+

Another thematic Game Changer move. On this occasion, however, the engines want something even simpler: 25 hxg6 hxg6 26 gxf5 gxf5 27 ♔d2 followed by ♜bg1+ and invading along both the g- and h-files.

25... ♔f8 26 gxf5 gxf5 27 ♜h5 ♗d4 28 ♞d5 ♞xd5 29 ♗cxd5 ♔f7 30 ♜c1 ♔g6 31 ♜h1 ♗d7 32 e3 ♗e6 33 ♜c8

33 ♗e7+ ♔f6 34 ♗c8 is a really elegant engine suggestion to trap the black rooks in the open board with both knights, but the text is simple, strong and effective.

33... ♔f7 34 ♜g1 ♗df8 35 ♗c7

White is consistent in targeting the h7-pawn.

35... ♗g6 36 ♔e2!? ♗e7

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

37 ♖h8 ♗xc7 **38** ♖g7+ ♕f6 **39** ♖hx7 ♗cd5
40 ♖h8 ♗g6 **41** ♗xd5+ ♖xd5 **42** ♖hg8 **1-0**

LONDON – March's winner, Yichen Han, returned to the Golders Green Rapidplay on May 7th and again made 6/6 as top seed Alexander Cherniaev was defeated by Peter Sowray, who had already lost to the eventual winner.

Open: 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 6/6, 2 Maciej Czopor (Wood Green) 5, 3-4 Peter Sowray (Hammersmith), Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 4½.

Under-1800: 1-2 Shrihan Koppuravuri (Aylesbury), Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) 5, 3-6 Henry Neenan (Gerrards Cross), Max Phillips (Somerset), Supratit Banerjee (Coulsdon), Liam Clery (Richmond) 4.

Under-1450: 1 Rui Pedro Alves (Portugal) 5½, 2 Levente Lencses (Richmond) 5, 3 Vijay Katukuri (Petts Wood) 4½.

NOTTINGHAM – Nottingham High School hosted 118 players for the return of the city's annual congress (April 23-24), an event which boasted a decent prize fund. Having only completed the requirements for the IM title the weekend before in Dublin, Jonah Willow might have been in a laid-back mood, but there was no sign of that as he defeated Mark Hebden then held against Brandon Clarke to deservedly collect the £750 first prize.

Open: 1 Jonah Willow (Nottingham) 4½/5, 2-3 Brandon Clarke (Ely), Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 4.

Major: 1-4 Sammy Benzaira (West Nottingham University), Alejandro Lopez-Martinez, James Luong (both Sheffield University), David Wells (York) 4.

Intermediate: 1-4 Andre Cockburn (Derby), John Robinson (Anstey), Bill Ward (Woodseats, Sheffield), Paul Wheatley (Sheffield University) 4.

Minor: 1 James McBain (Lincolnshire) 5, 2 Furkan Bahtiyar (Trakya Satranc) 4, 3-4 Jamie Woodhouse (Woodseats), Benjamin Humphries (Nottingham Juniors) 3½.

Improvers: 1 Joseph Hogan (Scotland) 4½, 2-3 Elliott Kent (Gateshead), Oscar Hunter-Wells (Oxfordshire) 4.

M. Hebden - J. Willow

Nottingham 2022

Torre Attack

1 d4 ♗f6 **2** ♗f3 e6 **3** ♘g5 h6 **4** ♘xf6 ♖xf6 **5**
e4 d6 **6** ♗c3 g5!? **7** e5 ♖g7 **8** ♗b5 ♕d8!?

A bold-looking novelty, but Black's king will actually prove quite safe here.

9 exd6

9 g4!? followed by ♖e2 and 0-0-0 is likely the critical test and note too here that 9...h5? runs into, amongst others, 10 h4!, and if 10...gxh4 11 g5.

9...cxd6 10 ♖d2 g4 **11** ♗g1 ♗c6 **12** ♗e2 ♖g5
13 ♖xg5+?

White is never able to obtain enough play in the centre after this, leaving Black dominating with his kingside pressure and bishop-pair. As such, 13 ♗f4! was essential, and if 13...a6 14 ♗c3 d5 15 h4! gxh3 16 ♖xh3 when 16...♘d6? would fail to 17 ♗xe6+!

13...hxg5 14 d5!? exd5

This was a Sunday morning game. 14...♗b4! just looks like a clear extra pawn for Black after 15 0-0-0 ♗xd5 or 15 ♖d1 ♗xc2+ 16 ♖d2 ♗b4 17 dxe6 fxe6.

15 0-0-0 ♘e6 **16** g3 ♖c8



16...♔d7! 17 ♕g2 ♖e8! holds everything together in view of 18 ♗bc3 ♗e7 and 18 ♗ec3 a6 19 ♗d4 ♕g7.

17 ♕g2 ♔d7 18 a3!?

Black has drifted to an extent and White might have recouped his pawn with 18 ♗bc3.

18... ♗e7?

Counterattacking against the knight on e2 with 18...♖e8! would again have left Black doing pretty well.

19 ♗xa7! ♖c5 20 ♗d4 ♕g7 21 ♗ab5 ♗c6 22 c3

White's knights are well placed, and Hebden is right back in the game.

22... ♗e5 23 ♕f1 ♖h6 24 ♕e2 ♖c8!

Black has spied a target.

25 ♖d2?

25 ♖dg1 ♖ch8 26 ♖g2 looks a bit suboptimal, but is actually OK, as is 25 a4!? ♖ch8 26 b4 ♖xh2 27 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 28 ♖f1 when it's far from easy to find a great plan for Black and the engines think White is absolutely fine.

25... ♖ch8



26 f4?

As so often, mistakes go together in pairs. 26 ♖dd1! ♖xh2 27 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 28 ♖f1 still wouldn't have been too terrible for White.

26...gxf4 27 gxf4 ♖xh2! 28 ♖xh2 ♖xh2 29 fxe5?

White needed to find 29 ♕xg4!, with some chances to yet save the game after 29...♗xg4 30 ♖xh2 ♗xh2 31 f5.

29... ♕h6 Now the g-pawn's a winner.

30 ♔c2 ♕xd2 31 ♔xd2 dxe5 32 ♗xe6 fxe6 0-1

SLIGO – The Sligo Spring tournament (April 29 - May 1) was a big success, with invited Ukrainian WGM Evgeniya Doluhanova picking up €600 for dominating the Masters with 4½/5. A slightly rusty Alexander Baburin was second on 3½, while the other two sections saw plenty of success for Ukrainian and young players. Lukian Hushpit won the Major with 5/5, while the 87-player Challenger saw both Dariy Kelbas and Jackie Liu rack up a perfect score.

WALES – We reported last month on the return to over-the-board chess in Wales with the Welsh Championships and in late April there were three simul for the Ukraine appeal. FM Grzegorz Toczek gave 20-board simul at the Rhondda and Cardiff Chess Clubs,

while Tim Kett gave one at North Cardiff Chess Club.

JUNE 2022

AYR – The Ayr Platinum Jubilee Congress (June 3-5) was part of the Scottish Chess Tour and attracted 57 players to the westcoast town.

Open: 1 Jonathan McKay (Glasgow) 5/6, 2 Tom Leah (Edinburgh) 4½, 3-4 Steven Brown (Ardrossan), Alan Jelfs (Renfrewshire) 4.

Major: 1 Alex McDonald (Greenwood) 5, 2-3 Prateek Wadhwa (Glasgow University), Daniel Kitaev (Grangemouth) 4½.

Minor: 1 Fraser McIntyre (Troon) 5½, 2-4 Iain Shields, Jordan McNaught (both Glasgow), Robert McLaughlin (Irvine) 4.

BARROW-IN-FURNESS – The South Lakes Congress took place at the Forum Arts Centre in Barrow (June 3-5).

Open: 1 Peter Large (Epsom) 4½/5, 2 Nigel Davies (Southport) 4, 3-6 Jim Burnett (Doncaster), Mike Surtees (Bolton), Colin Purdon (Camberley), Yaoyao Zhu (Calderdale) 3.

Major: 1-2 Richard Jennings (Aberdeen), Tony Slinger (Garforth) 4, 3-4 Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Alannah Ashton (Calderdale) 3½.

Intermediate: 1-2 Gordon Christie (Shirley), Frankier Murray (East Kilbride) 4, 3 George Home (Barrow) 3½.

Minor I: 1 Ahmed Abbas (3Cs) 4½, 2 Colin Watkinson (Isle of Man) 4, 3-5 Martin Beardsley, Gary Clarke (both Gosforth), Paul Taylor (Holywell) 3½.

Minor II: 1 Yannick Woods (Sligo) 4½, 2 James Ovens (Carlisle) 4, 3-5 Paul Ashton (Scarborough), Stanley Johnson (South Shields), Dylan Whitney (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 3½.

EDINBURGH – Tim Wall organised for Edinburgh Chess Club an IM norm all-play-all tournament (June 1-5) to help mark the club's bicentenary. Playing his first event under the Scottish flag, IM Angus Dunnington was lured

back to the board and finished with an unbeaten 6/9, half a point behind FM Hamish Olsson, with Andrew Burnett and Neil Berry back on '+2'. Further special events planned by the club will see them taking part in Edinburgh's 'Doors Open' festival over the weekend of September 24th and 25th, while three weeks earlier Lorin D'Costa and She Plays to Win will be running a weekend in Edinburgh in support of women and girls in chess.

KENILWORTH – We've already noted Mark Hebden's success in the Chessable English Championship in these pages. Alongside in Kenilworth (May 19-22), the English Women's Championship saw WIM Lan Yao (University College London) pick up £750 for her score of 6/7. Plenty of young players did well, not least from Essex, with Alaa Gamal (Basildon) finishing just half a point behind Yao, while back in third were Nina Pert (Billericay) and Mae Catabay (Colchester).

L. Yao - A. Milewska

English Women's Ch., Kenilworth 2022



52 ♔xg7+! ♖xg7 53 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 54 ♘xg7
♙xg7 55 d7 1-0

LIVINGSTON – The Livingston Blitz and Allegro took place at the Mercure Livingston Hotel on May 13th and 15th, a Friday evening and Sunday. Lennart Koehn (East Kilbride) won the blitz with 8/9, finishing half a point ahead of

Calum MacQueen (Edinburgh), while in the rapidplay Alan Tate (Edinburgh) and Andrew Newton (Inverness) tied for first on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$, with Mark Brown (Broxburn) and Neev Lukhi (Kirkintilloch) doing likewise in the Under-1650 section.

LONDON – Hammersmith Chess Club celebrated completing a season in their new home of the Mind Sports Centre with a special congress, ‘Hamrratty’, which was designed to reproduce the popular social and laid-back atmosphere at the famous Bunratty Congress. In W6, the Hamrratty title went to Yichen Han (Oxford) following an Armageddon game after he and Richard Bates (Richmond) had finished on $4\frac{1}{2}/5$ in what was a pretty strong Open (June 4-5). Julie Oh (Barnet) was the top-scoring female player with $3\frac{1}{2}/5$, while Luca Buanne (Richmond) and Theodoros Vasiliadis (Greece) bagged the Under-2200 and Under-1950 rating prizes.

The Mind Sports Centre also played host to the Caplin Menchik Memorial, which had just begun as we went to press. John Ashworth, CEO of Caplin Systems, made the ceremonial opening move in the first round.



FM Yichen Han

NEWRY – Brendan Jamison isn’t just a sculptor and artist, but also a 1720-rated chess player and FIDE Arbiter. He put on a special chess festival at the Sticky Fingers Arts Centre in Newry (May 27-29), which featured a simul

followed by a four-round Open played with 60 minutes per player per game. Conor Spackman (Strand) top-scored with $3\frac{1}{2}/4$, finishing half a point ahead of Cathal Murphy, while all the games took place beneath Jamison’s vibrant ceiling sculpture. Elsewhere in Northern Ireland, the Ulster Rapidplay took place at the Civil Service Pavilion in Belfast on 22nd May. Danny Roberts (Civil Service) and Gareth Annesley (Belfast South) shared leading honours in the top Seniors section with $5/6$, with the former taking the title on tie-break, while Pat McKillen (Queen’s University) saw off Jade Sandrey in the Intermediate after both had also finished on $5/6$.

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA – We’ve already reported on the 4NCL Easter Congress and the Welsh Championships over that same weekend, but there was also the famous Southend Congress (April 14-18), which began on the Thursday with a rapidplay in which David Haydon (Brentwood) won the Open with $5\frac{1}{2}/6$. The main congress boasted a £730 first prize in the 76-strong Open, which was won by visiting Swedish FM Joakim Nilsson.

Open: 1 Joakim Nilsson (Sweden) $6\frac{1}{2}/7$, 2 David Maycock Bates (Kingston) 6, 3-4 Thomas Villiers (Muswell Hill), Alfie Onslow (Ealing) $5\frac{1}{2}$.

Under-1950: 1-2 Alisha Vyas (Barnet), Luoke Wang (Brentwood) $5\frac{1}{2}$, 3-6 Peter Laundy (Basildon), Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Kushal Jakhria (Charlton), Sean Colliety (Linton) $4\frac{1}{2}$.

Under-1750: 1 Li Jiping (Sheffield University) $5\frac{1}{2}$, 2-3 Ryan Colcough, David Smith (both Wanstead) 4.

Under-1650: 1 Hemanth Gokul Medapati (Chelmsford) 6, 2-5 Simon Morris (south-west London), Rezin Catabay (Colchester), Qixuan Han (Coulsdon), Stephen Simpson (London) $4\frac{1}{2}$.

Under-1450: 1-2 Joshua Davis (Southend), James Black (Brentwood) $5\frac{1}{2}$, 3-6 Keven Lamb (Chandlers Ford), Sujana Nargund (Uxbridge), Viet Le (Essex), Taylor Duke (Southend) $4\frac{1}{2}$.

JULY 2022

BRIDGEND – Peter Wells won his final four games, overcoming Welsh Champion and White Rose 4NCL team-mate Jose Camacho Collados in the last round to win the 17th South Wales International (July 7-12).

Leading scores: 1 Peter Wells (Swindon) 8/9, 2 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 7, 3-7 Jose Camacho Collados (Cardiff), John Richardson (Hendon), Jack Rudd (Barnstaple), Hugh Murphy (Rushden), Andrei Maksimenko (Ukraine) 6.

J. Camacho Collados - P. Wells

Bridgend 2022



33 ♖b3?

White looks to be under pressure, but actually wouldn't be doing too badly after 33 ♗h3. Instead, he was to overlook a tactic.

33... ♗xd4! 34 ♖h1?

Collapsing, although it's hard to believe 34 ♖g3 ♗g7 35 ♗h3 d4 wouldn't have led to the same result.

34... ♖xf2 35 ♖f1 ♖xe2 36 ♖h3 ♗g7 37 ♖g3 ♖xg2+! The simplest.

38 ♖xg2 ♖xg2 39 ♖xg2 ♗c3 40 ♖f2 d4 41 ♖a2 e3+ 42 ♗g3 d3 43 ♖a7+ ♗f8 0-1

DARLINGTON – Well marshalled by Tim Wall, Northumberland won their first County Championship as they defeated Yorkshire in Darlington on July 2nd. Yorkshire staged a late fight back to only go down on board count, but

were always up against it, Danny Gormally and David Eggleston outplaying your Editor and Andrew Ledger on the top boards.

Yorkshire had the consolation of winning the Under-1850 Championship as they defeated Middlesex 9-7 in Ullesthorpe. Essex won the Under-2050 and Under-1450 titles, overcoming Surrey 8½-7½ and 7-5 at Wanstead House. That same venue also saw Surrey crush Warwickshire 13½-2½ in the Under-1650 section, while Minor Counties Champions are Devon who defeated Norfolk 9-7 in Knaphill, Surrey.

DUNDEE – Tushar Roul triumphed at the Dundee Allegro on July 10th, which was part of the Scottish Chess Tour.

Leading scores: 1 Tushar Roul (East Kilbride) 5/5, 2-4 Ross Blackford (Dunbar), Andre Babin (Dundee), Rhian Hughes (Newport-on-Tay) 3½.

EDINBURGH – While celebrating its 200th birthday, Edinburgh Chess Club played host to the 127th Scottish Championship (July 2-10). As we'll discover in more detail next month, a number of players unsurprisingly looked quite rusty, but there could be no doubt that St Andrews student Murad Abdulla was a worthy winner. The 2017 and 2018 Champion tied for first with fellow FM Keith Ruxton on 6½/9 but had the superior performance rating. Lennart Koehn was third, a point adrift, with a number of titled players finishing on just '+1', IMs Douglas Bryson, Angus Dunnington, Roddy McKay, Mark Orr and Craig Pritchett, as well as FMs Neil Berry and Andrew Burnett.

KENILWORTH – For a second 4NCL Congress in a row at Kenilworth (July 8-10), Mark Hebden got the better of Danny Gormally and claimed the top prize.

Open: 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 4½/5, 2-7 Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Gary Quillan (Liverpool), Roland Bezuidenhout, Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham), Matthew Payne (Worthing), Callum Brewer (Brighton) 4.

Major: 1-2 John Garnett (Stockton), Zak Tomlinson (Doncaster) 4½, 3 Matthew Holmes (Witney) 4.

Minor: 1-3 Paul Salisbury (Wetherby), Manel Fernando (Swindon), Magnus Borissow (Guildford) 4½.

LONDON – The ‘In Memoriam’ blitz tournament again took place at that legendary London chess venue, the Kings Head, on Saturday 21st May thanks to the support of David Norwood. The sponsor battled through to the semi-finals where he was eliminated by GM Alexander Cherniaev. Stuart Conquest reached the semis too before being knocked out by Michael Adams, who made short work of Cherniaev in the final, winning 2-0.



IM Tom Rendle

S. Conquest - T. Rendle

Kings Head (blitz) 2022

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗d2 a6 4 ♗gf3 ♗f6 5 ♘d3 c5 6 0-0!? Unusual, but swift development is rarely a bad policy in blitz.

6... ♗c6

The critical test must be 6...c4! 7 ♘e2 dxe4 when 8 ♗g5 ♙xd4 9 ♗dxe4 ♙xd1 10 ♖xd1 ♗bd7 11 ♘xc4 b5 should be OK for Black, despite the hole on d6.

7 ♖e1

Continuing to insist on a fluid central situation and now 7...cxd4 8 e5 (8 exd5!? ♙xd5 9 ♗c4 ♙d8 10 ♘f4 supplies some compensation) 8... ♗d7 9 ♗b3 ♙c7 10 ♘f4 was probably the critical continuation.

7...dxe4 8 ♗xe4 cxd4 9 ♗xf6+ gxf6

And not, of course, 9... ♙xf6?? 10 ♘g5.

10 ♘e4 ♘c5?!

Risky and 10... ♘e7 was likely a better try, and if 11 ♘f4 e5.

11 ♘f4 ♘d7

Now 11...e5 might be met by 12 ♘xc6+!? bxc6 13 ♗xe5 fxe5 14 ♖xe5+ ♘e7 15 ♙f3, which feels very dangerous for Black, although the silicon opines matters are under control after the fearless 15...0-0.

12 a3



Threatening b4. Black is a pawn to the good but is about to have significant weaknesses right across the board.

12...a5?!

12...e5 13 ♘g3 ♘e7 was the lesser evil, remaining more compact

13 ♙d2 ♙b6 14 ♘g3! ♖d8?

Not for the first time in such positions, 14...h5! was required to stave off the invasion.

15 ♖h6 ♜e7 16 ♚g7 ♜f8 17 ♜ab1 ♚c5 18 ♚xh7

Regaining the pawn with a huge advantage since Black is bottled up and devoid of counterplay.

18... ♜d6 19 ♜h4 ♜e7 20 ♜bd1 ♚b6 21 b3 ♚c5 22 ♚g7 ♚xa3 23 ♜xf6 ♜xf6 24 ♚xf6 ♚e7 25 ♚h6 ♚c5 26 ♜g5!



It's high time to begin to harry the black king.

26... ♚e7 27 ♚h4 ♚e8

Unfortunately for Black, 27... ♜h8 fails to 28 ♜xe6+! ♜xh4 29 ♜xc5, but in any case there's no defence.

28 ♜h7 ♜h8 29 ♜f6+ ♚e7 30 ♜g8+! 1-0

Ukrainian Eldar Gasanov was stunned by Peter Finn as fellow grandmaster Alexander Cherniaev triumphed at the Golders Green Rapidplay on June 18th.

Open: 1 GM Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5½/6, 2-4 Eldar Gasanov (West London), Mikey Watson (Petts Wood), Peter Large (Epsom) 5.

Major: 1 Rock Yu 6 (Newham), 2 Ronit Sachdeva (Guildford) 5, 3 William Drennan (Battersea) 4½.

Minor: 1 Orest Stus (Ukraine) 5½, 2-4 Sujan Nargund (Richmond), Thomas Aoun (Imperial College), Aahan Sinalkar (Coulsdon) 4½. Cherniaev also won the £100 first prize on July 2nd.

Open: 1 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5½/6, 2-3 Yichen Han (Oxford), Evangelos Kostopoulos (Greece) 5.

Major: 1 Alexander Funk (Hendon) 5½, 2-3 Rock Yu (Newham), Alexander Nikolov (Surrey) 5.

Minor: 1 Sujan Nargund (Richmond) 5, 2-5 Jason Birbas (south-east London), Delroy Bennett (Lewisham), Pierre Nedellec (Barnet), Alexander Horwood (Harrow) 4½.

Despite the rail strikes, 16 players still made it to another Adam Raof event, the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on June 21st.

Hendon's Oscar Pollack defeated Cherniaev as he top-scored with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Ernest Ignatovic. It was then the turn of Israeli Ido Porat to make 5½/6 on July 12th with fellow IM Peter Large half a point behind.

MALPAS – The World Senior Team Championships in Acqui Terme (June 20-29) not only attracted seven English teams, but sides representing Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Scotland finished on 10/18 in the Over-50 Championship, with IM David Levy making a welcome return and scoring 50% on bottom board, while the Welsh second team, Wales Cymru, could only draw three matches. The main story, however, was Charles Higgie of Malpas & Oswestry Chess Club belying his 1926 rating as he scored 3/8 on top board, defeating FM Andrew Burnett and also drawing with his first grandmaster in Alex Baburin.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON – The National Schools Championships Final made a welcome return on Thursday 30th June and Friday 1st July. Westminster School defeated Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School (Elstree) 4-2 in the final round to finish on 4½/5 and claim the title. King's College School (Wimbledon) and Wilson's School (Wallington) both won three and drew two matches, with the former taking second and the Richard Haddrell Trophy on tie-break.

AUGUST 2022

BATTLE – The ECF have announced that Manchester’s John Reyes and Robert Dennington from Leeds finished in the top two places in the ballot to become silver ECF membership representatives. They will now take their place alongside Stewart Reuben and Gerry Walsh (lifetime members), Adrian Elwin and David Eustace (platinum members), Luke Russell and Tim Wall (gold members), and Gareth Ellis and Tina Teotia (bronze members). We should also mention Shohreh Bayat, who was a fitting recipient of the award for Outstanding Chess Arbiter from Europe at the Year of the Woman in Chess Awards during the Olympiad in Chennai.

CLEETHORPES – Former local GM Matthew Turner triumphed at the inaugural Cleethorpes Rapidplay, which attracted 85 players to the north Lincolnshire coast on July 3rd.

Open: 1 Matthew Turner (Glastonbury) 5/6, 2-3 Gediminas Sarakauskas (Manchester), Sam Milson (Louth) 4½.

Major: 1-2 Alex Royle (Louth), Ionel Dragan (Workop) 5½, 3 John Cawston (Selby) 4½.

Minor: 1 Eldars Gulijevs (West Nottingham) 5½, 2-3 Andrew Watson (Skegness), Neil Milson (Louth) 5.

EDINBURGH – Scottish-based readers may wish to remember that on September 3rd and 4th, Lorin D’Costa and She Plays to Win will be at Edinburgh Chess Club to run two days of chess training. Lorin will also give a talk at 6.30pm on the Saturday evening, which is open to all, if with priority booking for women. Also as part of their bicentenary, Edinburgh CC will be open over the weekend of September 24th and 25th as part of the city’s ‘Doors Open’ festival.

GLASGOW – The 2022 Glorney Cup was played as a hybrid event, with the respective teams based in Glasgow, Cardiff, Daventry and Stillorgan (July 19-21). England won all six matches in the Glorney Cup, with Arnav

Srivastava racking up 6/6 on board 3, while Aron Saunders and Frankie Badacsonyi amassed 5½/6 on boards 4 and 5 respectively. England also proved far too strong in the Gilbert Cup, Georgia Headlong and Emily Maton scoring 5/6, while Anusha Subramanian managed a perfect score.

The Under-14 Robinson Cup was harder fought, with England and Ireland exchanging victories, the former prevailing on board points after both sides had finished on 10/12. England’s biggest hitters were Avyukt Dasgupta, who racked up 5/6 on board 2, and Stanley Badacsonyi who scored 5½/6 on board 4, while the top Irish scorers with 4½/6 were Patryk Brozynski and Jason Liu. The Under-12 Stokes competition saw success too for England, also with a score of 10/12 to finish a point ahead of Scotland, with board 3 Qixuan Han the top English scorer with 5½/6.

LANCASTER – The top section of the Lancaster Congress on June 18th, which was actually a rapidplay, was a strong six-player all-play-all.

Open: 1 Gediminas Sarakauskas (Manchester) 4/5, 2-4 Nigel Davies (Southport), Mike Surtees (Great Lever), Oliver Gill (Kendal) 3.

Major: 1 Adam Scoular (Swinton & Worsley) 4½/5, 2-5 Peter Garrett (Poulton-le-Fylde), David Shaw (Kendal), Ewan Kershaw (Lancaster), Jonathan Bennett (Marple) 4.

Minor: 1 Farhad Amar-Afshari (Atticus) 5/5, 2-3 Max Littlewood (Penistone), Edward Rigby (Southport) 4.

LIVINGSTON – Max Turner amassed a perfect score at the Livingston Allegro on July 31st.

Open: 1 Max Turner (Berwick) 6/6, 2-3 Neil Farrell (Edinburgh), Daniel Kitaev (Kirkintilloch) 4½.

Intermediate: 1 Louis Cheng 5½, 2 Gordon Greig (both Edinburgh) 5, 3-4 Rhys McCrosson (Govanhill), Kanishka Bhatia (Kirkintilloch) 4½.



GM Alexander Cherniaev

LONDON – Alexander Cherniaev conceded a draw in round 2 to Connor Clarke at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on August 6th, but thereafter won the remainder of his games. Perhaps surprisingly, in this 50-player Swiss, Cherniaev managed to avoid Eldar Gasanov, who dropped a draw to David Zakarian. The two GMs both landed up on 5½/6, winning £75 each, with the £50 rating prize going to St Albans’ Emily Maton for her 3½/6.

Open: 1-2 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Eldar Gasanov (West London) 5½/6, 3 David Zakarian (Oxford) 5.

Major: 1 Supratit Banerjee (Coulsdon) 5½, 2 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill) 5, 3-6 Alex Gao (Charlton), George Horan (Bury St Edmunds), Alexander Wagner (FIDE), Junyi Zhang (Coulsdon) 4½.

Minor: 1 Aditya Asnani (Kensington) 5½, 2-5 James Dane, Peter Hazell (both Coulsdon), Leo Rubiales Kowalski (Hammersmith), Cristian Delendrea (Hatch End) 4½.

Cherniaev went one better and scooped the £100 first prize with 6/6 at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on July 19th, finishing a point and a half ahead of Hendon’s Ilya Iyengar. An even more notable and recent Adam Raof initiative has been the Kensington Rapidplay, which takes place at the Holiday Inn, Wrights Lane, just a few minutes’ walk from High Street Kensington Tube. The tournaments run on Sunday afternoons from 12.30-18.30, with the next one scheduled for September 18th. July 31st saw a record entry at Kensington as Stuart Conquest racked up 6/6 in a large and strong Open to claim the £200 top prize.

Open: 1 Stuart Conquest (Gibraltar) 6/6, 2 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5½, 3-6 Eldar Gasanov (West London), Oscar Pollack (Hendon), Rohan Bansal (Battersea), Graeme Buckley (Wimbledon) 5.

Major: 1-2 Sam Hall (Warwick University), Ayan Pradhan (Coulsdon) 5, 3-4 Zoran Dimitrijevic (Serbia), James Fazzolari (Australia) 4½.

Minor: 1 Daniel Douglas (south-east London) 6, 2-5 Darcy Quinn-Sekyi (Cambridge), Guy Smith (London), Michael Domarkas (Wallington), Oscar Dybowski (Newham) 5.

Three weeks earlier, on July 10th, it had been the turn of Gavin Wall to triumph after defeating U.S. Grandmaster Nicolas Checa in the final round.

Open: 1 Gavin Wall (Richmond) 5½, 2-4 Nicolas Checa (USA), Harry Grieve (Guildford), Alberto Suarez Real (Wimbledon) 5.

Major: 1 Lucas Oliveri (Haywards Heath) 6, 2 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill) 5, 3 Jack Virgin (Charlton) 4½.

Minor: 1 Michael Domarkas (Wallington) 5½, 2 Michael Buckingham (Wanstead) 5, 3-4 Eddie Haines (Berkshire), Amy Ba (Oxford) 4½.



GM Ravi Haria

STAFFORD – Regular readers may recall Lawrence Cooper’s report in our October pages last year on the first Wood Green Invitational in his hometown of Stafford. There at the Oddfellows Hall’s Ravi Haria made a GM norm and at the second Wood Green Invitational at the same venue (July 14-19), he

once again dominated proceedings, largely outclassing the opposition as he racked up a huge 7½/9 to finish a point ahead of Irish IM David Fitzsimons who narrowly missed out on a norm.

R. Haria - J. Willow

Stafford 2022

Sicilian Moscow

1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 ♘b5+ ♗d7 4 a4

An innocuous looking line, if fairly trendy of late and not without some bite.

4... ♗gf6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♘e2 g6 7 0-0 ♘g7 8 a5

Seizing space so is White's main point.

8...0-0 9 d3 b5 10 axb6 ♘b7?!

Black shouldn't delay 10... ♗xb6 and after 11 h3 a5 12 e5 ♗fd5 13 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 14 exd6 exd6 he was fine in Tari-Giri, Chessable Masters (rapid) 2022.

11 ♗d2!

Now 11... ♗xb6 12 ♗b3 ♖b8 13 ♘e3 followed by ♗d2 is a pleasant edge for White, as would be 11... ♗xb6 12 ♗c4 ♗c7 13 ♘f4, but Willow's attempt to dissuade ♗c4 only serves to make matters even worse for him.

11...d5?! 12 ♗a4! dxe4

Clearly 12... ♗xb6? 13 ♗xc5 won't do and 12... ♘c6 13 ♗b3 ♘xa4 14 b7! ♖b8 15 ♖xa4 ♖xb7 16 ♖xa6 also looks rather good for White, so perhaps Black had to grovel with 12... ♗c8!?, as opening the centre doesn't especially help matters.

13 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 14 dxe4 ♘xe4 15 ♘e3



15 ♗f4! was even stronger, as then 15...e5 16 ♘e3 ♗c8 can be met by 17 ♗d6.

15... ♗c8

Willow finds the best defence, keeping c5 protected and planning to gradually round up the straggler on b6.

16 f3?!

Tempting, but it seems that White should have preferred to retain control and a clear edge with 16 c3 ♘c6 17 ♗b3.

16... ♘c6 17 ♗xc5 ♗xc5

Hardly terrible if followed up correctly, but 17... ♗xb6! was a better chance to complicate and activate, and if 18 ♘xa6 ♗b8 19 c4 (to prevent ... ♗d5) 19... ♗a4! 20 ♗xa4 ♖xa6 with full compensation for the pawn.

18 ♘xc5 ♘xf3?

The wrong pawn, although for a human to judge that 18... ♘xb2 19 ♖b1 ♖d8! 20 ♗e1 ♘b7 is quite playable for Black isn't so easy. Not only is b6 surviving, but e7 falling and yet after 21 ♘xe7 ♘c3 22 ♗h4 ♖d4 23 ♗g3 ♖d7 the engines may well be correct that Black is OK with ... ♘d4+ on the way.

19 ♘f2

19 ♖a5!? would also have maintained White's powerful grip.

19... ♘b7 20 c3

Simple chess, keeping Black's counterplay under control, although Haria must also have been tempted by 20 c4!? ♗xb2 21 ♖b1 followed by c4-c5 and ♖c2.

20...e5?

Black's position is clearly very unpleasant, but at least after 20... ♖d8 21 ♖c2 ♖d5!? He might yet have managed to secure a bit of activity.

21 ♖a4 e4 22 ♗e3!

Putting the dampener on any hopes of activity Black may have had. Having taken control, Haria is now quick to improve his position.

22... ♗e5 23 ♖ad1 ♖b8 24 h3 ♔h8 25 ♖d7! ♖e8 26 ♗d4 ♗c8?



27 ♖dxf7! 1-0

Finishing in style as, of course, 27... ♖xa4 gets mated: 28 ♗xe5+ ♔g8 29 ♖xf8#.

SEPTEMBER 2022

BANGOR – Richard Morrow of Bangor Chess Club top-scored with 5½/6 at his local City of Bangor Congress, a rapid event on September 3rd. One of Ulster's strongest players, Danny Roberts (Civil Service CC), was half a point behind in clear second, with David Obasi of Queen's University a further half point back and Bernie McCarthy (Belfast Central Library) finishing as the top female player.

BATTLE – Judges Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh have announced the shortlist for the ECF Book of the Year. Needless to say the four works still standing to win the award are all highly recommended, as well as available from Chess & Bridge:

Analysing the Chess Mind by Boris Gulko and Joel Sneed (Quality Chess); Richard Forster, Michael Negele and Raj Tischbierek's *Emanuel Lasker – Volume III* (Exzelsior Verlag); *Improve Your Chess Calculation* by R.B. Ramesh (New in Chess); and Michael Adams and Philip Hurtado's *Think Like a Super-GM*.

Under the guidance of ECF Director of Home Chess, Nigel Towers, eight qualifiers were held around the UK between August 29th and September 11th for the 2022 British Blitz Chess Championship. The London qualifier was unsurprisingly fairly strong where Canadian IM Jonathan Tayar only missed out on tie-break, with a similar fate befalling Marcus Harvey in Swindon. Qualifying for the Open and Women's finals on December 3rd are:

Belfast: 1 Koichi Nicholas (Meadhurst) 16½/17, 2 Mandar Tahmankar (Civil Service) 16; Louison Fuchs (France) 6, Leah Worbey (Greenisland) 4½.

Bolton: 1 Jacob Boswell (Cheddleton) 13½/15, 2 Allan Beardsworth (Stockport) 11; Natasha Regan (Epsom) 7½.

Cardiff: 1 Jose Camacho Collados (Cardiff) 14/15, 2 Oliver Stubbs (Downend) 13; Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow) 8½, Lindsay Pyun (Loughborough) 8.

Edinburgh: 1-2 Adam Bremner, Keith Ruxton 14/15; Louise Head, Svetlan Sucikova 9 (all Edinburgh).

Kenilworth: 1 Jonah Willow (West Nottingham) 14/15, 2 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 13; Elis Denele Dicen (Coventry), Katarzyna Toma (Worcestershire) 8.

London: 1 Eldar Gasanov (West London) 12/15, 2 Jonathan Speelman (West Hampstead) 11½; Kamila Hryshchenko (Ukraine) 9, Elmira Mirzoeva (FIDE) 8½.

North Shields: 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 14/15, 2 Charlie Storey (Jesmond) 13½;

Madara Orlovska (Lewisham), Anita Somton (West Nottingham) 8.

Swindon: 1 Jonathan Pein (Battersea) 13/15, 2 Yichen Han (Oxford) 12½; Stefanie Duessler (Germany), Meri Grigoryan (Cavendish) 8½.

BRENTWOOD – The Brentwood Congress was one of two events to take place over the whole of the August Bank Holiday weekend (27-29). Leading scores: 1 Savas Stoica (Hendon) 6/7, 2 Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 5½, 3 Roman Ismailov (London) 5.

CARDIFF – The South Wales Late Summer Congress (September 2-4) took place in Cardiff and comprised Open, Major and Seniors sections. Charles Morris claimed the Welsh Senior Championship with 4½/5, the same score with which the 2022 Welsh Champion, Jose Camacho Collados, won the Open.

Open: 1 Jose Camacho Collados 4½/5, 2-3 Daniel Kozusek (both Cardiff), Jason Garcia (Llanelli) 4.

Major: 1 Alun Smith 4½, 2 Mohamed Binesmael 4, 3-7 Ahmed Binesmael (all Cardiff), Rhys Davies (Rugby), Gavin Jones (Pontypridd), Gregory Lloyd (Cardiff), David Reid (Caerphilly) 3½.

Seniors: 1 Charles Morris (Wrexham) 4½, 2 Duncan Williams (Merthyr Tydfil) 3½, 3-5 Rudy van Kemenade (Aberystwyth), Mark Adams (Pontypool), Liam Penny (Cardiff) 3.

CORNWALL– John Nunn was surprisingly outplayed by Chris Fegan in the final of the third Cornwall Online Knock-out Tournament on July 24th, never managing to recover from a poor opening. Cornish-born Fegan had earlier defeated Nigel Kirkman and Lloyd Retallick and will be mainly known to readers as an active player in the capital and for his work for Chess in Schools & Communities.

EAST KILBRIDE – The East Kilbride Allegro saw FM Philip Giulian claim top honours with a perfect score on September 4th.

Open: 1 Philip Giulian (Giffnock) 5/5, 2 Roddy McKay (Cathcart) 4, 3 Neil Farrell (Edinburgh), Andrew Newton (Inverness), Chris Boyle (Giffnock) 3½.

Under-1600: 1 Ishan Kumar (Kirkintilloch) 5, 2-4 Zizheng Liu (Strathclyde University), Alex Lane (Queens Park), Christopher Nield (Bearsden) 4.

KENILWORTH – Mark Hebden was defeated by John Pitcher at the Warwickshire Rapidplay on September 6th, but still scooped the £200 first prize for his 6/7. Pitcher had already been defeated by Martin Burrows and would be held by Martin Page in the final round, but his fine performance still saw him rewarded with the title of Warwickshire Rapidplay Champion:

Open: 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 6/7, 2 John Pitcher (South Birmingham) 5½, 3 Martin Burrows (Wigston) 5.

Major: 1 Aloysius Lip (Oxford University) 7, 2 Gary Jackson (Banbury) 5, 3-5 Karan Kukreja (Coventry), Andrew Brocklehurst (Civil Service), Neil Clarke (South Birmingham) 4½.

Intermediate: 1 Roman Blinov (Oxford) 7, 2-3 Vladimirs Bovtramovics (Woking), Jason Madden (Leamington) 5.

Minor: 1 Daniel Jones (Birmingham University) 6½, 2-4 Ray Bettam (Coleshill) Jessie Campbell (Stratford), Omar Khemoudj (Leamington) 5.

LEYLAND – Lee Kay (Atherton) triumphed at the Leyland Congress (August 27-29), finishing on an unbeaten 5/6 to edge out Steven Potter (St Helens) by half a point. Back on 4/6, tying for third, were Jane Richmond and Johnathan Bourne, both of Brown Jack CC, Swindon.

LONDON – Gary Senior and Remy Rushbrooke each won £75 after sharing top honours at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on September 10th.

Open: 1-2 Gary Senior (Hendon), Remy Rushbrooke (Westminster) 5/6, 3-5 Lorezeno Lucchi (Lewisham), Balahari Bharat Kumar (Coulsdon), Chris Davison (Linton) 4½.

Major: 1 Dildarav Paratazham (Coulsdon) 5½, 2-6 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Lucian Cox (Bedford), Aden Kennedy (southeast London), Samuel Gaffney (Lowestoft), Ryan Voecks (Barnet) 4½.

Minor: 1 Aron Hegedus (Warwick University) 5½, 2-4 Levente Lencses (Richmond), Alex Horwood (Harrow), Callum Hill (Barnet) 4½.

RUSHDEN – After a last round draw with son Dmitrios, David Zakarian triumphed at the Adam Raof and Rob Hammond organised Northamptonshire Rapidplay on September 4th.

Open: 1 David Zakarian 5½/6, 2 Dmitrios Zakarian (both Oxford) 5, 3 Hugh Murphy (Rushden) 4½.

Major: 1 Adam Nawalaniec (Peterborough) 5½, 2 Harvey Craddock-Monroe (Leicester) 5, 3-5 Evan Lewis (Bedford), Nigel Young (Northampton), Antonio Mura (Rushden) 4½.

Minor: 1 Leszek Nawalaniec (Peterborough) 6, 2-3 Vijay Lad (Bedford), Anbalagan Marimuthu (Grantham) 4½.

TORQUAY – Last month we reported the results from the opening week and middle weekend of the 2022 British Chess Championships (August 8-21). Aside from Harry Grieve's excellent result in the Championship, other remaining notable results saw a threeway tie for first in the Major Open and in the Over-65 Championship John Nunn unsurprisingly proving far too strong.



GM John Nunn

Over-65 Championship: 1 John Nunn (Bude) 7/7, 2 Paul Hutchinson (Scarborough) 5½, 3-6 Geoffrey James (Brighton), Oliver Jackson (Cheshire), Jim Burnett (Doncaster), Paul Girdlestone (Swindon) 5; Women's Champion: Gillian Moore (Southampton), Dinah Norman (Wokingham), Susan Chadwick (Brighton) 3.

Major Open: 1-3 Midhun Unnikrishnan (Battersea), Peter Shaw (Wakefield), Ben Ogunshola (Swindon) 7/9.

Week Two Open: 1 Matthew Dignam (Berkhamsted) 6/7, 2 Petra Fink-Nunn (Bude) 4½, 3-5 Ifan Rathbone-Jones (Buckley), Nina Pert (Brentwood), Nasarullah Sheikh 4.

Week Two Under-2050: 1 Hugo Fowler (Street) 5½, 2 Max Pert (Brentwood) 5, 3 Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow) 4½.

Week Two Under-1950: 1-3 John Hickman (Reading), Henry Adams (Lewes), Luke Honey (Exeter) 5.

Week Two Under-1750: 1 Vjekoslav Novak (Croatia) 6, 2 Radha Ratnesan (Surbiton) 5, 3 Grant Daly (Downend) 4½.

Week Two Under-1600: 1 Jacob Liu (Watford) 5, 2 Bill Upton (South Norwood) 5½, 3 John Constable (Bude) 3½.

Week Two Under-1450: 1 Henri Blin (Guildford) 6, 2-3 Steven Mildenhall (Sutton Coldfield), Kevin Shi (Richmond) 4½.

Week Two Blitz: 1 Adam Taylor (Imperial College) 7½, 2-4 Charles Storey (Gosforth), Martin Walker (Norwich), Jai Kothari (Guildford) 7.

OCTOBER 2022

BATTLE – Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh have announced that Philip Hurtado and Michael Adams have won the ECF Book of the Year Award for the Quality Chess-produced *Think like a Super-GM*, which has unsurprisingly been very popular with customers at Chess & Bridge. The judges commented that “The two authors, in conjunction with the publisher, have produced a book of great interest and originality.”

DUNDEE – Top seed Andrew Greet was held to a draw by FM Keith Ruxton as the duo dominated the Dundee Congress (October 14-16).

Open: 1-2 Andrew Greet (Bearsden), Keith Ruxton (Edinburgh) 4½/5, 3-5 Peter Smith (Ayr), Edwin Spencer (Dundee), Alan Dunn (New Zealand) 3½.

Major: 1-3 David Hall (Perth), Chris Sykes (Corstorphine), Pisut Prayoonthamrongthiti (St Andrews) 4½.

Minor: 1 Tristan Del Mar (Edinburgh) 4½, 2-5 Ian Caldwell, Liam Mathieson (both Perth), Harry Feather (Stirling), Mark Irvine (East Kilbride) 4.

EDINBURGH – The Dean Allegro took place at Stewart’s Melville College on October 1st, resulting in success for Calum MacQueen.

Open: 1 Calum MacQueen (Edinburgh) 4½/5, 2-5 Neil Farrell (Edinburgh West), Frederick Waldhausen Gordon, Raja Palaniswamy, Jacob Watson (all Edinburgh) 4.

Intermediate: 1 Devin Grant (Canada) 5/5, 2-3 Kritan Boggarapu (Edinburgh), Aniruddha Vishwanath (Aberdeen) 4/4.

HULL – Shreyas Royal capped a remarkable couple of months as he secured in his third IM norm at the 4NCL Hull International (October

12-16), and in dramatic fashion. Entering the final day the 13-year-old was yet to win a game, but then took advantage of an off colour Matthew Wadsworth before Hungarian GM Gabor Nagy blundered a piece, to leave Royal on the magic 5/9 mark and just half a point behind the eventual winners, IM Marcus Harvey and Dutch GM Twan Burg.

There was also a strong weekend congress held alongside. While visiting the UK, Norwegian GM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen was tempted to take part and cruised to the £500 first prize with 5/5. Peter Wells and Kamila Hryshchenko also had decent tournaments, as they shared second place, the latter playing the perfect Swiss gambit as she finished by completely annihilating FM Richard Britton’s Sicilian Defence.

Open: 1 Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (Norway) 5/5, 2-3 Peter Wells (Swindon), Kamila Hryshchenko (Sussex) 4.

Major: 1-2 Lorenzo Fava (Cambridge), Joseph Catto (Hull) 4½/5, 3-5 Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Stephen Crow (Hull), Roman Blinov (Oxford) 4.

Minor: 1 Stellio Jerome (Pinner) 4½, 2-3 Colin Weller (Scarborough), Shriaansh Ganti (Wakfield) 4.

In less optimal news from Hull, we were saddened to hear of the death of Roelof Westra (x.iv.1932 - xxvi.ix.2022), long one of the city’s leading players and a top board during Hull’s domination of the Yorkshire League, as they won its premier Woodhouse Cup competition every season from 1986/87 to 1999/2000. Roelof was also British Senior Champion back in 1993 and widely known for his pure approach and good manners at the board, as well as hospitality and a willingness to impart helpful advice away from it. His younger brother Duko also passed away at the age of 88, just over a week later. While never as strong a player as Roelof, for almost 60 years Duko was also a stalwart of the Hull Chess Club and will also be much missed in the city.

LONDON – There was a five-way tie for first at the latest, popular Kensington Rapidplay on October 16th.

Open: 1-5 Graeme Buckley (Epsom), Stuart Conquest (Gibraltar), Koichi Nicholas (Meadhurst), Jonathan Pein (Battersea), Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5/6.

Major: 1-2 Laurie MacKellar (Hammersmith), Liam Clery (Richmond) 5½.

Minor: 1 William Walshe (Medway) 5½, 2 Mykola Yudin (south-west London) 5.

A month earlier, on September 18th, IM Graeme Buckley had gone one better, bagging alone the £200 first prize.

Open: 1 Graeme Buckley (Epsom) 5½, 2-3 Mikhail Sedych, Lorenzo Lucchi (both Lewisham) 5.

Major: 1 Terler Bohdan (Eton) 6, 2 Gregory Konyakhin-Borrelly (Battersea) 5½.

Minor: 1 Ethan Dong (Harrow) 5½, 2 Yudin Mykola (south-west London) 5.

NEWRY – The Newry Autumn Rapid was a closely-fought event at the Sticky Fingers Arts Centre on October 9th. Danny Roberts (Civil Service) edged out Mohammed El Abd Elsalam (Enniskillen) on tie-break after they had both finished on 8½/10, half a point ahead of Richard Morrow (Bangor).

Earlier on in the Northern Ireland Rapidplay Grand Prix, Gareth Annesley (Belfast South) had triumphed with a perfect 10/10 (the time control is a brisk 15+0) at the Downpatrick Rapid on September 17th, with Richard Morrow two points behind in second.

There was also the Strand Rapid Championship on September 23rd, dominated by Mandar Tahmankar (Belfast) who finished on 5½/6, half a point ahead of Ross Harris (Strand) and Gatis Barbals (Fruithill).

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE – Tim Wall triumphed at a typically competitive Northumberland Congress, which once again took place at The Parks Leisure Centre, North Shields (September 30 - October 2).

Open: 1 Tim Wall (Forest Hall) 4½/5, 2-3 Kevin Millward (Athenaeum), Virgil Szekely (Great Ayton) 4.

Major: 1 Jason Boutsias (Sheffield) 4½, 2-3 Andy Trevelyan (Jesmond), Luke Owen (Darlington) 4.

Minor: 1 Vivien Webster (Halifax) 5, 2-4 Luke Fletcher, David Sharp (both Gosforth), John Blewett (Durham) 4.

Foundation: 1 James Urwin (Thornaby) 9½/10, 2 John Morgan (Tynedale) 7, 3-4 Daniel Williams (Delves Lane), David Pritchard (Gosforth) 6½.

NOVEMBER 2022

CROWBOROUGH – Worthing's Matthew Payne made a perfect score as he won the £150 top prize at the Crowborough Congress, a rapidplay on September 17th. Mark Broom (Horsham), Alistair Compton (Rainham) and Arjun Kolani (Crowborough) shared second on 5/6.

DAVENTRY – A new 4NCL season kicked off in Daventry on the penultimate weekend of October. The top division has switched back to being a 12-team all-play-all, albeit with a twist: the top six sides have been kept apart until the final two weekends of the season (March 18-19, April 29 - May 1). Despite a sub-optimal number of the five weekends clashing with the Bundesliga, that may mean that there are a fair amount of one-sided matches in the first three weekends and then lots of quality action for the online audience to enjoy.

Of the 'big six', Celtic Tigers went down 4½-3½ to West is Best in the opening round, but they only held a slender average rating advantage of 18 points. Then in round 2 Cheddleton had to dig deep to draw with Wood Green Youth after coming unstuck on the top boards, Tamas Fodor and Ezra Kirk being outplayed by Jonah Willow and Borna Derakhshani respectively. Elsewhere defending champions Chess.com Manx Liberty thumped Gonzaga 6-2 and Cambridge University 7½-½, but Chessable White Rose kept pace by defeating their

second team 6½-1½ and Blackthorne 7-1, helped by two victories for new signing Jonathan Rowson. Wood Green Youth and The Sharks also began pretty well, the former seeing off both their second team and West is Best 6½-1½, while the latter beat Blackthorne 6-2 then Gonzaga 6½-1½.

J. Willow - T. Fodor

Wood Green Youth v Cheddleton
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♘b4 4 ♗ge2 ♗f6

Black's main alternative to what can still very much be considered the main line of this variation, 4...dxe4 5 a3 and then either the Rubinstein-like 5...♘e7 or 5...♘xc3+ 6 ♗xc3 ♗c6.

5 e5 ♗fd7 6 f4 b6?!

With White's centre expanding and strengthening at pace, 6...0-0 7 a3 ♘e7 followed by ...c5 must be a better approach than the rather slow text.

7 a3 ♘e7 8 g3

This can hardly be bad, but already the main pawn break was on: 8 f5! followed by ♗f4 or 8...exf5 9 ♗xd5 ♘b7 10 ♗df4!? when e5-e6 is a definite issue and Black is likely struggling.

8...c5 9 ♘g2?!

Now Black is OK and 9 f5! would still have been strong, and if 9...cxd4?! 10 ♗xd4 exf5 11 ♗xf5.

9...♗c6 10 ♘e3 ♘a6 11 f5!? ♘g5

Suddenly Black has almost finished development and should have a reasonable enough position, despite the invader on f5.

12 ♗d2 ♘xe3 13 ♗xe3 ♖c8

13...cxd4!? would have been a simpler approach, and if 14 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♗g5!.

14 0-0-0



14...♘xe2?!

Getting rid of the potentially bad bishop, but here it is quite effective, as is Black's pressure on d4 and the calm 14...0-0! 15 ♘h3 ♖e8 would have maintained a rough balance.

15 ♗xe2 ♗c7

Black's problem is that 15...cxd4 16 ♗xd4 either leaves him in trouble on e6 or White in control and ready to switch his attentions to the kingside after 16...♗xd4 17 ♖xd4! ♗c7 18 c3, and if 18...♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 ♘xd5!.

16 c3! cxd4 17 ♗xd4 ♗xd4!

White is beginning to take control and 17...exf5? 18 e6 would be superb for him. Fodor now finds the only way to stay on the board.

18 ♖xd4 0-0

Probably best or at least Black had to avoid 18...♗xe5? 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♖e1, while 18...♗xe5 19 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 20 fxe6 would have left him clearly worse with ♘xd5 next up.

19 ♖e1 exf5 20 ♘xd5

Calmly building up, although it was possible to strike then take control with 20 e6!? fxe6 21 ♗xe6+ ♖h8 22 ♘xd5 ♗c5 23 ♗e5.

20...♗c5 21 ♖b1 ♖fe8?

Underestimating the danger on the kingside.
21... ♗e6 was necessary.

22 g4!

Suddenly lines are opening much faster than Black would wish.

22...fxg4 23 ♖xg4 ♔d7?



23... ♗e6 was the last chance, if still pretty grim for Black after 24 ♖eg1 g6 25 h4, and if 25...h5? 26 ♖xg6+! fxg6 27 ♖xg6+.

24 ♖xg7+!

An obvious sacrifice, if one which also required good calculation to make work.

24... ♔xg7 25 ♖g1+ ♔f8

Clearly 25... ♗h8? 26 ♔g5 is all over.

**26 ♔h6+ ♔e7 27 ♔f6+ ♔f8 28 ♗xf7!
1-0**

The sting in the tail and key follow-up, forcing mate, as with 28... ♔xf7 29 ♔h6+ ♔e7 30 ♔d6#.

GROOMSPORT – Another FIDE-rated event took place in Northern Ireland on October 29th, the Groomsport Autumn Blitz (10+10). Edward Hanzharov (Strand) triumphed with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Richard Morrow from the local Bangor Chess Club,

with Conor Spackman (Strand) a further half-point back in third.

A week earlier, the Duncairn Arts Centre had played hosted to the North Belfast Rapid Championship, thanks to Club Director Paul O’Connor, who runs chess sessions at the Arts Centre’s cafe every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, as well as at Belfast Central Library on Tuesday mornings. Over the board on October 22nd, Richard Morrow (Bangor) triumphed with 4/5, pipping Gatis Barbals (Fruithill) on tie-break, with David Hill (Strand) third, half a point adrift.

We should also belatedly mention that at the 2022 Ulster Championship at Queens University, Belfast (August 27-29), Thomas Donaldson (Strand) triumphed with 5/6, finishing a point ahead of Mandar Tahmankar (Civil Service) and Alex Goss (Lisburn).



Paul Buswell

HASTINGS – We were saddened to learn of the death of Paul Buswell (xiv.iii.1950 – xviii.x.2022), former General Secretary of the BCF, who ran the office so well, first in Norwich and then at St. Leonard’s. He also served as Secretary of the Hastings Congress – many

readers will recall enjoying playing in one of the many Buswell and Bryant Rapidplays – and held many roles over the years at Hastings and St. Leonards Chess Club, not least in helping the club to become a limited company. Paul was renowned for his organising, of both the chess and the social side, once quipping after his Norwich Anonymous team lost a match to a team of early computers that “We are retreating with our tails between our legs to the pub, where we shall insist that the beer be pulled by hand!” but could prove a pretty dangerous 110-or-so-graded opponent on occasion, as here at his beloved Hastings Congress against a higher-graded opponent.

A. Waldock - P. Buswell

Hastings 2007/08

Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 f3 ♙g7 5 ♙e3 0-0 6 ♙d2 c6 7 0-0-0 b5 8 g4 ♙a5 9 a3 ♙e6 10 h4 b4 11 ♘b1 c5 12 d5 ♙xg4!? 13 fxg4 ♘xe4 13... ♘bd7! is the engines’ calm idea, leaving both e4 and g4 hanging while freeing b8 for a rook and after 14 ♙g2 ♜fb8 15 ♙d2 ♙a4 16 b3! bxa3! 17 bxa4 a2 18 ♙b5 ♘xd5! the dreaded ‘0.00’ evaluation appears, suggesting that in practice at least Black’s piece sacrifice was a pretty decent one.

14 ♙d3 ♘d7?

Getting a little carried away. Black is worse, but there’s all to play for after 14... ♘g3 15 ♜h3 ♘xf1 16 ♜xf1 ♘d7.

15 ♙xe4 bxa3 16 bxa3?

White shouldn’t have opened the b-file and would have been winning after 16 ♘xa3! ♙xb2+ (or 16... ♜ab8 17 ♘c4! ♙xb2+ 18 ♘xb2 ♙a1+ 19 ♙d2 ♙a5+ 20 ♙e2) 17 ♙xb2 ♜ab8+ 18 ♙a2, as pointed out by Mike Read in En Passant.

16... ♜ab8



Suddenly there’s just no good defence to the threats of 17... ♙b2# and 17... ♜xb1+.

17 c3 ♜xb1+

Anyhow, and now 18 ♙xb1 ♜b8 19 ♙a1 ♜b3 is a killer.

18 ♙xb1 ♜b8+ 19 ♙a2

Or 19 ♙c1 ♙xc3+ 20 ♙c2 when Black would surely have finished with another classic combination: 20... ♜b1+! 21 ♙xb1 ♙a1#.

19... ♜b2+! 20 ♙xb2 ♙xc3+ 0-1

HORSTEAD – The Norfolk County Championship took place at the Tithe Barn Horstead (October 1-2), with John Anderson (Lowestoft) defeating Martin Walker (Norwich) then pipping him on tie-break after they had both finished on 4/5. Walker would have to settle for winning the best game prize, while the Challengers was won by Colin Payne (Norwich) with 4/5.

M. Walker - S. Palaneappan

Norfolk Ch., Horstead 2022

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2 g6?!

It’s hard to believe that this misguided approach will take off against the Tarrasch.

8 ♖f3 ♗g7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♜e1 ♝b8 11 ♗g5 ♞a5

White's dominant central position leaves him clearly for choice even after 11...f6!? 12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 ♞d2.

12 a3 c4 13 ♗c2 b5 14 ♞d2 ♞c7 15 ♗h6 a5 16 ♖g3

16 h4! b4 17 axb4 axb4 18 h5 would also have left White's kingside play far more powerful than whatever Black can muster on the other flank.

16...b4?

Continuing to underestimate the danger. 16...f6! simply had to be played.

17 ♗xg7 ♞xg7 18 ♖h5+!



A thematic and devastating blow.

18...♞h8

18...gxh5 19 ♞g5+ ♞h8 20 ♞h6 f5 21 ♖g5 is, of course, all over.

19 ♞h6 ♜g8 20 ♖g5 ♖f8 21 ♖f6

21 ♖xh7! ♖xh7 22 ♖f6 ♜g7 23 ♖xh7 also leads to mate.

21...♜g7 22 ♖gxh7!

Spurning the fork on e8 to force mate.

22...♖xh7 23 ♖xh7 ♞g8

Or 23...♜xh7 24 ♞f8#.

24 ♖f6+ ♞f8 25 ♞h8+ ♞e7 26 ♞e8# 1-0

HULL – We reported the sad death of Roelof Westra last month. John Cooper now pays a fuller tribute to the leading Hull chess figure. Players active in Yorkshire chess - and many further afield – before around 2010 will almost certainly be familiar with Roelof Westra, who has passed away in his 91st year. Most, if not all, will recall him with respect and affection.

We in Hull respected him first as a very strong player – steeped in the game since learning it from his father in Holland in the 1930s and playing regularly and throughout the following 80 years (though online only in the final few). As a junior he witnessed and felt the power of the Soviet School at Groningen in 1946 and 1948 and played a succession of world champions in simul – including draws against Botvinnik and a win against Petrosian (and a draw against Keres, arguably the best player who never became world champion). It was entirely typical of Roelof as a man that, whenever the Petrosian win was mentioned (by others) he was first to stress that it was in a simul and that “Petrosian blundered in a won position”.

National Service took him to Canada, and he was soon Montreal Champion. In 1956 a very young Bobby Fischer was playing in the Montreal Open, but it was in a casual one-to-one game that Roelof held the great man to a draw, playing the Sicilian as Black.

In the early 1960s, he settled in Hull (or just east of it) with his brother Duko. Together, like many from Holland previously, he built up their market garden business, for the next 40 years always having to work hard alongside his chess. Yet chess was his passion: 12-time Hull Champion; twice Yorkshire Champion; British Veterans Champion in 1993; the linchpin of Hull's dominant record in the then very powerful Woodhouse Cup in Yorkshire in the late 20th century; and victor at many weekend congresses, in the north especially.

A '200 player' for three decades, Roelof's peak was around 215 (2300). He was capable of fine attacking games, but his main strength lay in a

deep positional understanding – and a powerful endgame technique. As White he was mainly a d4 player; as Black he relied on the fighting openings and theory from “the East” (he was always the first in Hull to collect his Informant when it arrived), taking on the Ruy Lopez against 1 e4, but later shifting to the Sicilian Sveshnikov, and with the King’s Indian against 1 d4. It’s fair to say that his theory did not keep close pace with later developments, and he relied increasingly on his positional understanding and endgame skill.

There is little doubt that under other circumstances (not having to work full-time; in a more ‘central’ chess location, etc), he had the talent to be a much higher-rated player. But how lucky we were that he was not! That is because by far the greatest contribution that Roelof made to our game – and I suspect the thing that sustained his life-long love affair with Caissa much more than his over-the-board triumphs – was in the social dimension of chess. Tremendously charming and gregarious, he connected easily with all those he played and met.

His was a chess life stretching far beyond the board. Many would be drawn with him to the pub after the match or the hotel bar after the game – to share his and their chess woes, memories, ideas, jokes and hopes; before the conversation ranged more widely and eclectically, as it always did with him, across politics, sport, music, farming, etc. A lifetime of chess microcosms and social networks – with him at the centre, lubricating and enlivening. It’s a joy that touched many, many chess players and fills us with happy memories. In this way Roelof will stay with us, and survive forever through us, beyond his long life in chess.

Roelof Douwy Westra - Born April 10th, 1932 in Leiden, South Holland; Died September 26th, 2022 in Beverley, East Yorkshire.

ILKLEY – Both Tim Wall and Gediminas Saraukas bounced back from opening round draws to share first place on 4½/5 at the

Ilkley Chess Festival (September 16-18), a welcome new event which has replaced the Bradford Congress in the northern calendar. IM Saraukas defeated Stephen Jones in the final round, while Wall initially rode his luck then attacked powerfully to overcome fellow FM Adam Ashton.

Open: 1-2 Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Gediminas Saraukas (Manchester) 4½/5, 3 Greg Eagleton (Huddersfield) 4.

Major: 1-2 Luke Gostelow (Leeds), Bob Newton (Rochdale) 4½, 3-4 Maksym Larchikov (Hull), J. Hall (Bradford) 4.

Intermediate: 1-3 Kate Walker (Shrewsbury), Paul Fearnhead (Poulton-Le-Fylde), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 4½.

Minor: 1 Samir Cradock (Undercliffe) 4½, 2-3 Shriaansh Ganti (Wakefield), John Tate (Ilkley) 4.

LIVINGSTON – The latest event in the Scottish Chess Tour took place at the Mercure Livingston Hotel. In the Livingston Allegro on November 6th, the Major saw Philip Thomas (Troon) and Jainill Vadalía (Glasgow) share top honours on 4½/5, the same score with which Vikram Vedanth and Kritan Boggarapu (both Edinburgh) tied for first in the Minor.

LONDON – Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) triumphed at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on September 27th, making 6/6 to finish a point ahead of Peter Large (Epsom). However, on October 11th he was held to a draw by both Large and Bao Nghia Dong (Battersea), and had to settle for a share of first with Dong.

MAIDENHEAD – Organised by Liam Varnam and Nigel Dennis, and with Tim Dickinson as Chief Arbiter, the Berks & Bucks Congress (August 27-29) saw a four-way tie for first in the Championship.

Championship: 1 Sohum Kumar, John Wager (both Maidenhead), Tim Seymour (Surbiton), Carl Bicknell (Clevedon) 4½/6.

Challengers: 1 Bohdan Terler (Maidenhead) 5½, 2 Ronit Sachdeva (Guildford) 5, 3-4 Zoe

Veselow (Coulsdon), Tim O’Sullivan (Aylesbury) 4½.

Reserves: 1 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill) 5½, 2 Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon) 4½, 3-4 Niclas Hordnes (Southampton), Ethan Pang (north-west London) 4.

NEWCASTLE – Tim Wall’s latest venture was the 4th EJCOA Invitational at Forest Hall Chess Club (October 24-28), which was dominated by top seed IM Matthew Wadsworth, who racked up an unbeaten 7/9. Notably that was Wadsworth’s fourth major success in a row, all following hot on the heels of his dramatic final round defeat at the British, since when he has won the Northumbria GM section, the MindSports Masters IM event and the Hit Open in Slovenia.

In Newcastle, Czech FM Martin Hollan raced to 5/6, but then was affected by the withdrawal of Andrew Burnett, who was taken ill during round 6. As FIDE don’t allow substitutes in all-play-all events, Hollan and Rajat Makkar had defaults against Burnett and could only play 8 games. However, both ended up scoring eight-round IM norms with 5½ points, finishing in equal second. In round 9 Hollan lost to backmarker Colm Barry, while Makkar won as Black in a swashbuckling ‘Dirty Harry’ Sicilian against Jonah Willow, who finished on 6/9, with organiser Wall on a pretty respectable ‘-1’.

G. Wall - M. Wadsworth

Newcastle 2022

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♖b6 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 a3 c4 7 ♘bd2 ♘a5 8 h4 ♙d7 9 g3 ♘e7 10 ♙h3 h6 11 0-0 ♗c7

11...0-0-0! might be slightly more precise, although after 12 h5 ♖b8 13 ♘h4 ♗g8 (13...g6!?) 14 ♘g2 ♗c7 15 ♗e1 ♘c8 16 ♗b1 White was beginning to take control, solid though Black undoubtedly was in Vachier-Lagrave-Vallejo Pons, Karlsruhe 2019.

12 h5 0-0-0 13 ♘h4 ♖b8 14 f4

Continuing to limber up for White’s main pawn break, f4-f5, although the engines prefer 14 ♗f3! ♙e8 15 ♗e1, keeping Black’s counterplay under control followed by protracted manoeuvring.

14...g6!



Not only ruling out f4-f5 but obtaining some much needed counterplay.

15 ♖h2 ♘f5 16 ♘g2?!

Not the best ever over-the-board novelty. White should have settled for either 16 ♘xf5 gxf5 17 ♗b1 or 16 hxg6! ♘e3 17 ♗e2 ♘xf1+ 18 ♘xf1, with full compensation.

16... ♙e7 17 g4 ♘g7

A much happier knight than when it’s driven here in the North Sea Defence. Already Black is for choice, even after 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 ♖g1 ♗dg8.

18 ♘e3? gxh5 19 gxh5 f5! 20 ♗g1 ♗dg8 21 ♙g2 ♙e8

Calmly building up on the kingside, but there was also 21... ♙g5! when 22 fxg5 hxg5 23 ♗h1 ♙e8 24 ♖g1 ♙xh5 25 ♗e1 f4 26 ♘ef1 ♘f5 looks extremely scary for White, in part due to his lack of coordination.

22 ♙f3 ♙d8 23 ♗g3?

23 ♖df1! ♖b3 24 ♜b1 ♞e7 25 ♗g2 had to be tried, and if 25... ♗xh5! 26 ♙xh5 ♜xg2+ 27 ♚xg2 ♞h4 28 ♗g3 ♜g8 29 ♚f2 ♜xg3 30 ♜xg3 ♙xh5 31 ♞g1 ♗xc1 32 ♜xc1 ♞xf4+ 33 ♚g2 ♞e4+ 34 ♚h2 when Black is pressing, but far from certainly winning.

23... ♗xh5!



24 ♙xh5

White comes a cropper down the g-file too after 24 ♜xg8 ♜xg8 25 ♙xh5 ♞g7.

24... ♜xg3 25 ♚xg3 ♜g8+ 26 ♚h3

26 ♚f2 ♞g7 27 ♙f3 ♞g3+ is also devastating, and if 28 ♚e2 ♞h2+ 29 ♗g2 ♜xg2+ 30 ♙xg2 ♙h5+.

26... ♞e7! 27 ♗g2 ♞g7 0-1

There's just no good way to cover g2 and g3 in view of 28 ♞f3 ♙xh5. Much earlier in the year, Wall had also staged another successful Northumbria Masters, which took place at St. Mary's Catholic School (August 26-30), soon after the British had concluded in Torquay. Matthew Wadsworth would obtain revenge over Harry Grieve as he won the GM norm tournament with 6½/9, missing out on a norm by half a point after failing in the final round to defeat James Moreby, who had also required a win, for an IM norm.

The IM norm event saw Swiss FM Martin Fischer tie for first on 6½/9 with Battersea and

The Sharks' Bao Nghia Dong, both making well-deserved IM norms. Meanwhile in the 67-player Masters, Brandon Clarke found himself on 5½/6, but was then defeated by fellow IM Marcus Harvey. The two would dominate the tournament, eventually sharing first on 7½/9, a whole point ahead of Danny Gormally, Alexander Cherniaev and Roman Mitra, who gained some 37 rating points. We should also mention the fine result of Ukrainian refugee Kamila Hryshchenko, who was right up there throughout, defeating FMs Neil Berry, Roland Bezuidenhout and Iain Gourlay in successive rounds before losing to Clarke and Mitra, which left her on 5½/9 and still gaining some 33 rating points.

SCARBOROUGH – Along with Tim Wall, Rajat Makkar hotfooted it from Newcastle to take part in the popular Scarborough Congress (October 28-30), which attracted over 300 players to the Spa. Makkar was held to a draw by Paul Townsend and extremely fortunate to not only survive but win his first and last-round games but win them he did to tie for first in the Open with fellow teenager Lorenzo Fava. In turn, Fava was fortunate to survive against Wall and Adam Ashton, but certainly suggested that his 1933 ECF rating (already up to 2137) was rather inaccurate, not least when he completely butchered a classical response to the London System.

Open: 1-2 Rajat Makkar (Reading), Lorenzo Fava (Cambridge) 4½/5, 3-6 Adam Ashton (Sowerby Bridge), Martin Mitchell (Poulton-le-Fylde), Steve Dilleigh (Bristol), Sarah Longson (Macclesfield) 4.

Major: 1 Richard Cowan (York) 5, 2-5 Chris Sykes (Edinburgh), David Gillespie (Scotland), Damian McCarthy (Culcheth), Philip Seery (Lancaster) 4.

Intermediate: 1-3 James Hall (Ilkley), Andrew Allen (Worksop), Simon Layhe (Crewe) 4½.

Minor: 1 Daniel Turnbull (Peterlee) 5, 2 Alan Hiatt (Carlisle) 4½, 3-7 Adrian Lawrence (Billericay), Colin Weller (Scarborough), Vivien

Webster (Halifax), Stephen Chadaway (Olton), Craig Chatterton (Sheffield) 4.

Foundation: 1-2 Vivek Yogesh (Singapore), KamWa Siu (Sheffield) 4½, 3-6 Ruairi Isaacs (Streatham), Andrew Watson (Skegness), Benedikt Pitel (Hull), Benjamin Wright (Epsom) 4.

L. Fava - M. Burrows
Scarborough 2022
London System

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♙f4 e6 3 e3 c5 4 ♘f3 ♘e7 5 ♘d3 cxd4 6 exd4 0-0 7 h4!?

Black's early play may have been a little routine, but this is still a remarkable and fearless new idea.

7...b6 8 ♘g5 g6?

Even quite strong and experienced players can panic so when faced with such raw aggression. 8... ♘b7 was fine though, as 9 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 10 ♘xh7+? ♙xh7 11 ♘g5+ is nothing to fear due to 11... ♙h6!, and if 12 ♙d2 ♙e7! 13 ♙f1 ♘xg5 14 hxg5+ ♙g6.

9 ♘h6 ♙e8 10 h5! ♘b7

Black is already under heavy pressure, but at least avoided being cleaned up by 10... ♘xh5? 11 ♙xh5! gxh5 12 ♘e5!.

11 hxg6 fxg6 12 ♘e5 ♘f8

A sensible defensive choice and the engines confirm that 12...d6 13 ♘xg6! hxg6 14 ♘xg6 ♘f8 15 ♙d2 should be pretty good for White.

13 ♘g5 ♘g7



14 ♙xh7!?

Tal-like play, if objectively unjustified here when 14 ♘c3 followed by ♙d2 and 0-0-0 would have left Black under heavy pressure.

14... ♙xh7 15 ♘xg6+ ♙g8 16 ♘xf6 ♘xf6?

A no-doubt shell-shocked Burrows isn't up to the defensive test. Black had to go 16... ♙xf6! when 17 ♘xe8 (17 ♙h5? ♙e7 defends) 17... ♙g5! would have ruled out ♙h5, counterattacked and left all three results possible.

17 ♙h5 ♙e7?

17... ♙f8 18 ♘c3 d6 19 ♙h7 ♘g7 20 ♘f7 ♘xe5! had to be tried, even if 21 dxex5 ♙g5! 22 ♘xe8 ♙xe5+ 23 ♘e2 ♙g7 24 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7 25 0-0-0 leaves White a pawn to the good and clearly for choice.

18 ♘f7+! ♙f8 19 ♙h7! 1-0

Presumably Black had initially overlooked 19... ♙e8 20 ♘g6#.

DECEMBER 2022

BIRMINGHAM – Max Turner dominated the Birmingham Rapidplay and scooped the £200 first prize on October 30th.

Open: 1 Max Turner 6½/7, 2 Tom Brown (both Warwick University) 5½, 3 Athar Ansari (Telford) 5.

Major: 1 Mathur Pranav (Birmingham) 6½, 2 Daniel Hilditch-Love (Newport) 5½, 3-5 Gavin Cartwright (Longbridge), Tom Junde He

(Birmingham), James Parkinson (Warwick Uni) 5.

Intermediate: 1 Adithya Vaidyanathan (Birmingham) 6½, 2 Oscar Butler 6, 3-5 Tommy Coker (both Warwick University), Brandon Sangha (Nottingham), Alexander Cant (Grantham) 5.

Minor: 1 Mehrgan Mehrgan (Birmingham) 7, 2 Daniel Jones (Birmingham University) 6, 3-4 Akshath Shivakumar (Solihull), James Markham (Birmingham) 5½.

BOLTON – After sharing first place at Kilkenny Armenian IM Artur Davtyan won the Bolton Rapidplay on December 4th.

Open: 1 Artur Davtyan (Manchester) 5½/6, 2 Gedaminas Sarakauskas (Lancaster) 5, 3 Roger Williamson (Aigburth) 4½.

Major: 1-2 Adam Scoular (Swinton), George Turner (Heywood) 5, 3-4 Mohammed Khan (Ashton), David Burgess (Red Dragons) 4½.

Knights: 1 Carmel Barwick (Crewe) 6, 2-4 Xiaojing Gu (Manchester), Tim Bowler (Maryport), Shulin Walia (Eccles) 5.

COVENTRY – Shabir Okhai defeated Syston club-mate Mark Hebden en route to making an impressive 6/6 on December 4th at the Coventry League Rapidplay.

Open: 1 Shabir Okhai (Syston) 6/6, 2 Max Turner (Warwick University) 4½, 3-7 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Philip Briggs (Nuneaton), Tom Brown (Warwick University), Francis Sagyaman (Coventry), Andrew Collins (Leamington) 4.

Major: 1-2 David Collyer (Southampton University), Jan Kus (Warwick University) 5, 3-6 Harvey Craddock-Monroe (Daventry), Bruno Dos Santos Silva (South Birmingham), Robert Wall (East Grinstead), Sehajdeep Singh (Coventry University) 4½.

Minor: 1-2 Henry Wood (Nuneaton), Max Phillipson 4½, 3-5 George Salmon McConnachie, Marc Roberts (all Warwick University), Christopher Badley (Rugby) 4.

CREWE – The Mornflake Stadium, home of Crewe Alexandra FC, proved an excellent new home for the Crewe Congress (Oct 14-16).

Open: 1 Jonathan Blackburn (Holmes Chapel) 4½, 2 Ali Jaunooby (Blackburn) 4, 3-4 Simon Gilmore (Belper), Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 3½.

Major: 1-2 Andrew Raeburn (Holmes Chapel), Karl Lockett 4, 3-6 Martin Burns (both Crewe), Richard Bryant (Shrewsbury), Mark Taylor (Rochdale), Dave Patrick (Halifax) 3½.

Intermediate: 1-2 Dylan Cooper (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Julian Hawthorne 4½, 3 Neville Layhe (both Crewe) 4.

Minor: 1 Stephen Gaskell (Rushall) 5, 2-3 Leila Feiz (Eccles), Nicholas Wright (Newcastle-under-Lyme) 4.

FAREHAM – David Pye triumphed at the 19th Castle Chess Fareham Congress (October 7-9).

Open: 1 David Pye (Cosham) 5/6, 2-3 Tim Kett (Cardiff), Matt Staniforth (Southampton University) 4½.

Major: 1 Max Dooley (Nottingham) 5, 2-4 David Cole (Surbiton), Matthew Deacon (Fareham), Simon Venables (Portsmouth) 4½.

Minor: 1 Kewal Bhoi (Portsmouth) 6, 2 Graeme Ford (Salisbury) 5, 3-4 Niclas Hordnes (Southampton), Kenneth Jardine (Wanstead) 4½.

The same venue, the Lysses House Hotel, then played host to the Hampshire Chess Association Congress (November 4-6).

Open: 1 Oliver Gill (Leeds) 4½/6, 2-3 Iwan Cave (Chandlers Ford), Roland Bezuidenhout (Fareham) 4.

Major: 1 Patrik Baron (Southampton) 5½, 2 David Collyer (Southampton University), 3 James Schumacher (Bournemouth) 4½.

Minor: 1 Tom Philidor (Fareham) 5½, 2 Oliver Ward (Southampton University) 5, 3-4 Freddie Christou-Moore (Eton), Ayan Pradhan (Reading) 4½.

KENILWORTH – Aply run by Nigel Towers, the finals of the 2022 UK Blitz Championship took place just outside Kenilworth on December 2nd. Jonathan Speelman was in top form, pipping Eldar Gasanov on tie-break after they

both finished on 12½/15. Mark Hebden was third on 11/15, half a point ahead of Freddy Gordon. Normally the performance of 66-year-old Speelman or 10-year-old Gordon which would have made the headlines, but that honour went to seven-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan of Harrow Chess Club. Sivanandan started with a remarkable 8½/9 in the women's final before having to settle for second on 11 points, the same score as made by Kamila Hryshchenko, with top honours going to WGM Elmira Mirzoeva with 11/14.

LONDON – The latest Golders Green Rapidplay of November 23rd saw FM Tom Eckersley-Waites make a welcome return to the board.

Open: 1-3 Tom Eckersley-Waites (London), Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Remy Rushbrooke (Pimlico) 5/6.

Major: 1 Andrew Nubbert (Middlesex) 6, 2 Orest Stus (Barnet) 5.

Minor: 1 Allan Buchan (Edinburgh) 5½, 2-3 Jason Skelton (Cambridge), Farhad Taghiyev (London) 5.

Alexander Cherniaev had gone half a point better at the 8th October edition of Adam Raoof's popular rapidplay.

Open: 1 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5½, 2 Peter Finn (Cavendish) 5.

Major: 1-2 Kacper Mytnik (Sheffield), Joshua Burnton (Barnet) 5.

Minor: 1 Jiakang Wang (Fulham) 6, 2 Xiling Wang (Harrow) 5.

Cherniaev was also successful at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on November 15th, where his 6/6 saw him finish a point and a half in front of Peter Large (Epsom) and Ilya Iyengar (Hendon). Then on November 22nd at the Clissold Arms it was the turn of Large and Bogdan Lalic (Lewisham) to share first on 5/6. London doesn't just boast rapidplays, but also the odd congress, not least the John Sargent-organised Central London Congress at Imperial College (November 4-6).

Open: 1 Graeme Buckley (Epsom) 4½/5, 2 Tom Farrand (Wood Green) 4, 3-8 Jovica Radovanovic (Sandhurst), Kim Yew Chan,

Simon Wilks (both Muswell Hill), Peter Lalic (Kingston), Thomas Bonn (Hammersmith), Alistair Hill (Battersea) 3½.

Major: 1-2 Colum Jezierski (West London), Antony Hall (Streatham) 4½, 3 Oliver Finnegan (Loughton) 4.

Minor: 1-3 Imran Rahman (Imperial College), Djuna Tree (Battersea), Florian Dietrich (University College) 4.

OMAGH – Brendan Jamison's NI Rapid Grand Prix continued with the Omagh Rapid on December 3rd at the Christian Brothers Grammar School. Richard Morrow (Bangor) triumphed with 5/6, finishing half a point ahead of Modestas Razbadauskas (Strand), with Chris Kelly (Civil Service) a further half point back, while Conor McMullan (Fruithill) won the junior section with 5/6.

PENZANCE – The 1st Cornwall Autumn Congress was held on the seafront in Penzance at the Queen's Hotel (October 14-16).

Open: 1 Jonathan Underwood (Seaton) 4, 2-4 David Onley (Wimborne), Jeremy Menadue (Truro), Nigel Saunders (Abergavenny) 3½.

Major: 1-2 Ian Bush (Cumnor), Andrew Waters (Rainham) 4, 3-4 Mike Cresswell (Barking), Dave Williams (Malpas) 3.

Intermediate: 1-2 Joseph Morrison (Richmond), Mike Maher 4, 3-4 Laurence Tarbuck (both Lichfield), Ian Blencowe (Gloucester) 3.

Minor: 1 Tony Tatam (Plymouth) 4½, 2 Michael Foss (Woking) 4, 3-4 Ben Jago (Penwith), Hazel Welch (Seaton) 3½.

POOLE – It remains to be seen if the Poole Seniors tournament can become as popular as the Exmouth Seniors event once was, but in any case it was a welcome addition to the UK calendar and attracted a field of 28 for the inaugural edition (October 31 - November 4). Nigel Fleming (Kings Head), Bill Adaway (Wimborne) and Simon Arnold (York) all won £150 for sharing first on 4/5.

SWANSEA – The West Wales Congress made a welcome return to the Mercure Swansea Hotel (November 11-13).

Open: 1 Alex Golding (Guildford) 4½/5, 2-3 Adam Musson (Morrison), Sam Jukes (Cardiff) 4.

Major: 1-2 William Phillips (Hatch End), Ganesh Balaji Kadalarasan (Uxbridge) 4, 3-4 David Williams (Downend), Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon) 3½.

Minor: 1 Vismith Prabhu (Llanelli) 4, 2-4 Ben Bickford (Cardiff), Lysa Brooks (Swansea), Alex Kennedy (North Cardiff) 3½.

SWINDON – Yichen Han defeated James Sherwin in the final round to tie for first at a strong Swindon Rapidplay on October 1st.

Open: 1-2 Yichen Han (Oxford), Peter Large (Epsom) 5½/6, 3-5 Ben Ogunshola (Camberley), Meri Grigoryan (Cavendish), Struan Robertson (Swindon) 4.

Major: 1 Matthew Holmes (Witney) 5, 2 Mark Jones (Swindon) 4, 3-7 Rob Wilden (Stroud), Alexander Chmelev (Twickenham), Benjamin Lappin (Gloucester), Alexander Hertog (Oxford), Graham Cole (Cowley) 3½.

Intermediate: 1-2 William Burgess (Cheltenham), Grant Daly (Downend) 4½, 3-5 Yihua Wang (Oxford), Danny O’Byrne (Swindon), Robert Wooding (Camberley) 4.

Minor: 1-3 Alan Willis (Basingstoke), Gunnar Niels (Oxford), Jesse Campbell (Cheltenham) 4½.

TORQUAY – Top seed, the in-form Dong Bao Nghia triumphed at the Torbay Congress (November 18-20), where Brendan O’Gorman was the second lowest-rated player but still impressively won the Major.

Open: 1 Dong Bao Nghia (Battersea) 4½/5, 2-4 William McDougall (Chichester), Scott Crockart (Plymouth), Mark Rich (Chislehurst) 4.

Major: 1 Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon) 4½, 2 George Lekoudis (Barnstaple) 4, 3-5 Frederick Coleman (Crowborough), Igor Doklestic (Bristol), John Nyman (Newton Abbot) 3½.

Intermediate: 1 Spencer Lawrence (Wiltshire) 5, 2-5 Kate Walker (Shrewsbury), Stephen Williams (Cwmbran), Alan Prince (Brentwood), Laurence Tarbuck (Lichfield) 4.

Foundation: 1 Gerard t’Hart (Plymouth) 5, 2-4 George Wright (Wimborne), Joy Fursman (Clevedon), Scott Waugh (Fareham) 4.

WITNEY – Top seed Yichen Han triumphed with 4½/5 at the Witney Congress, which was once again hosted by Cokethorpe School (November 5-6).

Open: 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 4½/5, 2 Ben Ogunshola (Camberley), 3-4 Indy Southcott-Moyers (Stroud), Sean Gordon (Watford) 3½/4.

Major: 1-2 Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Benjamin Lappin (Gloucester) 4, 3 Ian Bush (Cumnor) 3½.

Intermediate: 1-3 Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough), Spencer Lawrence (Wiltshire), Derek Edwards (Witney) 4.

Minor: 1-4 Vincenzo Bisogno (Swindon), David Cotterell (Shirley), Rezin Catabay (Colchester), David Gubinelli (France) 4.

The British Chess Championships 2022



The British Chess Championships 2022 Week 1

A report from ECF Home Director Nigel Towers and Organisers Kevin Staveley and Adrian Elwin

After many months of preparation, the British Championships 2022 kicked off on Monday 8 August with Round 1 of the Junior Championship, Senior Over 50 Championship, and the Weekday Congress all starting at 2.30 pm on Monday afternoon. These are the 108th British Championships in an almost unbroken run since the first Championships took place in 1904, with the competition making a welcome return to the Riviera International Conference Centre (RICC) in Torquay.

The organising team, led by Chief Organiser Adrian Elwin, had set up over 100 live boards in the Arena at the RICC ready to relay the games from the championship events and also the top boards of the weekday congresses via a live internet broadcast. Games were available live via the BCC broadcast web page at <https://tinyurl.com/yrrck9a> with commentary on the main Championships scheduled to start from Saturday 13 August for the nine rounds of the main Championship and Major Open (which runs from 13 to 21 August). Pairings, results to date and standings for all tournaments were available at the link here: <http://chess-results.com/tnr655607.aspx>



This way in ... picture by Melinda Wilde



Junior Section Lead Arbiter Jo Wildman

Junior Championship

As ever there was a big turnout with over 180 of the UK's top juniors taking part in seven round Swiss tournaments, with separate sections for U8s, U10s, U12s, U14s and U16s.

Under 8s (35 players) - Bodhana Sivanandan from London led the field until round 4 when Scottish Junior **Supratit Banerjee** took over to win the Under 8 Championship on 6 out of 7, just ahead of Bodhana who wins the U8 Girls' Championship on 5½ points.

	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	Supratit Banerjee	SCO	1667	6
2	Bodhana Sivanandan	ENG	1717	5½
3	Zoe Veselow	ENG	1638	5
	Ethan Pang	ENG	1592	5
	George Chen	ENG	1527	5
	Junyi Zhang	ENG	1426	5

Under 10s (43 players) - **Oleg Verbytski** from Kent made a late run in the Under 10s including a win in his round 7 game against Harry Bryant to clinch the Championship with 6 points out of 7, followed by Kai Hanache and Luokey Wang both on 5½ points. **Ruqqayah Rida** from Essex and **Rachel Yang** from London shared the Girls' Championship on 4½ points.

	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	Oleg Verbytski	ENG	1791	6
2	Kai Hanache	ENG	1636	5½
	Luokey Wang	ENG	1605	5½

Under 12s (45 players) - **Kameron Grose** made another late run to take the lead in round 5 and stay in front to win the Under 12 Championship with 6 out of 7 followed closely by **Elis Dicen** and Sankit Kumar on 5½, with Elis winning the U12 Girls' title.

	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	Kameron Grose	ENG	1637	6
2	Elis Denele Dicen	ENG	1968	5½
	Sanjit S Kumar	ENG	1855	5½

Under 14s (30 players) - **Luca Buanne** won the U14s on 6 out of 7 followed by Caleb Caleshu on 5½ with Michelle (Ngo Yu) Chan winning the U14 Girls' title.



Luca Buanne

	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	Luca Buanne	ENG	2147	6
2	Caleb Caleshu	ENG	1863	5½
3	Kenneth Hobson	ENG	2198	5
	Stanley Badacsonyi	ENG	1911	5
	Ruben Nangalia Evans	ENG	1831	5

Under 16s (28 players) – In the U16s **Frankie Badacsonyi** won his final round game to take the Under 16s title on 6, followed closely by Mohammed Ayaan Ismail, Edward Jackson and Abigail Weersing with **Abigail Weersing** (pictured below) winning the U16 Girls' title on 5½.



	Name	FED	Rtg	Pts
1	Frankie Badacsonyi	ENG	1997	6
2	Mohammed Aayan Ismail	ENG	2226	5½
	Edward Jackson	ENG	2077	5½
	Abigail R Weersing	ENG	2038	5½

Here is Aayan's round 1 game, an English Opening where he controls the c-file and develops what proves to be an irresistible attack.

Ismail, Mohammed Aayan (1919) - Sachdeva, Ronit [A11]

Chessable British Chess Championships
Riviera Centre, Torquay, 08.08.2022

1.c4 c6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.e4 e5 4.Nf3 d6 5.d4 Qc7
6.Be2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.h3 Nbd7 9.Be3 Rd8
10.Qc2 Nf8 11.Rad1 Ng6 12.Ne1 a6 13.Nd3 b5
14.cxb5 cxb5 15.Rc1 Bb7 16.Qb3 Qc4 17.Qd1
Qe6 18.d5 Qd7 19.Qb3 Re8 20.Nb4 Rec8
21.Rc2 Qd8 22.a4 a5 23.Nc6



23..Bxc6 24.dxc6 Rxc6 25.axb5 Rcc8 26.b6
Rab8 27.Ba6 Rc6 28.Nd5 Rxc2 29.Nxf6+ gxf6
30.Qxc2 Qd7 31.Qc7 Qd8 32.Rc1 Nf8 33.b7
Qxc7 34.Rxc7 d5 35.Ba7

1-0

Seniors Championships Over 50

There has also been a big turnout for the two Seniors Championships with 44 players in this week's Over 50 and 62 scheduled to play in the week 2 Over 65.



Over 50 Championships Round 1

Top seeds for the Over 50 were Scottish GM Paul Motwani, CM Mark Josse and FM Chris Townsend.

GM Paul Motwani shared the lead throughout the tournament and finished in top place with **FM Chris Duncan** and **Phil Crocker**, all on 5½ points.

Here is GM Paul Motwani's round 3 win against Paul Dargan.

Motwani, Paul (2420) - Dargan, Paul (2056) [B20]

Chessable British Chess Championships
Riviera Centre, Torquay, 10.08.2022

1.e4 c5 2.g3 Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.Ne2 Bg7 5.0-0 d6
6.d3 e6 7.Nbc3 Rb8 8.a3 b5 9.Rb1 Nge7 10.b4
cxb4 11.axb4 a5 12.Na2 d5 13.Bd2 a4 14.exd5
exd5 15.Nac3 0-0 16.Nf4 d4 17.Ne4 Bb7 18.h4
Ne5 19.h5 h6 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.Ne6 Qd5
22.Nxf8 Kxf8 23.f4 Nf7 24.g4 Qd8 25.f5 gxf5
26.gxf5 Nd5 27.Nc5 Kg8 28.f6 Bxf6 29.Qh5



1-0

Week 1 Congress – Open Section



IM Gary Lane

The Week 1 Congress had around 140 entrants across the various sections including GM Keith Arkell and IM Gary Lane. **Gary Lane** led the field throughout to finish on 6½ out of 7 points, followed by Matthew Dignam and fast-improving teenager Remy Rushbrook, both on 4½ points. Here is Gary's first round game against Ifan Rathbone-Jones.

Lane, Gary W (2328) - Rathbone-Jones, Ifan (2006) [B07]

Chessable 2022 British Championship Riviera Centre, Torquay, 08.08.2022

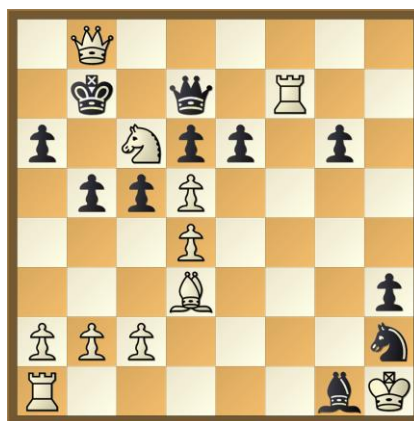
1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3 a6 5.Qd2 b5 6.f3 Nbd7 7.Nge2 Nb6 8.Ng3 h5 9.Bd3 h4 10.Nge2 h3 11.g4



Ifan tries a speculative sacrifice of a bishop for two pawns, with Bxg4 seeking to create problems for White's king which is stuck in the centre for a while. Gary defends efficiently

before staging a counter-attack leading to checkmate.

11...Bxg4 12.fxg4 Nxg4 13.Bg5 Qd7 14.0-0 c5 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.exd5 Rh5 17.Ng3 Rxc5 18.Qxg5 Bh6 19.Qh4 Be3+ 20.Kh1 0-0-0 21.Nf5 e6 22.Ne7+ Kc7 23.Nc6 Nxh2 24.Rxf7 Bg1 25.Qxd8+ Kb7 26.Qb8#



Rapidplay

The Rapidplay took place on Wednesday 10 August with a big field of around 180 players across seven sections – Open, U1750, U1500 and U11.



Pictured, above - Keith Arkell (bottom left) and Rapidplay Open winner Danny Gormally (bottom right)

The **Open** was won by **GM Danny Gormally** on tie-break, with 5 players all on 5½ out of 7 – Danny, GM Keith Arkell, Stanley and Frankie Badacsonyi and Soham Kumar.



U1750 and U1500 Winners Joseph Whelan (above) and Magnus Borissow (top)

The **U1750** was won by **Joseph Whelan** with 6½ out of 7, and the **U1500** by **Magnus Borissow**. The **U11** Rapidplay was won by **Luoke Wang** with 6½ out of 7.

Simul, Coaching, and Special Guests



Week 1 Simul

Outside the main events GM Keith Arkell

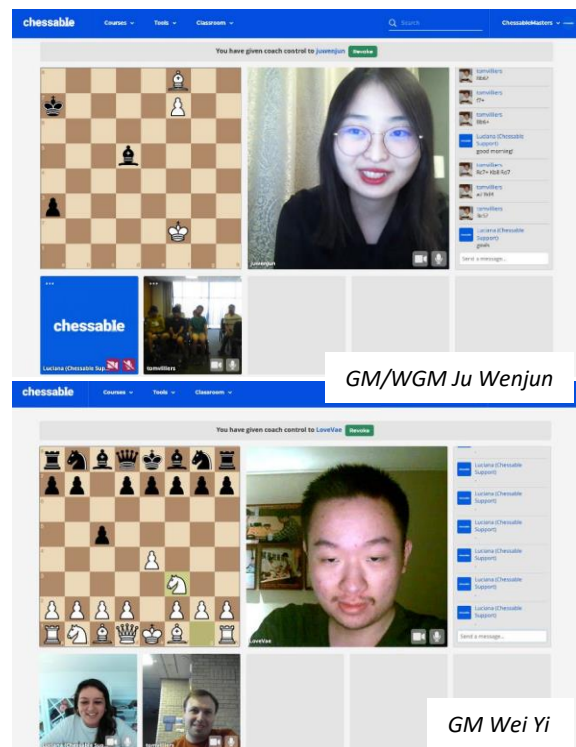
took on 18 players in a simul on Tuesday evening.



Tom Villiers at the BCC

Coaching

BCC Coach Tom Villiers has been available to provide some expert coaching before and after junior rounds. He was also able to run the first of two group sessions on Wednesday evenings.



Special Guests

Our sponsors Chessable arranged for a Chessable classroom session at 1.30pm on

Wednesday run by Tom and WIM Luciana Morales, with a guest appearance from the reigning women's world champion GM and WGM Ju Wenjun. The world champion set a puzzle for the audience to consider and took questions and answers from the audience in the commentary/ coaching room. Luciana and Tom also hosted a second guest session at 4.00 pm on Friday with top Chinese GM Wei Yi, with a similar set of puzzles followed by a Q and A session.

Weekend and Week 2 Events

Friday evening saw the start of the five round Weekender congress. This year's Weekender was very well subscribed, with the Atkins Open Section with 104 players, the Soanes U1750 with 56 players, and the Yates U1500 with 31 players. The first Blitz competition was held on Saturday evening. This was extremely popular with 108 players taking part in a nine round blitz at a 3|2 time control. GM Keith Arkell was top seed, but the event was won by **FM Jonah Willow** with a perfect 9 out of 9, followed by Anthony Zhang on 8 and Oscar Garcia on 7 points.



GM Nick Pert (top) and WIM Lan Yao

The main British Championship and Major Open started on Saturday 13 August with round 1 at 2.30 pm. These were nine round events, with a game a day scheduled to complete on Sunday 21 August.

Chess on the Riviera

David Gilbert reports on a sunny build-up to the British Chess Championships. This is an edited version of David's posts on English Chess Forum.

5 August

A weather warning for the coming week in Torquay. It's gonna be a scorcher! The sun will be shining and that means heaps of excited chess players will be dislodging the mothballs from their bottom drawer, donning their (very short) shorts and converging on the Riviera Centre, unleashing their frightening white legs on an unsuspecting public. You know who you are!

With a few days before the start entries are up to 1076. Previous experience suggests there will be more next week and overall there should be over the 1100, and that figure could reach as many as 1200. There are big numbers for Blitz (132) and Rapidplay (159) events, while the Major Open (78) and the Weekender (173) have achieved impressive entry levels.

7 August

POSTCARD - Arrived just after 1.00pm this afternoon. It's hot! The car air con was a dream. All quiet at the Riviera Centre. Apparently, they'll be setting up from five o'clock today. The organisers have now inserted the August ratings on Chess-Results in good time for Monday's pairings. Well done! The bowls green is now yellow and in a worse state than the Coventry Arena pitch. Plenty of action on the crazy golf course - a hole in one as I passed. The funfair looks scary if you're

fifty-plus. The Terminator is aptly named - what person in their right mind would do that to themselves? The Fun House looked anything but.

11 August

What an amazing week. I don't remember it being this warm for any previous British. Inside the Riviera Centre the air con is cranked up to full power and doing a great job keeping us cool. It's the last round for the rated sections tomorrow. Conditions in the balcony are fabulous, but we knew that already. Starting tomorrow evening there are close to 200 entries in the Weekender. What a brilliant turn-out. Downstairs in the over-50s the last game finished at 8.10pm this evening - getting on for six hours! You guessed it - a draw.

The arbiters are quietly getting on with their jobs, the refreshment counter has been busy, while parents celebrate or commiserate with their children, who all appear to be having a wonderful time. Staff in the restaurants in the town, and as far afield as Paignton, are reporting their best week of the summer.

Brendan O'Gorman really does have the knack of capturing chess emotions in his photography. Take, for example, his one of Stewart Reuben (below)



Stewart Reuben

15 August

The sun has set over the first week of the Championships - and what a week it's been, with the best chess weather ever, ever, ever. I came away in good spirits having won both

Sunday games - the second a thrilling win to overturn a lost position. Those pesky juniors were filling most of the top boards in the Soanes and Yates. There seem to be new ones every year! But in the massively popular Atkins I was delighted to see a London Public Service League player Gary Senior (Pimlico) take joint first. I can't thank the arbiters and the people manning the Office in the bowels of the building enough. Everything has gone like clockwork - all week they've been calmly efficient. Once a game finishes there's an arbiter by your side ready to collect the signed scoresheets.

One last thing - the bookstall is incredible. Jim must have bought most of the Chess & Bridge shop with him. Complimentary copies of *Chess* magazine were going like hot cakes. I bought *300 Most Important Chess Exercises* by Thomas Engqvist - that should keep me occupied until 2023. Where will that be? An announcement expected shortly ...

The British Chess Championships 2022 Week 2

Main British Championship

The main British Championship started with round 1 on Saturday 13 August with the remaining eight rounds running until Sunday 21 August. You can find pairings and results for all tournaments at the link here: <http://chess-results.com/tnr655607.aspx>

All games were played on liveboards and shown in the playing all (pictured) and published via the internet as shown on the BCC broadcast web page at

<https://tinyurl.com/yyrrck9a>

We also had a commentary room with players invited to join the team following their games. There were 60 players in the Championship including eight GMs, two WGMs and with the top ten seeds as shown below.

	Title	Name	Rtg
1	GM	Pert Nicholas	2537
2	GM	Hebden Mark L	2476
3	GM	Emms John M	2474
4	IM	Clarke Brandon G I	2474
5	GM	Gormally Daniel W	2466
6	IM	Kirk Ezra	2442
7	GM	Davies Nigel R	2425
8	IM	Wadsworth Matthew J	2418
9	IM	Pert Richard G	2411
10	GM	Arkell Keith C	2409

The Championship was played over nine rounds from Saturday 13 to Sunday 21 August with rounds starting at 2.30pm each day, aside from round 9 which started at 10.30am on the final Sunday. Games of the day were selected by a panel of IM Richard Palliser, GM Matthew Sadler and WIM Natasha Regan and published on the ECF website at <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/notable-games/>

Rounds 1 – 3 (Saturday – Monday)

Danny Gormally took an early lead and was the only player on 3 points after round 3. Games of the day from the first three rounds were as follows ---

Round 1 Game of the Day

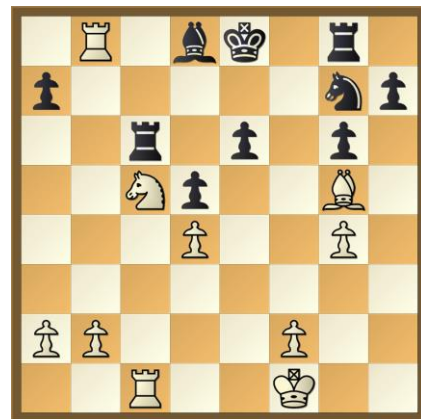
Chris G Ward v Martin G Walker
Kings Indian Defence – 13.08.2022



GM Chris Ward

In this game Chris adopts an early h-pawn push against Martin's Kings Indian Defence and then switches the attack to the c-file with Black's king caught in the centre.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. h4 Bg7 4. Nc3 d5 5. h5 Nh5 6. cd5 c6 7. e4 cd5 8. e5 Bf8 9. Qf3 Nc6 10. Bb5 Be6 11. Nge2 Qd7 12. Na4 Bg4 13. Qe3 Be2 14. Qe2 e6 15. g4 Ng7 16. Bh6 Rg8 17. Rc1 Be7 18. Rh3 Rc8 19. Kf1 Qc7 20. Bc6 bc6 21. Qa6 c5 22. Nc5 Qc6 23. Qc6 Rc6 24. Rb3 f6 25. ef6 Bf6 26. Rb8 Bd8 27. Bg5 1-0



Round 2 Game of the Day

Keith C Arkell v Lan Yao
English Opening – 14.08.2022



After some early manoeuvring, Keith pushes his kingside pawns with his queen joining in to

provoke a weakness on the dark squares followed by a rook lift to win the game.

1. c4 Nf6 2. Nc3 e6 3. Nf3 Bb4 4. g3 b6 5. Bg2 Bb7 6. O-O O-O 7. d3 Bc3 8. bc3 d6 9. e4 Nbd7 10. Nd4 c5 11. Nc2 a6 12. a4 Qc7 13. Ne3 Bc6 14. f4 Rad8 15. g4 Ne8 16. g5 Qb7 17. Qh5 g6 18. Qh6 Ng7 19. f5 ef5 20. ef5 gf5 21. Nd5 Bd5 22. Bd5 Qc7 23. Rf3 Rfe8 24. g6 Ne5 25. gf7 Kh8 26. Rh3 Nf3 27. Bf3 1-0



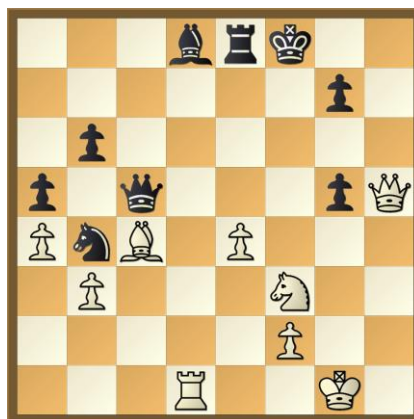
Round 3 Game of the Day (1)
Nigel R Davies v David J Eggleston
 1-0 – 15.08.2022

Nigel (below) transposes to a Queens Gambit Catalan opening against David with a well-timed pawn push against the opposing king and a fine pawn sacrifice with 26. g6! to open up lines against the opposing king.



1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. g3 d5 4. Bg2 Be7 5. O-O O-O 6. c4 dc4 7. Qc2 a6 8. a4 Bd7 9. Qc4 Bc6 10. Bg5 a5 11. Nc3 Na6 12. Rfd1 Nb4 13. Rac1 Re8 14. h4 h6 15. Bf6 Bf6 16. e4 Qd7 17. b3 b6

18. Qe2 Bb7 19. Qe3 Bd8 20. g4 Qe7 21. g5 hg5 22. hg5 c5 23. dc5 Qc5 24. Qf4 Qe7 25. Nb5 Rf8 26. g6 fg6 27. Qg4 g5 28. Nbd4 Bc8 29. Rc8 Rc8 30. Ne6 Rc5 31. Bf1 Re8 32. Nc5 Qc5 33. Bc4 Kf8 34. Qh5 1-0



Round 3 Game of the Day (2)
Thomas Villiers v Ioannis Lentzos
 1-0 – 15.08.2022

Tom sets an opening trap in the Caro Kann with a pawn sacrifice to set up a discovered attack with Nxf7 on move 6 which picks up the opposing queen for two minor pieces.

1. e4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. d3 de4 4. Ng5 ed3 5. Bd3 Nf6 6. Nf7 Kf7 7. Bg6 hg6 8. Qd8 e5 9. Nc3 Nbd7 10. O-O a5 11. Bg5 Rg8 12. Rad1 Be7 13. Qc7 Ne8 14. Rd7 Nc7 15. Re7+ 1-0



Rounds 4 – 6 (Tuesday - Thursday)

Danny dropped a point against IM Brandon Clarke in round 4. This meant that Brandon Clarke, Ezra Kirk, Richard Pert and Keith Arkell

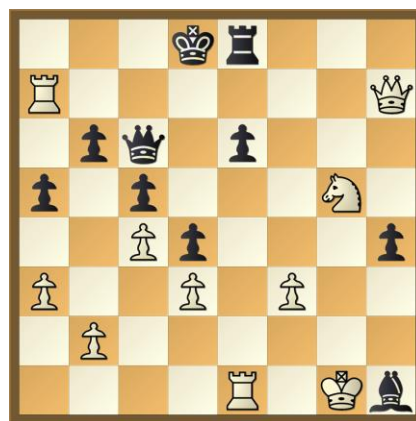
took joint lead after round 4 with 3½ points out of 4. Keith then won his round 5 game against Ezra Kirk with some fine attacking chess to move in front on 4½ points out of 5 after round 5. Keith was closely followed by a chasing pack of 6 players on 4 points (IM Brandon Clarke, GM Danny Gormally, IM Matthew Wadsworth, IM Richard Pert and FM Harry Grieve).

Keith drew his round 5 game against Matthew Wadsworth, while Harry won his game against Danny Gormally with Keith and Harry now equal first at the end of round 6. Games of the day for the middle three rounds were as follows ---

Round 4 Game of the Day
Matthew J Wadsworth v Lan Yao
 1-0 – 16.06.2022



1. Nf3 Nf6 2. g3 e6 3. Bg2 d5 4. O-O Be7 5. d3 c5 6. Nbd2 Nc6 7. e4 b6 8. Re1 Bb7 9. e5 Nd7 10. c4 d4 11. Nf1 Qc7 12. Bf4 h6 13. g4 g5 14. Bg3 Bf8 15. a3 a5 16. h3 Bg7 17. Qe2 Ne7 18. N1d2 Ng6 19. Ne4 O-O 20. h4 gh4 21. Bh2 Nde5 22. Ne5 Ne5 23. g5 hg5 24. Ng5 Bg2 25. Qh5 Rfe8 26. Be5 Be5 27. Qh7 Kf8 28. Re5 Ra7 29. Rae1 Qc6 30. Rf5 Ke7 31. Rf7 Kd8 32. Ra7 Bh1 33. f3 1-0



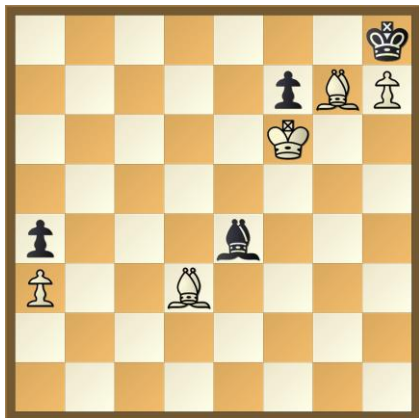
Round 5 Game of the Day
Keith Arkell v Ezra Kirk
 1-0 – 17.08.2022

Keith (below left) plays some fine attacking chess to reach a winning endgame with two bishops and a passed h-pawn against bishop and knight.



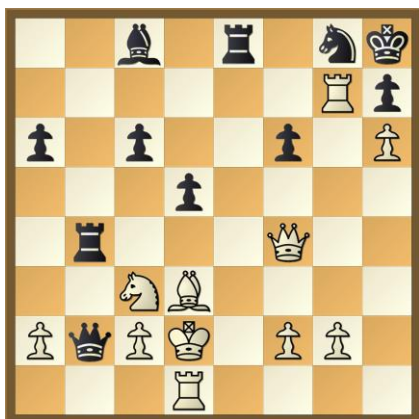
1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. g3 Bg7 4. Bg2 O-O 5. O-O d6 6. c4 Nbd7 7. Nc3 e5 8. e4 Re8 9. h3 ed4 10. Nd4 Nc5 11. Re1 h6 12. Rb1 a5 13. b3 c6 14. Bb2 h5 15. Qd2 a4 16. b4 Ne6 17. Nf3 Nd7 18. Qd6 Bf8 19. Qd2 Bb4 20. Ba1 Bf8 21. Rbd1 Bg7 22. e5 h4 23. Ne4 hg3 24. fg3 Qb6 25. Kh2 Rd8 26. Qc1 Qc7 27. Nf6 Nf6 28. ef6 Bf8 29. Rd8 Qd8 30. Ne5 Ra5 31. Be4 Bd6 32. Ng6 Rg5 33. Ne7 Kf8 34. Nf5 Qc7 35. Nd6 Qd6 36. Qe3 b5 37. cb5 cb5 38. Rc1 Bd7 39. a3 Rg3 40. Qg3 Qd2 41. Bg2 Qc1 42. Be5 Qg5 43. Bd6 Kg8 44.

Qf2 Nf8 45. h4 Qf5 46. Qf5 Bf5 47. Bf1 Bd7 48. Kg3 Bc6 49. Kf4 Nd7 50. Kg5 Kh8 51. Bd3 Kg8 52. h5 Kh8 53. h6 Kg8 54. h7 Kh8 55. Kh6 b4 56. Bb4 Ne5 57. Bf8 Ng4 58. Kg5 Nf6 59. Kf6 Be4 60. Bg7+ 1-0



Round 6 Game of the Day
Harry Grieve v Danny Gormally
 1-0 -2022.08.18

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cd4 4. Nd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Bg5 e6 7. Qd2 Be7 8. O-O-O O-O 9. h4 a6 10. Nc6 bc6 11. Rh3 d5 12. Rg3 Kh8 13. Be2 Rb8 14. Qe3 Ng8 15. ed5 ed5 16. h5 f6 17. Bf4 Bd6 18. Rg7 Re8 19. Qg3 Bf4 20. Qf4 Qb6 21. h6 Qb2 22. Kd2 Rb4 23. Bd3 1-0

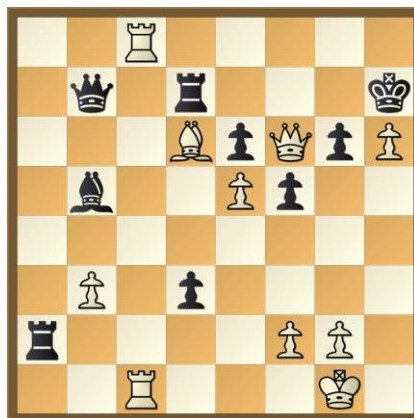


Rounds 7 – 9 (Friday to Sunday)

Round 7 Game of the Day
Daniel W Gormally v John Merriman
 1-0 – 19.08.2022



1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 Be7 4. Bd3 c5 5. dc5 Nf6 6. Qe2 a5 7. Ngf3 Na6 8. e5 Nd7 9. c3 Nac5 10. Bc2 Qc7 11. O-O b5 12. Re1 Ba6 13. Nd4 b4 14. Qe3 Rc8 15. Qg3 O-O 16. cb4 ab4 17. N2b3 Rfe8 18. Bf4 Qb6 19. Rad1 Nb3 20. Bb3 Bc5 21. Ba4 Qa7 22. Bh6 Bf8 23. Be3 Bc5 24. b3 Qb7 25. h4 Rc7 26. h5 Bf8 27. Bd7 Rd7 28. Nf3 Bb5 29. h6 g6 30. Nh2 Ra8 31. Ng4 Be7 32. Qf4 Rc7 33. Nf6 Kh8 34. Nh7 Bd8 35. Ng5 Ra2 36. Qb4 Be7 37. Qf4 Bd8 38. Rc1 Rd7 39. Bc5 Ra8 40. Bf8 Bg5 41. Qg5 f5 42. Bd6 d4 43. Rc5 d3 44. Rec1 Ra2 45. Rc8 Kh7 46. Qf6 1-0



Round 8 Game of the Day
Antanas Zapolskis v Gwilym Price
 1-0 - 2022.08.20

This was a fantastic attacking game which deservedly won the Alexander best game prize including a fine piece sacrifice with 25 Bxe6! to open the position with a second sacrifice 28 Rf3! to force checkmate.



Antanas Zapolskis

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cd4 4. Nd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Ndb5 Bc5 7. Nd6 Ke7 8. Nc8 Rc8 9. Be2 Qc7 10. O-O h5 11. Bg5 Kf8 12. Qd2 Ng4 13. Bf4 Nge5 14. Nb5 Qb8 15. c3 a6 16. Nd4 Bd6 17. Kh1 Bc7 18. Nc6 dc6 19. Be5 Be5 20. f4 Bf6 21. Qe3 g6 22. Bc4 Kg7 23. e5 Bd8 24. Rad1 b5 25. Be6 fe6 26. Rd7 Kh6 27. g4 hg4 28. Rf3 Bh4 29. Rh3 g5 30. Rh4 gh4 31. f5 Kh5 32. Rg7 1-0



Round 9 Game of the Day
Matthew J Wadsworth v Harry Grieve
 0-1 – 21.09.2022

Harry Grieve took on Matthew Wadsworth in a dramatic last round game which he needed to win to avoid a playoff. Harry takes us through the championship decider game where he demonstrates the power of two bishops against two rooks in an endgame. The game ends with four queens on the board after both players promote but with a forcing line for Harry and the game played through to checkmate as a fitting end to the Championship.

(1) Wadsworth, Matthew (2418) - Grieve, Harry (2390) A13
 Chessable British Championship (9),
 21.08.2022



Harry Grieve

Heading into the last round of the British, I had just taken the sole lead for the first time with 6½/8, closely followed by Matthew Wadsworth, Keith Arkell and Nick Pert on 6/8. This left me having Black against Matthew on board 1, with Nick having White against Keith on board 2 - a set of pairings that promised an exciting final round. I had to assume that there would be a decisive result between Nick and Keith, since a draw would put them both out of contention for the title - so to avoid the

possibility of a play-off, I was looking to play for a win going into this last round. Of course, I knew Matthew would be doing the same - which set the stage perfectly for the dramatic game that followed. There was the added complication of needing just a draw for my first GM norm, but I tried to put that out of my mind with the British Championship on the line.

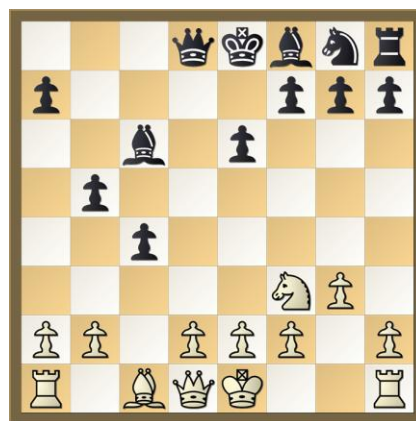
1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 c6 4.Nf3 dxc4 5.Na3 b5?!



Being honest, this is mostly just a mixing-up of move orders in the opening. Matthew is an excellent technical player, so I usually look to create lots of complications when we play each other - which here I achieved somewhat by accident. 5...Bxa3 - just a week later, we played with the same colours in the Northumbria GM event where I deviated with this much safer option. In this later game I got a winning position out of the opening, but Matthew later turned the tables and took the full point.

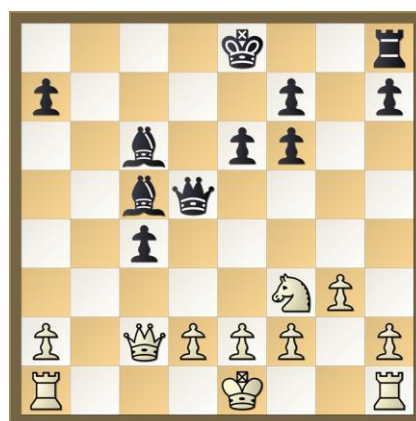
6.Nxb5! cxb5 7.Ng1! Necessary, since 7.Ne5? Nd7 and; 7.Nh4? g5 both fail to win the exchange for White.

7...Bd7 8.Bxa8 Nc6 9.Bxc6 Bxc6 10.Nf3



10...Nf6 Black clearly has some compensation for the exchange due to the strong light-squared bishop which will always deter White from castling. 10...g5!? is an option I considered at the time - White has to spend a tempo to prevent g5-g4, giving me time to play Bg7 and prevent White's b3 plan as played in the game. I decided instead just to complete development, but Matthew plays the next few moves very well to prevent me from developing my initiative.

11.b3 Bc5 12.Bb2 Qd5 13.bxc4 bxc4 14.Bxf6!? gxf6 15.Qc2



White sensibly trades pieces to prevent any ...Ne4 ideas and now starts to put pressure on the weak c4 pawn. Defending it passively with ...Bb5 will remove my strong light-squared bishop from the long diagonal and allow White to castle, so instead I have to look for a tactical solution.

15...Ke7 16.Rc1 Ba3 17.Rb1 Bd6 18.Qc3
 18.Rc1 would pretty much force me to repeat moves with 18...Ba3 but I had the advantage of knowing that Matthew would never head for a quick draw like this given the tournament situation.

18...Qe4 19.Rc1 19.0-0! would have been well-timed whilst White has the response **19...Qxe2? 20.Nd4**. After the text move White never gets another chance to castle.

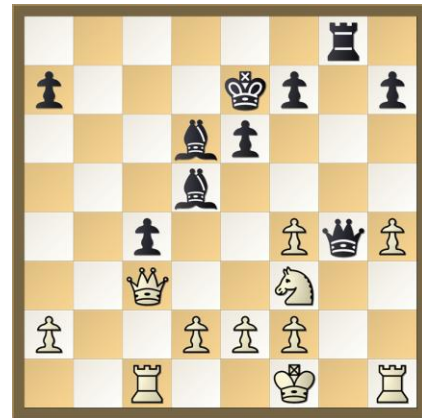
19...Bd5



20.Qa5 It's worth noting that Matthew turned down a couple of chances to exchange queens during the game: **20.Qe3!? Qxe3 21.fxe3 Rb8** gives Black some counterplay with the two bishops and the b-file, but White can keep the advantage with careful play.

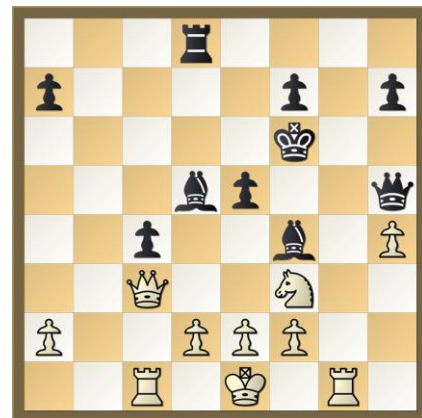
20...Ra8 21.Kf1 f5 22.h4 Qg4 23.Qc3 Around here I started to fully believe in my position for the first time - white hasn't managed to come up with a plan in the last few moves whilst Black's initiative has reached serious proportions.

23...f4 24.gxf4 Rg8



25.Ke1 Already an only move, since **25.Rg1?** fails to **25...Qh3+ 26.Ke1 Bxf3-**

25...Bxf4 26.Qa3+ Kf6 27.Rf1 Rd8 28.Qc3+ A necessary check, since the immediate **28.Rg1?** allows **28...Bxd2+! 29.Kxd2 Bxf3+ 30.Kc2 Qe4+ 31.Kb2 Rd2+** with a powerful attack.
28...e5 29.Rg1 Qh5



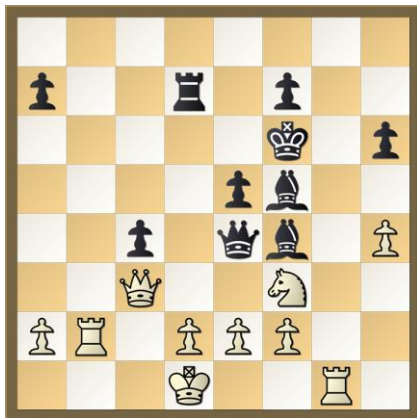
30.Qa5 Rd7 31.Qa6+ Ke7 32.Qa3+ Kf6 Around here it became clear that Nick Pert was going to win a powerful game on board 2 to reach 7/9, confirming that I would also need the full point to avoid the playoff - but whilst Matthew is still looking for the win, I can continue to offer repetitions when necessary.

33.Rc2 Qf5 34.Rb2



34...Be6? 35.Qc3 35.e3! would have exploited Black's last move, removing the bishop from a key diagonal. After **35...Bh6 36.Ng5** white starts to take over.

35...h6 36.Rb5 Qe4 37.Kd1 Bf5 38.Rb2

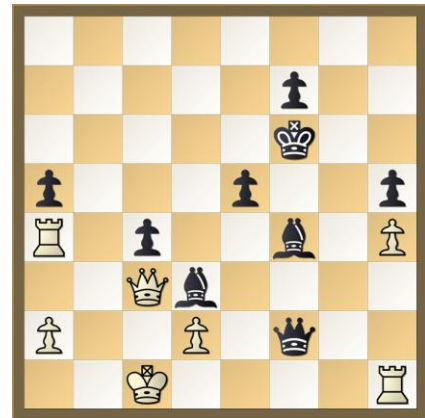


38...Rd3! Not too difficult a move to play, but definitely nice aesthetically. My calm choices such as ...h6 in the last few moves have highlighted the fact that White has no direct tries and I can just improve my pieces - but with every piece now seemingly well-placed, it must be time for the breakthrough. This also has the advantage of giving Matthew a difficult decision to make just before the time control.

39.exd3 39.Ng5!? is an interesting engine alternative, leading to a similar position to the game but without the h-pawns which should favour White - **39...hxg5 40.hxg5+ Bxg5 41.exd3 Qf3+ 42.Kc1 Qxf2 43.Rd1 Bxd3** is still very unclear.

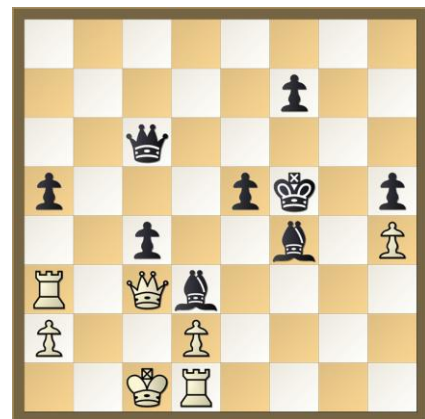
39...Qxf3+ 40.Kc1 Bxd3 I felt the momentum of the game was with me now - my compensation had felt shaky at times since being one exchange down from move 8, but actually things feel much easier with two exchanges gone - White's rooks lack targets whilst the black bishop pair are excellently placed.

41.Rb4 Qxf2 42.Rh1 h5 43.Ra4 a5!?



44.Rd1 Definitely a poisoned pawn - both **44.Qxa5? Qd4** and; **44.Rxa5? Qb6** are winning for Black.

44...Qb6 45.Qb2 Qc5 46.Ra3 Kf5 47.Qc3 Qb5 48.Qb2 Qc6 49.Qc3

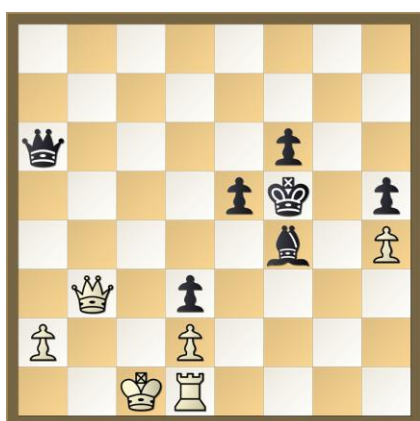


Finally, Matthew is the one to offer a repetition, potentially ending his challenge for the title if I accept and enter a playoff with Nick. However, since sacrificing the second exchange I had felt my position was practically very promising, so I decided to play for more.

49...f6 Right idea, claiming that the a5 pawn is still poisoned, but wrong execution. 49...Kg4! is very strong, when 50.Qxa5 Qb7 51.Rxd3 cxd3 gives black a much better version of the game with the king already activated.

50.Qxa5! Agreeing to give back one exchange after the sequence in the game, but I expect Matthew will have been quite happy with this to remove Black's strong bishop on d3 and have all three results back on the table - White's strong a-pawn gives him definite winning chances as well.

50...Qb7 51.Rxd3 cxd3 52.Qc3 Qa6 53.Qb3



53...Ke4! The engine gives many moves as equal here, but this feels right - White needs to act quickly now to prevent me achieving an ideal setup with the king on f3 protected by pawns on f5 and e4.

54.a4 Kf3 55.Re1? Threatening Qd1+, but as it turns out the decisive mistake, giving me time to cement my king in the position.

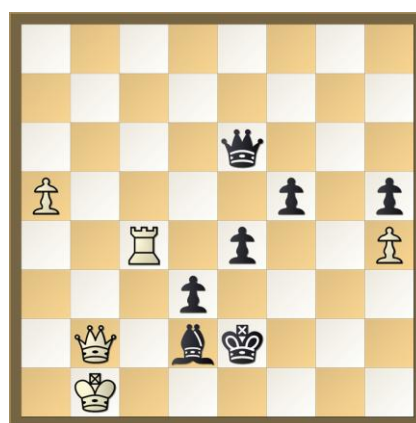
55.Qd5+ Kf2 56.Qc5+ Ke2 57.Re1+! Kxe1 58.Qg1+ Ke2 59.Qg2+= is a nice trick to force a repetition. This is the result of my 53rd move - White needs to look for a quick perpetual to avoid being worse, but even if Matthew had seen this idea I doubt he would have gone for it under the circumstances.

55...Kf2! Sometimes during a game you don't realise exactly where a position becomes

winning - but here at the board I sensed that the advantage had finally turned, and it was down to me now to convert it. My next two pawn moves were both played instantly, giving me the ideal setup whilst gaining time attacking White's rook.

56.Re4 f5 57.Rc4 e4 58.Qc3 Ke2! The black king functions perfectly as an attacking piece whilst I have the strong central pawn chain protecting it from any checks.

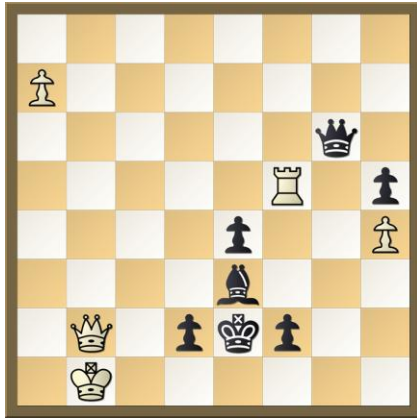
59.a5 Qh6! 60.Kb1 Bxd2 61.Qb2 Qe6



Now the f-pawn can start running and the conversion should be fairly easy - were it not for the amount that was on the line in this game.

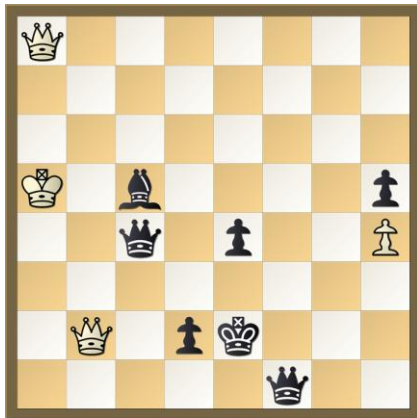
62.Rc5 f4 63.Qb5 f3 64.Re5 Qg6 65.a6 f2 66.Rf5 Be3 One last precise move, although cashing in immediately with 66...Qg1+ 67.Ka2 f1Q 68.Rxf1 Kxf1 should also be good enough.

67.Qb2+ d2 68.a7



68...Qxf5 68...Bxa7 does the trick as well of course, but it was a fitting end to such a tense game to have four queens on the board.

69.a8Q f1Q+ 70.Ka2 Qe6+ 71.Ka3 Bc5+ 72.Ka4 Qc4+ 73.Ka5



73...Qa1+! 74.Qxa1 Qb4+ 75.Ka6 Qb6# 0-1

Championship Results

FM Harry Grieve won the British Champion and British U21 Champion titles on 7½ points out of 9. Nick Pert was second on 7 points, with IM James Jackson and IM David Eggleston joint 3rd on 6½ points and a pack of five players in joint 5th.

1st	FM Harry Grieve (British Champion and British U21 Champion)	Guildford	8
2nd	GM Nicholas Pert	Sandhurst	7
3rd=	IM James P Jackson	Banbury	7
3rd=	IM David J Eggleston		7
5th=	GM Daniel W Gormally	Blackthorne	6

5th=	IM Matthew J Wadsworth	Maidenhead	6
5th=	GM Keith Arkell	Cheddleton	6
5th=	FM William Claridge-Hansen		6



ECF Chief Executive presents the British Crown trophy to FM Harry Grieve



Second placed Nick Pert is congratulated by Mike Truran



Fifth placed Danny Gormally, Matthew Wadsworth and Aaravamudhan Balaji

British Women's Championship Results

WIM Lan Yao won the Women's Championship to add to her English Championship success with 5 out of 9 points just ahead of WGM Katarzyna Toma on 4½ points.

1st	WIM Lan Yao (British Women's Champion)		5
2nd	WGM Katarzyna Toma	Wood Green	4½



ECF Events Director Shohreh Bayat presents the Women's Championship Trophy to WIM Lan Yao



WIM Lan Yao and WGM Katarzyna Toma



Julia Volovich (pictured with Shohreh Bayat) won the British U18 Girls' Championship

Major Open Results

The Major Open ran for nine rounds alongside the British Championship with a big turnout of 82 players. The lead changed hands several times over the course of the event with Ben Ogunshola, P U Midhun and Peter Shaw ending up as joint winners on 7 out of 9 at the end of the competition.



Ben Ogunshola, P U Midhun and Peter Shaw

Seniors Over 65 Championship Results

As in week 1 there was a big turnout for the Seniors Championships with 62 players taking part in the Over 65 Championship.



Over 65 Championships Round 4 – Nunn v Jackson

Top seed for the Over 65 Championship was GM John Nunn, and he led the field throughout, finishing on a perfect 7 out of 7, followed by Paul Hutchison on 5½, with Geoffrey James, Oliver Jackson, Jim Burnett and Paul Girdlestone all in joint 3rd place on 5 points.



British Over 65 Champion GM John Nunn



Above (top to bottom, left to right) 2nd placed Paul Hutchison, and 3rd equal Oliver Jackson, Jim Burnett and Geoffrey James



Above (top to bottom, left to right) - joint British Over 65 Women's Champions – Gillian Moore, Dinah Norman and Susan Chadwick

Home Chess Round-up

Events Round-up 2023

2023 saw the return of a full programme of events across England including local congresses and a series of national events.

March – 45th Blackpool Congress

The 45th Blackpool congress took place from 11 to 13 March at the Imperial Hotel in Blackpool. This was a five-round ECF and FIDE rated event with separate Open, Major, Intermediate, Minor and Standard sections, with a big turnout of over 280 entrants.

There was a tie for first place in the Open with seven players finishing on four points out of five:

Rk	Name	FED	Rtg	Club/City	Pts
1	Jones Steven	ENG	2344	Basingstoke	4
2	Ledger Andrew	ENG	2438	Sheffield	4
3	FM Duncan Chris	ENG	2252	Watford	4
4	FM Burnett Andrew	SCO	2158	Forest Hall	4
5	GM Gormally Daniel	ENG	2520	Blackthorne	4
6	Majumder Shrayan	ENG	2128	Hampshire	4
7	FM Wall Tim	ENG	2300	Forest Hall	4



*Steve Jones (top left),
Andrew Ledger (top right)
and Danny Gormally
(bottom)*



Indy Southcott-Moyers

Upcoming junior Indy Southcott-Moyers had a great tournament, including some fine wins against higher-rated opponents and titled players in the Open section. Indy's dad Vince provides his perspectives on the event below, including Indy's Evans Gambit game against Colm Barry, with annotations by Vince and Indy.

Blackpool Congress

To watch or not... a parent's dilemma!

Vince Southcott writes ...

It was our first experience of the Blackpool Congress and as with most congresses in my limited life as a non-playing chess parent, it was a roller-coaster of a weekend. Who needs Blackpool Pleasure Park!

Indy (my son), along with his coach, took a stance a while back during the first Covid lockdown to enter only the Open sections of tournaments because that's where you learn the most! I must admit that on looking at the profile of the Blackpool Open and seeing that there were a lot of highly-rated players, I did have the feeling this could be a tough weekend ahead.

After a four and a half hour journey and negotiating many queues on the M6, we pulled off the motorway to make the short journey into the heart of Blackpool. The Tower was a

welcome sight as the Imperial Hotel was just up the road from there. And what a hotel, steeped in history, steeped in famous visitors and, I was to learn, steeped in a very much loved and nostalgic chess tournament.

Even as we entered there was a buzz of excitement; chess talk around clusters of people meeting up for the first time in a long time, the grandeur of the foyer with its large imposing ornate columns and a chess hall with a sea of boards ready for action!

I like the first round pairings as you can roughly work out the level of the opponent... and Indy's first opponent was definitely going to be in the 2200 plus area. This is what he wanted - the chance to play at a higher level. We are establishing a routine now of do(s) and don't(s) after competing in a number of congresses and with half an hour to the starting time the routine begins ... don't talk about the opponent's rating or title ... do have equipment, snack and water ready ... don't talk about winning or losing ... do talk about playing dynamically and playing the best move each time ... do get some fresh air, and in Blackpool's case a good look at the sea (we love the sea!) ... do get in the playing area and set up ten minutes before play ... do sit and be focussed ready ... for me it's time to find a place to wait!

I love the hustle and bustle of the playing area filling up, players checking and rechecking their board numbers, the nervous adjustment of pieces, the mass wave of people rushing in at the last minute, the chatter of greetings and good lucks...

Then the silence and the wait! Luckily no choice but to wait, Indy's not on an electronic board! I settle down in the tea-room with potentially a long wait ahead. Thirty minutes in, I laugh at myself as I refresh chess-results.com to see if any of the matches have

finished ... no chance. I've come to realise - typically the higher the rating the longer the matches ... so I settle back down trying to distract myself.

After a few hours the tea-room starts filling slowly and the strange language of the chess player begins to build; *if I had played h3, Nd4, Qe6 I would be winning* ... and so the results start to appear filling up in the lower sections but still no Open results ... that's typically good news in Indy's case as he's OK with long matches.

Four hours plus into the game and it starts to resemble a blitz game when anything can happen. Ten past ten and still no sign of Indy and his game along with a few others were the only ones left unfinished. This is where I get nervous! I tend to pack up my stuff, wait, then unpack my stuff do something crazy like another Wordle or yet another bad game of online blitz ... and then repeat! Then I see him, walking into the room ... I can still never tell what the result is ... then he smiles and lets me know he won.

We briefly chat about the game then try to stop and talk about other things to lower the adrenaline. I take the chance to enter Indy's game into Chessbase; I'm a curious dad! A solid opening, complicated middle, a slight mistake from the opponent, developed pressure and converted well (see the game at the end)

Up for breakfast early and a walk before the routine begins again, although Indy adds in some prep. It's a titled player but we don't mention it! And Indy's playing on an electronic board ... oh boy, **to watch or not!**

The hotel is becoming like home now. We know where everything is. Amongst the melee in the corridors and foyer, the animated discussion and ponderings of the analysis room and general air of excitement as players

share who their next opponent are, there is a lovely feeling: *it's great to be here*.

It's nearly 9.25am. Dad's bit of the routine is next... time to leave! Indy's set for another game. On my way out I find myself asking where I watch the live boards... Nooooo, don't do it... but I now have the answer. Finding my usual spot, the tea-room, I settle down but not quite so much as last night... a little nagging thought keeps popping up ... how's Indy doing ... it can't hurt not this early on ... I take the plunge and a quick look ... no disasters yet ... phew ... right, that's it - no more.

The morning draws on and before I know it the hotel is preparing the room for afternoon tea... crikey, its 1.30pm! Four hours in! I get a lovely email from a chess friend saying how well Indy's doing ... oh gosh ... I succumb and take another look ... it's blitz time minutes only on the clock ... I hate endgames ... I can never get my head around them ... Indy's got less time ... I stop watching ... I move out of the tea-room and prepare for the worst.

Another fifteen agonising minutes waiting in the foyer ... Indy finally strides in, a bigger smile this time ... my reality is shattered, I'm in shock ... he won! An email pings in congratulating Indy, my chess friend had watched! I had to own up ... I didn't. No, I couldn't!

After the excitement and the rush to eat lunch and do *the routine* with only 35 minutes until the next round, I looked at the game ... tough ending for his opponent who missed a drawing move in the final moments of time pressure madness. Chess is such an incredible game, a crazy tightrope of a journey.

The journey got tougher; Indy played an FM next and a wrong pawn move at the start of the endgame allowed the opponent's king in and Indy eventually lost. With nearly 13 hours of chess within the last 24 hours, Saturday

night was a night to relax, and we crashed asleep really early!

Sunday was altogether different with a draw and a loss, but new things to learn. The big one was increasing Indy's tournament stamina; I guess it's like being match fit at football or rugby which is vastly different to being training fit. So more congresses and other tournaments are needed in the calendar. I did watch more moments of Indy's games. Not sure it's a good idea for my nerves!

I loved the Blackpool Congress for many reasons, mostly for the great atmosphere it created and how it accommodated and provided so much excitement for all levels of chess players. Sunday was full of conversations around who would win the prizes as results appeared throughout the day. A big cheer and thank you for the organisers who made it a fabulous event... can't wait for next year!

Colm Barry (2205) - Indy Southcott-Moyers (2025)

Blackpool Congress (1), 11.03.2022

Evans Gambit

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.b4 Bxb4 5.c3 Be7 6.d4 Na5 7.Bd3 d6 8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Nxe5 Nf6 10.0-0 0-0 11.Qc2 Bd6 12.Nf3 Nc6 13.Nbd2 Bg4 14.Rb1 Rb8 15.Re1 Re8 16.Bb5 Nd7 17.Nd4 Nce5 18.h3 Bh5 19.f4 Ng6 20.Bxd7 Qxd7 21.f5 c5 22.Nb5 Bg3 23.Re3 Nf4 24.Nc4



24...Rbd8?

Missed a nice tactic! 24...Ne2+! 25.Rxe2 Bxe2
26.Qxe2 Rxe4.

**25.Rxg3 Ne2+ 26.Kh2 Nxc3 27.Kxg3 Bd1
28.Qd2 Qxd2 29.Bxd2? Be2 30.Nbd6 Bxc4**



31.Nxc4?

A mistake. 31.Nxe8 b6!

**31...Rxe4 32.Rxb7? Rxc4 33.Rxa7 f6 34.Be1
Re4 35.Bf2 Rd3+ 36.Kh2 Rxc3 37.Rc7 h6
38.Rxc5 Rxc5 39.Bxc5 Re5 40.Bb6 Rxf5 41.a4
Rf4 42.a5 Ra4 43.Kg3 Kf7 44.Kf3 Ke6 45.g3 f5
46.h4 g5 47.h5 Ra3+ 48.Kf2 f4 49.gxf4 gxf4
50.Bc7 Kf5 51.Kg2 Kg4 52.Kf2 Ra2+ 53.Ke1 f3
54.Bb6 Kxh5 55.Be3 Re2+ 0-1**

May - Chessable English Seniors Championships 4 - 8 May 2022

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

Seniors Over 50

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

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



Mark Hebden finished on 6½ out of 7 to become the new Over 50 Senior Champion with WIM Natasha Regan becoming the Over 50 Senior Women's Champion. Natasha had a great tournament with a fine win against Andrew Ledger in round 6 (annotated below) after which she lost to Mark Hebden on board 1 in the last round.



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

Final standings are shown in the table below:

English Seniors Championship Over 50		
1st - English Over 50 Champion	GM Mark Hebden	6½
2nd	GM Keith Arkell	6
3rd=	Don Mason	4½
3rd=	CM Mark Josse	4½
3rd=	Jonathan Nelson	4½
Women's Over 50 Champion	WIM Natasha Regan	3½
U2000 Performance	WIM Natasha Regan	
U1800 Performance	Neil Homer	

Seniors Over 65

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



IM Paul Littlewood (above, left) led the Over 65 field for most of the event but lost out to Cliff Chandler in their round 6 game.

Cliff then went on to draw with FM Oliver Jackson in the final round. Final standings were as below, with a three-way tie for first place and Cliff Chandler becoming the English Over

65 champion followed by Ian Snape and Paul Littlewood on tiebreak.



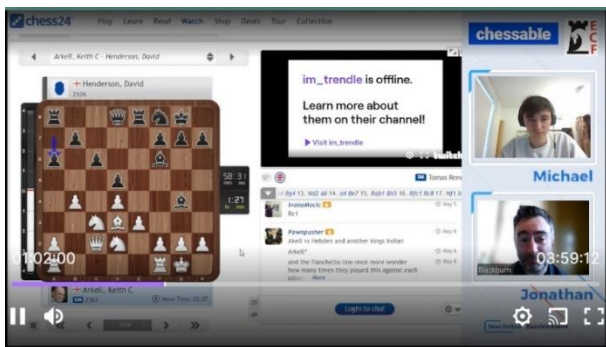
IM Paul Littlewood, Cliff Chandler, Ian Snape and WCM Dinah Norman – photo by Adrian Elwin

Final standings were as below based on tiebreaks:

English Seniors Championship Over 65		
1st - English Over 65 Champion	Cliff Chandler	5½
2nd	Ian Snape	5½
3rd	IM Paul Littlewood	5½
Women's Over 65 Champion	WCM Dinah Norman	2½
U2000 Performance	Roger de Coverly	4½
U1800 Performance	Alan Hall	

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





You can find further details of the event together with links to the games and recorded version of the commentary on the final round here:

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

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

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

Arkell, Keith - Henderson, David

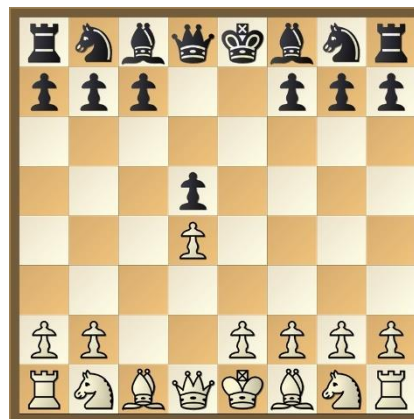
Chessable English Seniors Championship
Kenilworth, Warwickshire, Uni (7), 08.05.2022

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

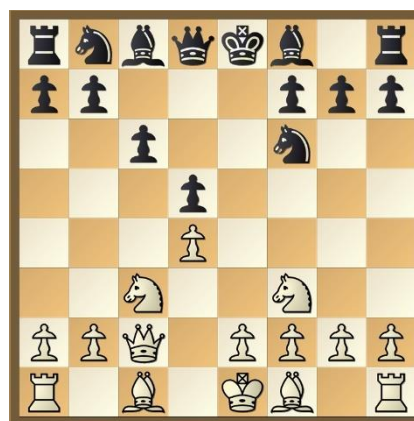
1.c4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.cxd5

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

3...exd5

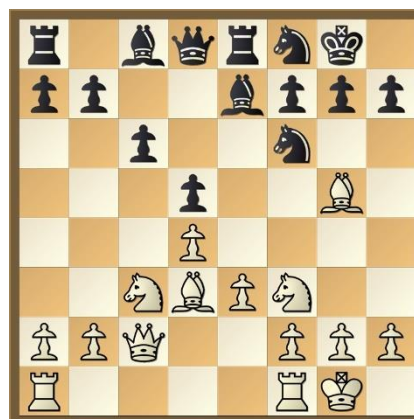


4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2



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

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



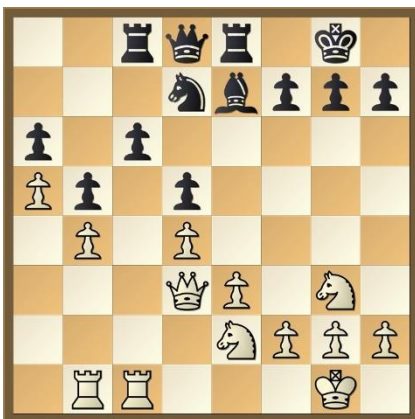
Instead of trying to exploit my move order David chooses to defend against a standard QGD Exchange variation.

11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.b4



And here we go with the minority attack. I have had this type of position umpteen times, affording me the opportunity to continually refine my understanding of the nuances. I believe that if White attacks in the centre or on the kingside, beginning with f3 and e4, then the d3 bishop is a valuable piece. However, with the knight on f3 and White instead planning queenside operations, the bishop has no use and should be exchanged for Black's counterpart.

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



I think White should only play in this way after the light-squared bishops have been exchanged. This is because after the intended plan of manoeuvring knights to d3 and c5 Black would be able to defend the a6 pawn by simply putting his bishop on c8. From there the bishop

would be able both to attack and defend. Incidentally, notice how much more effective a white knight on c5 would be when compared to a black one on c4, because of that a6 pawn.

21...Bf8 22.Rc3 g6 23.Qc2 Nb8 24.Nf4 Qd7 25.Nd3 The next stage is to bring my knights to d3 and f3 in order to induce the loosening move ...f6 by threatening Nfe5.

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



A multi-purpose move. It snuffs out any hope of a black kingside attack on the h2–b8 diagonal, gives my king some wiggle-room and prevents ... Bxh2+ in some variations after I later capture on c6. It also discourages any thoughts of trying to hurt me with ...f5, ...g5...f4.

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

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

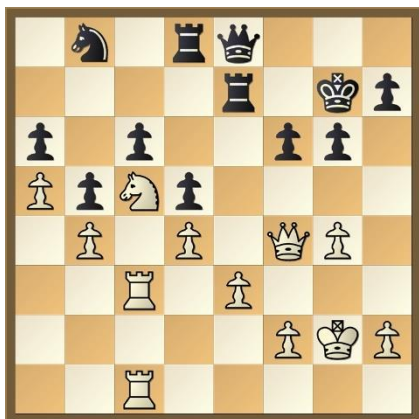
34...Qe6 35.Rc1 Re7 36.Nd3 Qe4+ 37.Kg1 Qe6

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

38.Nc5 Qc8 39.Kg2 Qe8 40.Qd1

Time to bring the queen to bear down on Black's fragile set up.

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



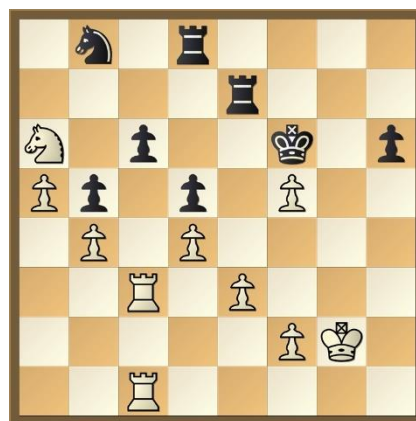
Sometimes in these positions, which I have had many times before, I bring my king over to the queenside first, and only then blast open the kingside. This time Black is so passive that I decided there was no need.

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



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

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



1-0

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

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

Over 50 Chessable English Seniors Championship, 07.05.2022

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

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.b4



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

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



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

8.Bxg7 Kxg7 9.Qb3 9.0-0 is an idea engines are very keen on, sacrificing the b-pawn and grabbing central space in return. 9...Nxb4 In fact, most engines don't grab this pawn(!) preferring 9...a5 instead 10.d4 c5 11.a3 N4c6 12.d5 Na5 13.Nc3 Bg4 14.Ne5 Bc8 15.Nf3 Bg4 16.Ne5 Bc8 17.Qc2 Nd7 18.Nf3 c4 19.Nd2 Ne5 20.Nb5 Bd7 21.Nd4 Rc8 22.Qc3 Kg8 23.Rab1 Ng4 24.e4 Ne5 25.f4 Nd3 26.e5 with good compensation for white. ½-½, 34 Berserk 9-dev NN - Koivisto 8.6, Matthew Engine Games 2022

9...Qb6 10.a3 a5



11..b5 A bold sacrifice!

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

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

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

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

14...Nc7 Not a favourite move of the engines, which all prefer returning the pawn

immediately for easy development with 14...Rd8 15.Nxb5 Nc6 16.N1c3 Nxc3 17.Nxc3 Na5 18.h4 Be6 19.h5 Rac8 20.Nxa4 Nb3 21.Rd1 Nd4 22.e3 Nc2+ 23.Ke2 Nxa3, which gave Black active play though White held in Stockfish 160422–Dragon 3.

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

16.Rb1 Bd7 17.Bxb7 e5 18.Nc2



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

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

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

20.d3 Rd6 21.Bf3



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

21...Be6 22.h4



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

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

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

23.h5 Bb3 24.g4

A really good move, exploiting Black's last move to put more pressure on the black kingside. The threat of h6 followed by opening the g-file and then invading along it is very attractive, mostly due to the stranded black rook on a5 which will be unable to challenge for any files White opens. My engines were already looking to randomise the position with 24...e4 25.dxe4 fxe4 but their evaluation is already reaching +2!

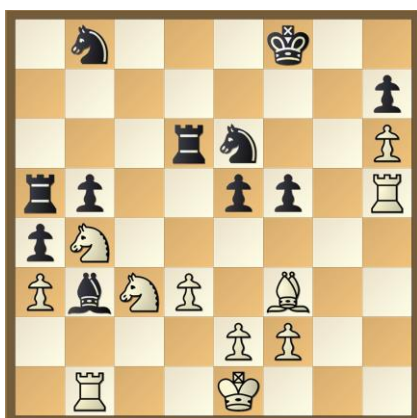
24...Ne6 25.h6+



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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



White is consistent in targeting the h7-pawn! Exchanging off the knights will draw away the

black knight from f8 and allow Rh8. **35...Ng6**
36.Ke2 36.Nxe6 Rxe6 37.Nc6 was another little knight tactic suggested by the engine, with the double threat of Nxa5 and Nd8+ forking king and rook!

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

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

May - Chessable English Championships 19 – 22 May 2022

Nigel Towers, ECF Director of Home Chess, reports on the Chessable English and English Women's Championships



The playing hall

The Chessable series of events continued with the Chessable English and English Women's Championships in May following on from the English Seniors earlier in the month in Kenilworth, Warwickshire.

The Championships saw top-level players from across England competing for the titles of English and English Women's Champion.

The event was controlled by the highly able arbiting team of Chief Arbiter IA Adrian Elwin and National Arbiters Jo Wildman and Richard Buxton. We were also joined by our sponsor Chessable's Events and Brand Manager, Irina Lomperi, who provided great support and help with the event as ever.

The **English Open Championships** were the first English Championships since Duncan Lawrie sponsored the first and previously only English Chess Championship competition in December 1991 in Hammersmith.

The event was ECF and FIDE rated with a total of seven rounds over the five days.

Full results and standings can be found at <https://chess-results.com/tnr638674.aspx>

GM Mark Hebden led the event throughout with 5½ out of 6 going into the final round where he was once again drawn against long-time opponent GM Keith Arkell. The players agreed a draw which meant that Mark finished on 6 out of 7 to take the English Championship for 2022.

Final standings are shown in the table below.

English Championship		
1st - English Champion	GM Mark Hebden	6
2nd	IM James Jackson	5½
3rd	IM Peter Roberson	5
4th=	GM Keith Arkell	4½
4th=	IM Marcus Harvey	4½
4th=	FM Adam Ashton	4½
4th=	Oskar Hackner	4½
U18	FM Shreyas Royal	4



ECF Home Director Nigel Towers presents the English trophy to winner GM Mark Hebden

The **English Women's Championship** was the next in the series of highly successful events from the first event in 2016 to the previous Championship in 2019 in Hull which was won by WGM Katarzyna Toma and Louise Head. Full results from 2019 can be found at <https://chess-results.com/tnr638675.aspx>

Alaa Gamal put in a great performance to lead the field with five out of six points going into the final round. Elis Dicen won her final round game against Alaa Gamal, and WIM Lan Yao won her game against Sarah Sengenberger, and so Lan Yao took the lead for the first time in the event to win the English Women's Championship for 2022.

English Women's Championship		
1st - English Women's Champion	WIM Lan Yao	6
2nd	Alaa Gamal	5½
3rd=	Nina Pert	4½
3rd=	Mae Catabay	4½
U18 (excluding those placed above)	Elis Dicen	4



ECF Women's Chess Director Aga Milewska presenting the English Women's trophy to WIM Lan Yao

Championship Collection

A collection of annotated games from the English Championships with annotations by GM Keith Arkell, FM Adam Ashton, FM Shreyas Royal and WIM Lan Yao.

Chessable English Championship Round 4 - Hebden v Derakhshani

GM Keith Arkell provides his thoughts on the championships including an annotated round 4 game between GM Mark Hebden and FM Borna Derakhshani

Entrenched GMs such as Mark Hebden and me are facing a particularly fearsome bombardment from all sides as a wave of young talent rises up through the ranks.



GM Mark Hebden (left) and GM Keith Arkell (right)

Freddie Gordon announced his arrival with some fine games at the 2021 British Online Championship, Shreyas Royal, still only 13, has rapidly progressed to IM strength, and Ravi Haria took off in the last few years to complete his GM title. Furthermore, our youngsters have done extremely well abroad recently, and when you add to that all the twenty-somethings on their way up, British chess is looking quite healthy these days.

Anyway, on to the Championship. Two weeks earlier Mark Hebden and I had locked horns at the Holiday Inn Kenilworth for the English Senior Championship, and with the town centre situated conveniently close we were delighted to return. The two players who impressed me most were Jacob Boswell and again Shreyas, both scoring well against strong opposition. Jacob is already past twenty years old but is one of many who have played extensively online during lockdown (I have played him myself over 150 times!) and will soon be rated far higher than his current 2075.

After escaping from a completely lost position against Jacob in round one, Mark Hebden went on an impressive five-game winning streak before we were paired together on the top board in the last round, for the umpteenth time. One solid draw later and Mark emerged as the new English Champion to add to his Senior title. Not bad when you think that he is now in his 65th year on Planet Earth! Congratulations also to IM James Jackson who finished second and Peter Roberson who finished third. As for me, my May results (13½/17) suggest that I am back to full strength after what was almost certainly a very protracted long Covid episode. I am thinking quickly and clearly again, and even my sense of smell is returning after an absence of two years! Here is Mark's round 4 game against another relatively young player on the up.

GM Mark Hebden – FM Borna Derakhshani - Chessable English Championship 2022, 20.05.2022



Borna Derakhshani – photograph by John Upham Photography

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 Bf5 5.cxd5 cxd5 6.Qb3 Qc7 7.Bd2 e6 8.Bb5+ Nc6 9.0–0 Bd6



10.Bb4

Hebden has been using this system against the Slav for donkey's years, including twice against me in a six-game match we played in 1996. He is looking for a very small edge based on control of the black squares and sometimes pressure against a backward pawn on c6. In this game he demonstrates how the f5 bishop can end up as a bystander.

10...0–0 11.Bxc6 Bxb4 12.Qxb4



12...Qxc6

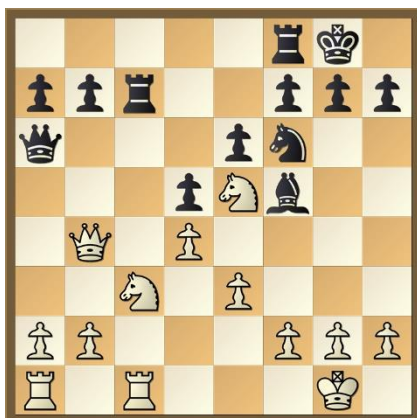
I would probably choose 12...bxc6 here, with some counterplay on the b-file, but both recaptures are fine for Black.

13.Ne5 Qa6 14.Nc3



14...Rac8 My hand would want to play 14...Rfc8 here, as all the play is likely to be on that side of the board. 14...Ng4 to remove White's most active piece is also fine.

15.Rfc1 Rc7?!



This doesn't look right, and Mark exploits it with a nice pawn sacrifice for an initiative which persists for the rest of the game. 15...Ng4 is still okay for Black, although Hebden will probably claim a small edge as he has the better minor piece.

16.Nb5! Rxc1+ 17.Rxc1 Qxa2 18.Nd6 b6



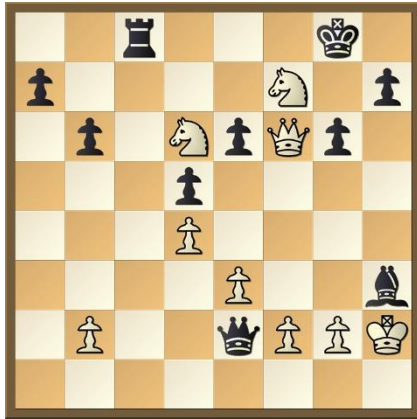
19.Nc8

I can see why this move was tempting as Ne7+ followed by N7g6+ is a big threat, but the simple 19 Ndx7 was probably stronger still.

19...g6

This looks ugly and indeed loses by force. Derakhshani could have prolonged the struggle with 19...h6! exploiting White's weak back rank after 20. Ne7+ Kh7 21. Nxf5 Rc8! When your position is on the ropes you have to keep a lookout for such resources! After 20 h3 Qa5 just about keeps Black in the game, but now Mark finishes matters with panache.

20.h3 Kg7 21.Kh2 Qa6 22.Qe7 Qe2 23.Nd6 Bxh3 24.Rc8 Rxc8 25.Qxf7+ Kh8 26.Qxf6+ Kg8 27.Nef7



1-0

Chessable English Championships Round 7 – Willow v Ashton



FM Adam Ashton

FM Adam Ashton had a good tournament, finishing 4th= on 4½ out of 7. Here Adam provides commentary on his game against Jonah Willow.

Willow, Jonah (2401) - Ashton, A. (2366) [A13]
 Chessable English Championship 2022, 20.05.2022

Black against Jonah is an extremely tough pairing these days. However, having endured a slightly frustrating tournament where I felt I was playing well but not taking full advantage, it was also a chance to finish on a high note.

1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.b3 c5



Jonah had presumably seen my previous, less than convincing, response to this line. 4...Be7 5.Bb2 0-0 6.Nc3 c5 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Nxd5 Qxd5 (8...exd5) 9.Bc4 Qd8 10.Qc2 Nc6 11.h4 f5 12.Ng5 Nb4 13.Qd1 Qe8? 14.a3 b5 15.Be2 Nd5 16.a4 (16.Bxb5!) 16...bxa4 17.Rxa4 h6 18.Nf3 Bd7 19.Ra5 Nb4 20.Bc4 Qd8 21.Ra1 Qb6 22.0-0 Bb5 23.Qe2 a6 24.d4 Rac8 25.Bxb5 axb5? (25...Qxb5!) 26.Ne5 Rfd8?? (26...Qb7 27.Ng6 Rfe8 White is much better but the game continues.) 27.Qh5 Bf6 28.Qf7+ Kh7 29.Nd7 Rxd7 30.Qxd7 Rd8 31.Qf7 cxd4 32.Ra7 e5 33.exd4 exd4 34.Re1 Rf8 35.Qxf8 Qxa7 36.Qxb4 1-0 (36) Virtanen, A (2262) - Ashton ,A (2359) ECC 2018.

5.Bb2 Nc6 6.cxd5



6...exd5!

Note that the dark-squared bishop can come straight to d6. The position would be considerably less dynamic with the bishop on e7, which is why I now prefer the 4...c5 move order.

6...Nxd5 is of course playable, but White has some interesting attacking schemes with a later Qc2, h4 as in the above game. My play there could no doubt be improved, but in any case I consider the game continuation to be a fairly favourable IQP position.

7.Bb5

After the obvious 7.d4? cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bb4+ is slightly awkward, a downside to the early fianchetto. 9.Bc3 a5=; 7.Be2 d4!

7...Bd6



8.0-0

After 8.d4 cxd4 9.Nxd4 I was intending to stay active with 9...0-0! which gives an unbalanced but roughly level position. (9...Bd7 is OK, but gives White the kind of edge they are looking for in these positions.)

8...0-0 9.d4 cxd4



10.Bxc6?!

Very ambitious. White wants to play against

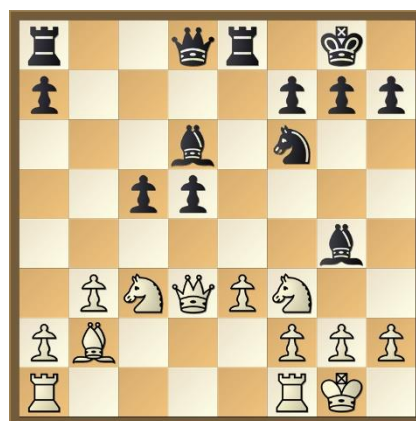
the hanging pawns, but Black's activity should not be underestimated.

I expected 10.Nxd4 Bc7, which I imagine is reasonably balanced..

10...bxc6 11.Qxd4

If allowed time to play Nc3, Rc1/d1 etc White will pressure the hanging pawns and be better. Black should therefore play actively.

11...c5 12.Qd3 Re8 13.Nc3 Bg4



13...Bb7!?

14.Rfd1

A brave decision, but obviously risky.

After the more normal 14.Nd2 I think I had planned 14...Bc7?! (14...Bh5!?!; 14...Rc8!?) but here 15.Nb5 is not so clear.

14...Bxf3 15.gxf3 d4!

Not sure if Jonah had missed or just underestimated this move but I think it more or less refutes White's play.

16.Nb5 Bb8



This rather commits to all-out attack and even introduces some back rank tricks for White in some lines, but the bishop is a strong attacking piece, so it is justified.

16...Nd5!? was a calmer alternative; exd4 will always allow a knight to f4, so White's position is difficult to play.

17.Rac1 a6 18.Na3 Nd5

With the queen arriving on h4 Black's attack takes on serious proportions.

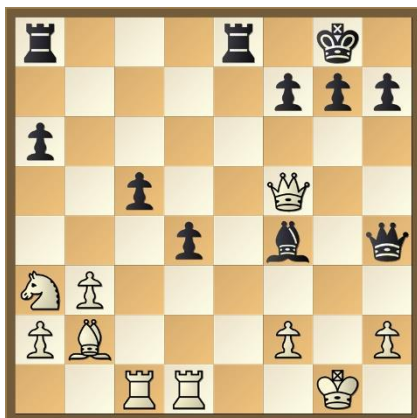
19.f4

19.Rxc5 Qg5+ 20.Kf1 Nxe3+ →

19...Qh4 20.Qf5 Nxf4

20...dxe3! also wins.

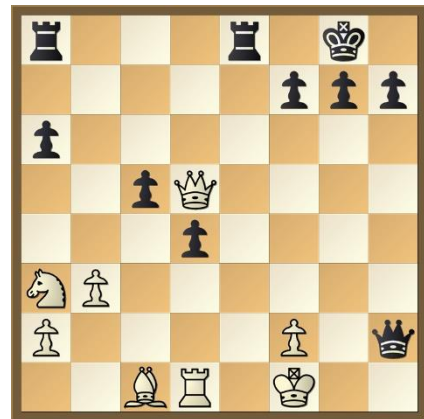
21.exf4 Bxf4



22.Qd5!

My opponent does well to keep the game alive here and for the next few moves. The frustration of not being able to find a killing blow also led me to use up all my time.

22...Qxh2+ 23.Kf1 Bxc1 24.Bxc1



24...Rad8

24...Qh3+! would have done it as after 25.Qg2 there is no good answer to 25...Qh5.

25.Qf3 Qe5

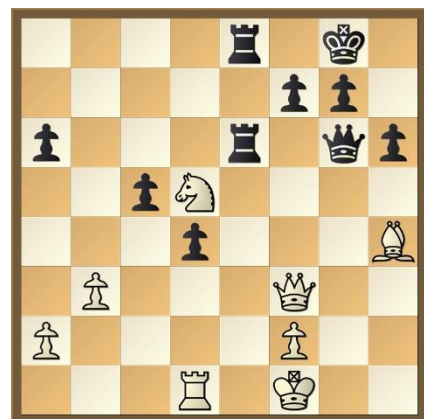
25...Re6!

26.Nc4

White has regained some co-ordination and now the task is not quite so simple, though Black should be winning. Unfortunately, I drift quite badly in the time scramble whilst my opponent resists very well.

26...Qe6 27.Bd2 Qg6 28.Ba5 Rc8 29.Nb6 Rc6

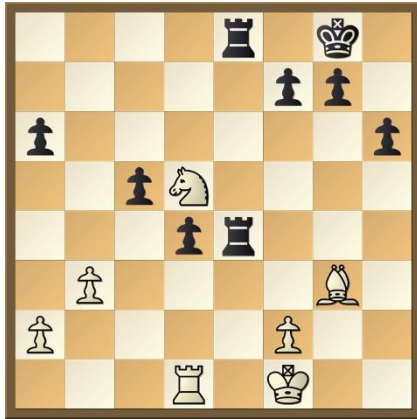
30.Nd5 h6 31.Bd8 Rce6 32.Bh4



32...Qe4?

32...Re4 33.Bg3 Qc6→ surprisingly cuts off the knight.

33.Qxe4 Rxe4 34.Bg3



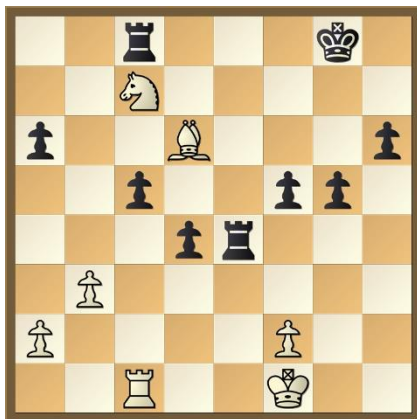
34...f5?

The computer evaluation suddenly plummets to 0.00 though both of us were in severe time trouble at this point.

35.Nc7

35.f3! and the rook surprisingly doesn't have a good square. 35...Re2 36.Nc7.

35...Rc8 36.Bd6 g5 37.Rc1

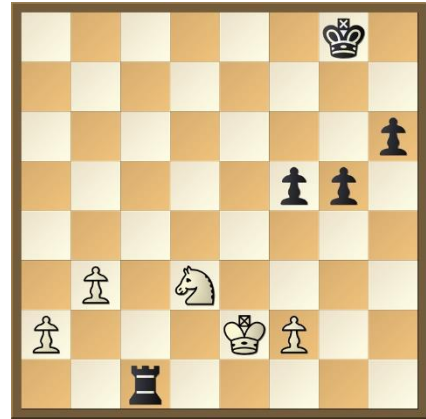


37.f3! is again awkward!

37...d3!

To my great relief the pawn deflects White's counterplay and now Black is winning again without too much trouble.

38.Rd1 Rd4 39.Be5 Rd7 40.Nxa6 c4 41.Nb4 c3 42.Rxd3 c2 43.Bb2 c1Q+ 44.Bxc1 Rxc1+ 45.Ke2 Rxd3 46.Nxd3



Somehow getting over the line against strong opponents is never quite as simple as it should be.

0-1

Chessable English Championships Round 4 – Wells v Royal

FM Shreyas Royal put in a strong performance to finish as the top-placed under 18 player on 4 out of 7 amongst top-level competition in the English Championships. Here Shreyas takes us through his round 4 game against GM Peter Wells.

Shreyas plays a sharp line of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, looking for a dynamic position. Peter picks up a pawn and the bishop pair but gives up the d5 square for Shreyas's knight. Peter misses a tactic in time trouble which allows Shreyas to simplify into a slightly better position for Black leading to a rook and opposite-coloured bishop endgame with Shreyas a pawn up.

Wells, Peter (2374) - Royal, Shreyas (2385) [D24]

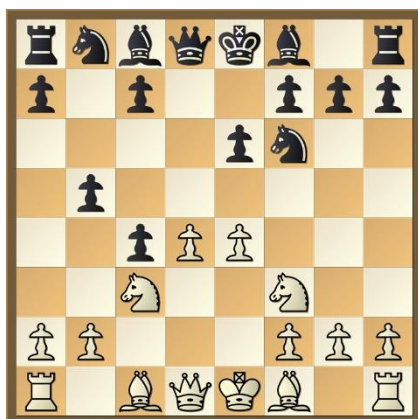
Chessable English Championship 2022, 20.05.2022



FM Shreyas Royal

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 dxc4 4...Be7 5.Bf4 - Peter was expecting this line, I suppose, since he shied away from his experienced Catalan to play this instead.

5.e4 b5!?



A very sharp and trendy line nowadays. I was not able to remember the theory very well, but at least I had avoided preparation and had got into a dynamic position.

6.e5 Nd5 7.Nxb5 Nb6

The idea for Black is to get very good control over the weak light squares with moves like Nc6–b4 Bb7 Qd7–Rd8 and also to attack his d4 pawn if possible, but since my best defensive piece (my knight) is on the other side of the board White has promising attacking prospects on the kingside.

8.Be2 Nc6 9.0–0 Be7 10.Qd2!?



The most popular move with the clever idea of Qf4 before the bishop can get to e4, restricting the queen and making it almost impossible to castle on the kingside for Black.

10...Ba6

I had a long think here formulating a plan, mainly trying to castle queenside.

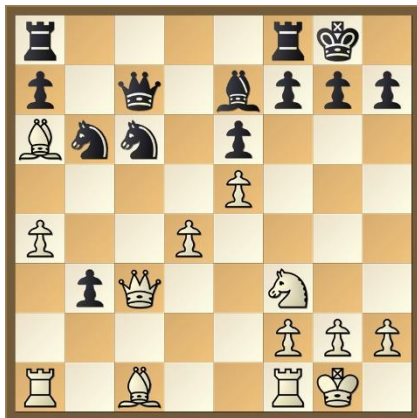
10...0–0. Nepomniatchi has played some good games in this line, and I also suspect it's the best line to deal with this: 11.Qf4 Rb8 12.Qg3 Kh8 13.Rd1 Nb4 14.Nc3 Bb7 15.Rb1 N4d5 16.Bd2 Nxc3 17.Bxc3 Bd5 18.b3 Be4 19.Ra1 Nd5 20.Be1 c3 21.Bd3 Bxd3 22.Rxd3 Ba3 23.Bxc3 Nxc3 24.Rxc3 Bb2 25.Rac1 c5 26.Rxc5 Bxc1 27.Rxc1 Qa5 28.h4 Qxa2 29.Qf4 Qxb3 30.Ng5 h6 31.Ne4 Rbc8 32.Re1 Qb4 33.Rd1 Rcd8 34.Qe3 a5 35.g4 a4 36.g5 h5 37.Nf6 g6 38.Kh2 Qb3 39.Rd3 Qc2 40.Rc3 Qf5 41.Ra3 Ra8 42.d5 exd5 43.Qd4 Qe6 44.f4 Rfc8 45.f5 Qxf5 46.Nxd5 Qe6 0–1 (46) Goganov,A (2594)-Nepomniachtchi,I (2784) Moscow 2020.

11.a4 Qd7 12.b3!?



With the idea of winning a pawn relatively quickly (however, I have decent compensation) and you can argue the advantage of the two bishops, but I suspect it was not that useful especially when I managed to establish a monster knight on d5 later in the game, with no opposing knight to contest it with!

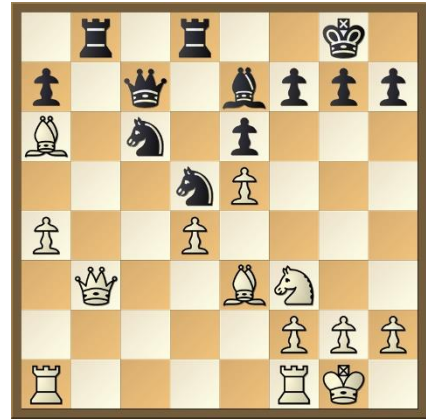
12...cxb3 13.Nxc7+ Qxc7 14.Bxa6 0-0 15.Qc3



15...Rfd8?!

15...Nd5! 16.Qxb3 Rab8 17.Qc4 Qb6= was the best way to continue. I had a similar alternative but not as effective.

16.Be3 Nd5 17.Qxb3 Rab8

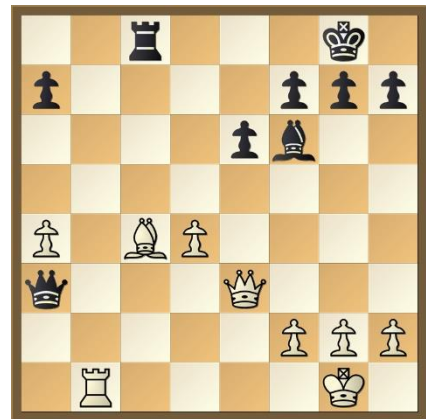


18.Qc2?

White was already down to around fifteen minutes and missed a tactic which gives me a pretty risk-free better position, and now he regrets having the two bishops.

18.Qc4 Qb6 19.Bb5 is not as good as a version with the bishop on c1, with White having less time to co-ordinate his pieces.

18...Nxe5! 19.Qe4 Nxf3+ 20.Qxf3 Bf6 21.Rfc1 Qb6 22.Bf1 Qd6 23.Rab1 Qa3 24.Rxb8 Rxb8 25.Bc4 Rc8 26.Rb1 Nxe3 27.Qxe3



Qxa4

27...Qd6 is a very accurate engine move! The idea is that the e6 pawn is better than the a4 pawn since it has centre potential, and also it protects my king in the sense that f7 is not a huge tactical weakness.

28.Bxe6

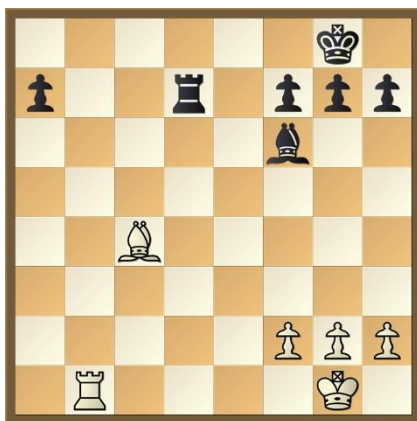
White blitzed this out within one minute, mainly relying on instinct. I had also seen this, but really did not trust it because I thought

there were so many forcing moves! Luckily for him, none of them seem to work for me.

28...Rd8!

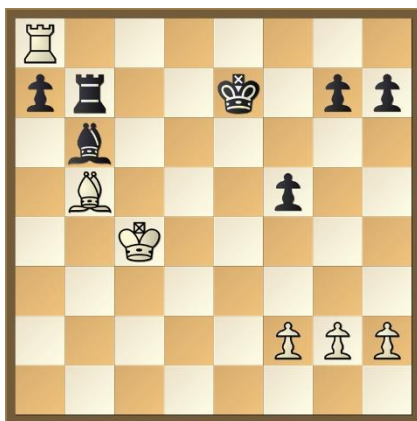
28...Bxd4?! was one of my considerations, but after ... 29.Bxf7+ Kxf7 30.Rb7+ I am forced to play Kf6 or Kg6, with nothing more than a perpetual. 28...Qc2 29.Re1! Rc3 was the main resource I was banking on, but now I lose the game! 30.Bxf7+! is what I missed initially, with mate coming; 28...Re8 29.Bb3!

29.Bb3 Qxd4 30.Qf3 Qd3 31.Qxd3 Rxd3 32.Bc4 Rd7



Now of course this endgame is drawn with best play, but it's definitely not easy with under a minute on White's clock.

33.Rb8+ Bd8 34.Kf1 Kf8 35.Ke2 Ke7 36.Bb5 Rc7 37.Kd3 f5! 38.Ra8 Rb7 39.Kc4 Bb6



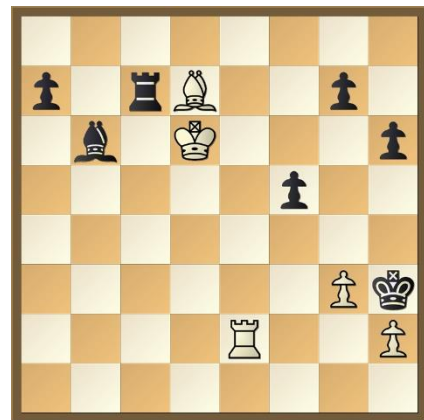
40.Bc6?

This loses a pawn: 40.f3 was a better try.

40...Rc7 41.Kd5 Bxf2→ 42.Rh8 h6 43.Re8+ Kf6 44.Re6+ Kg5 45.g3 Kg4 46.Kd6 Bb6 47.Bd7
I had blitzed out everything until now, since White was low on time, but now I sensed a critical moment...

47...Kh3 48.Re2 Rxd7+!?

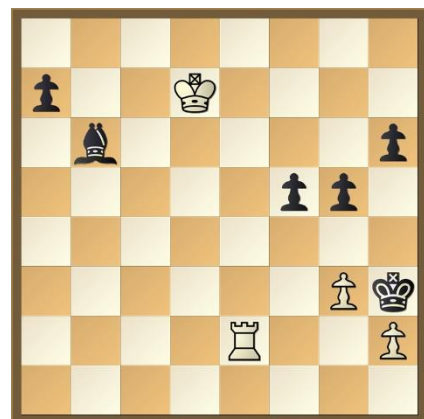
I feel this deserves an exclamation mark; however, White draws with another engine line!



But in practice, White had little chance anyway with just one minute left, and I suspect even with fifteen.

48...Rc5→ would need some more technique.

49.Kxd7 g5



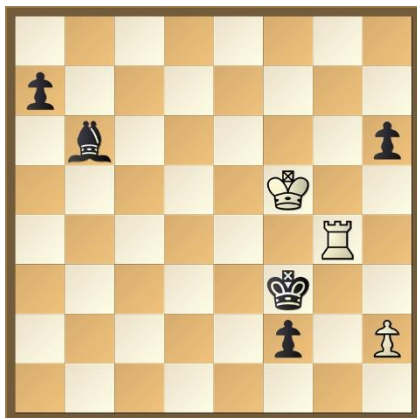
50.Ke6?

And White is lost.

50.Kc6!= with the idea of Re6! 50...Bg1 (50...f4 51.gxf4 gxf4 52.Re6 f3 53.Rxh6+ Kg2 54.Rf6 f2 55.h4 Bd4 56.Rf8 f1Q 57.Rxf1 Kxf1 58.h5 Ke2 59.h6 Kd3 60.Kb5 and he is in time for a draw)

51.Kd5 Bxh2 52.Ke5 Bxg3+ 53.Kxf5 g4 would be my best try, but once again it's a draw with best play.

50...f4 51.gxf4 gxf4 52.Re4 f3 53.Rf4 f2 54.Kf5 Kg2 55.Rg4+ Kf3



0-1

Chessable English Women's Championship Round 4 – Yao v Pert

English Women's Champion WIM Lan Yao walks us through her round 4 game against Nina Pert.

Pert, Nina (1620) - Yao, Lan (2276) [B47]
Chessable English Women's Championship
20.05.2022

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Qc7 6.g3 a6 7.Bg2 Nf6 8.0-0 h5 9.h3 Bc5 10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.e5



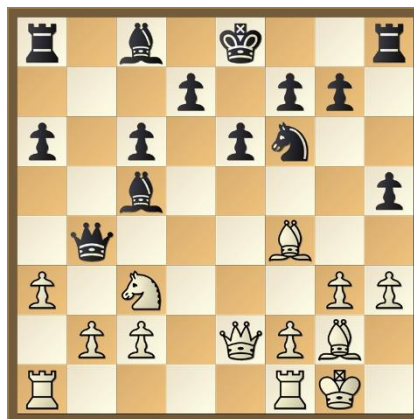
White sacrifices a pawn to gain a tempo to develop pieces, but the position is closed, and

it is hard for White to attack immediately. The theory is 11.Na4 Ba7 12.Bf4 e5 13.Bg5 d6.

11...Qxe5

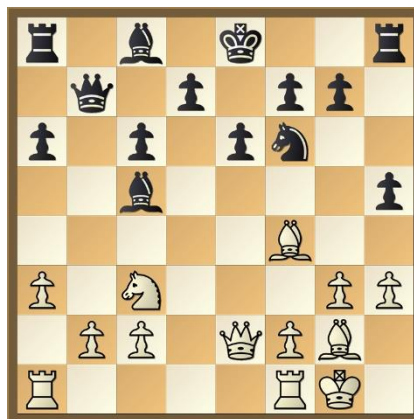
The queen looks in danger in the centre, but it can move to d4-b4-b7 to a safe place.

12.Bf4 Qd4 13.Qe2 Qb4 14.a3



14...Qxb2? Black should not risk taking the pawn because it will make White's pieces more active. 15.Na4 Qd4 16.c4 Be7 17.Rab1 Qa7 (17...0-0 18.Nb6 Ra7 19.Qc2! (19.Be3? Qe5=) 19...h4 20.Rfd1 Qc5 21.Be3 Qe5 22.Nxc8+-) 18.Nb6+-

14...Qb7



15.Rad1

The rook on d1 is almost useless. Instead it is better to play 15.b4 Be7 16.Na4 h4 (16...d5 17.Nc5 Qa7 18.c4) 17.c4 hxg3 18.fxg3 d5 19.Be5 when White is taking control of the

queenside and it is hard for Black to develop pieces.

15...d5 16.Bg5



Attacking the f6 knight, but White will lose control of the h2–b8 diagonal. It will allow me to play Qc7 or Rb8 to make my pieces more active in the future. Still, White should try to attack on the queenside. 16.Na4 Be7 17.Qe3, preparing Nb6.

16...Be7 17.Rfe1 0–0



Black will win another pawn by playing 17...Qxb2 18.Rd3 (18.Na4 Qb5→+) 18...Qb6→+. But I was thinking that it was important to castle and develop my pieces first rather than taking the pawn.

18.b3 Qc7

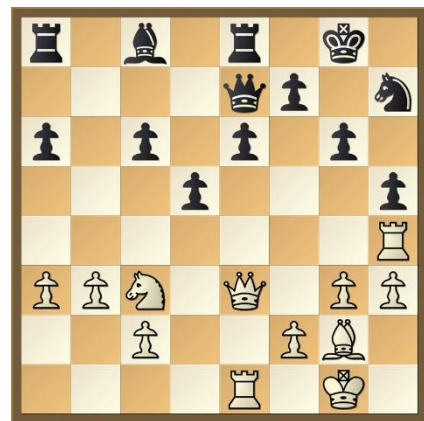
Leaves the b7 square to the c8 bishop. 19.Bf4 Bd6 20.Bg5 Nh7 21.Qxh5 Nxg5 22.Qxg5 Bxa3 →

19.Qe3 Nh7



Trying to trade the powerful bishop and occupy the centre by pushing f6 and e5 in the future.

20.Bxe7 Qxe7 21.Rd4 Re8 22.Rh4 g6



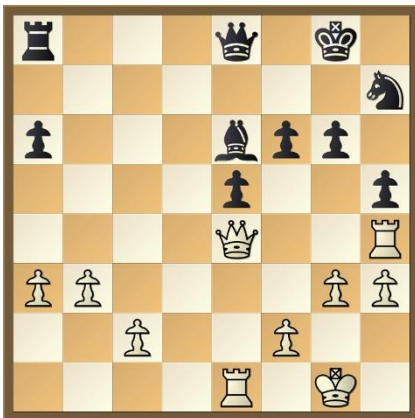
Leaves the f6 square to the f7 pawn rather than the knight. After 22...Nf6 23.Qe5 Black is still clearly better, but the e5 queen will become powerful and it is difficult for me to develop the rest of the pieces.

23.Qe5 f6 24.Qe3 e5



Now Black has a really powerful centre.

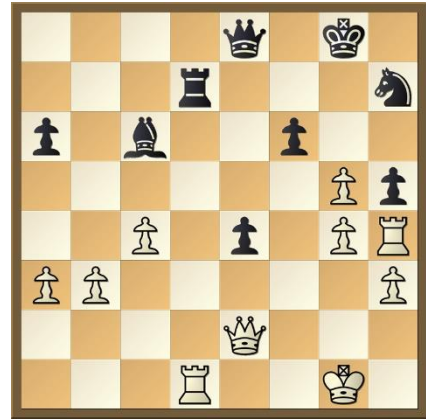
**25.Nxd5 cxd5 26.Bxd5+ Be6 27.Bxa8 Rxa8
28.Qe4 Qe8**



Material is almost equal, but White's rook on h4 is awkward, and Black is going to play Rd8–Bd5–Ng5. Black's knight and bishop will be too powerful for White to defend against.

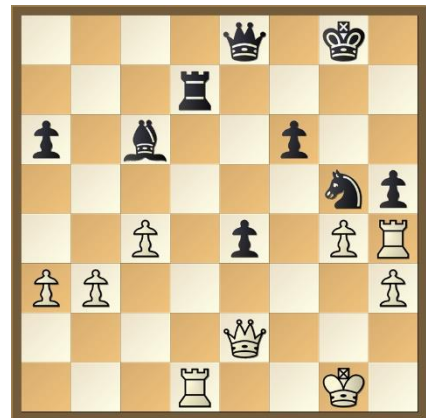
29.Qg2 Rd8 30.f4 Preventing Ng5.

**30...Bd5 31.Qe2 e4 32.Rd1 Rd7 33.c4 Bc6
34.g4 g5 35.fxg5**



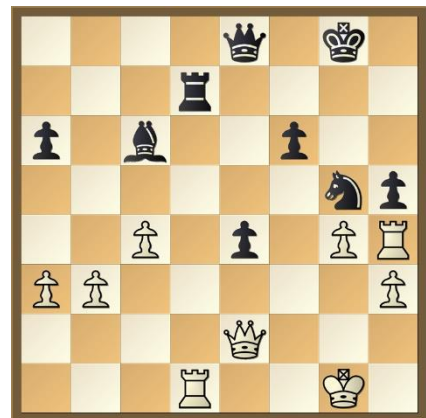
35.Rxh5 gxf4 Still preparing Ng5, and the f4 and e4 pawns are too powerful.

35...Nxg5



Bringing the h7 knight out. Another good move is 34...Rxd1+ 35.Qxd1 e3 threatening Qe4.

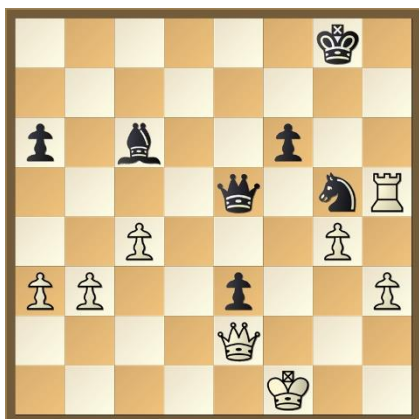
36.Rxh5 Qe5 37.Rxd7 Bxd7



38.Qe3 Nf3+ 39.Kf1 Qh2 40.Qf2 (40.Qc3 Qg1+ 41.Ke2 Nd4+ 42.Kd2 Qf2+ 43.Kc1 (43.Kd1 e3) 43...Ne2+) 40...Qh1+ 41.Ke2 Qc1 and White cannot prevent Ng1; 38.Qd1 Bc6 39.Qd8+ Kf7

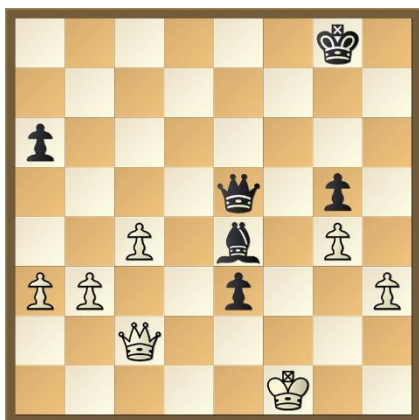
and White no longer has any checks, while Black has multiple threats such as Nf3 and e3.

38.Kg2 e3 39.Kf1 Bc6

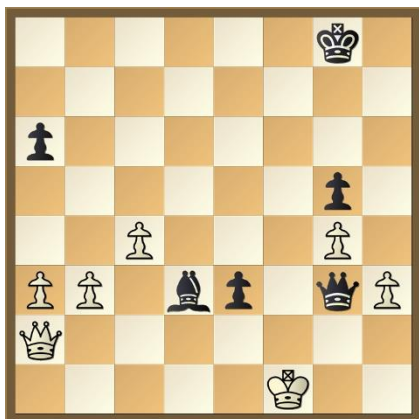


Threatening Qa1.

40.Rxg5+ fxg5 41.Qc2 Be4



42.Qa2 Qf4+ 43.Kg1 Qg3+ 44.Kf1 Bd3+



0-1

JULY - The English Counties Championships Finals

A report from Home Director Nigel Towers and Counties Controller Mark Murrell



The Lowenthal trophy

The finals for the different sections of the 2022 Championships were held on 2 July with six sections at four different venues across the country.

The Counties Championships are one of the longest running and most prestigious chess competitions in England. The first final was played in 1908 between Middlesex and Yorkshire, with Middlesex becoming the first English Counties champions. There have been 100 finals over the years since 1908 with the championship changing hands many times since the first Middlesex victory. You can find Anthony Fulton's report on the first 100 years and a full list of previous winners on the ECF web site at the links here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/100-Years-of-the-Counties-Championship-1.pdf>

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CountyChampsHistoricalWinners.pdf>

The last Counties Championships took place in 2019 with Yorkshire defeating Surrey to become the Open champions for 2019.

Winners of the 2019 Championships and defending champions for the 2022 events were as follows:

Open – Yorkshire

Minor Counties – Lincolnshire

U180 – Essex

U160 – Middlesex

U140 – Yorkshire

U120 – Essex

U100 – Staffordshire

This year's event was the 101st County Championship, and the first since lockdown with finals as follows:

Open – Northumberland v Yorkshire

Minor Counties – Devon v Norfolk

U2050 – Essex v Surrey

U1850 – Leicestershire v Middlesex

U1650 – Surrey v Warwickshire

U1450 – Essex v Surrey

The event was also the first played with liveboards which were broadcast live on the internet from three venues with live commentary from WIM Natasha Regan and GM Peter Wells.

The 2022 finals produced some close matches with some great games and the competition is now in a good place to move into a second 100 years of county competitions under the stewardship of Mark Murrell as Counties Controller.

2022 Open Counties Championships Final (Darlington)

Full details and match card can be found in LMS here:

<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97271>

All photographs courtesy of the Open Final courtesy of Carl Stephens



Arbiter Matthew Carr sorts it out, GM Gormally looks on

The final of the Open Championships was an all-Northern Counties match between **Northumberland** and **Yorkshire** held at the Dolphin Centre in Darlington.

The Mayor of Darlington Anne-Marie Curry attended the event to open proceedings by playing the first move on board 1. The control team included IA Matthew Carr (also pictured) supported by local club secretary Carl Stephens.

There were 16 boards in total with all games from the event broadcast from liveboards at the addresses below.

Lichess

The link is <https://lichess.org/broadcast/ecf-county-championships-finals-open/round-1/Cz2qawjk>

LiveChessCloud

The link is <https://view.livechesscloud.com/#db57e803-5e71-4c28-a4f7-2e4271f32f40>



Waiting for the final to start

The Open final was extremely close with Yorkshire taking an early lead and Northumberland catching up to reach an 8-8 tie. Northumberland won the trophy and Championships title on board count to become the 101st English Counties champions to add to their online and NCCU titles.

Here is the game from board 1 with Northumberland GM Danny Gormally winning against Yorkshire IM Richard Palliser.

(8816) Richard JD Palliser - Daniel W Gormally [B10]

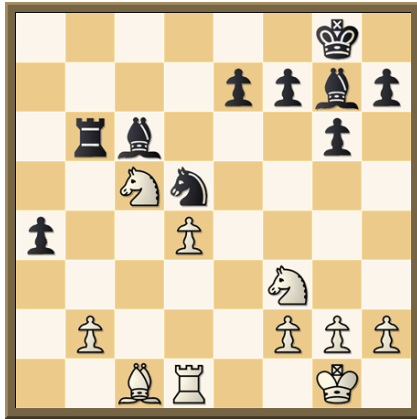


GM Danny Gormally and IM Richard Palliser

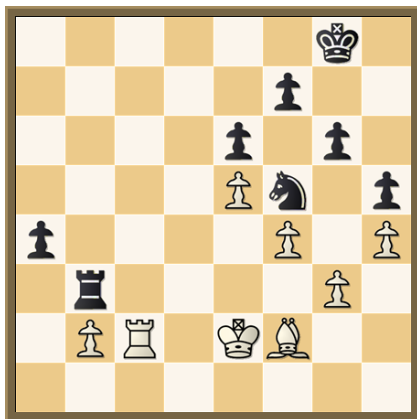
1.c4 c6 2.e4 d5 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.exd5 Nf6 5.Qa4+ Nbd7 6.Nc3 g6 7.Nf3 Bg7 8.Bc4 0-0 9.d3 a6



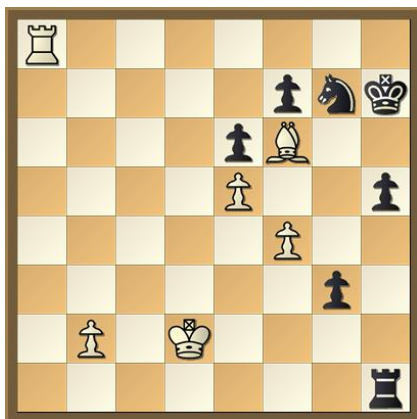
10.Bb3 Nc5 11.Qc4 Nxb3 12.Qxb3 b5 13.a4 Bb7 14.axb5 Nxd5 15.Ne4 axb5 16.Rxa8 Qxa8 17.0-0 Qa4 18.Qxa4 bxa4 19.Nc5 Bc6 20.d4 Rb8 21.Rd1 Rb4 22.Nd3 Rb3 23.Nc5 Rb6



24.h4 h6 25.Ne5 Be8 26.f4 h5 27.Kf2 e6 28.g3 Bf8 29.Ned3 Bb5 30.Bd2 Bxd3 31.Nxd3 Bg7 32.Be3 Rb3 33.Rd2 Ne7 34.Nc5 Rb4 35.Nd3 Rc4 36.Ne5 Rc8 37.Ke2 Nf5 38.Bf2 Rb8 39.Rc2 Bxe5 40.dxe5 Rb3



41.Bc5? Nxb3+ 42.Kd1 Nf5 43.Kc1 Rh3 44.Rc4 Rxh4 45.Rxa4 g5 46.Bb6 Rh1+ 47.Kd2 g4 48.Ra8+ Kh7 49.Bd8 g3 50.Bf6 Ng7



0-1



IA Matthew Carr presents the trophy to Northumberland captain FM Tim Wall

Minor Counties Final (Knaphill, near Woking)

As the dramatic Open Championship was unfolding in Darlington, an equally close Minor Counties Championship was taking place between over 250 miles to the south at Knaphill near Woking.

The Minor Counties was played between Devon and Norfolk with Devon winning by 9-7. Full details and match card can be found in LMS at <https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97264>



ECF Events Director Shohreh Bayat presents the trophy to GM Keith Arkell and Devon captain Jonathan Underwood

Here is the board 1 game from the final annotated by Keith Arkell.

Martin G Walker - Keith C Arkell

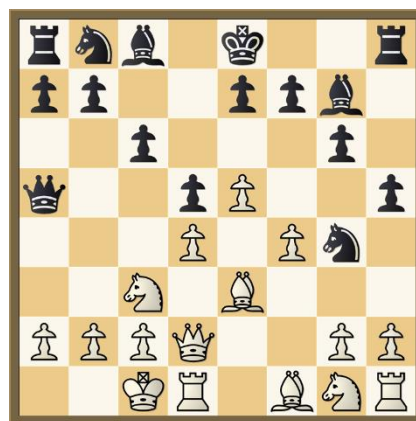
Minor Counties Final, board one., 02.07.2022

I've had a busy time since Team England returned from its triumphs at the World Senior Team Championships. Instead of returning to Devon, I hung around the Woking area for a couple of days catching up with my good friends Simon Williams and Blair Connell, who both live nearby.

Devon was due to play Norfolk in the final of the Minor Counties Championship, and Woking had been chosen as a neutral venue.

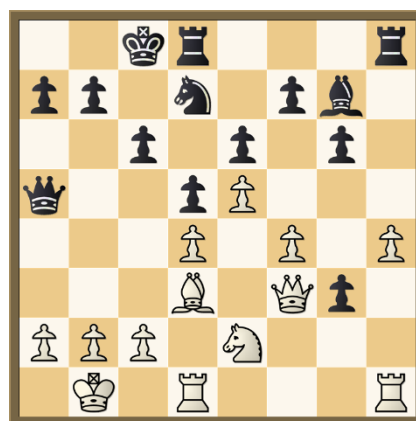
Devon were favourites on the top boards as we fielded a GM and an IM (Jack Rudd), and also on the bottom boards, but Norfolk were slight favourites on the middle boards, so a close contest was anticipated. In the end Devon ran out 9-7 winners, so two days after being presented with team and individual gold medals at the World Senior Team Championship, I got to hold the Minor Counties trophy! Here is my game against Norfolk's top board.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c6 4.Be3 d5 5.Qd2 Qa5 6.e5 h5 7.0-0-0 Nh6 8.f4 Ng4



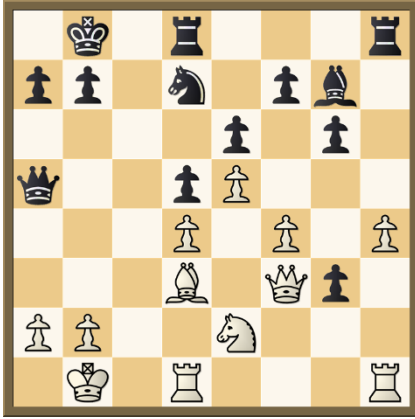
Give me this position again and I'll sit tight on the kingside for the time-being, and first expand on the other flank with moves like ...b5, Nbd7 to b6, etc.

9.Nf3 Nxe3 10.Qxe3 Bg4 11.h3 Bxf3 12.Qxf3 e6 13.Kb1 h4 14.Bd3 Nd7 15.Ne2 0-0-0 16.g4 hxg3 17.h4



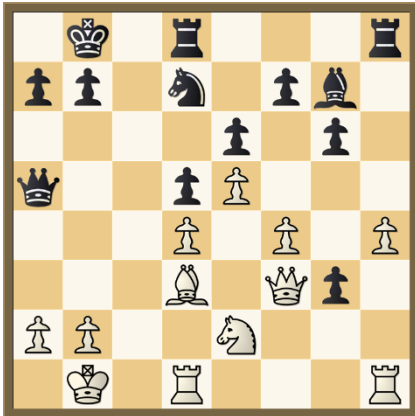
Vigorous play by Martin. He can forcibly open up lines with h5 followed by f5. I felt a little uncomfortable around here, but it was clear that I needed to obtain some counterplay with ...c5.

17...c5 18.c3 cxd4 19.cxd4 Kb8



This is a bit slow. It didn't occur to me that I could simply play...Nb8 to c6 here before getting my king safe.

20.Nxg3 Bf8 21.h5 gxh5 22.Rxh5 Be7 23.f5 Qb6 24.Bc2 Rxh5 25.Nxh5



25...Rf8??

This was over-cautious and left me in big trouble. Instead, the straightforward 25...Qc6 26.fxe6 fxe6 27.Qf7 Rc8 28.Bb3 Bg5 would have been fine.

26.Ba4

Suddenly I have a problem defending my knight.

26...Qc7

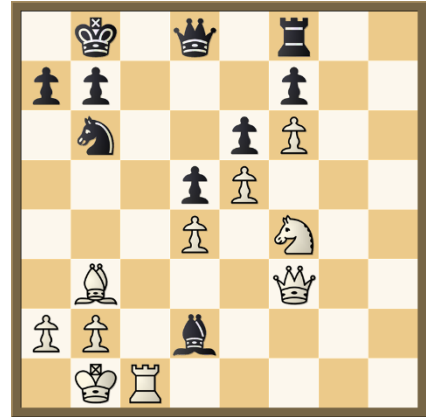
I thought that by provoking Rc1 I would at least gain access to the d2 square for my bishop. Both of my pieces are short of squares!

27.Rc1?

White returns the favour. Instead the immediate 27.f6 Bb4 (or 27...Bd8 28.Qa3 Rh8

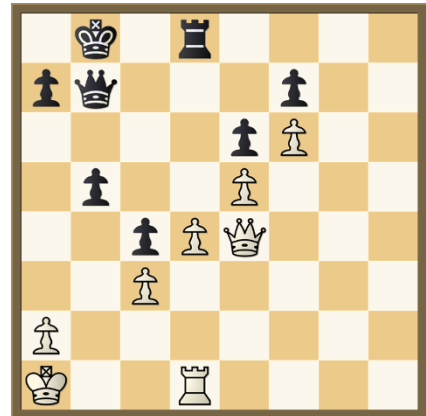
29.Rc1) 28.Qb3 Ba5 29.Qb5 would have forced me to give up a piece with 29...Nxe5.

27...Qd8 28.f6 Bb4 29.Nf4 Nb6 30.Bb3 Bd2



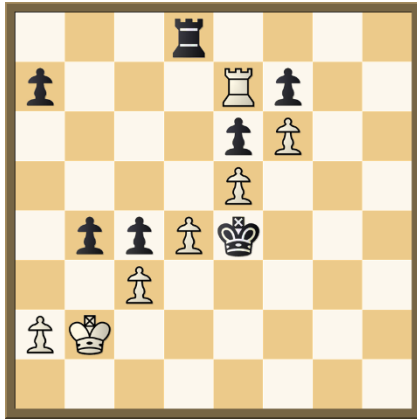
Now I am out of the woods and can even dream of winning the game.

31.Rg1 Nc4 32.Bxc4 dxc4 33.Ne2 Qc7 34.Rd1 Ba5 35.Qe4 b5 36.Nc3 Bxc3 37.bxc3 Rd8 38.Ka1 Qb7



I thought the rook ending presented me with the best winning chances, as there would be opportunities to break up White's position with a well-timed ...b4.

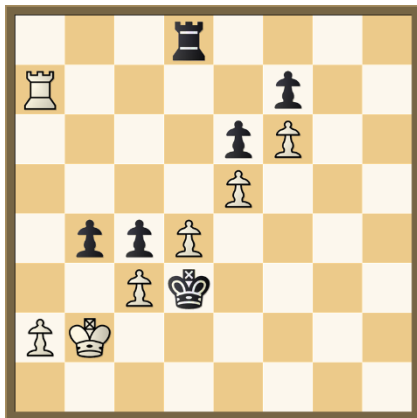
39.Qxb7+ Kxb7 40.Rg1 Kc6 41.Rg7 Rd7 42.Kb2 Kd5 43.Rg8 b4 44.Re8 Ke4 45.Re7 Rd8



46.Rxa7

The losing move. 46 Rxf7 Kd3 47 cxb4 c3+ 48 Kb3 Rc8 49 Rh1 draws because I can't grab the Rook as 49...c1=Q? 50 Rxc1 Rxc1 51 d5! wins for White, so instead I have to settle for 49...Kxd4 which is equal.

46...Kd3



Now White's rook is stranded and unable to prevent my c-pawn from queening.

47.cxb4 c3+ 48.Kb3 Rc8 49.Rxf7 c2

0-1

U2050 (Wanstead House)

The U2050 match was played over 16 boards between **Essex** and **Surrey** at Wanstead House and resulted in a win for local team Essex by 8½ – 7½. Essex had to come from behind and overcome a four-point deficit to steal the title.

Full details and match card can be found in LMS here:

<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97257>



Counties Controller Mark Murrell presents the trophy to the Essex U2050 captain

U1850 (Ullesthorpe)



The U1850 match was played over 16 boards between **Yorkshire** and **Middlesex** in Ullesthorpe, South Leicestershire with Middlesex winning by 9-7, having had to start their campaign in the preliminary round and being outrated in the final.

Full details and match card can be found in LMS here:

<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97236>



The victorious Middlesex team outside the venue

U1650 (Wanstead House)

Surrey v Warwickshire (Wanstead House). Surrey won the U1650 by 13½ – 2½ with a powerful team, including several players with notable rating increases over the season.

Full details and match card can be found in LMS here:
<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97250>



Counties Controller presents the U1650 trophy to Surrey captain Mike Gunn

U1450 (Wanstead House)

Essex v Surrey (Wanstead House) played over 12 boards. Essex won the U1450 by 7 – 5. Essex reached the winning post at 6 - 1 (and a safe board count) in quick time.

Full details and match card can be found in LMS here:
<https://ecflms.org.uk/lms/node/97243>



Counties Controller Mark Murrell presents the U1450 trophy to the Essex captain

All of the games can be replayed at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/replay-the-games-counties-championship-finals-2022/>



What Next after the British – the UK Open Blitz 2022

Nigel Towers reports on the return of the UK Blitz Championships

The UK Open Blitz made a welcome return in September following an enforced three-year break during the pandemic. Details are here:
<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/uk-blitz-championships-2022/>



GMs Justin tan (left) and Keith Arkell (middle)

Reigning champions from the most recent 2019 final were GM Justin Tan and GM and WGM Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant.

This year's Blitz Championship followed the same format as earlier years, with eight regional one-day qualifier events at locations across the UK over three weekends from 29 August to 11 September to find 32 qualifiers for the Open and Women's finals in December.

Monday 29 August

Cardiff - Mercure Cardiff North Hotel, Circle Way East, Llanedeyrn, Cardiff CF23 9XF

Saturday 3 September

London - St Luke's Church, Kidderpore Ave, Golders Green NW3 7SU

Midlands - Holiday Inn, 212 Abbey End, Kenilworth CV8 1ED

Scotland - Novotel Edinburgh Park, 15 Lochside Avenue, Edinburgh EH12 9DJ

Sunday 4 September

North West - Ukrainian Social Club, 99 Castle Street, Bolton BL2 1JP

Northern Ireland - Maynard Sinclair Pavilion, Stormont, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3TA

Saturday 10 September

South West - Polish Community Centre Whitbourne Avenue, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 2JX

Sunday 11 September

North East - The Parks Leisure Centre, Howdon Road, North Shields NE29 6TL

All qualifier events were fifteen round Swiss tournaments with the exception of the Belfast event which was played as an all-play-all. Games were played at a blitz time limit of three minutes plus two seconds per move.

The top two players in each qualifier qualified for the final in December, and the two highest-placed female players qualified for the Women's final. The top players in each rating category also won category prizes from their

event. The finals will be held on 3 December as two 16 player all-play-all tournaments again, with 15 rounds at 3|2 blitz time controls at the Woodland Grange Hotel in Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

The full set of qualifier events and the two finals were FIDE and ECF rated, with results appearing on the FIDE blitz list and also the new ECF over the board blitz list which was published in September for the first time. Pairings and results can be found here for all events:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr668675.aspx?lan=1&art=1&rd=15&flag=30>

Bank Holiday Monday 29th August

Wales

The Cardiff event was run by Kevin Staveley and was the first of the qualifiers with 16 players taking part on bank holiday Monday. The event was run as an all play all event over 15 rounds with qualifiers and prize winners as below. Photographs by Kevin Staveley.

Open Qualifiers

- 1 IM Jose Camacho Collados WLS
- 2 Oliver Stubbs ENG

Women's Qualifiers

- 6 Bodhana Sivanandan ENG
- 7 Lindsay Pyun ENG

Category Winner

- A Jose Comacho Collados



Stubbs v Garcia



After the battle – left to right – Jose Commacho Coladas, Oscar Garcia and Oliver Stubbs

London

The Golders Green qualifier was organised by Adam Raouf with Chief Arbiter Rob Hammond and took place on the following Saturday with 143 players taking part in a 15 rounds Swiss competition. Ukrainian GM Eldars Gasanov and local GM Jon Speelman finished equal first with 12 points to take the qualifying places, with the full list of qualifiers and prize winners as listed below. Photographs by Rob Hammond.

Open Qualifiers

- 1 GM Eldar Gasanov UKR
- 2 GM Jon S Speelman ENG

Women's Qualifiers

- 30 Kamila Hryshchenko UKR
- 38 WGM Elmira Mirzoeva FID

Section Winners

A GM Eldar Gasanov (West London); B CM Jonathan Pein (Celtic Tigers); C Peter Finn (Cavendish); D Kabir Pandit; E Ryan Benguelo; F Zain Patel; G Eugenia Karas; H Arran Airlie; I Slawomir Kalinowski.



Qualifier Jon Speelman (left) and qualifier GM Eldar Gasanov v FM Harry Grieve



Midlands

Photographs by Dennis Dicen

The Midland qualifier also took place on 3 September, at the Holiday Inn in the centre of Kenilworth. This was another well attended qualifier with a total of 64 players taking part including local GM Mark Hebden, WGM Kata Toma and IMs Jonah Willow and Laurence Cooper. There were also a number of fast improving juniors including several players from the Coventry Chess Academy, together with a big contingent of players from Warwick University Chess Society.

Open Qualifiers

- 1 IM Jonah B Willow ENG
- 2 GM Mark L Hebden ENG

Women's Qualifiers

17 Elis Denele Dicen ENG

18 WGM Katarzyna Toma ENG

Section Winners

A Jonah Willow, B Shabir Okhai, C Anusha Submarian, D Elis Dicen



A view of the playing area at the Kenilworth Holiday Inn



Board 1 - IM Jonah Willow plays GM Mark Hebden



Board 1 - Henrik Stepanyan v IM Jonah Willow



View across the top boards in Kenilworth

Scotland

The Scottish Qualifier was the third event on 3 September. The event was organized by David Clayton and Alex McFarlane and took place at the Novotel Edinburgh Park. There was a total of 39 players in the event with qualifiers and section winners as below.

Open Qualifiers

1st CM Adam Bremner SCO

2nd FM Keith Ruxton SCO

Women's Qualifiers

5 WFM Louise Head ENG

10 WIM Svetlana Sucikova SVK

Section Winners

A Adam Bremner (Edinburgh), B Louise Head (Crowthorne) on tie break, C Frederick Gordon.

Northern Ireland

Photographs courtesy of UCU Secretary and Organiser Mark Newman

The Northern Ireland event was organized by Mark Newman and took place in the NICS meeting rooms in the Pavilion of the Stormont Estate, Belfast. There were 19 players in the event which ran as an all-play-all.



The playing area



Head-to-head match between qualifiers Koichi Nicholas and Mandar Tahmankar

Open Qualifiers

- 1 Koichi Nicholas ENG
- 2 Mandar Tahmankar IND

Women's Qualifiers

- 14 Louison Fuchs FRA
- 15 Leah Worbey IRL

Section Winners

A Nicholas Koichi (Schach Attack), B Andrew Campbell (Greenisland)

North West

Photos by of Julian Clissold

Open Qualifiers

- 1 Jacob Connor Boswell ENG
- 2 Allan W Beardsworth ENG

Women's Qualifiers

- 11 WIM Natasha Regan ENG

Section Winners

A Jacob Boswell



Games in progress at the Ukrainian Centre

South West

The Swindon event was organised by Ben Ogunshola. There was a big turnout for the event with 56 players taking part. The event was very close with a three-way tie for top place between CM Jonathan Pein, Yichen Han and IM Marcus Harvey with Jonathan Pein and Yichen Han qualifying on tie-break. Stefanie Duessler and WFM Meri Gregorian qualified for the Women's final as the highest placed female players on 8½ points. Qualifiers and section winners are as shown below.

Open Qualifiers

- 1 CM Jonathan Pein ENG
- 2 FM Yichen Han NED

Women's Qualifiers

- 15 Stefanie Duessler GER
- 17 WFM Meri Grigoryan ENG

Section Winners

A Jonathan Pein, B Indy Southcott-Myers, C Dylan Wastney, D Jude Shearsby



Organiser Ben Ogunshola (right)



IM James Sherwin (left)



GM Keith Arkell (right)

North East

The North East event took place as the last of the qualifiers at the Parks Leisure Centre in North Shields. There were 25 players in total with top seeds GM Danny Gormally in the

Open section and Madara Orlovskia in the Women's section. Qualifiers and section winners are shown below.

Open Qualifiers

- 1 GM Daniel W Gormally ENG
- 2 FM Charles H Storey ENG

Women's Qualifiers

- 10 Madara Orlovskia LAT
- 12 Anita Somton ENG

Section Winners

A Danny Gormally, B Maksym Larchikov



Qualifier Danny Gormally (nearest) v Nathan Ekanem

November - The Braille Chess Association **90th Anniversary Congress**

Home Director Nigel Towers reports



A view of the playing area in Solihull

I had the privilege of attending the Braille Chess Association (BCA) 90th Anniversary Congress which took place over the weekend of 28-30 October at the Crown Plaza hotel in Solihull.

The Braille Chess Association was founded in 1932 to support blind and visually impaired chess players. The BCA grew from a Braille correspondence chess organisation to a community of chess players taking part in correspondence chess and over the board tournaments at home and abroad. Membership is open to blind and partially sighted people while sighted friends and family may join as associate members. The BCA has over two hundred members and runs a programme of events including over the board, email, VOIP (Skype and Zoom), and online Lichess tournaments for members throughout the year. As well as the programme of events the BCA provides ongoing support for members including recommendations for tactile sets, talking chess clocks, voice recorders, and accessible learning materials at <https://www.braillechess.org.uk/>

The BCA 90th Anniversary Congress was held at the excellent Crowne Plaza Hotel in the

centre of Solihull and included entrants from England, Ireland and Sweden. The chess part of the weekend consisted of two five-round Swiss tournaments – an Open and a Challengers for those whose grade or estimated grade was 1450 or below. The rate of play was 90 minutes for each player for all moves, with rounds starting at 20.00 on the Friday evening, 9.45 and 14.15 on the Saturday and 9.45 and 14.00 on the Sunday.

Blind and partially sighted players use peg boards or magnetic tactile sets to keep track of the position on the board and make their moves. Players speak their moves into a voice recorder for reference and for their opponents to make the opponent's move on their set.

I arrived at the venue during round 3 on Saturday afternoon and was able to watch some close-fought games in the Open and Challengers sections. The event was extremely well organised with a team of sighted arbiters on hand throughout.

At the end of round 3 I was very pleased to join Chairman Norman Wragg and Secretary Dr Guy Whitehouse together with the BCA organising team and players for the 90th Anniversary dinner. Dinner was followed by a musical soiree, with some fine musical talents on display.

The Open event was won by top seed Steve Burnell who finished with 4½ points, a full point ahead of the joint second players.



Steve Burnell (above) takes us through his round 4 game on Sunday morning in the Open Competition.

Steve Burnell – Bill Armstrong [E73]
 BCA 90th Anniversary Congress Solihull,
 30.10.2022

I never really like my own games, as I always see afterwards where I could have done better! However, my round 4 game was interesting in itself as well as in the context of the tournament. Going into round 4 I was on 3/3, with my opponent Bill Armstrong on 2½/3. Although the resulting draw probably suited us both, nevertheless neither of us played for this and it was only at the very end, when Bill was getting rather short of time and neither of us could see a way to win, that we agreed the draw.

1.d4 d6 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.e4 Bg7 5.Be2 0–0
6.Bg5 Nc6 Black has played the King's Indian with Nc6. So far we have been following theory.

7.h3

7. d5 would be the main line at this point, closing the centre.

7...a6 8.a4

8.Nf3 or d5 may be better. The position is about equal.

8...a5 9.Nf3 h6 10.Be3 Nb4 11.0–0 c6



12.Ne1 e5 13.d5



Closing the centre. It's difficult for either side to make progress on the queenside and attention therefore moves to the kingside.

13...Ne8 14.Qd2 Kh7 15.f4 f5 16.exf5

The correct pawn capture.

16...Bxf5 16. gxf5 may be better. 17.fxe5 dxe5



18.Rd1 Qc8 19.dxc6 Qxc6 20.Nd5 Nxd5
 21.Qxd5 Be4 22.Qxc6 Rxf1+ 23.Kxf1 Bxc6
 24.b3 Nf6 25.Nc2 Ne4 26.Bd3 Rf8+ 27.Kg1 Nc3
 28.Rd2 e4 29.Bf1 Be5 30.Bd4 Bxd4+ 31.Rxd4

The position is about equal. Black offered a draw, which was accepted, leaving Steve with 3½ out of 4.

½–½

Steve went on to win his final round game and the Open championship for 2022 with 4½ out of 5.



Steve Burnell receives the Championship Trophy from BCA Chairman Norman Wragg OBE

Simon Highsmith won the Challengers section with 4½ points, again a full point ahead of the players in joint second place.



Simon Highsmith, Challengers section winner

December - UK Open Blitz Finals 2022



Top four in the Open (left to right) – 2nd GM Eldar Gasanov, 1st GM John Speelman, 4th Freddy Gordon and 3rd GM Mark Hebden



Top four in the Women's (left to right) - 3rd and joint English Women's Champion WGM Kamila Hryshenko, 1st and UK Women's Blitz Champion WGM Elmira Mirzoeva, 2nd and joint English Women's Blitz Champion Bodhana Sivanandan and 4th Stephanie Duessler

The 2022 UK Blitz finals took place at the Woodland Grange Hotel, Leamington Spa on Saturday 3 December.

The Open and Women's finals were played as two tournaments over 15 rounds for the two groups of qualifiers from the eight regional events.

Photographs provided with kind permission from Dennis Dicen.

Open Final



IA Matt Carr surveys the action in the Open final

The Open final proved to be a close battle between GM John Speelman and GM Eldar Gasanov, with the lead changing hands several times and the final result in the balance right up to the last round, with both players finishing on 1½ points and Jon winning on tie break. GM Mark Hebden finished third on 11 points. Top Scottish Junior Freddy Gordon put in a tremendous performance to finish in fourth place on 10½ points, including wins against GMs Danny Gormally, Mark Hebden and Jon Speelman. Freddy's TPR was 2401, with an impressive 243 Elo points gained from the event.



Freddy plays out the final stages of his round 8 draw against FM Yichen Han, watched by GM Jon Speelman and IM Jose Commacho Collados



Winner and UK and English Blitz champion Jon Speelman



2nd placed GM Eldar Gasanov



3rd placed GM Mark Hebden

The final standings at the end of the 15 rounds are shown in the table below.

Player	Federation	Fed	Pts
1	GM Jon S Speelman *	ENG	12½
2	GM Eldar Gasanov	UKR	12½
3	GM Mark L Hebden	ENG	11
4	Frederick Gordon	SCO	10½
5	IM Jonah B Willow	ENG	9½
6	GM Daniel W Gormally	ENG	9½
7	FM Yichen Han	NED	8½
8	IM Jose Camacho Collados	WLS	8
9	Jacob Connor Boswell	ENG	7
10	NM Alfie Onslow	ENG	6½
11	Allan W Beardsworth	ENG	5½
12	CM Jonathan Pein	ENG	5
13	FM Charles H Storey	ENG	5
14	Oliver Stubbs	ENG	4
15	Koichi B Nicholas	ENG	3½
16	Mandar Tahmankar	IND	1½

* UK Open Blitz Champion 2022 and English Blitz Champion 2022

Freddy Waldhausen Gordon has kindly annotated his win against GM Jon Speelman for us. Freddy gains space on the kingside, including an excellent pawn sacrifice with 17 e6 which locks out Jon's dark-squared bishop and then switches to an attack on the queenside against Jon's castled king.

Waldhausen Gordon, Frederick (2067) - Speelman, Jon S (2532) [B11]

UK Blitz Championship Final 2022 - 03.12.2022



Chess demolishes differences. It's a language of different generations – Judit Polgar
With annotations by Freddy Gordon.

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 a6



4.d4 Bg4 5.h3 Bh5 6.exd5 cxd5 7.g4 Bg6 8.Ne5 Nc6 9.h4 Nxe5 10.dxe5 h5 11.Qxd5 Qxd5 12.Nxd5 0–0–0

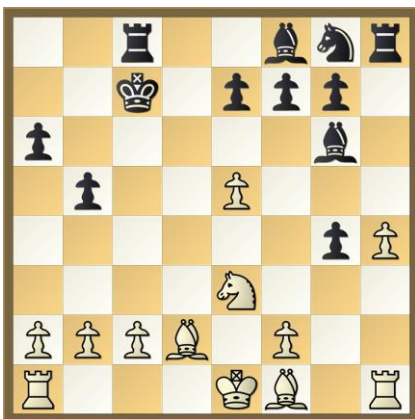


13.Nb6+ Kc7 14.Nc4 b5



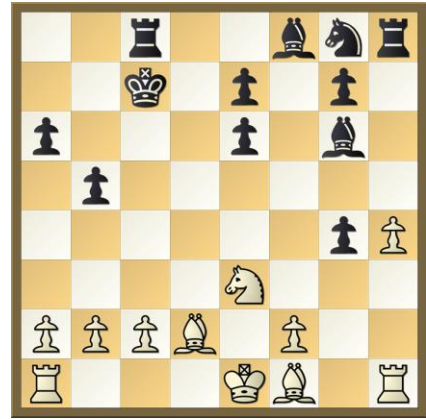
Up to now this has all been theory, but now we are out of theory.

15.Ne3 hxg4 16.Bd2 Rc8



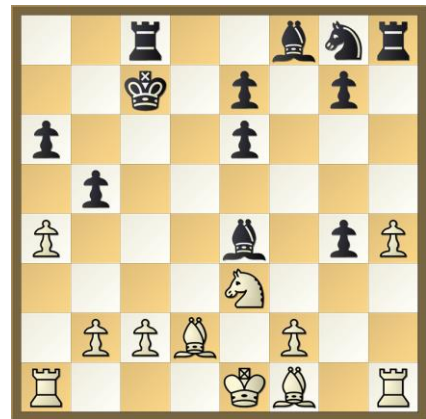
The rook moves because Ba5 is threatened.

17.e6! fxe6



I played e6 because it blocks in the bishop, which is really important, and it also opens up the angles to the black king.

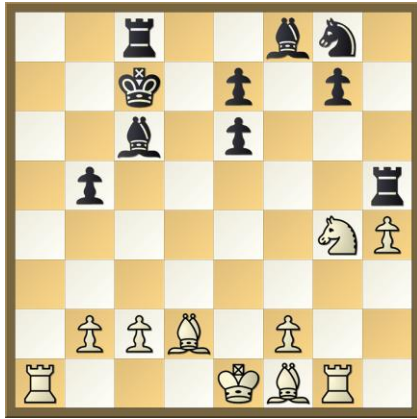
18.a4 Be4



I am putting pressure on the f1 to a6 diagonal. I'm breaking up the pawns, forcing my opponent to do something.

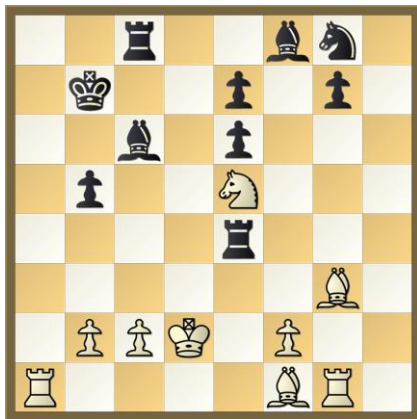
19.Rg1 Bc6 Jon then quickly protects b5, but at the cost of the attack on c2, which will allow my knight to do other things.

20.axb5 axb5 21.Nxg4 Rh5



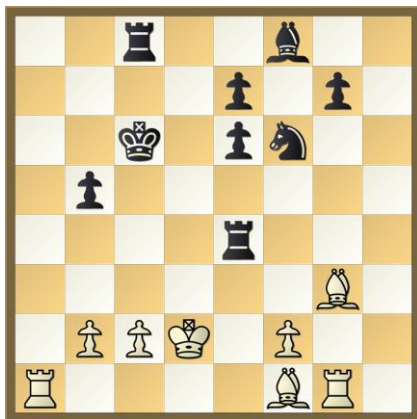
I do not understand this move. I think he wants to play e5, but I am not sure, which is why I played Bf4+.

22.Bf4+ Kb7 23.Ne5 Rxh4 24.Bg3 Re4+ 25.Kd2



25...Nf6 I'm not sure he should play this. Maybe Bd5?

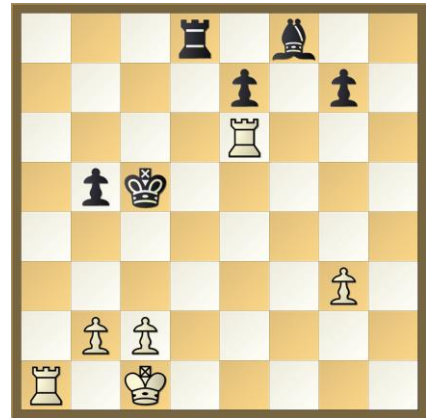
26.Nxc6 Kxc6



Now Jon has the chance not to lose the exchange with Rxc6, but Kxc6 loses the exchange.

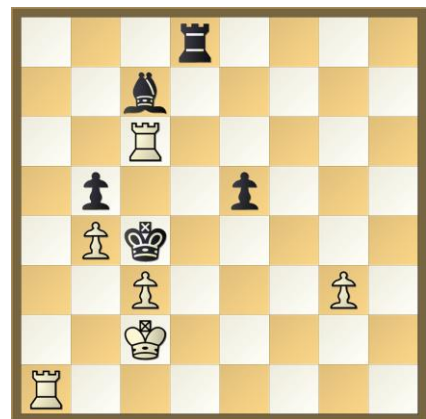
27.Bg2 Rd8+ 28.Kc1 Kb6 Now I am just better because of the exchange advantage and the fact that the bishop on f8 is not active.

29.Bxe4 Nxe4 30.Re1 Nxc3 31.Rxe6+ Kc5 32.fxg3



32...g6 A last desperate pawn sacrifice.

33.Rxg6 e5 34.c3 Bd6 35.Kc2 Bc7 36.b4+ Kc4 37.Rc6+



1-0

Jon's loss to Freddy was his only loss of the tournament – after which he spent the remaining rounds chasing GM Eldar Gasanov. Here is Jon's win against Danny Gormally in round 13 which allowed him to draw level with Eldar, before winning on tie break at the end of the 15 rounds.

Jon S Speelman (2500) - Daniel W Gormally, (2450) [D02]

UK Blitz Championship Final 2022, 03.12.2022

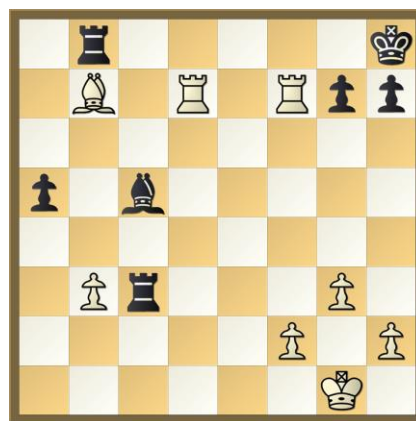
1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 c6 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.0-0 Bg4 5.d4 Nbd7 6.Nbd2 e6 7.Re1 Be7 8.e4 dxe4 9.Nxe4 0-0 10.c3 Bh5 11.Nxf6+ Nxf6 12.Qb3 Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Qb6 14.Bd2 Rfd8 15.Rad1 Nd5 16.c4 Qxb3 17.axb3 Nb4 18.Bc3 Bf8



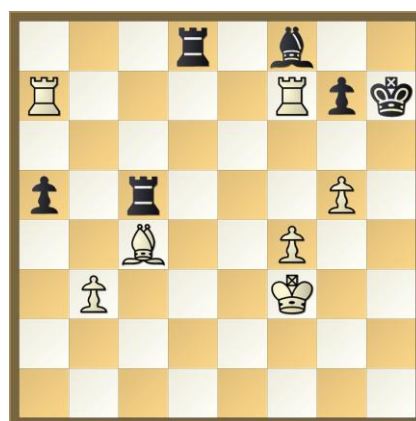
19.Re2 Na2 20.Red2 Nxc3 21.bxc3 a5 22.d5 22...exd5 23.cxd5 cxd5 24.Bxd5 Rd7 25.Bf3 Rc7 26.Rd7 Rxc3 27.Bd5 Bc5



28.Rxf7 28...Kh8 29.Bxb7 Rb8 30.Rdd7



30...Bf8 31.Bd5 31...h6 32.Ra7 Rc5 33.Bc4 Re5 34.Kg2 Rc8 35.h4 Rce8 36.f4 Rc5 37.Kf3 Rb8 38.g4 Rd8 39.g5 hxg5 40.hxg5 Kh7



1-0

Women's Final



Women's final with a view across the playing area

The Women's section was an outstanding and historic tournament with top seed WGM Elmira Mirzoeva winning the event on 12 out of 15, closely followed by Bodhana Sivanandan and Kamila Hrychenko on 11 points.



First placed WGM Elmira Mirzoeva



Second placed Bodhana Sivanandan playing against WIM Natasha Regan



Third placed Kamila Hryshchenko

Bodhana's performance was described by Leonard Barden as historic with an unprecedented run of eight wins in a row in rounds 2 to 9, finishing on 12 out of 15 in total. As well as coming second in the event, Bodhana becomes the youngest ever English national champion at seven years of age. Her

TPR was 2076 Elo with an increase of 328 rating points from the event.

	Player	Fed	Pts
1	WGM Elmira Mirzoeva *	FID	12
2	Bodhana Sivanandan **	ENG	11
3	Kamila Hryshchenko **	ENG	11
4	Stefanie Duessler	GER	8½
5	Meri Grigoryan	ENG	8½
6	Madara Orlovska	LAT	8
7	Andrea Henderson	AND	8
8	Louise Head	ENG	7½
9	Elis Denele Diden	ENG	7
10	Lindsay Pyun	ENG	5½
11	Anusha Subramanian	ENG	5½
12	Eugenia Karas	ENG	5
13	Natasha K Regan	ENG	4
14	Anita Somton	ENG	3½
15	Louison Fuchs	FRA	0

* UK Open Blitz Women's Champion 2022

** Joint English Women's Blitz Champion 2022

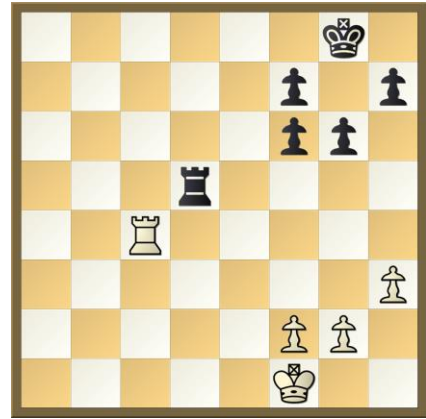
Here we feature one of Bodhana's wins against Eugenia Karas in round 7.

Eugenia Karas (2004) – Bodhana Sivanandan (1594) [D10] - UK Women's Blitz Championship Final 2022, 03.12.2022

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.cxd5 cxd5 4.Bg5 Nf6 5.Bxf6 exf6 6.Nc3 Nc6 7.Nf3 Be6 8.e3 Bd6 9.Bb5 0–0 10.0–0



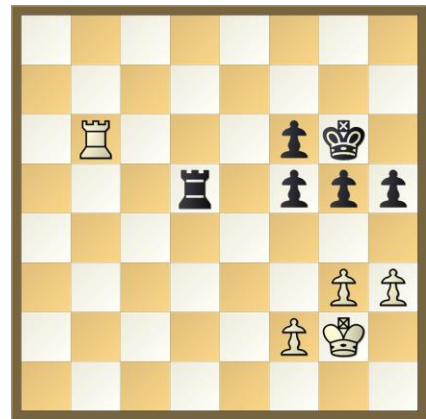
10...Rc8 11.a3 a6 12.Bd3 Ne7 13.e4 dxe4
14.Bxe4 Qd7 15.d5 Bf5 16.Bxf5 Nxf5 17.Nd4
Nxd4 18.Qxd4 Rfd8 19.Rfd1 Be5



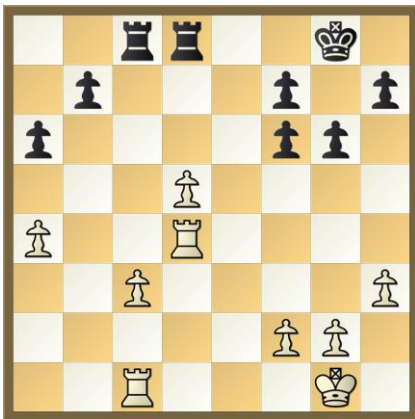
32.Rc6 Kg7 33.g3 f5 34.Kg2 g5 35.Ra6 f6
36.Rb6 Kg6 37.Ra6 h5 38.Rb6



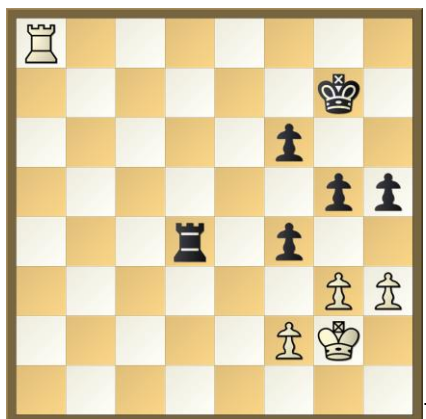
20.Qd3 Qc7 21.h3 Bxc3 22.Rac1 Qb6 23.bxc3
Qc5 24.a4 g6 25.Qd4 Qxd4 26.Rxd4



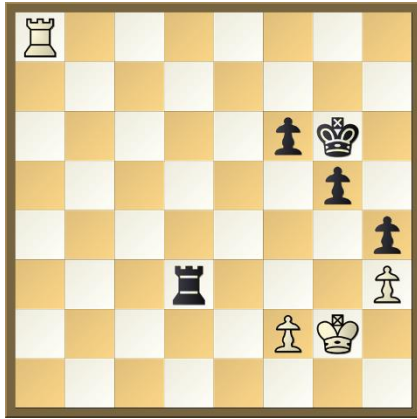
38...Rd3 39.Rb8 Rd4 40.Rg8+ Kh7 41.Rf8 Kg7
42.Ra8 f4



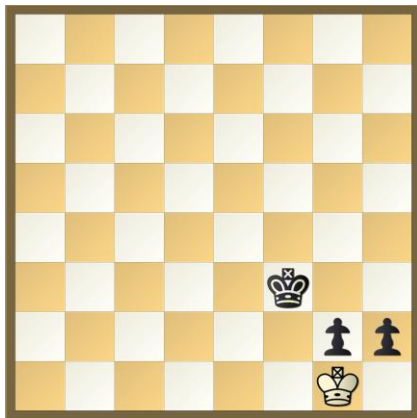
26...Rc5 27.c4 b5 28.axb5 axb5 29.Kf1 bxc4
30.Rcxc4 Rxc4 31.Rxc4 Rxd5



43.Ra5



47.Rg8+ Kf5 48.Ra8 Rd4 49.Ra6 Ke5 50.Ra5+ Kf4 51.Ra6 f5 52.Rf6 Rd2 53.Ra6 Rd4 54.Ra5 g4 55.hxg4 fxc4 56.Ra8 h3+ 57.Kh2 Kf3 58.Rf8+ Rf4 59.Rxf4+ Kxf4 60.Kg1 Kf3 61.Kh2 Kxf2 62.Kh1 Kf3 63.Kh2 g3+ 64.Kh1 g2+ 65.Kg1 h2+



0-1

December - Scarborough Report

A report from Nigel Hepworth

Scarborough's 45th congress saw a few changes, with Andrew Butterworth and Chess Direct Ltd retiring earlier in the year. So Nigel Hepworth has now taken over the administration and Chess & Bridge from London are now providing the bookstall and sets. Thanks go to Alex McFarlane as Chief Arbiter, David Clayton who provided live boards in the Open and Damien McElvenny. It was Damien's first congress since qualifying as an arbiter; I hope it was good experience for him. Thanks also go to Trevor and Janet Blower

for their help in setting up and assisting with taking entry fees.



As usual, the congress was held in the Spa Complex's Ocean Room on the South Bay during the last weekend in October, and despite a few late withdrawals we had a decent turnout of around 340. Unlike many congresses, the Spa allows everyone to play in the same hall and is only a walk away from the promenade. There are also shops and lots of B&Bs available close by, so it's not surprising that it's a popular event. The weather at this time of year can be hit and miss but this year it was mild although we did have a downpour!

In the Open we saw Jim Burnett and Ali Jaunooby just missing out to the joint winners of 15-year-old Rajat Makkar of France and 14-year-old Lorenzo Fava from Italy, who both scored 4½ out of 5. Richard Cowan won all his games in the Major, and the Intermediate section saw a three-way tie between James Hall, Andrew Allen and Simon Layhe with 4½ points. Daniel Turnbull also won all his games in the Minor. whilst the Foundation saw a tie between Vivek Shelgaonkar Yogesh and Kam Wa Siu with 4½ points. All the results can be found on www.chess-results.com where there are also 40 games from the live boards available. All the prize winners can be found on our website www.scarboroughchess.uk.

It was alarming to find that the average age of entries at this year's congress was around 50

in all sections, apart from in the Open where it was under 40, and we had six over 80-year-olds. So to try and encourage the younger generation, one of the changes for next year is to host a one-day junior event in the Promenade Room which is located under the Ocean Room at the Spa. The other main change for next year is to make the Major FIDE-rated along with the Open. It is booked for 27-29 October 2023 at the Spa, and full details will be confirmed along with leaflets at Blackpool's Chess Conference in February. Our website, www.scarboroughchess.uk, will be up to date with developments, where there'll also be an online entry form.



Thanks again to all who entered, and we appreciated receiving early entries. Thanks also to all who gave donations to help fund next year's congress. Anyone with ideas on how to encourage others to enter please contact us through our website, as we aim to break the 400 level and try to fill the Ocean Room. We are also on the lookout for arbiters to help out next year, as Alex McFarlane won't be attending, and David Clayton may be at the Isle of Man. So if anyone is interested, again please make contact through our website. Special thanks go to Alex for all his help and support over the years. And finally, a quick mention to Bill Ward from Woodseats who has attended almost every Scarborough congress - his wedding and being in hospital have been the reason for the odd absence!

International Chess Round-up

2021-2022 was a busy year for international chess because of the timing of two international team events in the same period. In November 2021, with international chess still heavily affected by Covid and many players out of practice, England played in the European Team Championships in Slovenia. Although the Open team's final standing was damaged by a 1½-2½ last round defeat by Russia, there were two notable successes. Ravi Haria became our latest GM by inching over 2500 at the event and Gawain Jones had a storming tournament, scoring an unbeaten 5½/7 for a 2782 performance and securing the silver medal on board 3.



GM Gawain Jones (left) and GM Ravi Haria

Lack of player availability left our Women's team depleted and all were completely out of practice – one hadn't played for years! – and it wasn't a complete surprise when they lost the first six matches and only won an individual game in round five.

I want to put on record my gratitude to our Director of Events Shohreh Bayat for agreeing to play after a long break from chess and she scored a creditable 3½/7, with Zoe Varney also making her debut with 3½/6. On top board, Katarzyna Toma was out of practice, and this was reflected in her losing her first four games and then winning four in a row. After winning the last three matches, the team ended almost exactly in line with their seeding.

The Chess Olympiad, moved at short notice from Moscow to Chennai, was a logistical nightmare with visas and flights. Huge thanks

are due to the Director of Women's Chess Aga Milewska for volunteering to stand for many hours at Indian visa offices.

After weeks of frantic activity, nearly everyone made it to Chennai on time, but we had to do without our board 3 Lan Yao for a couple of rounds due to the delays. Lan made a tremendous debut and I hope our new British Women's Champion is a fixture of the team for many years to come. It was nice to have a Women's team that was very competitive and started with a high seeding, which meant relatively easy early pairings. The team's final result does not reflect the fact that England came quite close to defeating India, and the Armenian captain had some anxious moments too. Despite only being a part time player, Jovanka Houska made a positive score on board one.



The England Women's team

I was delighted with the performance of the Open team, who it should be remembered have only two full time players out of five. The standout performance was that of David Howell who scored $7\frac{1}{2}/8$ and won a gold medal for individual performance on board three. The team also has a relatively high average age, and it was youth that dominated the 11-round event with the Uzbek teenagers and Indian prodigies finishing in gold and bronze medal positions respectively. I must pay tribute to Mickey Adams who went through undefeated on top board and played 10 games.



GM Michael Adams (left) and GM Luke McShane

England started with four straight match wins which included a drubbing of a strong Serbian team $3\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$, and it could easily have been 4-0. In round five we were outplayed by a superb Armenian team who still took silver despite the migration of Levon Aronian to the USA. After some ups and downs, a last round victory over Moldova would have seen us finish fifth ahead of the top seeds USA or a 2-2 draw would have placed us seventh or eighth.

In the end Luke McShane's big advantage disappeared in the time scramble and we lost the match, but still finished in line with our seeding. Arriving a couple of days early clearly helped the performance of the team and I'm indebted to the generosity of our performance coach Benjamin Portheault, who assisted us gratis and who was able to help many of our players in a variety of ways. Many of the extra costs were covered by individual sponsors, to whom I would like to record my thanks.

Nearer to home it was good to see a revival of closed international tournaments and thanks to the efforts of the 4NCL, Lawrence Cooper, Adam Raof and Tim Wall there more norm opportunities than in previous years. In August Harry Grieve secured a GM norm by winning the British. Earlier in the summer Brandon Clark won an open tournament in Spain having earlier won an all-play-all tournament in Hamburg and I hope that Brandon and Marcus Harvey too can push on and swell the ranks of English GMs.

I managed to run a scaled-down London Chess Classic in December and it was an honour to be able to have Boris Gelfand with us, but it was a

shame that the shadow of Covid hung over the event and affected attendance. England's Michael Adams, Luke McShane and Gawain Jones lost narrowly to the Rest of the World team of Gelfand, Nikita Vitiugov and Maxime Lagarde in the main event which unusually was a Scheveningen tournament (we haven't had one of those for some time).

David Howell wasn't at the Classic but did play at the FIDE Grand Swiss in Riga at the end of the autumn – and how well he did. While Alireza Firouzja and Fabiano Caruana qualified for the Candidates, David was right up there, sharing the lead with those two superstars with two to play. He was defeated by Caruana in round 5, then won four games in a row, a staggering performance in such a strong tournament. Those wins were over Nodirbek Yakubboev, Ruslan Ponomariov, Andrey Esipenko and Anton Korobov. David was then outplayed by Firouzja and held by Vincent Keymer, but his 7/11 and 2764 performance will live long in the memory.



GM David Howell

As our enduring weakness has been the lack of talent coming through, I'm delighted to report that at the very end of August, Shreyas Royal got over 2400 for the first time at the age of 13. In addition, as I'm sure my colleague Alex Holowczak has written elsewhere, England now has two world #1 ranked seven-year-olds and two eight-year olds ranked second and 4th

respectively. it's essential that these talents and others we have at the younger age groups are all nurtured and that the money be found to support them and their development. The John Robinson Youth Trust and Chess Trust will be essential in that regard. The taps should be opened wide while we have this almost unprecedented opportunity.

At the other end of the age scale we should celebrate the triple gold success of our Open Over 50, Open Over 65 and Women's Over 50 teams at the World Senior Teams held at Acqui Terme, Italy in July. I was delighted to be able to pop in and watch the very competitive match between England 1 and England 2 when Glenn Flear took Mickey to the brink of defeat. England had by far the biggest delegation and this unprecedented success is due largely to the initiative and huge amount of work – including fund-raising – put in by the acting Manager of Senior Chess IM Nigel Povah, who worked in tandem with Stewart Reuben. We look forward to more success at Dresden in November for the European Championships and indeed there has already been further success with Terry Chapman finishing second in the European Senior Over 65 Championship in Lublin, where Tony Stebbings claimed bronze. We have started a roll of honour section on the ECF website and look forward to more entries in 2022-23.



The England teams at Acqui Terme

— Malcolm Pein, 2 September 2022

Women's Chess Round-up

The European Chess Women's Gala

*The ECF's Director of Women's Chess
Agnieszka Milewska reports*



Eva Repkova (left) with Agnieszka Milewska (right)

On 26 and 27 February I visited Monaco to represent England at the European Chess Women's Gala. The event was organised by the President of the Monaco Chess Federation Jean-Michel Rapaire, supported by the European Chess Union (ECU) and FIDE.

The gala was opened by Prince Albert of Monaco, followed by a simultaneous exhibition match with local school children against GM Pia Cramling and IM Almira Skripchenko.

The event was a superb opportunity to connect and learn from other chess players and organisers in women's chess, sharing perspectives, talking about challenges facing women's chess, and discussing different

solutions. I came away with a lot of ideas for the ECF to look at.

The gala included interviews, talks and seminars with President of the ECU Zurab Azmaiparashvili, ECU Vice President and FIDE CEO Dana Reizniece-Ozola, ECU Secretary General Theodoros Tsorbatzoglou, Chairperson of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess Eva Repkova and Chairperson of the FIDE Commission for Planning and Development Sonja Johnson.

There was a rapidplay tournament on Sunday for schoolchildren, where they were able to meet and chat with their heroes from women's chess and ask for autographs! The event closed with a friendly blitz tournament for the attendees. The Gala was fun, engaging and educational.

The First Women in Chess Global Exchange Forum

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



Let us not forget that this forum is about connecting us, connecting people, connecting all those who care about women in chess and want to contribute in any way. Thank you all for joining - *IM Eva Repkova, Chairperson of FIDE Commission for Women's Chess*

The Year of the Woman in Chess is in full swing with the strong engagement of women in

chess worldwide through workshops, training seminars, fundraisers, and women's day events, organized by the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess.

An online event, the Global Exchange Forum, was organized in cooperation with Chess24. This is a quarterly seminar aiming to connect chess officials, organizers and influencers working on behalf of women around the globe. The first seminar took place on 10 April 2022. The event was hosted by **Agnieszka Milewska**, the ECF's Director of Women's Chess, and **Eva Repkova**, Chairperson of the FIDE Commission for Women's Chess.

The special guest, **GM David Smerdon**, presented research on the gender gap in chess, *Facts and Myths about Gender in Chess*. Smerdon is a PhD in Economics at the University of Amsterdam and Tindergen Institute. He was awarded the title of International Grandmaster in 2009 and has represented Australia in seven chess Olympiads.

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

According to the results of the research, girls drop out at faster rates than boys at all ages, but the drop-out is especially severe after age 16. There are both participation and performance gaps for women in chess, caused both by social and biological factors. Stereotypes are among the social factors that negatively affect women's performance. Multiple studies have found that women chess players play worse against men than against other women, while men modify their playing style when facing women – they often take longer to resign and play riskier openings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

<https://www.fide.com/docs/presentations/2022%20FIDE%20Exchange%20Forum%20-%20Smerdon.pdf>

Caplin Menchik Memorial WGM tournament, Mind Sports Centre, London, 18-26 June 2022

Article by Harriet Hunt, reprinted with the kind permission of Harriet and Chess Magazine

Following closely behind the two all-play-all WIM tournaments reported in the June issue of *Chess*, a third closed women's event, this time offering the opportunity for WGM norms, took place at the Mind Sports Centre in Hammersmith in the second half of June. Once again, immense credit for organising this event goes to ECF Director of Women's Chess, Aga Sapkowska Milewska. Her vision brought together a very international ten-player field, including four English players, Ketī Arakhamia-Grant from Scotland, and players from Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Ukraine. The tournament was generously sponsored by Caplin Systems, whose CEO, John Ashworth, made several visits during the event and spoke in an impressively knowledgeable and nuanced way about chess and women's participation. John also treated the players and guests to a traditional Polish dinner of *barszcz* [beetroot] and *pieczona kaczką* [roast duck] at the nearby Polish cultural centre.

Presided over by International Arbiter Shohreh Bayat, the tournament ran smoothly in the excellent venue of the Mind Sports Centre, if not entirely calmly. A few rounds were played to a backdrop of loud building work on the neighbouring property. Attempts by the organisers to negotiate with the builders were met with the response that they 'weren't being funny, but they had a *job* to do' and a suggestion that the players should wear noise-cancelling headphones!

The date of the final round of the tournament, 26 June, marks the anniversary of the death of the first Women's World Champion, Vera

Menchik, in an air raid on London in 1944. There have been surprisingly few events in Britain honouring Vera Menchik, who has always struggled to shake off being perceived as a foreigner. Born in Russia in 1906 to a Czech father and English mother, she moved to Hastings as a teenager after the Russian revolution but did not become a British citizen or represent the British Chess Federation until 1937, following her marriage to Rufus Stevenson. In recognition of Menchik's multinational heritage, the Czech Embassy hosted the players for a reception and their First Secretary, Martin Hosek, paid more than one visit to the tournament.

The last two rounds of the tournament clashed with the rescheduled final 4NCL weekend. With Katarzyna Toma and Zoe Varney ambitiously committed to playing both events, three games were scheduled in advance so they could leave for Daventry on the Friday evening. This made it quite unclear who was leading at any time, as players had completed different numbers of games.

The majority of players in the line-up have styles tending towards the aggressive and tactical: combined with the unforgiving time control (all moves in 90 mins plus 30 seconds per move) this led to some highly exciting chess, if a bit random in places. I started the tournament well but two disastrous losses in the middle rounds left my overall result a long way short of what I might have hoped for. In the meantime, my old rival Polish IM/WGM Joanna Dworakowska made better use of her chances and finally snatched tournament victory. Joanna and I have faced one another over more decades (!) than we would care to remember, and she has played in many women's Olympiads and European Team Championships in medal-winning Polish teams. She has also been relatively inactive in recent years, and her path to victory saw some impressive tactical play but she also survived some decidedly questionable positions,

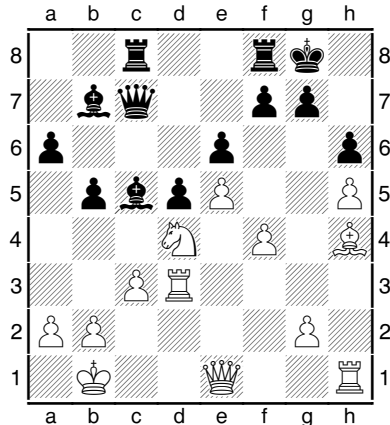
probably the result of rustiness. Joanna got off to a flying start against young German talent Lara Schulze in the first round.

White: Joanna Dworakowska (2321)

Black: Lara Schulze (2284)

Richter-Rauzer, B67

Round 1



Black to play. This position arose from a Richter-Rauzer, where Joanna has just played **23.f4**

Lara missed the strength of White's next; she should instead liquidate her 'good' bishop with 23...Bxd4 24.Rxd4 a5 25.Qd2, when White has just an edge.

Black could also try 23...Kh7, when White should play 24.Qd2! keeping some advantage (24.Rg3? Rg8! gets nowhere.)

After **23...a5? 24.Rg3!** lines up an unstoppable and crushing sacrifice on g7. White is winning.

24...Kh7 25.Rxg7+! Kxg7 26.Qg3+ Kh7 27.Bf6 Rg8 28.Qd3+ Rg6 29.hxg6+ fxg6 30.Rxh6+

Sacrificing the second rook!

30...Kxh6 31.Qh3#

1-0

However, Lara recovered from this reverse to finish in overall 3rd with 6/9. Another player of the younger generation who could be very satisfied with her tournament was the lowest-rated player, 19 year old Kamila Hryshchenko. As reported in the June issue, Kamila has recently arrived in England from eastern Ukraine, and this was her first tournament in the country. Her score of 5½/9 was enough for her first WIM norm – many congratulations to

her. Her best game was the following win over WGM Katarzyna Toma.

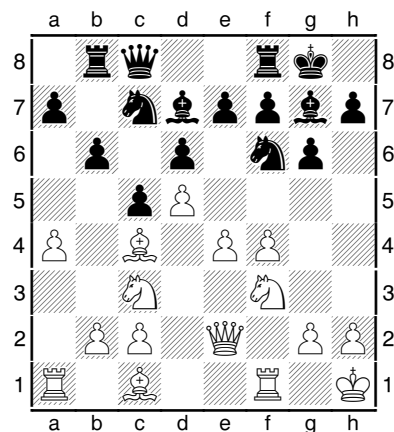
White: Katarzyna Toma (2309)

Black: Kamila Hryshchenko (2037)

Pirc Defence, B09

Round 7

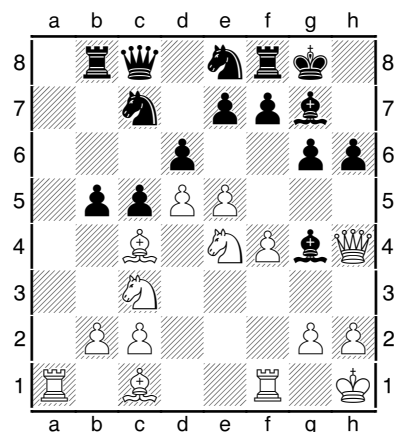
1.e4 g6 2.d4 Bg7 3.Nc3 d6 4.f4 Nf6 5.Nf3 0-0 6.Bd3 c5 7.d5 Na6 8.Qe2 Rb8 9.0-0 Nc7 10.a4 Bd7 Unusual; Black usually seeks queenside play with 10...a6. 11.Kh1 Qc8 12.Bc4 12.Bd2 is a sensible alternative. 12...b6



13.e5 I quite like the interesting pawn sac 13. f5 gxf5 14.e5 dxe5 15.Nxe5 with compensation.

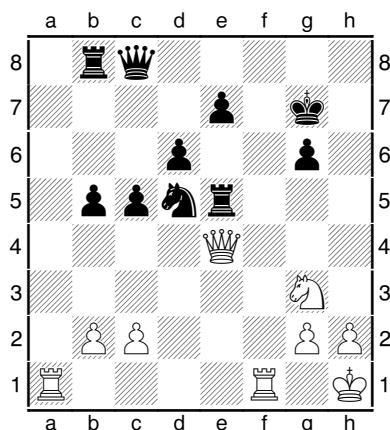
13...Nfe8 14.Ng5 White's position is optically pleasant but it's not easy to restrain Black's counterplay and make progress. Other moves that should be considered are 14.Be3; 14.Ne4 Qb7 15.Rd1; or 14.Bb5.

14...Bg4 15.Qe1 h6 16.Nge4 a6 17.Qh4 b5 18.axb5 axb5



19.Be2 A critical position where I think White's best chance is the complicated 19.f5 gxf5 20.Ng3 bxc4 21.h3 f4 (21...dxe5 22.hxg4 f4 23.Nf5 is also unclear) 22.Bxf4 Bf5 23.Qxe7 dxe5 24.Bxh6 and White is a piece down in this wild position but seems to be holding the balance. **19...Bxe2 20.Nxe2 f5** Very impressive play from Hryshchenko, who has strategically outplayed her experienced opponent to reach a position where Black's pieces have substantially greater dynamism. **21.exf6 Nxf6 22.f5** Initiating a piece sacrifice that should prove unsound. **22...Nxe4 23.Bxh6 Rxf5?** But the way to refute the offer was 23...gxf5 24.Nf4 Rf7, when White is out of ammunition. **24.Bxg7 Nxd5 25.Qxe4?** 25.Qh8+ Kf7 26.Rxf5+ Qxf5 (26...gxf5 27.Qh7) 27.Qxb8 Kxg7 28.Qxb5 is roughly level.

25...Kxg7 26.Ng3 Re5



Hryshchenko is a clear pawn up with better placed pieces, which she coordinates pleasingly geometrically to convert her advantage.

27.Qf3 Nf6 28.Ra7 Qe6 29.h3 Rh8 30.Kg1 Rh4 31.Qf2 Rd4 32.Rb7 b4 33.b3 Re3 34.Ra1 Qe5 35.Raa7 Nd5 36.Rb8 Rf4 0-1

Kamila's success reflected the general trend of close games with unpredictable results between players even with large rating differentials. 22 year old Zoe Varney played with admirable fearlessness and energy against the titled players, but lost a number of promising positions through an insufficient

sense of danger at critical points. Nevertheless, Zoe has made great strides forward recently, encouraging for her English Olympiad team debut in Chennai.

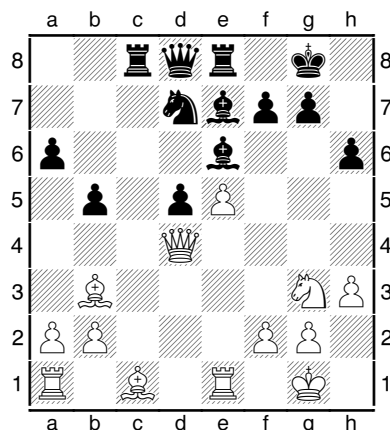
White: Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (2354)

Black: Zoe Varney (2060)

Ruy Lopez, C90

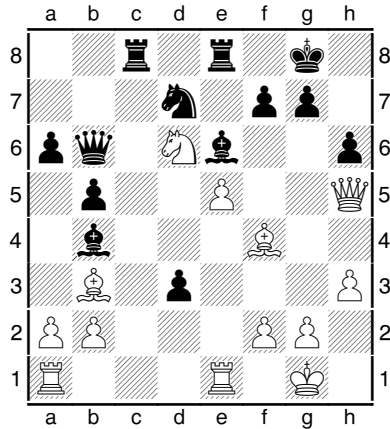
Round 7

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.d3 An alternative to the usual 6.Re1, this line has become popular recently with many top players. **6...b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.Re1 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.Nbd2 Nc6 12.Nf1 h6 13.Ng3 13.Ne3** is an alternative plan. **13...Re8 14.h3 Be6 15.d4** 15.Nh2 has been tried by several players in this position, to avoid the following central liquidation after which Black seems quite comfortable. **15...cxd4 16.cxd4 exd4 17.Nxd4 Nxd4 18.Qxd4 Rc8 19.Bb3 d5 20.e5 Nd7**



This position has occurred a number of times in practice, and White has not scored particularly well.

21.Be3 21.Nh5 is maybe the most testing. **21...Bc5 22.Qd1 d4 23.Bf4** Keti presumably wanted to avoid the very equal position after 23.Bxd4 Bxd4 24.Qxd4 Bxb3 25.axb3 Nxe5 26.Qxd8 Rxd8. **23...Qb6** This line is quite well-trodden, and the moves up to here have been seen before in Puranik-Arjun, Barcelona 2019. Keti's next move deviates from the 24. Qf3 of that game, which also turned out well for Black. **24.Qh5 d3! 25.Ne4 Bb4 26.Nd6**



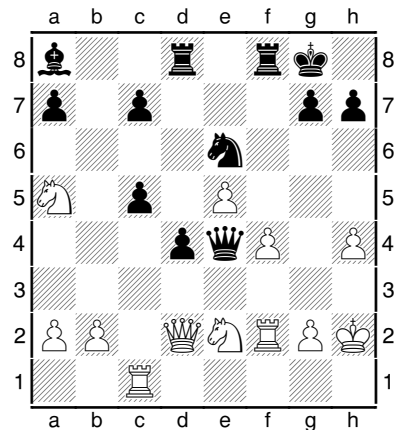
26.Re3 generates some kingside threats, but after 26...Qd4 27.Bxh6 Qxe5 Black is in control. **26...Bxe1?! 26...Bxd6 27.exd6 Bxb3 28.axb3 Qd4** keeps a comfortable plus for Black. **27.Rxe1 Bxb3 28.axb3 Qxd6 29.exd6 Rxe1+ 30.Kh2** An interesting position. Although Black is nominally ahead on material, White seems to have enough to hold level, e.g. 30...Re6 31.Qd5 g5 32.Bd2 Rd8. **30...Rc2?! There is nothing wrong with this move, but the annotation is for failure to appreciate White's tactical possibilities. 31.Qg4 Nf6?? 31...Re6 is now really advisable: 32.Bxh6 Rg6 33.Qxd7 Rxf2 34.Qe8+ Kh7 35.Qe4 should lead to equality. 32.d7** And now White is completely winning. **32...Nxc4+ 33.hxc4 Rd1 34.d8Q+ Kh7 35.Qd4 g6 36.Qf6 d2 37.Qxf7+ Kh8 38.Be5# 1-0**

Slovenian WIM Teja Vidic had a tournament she'd rather forget, finishing on just ½/9, but her game against the eventual winner hung on a knife-edge of spectacular tactics.

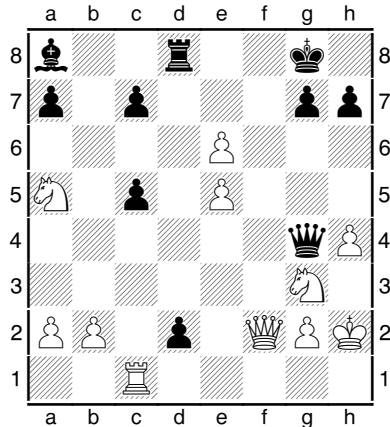
White: Joanna Dworakowska (2321)
Black: Teja Vidic (2176)
Giuoco Piano, C54
 Round 7

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.e5 d5 7.Bb5 Ne4 8.cxd4 Bb4+ 8...Bb6 is more popular in recent top-level games. **9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 9...Nxd2 is more commonly played. 10.Nfxd2?! A strange choice. 10.Nbxd2 looks**

more natural. **10...0-0 11.Bxc6 bxc6 12.0-0 Rb8 13.Nb3?! White is attempting to impose structural superiority on the queenside, but Black's position has plenty of dynamic resources. Better was 13.f3 Nxd2 14.Qxd2. 13...f6 14.f3 Ng5 15.Nc3 Stronger was 15.f4 Ne4 16.Nc3. 15...fxe5 16.dxe5 Ne6 17.Qd2 d4 18.Ne2 18.Ne4 looks more natural and better. 18...c5 19.Rac1 Qd5 20.f4 Bb7** Black has a great position. **21.Rf2 Rbd8** The direct 21...Rf7, intending to pile up with ...Rbf8, was also good. **22.Na5 Ba8 23.h4?** Worried about ...Ng5 coming, but this creates further weaknesses. White should try 23.Qd3. **23...Qe4** Probing White's position, though again 23...Rf7 is stronger. **24.Kh2?**

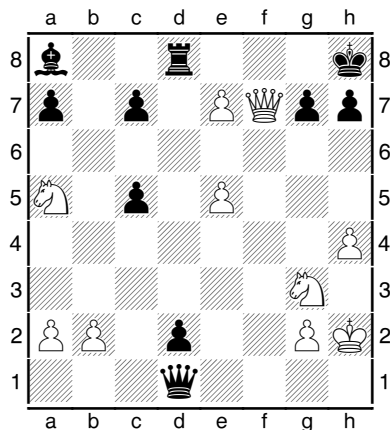


24...d3? Watching from the sidelines, I spotted the lovely combination **24...Qxe5!! 25.fxe5 Rxf2** and White is helpless against Black's threats, e.g. 26.Rg1 (26.Qd3 Rxc2+ 27.Kh3 Rxe2 28.Qxe2 Nf4+-) 26...d3, picking up a knight with an overwhelming position. **25.Ng3 Qg6?! 25...Qb4** keeps some advantage, but it's hard psychologically for Black to change tack when her focus has been the kingside. **26.f5 Qg4 27.fxe6 Rxf2 28.Qxf2 d2**



Looks winning for Black?

29.Rd1!! Driven by necessity, but an amazing resource. **29...Qxd1??** Black is completely lost after this move. **29...Rf8 30.Qxd2 Qxh4+ 31.Kg1 Qxg3** holds the balance, with the White e-pawns counteracting Black's kingside prospects **30.Qf7+ Kh8 31.e7**



There is no defence to the back-rank threats. **31...Qg1+ 32.Kxg1 d1Q+ 33.Kh2 h6 34.Nf5 Rg8 35.e8Q Rxe8 36.Qxg7# 1-0**

UCL history student WIM Lan Yao has recently transferred federation to England (from her native China) and will also be making her debut for the English team in Chennai. Lan has a great chess understanding and played unflappably competently to lead the tournament with 6½/8 going into the final round. Needing just a draw both to secure victory and her first WGM norm, she had Black against Joanna Dworakowska. On 6/8, Joanna needed to win to overtake her.

White: Joanna Dworakowska (2321)

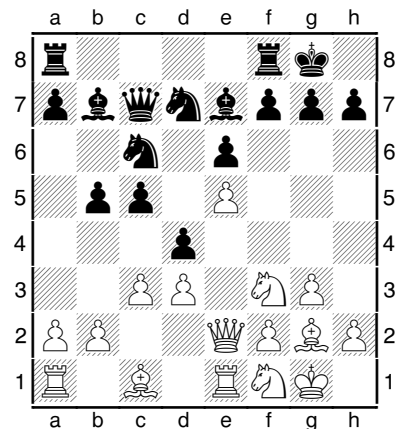
Black: Lan Yao (2259)

King's Indian Attack, C00

Round 9

Having played my own round 9 game against Katarzyna Toma in advance, I was commentating live on this game with WIM Natasha Regan on the ECF Twitch channel.

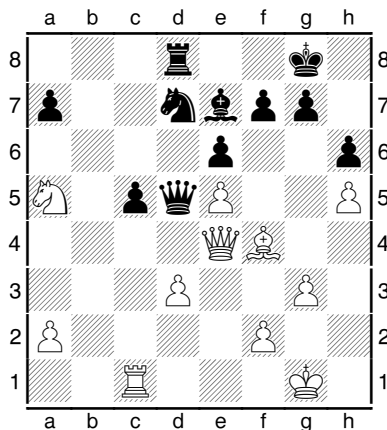
1.Nf3 A surprise. Joanna usually plays 1. e4, but Lan Yao had been scoring very well with the Sicilian Taimanov. **1...Nf6 2.g3 e6 3.Bg2 d5 4.0-0 Be7 5.d3 0-0 6.Nbd2 c5 7.e4 Nc6 8.Re1 Qc7 9.c3 b5 10.Qe2 10.Nf1** is the main line. **10...Bb7 11.e5** A standard idea in the King's Indian Attack, but Black's counterplay on the queenside is very quick in this particular position, so closing the centre may be premature. **11...Nd7 12.Nf1 d4**



Given the tournament situation (White needing a win, Black needing a draw), I suspect Lan was very happy with the outcome of the opening. She is already creating weaknesses on the queenside, while White is some way off a clear plan of action. **13.Bf4 dxc3 14.bxc3 b4!** Another strong strategic move.

15.cxb4 Nxb4 15...cxb4 to establish a queenside pawn majority also looks tempting, but I think the text is the best. **16.Ne3 Nd5** There is no hurry to play this move. **16...Nb6** looks stronger, as White will probably kick the knight with **17.a3 N4d5** anyway. **17.Nxd5 Bxd5** The position is pretty equal, but it's hard for Joanna to find a plan that doesn't involve further minor piece exchanges. **18.h4 Qc6**

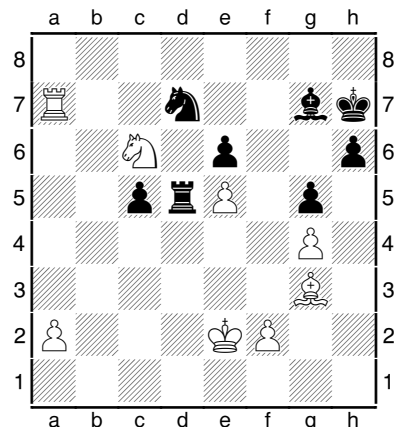
19.h5 Rab8 There is no real reason for Lan to avoid 19...h6 here, and she should probably play this now or over the next couple of moves. **20.Rec1 Rb4 21.Rc2 Rfb8 22.Rac1** Inserting 22.h6 g6 is probably a good idea for White, although she has to contend with the possibility of 22...g5. **22...Rb1** Perhaps too impatient to Hoover. 22...h6! looks strong here as it's hard for White to find a move that doesn't worsen the position of her pieces. **23.Nd4 Rxc1+ 24.Rxc1 Qb7 25.Bxd5 Qxd5 26.Nb3** White's pieces look a little more coordinated now, with the knight handily blocking the b-file and exerting pressure on c5. It's easy to miss or underestimate her next idea, so this is the point where Black has to play incisively. **26...Rd8?! 26...g5! 27.hxg6 hxg6 28.Qe4** and now, unlike in the game, the rook has remained more active on the b-file **28...Rb4! 29.Qxd5 exd5** with a level position. **27.Na5 h6?!** Now a bit late. Black should try **27...Nb8 28.h6 Qxd3 29.Qxd3 Rxd3 30.Rb1 Nd7 31.Rb7** and White's activity on the b-file and back-rank threats compensate for the pawn minus. **28.Qe4!**



A very strong move. Black is now in some danger of being worse whatever she tries, and faces some critical choices. **28...Nb8** The alternatives: 28...Rc8 may be best, when 29.Rc2 Nb6 30.Qxd5 exd5 31.Nb7 c4 32.Nd6 Rd8 33.Nf5 gives White some initiative but nothing clear. 28...Bg5 29.Nb7 Rc8 30.Qxd5 exd5 31.Rc2 seems better for White, as does 28...Bf8

29.Nc6 Qxe4 30.dxe4 Rc8 31.Nxa7 Ra8 32.Nc6 Rxa2. **29.Qxd5 Rxd5 29...exd5 30.Rb1** is clearly better for White. **30.Rb1 Nd7 31.Nc6 Bf8 32.Rb3 g5 33.hxg6 fxg6 34.g4 g5 35.Bg3 Kh7?!** Probably an error as Black's pieces are just as vulnerable with the king on h7 as on g8. Active counterplay was the best plan: 35...c4 36.dxc4 Rc5 37.Nxa7 Rxc4 38.f3 Bc5+ 39.Kg2 Bxa7 40.Rb7 Rc2+ 41.Kh3 Rxa2 42.Rxd7 and this really is heading for the draw. **36.Kf1 Bg7 37.Rb7 Rxd3 38.Ke2 Rd5?!** A quicker route to counterplay is 38...c4 39.Rxa7 Nb6 heading for c3. **39.Ne7 Rd4 40.Nc6** Another idea to put Black under pressure is 40.f3 threatening Bf2, but 40...Nb6 41.Nc6 Rd5 42.Rxa7 c4 43.Bf2 Rb5 44.Bxb6 Rxb6 45.Nd4 Kg6 also looks OK for Black.

40...Rd5 41.Rxa7



41...h5? Cracking under the combined pressure of the position, the clock, and the tournament situation. 41...c4 42.Nb4 Rb5 43.Nc2 Nxe5 44.a4 Rd5 45.Ne3 Rc5 46.Bxe5 Rxe5 47.Rc7 Kg6 48.Rxc4 h5 and Black's kingside pieces emerge from their cage. **42.gxh5 Kh6 42...c4** is now well met by 43.Ra5. **43.Ne7 Rd4 44.Nc6 Rd5 45.Ne7 Rd4 46.Ra6** Finding the right route. **46...Kxh5 47.Rxe6** White is now winning: she has an extra pawn and Black's pieces are poorly coordinated and loose. **47...Ra4 48.Nf5 Rxa2+ 49.Kf3 Bf8 50.Rc6 50.Re8** is more efficient. **50...Ra3+ 51.Kg2 Ra8 52.e6 Nf6 53.e7** The black bishop has been coralled for some moves and finally drops off. The rest requires no further

commentary. 53...Bxe7 54.Nxe7 Ne4 55.Nf5 Kg4 56.Ne3+ Kh5 57.Nd5 Ra3 58.Nf6+ Nxf6 59.Rxf6 c4 60.Rc6 Ra4 61.Be5 Kg4 62.Bc3 Kf5 63.Kf3 g4+ 64.Ke3 Kg5 65.Rc5+ Kh4 66.Be5 Kh3 67.Bg3 Ra3+ 68.Kd4 Kg2 69.Rxc4 Ra8 70.Ke4 Rf8 71.Rc5 Rh8 72.Kf4 Kh3 73.Rf5 Rh7 74.Rf6 Rh5 75.Rf7 Rh8 76.Kg5 Rg8+ 77.Kf5 Rh8 78.Rg7 Rh5+ 79.Kg6 Ra5 80.Rh7+ Kg2 81.Rh5 Ra8 82.Kg5 Kf3 83.Rh6 Ra5+ 84.Kh4 Rf5 85.Re6
1-0

A very disappointing first loss in the tournament for Lan in this crucial game, but she brings so much to English chess.

This left Joanna the outright winner on 7/9 – putting the icing on the *pipeczek* (cake like a doughnut) of the Anglo-Polish chess links that were something of a theme of the tournament. Congratulations and huge thanks also go to Aga Milewska, who completed her International Organiser title requirements through this event. Aga has many plans for her future women’s events, which are already having a hugely positive impact for players in Britain and elsewhere in Europe.



Happy participants after the event

Junior Chess Round-up

International Junior Tournaments

2022 was by far the most successful year for English juniors in international junior tournaments in recent memory. English individuals or teams won 24 medals in total. Highlights included a clean sweep of all four sections of the Glorney Cup, including a 2nd place finish for our Under 18 Girls B team, and Bodhana Sivanandan (pictured below) winning three gold medals and one silver medal.



Tournament and Section	Name	Medal
European Schools Under 7 Girls	Bodhana Sivanandan	Gold
European Schools Under 9 Girls	Zoe Veselow	Gold
European Schools Under 7 Open	Kushal Jakhria	Gold
European Schools Under 11 Open	Jan Murawski	Bronze
World Cadets Rapid Under 8 Girls	Bodhana Sivanandan	Gold
World Cadets Rapid Under 8 Girls	Zoe Veselow	Bronze
World Cadets Rapid Under 8 Open	Kushal Jakhria	Bronze

World Youth Rapid Under 14 Girls	Eugenia Karas	Gold
World Cadets Blitz Under 8 Girls	Bodhana Sivanandan	Gold
World Cadets Blitz Under 8 Girls	Zoe Veselow	Bronze
World Cadets Blitz Under 8 Open	Kushal Jakhria	Gold
World Cadets Blitz Under 10 Open	Kai Hanache	Silver
World Cadets Blitz Under 10 Open	Oleg Verbytski	Bronze
World Youth Blitz Under 14 Girls	Eugenia Karas	Bronze
European Youth Rapid Under 14 Girls	Nina Pert	Bronze
Glorney Cup Under 18 Open	England	Gold
Gilbert Cup Under 18 Girls	England	Gold
Gilbert Cup Under 18 Girls	England B	Silver
Robinson Under 14 Open	England	Gold
Stokes Cup Under 12 Open	England	Gold
European Youth Blitz Under 8 Open	George Chen	Silver
European Youth Blitz Under 10 Open	Kai Hanache	Silver
World Cadets Under 8 Girls	Bodhana Sivanandan	Silver
European Youth Under 8 Girls	Zoe Veselow	Silver
Commonwealth Youth Under 8 Open	Samar Dayal	Gold

Domestic Junior Tournaments

The 2022 British Junior Champions were:

Under 8 - Supratit Banerjee (Scotland)

Leading English junior - Bodhana Sivanandan

Under 10 - Oleg Verbytski

Under 12 - Kameron Grose

Under 14 - Luca Buanne

Under 16 - Frankie Badacsonyi

Under 18 - Aaravamudhan Balaji

The 2022 National Schools Champions were Westminster School. The 2022 Team Chess Challenge winners were Wilson's School.

Progress in Ratings and Titles

Shreyas Royal achieved the international master (IM) title, and in November became the youngest English player ever to achieve a grandmaster (GM) norm. Shreyas requires two more GM norms and a modest rating increase to achieve the GM title.

In the 2022 year-end rating list, England has a number of juniors near the top of their age groups (world ranking in brackets - limited to the top 20):

2016 Boys - Junyan Hu (4)

2015 Girls - Bodhana Sivanandan (1)

2015 Boys - Kushal Jakhria (2); Ethan Pang (5)

2014 Girls - Yichen Zhang (7); Zoe Veselow (9)

2013 Boys - Oleg Verbytski (15)

2010 Girls - Elis Dicen (19)

2009 Boys - Shreyas Royal (3)

2008 Girls - Eugenia Karas (8); Nina Pert (14)

New Junior Development Pathway

The new ECF Junior Development Pathway has been launched, and a number of clubs have already joined this pathway. More information can be found about this on the ECF Juniors website at

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

Online Chess Round-up

ECF Online Clubs

We continued to run ECF Members clubs open to all ECF members and supporters on Chess.com and Lichess.

Chess.com ECF Members club

The link is

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

Lichess English Chess Players club

The link is <https://lichess.org/team/english-chess-players>

By the end of 2022 we had close to 2,000 members in each club with five club tournaments per week in the Chess.com ECF Members club and four per week in the Lichess English Chess Players club. All of the club tournaments were rated, with results reflected in the monthly ECF online ratings at blitz, rapid and standard time controls. The ECF members club also took part in international events in the Chess.com Nations League, with the English Chess Players club representing England in various team battle leagues and series taking place on Lichess.

Chess.com ECF Open club

The link is

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

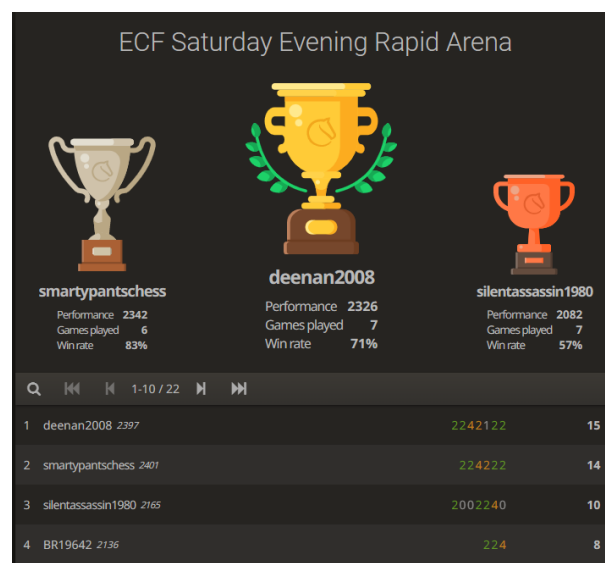
We also ran an Open club on Chess.com with over 5,500 members, with regular ECF tournaments and a chance to play for the ECF England team in the Live Chess World, European and Mediterranean Leagues. You can find a current list of upcoming club tournament and matches on the ECF Online Events page as well as the Club home pages: <https://englishchessonline.org.uk/upcoming-club-events/>

ECF Members club and English Chess Players Tournaments

Weekends - On Fridays we have the ECF Diamond Arena in the ECF Members club on Chess.com. This starts at 8.00pm and is a 90-minute Arena tournament at a 10|0 blitz time control, with a prize of a month's Chess.com Diamond membership each for the top placed player and the top placed U1400 player.



There is then a 120-minute rapid Arena on Lichess at 8.00pm on Saturday evenings at a 10|2 rapid time control, and a five round rapid Swiss on Chess.com at 8.00pm on Sunday evenings, also at a 10|2 time control.



Weekdays - During the week we have Lichess Swiss tournaments at a mix of 3|2 and 5|2 blitz

time controls on Monday and Wednesday afternoon, a Chess.com Tuesday Improvers Rapid or Blitz for players under 1700 on Tuesday afternoons, and a Chess.com Thursday Afternoon Blitz.

Alternate Sundays – We run a four round classical Swiss on alternate Sundays. This is a standardplay event at a 50|10 time control with rounds at 10.30am, 2.00pm, 5.00pm and 8.00pm, and a good opportunity to get an online rating at the standardplay time control.

Registering for events - ECF online events for the week are published in our weekly online email, which is distributed on Fridays and can be found on the online club home pages and the online website here:

<https://englishchessonline.org.uk/upcoming-club-events/>. If you would like to receive the weekly circular then please register at <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/ecf-online-mailing-list/>. We also publicise online events and results together with chess related content on the ECF online Twitter account which you can follow on <https://twitter.com/ECFonlinechess>

Over the Board (OTB) and Online Ratings

ECF online ratings are published monthly on the first of each month and now appear alongside your OTB ratings in the ECF rating system. Online ratings are based on all online events submitted for rating including ECF club events as above, together with 4NCL online and other online leagues. Ratings are calculated in the same way as OTB ratings using the same Elo algorithm to calculate the rating change from each game. The rating system now includes FIDE OTB titles as part of the player record. We also show the ECF National Master (NM) title where this has been achieved:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/master-points-system/>

Players with an OTB title at NM level or above can register their titles with Chess.com and

Lichess and take part in the titled events on the platforms, including the well know Titled Tuesday on Chess.com:

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/titled-tuesday> and the Lichess Titled Arena: <https://lichess.org/blog/YwiX9xAAALynR5hW/titled-arena-announcements>

As well as the regular schedule of nine blitz and rapidplay tournaments across the two platforms, we ran a fortnightly all-day four round classical Swiss tournament at 50|10 time control which allowed players to get online ratings at all three time controls.

Chess.com Internationals



The Chess.com **Nations League Season 4** started in February, with matches on Sundays from 13 February to 27 March 2022. We played in the top division with nine other teams: Argentina, Canada, Greece, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Tahiti, United States and Uruguay. Each match was played on a minimum of ten boards with two legs (blitz at 3|2 and rapid at 15|2) and two games per leg against the opposing board. Season 4 of the Nations League finished in March with a loss against Canada followed by a convincing win against Team Argentina for us to finish in fourth place in the top division. The table below shows results and final standings for the season.

Round 6 (Final) Standings								
#	Name	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Total
1	USA	W3	W4	W2	W5	W7	W6	6
2	Romania	H-	W7	L1	W3	W^	W5	4½
3	Canada	L1	W9	W8	L2	W4	W7	4

4	England	W6	L1	D5	D7	L3	W8	3
5	Jamaica	B-	H-	D4	L1	W8	L2	3
6	Greece	L4	W8	L7	X9	L2	L1	2
7	Uruguay	D8	L2	W6	D4	L1	L3	2
8	Argentina	D7	L6	L3	B-	L5	L4	1½
9	Tahiti	U-	L3	B-	F6	U-	U-	1

Chess.com Live Chess European League



Season 5 of the LCEL started on 7th February 2022 at <https://www.chess.com/club/live-chess-european-league>. England took part with a team from the ECF Open Club with support from Team England Live administrators. There were four divisions in the league: Premier Division and Divisions 1-3. The England team was in Division 1 with the other teams as follows: Team France (last ranked from Premier Division), Team Kazakhstan, Team Italy, Team Turkey, Team Azerbaijan and Team Belarus. Matches were based on three Chess.com team matches with 12 board minimums and each match comprising two games against the opposing board as follows:

Bullet - **2min+1sec**

Blitz - **5min+2sec**

Rapid - **10min+2sec**

We finished in 5th position in Division 1 with the final cross-table as shown below.

Rank	Team	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Pt
1	Team Italia		5	2	2	2	5	5	21
2	Belarus	0		5	5	5	2	3	20
3	Team Kazakhstan	3	0		4	5	0	5	17
4	Team Azerbaijan	3	0	1		2	5	5	16
5	ECF	3	0	0	3		5	3	14
6	Team France	0	3	5	0	0		5	13

7	Team Türkiye	0	2	0	0	2	0		4
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The follow-on **Season 6 of the LCEL** started in September 2022. We finished top of Division 2 at the end of Stage 1 in December 2022 with the Stage 1 final rankings as follows:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
Division 2									
	ENG	DNK	BEL	HUN	TUR	SV	CT	Pts	
1	ENG		W	W	W/L/L	L/W/W	W	W	25
2	DNK	L		L/W/W	W	W/L/D	L/W/D	W	19
3	BEL	L	W/L/L		W	W/L/L	W	W	17
4	HUN	L/W/W	L	L		W/D/W	L	W	13
Relegation Pool									
5	TUR	L	L/W/D	L/W/W	L/D/L		L	L	8
6	SV	L	W/L/D	L	L	L		D/W/W	6½
7	CT	L	L	L	L	L	D/L/L		½

Chess.com Live Chess World League (LCWL) Season 9

<https://www.chess.com/club/live-chess-world-league>



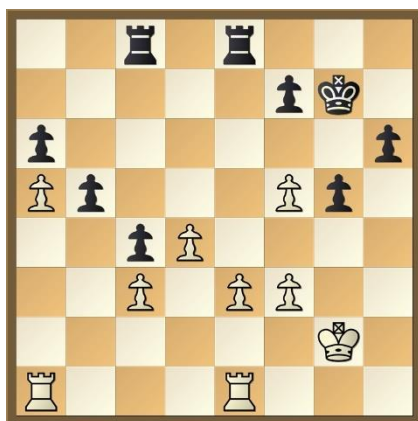
Season 9 of the well-established LCWL started in February 2022. As with the LCEL England took part with a team from the ECF Open Club with support from Team England Live administrators. There were five divisions in the league. England were in **Division 3** with each round consisting of a blitz (5|2) and a rapid (10|2) Chess.com match with two games per board against the opposing team in each match. Division 3 included the following Chess.com teams: Team Brazil Live, Team Belarus, Team Iran+, Chess Federation of Canada, English Chess Federation, Team India, Uruguay Open and Team Chile. Here is a game

from the England v Brazil online rapid match won by Chris Davison.

ReiWgt07 (Wellington Francisco) (2169) - ChrisD24991 (2212) [D38]

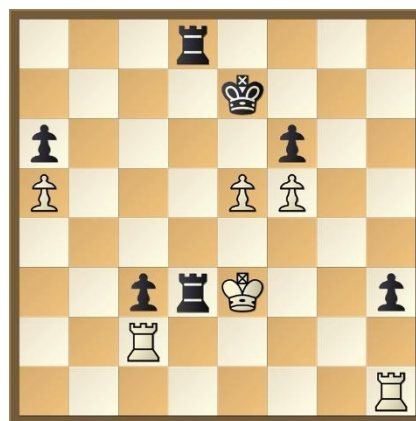
Chess.com, 03.04.2022

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Nf3 d5 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.cxd5 exd5 8.Be2 Be6 9.0-0 Nbd7 10.Rc1 c4 11.Ne5 Bxc3 12.bxc3 h6 13.Nxd7 Bxd7 14.Bh4 g5 15.Bg3 Ne4 16.Bf3 Nxf3 17.hxf3 Bf5 18.Re1 Re8 19.Qa4 a6 20.g4 Bg6 21.Qb4 b6 22.a4 Rb8 23.Ra1 Kg7 24.a5 b5 25.Qc5 Be4 26.Bxe4 dxe4 27.f3 exf3 28.gxf3 Qf6 29.Kg2 Rbc8 30.Qf5 Qxf5 31.gxf5



We have reached an objectively equal double rook ending with Black to move. Chris demonstrates some great maneuvering technique with the rooks to produce two passed pawns which is enough for his opponent to go wrong in the time scramble.

31...Rb8 32.Rab1 Kf6 33.e4 h5 34.Kg3 Rh8 35.Rh1 Ke7 36.e5 h4+ 37.Kg4 b4 38.cxb4 Rhd8 39.Rhd1 f6 40.f4 gxf4 41.Kxf4 c3 42.Rbc1 Rxb4 43.Ke4 Rc4 44.Rc2 h3 45.Rh1 Rcx4+ 46.Ke3 Rd3+



ChrisD24991 won on time.

0-1

We finished season 9 in the top half of the table with eight wins, three losses and one default.

LCWL Season 10

Live Chess World League Season 10 started in September alongside LCEL Season 6 with the ECF entering both events from the ECF Open team.

LWCL England v Belgium

Our first match of the new seasons was in the Live Chess World League season 10 where we played Team Belgium led by IM Richard Polaczek on 10th September: <https://englishchessonline.org.uk/english-chess-online-home-page/live-chess-world-league-season-10/>

The match was in two parts with a blitz leg with two games against the opposing team at 5|2 and a rapid leg with two games at 10|2. We won the blitz leg by 13½ to 2½ and the rapid by 7 to 5.

Blitz Leg The link is

<https://www.chess.com/club/matches/live/english-chess-federation/1448343>

Rapid Leg The link is

<https://www.chess.com/club/matches/live/english-chess-federation/1448344>

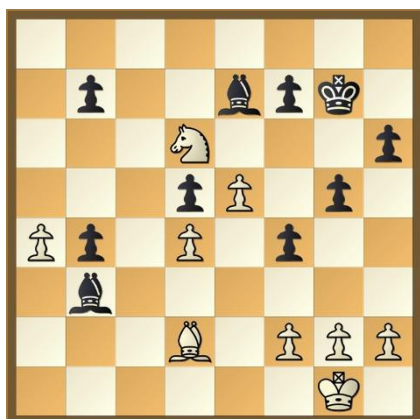


Online Board 1 Robert Starley, pictured at the British

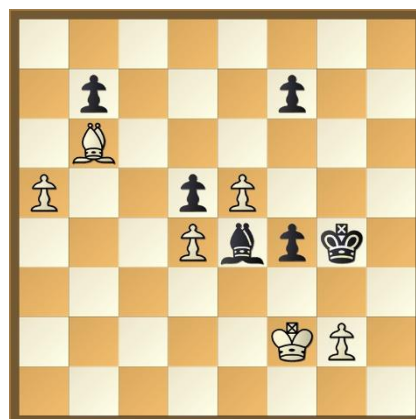
Here is Robert Starley's online game against Belgian IM Richard Polaczek on board 1 of the Rapid. Robert plays an Advance Variation against Richard's French Defence with an exchange of pieces on the c-file and Robert then securing a draw to ensure the team won the match in the second leg.

Event "Live Chess" Site "Chess.com", Date "2022.09.10", Result "1/2-1/2", WhiteElo "2024", BlackElo "2294", TimeControl "600+2"

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. e5 c5 4. c3 Nc6 5. Nf3 Nge7 6. a3 a5 7. a4 cxd4 8. cxd4 Nf5 9. Bd3 Nb4 10. Bxf5 exf5 11. O-O Be7 12. Nc3 Be6 13. Nb5 h6 14. Be3 g5 15. Rc1 Nc6 16. Ne1 f4 17. Bd2 O-O 18. Qh5 Kg7 19. Nd3 Qd7 20. Qe2 Rfc8 21. Rc3 Nb4 22. Nxb4 axb4 23. Rxc8 Rxc8 24. b3 Rc2 25. Rc1 Qc8 26. Qd1 Bf5 27. Rxc2 Qxc2 28. Qxc2 Bxc2 29. Nd6 Bxb3



30. Nf5+ Kf8 31. Nxe7 Kxe7 32. Bxb4+ Ke6 33. a5 Kf5 34. f3 h5 35. h3 Bc4 36. Kf2 Bd3 37. Be7 g4 38. hxg4+ hxg4 39. fxg4+ Kxg4 40. Bc5 Be4 41. Bb6 - 1/2-1/2



We played seven rounds in the all-play-all stage 1 with five wins, a draw against Nicaragua and a single loss against team Bolivia. We then played three more matches in the Championship pool to finish second overall to Bolivia with the stage 2 cross-table and cumulative points as shown below:

LWCL Season 10 Second Stage						
Championship Pool						
		1	2	3	4	
		BOL	ENG	BEL	PRI	Pts
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
Relegation Pool						
		5	6	7	8	
		SLV	BGR	COL	NIC	Pts
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

Lichess Internationals

Bundesliga



The online Bundesliga started when the main over the board Bundesliga was suspended during lockdown and has continued without a break for the last two years with regular team events on Thursday and Sunday at 7 pm. The team battles include ten teams playing in Arena format for 100 minutes with the top three promoted and the bottom 3 relegated: <https://rochadeeuropa.de/-turniere/>. This is probably the most competitive of all the Lichess leagues and we moved between Ligas 2 and 6 of the competition over the course of the year.

Torres de Loule/ Liga Ibera



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

Champions League

This is an international league with team battles at 5.30 pm on Tuesdays with around

twenty teams and fifteen leaders at a 3|0 blitz time control.

Other Leagues, Marathons, Bullet Events and Fischer Random

We also participate in the regular Mega A Team Battles every other week on Friday afternoons. The Mega Team Battles are the largest of the Lichess Team Battles, with up to 200 teams and 20 leaders per team participating in two-hour arena format team battles at a blitz time control. We also took part in a number of the bullet leagues, and the Fischer Random leagues.

Online Bullet Chess

As above, our regular club tournaments are at a mix of rapid and blitz, with a fortnightly standard play tournaments. The blitz and rapid events are relatively quick times controls but still too slow for some, and the English Chess players team joined a new series of bullet team battles at 7 pm on Saturday afternoon and Wednesday evenings organised by @endicraft:

<https://lichess.org/team/endicrafts-wednesday-bullet-ewb/tournaments>

They say bullet isn't real chess, which could be true but that perhaps misses the point. We certainly have some gems of bullet history - the highlight being the 2001 bullet immortal on ICC between GMs Roland Schmaltz and Ronen Har-Zvi:

<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1553589>

Roland Schmaltz (2546) - Ronen Har-Zvi (2512) [C25]

ICC bullet 1 0 Internet Chess Club, 07.03.2001

1.e4 Nc6 2.Nc3 e5 3.g3 Bc5 4.Bg2 Nf6 5.Nge2 d6 6.h3 Bb6 7.0-0 0-0 8.Kh2



8..Re8 9.f4 exf4 10.gxf4



11.Kg3 Nf2 12.Rxf2



After a quiet opening GM Har-Zvi reaches the above position when the fun starts. White is lagging in development and Black's pieces are better placed. Can you see Ronen's spectacular next move and the follow up – and could you see it in a second or two?

Ronen saw it including the follow up and proceeded to demolish the unofficial bullet world champion of the day with multiple piece sacs and a forced white king march to the 8th rank accompanied by Black's remaining minor pieces, where the white king was checkmated on move 24.

10...Ng4+!!



Qh4+!! 13.Kxh4 Bxf2+ 14.Ng3 Re6 15.Kg4 16.f5



16...Rg6+! 17.Kf4 Rxf3 18.Qf1 g5+ 19.fxg6 Ne6+ 20.Kf5 Ng7+ 21.Kf6



21...Rxc6+ 22.Ke7 Re6+ 23.Kd8 Bb6 24.Nd5 Re8#



0-1

Hikaru Nakamura's key tips for bullet are: play an opening where you are very familiar with the positional ideas so you can get ahead on time; use lots of small improving moves; don't assume too much with pre-moves; choose your thinking time well; and of course - never resign! The link is

<https://www.Chess.com/article/view/7-bullet-chess-tips-by-hikaru>

Bullet is not for everyone but it's worth giving it a try at least once, so in which case why not join the weekly bullet at 7 pm on Wednesdays in the English Chess Players club on Lichess.

Titled Tuesday and Titled Arenas

Chess.com run a weekly Titled Tuesday event with early and late 11 round Swiss tournaments at 5 pm and 11 pm UK time:

<https://www.chess.com/article/view/titled-tuesday#format>



Titled Tuesday is open to players with FIDE titles from FM to GM or WGM, or a National Master (NM) title awarded by their federation. (The ECF awards NM titles to those with a sustained ECF standardplay rating of 2200 or over for a period of at least 24 months in the national lists – further details on the Master points page here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/master-points-system/>)

GM Hikaru Nakamura regularly plays in and wins the Titled Tuesday events as he did on 11 October. Here is Hikaru's round 9 game from the 11 October early tournament against GM Magnus Carlsen. Hikaru opens with the offbeat 1.a3 (Anderssen's Opening) with Magnus responding with 1..g5 (the reverse Grob). Both openings were popularised by Mike Basman. Hikaru picks up the offered g-pawn early in the game, finds a tactic to win a second pawn, and goes on to win the game on time. He finished the early tournament with 9½ points from the 11 rounds, just clear of Carlsen and Duda on 9 points.

(10724) Hikaru (3228) - MagnusCarlsen (3261) [A00]

Live Chess Chess.com, 11.10.2022

1.a3 g5



2.e4 c5 3.d4 cxd4 4.Qxd4 Nf6 5.Bxg5 Nc6
 6.Qd3 Qb6 7.Bc1 Ng4 8.Nh3 d6 9.Nc3 Nge5
 10.Qb5 Qxb5 11.Bxb5 Bxh3 12.gxh3 a6 13.Be2
 Nd4 14.Kd1 Nxe2 15.Nxe2 Rc8 16.b3 Rg8
 17.Be3 b5 18.a4 b4 19.a5 e6 20.Ra2 Be7
 21.Ng3 Kd7 22.Ke2 Bd8 23.Rd1 Rb8 24.f4 Nc6



25.Bc5 25...Bc7 26.Bxd6 Bxd6 27.e5 Kc7
 28.exd6+ Kd7 29.Ne4 Rg2+ 30.Kf3 Rxh2
 31.Nc5+ Ke8 32.Rg1



1-0

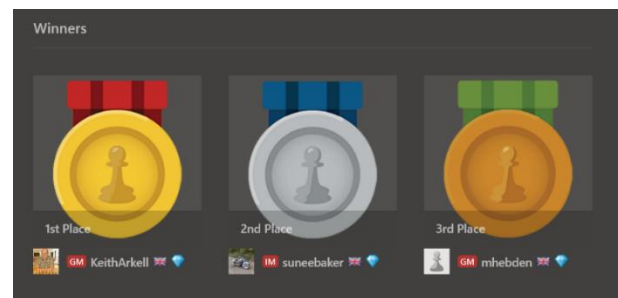
ECF Red Cross Charity Marathon for Ukraine

by Danny Rosenbaum

The English Chess Federation's 24-hour charity marathon for Ukraine on 2-3 April 2022 was a great success. The event raised £18,000 for the Red Cross DEC appeal in support of Ukraine. It was wonderful to see so many Ukrainians taking part. Appropriately for a chess marathon, there were 64 Ukrainian players. Like last year when we held *Checkmate Covid – The Rematch*, this year's marathon was won by GM Keith Arkell. Keith played 248 games in 24 hours, which is an average of less than six minutes per game despite it being five minutes a side chess. He explained, 'I managed this by a policy of moving instantly nearly all the time. I won 204 games, lost 21 and drew 23.'

Keith's secret? 'I'm just lucky that I have good stamina - it's probably the good air down here in Paignton, and the tempting coastal walks!'

He scored 728 points, streets ahead of the field. IM Chris Baker was second with 399 points and GM Mark Hebden third with 386 points.



Of the 6,367 games in the tournament, one game that gained a lot of attention on Twitter was Ali Mortazavi v Lawrence Trent. You can play back the Jackson Pollock-esque melee at <https://www.chess.com/game/live/42671926319>. The action was sufficient for Levon Aronian to comment:



BigAI (2515) - LawrenceTrent (2371) [B00]
 Live Chess Chess.com, 02.04.2022

1.e4 b6 2.Nc3 Bb7 3.g3 An unusual line against Owen's defence countering the light squared bishop on the diagonal.



e6 4.Bg2 d5 5.exd5 Nf6 Taking advantage of the pin on the long diagonal.

6.Nf3 Nxd5 7.0-0 Be7 8.a4 a6 9.Re1 0-0 10.d4 Nd7 11.Ne4 N7f6 12.Ne5 Qc8 13.c4



13...Nb4? 13...Nxe4 is a safer move allowing the knight back to f6 if White recaptures on e4.

14.d5

Better is 14.Nxf6+ Bxf6 15.Bxb7 Qxb7 16.Nd7 and White is now in control. If the rook moves

then Nxf6 followed by Qg4+ with a big attack on the black king.

14...exd5 15.Ng5 Bc5 16.Bh3 Qd8



The position is about equal at this point. Black has some pressure on the white king with the bishops on the diagonals, but White has a surprise in store.

17.Nexf7?! A nice sacrifice which is probably unsound but kicks off a tactical struggle with chances for both sides.

17...Rxf7 18.Be6



18...Ne4 18...Bxf2+ is better, setting up a discovered check - 19.Kxf2 Ne4+ with Black taking the initiative.

19.Bxf7+ Kh8 20.Rxe4 Returning the exchange to protect the f-pawn and remove one of Black's best pieces. **20...dxe4**



The position is about equal. Neither king is safe and both sides go for the attack with queen and minor pieces.

21.Qh5 Threatening mate on h7. Black can now sacrifice on f2 with a series of tactical strikes against the white king. The rest of the game is a series of forcing moves for both sides, with both players short of time and some missed wins on both sides.

21...Bxf2+? 22.Kg2? 22.Kxf2 h6 23.Be3 and Black has nothing much for the sacrificed piece.

22...e3+ Shutting out the bishop on c1 with check, and Black is now in control.

23.Kh3 Qd3?! A nice idea which is probably unsound but kicks off a tactical struggle with chances for both sides.

24.Ra3? Developing the rooks but handing the initiative back, and Black is now winning. The best move was 24.Be6 with a big threat of Nf7+ and various checkmating threats.

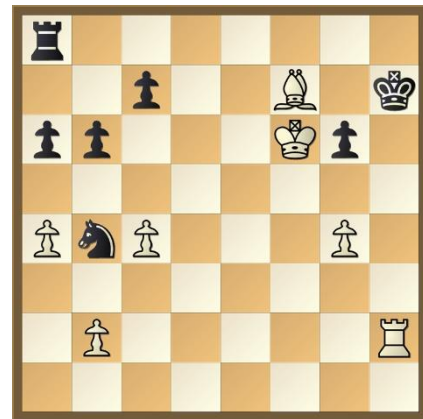
24...Qf1+ 25.Kh4 Bxg3+! **26.hxg3 Qh1+ 27.Nh3 Qe4+** Black protects h7 again and looks to push the e-pawn, but misses a win with 27...Bc8 which wins on the spot.

28.g4 e2 29.Bd2 e1Q+ 30.Bxe1 Qxe1+ 31.Rg3 Qe7+ 32.Ng5 h6 33.Qg6 Qxg5+? 33...hxg5+

34.Kh3 Qf6 stops the mate, and Black wins with the extra piece.

34.Qxg5 hxg5+ 35.Kxg5 g6? It's now mate in three. 35...Be4; Black must return the extra piece to stop mate on the h-file.

36.Kf6 Bg2 37.Rxg2 Kh7 38.Rh2#



BigAl won by checkmate. An impressive tactical struggle, with the initiative changing hands several times before White settles things with mate on the h-file.

1-0

Thank you to Natasha Regan in particular, and to all the commentators who gave their valuable time so that we had 24-hour coverage. Most of them were on the ECF's Twitch channel at https://www.twitch.tv/ecf_commentary but Titas, aka the Duke of Bebington, deserves huge credit for streaming through the night on his own channel and raising £1,170. We had very heartening feedback from the Ukrainian players, including this post below on the ECF's Open Club's noticeboard on Chess.com –



A full list of standings and games can be found at

<https://www.chess.com/tournament/live/arena/ecf-charity-marathon-for-ukraine-1792555>

The ECF were very grateful to Chess.com, Chessable, Forward Chess and Elk and Ruby for their generous support for the event.

ECF Marathon for Ukraine – some tactics along the way.

The English Chess Federation’s 24-hour charity marathon for Ukraine took place over the weekend of 2-4 April and was won by GM Keith Arkell. There were some interesting tactics amongst the **6,300 games** played over 24 hours and we have presented a selection below.

Anato1iy22 (2043) – GM Mikhail_Golubev (2427) – Black to play. Checkmate in eight moves.



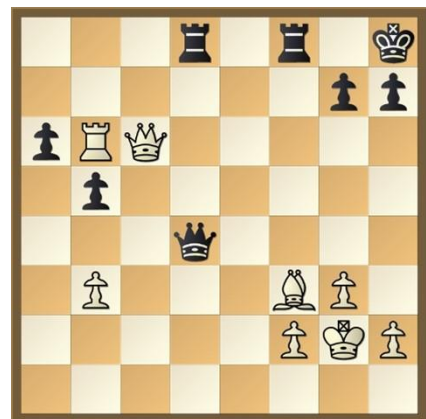
Checkmatealot (2261) - chess4ever64 (2103)
– Black to play. It’s the same theme as the previous puzzle, and once again checkmate in eight moves.



AlexRoyle10 (2013) - m00nmaker (1724) -
White to play and win.



RichardABates (2327) v Exlsambard (1905) –
Black to play and win.



ECF Online Marathon – some tactics along the way - answers

Anato1iy22 (2043) – GM Mikhail_Golubev (2427)

Answer: 19. ...Rexg3+ 20.fxg3 Bxg3 21.Nxf6+ (throwing in a check), gxf6 22.Rf2, Bxh2+ with mate to follow on h2. 0–1

Checkmatealot (2261) - chess4ever64 (2103)

Answer: Another destructive sacrifice on g3 followed by a king hunt. 22. ...Rxxg3+ 23.hxxg3 Rxxg3+ 24.Kf1 Rf3+ 25.Ke2 Rf2+ 26.Kd3 Rxd2+ 27.Ke3 Bxf4+ 28.Kxf4 Qd6+ 29.Kf3 Qg3# 0–1

AlexRoyle10 (2013) - m00nmaker (1724)

Answer: 23.Rxd8 Rxd8 24.Rxg6+ Kxg6 25.Ba6 d5 26.c7 Re8 27.c8Q Rxc8 28.Bxc8 d4 1-0

RichardABates (2327) v Exlsambard (1905)

Answer: 33. ...Rxf3 34.Kxf3 Rf8+ 35.Kg2 Qxf2+ 36.Kh3 Qf5+ 37.Kh4 g5+ 38.Kh5 Qh3+ 39.Kxg5 Rg8+ 40.Kf4 Qf1+ 41.Ke5 [RichardABates won on time] 1-0

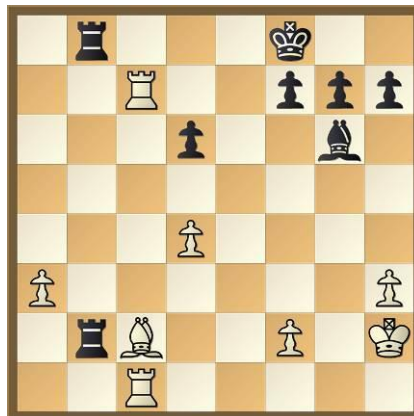
Endgame Challenge

The June 2022 Jubilee bank holiday weekend saw a welcome return for the English Chess Players Endgame Challenge on Saturday 4th June with two thematic arenas based on positions from the games of endgame master Akiba Rubinstein. Here is the game behind one of the positions used in the tournament.

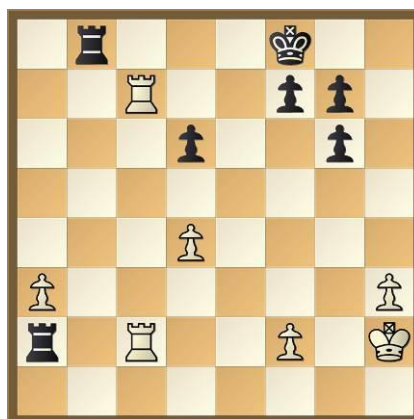


Akiba Rubinstein (pictured) was a Polish grandmaster who played tournament chess between 1903 and 1932. By 1912 Rubinstein had established himself as one of the strongest players in the world and was due to play in a world championship match against the great Emanuel Lasker which had to be abandoned due to the outbreak of World War 1. Rubinstein's style was mainly positional, and he often aimed for an endgame position where his mastery of rook and pawn endings in particular was second to none.

The first of the bank holiday online arenas started from the position after Spielmann's move **37.Bc2** from the game Spielmann v Rubinstein in the St Petersburg tournament of 1909.



The 1909 game continued **37... Ra2 38.Bxg6 hxg6 39.R1c2**



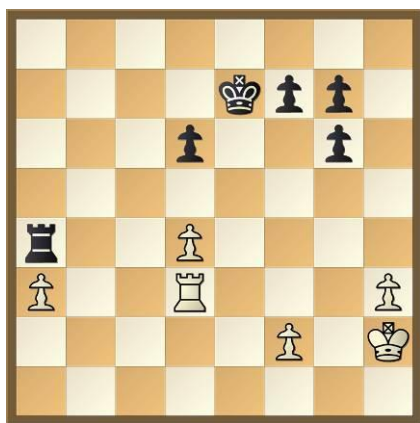
40. Rxc2 40 Rxa3 wins another pawn but allows Rd7 when White's rooks become very active.

40 .. Ra8 41.Rc3

the only way to defend the a- and d-pawns.

Ra4 42.Rd3 Ke7

White's position is already very difficult with four isolated pawns and the white rook tied to the defence of two of them. Rubinstein's plan is to activate his king to pick up one of the two weak pawns.



43.Kg3?!

Lasker's annotation notes that '43.d5 was necessary, stopping the advance of Black's king. Then if 43...Kf6 44.Rf3+, or 43...f5 44.Re3+ and 45.Re6'.

43...Ke6

Again Lasker notes here that 'the mastery with which Rubinstein implements the following endgame is more than praiseworthy'.

44.Kf3 Kd5 45.Ke2 g5 !

46.Rb3 f6 47.Ke3 Kc4 48.Rd3 d5 49.Kd2 Ra8 50.Kc2 Ra7 51.Kd2 Re7 52.Rc3+ White loses a pawn anyway. If 52.Re3 Rb7 53.Rd3 Rb2+ 54.Ke3 Ra2 and White is in Zugzwang.

52...Kxd4 53.a4 Ra7 54.Ra3 Ra5 55.Ra1 Kc4 56.Ke3 d4+ 57.Kd2 Rf5 58.Ke1 Kb4 59.Ke2 Ka5 60.Ra3 Rf4 61.Ra2 Rh4 62.Kd3 Rxh3+ 63.Kxd4 Rh4+ 64.Kd3 Rxa4 65.Re2 Rf4 66.Ke3 Kb6 67.Rc2 Kb7 68.Rc1 Ra4 69.Rh1 Kc6 70.Rh7 Ra7 71.Ke4 Kd6 72.Kf5 g6+ !

73.Kxg6 Rxh7 74.Kxh7 Ke5 75.Kg6 g4

0-1

Thematic Endgame Tournaments

We have also been running a series of Saturday afternoon endgame tournaments in the English Chess Players Club open to all club members. These start from thematic endgame positions with two tournaments with different starting positions.

The tournaments on 15 January were based on some classic minor piece endgame positions including a knight v bishop endgame from Karpov v Kasparov from the 1984 World Championships. The original Karpov v Kasparov game is reproduced below as a model game for these types of position.

Thematic Tournament 1 – Good Knight v Bad Bishop

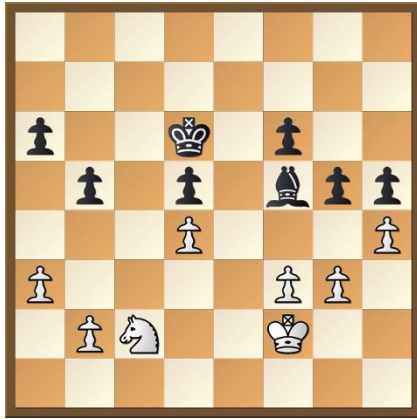
(Karpov v Kasparov 1984 - Game 9 starting from Karpov's move 45)

Game 9 of the first Karpov v Kasparov World Championship match is a classic example of how to play with a good knight against a bad bishop. The game was played in October in the early stages of what became a marathon World Championship match continuing for five months and 48 games with the score at 5-3 and 40 draws. After 48 games FIDE president Campomanes decided the match was going on for too long and stopped it amidst some controversy over concerns for the health of the players. Game 9 of the marathon started with a Tarrasch defense to Karpov's Queen's Gambit. We join the game after Black's 44th move Bxf5.

Anatoly Karpov - Garry Kasparov [D34]

Karpov - Kasparov World Championship Ma Moscow URS (9), 05.10.1984

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.g3 Nf6 6.Bg2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Nc3 Nc6 9.Bg5 cxd4 10.Nxd4 h6 11.Be3 Re8 12.Qb3 Na5 13.Qc2 Bg4 14.Nf5 Rc8 15.Bd4 Bc5 16.Bxc5 Rxc5 17.Ne3 Be6 18.Rad1 Qc8 19.Qa4 Rd8 20.Rd3 a6 21.Rfd1 Nc4 22.Nxc4 Rxc4 23.Qa5 Rc5 24.Qb6 Rd7 25.Rd4 Qc7 26.Qxc7 Rdxc7 27.h3 h5 28.a3 g6 29.e3 Kg7 30.Kh2 Rc4 31.Bf3 b5 32.Kg2 R7c5 33.Rxc4 Rxc4 34.Rd4 Kf8 35.Be2 Rxd4 36.exd4 Ke7 37.Na2 Bc8 38.Nb4 Kd6 39.f3 Ng8 40.h4 Nh6 41.Kf2 Nf5 42.Nc2 f6 43.Bd3 g5 44.Bxf5 Bxf5



45.Ne3 Bb1 46.b4 Played by Karpov to fix the queenside pawns on light squares.

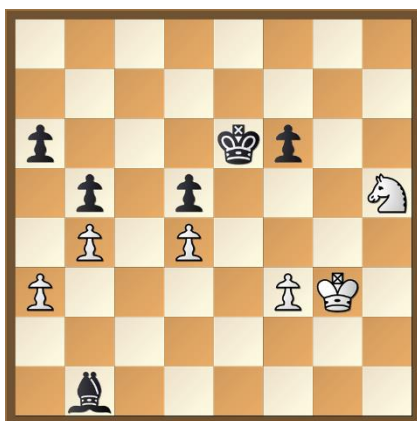
46...gxh4

47.Ng2!! Karpov thought for some time in this position before playing Ng2 with a very clever pawn sacrifice. The idea is for White to give the pawn up temporarily to keep an entry point for the knight and king into the Black position.

47...hxf3+ 48.Kxf3 Now we reach a good knight v bad bishop position with the king and knight both able to infiltrate.

48...Ke6

And White will infiltrate with three black weakness to target.



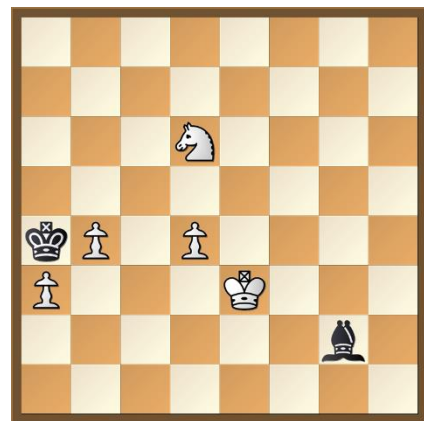
49.Nf4+ Kf5 50.Nxh5 Ke6 51.Nf4+ Kd6 52.Kg4 Bc2 53.Kh5 Bd1 54.Kg6 Ke7 55.Nxd5+ Abandoning the pawn.

55...Ke6 56.Nc7+ Kd7 57.Nxa6 Bxf3 58.Kxf6 White is now two pawns up.

58...Kd6 59.Kf5 Kd5 60.Kf4 Bh1 61.Ke3 Saving the pawn.

61...Kc4 62.Nc5 Bc6 63.Nd3 Bg2 64.Ne5+ Kc3 64...Kb3 65.Kd3 Kxa3 66.Kc3 Winning, as White can start pushing the pawn with support from the knight.

65.Ng6 Kc4 66.Ne7 Bb7 67.Nf5 Bg2 68.Nd6+ Kb3 69.Nxb5 Ka4



70.Nd6 Black resigned at this point as White will promote one of the passed pawns.

1-0

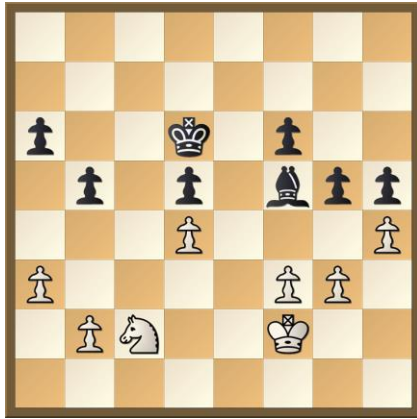
Tournament Results – Bishop v Knight – Who Won?

That was how the world champions played it and you can find the two thematic tournaments at the links here to see how ECF online club members fared from the Karpov – Kasparov starting position as well as the more recent Arkell – Stubbs minor piece ending.

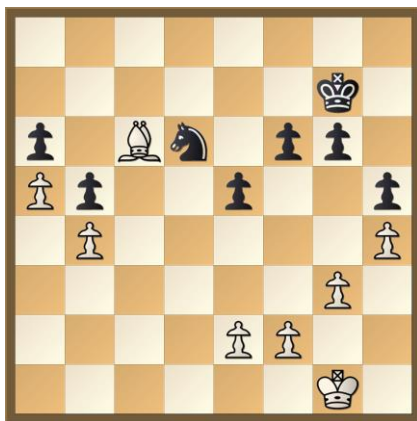
You can find details of the model games in the Lichess study here:

<https://lichess.org/study/sd5gNRDB>

The two tournaments are at the links below:



White to move starting from Karpov v Kasparov – 1984 World Championship:
<https://lichess.org/tournament/hHZzuqMX>



White to move from Arkell v Stubbs – 2021 British Championships:
<https://lichess.org/tournament/23t24goP>

These were played in Arena format at 3|2 on Saturday 15th January. GM Keith Arkell joined us for both tournaments and was able to give some expert advice in the chat.

In general, the side with the stronger minor piece won or drew but there were a few upsets as the positions can get quite double edged.

As ever, careful play is required to convert this sort of advantage with calculation required at the right points as the position develops.

ECF Online Grand Prix – 2022



Series 2 of the ECF Online Grand Prix kicked off on 2 January and continued over ten months until the end of October with blitz events on the first Sunday of each month and rapid events on the third Sunday.

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

You can find further details and leaderboards here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2022-online-grand-prix-series/>

Category prize winners were as follows:

ECF Online Blitz Grand Prix – Category Prize Winners

Open – 1st Michael Harris; 2nd Chris Davison; 3rd Tristan Cox

Senior (Over 50) – 1st Michael Harris; 2nd John Sharp; 3rd Julian Tang

Women’s – 1st Elis Dicen; 2nd Anusha Subramanian; 3rd Karin Bayona

Junior (U18) – 1st Pengxiao Zhu; 2nd Elis Dicen; 3rd Stanley Badacsonyi

U2000 – 1st Kyle Bennett; 2nd Elis Dicen; 3rd John Sharp

U1700 – 1st Pengxiao Zhu; 2nd Rithwik Gururaj; 3rd Julian Tang

U1400 – 1st Jonas Zurba; 2nd George Calvert; 3rd Louis Buckland

U1100 – 1st Louis Buckland; 2nd Shaivi Prasad; 3rd Agreya Agnihotri

ECF Online Rapid Grand Prix – Category Prize Winners

Open – 1st Chris Davison; 2nd Tristan Cox; 3rd Elis Dicen

Senior (Over 50) – 1st Julian Tang; 2nd Mark Jones; 3rd Vincent Logan

Women’s – 1st Elis Denele Dicen; 2nd Anusha Subramanian; 3rd Caroline Jane Robson

Junior (U18) – 1st Elis Denele Dicen; 2nd Eoin Moore; 3rd Alex Royle

U2000 – 1st Elis Dicen; 2nd Kyle Bennett; 3rd Eoin Moore

U1700 – 1st Supratit Banerjee; 2nd Anusha Subramanian; 3rd Pengxiao Zhu

U1400 – 1st Supratit Banerjee; 2nd Alexander Cant; 3rd Ishanth Reddy Thangella

U1100 – 1st Neil Bates; 2nd Supratit Banerjee; 3rd Ishanth Reddy Thangella

ECF Daily Chess

Daily Chess is a form of correspondence chess played on Chess.com at a day per move or three days per move. The ECF Members club has a number of keen correspondence players and we have been running an ECF Daily Championship on Chess.com for a couple of years.

Andrew Caswell, the ECF’s Daily Chess Manager, reported on the last two years’ events during the course of 2022. Note that daily team events will generally last for months and sometimes over a year – hence the focus on events starting in 2020 and 2021.

2020 Daily Championships

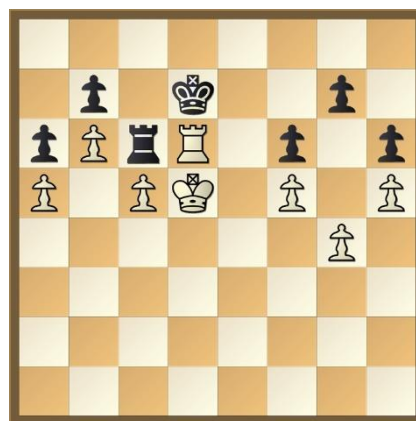
The 2020 Championship has now reached its climax, with three players contesting the final round to determine the placings for the tournament. Although one game remains to be completed, @Robbo125 is set to win the competition, having achieved an unassailable score of 3/4 in the final group. Second place will be determined by the result of that final game with @it-bites taking on @Ed143, their other game having been drawn. Here is a win that secured the title for Ian Robson:

<https://www.chess.com/game/daily/360694705>

Robbo125 (2253) - it-bites (2253) [B11]

ECF Members 2020 Daily Tournament - Chess.com, 06.10.2021

1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 Bg4 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 e6 6.g3 Bb4 7.Bg2 Nd7 8.a3 Ne5 9.Qe2 Bxc3 10.dxc3 dxe4 11.Qxe4 Qd5 12.0–0 Qxe4 13.Bxe4 Nf6 14.Bg2 0–0 15.Re1 Nc4 16.b3 Nb6 17.c4 Rfd8 18.Be3 Rd7 19.a4 Nc8 20.Bc5 Ne7 21.Red1 Kf8 22.Kf1 Ke8 23.Rd3 Rxd3 24.cxd3 Nd7 25.Bxe7 Kxe7 26.d4 Nf6 27.Ke2 Kd6 28.b4 a6 29.Kd3 h6 30.a5 Nh5 31.Bf3 Nf6 32.Re1 Nd7 33.Bg4 Nf6 34.Bd1 Nd7 35.h4 Nf6 36.Bf3 Nd7 37.Bd1 Nf6 38.g4 Nd7 39.f4 Nf8 40.h5 Nh7 41.Bf3 f6 42.Kc3 Nf8 43.Rg1 Nd7 44.Be4 Rf8 45.b5 Kc7 46.b6+ Kd6 47.Re1 Nb8 48.c5+ Kd7 49.Bg6 Ke7 50.Bf5 Rd8 51.Bxe6 Nd7 52.Bxd7+ Kxd7 53.Kc4 Rg8 54.d5 cxd5+ 55.Kxd5 Rf8 56.f5 Rc8 57.Re6 Rc6 58.Rd6+



1–0

ECF 2021 Daily Championships

149 players entered the three tournament sections for the 2021 event (Open, U1750, U1400 as per Chess.com ratings). There are just two players left in contention for the U1400 section, with @benjaminlappin playing @EmeraldArmy to determine the outcome. @owletofdoom has already secured third place.

The U1750 competition has finished with the placings as follows:

1st - @hbpatel142

2nd - @Saracen-Cat

3rd - @PlumptonRed

In the Open there were three players contesting the final round to determine the placings for the tournament - @Horseychess @john_chandler and @dasc1.

Articles from 'ChessMoves' 2022

Post-Traumatic Chess Disorder by John Foley



This article was originally published on the Kingston chess club website at <https://kingstonchess.com/2022/01/30/post-traumatic-chess-disorder/>

I recently embarked on the task of uploading my games to a database for the first time. This has engendered the strange feeling of my life passing before my eyes as I scroll through the games. This life review experience is sometimes reported by people when they are falling from a height to their presumed death. One theory is that this is due to “cortical inhibition” – a breaking down of the normal regulatory processes of the brain – in highly stressful or dangerous situations, causing a “cascade” of mental impressions. Looking through my past games is stressful, indeed traumatic. I am recalling matters long since deliberately buried in the recesses of my memory. Twinges of regret are surfacing to

remind me of my cognitive limitations (or, if I am being cruel to myself, stupidity).



John Nunn

This late-chess-life crisis all started after I had given John Nunn a lift to Ashted for the [Alexander Cup final](#), the Surrey team knockout championship, in 2018. In the pre-digital age, we had met in the London Under-14 championship and inevitably I had lost, but I couldn't remember anything about the game. I went on to win the London [Under-16](#) (ahead of a certain Jonathan Speelman) whereas at the same time John Nunn won the London Under-18. Given his prodigious talent, he won everything as a junior in England and had set his sights abroad. By the time I won the [Oxford University Chess Club](#) (OUCC) championship in 1976, he had a doctorate in mathematics and was well on his way to becoming a grandmaster.

As we wended our way back through the Surrey Hills, I nonchalantly mentioned that he was the reason I had given up chess. He seemed abashed at my unwonted revelation. I explained that it was apparent some people were so talented that there was no point in competing with them. On the principle of comparative advantage, I should spend my time doing something else. However, I was foolish; I had misinterpreted the data by observing only those around me – the “availability bias”. I had not twigged that I was amongst a special generation – two of my

university contemporaries, John Nunn and Jonathan Speelman, were the core members of the England team that went on to win the silver medal at the [Chess olympiads](#) in 1984, 1986 and 1988, behind the mighty Soviet Union. I mentally placed chess in a box called “it was fun while it lasted” and embarked on a modelling career (not that sort of modelling!)



The Yugoslav Attack after 10.h4

Soon after our trip, John sent me the game we had played in the Under-14 championship in which I had succumbed to his Yugoslav Attack. I winced as I recalled my temerity in playing the Sicilian Dragon without having even read a book on it (although to be fair maybe one had not yet been written in English). The game is too embarrassing to show, at least if I am to retain any sense of dignity. What struck me was that Doccy (as Nunn is universally known in the chess community) had recorded, studied and still remembered every opponent and probably every game he had ever played. You don't get into the top 10 players in the world by being casual; you need focused application.



Mike Truran

I recall a conversation with Mike Truran, progenitor of the [4NCL](#), the national chess league, just prior to his being ensconced as chief executive of the English Chess Federation (ECF). Over an entertaining lunch at the Fleece, his favourite hostelry in Witney, he casually mentioned that we had played in the university championships. “Oh really”, I enquired, “what happened?” He had won, he beamed. I could not recall the game, let alone the result. Nor could I remember my opponent, but I was too polite to mention this – he probably wasn't as handsome then as he is now with a trimmed goatee. It turned out that Mike had also kept a careful record of all his encounters over the board. By contrast, in those days I had seen myself as being on the grand tour of intellectual self-discovery – and, dare I admit, romance – whilst occasionally conceding to the seductive charm of chess.



Robin Haldane

It is only in hindsight that one can make sense of disconnected comments. When I resumed chess after 25 years in the “real” world, I was playing in an evening league match next to Robin Haldane, the terrific and prolific suburban competitor, who informed me that I had beaten him in a “very nice game” in the London Under-14. This was the final proof that I was in the minority of players who treated the game without the respect it deserved. I should have been keeping a record of each game. Only thus would I be able to respond to Robin with some informed pleasantries such as “but you put up a stout defence”.



Dominic Lawson

Yet I should have been forearmed. In the OUCC championships of 1975, I played Dominic Lawson, now a distinguished journalist and the esteemed president of the ECF. Dominic played a crisp, albeit obvious, combination to win. He was surprised to discover later that the combination had been included in a compilation book (presumably for beginners). As he [recounted to ChessBase](#) in 2014, and previously in *Chess* magazine in the 1980s, he was pleased by this recognition and cited it as his most memorable game.



*Dominic Lawson v John Foley
(Oxford University Championship, 1975)*

Although not thrilled to be on the receiving end of a published combination, I drew some comfort from the dictum that it takes two players to make a game. It is only worth publishing moves in games where there is some reasonable opposition. I noted that my repertoire had moved on from the Sicilian to the French Defence, but I could still be crushed in both. My regret in reading Dominic’s article was not that I had lost to a cheapo (the move, not him), but that I could not lay my hands on the game in which I beat him the following year on my way to the championship title. I recall I played the Modern Benoni with the f5 flourish, as made famous by Jonathan Penrose, who beat the then world champion Mikhail Tal in the Leipzig Olympiad in 1960. If only I had had that game, I could have fashioned some riposte. Actually, I have not quite abandoned the last thread of hope, because there are still some storage boxes in the attic which have not been disinterred in decades.



Stephen Moss v a youthful Magnus Carlsen

I fancied that a future biographer would write an encomium about how an average club player could, after years of apathy, apply himself intensively and become a grandmaster. This was more or less the theme of [The Rookie](#), the book written by my Kingston colleague, and another contemporary at the OUCC, the Guardian writer Stephen Moss, which tracks his odyssey through chess (and life).

Yet subconsciously I had evolved almost the same attitude as [Ken Inwood](#), one of Kingston's strongest players for decades. Ken discards his scoresheet after each game in what appears to be a careless disregard for self-improvement. But then Ken does not have anything to prove, having won the London Under-14 and Under-18 titles before becoming the British Boys' Champion at Hastings in 1953 and playing top board for England in the [Glorney Cup](#). He has for many decades made a pilgrimage to the Hastings international tournament at the turn of each year to watch the top games with flask at the ready. There comes a stage when chess is played for pure enjoyment, win or lose.



Score sheets

At least I had the foresight to hang on to these precious documents. Wads of distressed scoresheets have been strewn in drawers and stuffed into bookshelves. The process has begun of collating and painstakingly transcribing the moves of the games I can

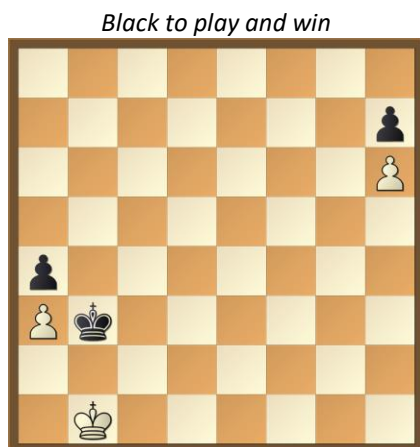
unearth into [Hiarcs](#), the Mac-friendly chess database and engine. Some of my games were conveniently retrieved from doubly checked online databases such as 4NCL's. That made me realise what a terrible written record I had kept of the moves.

Note on notation: the algebraic system gives rise to reflection errors when recording: a becomes h and b becomes g; 1 becomes 8 and 2 becomes 7 etc, so there is a lot of decoding required. One must play a game out until the moves no longer make sense and then reverse back to the last reflection. Descriptive notation largely precludes this sort of error.

The main defect of transcription, however, cannot be cured by any notation system. The problem occurs towards the end of each game. When time is short, accuracy goes out the window. Distinguishing between moves and squiggles becomes impossible. In the worst case, when the remaining time drops below five minutes, it is no longer mandatory to record the moves. The end of the game is lost to history unless the opponent is obliging. Returning to a game years later, one plays through to a perfectly good position up to move 35 or so, but then the scoresheet puzzlingly records the game as a loss. The advice for constructing personal game histories, learned late in my life, is to correct the scoresheet immediately after the game. Ideally, one should make some quick notes on the game – perhaps during the post-mortem analysis conducted by the players – and input the moves without delay.

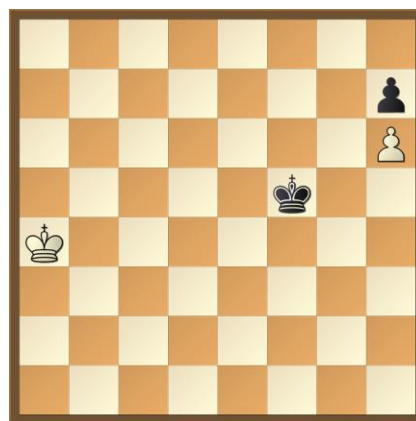
The games I am currently inputting are from random dates in the past. I am up to game 150, which must be a tiny fraction of the games played in my chess "career". The games are not of any theoretical importance, except that each game can trigger a personal memory or give rise to a newly perceived finesse with potential instructive value. A game fitting this latter category was one I played as Black

against Martin Gruau in a Surrey v Kent county match in 2018. After a hard-fought and complex game, we reached the following position. I was so sure I was winning, and the move so obvious, that I did not think I needed to calculate my next move.



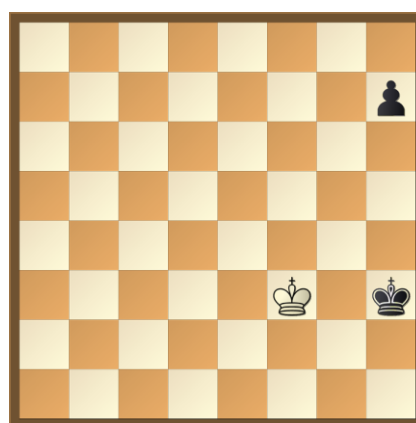
*Martin Gruau v John Foley
Surrey v Kent, 27 January 2018*

Like anybody else who has been striving for victory for five hours at the board in a chilly community hall, I was exhausted, but finally the win was within my grasp. In the diagram, Black is playing down the board. My king had advanced and pushed my opponent's king to the back rank. I could capture the a3 pawn and then saunter over to pick up the h6 pawn, whilst the White king had to deal with the passed a4 pawn. I should be able to shoulder off the White king if it tried to race over to stop the h-pawn. This much was clear and there was no need to consider any other plan. So I played 70 ... Kxa3? There followed 71 Ka1! I followed my ill-thought plan and we reached this position after Black's 75th move.



White to play and draw

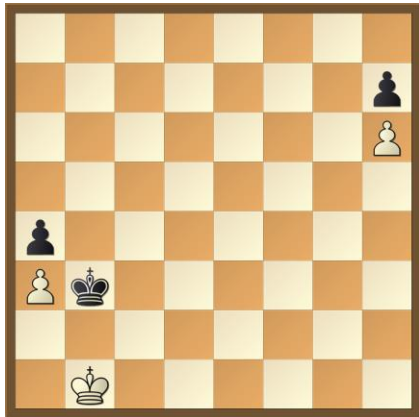
I was on track but my opponent seemed confident, which was rather worrying- wasn't he supposed to resign? I finally began to put my brain in gear and realised that I had sleepwalked into a draw. The final position is shown below. The Black king is forced to the edge and cannot escape without allowing the white king to reach the drawing square h8. Dagnabbit! I dealt with the anguish by the technique of instant forgetfulness – the nostrum of choice for the disappointed player.



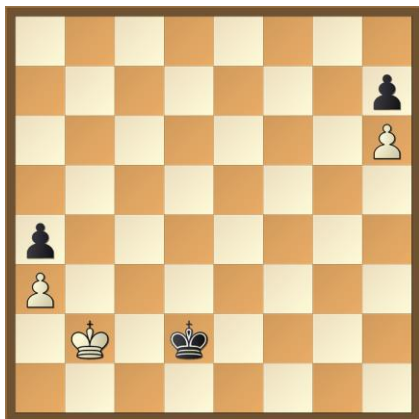
Drawn

So, as I was inputting and reviewing the game again, I noticed something surprising. I had been right to believe that I had a winning move in the opening diagram position. The finesse is to refrain from capturing the a3 pawn! I had played a pedestrian move, failing to recognise that I was standing at a crossroads. During a game one is not presented with a caption

“White to play and win” which would immediately raise the level of awareness.



The winning move is to avoid capturing the pawn **70...Kc3!** The actual move played draws 70...Kxa3? 71.Ka1 Kb3 72.Kb1 Kc4 73.Ka2 Kd5 74.Ka3 Ke5 75.Kxa4 Kf5 76.Kb4 Kg5 77.Kc4 Kxh6 78.Kd4 Kg5 79.Ke3 Going straight to the blocking corner 79.Ke4?? This natural move is a blunder (79...Kg4 80.Ke3 Kg3 81.Ke2 Kg2 82.Ke3 h5 83.Kf4 h4 84.Kg4 h3 winning)) **71.Kc1 Kd3 72.Kb2 Kd2!**



Now White is forced to lose a tempo whereas Black takes the same number of moves to reach h6. A serious error would be to allow the White king easy access to a4 72...Ke4?? 73.Kc3 Kf5 74.Kb4 Kg6 75.Kxa4 Kxh6 76.Kb5 White wins **73.Kb1 Ke3 74.Kc2 Kf4 75.Kc3 Kg5 76.Kb4 Kxh6 77.Kxa4 Kg5 78.Kb5 h5 79.a4** Black promotes one tempo earlier and stops the White pawn.

The crucial point is that if Black captures the a3 pawn, then the White king is given a shortcut to Black's a4 pawn via a2 in two moves instead of the long way round via c3 and b4 in three moves. In an endgame, a tempo can make all the difference. White gains a move to advance and promote the h-pawn. Black should have been counting tempi rather than material. In fact, in the diagram, remove the a3 pawn and White still draws a pawn down. A common error and one which the diligent student of the game should have been able to figure out. There may be many more such gems yet to be recovered from the past.

Reverting to the classic lunch at the Fleece (or should that be the Golden Fleece), Mike Truran, who studied languages at Oxford, vouchsafed to me a line from the Aeneid: *forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*. Classical scholars still [debate](#) the precise translation, but one interpretation is: “Someday, perhaps, it will help to remember those troubles as well.” The positive take on this aphorism is that, far from forgetting unpleasant experiences, we should instead wait and integrate them into our personal experience when we are ready. There will come a point when we confront adversity and feel more complete for doing so. The more I review my historical games collection, the more I understand the narrative of my life.

Photo credits: Sophie Triay (Mike Truran); Linda Nylind (Stephen Moss); Brendan O’Gorman (Robin Haldane)

Alex and Sarah Longson report on the success of English Juniors



Alex Longson reports ...

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

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



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

In the World Cadets Rapid and Blitz there were a further ten medals. Bodhana Sivanandan - Gold, Girls U8 Blitz and Girls U8 Rapid; Zoe Veselow - Bronze, Girls U8 Blitz and Girls U8 Rapid; Kushal Jakhria - Gold, Open U8 and Bronze, Open U8; Eugenia Karas - Gold, Girls U14 Rapid and Bronze, Girls U14 Blitz; Kai Hanache - Silver, Open U10; and Oleg Verbytski - Bronze, Open U10.

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

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



Bodhana Sivanandan

Games

Editor's note: if you want to play through the games online you can go to <https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO> and select each game by clicking on a 'chapter'

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

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

Rhodes 2022

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

5...Bxd4 6.Nxd4 Nxd4 7.f4 d6 8.fxe5 dxe5 9.Bg5 Qe7 The main response, preparing to castle queenside and also creating some possible ...Qc5 tactics.

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

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

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

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

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

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

14.Rc1



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

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

16...Nxe4 Perhaps a bit premature.

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

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

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

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

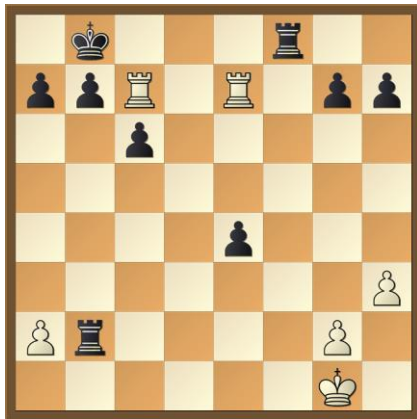
22...e4 23.Rd1 White decides to go active immediately.

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

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

24.b3 was a better option.

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



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

0-1

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

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

See the game at <https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/rSzhbNhs>

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



This loss meant Kushal (above) surrendered his lead to Velislav Zahariev. It was another English player who helped the cause by defeating Zahariev in round 8. See the game at <https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/mLcTHfwL>

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

Zoe amassed an impressive 8.5 / 9 points on the way to her gold medal in the U9 Girls section, but there were some tough games along the way including a long endgame grind against fellow ECF Academy student Amelie Bryant and the following round 5 clash versus the top Italian seed Clio Alessi. See the game at <https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/BSsPhyiv>

In round 8 Zoe survived a real scare before turning the game around and showing superior endgame technique to defeat her opponent. See the game at <https://lichess.org/study/Ulem10tO/fnUewjd3>

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

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



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

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

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

U11 European School Championship

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

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

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

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

7.c4 Preparing to castle.

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

8.Bf4 8.Nc3 cxd4 9.Qxd4

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

9...Bc8 Black misses a chance.



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

10.Bg5! Qe6 Too late!

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

0–1

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

“I could not have hand-picked a better set of parents and players for the European Schools or World Youth tournaments. Each set of players was focused, dedicated, kept hydrated

in warm conditions and of course got plenty of rest for the next day’s preparation and games. All their hard work paid off as we managed to win a few medals! Win lose or draw, every player had a great time, and they will all become better players for the experience.”

Final comments from Sarah Longson, Head of the ECF Academy

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

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

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

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

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

Yorkshire Chess – a report from Steve Westmoreland on the camaraderie amongst a blend of juniors and seniors

Defeat was in the air as the packed car pulled away from Syston. The car was not silent though; that would have been impossible with a 12-year-old boy (Jacob) in it. Also Sean, who was claiming he could have won his game in the remaining two minutes left on the clock after burning up all his time and still in the middle game. Dan and I were chortling. Friendship and camaraderie are among the reasons why I do county chess and volunteered to captain the Yorkshire U1450s and stand in for the Open team on the day. The U1450s were young, with seven at 18 years or under. It would have been eight, but Awen (aged 12) pulled out due to a stomach bug and I was fortunate to get the veteran Dan Czerniuch in the squad. Many of us turned up wearing smart Yorkshire County Chess polo shirts; something which I arranged believing it would help team spirit and pride in playing for our county.



Okay, this was not on the day, but a good picture of Jacob in the Yorkshire shirt winning a trophy

Pride is important and something that I have noticed this season, especially when standing in as captain of the U1650s (very busy season!). My home club of Holmfirth has had a number of post-pandemic new players. They want to play and help coach kids.

One of our local players, Drew, debuted in the U1650s at Bury against Lancashire. His nephews were calling him and giving advice. His wife and kids were proud and so was he. The chance to represent Yorkshire was a huge source of pride. The new post-lockdown players and juniors needed no encouragement to come and play. It was and is fantastic to see. It also made it an easy decision to promote juniors and new players, especially with the pandemic putting off many experienced players. At Holmfirth we had deliberately pushed the most talented kids (around 12 years old) into the adult teams. Quick games were turning into long games, with gradings coming in at 1300-1400.

Awen and Jacob were picked. York contacted me via Dave Smith and Peter Cloudsdale, with Max Wrigley and Bertie Leatham joining the team. Angelica Rowe joined us from Alwoodley. Sean Keddie (Holmfirth) and

Amelia Fretwell (Huddersfield) came in as very strong 18-year-olds. Hull and Beverley added Luke and McKenzie, with Aditya (Alwoodley) playing before exam prep interrupted the games.

Around these juniors we had experienced adults, with the irrepressible Steve Collins, Brendan Briggs, Gaz Taylor, Dan Czerniuch and Danny Dhunna. Two of the dads acted as reserves, with Olaf winning his one game for the county against Lancashire. If the dads play chess, you have reserves on the day!



The U1450s beat Lancashire and progressed to face Essex at Syston in the quarter-finals. It was a packed room alongside the Open team who beat Middlesex 13-3. I was hovering nervously along with the excellent Malcolm Crane as the results came in. Alas, we lost 4-8 but there was a lot to take away.



All the juniors walked away smiling. Max at the age of 8 and Jacob aged 12 played for around four hours, making their opponents sweat. Sean for the third county match in a row burned all his time away without hitting middle game and still took away points.

Will I pick juniors again? Absolutely, and I have written to all coaches and clubs to request they play their juniors in standard play. We will be back next season, and stronger. As for myself, I am re-joining the 1850s as a player. See you over the board.

It is great to have the county season back.

England Triple World Champions by Keith Arkell and Nigel Povah

The World Senior Team Chess Championships (WSTCC) were held in Acqui Terme in Italy from 19-30 June and this year we decided, after nearly two years of little or no over the board chess, to really give it a go.

In 2014 FIDE began to recognise two categories of senior chess: 65+ and 50+. Until then the single category was 60+. We were very fortunate to be able to persuade Mickey Adams and Nigel Short to lead our 50+ first team and similarly to persuade John Nunn and Paul Littlewood to head up our 65+ first team, ensuring we would be competitive in both sections, with four past and present British Champions at the helm! Indeed Mickey, who made his debut in senior chess, became the highest-rated player to have ever played at this level.

England had a strong contingent of 34 players, the largest delegation of all, and this enabled us to field seven teams: five in the 50+ age group including our Women's team, and two in the 65+ age group.

The 50+ section

Keith Arkell had been privileged to be selected for England's 50+ first team on all eight occasions, sampling the chess on all four boards; so it's fair to say he had a good inside perspective on our journey - one which has seen the team come agonisingly close to winning the gold medal numerous times.

2022 was by no means the first time England had been seeded number 1, but we had never sent such a strong team to the World Championship, largely because we were able to field England's two greatest-ever players - Mickey Adams and Nigel Short. Yes, surprisingly Mickey is now a senior! To complete the team we had Mark Hebden, who is enjoying his best year for some time, team captain John Emms, who plays at a consistently high level, and Keith Arkell, now back to full strength after a couple of years in the doldrums of probable long Covid. The team spirit was positive and we were all eager to play, so John had a free hand to select four players from five each round.

From the competitive viewpoint there were two factors to consider - match points as a priority and, as a tiebreak, winning by the biggest margin possible.

The event had strength in depth, and we expected tough challenges from Hungary, Italy, Iceland, Georgia and particularly the second seeded team, the USA.

We began with a 4-0 drubbing of the team from Oslo followed by a 3½-½ victory vs England 2, with Glenn Flear doing his team proud by holding Mickey with Black.

Then in round 3 we would face our first stern test. The team from Iceland consisted of the same players as their successful Olympiad side of days gone by. The last time we played them, three years ago, we didn't have the luxury of Mickey and Nigel on the top two boards, but

Keith Arkell managed to bring home the bacon in a tactical skirmish v ex-Candidate Hjartarson. This time the mathematician in Keith understood that when you are facing a team of four equally strong GMs, and you are two GMs and two Super GMs, the job of the two GMs is to neutralise boards 3 and 4. For Keith it was therefore sensible to draw quickly with White vs Jon Arnason. Mark held Petursson on board 3, leaving Nigel and Mickey to complete the job, which they duly did. Adams obtained a powerful passed pawn vs Olafsson, finally breaking through in a queen ending, while Short was brutal vs Hjartarson

Notes by Richard Palliser - reproduced with the kind permission of CHESS Magazine.

Short, N (2617) - Hjartarson, J (2472) [B06]
World Senior Teams 50+ Acqui Terme ITA (3.1), 22.06.2022

1. e4 g6 Short's set-up against the Modern is reminiscent of one of his most famous games: 1... Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. Nf3 g6 5. Bc4 Nb6 6. Bb3 Bg7 7. Qe2 Nc6 8. O-O O-O 9. h3 saw White setting up in similar vein in Short-Timman, Tilburg 1991.

2. d4 Bg7 3. Nf3 d6 4. Bc4 Nf6 5. Qe2 O-O 6. e5



One of the key points behind White's approach, aiming to stifle Black's fianchettoed

bishop and counterplay with the bridgehead on e5.

6...dxe5 7. dxe5 Nd5 8. h3 Be6 9. O-O Nd7 10. Re1 c6 11. a4



Maintaining control. Black's set-up is very solid, but also slightly on the passive side.

11... Qc7 12. Bd2 a5 13. Na3 b6

Rather slow and 13... Nc5 14. b3 Rad8 restricted White to an edge in V.Gurevich-Lai, German Bundesliga 2019.

14. c3 Rad8 15. Nc2 Threatening Ncd4. Black now finds himself facing a choice of evils, with 15... Nc5 16. Ncd4 Bc8 17. b4 Ne6 18. bxa5 bxa5 19. Qe4 also rather unpleasant for him with Qh4 on the way.

15... c5 16. Na3 Qc8 17. Qe4 The same plan as in the previous note. With White controlling the queenside, Black is devoid of counterplay and so vulnerable to a kingside attack.

17... Nc7 18. Bg5 Rfe8 19. Qh4 Bf8 Ugly and the similar 19... Bxc4 20. Nxc4 Bf8 was the lesser evil.

20. Bh6 Straightforward play, but 20. Nb5 would have been very strong, intending to cause chaos on e6, whether with an exchange

there or Bxc4 21. Nxc7 Qxc7 22. Qxc4 when e5-e6 will follow, and if Nb8 23. e6 f6 24. Bxf6.

20... Bxh6 21. Qxh6 Nf8 22. Qh4



Reminding Black that e7 might easily become weak. Observe how Short isn't in a rush, being content to slowly improve his pieces while keeping Black bottled up.

22... Kg7 23. Ng5 Bxc4 24. Nxc4 h6 25. Nf3 Nd5 26. Rad1 Qc6 Allowing White to break through, but 26... Ne6 27. Qe4 Qc6 28. Ne3 Nec7 29. e6 also would have done, and, if 29... Qxe6 30. Qxe6 fxe6 31. Nc4 Rb8, 32. Nce5 with superb compensation for the pawn. As such, perhaps 26... Qe6 was best, if still clearly better for White after 27. Rd2 Rd7 28. Qe4 Red8 29. h4.

27. e6 fxe6 Hjartarson has largely defended his sub-optimal position well, but now collapses. He was no doubt concerned about 27... Nxe6 28. Nce5 Qc7 29. Nxc6, but better this, then 29... Kxc6 30. Rxd5 Rxd5 31. Qe4+ Kg7 32. Qxd5 or even 27... f5 28. Qg3 Qxa4 29. Nxb6 Nxb6 30. Rxd8 Rxd8 31. Qc7 Qe8 32. Qxb6, than the game.

28. Nfe5 Qxa4 29. Nf7!



A silent sacrifice and one which the six-time Icelandic Champion had clearly overlooked.

29... g5 Of course, if 29... Kxf7 30. Ne5+ wins the queen and in any case there isn't a defence.

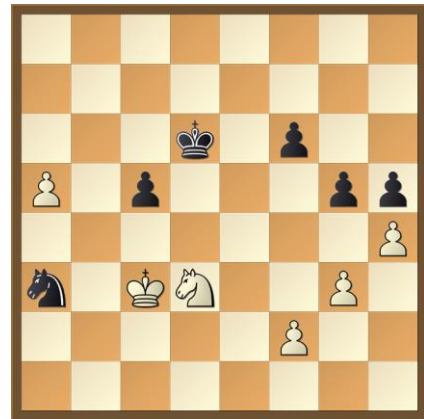
30. Qxh6+ Kxf7 31. Ne5+ Kg8 32. Qxg5+ Kh7 Likewise, 32... Kh8 33. Qh5+ Nh7 34. Rd3 is devastating.

33.Qh5+ Kg7 34. Rd3 1-0

In the crucial match versus the USA, Mark Hebden missed the moment to steer his game to a draw, and, in the end, it required exquisite endgame technique from Michael Adams to break the resistance of Gregory Kaidanov and salvage a drawn match, enabling England to maintain the lead on game points:

Notes by Richard Palliser - reproduced with the kind permission of CHESS Magazine.

Adams, M (2690) - Kaidanov,G (2557) [C50]
World Senior Teams 50+ Acqui Terme ITA (4.1),
23.06.2022



Black has just advanced his g-pawn from g6 to deal with the threat of Nf4. Those familiar with the work of Tim Krabbé or the recent articles in CHESS magazine by James Plaskett and Jose Vilela will no doubt now be wondering about 59. g4, but after gxh4 60. gxh5 Nb5+ 61. Kd2 h3 62. f4 h2 63. Nf2 Ke6 Black is in time to draw. As such, Adams prefers another advance...

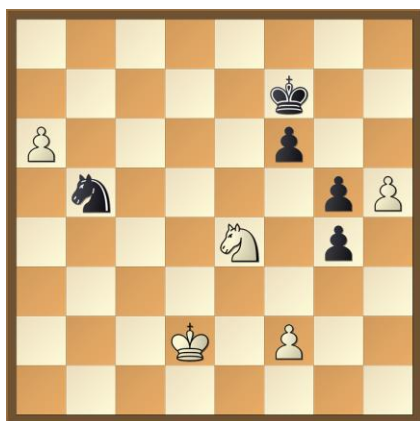
59. a6

59... Kd5? ...and is immediately rewarded. 59... Kc6 was correct when even 60. Ne5+ fxe5 61. hxg5 Nb5+ leads to a draw after 62. Kb3 (and not 62. Kd3 Kd5 63. g6 c4+ 64. Ke3 Ke6) 62... Kb6 63. g6 Nd4+ 64. Kc4 Nf5 65. a7 Kxa7 66. Kxc5 Kb7 67. Kd5 Ne7+ or 59... Nb5+ 60. Kc4 Kc6).

60. g4! Now it works since the black king is outside the square of the a-pawn.

60... Nb5+ 61. Kd2 hxg4 61... gxh4 62. gxh5 h3 and here even 62... Ke6 63. Nf4+ Kf7 64. Kd3 is an easy win for White. 63. Nf4+ reveals Black's main problem.

62. h5 Ke6 63. Nxc5+ Kf7 64. Ne4



64... Kg7 The knight also finds a way to defend the h-pawn after 64... f5 65. Nxf5+ Kg7 66. Ne6+ Kh6 67. Nf4 when Kg5 68. Kd3 wins.

65. Kd3 Na7 66. Ng3 Nc8 67. Nf5+ 1-0

Excellent wins with Black for Mark Hebden and Mickey Adams steered us towards a 3-1 win against Hungary in round 5. Keith even stood slightly worse with White by the time he repeated moves, but the only two half-points he dropped in this competition were against the best individual performers from Iceland and Hungary, so he was happy enough that he was doing his bit for the team.

An off day for Nigel left Mark and Mickey needing their best efforts to edge out a tricky Italian team in Round 6, but then we increased our tiebreak lead to 1½ game points over the USA by winning 3½-½ vs the team from the Netherlands.

Round 8 was very important for deciding the final standings. England were up against the third seeded Georgia while the USA faced Hungary. The Magyars pulled off a 2-2 draw despite defaulting board 4! This meant that if we could beat Georgia we would need only a draw against a significantly weaker team in the last round to win the whole thing. John over-pressed in an unclear endgame and Nigel drew. To win the match Keith needed to beat GM Nona Gaprindashvili, (who was World

Champion when Keith was just 12 months old) with Black, and Mickey would have to defeat Keith's perennial rival on the senior tour, Zurab Sturua.

In the end Keith won a scrappy game during which Nona and he both missed things, but at this stage of a competition all that matters is the result! The scene was set for Mickey Adams.

Notes by Richard Palliser - reproduced with the kind permission of CHESS Magazine.

Adams,M (2690) - Sturua,Z (2530) [C42] World Senior Teams 50+ Acqui Terme ITA (8.2), 28.06.2022

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. Nc3 Nxc3 6. dxc3 Be7 7. Be3



An aggressive set-up against the Petroff, not least when Black opts to castle kingside.

7...Nd7 8. Qd2 O-O 9. O-O-O c6 10. Kb1 d5 11. h4 Adams wastes no time in launching his attack.

11... Nf6 12. Bd3 Bg4 13. Rde1



A new idea, placing the rook on the open file while unpinning the knight.

13... c5 14. Ng5 b5 A tempting advance, but it's not so easy to get at the white king with that extra queenside pawn on c3. As such, Black should probably have stayed calm with 14... Bd6 15. f3 Bd7 16. g4 Qc7, and if 17. h5 Rae8 18. h6 g6, threatening to break through with ...d4.

15. f3 Bd7 16. g4 Rc8 17. Bf4



17. h5 d4 was presumably Black's idea, but after 18. cxd4 c4 19. h6 g6 (19... cxd3 20. hxg7 dxc2+ 21. Kc1 Kxg7 22. d5 wins) 20. Be4 c3 21. Qd3 cxb2 22. d5 White's king is safe enough and he should be doing pretty well. Instead, in classic fashion, Adams calmly improves a piece while preparing to target h7 after Be5.

17... Re8? The decisive mistake. Black needed to find 17... c4. 18. Be5 h6 (18... cxd3 19. Qxd3 g6 20. h5 is simply far too strong an attack, followed by Nxh7 or Be8 21. f4),

although even after 19. Bf5 Bxf5 20. gxf5 Bc5 21. Qg2 he would have remained under heavy pressure.

18. Be5 h6 19. Qf4



More simple and very strong chess, keeping the queen in touch with h2 while threatening 20 Bh7+! Alternatively, 19. Nxf7 Kxf7 20. g5 would also have been pretty strong.

19... Qb6 Black had nothing better than to allow the threat as if 19... hxg5 \$2 20. hxg5 followed by Qh2.

20. Bh7+ Kf8 Naturally not 20... Nxh7 21. Qxf7+ Kh8 22. Qxg7# and 20... Kh8 21. Bf5 Bxf5 22. Nxf7+ Kg8 23. Nxh6+ gxh6 24. Qxf5 Nh7 25. g5 h5 26. Bf4 would also have been a massacre.

21. Bf5 Once again, a very good case might also be made for 21. Nxf7 Kxf7 22. g5

21... Bxf5 22. Qxf5 g6 There's still no time for 22... hxg5 23. hxg5, and if g6 24. Qf4 Ng8 25. Bg7+ Kxg7 26. Rh7+ Kxh7 27. Qxf7+.

23. Qf4 Kg8 24. b3!



Yet more vintage Adams, making a useful prophylactic move, while giving Black every chance to go wrong. The text is strong, although the engines are undoubtedly right that so too would have been 24. Nxf7 Kxf7 25. h5.

24... Rc6 (24... Qc6 25. Re2 would have maintained the pressure, but now even Adams is content to strike.

25. h5 hxg5 (25... gxh5 fails to 26.gxh5 hxg5 27. Qxg5+ Kh7 28. Bxf6 Rxf6 (or 28... Bxf6 29. Qf5+ Kh6 30. Rxe8) 29. Reg1.

26. Qxg5 Nxh5 Hopeless, but so would have been 26... Nh7 27.hxg6 Rxg6 28. Qh5.

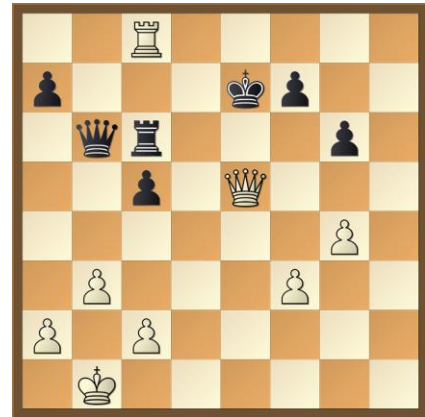
27. Qh6 Bf6 28. Bxf6 Rxe1+ 29. Rxe1 Nxf6 30. Rh1 The open h-file remains decisive.

30... Nh7 31. Qxh7+ Kf8 32. Qh6+ Ke8 33. Qg5! Maintaining the pressure and threatening to round up the d-pawn.

33...Rd6 There's no respite for the exposed black king and now 33... d4 34. Re1+ Re6 35. Rxe6+ Qxe6 36. cxd4 cxd4 37. Qxb5+ would also be an easy win.

34.Qe5+ Re6 35. Rh8+ Ke7 36. Qg5+ Rf6 37. Qxd5 b4 38. Rc8 bxc3 39. Qe5+ Re6 40. Qxc3 We see the point of Adams' 24.b3, as White goes a safe pawn up and still has all the threats.

40... Rc6 41. Qe5+ The c5 pawn drops and Black's position is hopeless.



Keith had to excuse himself for the last round, because the rather large styte under his left eye was playing up, but he had faith in his teammates to carry us over the line against a Canadian side rated about 300 points less than us on each board. Adams won by default on board 1 against former England Glorney Cup player, David Cummings, and we cruised to a 3½-½ win.

In the end, it's fair to say that we thoroughly dominated the event. A record four of the team gained individual gold medals for the best performance on our respective boards - Mickey Adams, Nigel Short, Mark Hebden and Keith Arkell, with Mickey and Keith remaining undefeated.

On behalf of the team, Keith would like to conclude by thanking the organisers of the event, the selectors for their wisdom in bringing together a nicely balanced team, captain John Emms for conducting a potentially difficult job exceptionally well, and Nigel Povah who did so much to help assemble such a strong team.



England Women 50+

England Women also won the Women's World Over 50 Championship. England's Women's team was headed up by WGM Sheila Jackson and achieved some notable successes in the Open competition against Norway and Poland in particular.

In round 4 they met the powerful Icelandic team, comprising four grandmasters, and although they went down 4-0 they weren't without chances, as the following encounter on board one shows.

Jackson,S (2072) - Hjartarson,J (2472)
 World Senior Team 50+ Championship, Acqui Terme (4.1), 23.06.2022 [Notes by Nigel Povah]



In this position GM Johann Hjartarson stands slightly better but here he blundered with 18...Rad8? (18...Be6! =/+ was best) and Sheila failed to spot her opportunity to get the advantage against her GM opponent who was rated 400 points above her,

playing 19.Rd1?!, and after the subsequent exchange of rooks on the d-file Black went on to win. Instead Sheila could have played 19.Nxg7! Kxg7 20.Qxf6+! Kxf6 21.Nd5+ Kg7 22.Nxc7+/- when White has won a pawn and clearly stands better.



Natasha Regan, Ingrid Lauterbach, Petra Nunn and Sheila Jackson

The 65+ section

As already mentioned, England 65+ 1 was led superbly by John Nunn, who was making his over-65 debut and did so in spectacular style, scoring an undefeated 6½/7 with a performance rating of 2719.

England 1 started off with a 2½-1½ victory over England 2, after Tony Stebbings slipped up in an unbalanced but level position against Kevin Bowmer, who didn't hesitate to pounce. In round 2 England 1 had a convincing 3½-½ win over a German team, S.C. Kreuzberg, with Paul Littlewood having a good win on board 2.

Littlewood, Paul E (2342) - Simon, Ralf-Axel (2115) [B95]

World Senior Team 65+ Championship, Acqui Terme (2.2), 21.06.2022 [Notes by Paul Littlewood]



I had managed to build up a very dominant position and now my opponent makes a fatal error, moving the wrong rook to

20.Qg3 d8 **20...Rad8??** 20...Rfd8 prevents the 21.N4f5 tactic, as Black has 21...exf5 22.Nxf5 Qf8,.However, White is still well on top after 21.Nxc6 bxc6 22.Rc3+- with a clear advantage, as the c-pawn will drop.

21.N4f5! Black will end up losing his queen or allowing mate on g7

1-0

In round 3 we met Germany 2, who proved to be stronger than their ratings suggested, and we were held to a 2-2 draw, with all four games being drawn. Then, in round 4 we faced Germany 1, the third seeds, just behind ourselves and we had a convincing win by the score 3½-½.

John Nunn won an important game on board one against the strong German GM Rainer Knaak.

Knaak, Rainer (2479) - Nunn, John D M (2568) [E73]

World Senior Team 65+ Championship, Acqui Terme (4.1), 23.06.2022 [Notes by John Nunn]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Be3 A rather unusual system which aims to gain space on the kingside before developing the knight on g1.

6...e5 6...c5 is an alternative line.

7.d5 a5?! The most commonly played move, but possibly inaccurate since White can now chase away the knight from f6 without having to spend a move defending the e4-pawn. 7...Na6 8.g4 Nc5 is better, since now White must spend a tempo on 9.f3 or 9.Bf3.

8.g4 Na6 9.g5 Nd7 10.h4 This position should be good for White, since he has already made substantial progress on the kingside while Black lacks immediate counter-play.

10...f5 11.gxf6 Nxf6 12.h5 Nc5 12...gxh5 13.Bxh5 Nc5 14.f3 Nxf6 15.Rxf6 also favours White, since he has an obvious plan of Qd2, 0-0-0 and switching the queen and d1-rook to the kingside.

13.hxg6 hxg6 I thought about 13...Nfxe4 but after 14.Nxe4 Nxe4 15.gxh7+ Kh8 16.Nf3, with Nh4 to come, Black's position looks very unattractive.

14.Bf3 By now I was regretting not thinking longer about my seventh move, since it is clear that Black doesn't have a great deal of counter-play.

14...Kf7: an innovation, and probably a good chance, aiming to gain control of the h-file before White can complete his development.

15.Nh3 Bxh3 Black's good bishop disappears, but the knight cannot be allowed to land on g5.

16.Rxh3 Qd7 16...Rh8 is less risky, since now 17.Rxh8 (17.Rg3? Bh6 is fine for Black) 17...Qxh8 18.Ke2 Bh6 19.Bxc5 dxc5 20.Qb3 b6 21.Rh1 Kg7 gives White only a modest advantage.

17.Rg3 Rh8 18.Qd2 Rh3 This was the idea behind my 16th move, but there is a flaw.

19.0-0-0 19.Bg4! is obviously critical; then grabbing material by 19...Rxf3, so I intended to play 19...Qxg4 20.Rxg4 Nxf4 21.0-0-0 Rxf3 22.Rg1 Nxe3 23.fxe3 Bf6 when Black has chances to set up a fortress despite White's material advantage. 20.Bxd7 Rg1+ 21.Ke2 Rxa1 22.Be6+ Nxe6 23.dxe6+ Kxe6 24.c5! gives White too strong an attack.

19...Rxf3 20.fxf3 Rh8 White may still have an edge but Black has survived the most dangerous moment; note that if Black manages to play ...Bh6 he will be completely safe

21.Kb1 b6 22.Rf1 Kg8 23.Bg5 Qh3!?



Suddenly Black becomes ambitious 23...Nh7 24.Be3 Nf6 would have led to a repetition.

24.Qf2?! I had to calculate 24.Bg2 carefully, since it temporarily wins a piece, but Black has a choice between the drawish 24...Nfxe4 (or the sharper 24...Qxg3!?) 25.Bxf6 Rh2 26.Qg5 Qxg2 27.Qxg2 Rxg2 28.Bd8 Na6 which gives Black chances to play for a win). 25.Nxe4 Nxe4

26.Qc2 Qxg3 27.Bxe4 Qxg5 28.Bxg6 Rh4; 24.Qe1! was the best chance, with perhaps still a slight edge for White.

24...Nd3 25.Qg1 25.Qe2 Qxg3 and; 25.Qg2 Qxg2 26.Bxg2 Rh2 are just bad, so this is forced.

25...Ng4!? Again playing to win; 25...Qh2 is dead equal.

26.Bxg4 26.Be2 Nh2 27.Bxd3 Nxf1 28.Bxf1 Qh1 29.Be3 Rh2 is unclear.

26...Qxg4 27.Qe3 Nc5?! Time shortage starts to play a part; objectively speaking, this is going a bit too far with Black's winning attempts 27...Rh3 28.Qxd3 Qxg5 29.Rg1 Bh6 30.Nb5 is level.

28.Bh4?! 28.Qf2! Qd7 29.Be3 gives White some advantage.

28...Rh5 Threatening ...g5.

29.Bd8 Qd7 30.Bg5? Now it all goes wrong for White, since Black is not obliged to repeat moves: 30.Bh4 would have maintained the balance.

30...Qh3! driving the rook away from its active position on the open f-file.

31.Re1 Qg4 White is in serious trouble since he no longer has the possibility of doubling on the f-file.

32.Bd8 Bh6 33.Qe2 Qxg3 34.Bxc7? loses at once, but even 34.Qd1 Be3 35.Bxc7 Nd3 gives Black a large advantage.

34...Rh2 35.Qd1 Rd2

0-1

Nigel Povah also managed to register an important win in the following interesting game.

Kiefer, Gerhard (2212) - Povah, N (2201) [B15], World Senior Team 65+ Championship, Acqui Terme (4.3), 22.06.2022 [Notes by Nigel Povah]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 0-0 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5 A currently fashionable line in the Classical Caro-Kann. Black saves his h-pawn but plays aggressively, with the option of using 'Harry' as a weapon.

10.Bd2 This move surprised me, as I was expecting the main line move 10.Be3, which he had played before in at least two games. So I spent a few minutes trying to determine how this might be different in the lines I had been examining. For example, it would rule out the ...Rxe3 possibilities and might allow him to play c4 and Bc3. In any event I decided to continue as planned.

10...Nd7 11.0-0-0 b5 11...Nf8 is the main move after 10.Be3 and it is here too, but I chose to play more directly.

12.Kb1 12.d5!? is the recommended move against 10.Be3 but here it is less effective: 12...c5 13.Bxb5 Rb8 when the best move 14.c4 is not available due to ...Rxe2 14.Bd3 Ne5=/+; 12.Ng3! Nb6 13.Rde1 favours White.

12...Nb6= 13.Bf4?! This came as a real surprise, as it now means that Bd2 and Be3 are no different and it allows me to win two pieces for a rook.

13...Be6-/+ I spent some time looking at the 13...Rxe2 line and also 13...Nd5 but then thought it made more sense to continue developing and to follow my plan of attacking on the light squares. Stockfish prefers 13...Rxe2 14.Qxe2 Bxf4 15.Qxh5 Bh6-+ but I

didn't like 16.g3 with f4 to follow and my bishop is shut out of the game: 16...Be6 17.f4 Qd7; 13...Nd5 14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.Ng3 Nf4-/+ is also good.

14.Bxd6 Qxd6 15.Ng3?-+ This misplaces the knight and ignores the growing threats against his queenside. 15.g3-/+

15...Qd5 16.b3 a5 The thematic advance, threatening to soften up his light squares with ...a4.

17.Nf1. He decides his Ng3 isn't doing much, so chooses to re-route it to e3 17.Ne4 a4-+.

17...a4! Sticking to my plan and intending to grab the g-pawn, as tactics rule out his Be4.

18.b4 Qxg2-+ Stockfish now gives this as -4.

19.Ne3 Not 19.Be4? Qxe4! 20.Qxe4 Bxa2+ 21.Kxa2 Rxe4-+.

19...Qf3 20.Rhg1 h4 Harry does a useful job of preventing Rg3.

21.Ka1? White tries to tee up the Be4 threat but this runs into another tactic.

21...Bb3! Now it's -5.

22.Qd2 Clearly not 22.axb3 axb3-+-.

22...Bxd1 23.Nf5! This came as a bit of a surprise, as he goes on the counter-attack and I now have to be very careful to avoid getting caught in a mating net.

23...Kf8! By far the best way of dealing with his threats. 23...Qg4?? looks like a way of avoiding trouble and keeping the advantage but it loses to the clever and unobvious 24.Nh6+!! (24.Rxg4? Bxg4-+) 24...gxh6 25.Qxh6! with mate to follow on f7 due to Bh7+ etc.

24.Rxd1

After a long think he rejects the captures on g7. I was expecting 24.Rxg7 when I had seen two reasonable continuations, including one which involved a mate in 8! 24...Bc2! I particularly liked this clever move which is Stockfish's second choice at -4 (24...Qh5!: this move, which prevents White's two threats of Qh6 and Rh7 was the more obvious move and is best, with Stockfish giving it -5.6 but I was less keen because of 25.Qf4! Rad8 26.Qc7 but now again we have the clever 26...Bc2!+ 27.Bxc2 (27.Qxb6 Qd1+ 28.Kb2 Qb1+ 29.Ka3 Qc1#) 27...Re1+ 28.Bb1 (28.Kb2 Nc4#) 28...Rxb1+ 29.Kxb1 Qd1+ 30.Kb2 Nc4#); (24...Qxf5? 25.Bxf5 Kxg7 26.Qxd1+/=) 25.Rh7 when I'm pleased I saw a mate in 8! (25.Rg1 best: 25...Re6 26.Qh6+ Ke8-+ and White is in big trouble: 25.Bxc2 Qh1+ 26.Bb1 Re1 27.Qd3 Nd5 28.Rh7 Ke8 29.Rh8+ Kd7 30.Rxa8 Nxc3-+; 25.Qxc2 Re1+ 26.Kb2 Nc4+ 27.Bxc4 a3+ 28.Kb3 bxc4+ 29.Kxc4 Qd5+ 30.Kd3 Qxf5+ 31.Kc4 Qb5+ 32.Kb3 Qd5+ 33.c4 Qf3+ 34.Qc3 Rb1+ 35.Kc2 Qd1#) 25...Qh1+ 26.Kb2 Qb1+ 27.Ka3 Qb3+! 28.axb3 axb3+ 29.Kb2 Ra2+ 30.Kc1 Ra1+ 31.Kb2 Rb1+ 32.Ka3 Ra8#.

24...g5! Defending h4 and ruling out Qh6.

25.Ne3 Rad8 26.Bf1 Qf4 27.Bg2 Nd5 28.Bxd5 Rxd5! I wanted to keep my queenside pawn structure intact and I knew the rook and pawn ending would be an easy win.

29.Nxd5?! Although this wins material, it makes the finish very easy for Black.

29...Qxd2 30.Rxd2 cxd5 31.Kb2 Re1 32.h3 Ke7

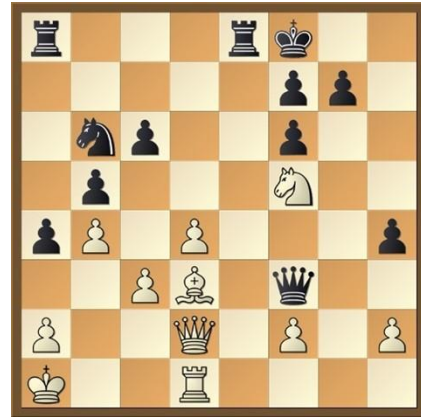
33.Ka3 He was clearly hoping to engineer a stalemate:

33...f5 34.c4 dxc4 35.f4 Re3+ Ruling out any stalemate hopes and, more importantly,

winning his rook with ...c3+ next, so he resigned.

0-1

Meanwhile Paul Littlewood had an exciting and somewhat fortunate finish to his game.



Littlewood, Paul E (2342) - Chevelevitch, Evgueni (2369) [E92]

World Senior Team 65+ Championship, Acqui Terme (4.2), 23.06.2022 [Notes by Paul Littlewood]



46.dxc6 We reach an interesting position where I have just captured on c6 and now my opponent played the clever and critical

46...Qd1! 47.cxb7+ Be6. 47...Kg5 fails to 48.Rg6+, a key line clearance. 48...Kxg6 49.b8Q Qxf1+ when I'm saved by 50.Qg1 with a winning position.

48.Rxe6+ Kxe6 49.Qa6+ Kd7 50.Qb5+ Kd6?? Foolishly allowing me to promote with check. 50...Ke6! when Black has enough resources to draw, e.g. 51.c5 gxf3 52.g3 Rb8=.

51.b8Q+ It's all over, as after 51...Rxb8 52.Qxb8+, White will be able to bring his queen back via either Qa7/Qb6+ and then Qf2 or Qb5+ followed by c5.

1-0

In round 5 we faced another one of our key rivals and joint leaders, France, and we managed a close 2½-1½ victory, thanks to another win from John Nunn on board 1 and Tony Stebbings' opponent allowing a strong mating attack.

In round 6 we beat Israel 2 by 3-1 thanks to wins from John and Paul on the top two boards, with the latter's being a particularly crushing victory.

Littlewood,P (2342) - Peretz,M (2139) [B30]
World Senior Team 65+ Championship, Acqui Terme (6.2), 26.06.2022 [Notes by Paul Littlewood]

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nf6 A surprise. I had prepared for 2...Nc6. Bearing that in mind I chose not to play the sharpest response 3.e5.

3.Nc3 Nc6 4.Bb5 Nd4 5.e5 Nxb5 6.Nxb5 Nd5 The first critical position. Mark Hebden told me that he had played 7.Ng5! in a game in the 1980s and this was regarded as best. Instead, I chose a quieter line.

7.0-0 a6 8.Nc3 e6? And my opponent immediately makes a mistake. Best was 8...Nxc3 9.dxc3 d6 10.exd6 Qxd6 11.Qe2 when White is fractionally better because of his lead in development, although Black does have the bishop pair.

9.Nxd5 exd5 10.d4 d6? 10...c4 11.b3 b5 12.a4 Bb7 13.Ng5 h6 14.Nh3 Be7 15.axb5 axb5 16.Rxa8 Qxa8 17.f4+/- and although White isn't winning any material yet, he's in full control.

11.Bg5+-Black is in big trouble because the natural ...Be7 loses a pawn and he must now lose further time moving his queen.

11...Qb6 11...Be7? 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.dxc5 and the d5 pawn drops.

12.dxc5 Qxc5 13.Re1 Be6 14.Nd4 With tremendous pressure for White, so in desperation Black tries

14...Kd7



but then I had a strong finish with

15.b4! deflecting the black queen from the defence of e7.

15...Qc4 When White now invades the Black position. 15...Qc7 is well met by 16.c4! with a winning attack.

16.Nxe6 fxe6 17.Qf3 dxe5 18.Rxe5 Bd6 19.Qf7+ Kc6 20.Rxe6 Rhf8 21.Rxd6+ Kxd6 22.Be7+ 1-0

At the start of round 7, England 1 led on 11 match points, with Germany 1 on 10, Hungary on 9, Israel 1 on 8 and Switzerland on 8. We

were paired against a dangerous Hungary side, who had already defeated top seeds Israel 1 by 3½-½ and the useful Germany 2 by 2½-1½, so we knew this could be tricky if we weren't careful. Fortunately, once again John delivered a solid and impressive victory on board one, whilst Paul, Nigel and Ian all managed to draw, allowing us to win by 2½-1½.

In round 8 we were on 13 match points, still one match point ahead of Germany 1 and four match points ahead of third placed Switzerland, whom we were paired against. However, Covid intervened and three of the Swiss team had to default, but the Swiss proposed a one-board match against their healthy board one. We contested this, quoting the FIDE Olympiad regulations which state that it needs to be two boards to be valid and we tried to claim a 4-0 victory by default, but the chief arbiter and the Swiss captain argued that the top board game should be allowed to go ahead. After much discussion, John, who by this stage was quite distracted by the whole controversy of playing such a pointless match, not to mention the concern that his opponent had been mixing with team-mates who now had Covid, proposed that he would rather default board 1 and we be granted a 3-1 victory, with none of the results being rated, and this was finally agreed.

Meanwhile our main rivals, Germany 1, were paired with Germany 2 and much to our surprise and delight, Germany 2 showed themselves to be real fighters, just as we had found when we only managed a 2-2 draw with them, and they managed to beat Germany 1 by 2½-1½. So we became World Champions in round 8 without even moving a pawn!

Round 9 was obviously a bit of an anti-climax and we were paired against the top seeds, Israel 1, who had now climbed back up the leader board and stood to secure bronze if they could defeat us. John wanted a rest after

having had a very tough string of games and so for the first time we didn't field our top two. A tough match ensued in which we succumbed by 1½-2½.

The final top standings were -

1. England 1 15 match points (24 game points)
2. Germany 1 13 (20½)
3. Israel 1 12 (22½)
4. Germany 2 12 (21½)
5. France 12 (20½)
6. Hungary 11 (20½)

England 2 finished 13th (they were seeded 12th) with 8 match points and 19 game points, with Kevin Bowmer and Peter Wood being their best two performers.



John Nunn, Tony Stebbings, Nigel Povah, Ian Snape, Paul Littlewood

In conclusion, this was a most successful event for English chess. England last won a World team title in 1978, when we won the World U26 team championship title. and as Stewart Reuben said to me, he had been waiting for a long time for another such success and, a bit like London buses, not one came along but two and in this case three!

It is also worth noting that England is the first nation to have won both Seniors age groups simultaneously.

Thanks are also due to those who kindly made donations to help support our ambitions in this event. They include the ECF, the Chess Trust, the Friends of Chess and numerous individuals,

including many of the players, with specific thanks to Nigel Povah, Stewart Reuben, Nigel White, Natasha Regan and Chris Gant for their generous donations. A big 'thank you' to them all, as none of this would have been possible without their support.

Finally, we'd like to conclude by mentioning that we had stated on the Seniors page of the ECF website that the England teams were competing in Acqui Terme in memory of David Anderton, who had been a wonderful servant for English chess and we think we can all agree that we did him proud.

However, we would like to go further and dedicate this success to Stewart Reuben, who has undoubtedly made one of the largest contributions to the development of English chess for over 50 years and most recently seniors chess, where he is of course the architect of the English seniors chess scene. This is his last year in charge of English seniors chess and we're absolutely delighted that we have been able to give him this send-off.

Final scores for the English players were as follows -

England 50+ 1: 1. Mickey Adams (7/8); 2. Nigel Short (6½/9); 3. Mark Hebden (6½/8); 4. John Emms (3½/6); 5. Keith Arkell (4/5)

England 50+ 2: 1. Glenn Flear (5½/9); 2. Steve Dishman (2½/6); 3. Chris Duncan (3/8) 4. Russell Granat (5½/7) 5. Clive Frostick (3½/6)

England 50+ 3: 1. Chris Fegan (3/7); 2. Nigel White (3½/6); 3. Stephen Homer (3/7); 4. Edgar Wilson (3/6); 5. Bill Ingham (2/6)

England 50 + 4: 1. John Hickman (3/7); 2. Bob Kane (2/7); 3. Kevin Winter (2/5); 4. Rob Merriman (1/7); 5. Matthew Ball (2/6)

England 50+ Women: 1. Sheila Jackson (2½/8); 2. Ingrid Lauterbach (4½/8); 3. Natasha Regan (3/8); 4. Petra Nunn (3½/8)

England 65+ 1: 1. John Nunn (6½/7); 2. Paul Littlewood (6½/9); 3. Tony Stebbings (3½/6); 4. Nigel Povah (3/6); 5. Ian Snape (4½/7)

England 65+ 2: 1. Mark Page (4/8); 2. Geoff James (3½/8); 3. Kevin Bowmer (5/7); 4. Stewart Reuben (1/5); 5. Peter R. Wood (5½/8)

Board prizes

England players won seven of the 30 board prizes on offer. Mickey Adams, Nigel Short, Mark Hebden and Keith Arkell all won the gold medal board prizes for their boards in the 50+. In the 65+ section, John Nunn and Paul Littlewood both won the gold medal board prizes, whilst Ian Snape won the silver medal for board 5.

2021/2022 4NCL

Winning captain Zahed Miah reports on a successful season for Chess.com Manx Liberty

After serial champions Guildford 1 left the stage of premium 4NCL team chess for the 2021/2022 season and competed without several top UK grandmasters, it was clear that only Wood Green, Chessable White Rose 1 or Chess.com Manx Liberty could realistically win the event.

The Manx team still consists mostly of members who used to play in the Bundesliga for Trier, a mid-table team between 2006/2007 and 2016/2017. Unfortunately, the former chairman and pillar of SG Trier, Kurt Lellinger, passed away and the club collapsed due to a lack of funding and support. While the Trier chess club still exists, it is just a shadow of what it used to be.

As a consequence, Manx Liberty was established by International Master Dietmar Kolbus, a Manx resident and former Trier sponsor in 2016/2017 and entered Division 3 North. I also became a director of the Manx team.

The transition to move the team to the UK could not have been done without ongoing co-sponsor and Trier organizer Stefan Muellenbruck who ran a very successful campaign to finish SG Trier's last 2016/2017 season in the Bundesliga in style by winning all three matches.

During the same season, Manx Liberty under Dietmar Kolbus secured with other Trier members promotion to Division 2. It shows the exceptional spirit of all the team members to push both teams to success at the same time.

The Manx Liberty team moved to 4NCL Division 1 within two years and became the first challenger of serial 4NCL winner Guildford, but could never match the outstanding quality of Guildford across all games.

With the promotion of Manx Liberty to Division 1, Alan Ormsby and the Scheinberg Family joined the sponsorship team and the team was renamed Chess.com Manx Liberty.n 2021/22 Alexei Shirov joined the team on an occasional basis and was a ground-breaker this season with a flawless performance of 7/7 on board 1.

Julianna Terbe from Hungary played her first season as female player and finished the season undefeated and with important wins over Wood Green and Chessable White Rose. Constantin Lupulescu was another pillar of strength for the team and now celebrates five seasons of 4NCL chess undefeated on the team's top boards.

Matthew Turner became another addition this season and, while he is an experienced grandmaster, he has also helped the team relentlessly with organisational issues and with his driving services.

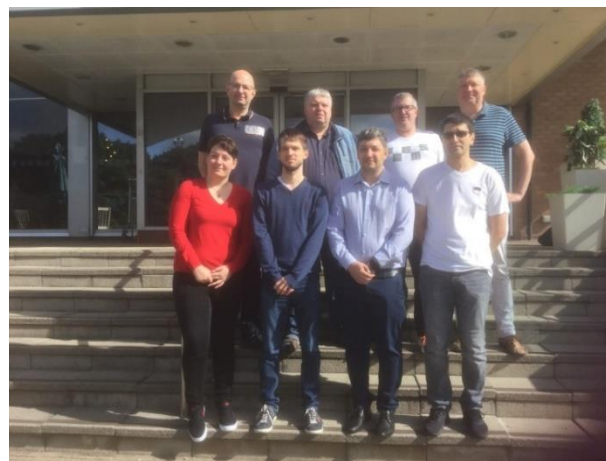
Balazs Csonka joined the team after an impressive performance at the Manx Liberty Masters which was held in September 2021 in Douglas, Isle of Man.

Manx resident Dietmar Kolbus finished the season with + 4 = 7, undefeated over all 11 games.

While some players are highlighted here, it would be unfair to ignore the contribution of all the other team members who have made the success of the season possible.

It is expected that Chess.com Manx Liberty will remain competitive during the season 2022/2023, but will expect to be challenged again by Wood Green, Chessable White Rose and other teams.

Chess.com Manx Liberty won both matches of the last weekend by 6.5-1.5 and finished the season as the new 4NCL champions.



Players at the last weekend included front left to right: Julianna Terbe, Balazs Csonka, Constantin Lupulescu, Mircea Parligras. Back left to right: Lukasz Cyborowski, Dietmar Kolbus, Matthew Turner, Alexei Shirov

Here is an important game annotated by the winner Constantin Lupulescu.

Lupulescu, Constantin (2627) - Fodor, Tamas Jr. (2526) [D30]
4NCL Main League 2022

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 In another hard-fought match against Cheddleton I had also faced Tamas with the white pieces in a game that finally ended in a draw. This time he chooses to go with his pet line which he has played in a multitude of games.

5.b3 White tries to take advantage of the move order by placing his bishop on b2 as fast as possible to put a dent in Black's normal e5 break. 5.Nc3 Nbd7 would transpose to normal Sem-Slav positions.

5...Ne4 Black is now trying to get to a Stonewall type of position. 5...Nbd7 6.Bd3 Bd6 7.Bb2 0-0 8.0-0 b6 There are many games starting from this position.

6.Bd3 Qa5+?! But now Black combines too many plans while still being underdeveloped. This queen sortie involves a strategic risk as he could end up losing quite some time. 6...f5 would have been the normal approach but probably Black didn't like 7.0-0 and, if 7...Bd6, White can play directly 8.Ba3, saving a tempo by not having played Bb2.

7.Nfd2!



White prepares to challenge the most advanced black piece on e4 by also preparing

f2-f3 if need be. 7.Bd2 Nxd2 8.Nbxd2 g6 is less convincing as Black would enjoy good control of the dark squares; 7.Nbd2?? Qc3- would be embarrassing.

7...Nd7 8.0-0 Nxd2 Black has managed to swap one pair of pieces which will help with his cramped position. However, he has lost a lot of time in the process. 8...f5 would just weaken Black's position after 9.f3 Nxd2 10.Bxd2 Qd8 11.Nc3.

9.Bxd2 Qd8 A sad necessity, but the alternatives were no better. At least on d8 the queen can safeguard against the e4 break for a while. 9...Bb4 10.a3 Bxd2 11.Nxd2 0-0 12.b4 would have given White very easy play.

10.Nc3 White enjoys a significant development advantage, but the position is not so simple as his bishop on d2 is quite awkwardly placed.

10...Nf6 11.Qc2 11.e4? would just spoil White's advantage. 11...dxc4! 12.Bxc4 Qxd4; although Black is very underdeveloped, White cannot really use this, due to his awkwardly placed pieces.

11...Be7 12.Rad1!



Completing development before taking action.

12...b6 Black tries to place his bishop on b7 before White has time to play e4.

12...0-0 13.Bc1 was my idea, finally being ready for the e4 break.

13.e4 dxc4 14.Bxc4 Qxd4? Black doesn't want to just suffer in a passive position, but this move loses by force. 14...0-0 15.Bc1 was preferable.

15.Bf4!



White wins some vital tempi by pushing the black queen around.

15...Qc5 16.e5+- Black's knight doesn't have a good square to retreat to.

16...Nh5 16...Nd5 17.Ne4 Qa5 18.Bxd5+-;
16...Nd7 17.Ne4 Qa5 18.Bxe6! fxe6 19.Qxc6
Rb8 20.Qxe6+- with Nd6 coming as a killer blow.

17.Ne4 Qa5 18.Be2 Suddenly Black's king is in mortal danger.

18...Nxf4 19.Qxc6+ Bd7 19...Kf8 20.Qxa8
Nxe2+ 21.Kh1 Qa6 22.Nd6 Bxd6 23.exd6 with d7 coming with decisive effect.

20.Qxa8+ Bd8 21.Bb5



A nice finishing touch from several winning lines.

1-0

Congratulations Bodhana **Part One**



Bodhana Sivanandan came second in the U8 Girls category at the FIDE World Cadet Chess Championship. Bodhana actually finished joint top with 9.5 points after 11 rounds but narrowly missed out on gold on tie-break. England's Zoe Veselow also did well in the same event with 7.5 points. There were a number of good performances from England's players which can be accessed at <http://chess-results.com/tnr670151.aspx?lan=1&art=25&f-edb=ENG&flag=30>

FIDE World Cadets Championships – Bodhana's Choice (Game 1 of 2)

Bodhana has kindly selected two of her World Cadet games for publication in the October

and November ChessMoves. Both demonstrate some fine attacking play and positional understanding in some complex and unbalanced positions. This month's game is a Pirc defence where Bodhana, playing with the white pieces, picks up the exchange with a nice tactic in the early middlegame and is then forced to consolidate to develop her pieces. The game finishes with a fine combination to allow her pawn to promote whilst stopping her opponent's passer on the other side of the board.

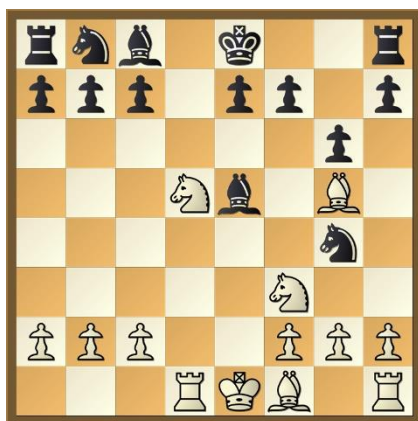
Bodhana Sivanandan - Zhansaya Sholpanbek [B07]

FIDE World Cadets Chess Championships 2, 19.09.2022]

1.e4

1...d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.Bg5 Nf6 We have now reached a Pirc defence.

5.e5 dxe5 6.dxe5 Qxd1+ 7.Rxd1 Ng4 8.Nd5 Bxe5 9.Nf3



Of course the pawn on e7 can't be taken. 9 Bxe7 would be an error due to 9..c6 picking up the bishop. Likewise 9.Nxe7 would also be wrong as f6 picks up the knight.

9...Bd6?



10.Bxe7 And now the capture on e7 works, deflecting the bishop from protecting the c-pawn.

10...Bxe7 11.Nxc7+ Picking up the rook for the bishop capture on e7.

11...Kf8 12.Nxa8 Nc6 13.c3 Bc5



The dust settles for the moment with Bodhana the exchange and a pawn up. However, black's pieces are much better developed and menacing the white king. This will need some accurate defensive play to consolidate and make it through to an endgame.

14.Rd2 Kg7 15.Nc7 Bb6 16.Nd5 Re8+ 17.Ne3



17.. Nxf2 Removing the knight's protection and picking up a pawn.

18.Rxf2 Bxe3 19.Re2 Bf5 20.h3 Na5 20...Bd3?! fails to 21.Rxe3! Rxe3+ 22.Kf2.

21.b3 Nc6



White remains the exchange up but still needs to untangle her pieces.

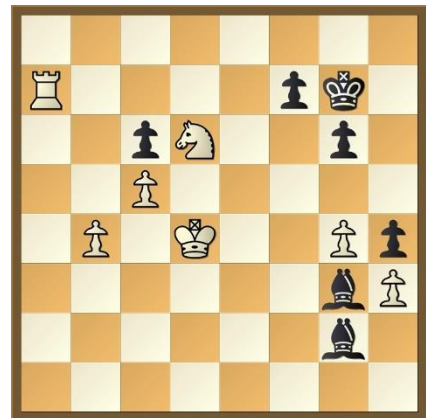
22.g4 Bb1 23.Nh4? 23.Nd2! This is a better line due to the threat of Nc4 winning the pinned bishop. 23...Bxd2+ 24.Kxd2 Rxe2+ 25.Bxe2 Bxa2 26.Kc2.

23...Re4 24.Bg2 Re7 25.Bxc6 bxc6 26.Ng2 Bc5 27.b4 Bd6 28.Rxe7 Bxe7+–



And we transition to an endgame with king, rook and knight against king and two bishops.

29.Kd2 Bxa2 30.Ra1 Bd5 31.Ne3 Be4 32.Rxa7 Bh4 33.c4 Bg3 34.c5 h5 35.Kc3 h4 36.Kd4 Bh1 37.Nc4 Bg2 38.Nd6

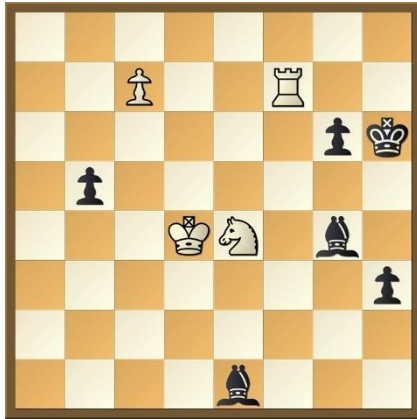


38...Bxh3 39.Rxf7+ Kh6 40.Ne4 Be1? 40...Bxg4 41.Nxg3 hxg3.

41.b5 cxb5 42.c6 42.g5+ Kh5 43.c6.

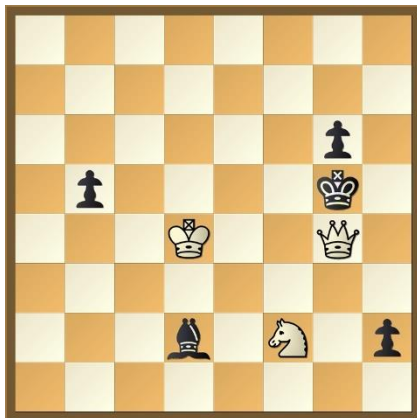
42...Bxg4 43.c7 Rh7+! is the strong threat.

43...h3?



Allowing a nice decoy tactic to stop the h-pawn from promoting, and the rest is straightforward.

44.Rh7+ Kxh7 45.Nf6+ Kh6 46.Nxg4+ Kg5 47.c8Q Bd2 48.Nf2 h2 49.Qg4+



1-0

Congratulations Bodhana **Part Two**

Here is game 2 where Bodhana plays the Caro-Kann, with her opponent trying an unusual line in the Panov-Botvinnik. After some manoeuvring with the rooks and minor pieces Bodhana reaches a rook and pawn ending a pawn up which she proceeds to convert.

FIDE World Cadets Championships – Bodhana's Choice (Game 2 of 2)

FIDE World Cadets Chess Championships 20,

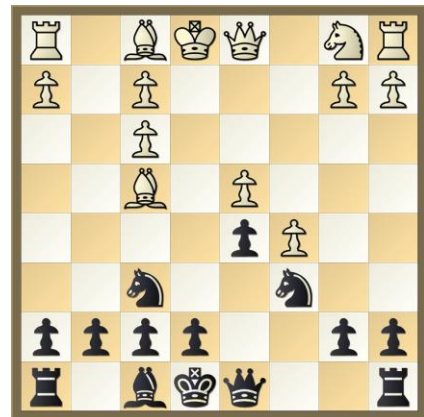
Girls 08: Round 7 : Zhumambayeva, Aliya -
Sivanandan, Bodhana 23.09.2022

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.c4
Bodhana plays the Caro-Kann defence with White, trying a Panov-Botvinnik attack with 5. c4.

5...Nf6 6.Bf4 6. Nc3 is more usual, followed by Bg5 to increase the pressure on d5.

6...Bg4 Pinning the knight.

7.c5 Bxf3 8.gxf3



Forced to avoid losing the d-pawn. Black is slightly better now due to the damaged kingside pawn structure.

8...a6 Played to stop Bb5 and slow down White's attack.

8...Nd7 may be best to support the freeing e5 which undermines the d- and c-pawns before White starts the standard queenside attack in the Panov.

9.Nc3 e6 10.Be2 Be7 11.Rg1 g6 12.Qa4 Qa5 13.Qxa5 Nxa5 14.Na4



Threatening Nb6 to displace the black rook or pick up the exchange.

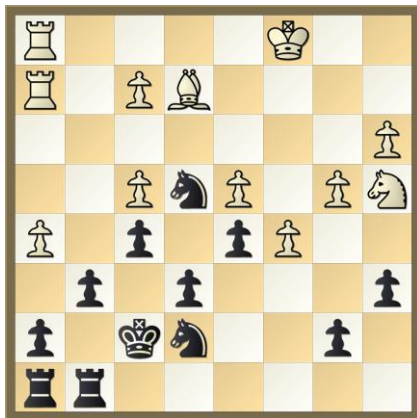
14...Nd7 14...Bd8 This is the other way of discouraging Nb6.

15.0-0-0 Nc6 16.a3 f6 The position is about equal.

17.Bc7? Kf7 17...Rc8 18.Bb6 f5, preparing Bf6 to attack the pawn on d4 which is now difficult to defend.

18.Bb6 Bd8 19.Bxd8 Raxd8 20.f4 f5 21.h4 Nf6 22.Bf3 Na5 23.Be2 Ne4 Black has a slight edge, with the two knights very active.

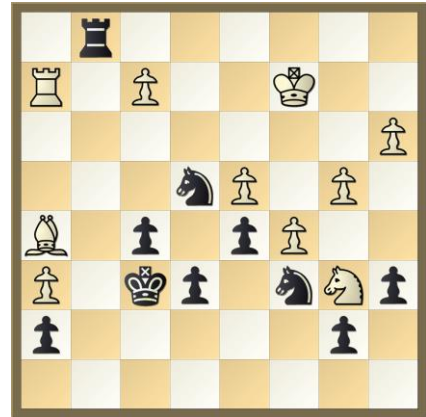
24.Rg2 Rb8 25.b4 Nc6 26.h5 Ne7 27.Rh1 Rbg8 28.Rgh2



28...g5 The best move to keep the position closed.

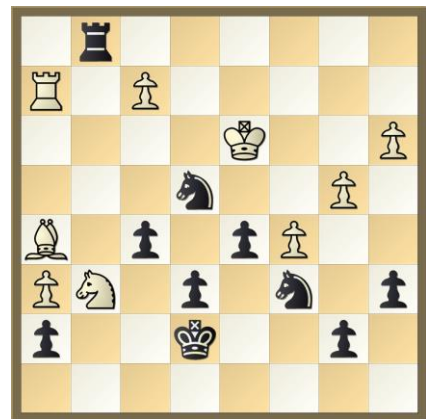
29.fxg5 Rxd5 30.h6 Black is now better as the rooks will become more active on the g-file and the two knights are better placed than White's minor pieces.

30...Rhg8 31.Bh5+ Kf6 32.Nb6 Rg1+ 33.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 34.Kc2 Nc6



The d-pawn will fall shortly and Black is winning.

35.Nd7+ Ke7 36.Ne5 Nxd4+ 37.Kd3 Nc6 38.Ng6+



38...Kf6 38...hxg6! wins on the spot. **39.h7 Ne5+ 40.Kc2 Nf7**, covering the queening square and emerging a piece up.

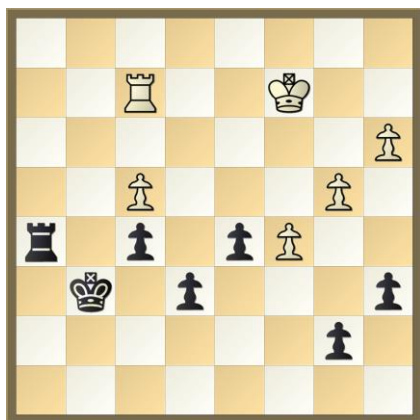
39.Nf8 Ne5+ 40.Kc2 Rg8? Protecting the queening square, but the position is now about equal with both sides having chances with the respective passed pawns after Nxd7.

40...Ke7 41.Nxd7 d4 42.Be2 Ra1 43.Kb3 d3 44.Bxd3 Nxd3.

41.Nxh7+ Ke7 42.f4 Nd7 43.Ng5 Nf8 44.Bf7?
44.Nf7 Rg3 looks better for Black.

44...Rh8 45.Bh5 Rxh6 Black is winning again!

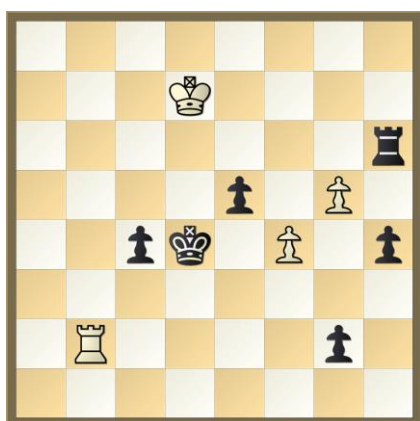
46.Rh3 Kf6 47.Nf7 Rh7 48.Ne5 Nf2 49.Rf3
Rxh5 50.Rxf2 Ng6 51.Nxg6 Kxg6



Reaching a rook ending where the passed d-pawn should be enough for a win, provided Black can activate her rook.

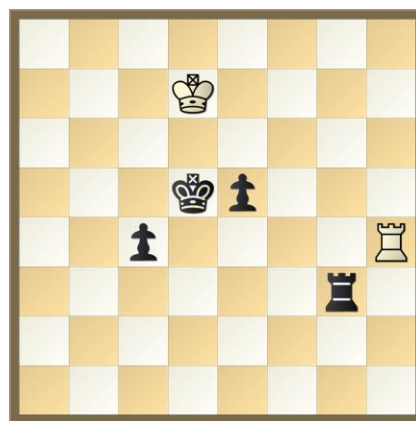
52.Rf3 Kf6 53.Kd3 Rh1! 54.Kd2 d4 55.Kd3 e5
56.fxe5+ Kxe5 57.Rg3 Ra1 Black's two passed pawns and active rook should be enough to decide.

58.Rg7 Rxa3+ 59.Ke2 a5



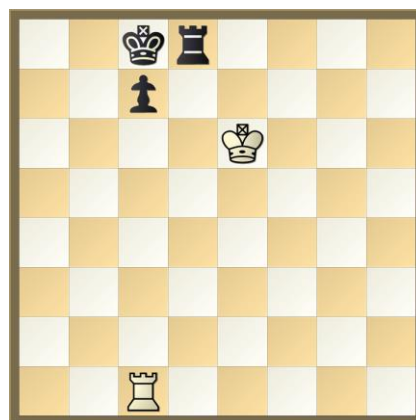
Aiming to break up the connected pawns.

60.b5 Rc3 61.Rxb7 Rxc5 62.b6 Rb5 63.Ra7
Rxb6 64.Rxa5+ Ke4



And the rest is straightforward.

65.Ra8 Rb2+ 66.Ke1 f4 67.Re8+ Kf3 68.Rd8
Re2+ 69.Kd1 Re4 70.Kd2 Kf2 71.Kd3 Re1
72.Rf8 f3 73.Kxd4 Kg2 74.Rg8+ Kf1 75.Rf8 f2
76.Kd3



Reaching a winning Lucena position.

76...Re6 77.Kd2 Rd6+ 78.Ke3

78.Kc3 Allows Black to build a bridge with Rd5.
78...Rd5 79.Rg8 Ke2 80.Re8+ Kf3 81.Rf8+ Ke3
82.Re8+ Kf4 83.Rf8+ Rf5

78...Ke1 79.Rxf2 Re6+ 80.Kf3 Rf6+ 81.Ke3 Rxf2

Michael John Basman **(1946 – 2022)**



The ECF was very sad to learn of the passing on 26 October of International Master Michael Basman.

Michael was a renowned English chess player, author and organiser who was awarded the international master title in 1980.

As well as competing at the highest levels of English chess over many years, his achievements included popularising the Grob and the invention of the Basman Attack and St George Defence openings, the latter being used by GM Tony Miles to defeat GM Anatoly Karpov. He also founded and organised the UK Chess Challenge in 1996 and was a central figure in bringing chess to several generations of junior players.

In 2020 he was one of ten chess seniors who were the subject of a [tribute by FIDE](#) for their contributions to the game. He was described in the tribute as a guru of the English chess scene and a true iconoclast, both descriptions being well merited.

We send our condolences to Michael's family and to his many friends and colleagues on the passing of a much-respected figure who made such a huge contribution to English chess. He will be greatly missed.

Tribute by Sarah Longson

Mike was the founder of the UK Chess Challenge, and his efforts encouraged me and millions of other kids to enjoy the wonderful benefits of this game. I won the Girls edition in the first year of the event, which inspired me to compete regularly, and I ended up playing all over the world. I'll always be grateful for this introduction to the game, as I am for the support and advice he gave to Alex and me when we took on the organisation of the competition.

I remember many entertaining discussions with Mike - not least about modernisation. Mike was initially quite sceptical about computers in chess and resisted the trend to produce pairings on Swiss Manager. 'But what if the laptop breaks?' At the 2018 Terafinal prize-giving he seemed to be won over: 'These computers are marvellous – can they present the prizes as well?' In the last few years Mike even took to streaming.

It certainly wasn't an aversion to modernisation that delayed Mike's adoption of computers. Mike was almost by definition a moderniser. Ignoring for a moment his contribution to opening theory, he introduced teaching chess via cassette tapes under the name Audio Chess. This can be seen as a precursor to the video instruction, DVD instruction and online instruction trend that followed and is so prevalent today. He brought many new ideas and innovations to life through the UK Chess Challenge - not to mention some much-needed humour.

Mike's wicked sense of humour could certainly be seen in his opening choices (1.g4 as White and 1...g5 as Black). Just a few days before his

untimely death we were joking about how even the World champion Magnus Carlsen was finally adopting his openings in a recent Chess.com Titled Tuesday event. The two openings that Mike is perhaps best known for are the Grob (1.g4) and the St George (1...a6). Speaking of the St George – the only time I actually played Mike was at a blitz event held in a pub in London. After 1.e4 and with a twinkle in his eye he essayed 1...a6 and beat me in about two minutes.

The energy, originality and joy that Mike brought to all his endeavours are a source of great inspiration. He believed that young minds should be encouraged to be rational, compassionate and creative, and that through chess and the UK Chess Challenge he could help develop these traits in the next generation. Mike was a fighter at the board and away from it - not afraid to stand up for his beliefs.

Mike leaves behind an incredible chess legacy and I know that many of his former students, friends and acquaintances will be deeply saddened by his passing. Our condolences go out to his family and nearest friends.

Opening Theory

Michael was justifiably renowned for his contribution to opening theory with a range of offbeat openings including:

The Basman Attack - 1 e4 e5 2 Nh3.

The Creepy Crawly - 1 a3 and 2 h3 against anything.

The St George Defence 1 e4 a6 2 Any move ...b5.

He also authored many books including the classic *The Killer Grob* – long out of print, but worth seeking out a copy if you play the Grob or expect to face it.

Michael was an active chess player up to 2022 and lived long enough to see Magnus Carlsen adopting 1 g4 and 1 ...g5 in some recent online

games including Chess.com's Titled Tuesday which we feature elsewhere in the issue.

As well as a ground-breaking theoretician he was also a fine chess player, with the following games highlighted amongst the many tributes on social media following his passing.

Basman was one of the top English players in the late 60s and 70s. Here is his game from the 1966/1967 Hastings Christmas Congress where he draws against the great Mikhail Botvinnik with some deep positional play against Botvinnik's English Four Knights Opening. Basman is close to winning the game with his passed queenside pawns, and Botvinnik is lucky to escape with a draw by perpetual check.

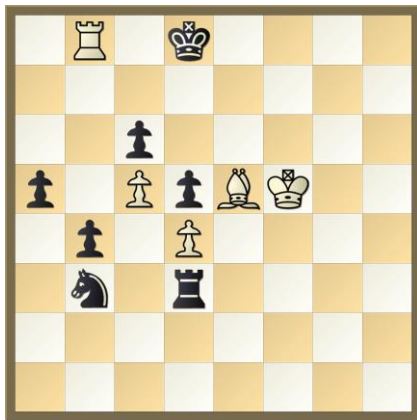
(10692) Mikhail Botvinnik - Michael John Basman [A29]

Hastings 1966/67 Hastings ENG (8),
05.01.1967

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 Bb4 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 Re8 7.d3 Bxc3 8.bxc3 e4 9.Nd4 exd3 10.exd3 Nxd4 11.cxd4 d5 12.Be3 Be6 13.Rc1 h6 14.h3 c6 15.Qd2 Qd7 16.Kh2 Kh7 17.Rfe1 Ng8 18.g4 Ne7 19.Bf4 Rad8 20.c5 g5 21.Be5 f5 22.gxf5 Bxf5 23.Re3 Ng6 24.Rce1 Re6 25.Bg3 Rde8 26.Bf1 Qg7 27.Rxe6 Bxe6 28.Be5 Qf7 29.Bg3 Qf5 30.Qd1 Rf8 31.Bg2 Rf7 32.Re3 Qf6 33.Qe1 Bd7 34.Qb4 g4 35.hxg4 Bxg4 36.Qb2 h5 37.Kg1 h4 38.Bd6 Qf5 39.Bf1 Bf3 40.Kh2 Bd1 41.f4 Nxf4 42.Qf2 Ng6 43.Qxf5 Rxf5 44.Kg1 Bg4 45.a4 Kh6 46.Re8 Rf7 47.a5 a6 48.Re3 Kg5 49.Re8 Kh5 50.Rg8 h3 51.Re8 Nh4 52.Rh8+ Kg5 53.Rg8+ Kf5 54.Kh2 Nf3+ 55.Kg3 Nd2 56.Bxh3 Bxh3 57.Kxh3 Nb3 58.Kg3



58...Nxa5 59.Kf3 Nb3 60.Ke3 Rh7 61.Rf8+ Ke6
 62.Re8+ Kd7 63.Rb8 Rh3+ 64.Kf4 Na5 65.Kf5
 b5 66.Rg8 Rf3+ 67.Ke5 Re3+ 68.Kf5 Rf3+
 69.Ke5 Re3+ 70.Kf5 b4 71.Rg7+ Kc8 72.Rc7+
 Kd8 73.Ra7 Nb3 74.Be5 a5 75.Rb7 Rxd3
 76.Rb8+



½-½

Basman later tied for first place on 8½ out of 11 in the 1973 British, losing out in the play-off against William Hartston.

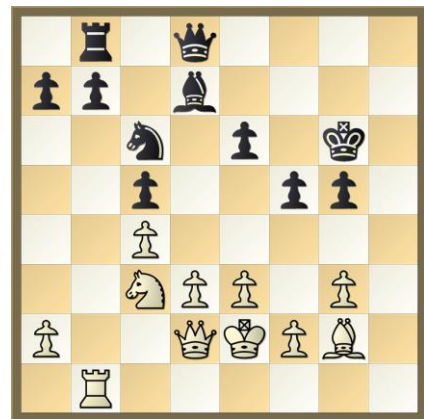
Here is a fine example of Basman's playing style where he draws against GM Tony Miles, with both players' kingsides disappearing.

Anthony Miles - Michael John Basman [A04]
 BCF-ch Eastbourne ENG (7), 13.08.1973

1.Nf3 c5 2.g3 f5 3.Bg2 g6 4.c4 Bg7 5.Nc3 Nc6
 6.d3 Nh6



7.h4 Nf7 8.h5 e6 9.hxg6 hxg6 10.Rxh8+ Bxh8
 11.Be3 Nd4 12.Qd2 Bf6 13.Rb1 d6 14.b4 Kf8
 15.bxc5 dxc5 16.Na4 Qc7 17.Kf1 Kg7 18.Ng5
 Rb8 19.Nxf7 Kxf7 20.Bg5 Bd7 21.Bxf6 Kxf6
 22.Nc3 g5 23.e3 Nc6 24.Nb5 Qd8 25.Ke2 Kg6
 26.Nc3



½-½

And of course - here is one of Basman's most famous games against Ulf Andersson - which has become known as 'The Immortal Waiting Game' - with Basman's long wait eventually provoking his opponent to launch an attack.

The Immortal Waiting Game

(Annotations by Alex Longson)

In the following game Mike adopted an astonishing approach of waiting passively for his esteemed opponent (the ultra-strong grandmaster Ulf Andersson) to build up an attack. From move 12 to move 23 Mike simply shuffles his pieces back and forth. On the brink of collapse he defends tenaciously and succeeds in drawing the sting out of White's attack. Then from move 30 he completely outplays his world-class opponent with forceful classical play.

Ulf Andersson - Michael John Basman [E18]

Hastings 1974/75 Hastings ENG (11),
09.01.1975

**1.Nf3 b6 2.g3 Bb7 3.Bg2 e6 4.0-0 d5 5.c4 Nf6
6.d4 Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.Ne5 h6 9.Bf4 a6 10.Rc1
Ra7**



11.cxd5 exd5 12.Qb3



The opening hasn't gone well for Black - and Mike now decides simply to hold station for more than 10 moves (!) and ask White how he intends to break through. This strategy isn't to be recommended in general, though in this game it works out well. Perhaps Mike was also using a bit of psychology - Ulf being well known for his skill in dry technical positions. Perhaps he was less at home being forced to play the aggressor.

**12...Ba8 13.Rfd1 Kh7 14.h3 Kg8 15.Kh2 Kh7
16.g4 Kg8 17.Bg3 Bb7 18.e3 Ba8 19.a3 Bb7
20.f4 Ba8 21.Rd2 Qd6 22.f5 Qd8 23.Bf4 Bb7
24.Rg1 c6**



Finally Black switches from his policy of doing nothing. White is clearly gearing up to play Bf3/h4/g5 and Mike wants to play ...Nh7 to hold up the storm. To prepare this he first protects the d5 pawn.

**25.Bf3 Nh7 26.Rc1 Bd6 27.Na4 Bc7 28.Kg3 Nf6
29.h4 Nfd7 30.Nxd7?!** This seems to ease Black's congestion issues a little.

Maybe 30.g5!?

30...Nxd7 31.Re2 Re8 Mike has defended fantastically and appears to now have a viable position. It is fascinating that once reaching a more standard position Mike's play is extremely strong and classical - he completely outplays Ulf in this next stage.

32.Kh3?! Allowing further exchanges and breaking up the white pawns.

32...Bxf4 33.exf4 Rxe2 34.Bxe2 Qe7 35.Bf3 b5
Mike wants to play ...bc8 to point at the king.

36.Nc5 Bc8 37.Qd3 h5! Black breaks up the white kingside cover.

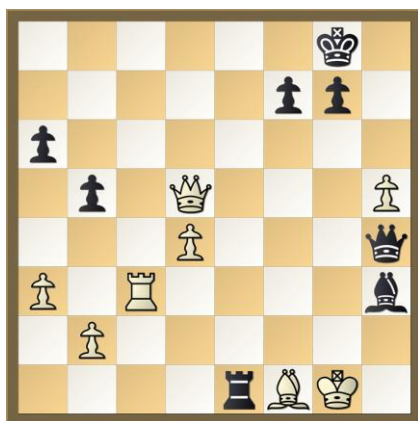
38.gxh5 Qf6 39.Kg3 Nxc5 40.Rxc5 Bxf5 41.Qc3 Bd7! Another good move, making way for the queen to come to h3.

42.Qd3 Ra8 Improve the position of all your pieces!

43.Rc1 Re8 44.Qc3 c5?! 45.Qxc5? 45.dxc5 d4 46.Qd2 Re3 was perhaps Mike's idea, but it appears that White can defend with 47.Re1.

45...Qf5 Now Black is crashing through.

46.Qxd5 Qh3+ 47.Kf2 Qh2+ 48.Bg2 Qxf4+ 49.Bf3 Bg4 50.Rc3 Qh2+ 51.Bg2 Qxh4+ 52.Kg1 Re1+ 53.Bf1 Bh3



0-1

Defeating Speelman with the Borg

Resistance is futile

Annotated by Alex Longson

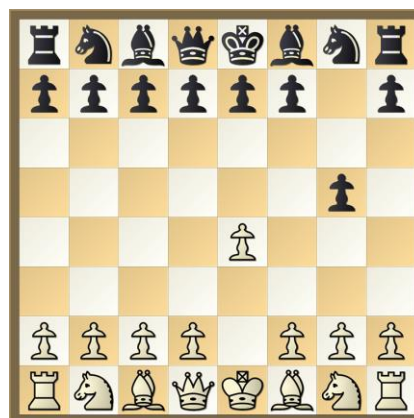
Mike brought attention to the move 1.g4 – the Grob opening - and even [wrote a book](#) about it (*The Killer Grob*). Whilst this move seems outrageous enough for most chess players,

Mike often went even further by playing 1...g5 with Black – a move I believe he referred to as the Reverse Grob but which is sometimes referred to as the Borg. Despite this move giving White a decisive advantage according to modern engines, in the following game Mike managed to defeat grandmaster Jon Speelman in the 1980 British Championships.

Jonathan Speelman - Michael John Basman [B00]

BCF-ch Brighton ENG (9), 27.10.2022

1.e4 g5 +2.3 according to Stockfish!!



2.d4 h6 2...Bg7 Was Mike's preferred choice in 2021 when he regularly deployed this defence against the latest generation at the EJCOA Invitational.

Whilst he did suffer some gruesome defeats he did manage to hold the highly-promising FM Yichen Han to a draw.

Han, Yichen - Basman, M., 1/2-1/2

1st EJCOA Forest Hall Invitational 2021

<https://lichess.org/fleQPWTZ>

3.h4 gxh4 4.Rxh4 d5 5.exd5 e6 6.Rh5

6.Nf3 exd5 Looks clearly better for White due to Black's ruined kingside structure.

6...Nf6 7.dxe6 Bxe6 8.Nc3



True to Speelman's dynamic style, but it also feels that mixing it in this way also plays into Mike's hands somewhat.

8...Nxh5 9.Qxh5 White has adequate compensation for the exchange in the form of a pawn, slightly better structure and some initiative.

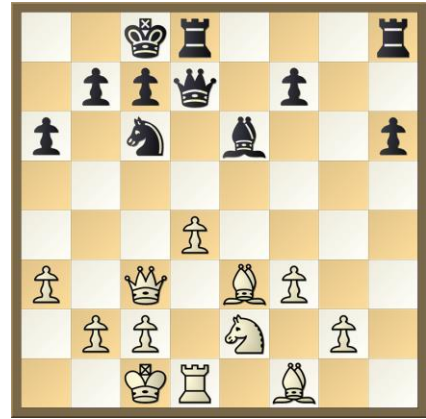
9...Bb4 9...Qxd4 10.Be3 would allow White more activity.

10.Nge2 Nc6 11.Be3 Qd7 12.a3 Bg4 13.Qb5 a6!



14.Qd3 14.Qxb7 Ra7 traps the queen.

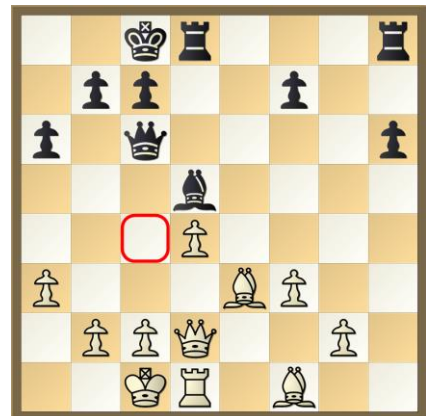
14...Bxc3+ 15.Qxc3 0-0-0 16.f3 Be6 17.0-0-0



The dust has settled and the game seems fairly balanced.

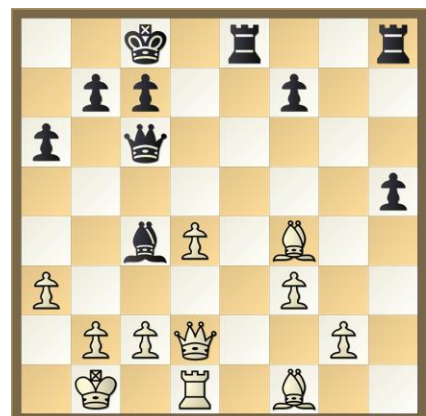
17...Ne7 18.Nf4 Nd5 19.Nxd5 Bxd5 20.Qd2?!
20.Qb4 intending c4 was a more active idea.

20...Qc6



Taking control of the light squares and not allowing White to advance with c4.

21.Kb1 h5 22.Bg5 Rde8 23.Bf4 Bc4!



Black's bishop wasn't doing much on d5, so he aims to swap off White's f1 bishop which is defending potential entry points for the black rooks.

24.Be5 Rhg8 White has drifted and now Black is firmly on top with the rooks threatening to invade.

25.d5?! Perhaps based on a miscalculation?

25.b3 Bxf1 26.Rxf1 f6 27.Bf4 Qd5 and Black is clearly on top.

25...Bxd5 Perhaps Speelman missed that black could in fact capture the pawn?

26.Qd4



26.Qxd5 Rd8 27.Qxc6 Rxd1+ - this intermediate check wins the game.

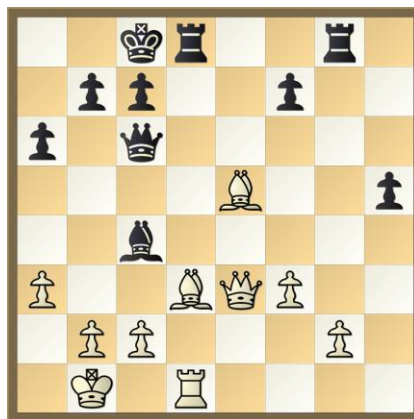
26...Bb3?? Based on a trick which doesn't work!

26...Rd8 is simple and strong: 26...Ba2+ 27.Kxa2 Rd8 was a correct version of the trick tried in the game.

27.Bd3?? A mutual blunder !

27.cxb3! Rd8 28.Rc1! and White wins!

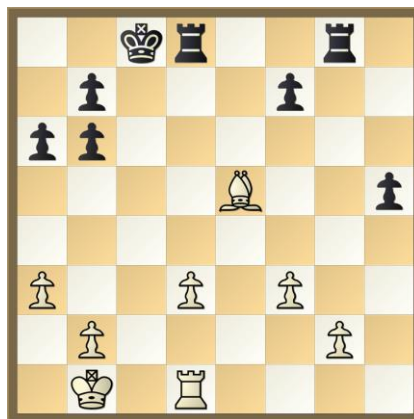
27...Rd8 28.Qe3 Bc4



Now Black is back on track.

29.Qa7 Bxd3 30.cxd3 Qb6 31.Qxb6 31.Qa8+ Kd7 and the queen is trapped.

31...cxb6

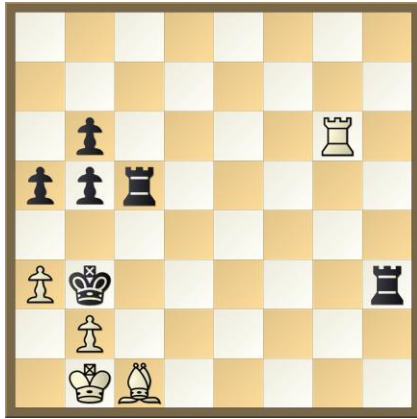


An exchange to the good and with active rooks, Black is winning this endgame.

32.g3 Kd7 33.Bf4 Kc6 34.Rc1+ Kb5 35.Rc7 Rxd3 36.Rxf7 Rxf3 37.Rf5+ Kc4 38.Rxh5 Kb3 39.Rh1 Rf2 40.Bc1 Rxc3 41.Rh7 b5 42.Rc7

White is restricted to complete passivity - 42.Rxb7 Rg1.

42...b6 43.Rc6 Rh3 44.Rg6 Rc2 45.Rg1 a5 46.Rg6 Rc5



0-1

John Nunn wins World 65-plus Championship in golden year for England seniors – Leonard Barden

2022 has proved a vintage year for English senior chess, half a century after the Fischer v Spassky match which triggered a global boom and, for a while, made England the world No. 2 chess nation behind the former Soviet Union. Earlier English team golds in the world 50+ and 65+ and the European 50+ set a high barrier for John Nunn at the world 65+ individual championship in Assisi, Italy, but the eminent author of 30 high-class books and former top-10 grandmaster rose to the occasion and triumphed in a tense final round last Saturday. Nunn scored 9/11, winning all his six games with White and converting in the logical style of his best years. He sacrificed his queen for checkmate in round three, and refuted unsound play energetically in round five. It was a highly competitive event of 192 players, and victory almost escaped the 67-year-old from Bude, Cornwall. Nunn lost in round eight to Jens Kristiansen, but the Dane blundered to defeat in the final round in a drawn bishop ending. A Fide online report gives fuller details, plus photos from the award ceremony. There is scope for England's current dominance of world senior chess to continue and even

accelerate. Due to Covid, FIDE was unable to stage the individual 50+ and 65+ events in 2020 and 2021, but the global body boosted the 2022 prize fund to €37,000 and pledged increased support for senior chess in future. Given that many of England's active amateur players are seniors who grew up with and admire Nunn and other older GMs, there is a case for the ECF to give a higher profile to major senior events. Michael Adams, now 51, and Nigel Short, now 57, challenged for world titles in their peak years, and both legends were key performers in June when England fought off a strong US challenge to win the world 50+ teams. They would have been the top seeds had they played in the 50+ world individual last week. It would be better, of course, if England had the players and financial resources to compete against the leading nations and individuals in open competition, or even to develop a world class junior squad as in the 1970s. But the chances of either happening are small, while in senior chess there is a realistic opportunity for a decade of English dominance.

John has annotated his favourite game and the two critical last-round positions from the tournament below.

World Senior Championship **John Nunn**



Photograph by Fernando Bernardo

Here is my most spectacular game from the World Senior Championship in Assisi.

John Nunn - David Shnaider

World Senior Chess Championship, Assisi
2022 Sicilian Defence

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5

Although I still sometimes play the Open Sicilian, when you are in your late 60s using Bb5 against the Sicilian seems more and more attractive. I played Bb5 three times in Assisi and won all three games, so I can't complain about the results.

3...Qb6

A rather unusual, but far from bad, alternative to the more common 3...g6, 3...e6 and 3...d6.

4.Nc3 e6

Much the most common move, countering the threat of 5.Nd5.

5.0-0 Nge7 6.Re1 g6?!

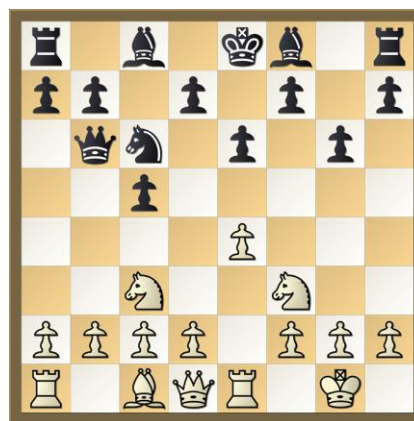
This has been played several times before, but it is very risky (instead Black should try 6...a6 or 6...Nd4). My opponent may have felt that I was unlikely to have prepared for 6...g6, as in the main databases he has no games with this position. However, having unearthed his online handle, I then had access to many online games which showed that he had reached this position twice, with one opponent playing 7.a4 and the other 7.b3. I gave my computer a few minutes and it suggested a dangerous attacking continuation for White, which I noted before moving on to the next line.

7.Bxc6

The start of a long forcing continuation.

7...Nxc6

More or less compulsory, as a pawn capture is met by e5 followed by Ne4, while 7...Qxc6 8.d4 gives White a huge lead in development.



8.d4!

The computer's innovation, and much stronger than any previously played moves. The immediate 8.Nd5 exd5 9.exd5+ Ne7 10.d4 is less effective due to 10...c4 11.Bf4 d6 and now 12.Nd2 can be met by 12...Qxd4.

8...cxd4

8...Nxd4 9.Bg5 is excellent for White; for example, 9...Bg7 10.Nxd4 h6 (10...cxd4 11.Nd5 Qc5 12.Qf3 d6 13.Bf6 is also very bad for Black) 11.Nf5! gxh5 12.Bh4 0-0 13.exf5 and White has a huge attack without any sacrifice.

9.Nd5 exd5 10.exd5+ Ne7 11.Bf4 d6

At first sight this sacrifice looks marginal at best, but the next move, which was the key idea behind the computer's line, makes it look much more promising. There is no forced win for White, but Black must play such a long series of 'only' moves to reach a (probably) holdable ending that in practice the chances of success are excellent.

12.Nd2!



Now the knight reaches d6 via c4 or e4 and so Black loses the right to castle.

12...Qa6

12...Bg7 13.Nc4 Qa6 transposes.

13.Ne4 Bg7 14.Nxd6+ Kf8 15.Qf3

Having now reached the end of my preparation, this was a tough decision. The alternative is 15.Rxe7 Kxe7 16.Qe1+ Be6 (16...Kd7? 17.Qe4 is hopeless as there is no way to meet the threat of Re1) 17.dxe6 fxe6 18.Qb4 Kd7, which also favours White but, like the move chosen, does not win by force. After 19.Nxb7 Rac8 20.Re1 Rxc2 21.h4 Rc4 22.Nc5+ Rxc5 23.Qxc5 Rc8 White has an edge due to Black's more exposed king, but Black's pieces are active and his d-pawn is a potential danger.

15...f5?

Black finally goes wrong and in a position like this it only takes one mistake. The move is understandable as it avoids a disaster on f7 and prevents the white queen moving to the e-file, but the loss of time proves fatal. The critical line runs 15...Bd7 16.Rxe7 Kxe7 17.Re1+ Kf8 18.Qe4 Kg8 (18...Bf6? 19.Bh6+ Kg8 20.Qf4 wins) 19.Qe7 Rf8 20.Qxd7 Qa5 21.Re8 Qxd5 22.Be5! and here Black seems to be in trouble since White is threatening 23.Rxf8+ Bxf8 24.Qxf7+ Qxf7 25.Nxf7, while 22...Bxe5 loses to 23.Rxf8+ Kxf8 24.Qd8+ Kg7 25.Nf5+. However, the accurate defence 22...d3! 23.cxd3 h5! 24.Rxf8+ Bxf8 25.Bxh8 Qxd6 26.Qxd6 Bxd6 27.Bf6 (27.Bc3 f5 is

similar) 27...Kf8 leads to an ending in which Black has excellent drawing chances despite White's extra pawn. Black's king will gain a tempo by ...Ke6 so White cannot prevent it reaching d5, after which the strong centralised king should be enough to frustrate any winning attempts by White.



16.Qg3!

White has several strong continuations, but I spent some time picking the most convincing. There are several threats, including the simple 17.Qh4, while 16...Bf6 loses at once to 17.Be5.

16...Bd7

Too late, as White can break through with a further sacrifice.

17.Rxe7! Kxe7 18.Qg5+ Kf8

18...Bf6 19.Re1+ also leads to a quick mate.

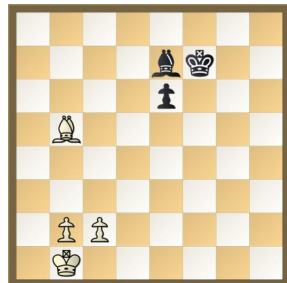
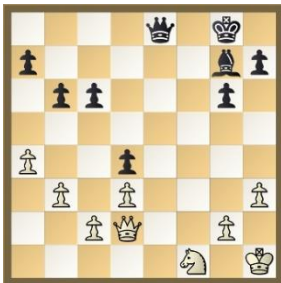
19.Re1 Be8

Black allows a neat finish. Instead, 19...Kg8 loses to 20.Re7 Rf8 21.Rxg7+ Kxg7 22.Qe7+ Kg8 23.Bh6 followed by mate.



20.Qe7+ Kg8 21.Qe6+ Kf8 22.Qxe8+ 1-0

It's always nice to end with a queen sacrifice. Before the last round, I was half a point behind the Dane Jens Kristiansen. As he had the better tie-break, only a Kristiansen loss and a win for myself would give me first place. This was the state of play in the two games as the time-control approached:



**John Nunn –
Valentin Bogdanov**
Black to play

**Jose Fernandez Garcia – Jens
Kristiansen**
Black to play

Let's start with my game. Given that I needed to win, the position on the board did not look very promising. True, Black's bishop is not especially active, but the reduced material and the passive position of White's pieces mean that objectively White has no advantage.

27...Qe5

Centralising the queen is perfectly reasonable.

28.Nh2

White intends Nf3 to kick the queen away.

28...c5

Pushing the pawn to c5 secures the d4-pawn but puts another pawn on a dark square. 28...Bh6 is tempting, but Black probably did not like 29.Ng4! (29.Qxh6 Qe1+ 30.Nf1 Qxf1+ 31.Kh2 Qf6 is dead drawn) 29...Bxd2 30.Nxe5 c5 31.Nc6 a6 32.Nb8 Bf4 33.Nd7 (33.Nxa6? Bd6 can only be good for Black) 33...Bc7 34.a5 bxa5 35.Nxc5 and, although this should still be a draw, it's hard to be sure of that in advance. In any case, Black is under no pressure to make a concession.

29.Nf3

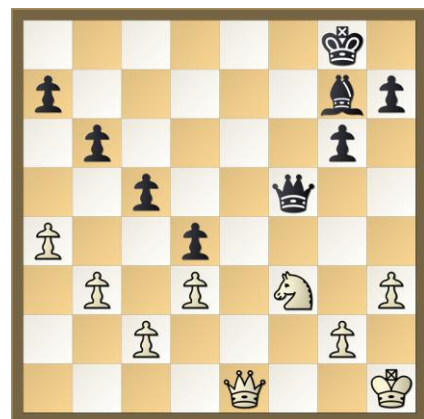
Now Black has a choice: to allow Qf4 or give up control of the e-file.

29...Qf5

The idea is to meet 30.Qe2 by 30...Kf7, keeping the white queen out.

30.Qe1!

I am sure we have all lost drawn positions which slip away bit by infinitesimal bit and that's what happens here. Black is of course still drawing, but it's unpleasant to defend a position with little or no active play and White makes incremental progress.



30...Qd7

30...Kf7 can now be met by 31.Qh4 and the attack on h7 allows the white queen to penetrate to d8.

31.Qe4

31.a5!? was an interesting alternative. If Black takes, his pawns are broken, while otherwise White plays a6 setting up a possible Qe4-b7. However, I decided to simply centralise my queen instead.

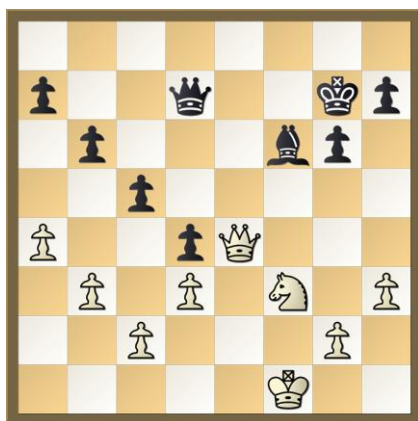
31...Bf6

By now I was thinking that a win was a possibility. For the moment White cannot achieve anything directly, and any attempt to improve White's position, for example by playing Nd2-e4, is frustrated by Black's counterplay against the white king, as in the line 32.Nd2 Bg5 33.Nc4 Qf7 34.Kg1 Bf4 intending ...Bg3.

32.Kg1

It occurred to me that I would be much better off with my king on the queenside, where it is defended by four pawns, rather than just two as on the kingside. Moreover, with the king on b2 additional plans involving a kingside pawn advance become feasible.

32...Kg7 33.Kf1



The long march continues.

33...a5?!

I feel this is a more concrete error. Black doesn't want to keep worrying about a possible a5 by White, as in the note to move 31, so he decides to rule it out completely. However, to fix all the queenside pawns on

dark squares looks like a significant concession.

34.Ke2 Qe7 35.Kd1!

35.Qxe7+ Bxe7 is a dead draw, but if Black exchanges on e4 himself White wins because Black's king is completely excluded by the d5-g5 barrier, while White can march his own king to b5.

35...Qd7 36.Kc1 Kf7 37.Kb2

White's advantage is now substantial, and he has a variety of possible plans, such as a kingside pawn advance or a knight transfer to e4.

37...Kg7

Black is content to wait, but 37...h5 might have been a better practical chance, since 38.g4 (38.Qf4 followed by Nd2-e4 is better, still with good winning prospects) 38...hxg4 39.hxg4 Qe6 gives White nothing clear.

38.g4

Threatening g5, followed by Qe5+, h4 and Nd2-e4.

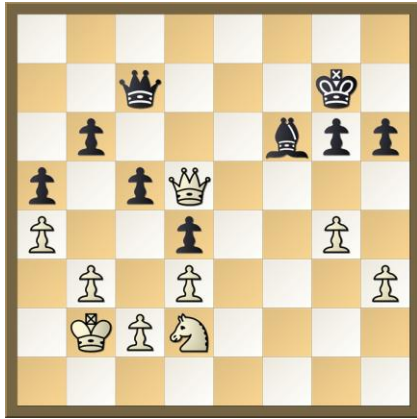
38...Qe7?

Just before the time control Black gives White the chance for an easy win.

39.Qd5?

Overlooking the forcing line 39.g5! Bxg5 40.Nxg5 Qxg5 41.Qb7+ Kh6 42.Qxb6, which would have been decisive since Black is bound to lose a pawn on the queenside.

39...h6 40.Nd2 Qc7



41.Ne4

This centralisation is natural, but it was also possible to transfer the knight to c4 by 41.Nc4 Bg5 (threatening ...Qf4) 42.Qe4 Kh7 43.Ne5 Qg7 44.Nf3 Qf6 45.h4 Bf4 46.h5 and Black is under severe pressure. However, this looked very committal and I decided to try other ideas first.

41...Be7

Although White has made a lot of progress, Black has set up a new line of defence and I couldn't immediately see how to proceed, so I decided to just manoeuvre around and hope for an inaccuracy.

42.Kb1 Kf8 43.Qe6 Kg8 44.Kb2 Qd8?!

Black should not have allowed the white queen to occupy the excellent c6-square. After 44...Bg5 White would have to backtrack and try another idea, such as that mentioned in the note to White's 41st.

45.Qc6!

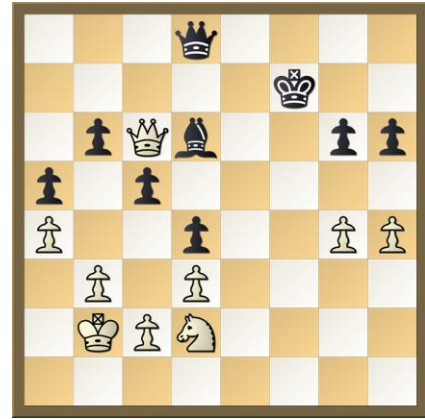
Now the b6-pawn is under constant pressure and Black's options are more limited.

45...Kf7

45...Kh7 46.Qb7 Kg8 47.Nd2 followed by Nc4 is very similar.

46.Nd2 Bd6 47.h4

47.Nc4 Bc7 48.h4 followed by h5 was simpler.



47...Bf4 48.Ne4

Now the threat is h5, after which the additional possibility of Qg6+ will be decisive.

48...Qxh4 49.Qb7+?

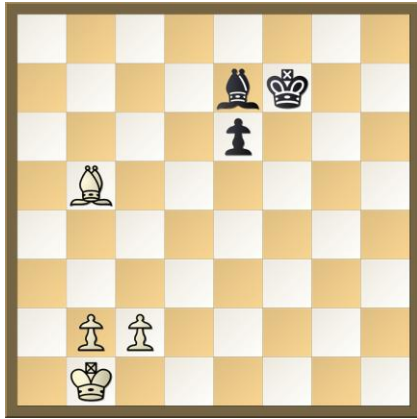
An error which could have made the win considerably more difficult. 49.Qxb6 Qxg4 50.Qa7+ Ke6 51.Qxa5 was clearly winning.

49...Kf8?

Now it's once again straightforward. 49...Qe7 50.Qxb6 h5 51.gxh5 gxh5 52.Qxa5 h4 was much better, when it's surprisingly hard for White to win. The best line is 53.Qe1 h3 54.Qf2 Qe5 55.a5 h2 56.Qh4 Kg6 57.a6 Qc7 58.Qg4+ Kh6 59.Nf2 Be3 60.Qh3+ Kg6 61.Qg2+ Kf7 62.a7 Qxa7 63.Qxh2, which should win in the end, but clearly White should never have allowed Black this chance.

50.Qxb6 Qxg4 51.Qxc5+ Kf7 52.Qxa5 Qg1 53.Qd5+ 1-0

White wins easily after 53...Ke7 54.Qc5+ Kf7 55.a5 and the check on c1 achieves nothing. Now let's look at Kristiansen's game. Here's the position again.



At first sight this is a dead draw because endings with bishop and two connected passed pawns vs bishop (with opposite-coloured bishops) are generally drawn unless the pawns are quite far advanced. Indeed, on some online forums Kristiansen was rather unfairly lambasted for losing this. There is a standard method of drawing, based on attacking the pawns with the bishop from the front. For example, if you imagine White's pawns are on b4 and c4, with his king on b3, then if Black's king is on b6 and his bishop on f8 it's impossible for White to make progress. However, this defence only works when the white king is behind the pawns. It's much more dangerous for Black when the white king is in front of the pawns. For example, suppose Black wastes time by 37...Bg5 38.Ka2 Bh4 39.Kb3 Bg5 40.Kc4 Bh4. Then White is already winning with 41.Kc5!, from which it's clear that time is an important factor. At the moment Black cannot move his king to the e-file, which makes it slightly more awkward for him.

37...Kf6?!

The last few moves before the time control see Black make things harder for himself. The simplest method was 37...Bf6 38.c3 Ke7 39.Kc2 Kd6 40.b4 Kc7 (40...Be7? 41.c4) 41.c4 and now provided Black finds the only saving move, 41...Kb6!, he can continue with ...Be7 and set up the draw mentioned above. It's not surprising that Black avoided this line in the run-up to move 40 since it depends on a single tempo.

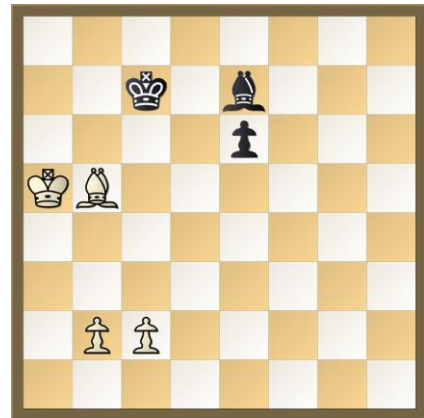
38.Ka2!

The best chance, aiming to get the king as far in front of the pawns as possible.

38...Ke5

Black aims to reach the standard draw by playing his king to b6, but White can prevent this.

39.Kb3 Kd6 40.Ka4 Kc7 41.Ka5



The time-control has been reached and White has managed to stop ...Kb6, which means that Black can no longer use the standard plan to save the game. The critical nature of the position is shown by the fact that Black has only three possible drawing moves here.

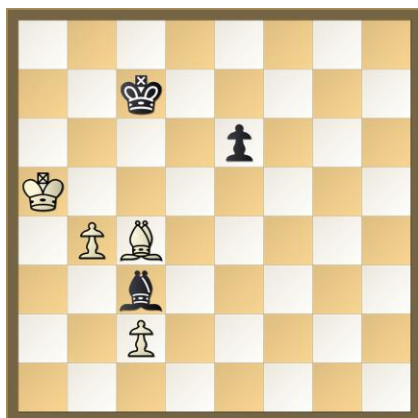
41...Bf6!

Black finds one of the three. There's a different drawing line with 41...Bd8! 42.c4 (42.b4 Kb7+ 43.Ka4 Be7 followed by ...Kb6 is simpler) 42...Kd6+ 43.Ka4 Kc5 44.b4+ Kd4!, when Black is saved by his active king position.

42.b4 Bc3!

The only move to draw, since if White is allowed to play c4-c5 then he is winning. It's interesting to note that the position is a win without Black's e-pawn. In such an ending it usually doesn't matter whether the defender has a pawn, since the attacker's bishop can manoeuvre while controlling the pawn. Unusually, in this case the extra pawn is critical.

43.Bc4



43...e5?

The losing move, since allowing the white bishop to occupy the long diagonal proves fatal. The correct defence is 43...Kd6! (43...Kd7! is the only other move to draw) 44.Kb5 e5! 45.Bd3 Kd5! and the e-pawn prevents White driving the king away from d5 by playing Bf1-g2+.

44.Bd5!

Now it's a win, but White must still find the correct plan.

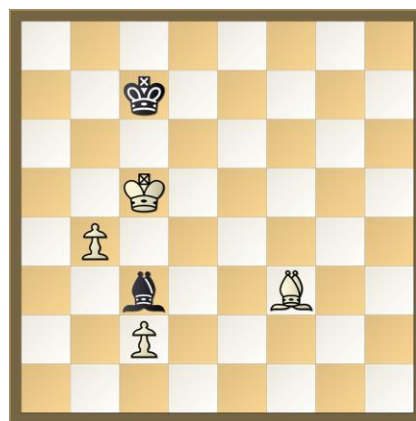
44...Kd6 45.Be4 Kc7 46.Kb5 Kd6 47.Bf3

The simplest method is 47.Kc4 Be1 48.Kb3 Bf2 49.c4, followed by Ka4-b5 and c5, but the line played does not endanger the win.

47...Kc7 48.Kc4 Be1 49.Kc5 Bc3 50.Be4 Bd4+ 51.Kb5 Bc3 52.Bf3 e4

Giving up the pawn makes it rather easy for White. The most resilient defence is 52...Kd6, but White can still win by, for example, 53.Be4 Kc7 54.Kc4 Be1 55.Kb3, as in the note to White's 47th move.

53.Bxe4 Kd6 54.Bf3 Kc7 55.Kc5



Now the plan is to stalemate the black king and force him to release the blockade of the c-pawn.

55...Kd7 56.b5 Kc7 57.b6+ Kb8 58.Kc6 Kc8 59.Bg4+ Kb8 60.Bf5 Bf6

60...Ka8 61.Kc7 leads to a quick mate, so the bishop must move.

61.c4 Be7 62.c5 Bf8 63.Kb5 Be7 64.c6 Bd8

The pawns are too far advanced for this defence to work.

65.Bg4

Now Black is in Zugzwang and must allow the c-pawn to move forward.

65...Ka8 66.c7 1-0

It was a really exciting last round!

'There will be dancing in the streets of Bude tonight!' (with thanks to Kevin Thurlow)

Nigel Povah provided the following additional summary of the tournament.

The 30th World Senior Individual Chess Championship concluded in Assisi, Italy on Saturday 26th November, with GM John Nunn winning the Over 65 age group with 9/11. Nunn had made a storming start, scoring 6½ from 7 before uncharacteristically slipping up against Danish GM Jens Kristiansen but he then bounced back impressively, scoring 2½ from his last 3 games, and secured the title when Kristiansen lost in the final round. John

Nunn deservedly added to his three Problem Solving World titles by winning his first OTB World title, having faced much the strongest field, comprising 4 GMs and 5 IMs.

Other notable performances in Assisi in the 65+ event came from Terry Chapman with 7/11, with Paul Hutchinson and Michael Stokes on 6½/11.

The Over 50 Championship was again won by the former 50+ World and European Champion, Georgian GM Zurab Sturua, with 8½/11 ahead of Lithuanian GM Maxim Novik on tiebreak. Keith Arkell finished top of the English contingent scoring 7½/11 and was disappointed to have dropped too many half-points throughout the event. FM Stephen Dishman finished on 6½/11, having faced 5 GMs, but sadly only adding two points in his last five games, thus missing his opportunity to make his third and final IM norm.

Scores for the remaining English players were as follows:

Over 65 – David Bray 6; Norman Hutchinson 5½; Paul Raynes 5½; Hassan Erdogan 4½; Brian Hewson 4/8

Over 50 – Petra Fink-Nunn 5; Ingrid Lauterbach 5; Owen Phillips 5; Nigel White 5

Chess in Schools and Communities



Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC) is a nationwide charity with a mission to introduce chess to schools and inner city communities and to highlight its social and educational

benefits. The charity was founded in 2009 and has steadily grown to have a presence across the country, with a focus on the key urban areas of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Leeds, Teesside, Birmingham and South Wales.



The charity teaches chess to over 15,000 children per year, many of whom get to visit the London Chess Classic/ChessFest

CSC delivers weekly chess sessions in over 250 schools nationwide. In some of these schools we run traditional chess clubs, either before school, at lunchtime, or after school. However, the core offering of the charity is to run chess lessons in curriculum time. By doing this we ensure our programme is fully inclusive. Girls, often under-represented in chess clubs, excel in our lessons and we often find that children with special educational needs flourish. In addition to the schools that participate in our programme, we have also supported chess at over 1,500 other schools, with staff training and the provision of free chess equipment.

To support our teaching, we have developed a unique 30-week curriculum consisting of lesson plans, worksheets and handouts that takes our students from complete beginners to proficient chess players over the course of a school year. The lessons are delivered by our nationwide network of tutors, all of whom are fully trained and have enhanced DBS checks. We offer [free training](#) to teachers and teaching assistants in our schools, ensuring that they

have the skills and knowledge to support our tutors in the classroom.



Over 300 children competed at our schools tournament held in Liverpool's iconic St. George's Hall in July 2022

In addition to our work in schools, CSC delivers regular chess lessons in a variety of community settings: libraries, hospitals, homes for older people, youth centres, and prisons (see [Channel 4 report](#) on our work in prisons). These lessons assume no prior knowledge of chess and are aimed at communities that experience high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Much of this work is aimed at tackling social isolation. The lessons are always free at the point of delivery.



Over 11,000 people attended ChessFest in London's Trafalgar Square - the UK's largest one-day chess event

CSC also encourages mass participation in chess through large-scale events such as the London Chess Classic and [ChessFest](#). The **London Chess Classic** usually takes place in December and includes a [schools festival](#) attended by up to 2,500 children a year. The children receive chess lessons, watch a 'Meet

the Grandmaster' show, and take part in a tournament against their peers from across the country. **ChessFest** is a week-long celebration of chess culminating in the charity taking over Trafalgar Square for a day of free family-friendly activities: lessons, simultaneous displays, and a living chess demonstration featuring 32 professional actors on a giant board.

CSC welcomes applications from people interested in our school, community, or prison programmes. We have vacancies across the country for paid work and for volunteers. CSC runs a comprehensive induction programme for new tutors, including a training course and a period spent shadowing an experienced CSC tutor. While it is important to have a basic knowledge of chess, we have found that teaching experience or the ability to work with children in a classroom setting is of greater value. Enthusiasm and a passion for learning are essential. If you are interested, please complete our [application form](#).

We are recruiting schools. If you want chess in your child's or grandchild's school please [contact us](#).

To find out more about the work of Chess in Schools and Communities please visit [our website](#).

Chess In Schools and Communities are Recruiting New Tutors

Passionate about chess? Chess in Schools and Communities are recruiting new tutors nationwide to teach in schools, libraries and prisons. We have particular need in the following areas — Leeds, Merseyside, Birmingham, Cardiff, Essex and North/East London.

We run a comprehensive induction programme for new tutors, including a training course and a period spent shadowing an experienced CSC tutor.

Our tutors are currently active in over 250 schools, libraries and prisons in 80 boroughs across England and Wales. Whilst it is important to have a basic knowledge of chess, we have found that having classroom experience or the ability to work with children in a classroom setting is of greater value. Paid and volunteer roles are available with flexible hours. Sign up now to become a Chess in Schools tutor at www.chessinschools.co.uk

June Book of the Month from Ben Graff

Think like a Super GM

by Michael Adams & Philip Hurtado
(Quality Chess)

I remember playing in the same rapid tournament as Michael Adams when we were both teenagers. It might have been a Cheltenham and Gloucester event, although after all these years I can't be sure. I do recall that we were wearing similar-style leather jackets, but our shared fashion sense in no way translated into comparable skill at the board. While I trailed in somewhere in the middle of the field, Michael aced the contest en route to a brilliant career which would take him to number four in the world and seven British title victories. Even back then, all the participants knew that he was destined for bigger things, and so it proved.



Think Like a Super-GM is an innovative attempt by Adams and Hurtado to explore how chess players of different standards analyse, coupled with expert guidance from Adams as to the lessons which can be drawn. As both authors note, this is a book which is difficult to categorise, and they are to be commended for their originality. In essence, Adams and Hurtado try to get to the core of what goes through a chess player's mind when they look at the board in front of them, with a view to helping all of us improve our approach.

The pair are a superb combination: Adams the elite player who has seen everything and beaten everyone; and Hurtado the keen club enthusiast who has forged a successful career as a process improvement specialist. Between them they are as well-equipped as any to try and help the rest of us understand why we make the choices that we do at the board, and to consider ways in which on occasion we might make better ones.

It must be the case that we probably all, to a greater or lesser extent, have an uneven technique, and this is something Adams notes. "I am frequently surprised – both by the, to me, difficult concepts that [weaker players] understand, and by other areas where their understanding seems surprisingly lacking from my point of view." The encouraging point being that we all have something to work with, to build on, and this is where *Think Like a Super-GM* comes in.

The book consists of forty puzzles, which the reader is invited to solve. These were predominantly selected by Hurtado himself, which Adams rightly identifies as another strength. "There are lots of books where GMs give their views on what they think other players need to know, but these may not always ask the questions people want answered." The other positions come from Michael Adams's own games, where he is of course perfectly placed to provide a unique insight.

Philip Hurtado, notebook in hand, asked a host of players of different standards to also work through the problems and explain their solutions. In essence the book is an experiment that "...would uncover how a top grandmaster makes decisions. I could then compare it to the way I think about my own moves, and learn from the differences."

The solvers ranged from Grandmasters Keith Arkell, Eduardo Iturrizaga and Renier Vazquez, through to IMs Harriet Hunt and Juan Reyes, Louise Head and numerous club players including Nathanael Paul, John Green and Penny Wood. I was delighted to see that many of the club participants came from Solihull Chess Club, a fine bastion of chess in the Midlands.

Michael Adams provides his own solutions, and we explore some of the differences in approach and what they might mean. Further puzzles are shared, and Hurtado undertakes statistical assessments of the players' choices. He also utilises a range of 'eye-tracker' experiments which are intriguing, highlighting as they do that a grandmaster seems to instinctively know where on the board they should be looking with a greater degree of regularity than the rest of us.

I learnt a lot, not just from Michael Adams's analysis, but also from reading the thoughts of other players at different levels. There were places where I felt in sync with my fellow solvers and others where I now recognise that there are certain positions I need to do more work on. I would imagine this would be the same experience for most. Just playing through the puzzles was of itself a very pleasant way to spend a few hours.

Adams draws some interesting conclusions when he reflects on the players' attempts to solve the problems. While stronger players of course calculate more accurately, they also seem to have a better sense of when to

calculate. In endgames there is a particular need to be concrete, and some of the solvers (much as I would) on occasion resorted to comments along the lines of “...sort of wait and see what Black does,” when we need to be harder-headed. Avoiding leaping in, taking our time, being patient when the situation demands it, are all points that Adams brings to life by looking at how the players approached the specific positions.

There are no magic fixes; it all comes down to “working harder at the board”. Yet what *Think Like a Super-GM* will do is to help the reader understand how all too often we come to conclusions that are rushed or not fully thought through when in fact we all have the potential to do better. This is an inspiring and helpful guide that may or may not take us all the way to Super-GM, but is likely to give a lot of pleasure, and the genuine possibility of improving our play.

The Chess Trust



The Chess Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) established under the auspices of the Charity Commission (Registered Charity Number 1160881).

The Chess Trust was established in 2015. It was initially supported by a significant bequest from the estate of Kent junior organiser Richard Haddrell, and this bequest formed the basis for building plans to support chess. Since 2015 additional funds have been received through donations and bequests, and in 2022 the Chess Trust received the assets of the Permanent Invested Fund from the British Chess Federation (the English Chess Federation’s predecessor). The Trust intends to utilise any funds received to meet its objects in the immediate future and for the long term.

The Trust has two objectives:

1. The advancement of amateur sport by promoting the study and practice of chess in all its forms, principally, but not exclusively, for the benefit of residents of England; and
2. The advancement of education by promoting the development of young people through the teaching and practice of chess.

What does this mean in practice? It means that the Chess Trust can support a very wide range of activities for the advancement of the playing and teaching of chess. The only real limitation is that it cannot directly support professional players or pay their expenses.

Since 2018, the Chess Trust has established and supported the Accelerator Programme, a

chess development scheme available to England's top junior chess talents on a selection-only basis. Places on the programme are strictly limited, and participants have had the benefit of regular contact with an allocated mentor, who has helped to establish a personal development plan and to develop good working practices. Training camps at physical locations with support from elite international players have been held, and assistance has been provided before and during various international events. Mentoring has been provided by GMs Peter Wells and John Emms and IM Adam Hunt.

During 2022 the Chess Trust has expanded its activities. It has provided financial support to enable organisers of norm tournaments to bridge some of the gap between expected income and budgeted costs and has given those organisers the comfort that the financial risk of putting on a norm tournament can be mitigated, at least in part.

The Chess Trust has also established a fund to enable Ukrainian refugees now living in England to continue to play chess. A total of £10,000 has been made available, and applications are still very much welcome via the application form on the shortly-to-be-redesigned website at www.chesstrust.org.uk/. To date, 12 grants have been made to senior and junior, male and female players, and these grants have helped participation in events all over the country, from Northumbria to Hull to Torquay. Please encourage your Ukrainian clubmates to get in touch with us!

The Chess Trust has made all its grants for 2022, but applications are welcome for 2023. The Trustees usually meet at least twice a year to consider grant applications, and the next such meeting is in March. If you are considering applying for a grant, you may do so through the website. The Trustees can only make grants which are in accordance with our

objects above, but these are quite broad, and we will consider just about anything! All we ask in return is that recipients of grants make it known that support has been provided by the Chess Trust, be that via entry forms, social media or even banners at the event, as was the case at the Hull 4NCL International Congress held last month. We also ask for a brief report on the use of the grant and the benefits obtained, which we may publish on our website.

The Chess Trust was established with the help and support of the ECF, but importantly the Chess Trust is independent of the ECF, as it must be for Charity Commission purposes. The ECF CEO and Finance Director are ex officio Trustees, but others were selected and invited to become Trustees when the Chess Trust was established, being replaced by new Trustees when necessary. As well as the ECF Trustees (Mike Truran and Adam Ashton), the current Trustees are David Eustace, Sarah Longson, Stephen Greep, Malcolm Pein and Simon Brown. The Chair of Trustees since inception was Ray Edwards, who stepped down this year, and we owe him thanks for steering the Chess Trust through its early years and guiding it into its current position, where it can make a real difference to chess in England.

After Ray stepped down, the other Trustees asked me (Simon Brown) to become Chairman, and I was honoured to accept. As a fellow Kent chess player, I remember Richard Haddrell well from when I played in his junior tournaments in the 1970s, feeling slightly sheepish when on the receiving end of his (usually) benign reprimands for making too much noise with my contemporaries, including Daniel King, Clive Frostick and Ian Thompson amongst many others.

Of course, the Chess Trust is happy to accept donations and bequests now, and, as it is a charity, any such donations from a UK taxpayer will be eligible for the Gift Aid scheme which will benefit the Chess Trust and any higher rate

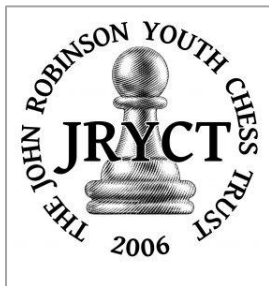
taxpayer. But it is the Trustees' intention over the next few years to demonstrate that the funds available to us can be spent wisely and responsibly and can make a real difference to chess in the UK, so that the donors of the future will know that the Chess Trust will find the best use for their funds.

If you wish to enquire about the work of the Chess Trust, please contact the Secretary David Eustace by email at david.eustace01@btinternet.com

event subsidy); the 4NCL Hull International Congress; the Northumbria Chess Masters; the Braille Chess Association; and awards to individual junior players.

If you wish to enquire about the work of the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, please contact the Chairman by email at admin@johnrobinsonchess.org or visit <https://johnrobinsonchess.org/>

The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust



The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, an independent grant-making charitable trust, was founded in 2006. The Trust was created following the death of Mr. John

Robinson on 1 February 2006. Our charity registration number is 1116982.

Applications for financial support by The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust are invited. They should be emailed to the Chairman (see email address below) and must meet the charitable objects of the Trust – *'to advance education by providing or assisting in the provision of facilities for the teaching development and supervision of the playing of chess amongst persons under the age of twenty one, resident in England or eligible to represent England at chess'*. Each year the Trust awards a total of approximately £25,000 in grants.

Recent grants include: support to the UK Chess Challenge (an ongoing bursary award scheme for Megafinal entries); Hastings Chess Congress (bursary awards for Masters entries); the Cambridge Girls Chess Initiative; the British Chess Championship (coaching for juniors and

Chess in Prisons

A visit to HMP Wakefield 24 August 2022

All photographs are used with the kind permission of HMP Wakefield

This visit had been outstanding for a long time due to the Covid pandemic and other reasons, so I was delighted to finally deliver on my commitment to visit HMP Wakefield on behalf of the English Chess Federation to give a chess simultaneous exhibition against ten players and hold a chess Q&A session with the prisoners.

HMP Wakefield is a Category A establishment, which is to say it houses some of Britain's most dangerous prisoners. It has held many infamous prisoners, but the day was about chess, not what people were there or why. Wakefield Prison was originally built as a house of correction in 1594. Most of the current prison buildings date from the Victorian era.



Carl's simul underway

The current prison was designated as a dispersal prison in 1967, holding 144 inmates, and it is the oldest of the dispersal prisons still operating across England and Wales. From what I saw it was still very fit for purpose.

'Here we go round the mulberry bush'

The exercise yard at HMP Wakefield once had a mulberry tree, around which female inmates who were also mothers used to exercise. This has been linked to the nursery rhyme *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* as attested to by former prison governor R. S. Duncan in his 1994 book. This origin of the song is also explained on the prison's website. There is no corroborative evidence to support this theory or to say it isn't true. The tree was removed in May 2019 as it had died. Thankfully (miraculously), a cutting from it had been taken by a retired prison officer and two small 'beginnings' were planted. I saw that two healthy bushes are now growing, which is excellent news.



Carl on a wing at HMP Wakefield

Prison Governor Tom Wheatley and Head of Reducing Offending Christine Lindsay both supported my visit. Without such commitment and vision I would never be able to set foot in a prison. Christine spent the day as host. Despite having recently had an operation on an ankle she pressed on and gave me a tour, which was absolutely fascinating. Her passion not just for putting on a chess event, but for her job in general (helping prisoners with

rehabilitation through education and thereby hopefully to reduce re-offending), shone through and everywhere I went I could see that Christine had managed to put the magic touch to the working environment for her and her staff – whom I also met and had lunch with (thanks again Christine). It is remarkable how a coat of bright paint can transform drab prison walls into a boost to the spirit just by walking down a corridor. A picture here, a motivational quote there – it all serves to make for a more positive environment for both prisoners and staff.

Christine showed me the woodwork shop, where prisoners make wonderful artefacts from furniture to children's toys, but the shining light was the workshop, where inmates recycled old mattresses to make new divans that were then sold. They have not been doing this for long. It is a new initiative and I think the only one on the prison estate, but already they have prevented almost 800,000 metal springs from going into landfill. This is remarkable, and just one of the positive stories that happens in a prison that the general public seldom if ever get to hear about.

That lunch incidentally was made by prisoners working for their catering qualifications, and everything about the prison said 'education and self-improvement' to me.

Back to the chess. I played ten opponents simultaneously and all were of a good standard. That is to say, they would easily take their place in a club team and local league. I was delighted that amongst the team players was one prison officer. Let's not forget that many officers encourage chess and unsurprisingly play against inmates. Chess is a game for everyone, after all. The games were all hard fought. The openings were sound and the middlegame to endgame struggles were often quite complex. Only in the endgames did I manage to capitalise on mistakes – which is in truth the essence of any sport. You not only

need to be aware of an opportunity, but you have to strike immediately. There's no time to be lost in chess, or in life.

I managed to win nine games and the final one was agreed drawn. I had my opponent on the run in the opening and hassled his queen which he had brought out way too early (not a good idea in chess) but he played a very committed 'gung ho' attack against me – pushing Harry the h-pawn all the way to h3 near my castled king, then he brought his queen and rook in, desperate to checkmate me, but I managed to keep calm and forced some key exchanges in the end. In fairness I did allow him a very important move back earlier on in our game but overall, he deserved his result. Well done indeed.

The games were all intense struggles. Thus I was pleased with 9½/10 with no losses.

Q&A session

After the simul we enjoyed a fascinating Q&A session and I was asked many questions about chess. The first was the most difficult. 'Who is the youngest player you have ever lost to?' I couldn't answer this. I still can't, as I have no idea! Prisoners were keen to learn more about how to study, castling choices, en passant, pawn structures, knights v bishops, when to exchange pieces what is the best opening, chess personalities, my experience of chess in other prisons, and especially that old chestnut the 50-move rule, which for some reason many prisoners do not understand. They seem to think it is an 18 or 27 move rule, but I have no idea why.

I am the chess columnist for the prison newspaper *Inside Time*, and the players were eager to point out that they always read and enjoy the column and the puzzles I provide. At all times they were respectful to me, the prison staff and one another – all that mattered was the chess. This is how it always is. What a credit they were.



Carl's Q&A was very popular

I donated several chess sets, books and magazines (on behalf of the ECF) and also met with the Governor afterwards to discuss the benefits of chess in prison and encourage the regular playing of the game at HMP Wakefield. Both Governor Tom and Christine are receptive to this, having seen the effect of chess on the prisoners, some of whom would simply not have mixed outside the chess scenario. I look forward to seeing if any progress is made. Chess as ever unites people; it brings them together in a way that real life does not seem able to do. It is a productive use of time in a place where time is all that people have.

My sincere thanks are extended to the team at HMP Wakefield, and to the ECF for their continued support of chess in prisons.

Testimony

This is what the prison said after my visit. The final paragraph is what makes it all worthwhile, and so rewarding for me.

'Carl visited HMP Wakefield on 24 August. We have a lot of avid chess players here who eagerly awaited his visit. Carl pitted his wits against nine prisoners and one member of staff in chess games simultaneously. It was astonishing to see a group of men who would normally not even be in the same room together, let alone have a group discussion. But they were all in the chess

zone, totally focused on their own individual games. Carl was amazing; I don't know how he played all those games at once and the prisoners were in awe of him.

'Once the simultaneous display was finished Carl answered many questions from the group who were enthralled in his knowledge and anecdotes. This has made it evident that chess breaks down barriers between people and brings people together harmoniously with a common interest and goal to play and improve their chess skills. This is something that we will endeavour to repeat at HMP Wakefield in the future to build a regular chess tournament amongst different groups of prisoners and staff.

'The books that Carl gave us were donated to the library so that everyone has the opportunity to read them. The magazines were given out to the participants to read and share on their respective units.

'Thank you, Carl, for your visit; both the prisoners, staff and the Senior Management Team (SMT) were amazed at your skills, and whilst prisoners were playing against you they were no longer in prison, they were in that game of chess, mind body and soul, and prison didn't exist. It shows the power of chess and the lessons that can be transferred to daily life and how it can mitigate some of the pains of imprisonment.'

Regards
Christine Lindsay
Head of Reducing Offending

'They tried to bury us; they didn't know that we were seeds'
--- Mexican proverb

Second Intercontinental Online Chess Championship for Prisoners

The International Chess Federation (FIDE) ran the second Intercontinental Online Chess Championship for Prisoners, held from 13-14 October 2022, on the International Day of Education in Prison. It was part of the Chess for Freedom programme and, following the International Championship first held in 2019 and the Intercontinental Online Chess Championship for Prisoners 2021, the event aims to introduce chess as a tool for education and social inclusion in prisons of different countries.

The Championship, organised by FIDE and the Cook County (Chicago, IL, USA) Sheriff's Office and hosted by Chess.com, was open for teams of four players representing any correctional facility (jail or prison) without any specification by age and gender of prisoners. The tournament was played online and streamed live on FIDE's YouTube channel.

Day one was the group stage, divided into eight teams per group, with the top two qualifying for the Championship finals on day two. The time control was 10 mins + 5 seconds increment per move.

The ECF and the charity Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC) worked together on this project. Carl Portman and Nigel Towers managed England 1 (male) whilst Peter Sullivan was the manager of the England 2 (male), England Women and England Youth teams.

The wonderful headline news is that England won silver and bronze medals! Peter Sullivan wrote 'Many congratulations to a joint Isis/Wandsworth team which represented England in the Youth Championship and won a silver medal. Emphatic wins against Niger and India in the group stages set up a semi-final with Ecuador and the team lost a close final to

Serbia. This far exceeded any reasonable expectations for a team playing in its first Championship.

'Congratulations also to Bronzefield, who won a bronze medal for England in the Women's Championship. Decisive wins against the US and Ecuador gave the team a strong start. This result comes after a fine runners-up performance in the Novus British Prisons Chess Championship. The team overcame many setbacks, even the chess coach's car breaking down on the way to the match.



One player watches as his colleague enjoys his game

'There was a fine performance too by Wandsworth playing as the England second team, who finished tenth out of 85 teams in the Open Championship, our strongest ever result. This team was not even confirmed to play until two weeks before the tournament but grabbed the chance with both hands. The team were drawn in a tough group including Zimbabwe, last year's beaten finalists, and looked out of it half-way through the group stages. However, they performed fantastically in the closing games to reach the final stage with the help of wins against the USA and Argentina.

'We knew we had some talented players, but it has been a revelation to see just how much effort they put in. There has been a real sense of teamwork with officers, men and women, the education teams, volunteers and

governors all getting behind the project. We have been genuinely surprised by the number of people who have gone out of their way to support us.

‘It was a real achievement to secure reliable internet access for all four teams to play matches against the likes of India, Zimbabwe, El Salvador and Serbia. Many thanks to the Novus Digital team for their pioneering work to make this happen and for all their support during the tournament.’



England 1 from HMP Hewell are in the zone

The England 1 team from HMP Hewell had a marvellous day. It was the first time that any of the players had done anything like this and they had a lot of learning to do in the weeks leading up to the tournament. They had all played chess in prison before this – but they all readily agreed that they could improve. There were no standout players (that is to say regular chess players) and Nigel and Carl gave as much coaching help as they could prior to the event. Every player was committed to the project and gave their all. They worked together to develop their game, and they improved as time went on. Getting used to playing online takes a bit of time, but they all threw themselves into the task and were soon up and at it. They did not qualify for day two – and to be fair, this was not surprising, but they did dig out draws against Germany and Bulgaria.

Speaking as ECF representatives, Nigel and I thoroughly enjoyed our visits to HMP Hewell and this group of men became ‘a second family’ to us. The prisoners were always

respectful to each other, the staff, Nigel and me, and we could have asked no more of them. It was a genuine privilege to work with this group of prisoners, who showed that they have something to offer in life. **It is also worthwhile to note that this England team consisted of English, Albanian, Somalian and Bulgarian players, so chess really has no barriers to playing, and is open to all regardless of skin colour, gender, background, origin or ability.**

We hope that chess is their friend for life and that the disciplines learned from the game, such as thinking before moving, being responsible for decisions, planning, and how to deal with success and failure magnanimously, are all things that will be transferred to real life.

This event shows what can be done when there is a collective will – in this case globally – to do something positive. It was a success in every way, and that is cause for celebration. You can visit the ‘Chess for Freedom’ pages on the FIDE website here to learn more about chess in prisons:

<https://chessforfreedom.fide.com/>

Further, if you visit the chessresults.com website you can find the results: <https://chessresults.com/fed.aspx?lan=1&fed=FID>

... and the games are here:

<https://www.chess.com/events/2022-intercontinental-online-chess-championship-for-prisoners>

It is true that England 1 were not the strongest team; however, I am going to give a game played by one of the men at HMP Hewell who had not played much chess at all in the build-up to the finals. He had suddenly ‘emerged’ as board one, late in the day, and managed to win three in a row. This was nice, and Grandmaster Simon Williams might approve of a certain h-pawn being utilised.

There are many mistakes, but it was fun to watch. I should note that I had to follow the

event online (after all those months of preparation!) because I contracted Covid-19 and was therefore unable to attend in person. My thanks go to Nigel and the team at HMP Hewell, including Novus staff, for making it happen on the day.

Annotated game with notes by Carl Portman

England A – Serbia A [D00]

Intercontinental Online Chess Champions 2022

Our player was White, and I shall refer to him as 'M'.

1.d4 d5 2.Nc3

This move is slightly unusual, but very playable.

2...Nf6 3.e3 e6 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.Bd2 Bb4 6.Qe2 0-0 7.0-0-0

With this move White makes a declaration. He is going to concentrate his forces on the kingside to get at the opposing king.

7...a6 8.e4 Re8 9.e5



A good move, taking space and removing a very important defender.

9...Nd7 10.Bg5 Ne7 11.Na4

Impressive. White takes care of his structure before going for the attack. Preparation is everything.

11.h4 Bxc3 12.bxc3 and White's king is exposed, so there's no need to rush.

11...b6 12.Qe3 g6?!

This move cannot be recommended. Why? Because it creates 'holes' around Black's king, and opens up squares for White to invade. Note how the king is alone, with his army over on the queenside.

13.Qf4

The queen inches closer, with venom in her heart.

13...Rf8

13...b5 14.a3 bxa4 15.axb4 c5 16.dxc5 is interesting.

14.h4!



Move of the day at HMP Hewell. 'M' uses Harry the h-pawn (as we call him in chess) to carve open the black position. Never again think of pawns as lowly - they can do great damage. Here, White makes no secret of his intent. Crash through, or as Jim Morrison would say: 'Break on through to the other side.'

14...Qe8

Look how limited Black's moves are. Note how free White is to play several options. He is winning here, but can he drive his supremacy home? You bet he can.

15.h5!

Go baby! There was little that Black could do to stop this. The rook on h1 is supporting his pal and waiting also for his queen to join him.

15...Nb8

What a sad state of affairs for the black knight, returning to the stable whence he came.

16.hxg6?!

Whilst this is not technically the best move, White has opened up the h-file, ready to attack.

16.Bf6 was best. Why? White wants to play queen to h6 and mate on g7 - a big threat. Now for example 16...Nd7 17.Bd3 Nf5 18.Bxf5 Nxf6 19.exf6 exf5 20.Qh6 and it is game over.

16...Nxg6?



This is the final nail in the coffin. 16...fxg6 17.Bf6 was necessary.

17.Qh2!

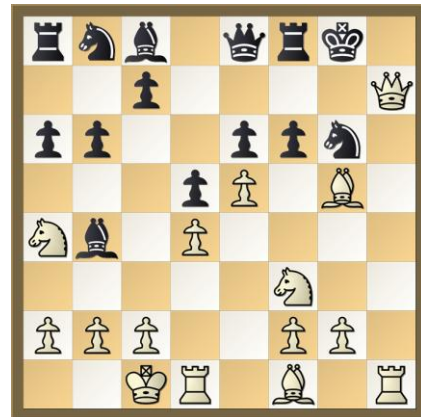
Gosh! Well spotted. It is a fact that backward queen moves can be very hard to find in chess. I saw this possible move 'live' on the internet and hoped that White would play it - he did. It is now checkmate in four moves against any defence.

17...h5 18.Qxh5

Note again how 'Harry the h-pawn' cleared the file for the attack and the rook and queen capitalised on it.

18...f6 19.Qh7# 1-0

The final position

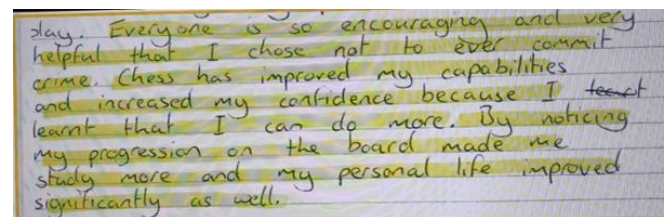


Brutal. In chess, any game that finishes in fewer than 20 moves is called a 'miniature' so this is a game to be very proud of for 'M.'

With thanks to:

The Cook County Sheriff's Office; The ECF; CSC; FIDE; NOVUS; HMPPS; Chess.Com; and all staff, organisers and participants.

One final reminder – why chess in prisons? This is only one piece of testimony from a prisoner



ECF Awards 2022

President's Award for Services to Chess

Jimmy Adams; Richard Freeman; Colin Green; Ray Pomeroy; Mick Riding

Contribution to Women's Chess

Lorin D'Costa

Contribution to Junior Chess

Dale James

Club of the Year

Gosforth Chess Club

Small Club of the Year

Holmfirth Chess Club

Congress of the Year

Durham

Contribution to Community Chess

John White and Christopher Skulte
Warwick University Chess Club

No awards were made in the categories of *Contribution to Online Chess* and *Accessible Chess*. Next year we will ask for nominations to be made in a more standardised format. This will aid the evaluation and reporting structure. — *Stephen Greep, Chairman, ECF Awards Committee*

Regarding the citations made for the successful 2022 ECF award winners, this year has required a little more editing than normal for presentation to the Board. A number of the entries were very long, and some have been edited down. All citations have been approved by the award winners. The Committee have discussed future publicity and ways to increase the number of award nominations in future years. You can find the citations online here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-awards-2022/>

Book of the Year 2022



Think like a Super-GM

Michael Adams and Philip Hurtado
Quality Chess pp464 £29.50

The two authors, in conjunction with the publisher, have produced a book of great interest and originality. Adams is a Super GM, whilst Hurtado has an engineering, scientific, statistical background, and they have combined to answer the question: how does a Super GM think? To do this, players of varying ability from amateur to GM were asked to examine 40 selected positions, find the best and follow up moves, and the time taken, and their thoughts were recorded. These were then analysed and compared. The reader can then do the tests themselves and see how they rate against the panel.

Adams provides full analysis of the test positions to reveal what is going on, so the reader can evaluate their performance. Finally, Hurtado gives a Puzzle Commentary whilst Adam writes *Adams Insight* giving a Super GM's overview.

Part Four is headed 'Conclusions from the Puzzles'. Both Hurtado and Adams answer this question from their different perspectives.

Whilst there is some overlap the differences between them are fascinating and interesting. The last chapter, 'Eye Tracking Experiment', is where players studied positions and their eye movements were captured by camera/technology whilst they thought. This is a new field of chess study and the results are well worth reading.

The publishers, Quality Chess apart from being involved from the beginning, have arranged the often complex material excellently. The production of the book is to a high standard, so the book is a pleasure to handle and read.

A very worthy Book of the Year. The information required to think like a Super GM can be found in this book – all that remains is to become one!

— Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska, Sean Marsh
3rd October 2022

Michael Adams' Game of the Month



January 2022

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

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

R. Haria – L. Trent

English Rapid Championship 2021

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

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

7.0–0 0–0 8.Re1



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

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

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

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

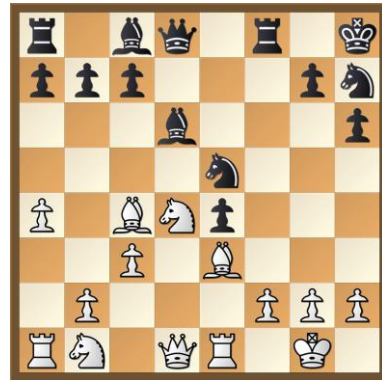
After 11.Bd5 f4 12.Bc1 Bf6 is good, and the intriguing 12...g5 13.Bxc6 g4 14.Bd5 gxf3 15.Qxf3 Qe8 followed by Ng5 also looks quite dangerous.

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

12...Bxd6! A good move, stronger than the tempting 12...exf3 13.dxe7 Qxe7 14.g3 Bh3 15.Nd2 Rad8 16.Qb3 when it is not so easy to exploit the pawn on f3, due to White's well developed pieces. The alternative 12...cxd6!?

13.Nd4 d5 14.Be2 Bg5! is also very sensible - Black has taken over the centre.

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



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

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

14...Nf6! is better aiming for Ng4. After 15.Nd2 (15.h3 Nd5! is crushing 16.Nc2 Nxe3 17.Nxe3 Qh4) 15...Neg4 16.Bxg4 Black has two promising tries, but White can weather the storm: 16...Nxg4 (16...Bxh2+ 17.Kxh2 Nxg4+ 18.Kg1 Qh4 19.N4f3 exf3 20.Nxf3 is ok) 17.h3 Bh2+ 18.Kh1 Bf4 19.Nxe4! (19.hxg4? Qh4+ 20.Kg1 Qh2+ 21.Kf1 Qh1+ 22.Ke2 Bxg4+) 19...Bxe3 20.fxe3 Qe7 21.Rf1 Bd7 22.hxg4 Qxe4 23.Nf5 is only a little better for Black.

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

17.b5 axb5 18.axb5 Rxa1 19.Qxa1 Neg4, and White's queen will be missed on the kingside.

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

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

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

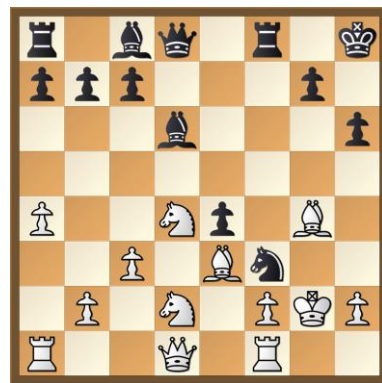


17.Bg4 17.Bxf4 Bxf4 18.b4 (18.g3 Bxd2 19.Qxd2 c5 20.Nb3 Qb6 21.Nc1 Bh3 is crushing, or 18.Nc4 Nh3+ 19.gxh3 Bxh3 opens the White king allowing the Black queen to join the attack.) 18...Nh3+ 19.gxh3 (19.Kh1 Bxh2 leaves White's king too open: 20.gxh3 Bxh3 21.Kxh2 Qh4 22.N2f3 exf3 23.Nxf3 Rxf3 24.Bxf3 Bxf1+)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

17...Nxc2 Effectively the winning move, as the only escape route unsurprisingly eludes Ravi,

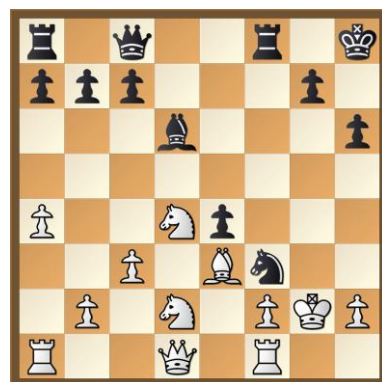
but objectively 17...c5 18.Nb5 Bb8 lining up a lot of nasty threats was stronger 19.g3 (19.Bxc5 Bxg4 20.Qxg4 h5! 21.Qd1 Ngh3+! 22.Kh1 Qg5 23.g3 Qxc5.) 19...Nfh3+ 20.Kh1 a6 keeping a big advantage.

18.Kxc2 Nf3 The slow 18...c5!?! 19.Nb5 Bf4 also leaves White with terrible practical problems, e.g 20.Bxc8 Rxc8 21.Bxf4 Rxf4 22.Nc4 Qf6 and there are too few defenders available to stop a decisive breakthrough. 23.Qh5 Nf3 24.Qh3 Qg6+ 25.Kh1 Rh4 26.Qxc8+ Kh7 27.Qc7 Qh5 mates soon. The correct 21.Nc4! Qe8 22.Qg4! h5 23.Qh4 hangs on.



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

19...Qxc8



20.Rh1? White has only one, hard to see move here: 20.Rg1! Nxc2 (20...Qg4+ 21.Kh1 Qh3 22.N4xf3 exf3 23.Nf1, or 20...Nxc2 21.Qh5 get White out of trouble) 21.Qxg1 Bf4 22.Re1

leaves White's king still open, but exchanges have doused the flames for now. Instead, 20.N2xf3? exf3+ is hopeless 21.Kh1 (21.Nxf3 Qg4+ 22.Kh1 Rxf3) 21...Qh3.

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

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



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

Jon Speelman is not such an active player these days, but he remains a stalwart of the 4NCL. This game played in the re-opening weekend, showcases his superb endgame technique, and the idiosyncratic king march is also typical of his style.

The advantages of the bishop against a knight is one theme here; however, the difference in king activity is the really important factor. White's monarch remains rooted to the spot, whilst Jon's king traverses the whole board, causing chaos on its travels and eventually causing the White position to collapse.

March 2022

M. Walker – J. Speelman

4NCL 2021

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nf3 Bb4 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bd2 Nc6 9.Bd3 Be7 Black has lost time with the bishop, but this sets up a potential opportunity to play Ndb4 and grab the d-pawn.



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

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



23...Rf8+



10.a3 White should have met the threat more dynamically. After 10.0-0 Ndb4?! 11.Be4 Nxd4?! 12.Bf4 gives great compensation. White could also have tried 10.Nxd5 Qxd5 11.0-0 as again it is not easy for Black to grab the money and run: 11...0-0 (11...Nxd4? 12.Qa4+ Nc6 13.Be4) 12.Re1 Nxd4?! 13.Nxd4 Qxd4 14.Bc3 with a lot of White's pieces aimed at the kingside.

10...Bf6 11.Be3 It was stronger to continue developing, as it is still risky to grab the pawn: 11.0-0 Bxd4? (11...Nxd4? 12.Nxd4 Bxd4 13.Qa4+) 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.Qa4+ Nc6 14.Nxd5 is very tricky for Black 14...Qxd5 (14...exd5 15.Rfe1+ Be6 16.Bb4 prevents castling) 15.Be4 Qxd2 16.Rfd1 Qxb2 17.Bxc6+

11...e5 The calm 11...Nce7 might have been expected, Jon's move simplifies the position, but matters are still far from simple.

12.dxe5 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.dxe5 Nxe5 14.Nxe5 Qxe5 15.0-0 0-0 is a little more comfortable for Black, as the pawn on b2 is loose.

12...Nxe3! Black's idea; he will gain the bishop pair and the better structure.

13.fxe3



13...Nxe5 13...Bxe5 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Bb5+ Bd7 16.Qh5 is fine for White.

14.Bb5+ 14.Nxe5 Bxe5 15.Bb5+ Bd7 transposes to the game.

14...Bd7 15.Nxe5 Bxe5 15...Bxb5 16.Qb3! 0-0 17.Qxb5 a6 18.Qc5 b6 19.Qd5 Qxd5 20.Nxd5 Bxe5 21.Nxb6 Bxb2 22.Rb1 Bc3+ 23.Ke2 is roughly equal.



16.Qxd7+?! Too compliant. White should have played 16.Qd5! Bxc3+ (16...Qh4+ 17.g3 leads nowhere as 17...Bxg3+ 18.hxg3 leaves the rook on h1 defended by White's queen.) 17.bxc3 Bxb5 (17...a6? 18.0-0! is not in Black's interests.) 18.Qxb5+ Qd7 19.Qe5+ Qe7 20.Qb5+ and to avoid repetition Black must displace his king; 20...Kf8 21.0-0 and the shattered pawn structure is balanced by Black's problems to connect the rooks.

16...Qxd7 17.Bxd7+ Kxd7 Black's king is quite happy to stay in the centre, and the influential

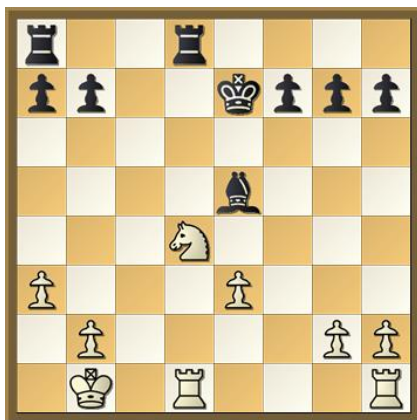
bishop and neater pawns are a significant advantage in the endgame.

18.0-0-0+ This seems obvious as the king covers b2 with gain of time, but 18.Rd1+ Ke6 19.Ne2 Rhc8 (19...Bxb2 20.Nf4+ is tricky) 20.Nf4+ was also possible.

18...Ke6 19.Nb5 Rhc8+ Jon is reluctant to allow a capture on a7, but 19...Rac8+ 20.Kb1 Rhd8 was equally playable as 21.Nxa7 Rxd1+ 22.Rxd1 Rc5 23.a4 Ra5 24.Nb5 Rxa4 keeps an advantage.

20.Kb1 Rd8 Stronger than 20...a6 21.Nd4+.

21.Nd4+ Ke7 It is more practical to keep the bishop on the board for a bit longer.



22.Nf3 22.Nf5+ Kf8 and g6 will evict the knight later.

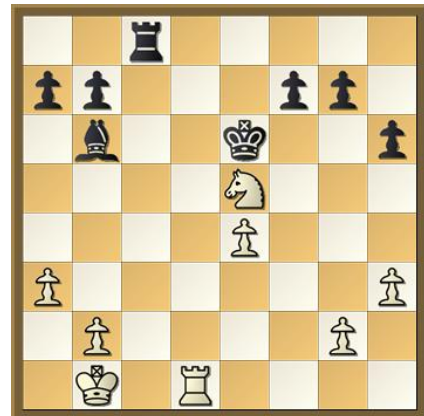
22...Bc7 22...Bf6 23.e4 Ke6 was the alternative, but this uses the bishop to attack the weakness on e3 directly.

23.Rhe1 Bb6 24.e4 At some point it is essential for White to swap a pair of rooks to enable his king to join the action. Here 24.Rxd8 Rxd8 25.Kc2 was one way.

24...h6 25.h3 Rac8 26.Ne5? This knight jump is a step in the wrong direction; it is well anchored on f3 and controls important squares on the d-file. Now was a good moment

for 26.Rxd8! Rxd8 27.Kc2; the opportunity won't arise again.

26...Rxd1+ 27.Rxd1 Ke6



28.Nd3 The reverse ferret 28.Nf3! Rc4 29.Re1 was tougher. White's knight never finds a stable post after this.

28...Rc4! 29.Re1 29.e5 Re4! leaves the pawns on e5 and g2 both vulnerable, 30.Kc2 Re2+ 31.Kc3 Be3. The check doesn't help; 29.Nf4+ Ke5 30.Nd5 Bd4 31.Re1 Bc5 32.Nc3 Bxa3! picks off a pawn.

29...g6 White is low on useful ideas so Jon throws in a waiting move. One big problem for White is that his king can't enter the game easily due to the dominant rook on c4, and it remains cut off for the rest of proceedings.

30.Re2 Neither 30.Nf4+ Ke5 31.Nd3+ Kd4 32.Nf4 Bc7, nor 30.b3 Rc3 work out well.

30...a5! Continuing to gradually improve the position.

31.Nf4+ 31.Ne1 allows the Black king to enter 31...Ke5 32.Nd3+ (32.Nf3+ Kf4) 32...Kd4 33.Ne1 a4. 31.Ka2 a4 doesn't help, waiting with 31.Re1 a4 32.Re2 h5 33.Re1 was still best.

31...Ke5 32.Nd3+ Kd4 Black's king continues to advance.

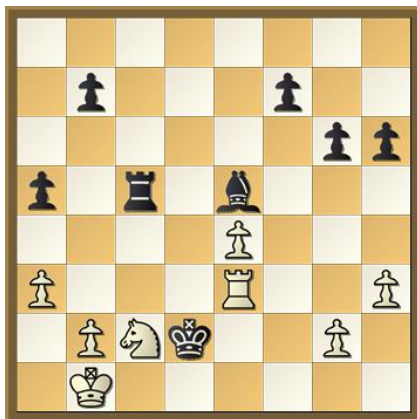


33.Nf4 33.Ne1! was a bit tougher.

33...Bc7 34.Nd5 Be5! Black's bishop has found the perfect central post.

35.Ne3 Rc5 36.Nc2+ After 36.Ng4 h5 37.Nxe5 Kxe5 the passive position of the White monarch decides.

36...Kd3 37.Re3+ Kd2 Black's king has walked right into the heart of White's position. Checks are only a temporary inconvenience.



38.Rf3 f6 Not 38...Rxc2? 39.Rf2+.

39.Ne3 39.Rf2+ Kd3 40.Rf3+ Kxe4 grabs a pawn.

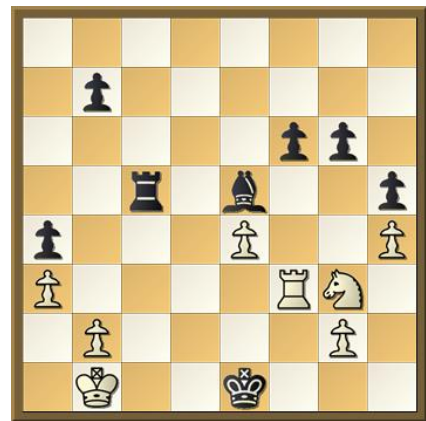
39...h5 It's natural to prevent any counterplay, but 39...a4 40.Ng4 Bd4 41.Nxf6 Rc1+ 42.Ka2 Rc2 is another way to do it.

40.Nf1+ Ke2 41.Ng3+ Ke1 The king settles on the back rank.



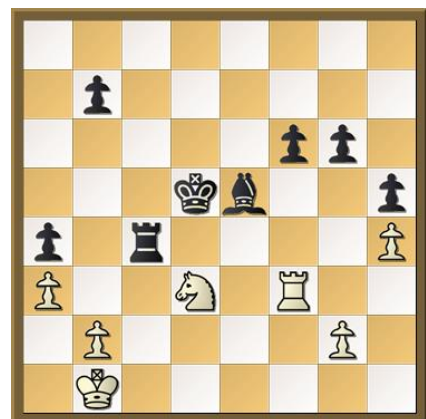
42.h4 42.Rf1+ Kd2 43.Rf2+ Ke3 44.Rf3+ Kd4 drives the king back but doesn't help White.

42...a4! White is fast running out of options.



43.Rf1+ Kd2 44.Rf2+ Kd3 45.Rf3+ Kd4 46.Nh1 Something has to give: 46.Ka2 Rc2, 46.Nf1 Kxe4 47.Nd2+ Kd4.

46...Kxe4 47.Nf2+ Kd5 48.Nd3 Rc4



White resigned, The coming rook and pawn endgame is hopeless: 49.g3 (49.Nxe5 fxe5 50.g3 e4 51.Rf7 e3) 49...Ke4 50.Nxe5 fxe5 with White's king still sidelined the e-pawn can't be stopped. 51.Rf7 Kd3, and now 52.Rxb7 e4 53.Rd7+ Rd4 54.Rxd4+ Kxd4 55.Kc2 e3 56.Kd1 Kd3 57.Ke1 e2, or 52.Rd7+ Ke2 53.Rxb7 e4 54.b3 axb3 55.Rxb3 e3.

June 2022

Looking at the games from the European Schools Championships, I was most struck by the high standard of play overall in the younger age groups.

This one is a good example. After a fluctuating struggle, a complicated endgame arises in which the key is maintaining activity, and by generally following this principle Zoe Veselow comes out on top.

When you have few pieces remaining, if they are deployed purely in defensive actions your opponent will have a free hand to improve their position.

Z. Veselow – B. Chiokadze

Girls U9 European School Championship 2022

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Ng5 Ngf6 One trap here is 5...h6 6.Ne6!, when the knight can't be captured due to mate.

6.Bd3 e6 6...h6 7.Ne6! still works out.

7.N1f3 Be7 After 7...h6 8.Nxe6! remains very dangerous, stranding Black's king in the centre 8...fxe6 (8...Qe7 9.0-0 fxe6 10.Bg6+ was the famous Deep Blue - Kasparov game that didn't end well for humanity.) 9.Bg6+. Instead, 7...Bd6 is the best move according to theory, placing the bishop more actively.

8.0-0 0-0 9.Qe2 h6 10.Ne4 Nxe4 11.Qxe4 Nf6 12.Qe2 The more aggressive 12.Qh4! was stronger; the queen is menacing on h4, and could drop back to g3 if required. 12...b6? 13.Bxh6 gxh6 14.Qxh6 already leaves White

with a winning attack, with ideas of Ng5 or Rae1–e5.

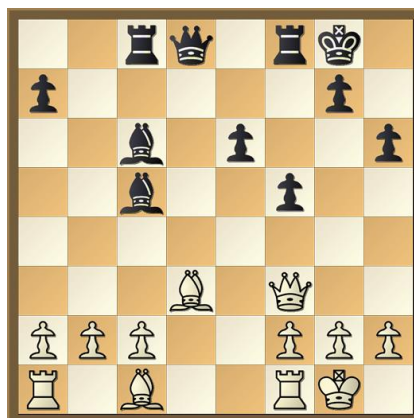
12...Bd7 12...c5 was possible immediately.

13.Nd2 Zoe plans to swap the knight on f6 and set up a queen and bishop battery, but this is a bit too clumsy. White would be better to continue developing, deciding how to utilise the extra space later - I would prefer 13.Bf4.

13...c5 14.dxc5 Bxc5 15.Ne4 Nxe4 16.Qxe4 f5 17.Qxb7 I was tempted by 17.Qe5 Qe7 18.Bf4, but 18...g5 19.Bd2 Bd6 drives White backwards.

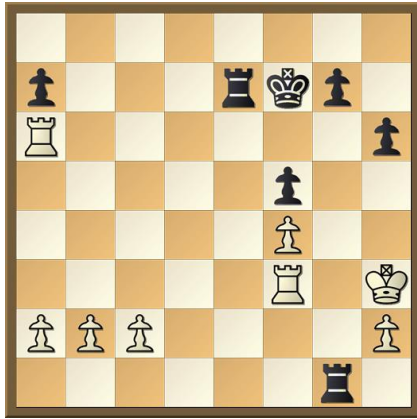
17...Rc8 18.Qf3 It's natural to retreat the queen, but 18.Be3 was possible due to some tactical points: 18...Bc6 (18...Bxe3 19.fxe3 Bc6 20.Qxa7 Qg5) 19.Qb3 threatens to take on e6 with check. Grabbing the hot pawn on b7 requires White to show great accuracy.

18...Bc6



19.Qe2 19.Qg3 was necessary, but 19...Rf6 is also rather dangerous; 20.Bf4?! Qe8 sets up Rg6.

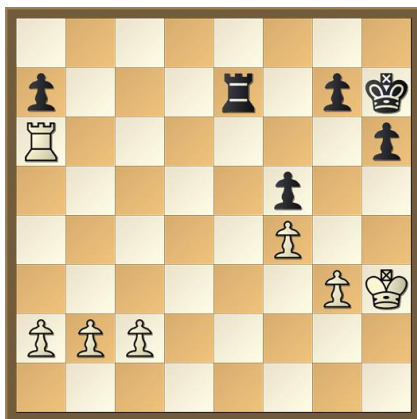
19...Qd5! 20.Qf3 Qxf3 21.gxf3 Bxf3 An important psychological moment. White's pleasant opening is only a memory, as Black has regained the pawn with a great attacking position. Zoe now starts defending resiliently,



44...Kg8 This retreat is too passive. 44...g5!? was well worth a try, after 45.fxg5 hxg5 46.Rxf5+? (46.Rg3!)=) 46...Ke8 Black is even winning with twin threats of Re3+ and Rh7+, showing the dangers of the king's being stuck on the rim. 44...Rc1 was also all right, keeping White busy by attacking c2.

45.Rg3 Rxf3+ Too compliant. After this swap White will have the more active rook, and it is striking how easy the conversion is after this. 45...Rf1! 46.Rxh6 Rxf4 is much more challenging.

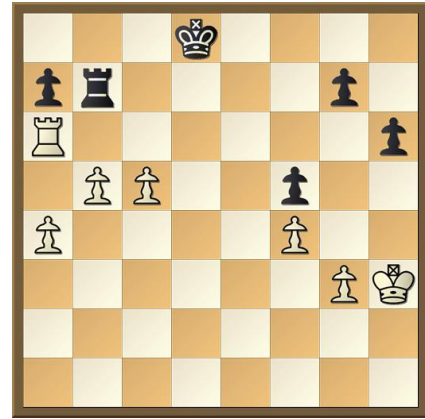
46.hxg3 Kh7



47.c4! Kg8 47...g5! was the last chance to create practical chances.

48.c5 Kf8 49.b4! Ke8 50.b5 White's pawns have swarmed forward, and the position has transformed.

50...Rb7 51.a4 Kd8



52.Rg6! The rook clears a path for White to play b6, but also tacks onto the pawn on g7 which immediately pays dividends.

52...Ke7 52...Ke8 53.c6 Rc7 54.a5 Kf7 55.b6 decides.

53.Rxg7+ Black resigned: the rook is lost.

August 2022

This month I am looking at a very tense game from the World Seniors. As our match with co-leaders USA had finished in a draw, it was important for both countries to keep winning, and the Italian host team presented a tough challenge, which we edged by the narrowest margin 2½-1½.

Mark Hebden won this key encounter, part of a four-game winning streak with which he finished the event. Although White gets a comfortable edge from the opening, Garcia Palermo resists stubbornly and, when he gets the chance to create counterplay, both kings, which are shakily placed on opposite sides of the board, feel the heat.

In a very difficult middlegame to negotiate, both sides have opportunities, and the assessment remains hard to figure - a tense situation, especially in a close team match. However, in the run up to the time control, Mark zones in, and with a series of accurate moves takes full advantage of a slip by his

opponent, to convincingly close out the game for a very significant victory.

M. Hebden – C. Garcia Palermo

World Seniors Over 50 Team 2022

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.e3 Surprised by his opponent's unexpected opening choice, and smelling preparation, Mark avoids his speciality 3.c3. A wise choice, as Garcia Palermo proves unfamiliar with the resulting positions.

3...b6 4.Bd3 Bb7 5.0-0 c5 This move looks very logical after Black has fianchettoed the light-squared bishop, but his development is lacking, so 5...d5 getting a solid central presence is stronger.

6.c4 cxd4 7.exd4 Be7 8.Nc3 d6 8...0-0 9.d5 is also not ideal. The best 8...d5 9.cxd5 Nxd5 10.Ne5 0-0 11.Qg4 is also not easy for Black, though.



9.d5! Very awkward to meet.

9...e5 9...exd5 10.cxd5 0-0 11.Nd4! is even worse, if 11...Nxd5? 12.Nxd5 Bxd5 13.Qh5. Carlos's response is sensible, but the central bridgehead on d5, cutting Black's army in two, means that he will struggle to co-ordinate his pieces.

10.Nh4! Simple play with 10.Rb1 0-0 11.Re1 Nbd7 12.b4 gives White a nice space advantage, but Mark rightly looks for more.

10...g6 10...Nxd5 11.cxd5 Bxh4 12.Bb5+ Nd7 13.Qg4 with Ne4 to follow is very nasty. As the bishop on b7 is biting on granite, perhaps 10...Bc8 11.Nf5 Bxf5 12.Bxf5 was a better option, although the bishop pair maintains a large edge.

11.Bh6 Preventing castling. The direct 11.f4 exf4 (11...Nbd7 12.f5) 12.Bxf4 Nbd7 13.Bh6 was also good.

11...Nbd7 11...Bf8 12.Bg5 Nbd7 13.f4 is no better.

12.f4 a6 Covering b5, after considering the variation 12...Qc7 13.Nb5 Qc5+ 14.Kh1 a6 15.b4.



13.Qe2 Qc7 14.fxe5 14.Rae1 0-0-0 15.Nf3 looks a good way to keep up the pressure, whilst maintaining options, and keeping Black's pieces bottled up.

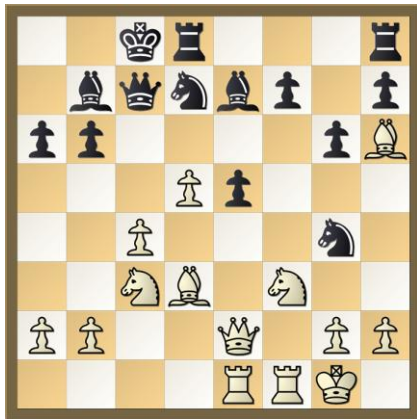
14...dxe5 Not 14...Nxe5? 15.Bg7.

15.Rae1 It's always tempting to force matters, but a simple line like 15.Kh1 0-0-0 16.Rad1 leaves Black with plenty of problems to resolve.

15...0-0-0 Not the safest place for Black's king, but at least it is finally out of the centre.

16.Nf3 White could have played 16.Kh1! several times over in the last few moves, but now it is necessary. This slip allows Black his first active moves into opposing territory.

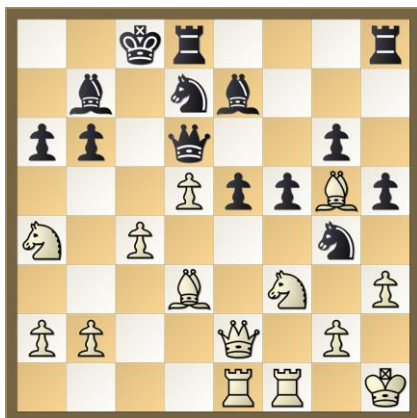
16...Ng4!



17.Bg5 Qc5+ 17...f6 was also very reasonable; 18.Bh4 Ne3 19.Rf2 (19.Qxe3?? Bc5) 19...Ng4 leads to an unusual repetition.

18.Kh1 f5 19.h3 h5 Now Black has made progress on the kingside, the position is much more double-edged – so White needs to accelerate his play on the other side of the board.

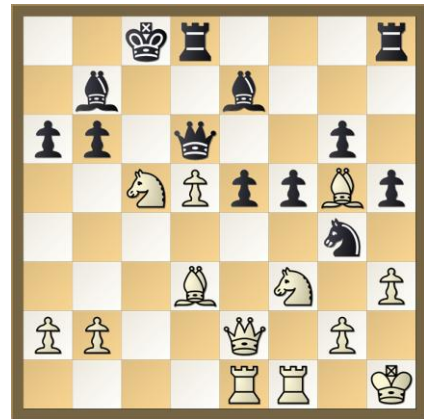
20.Na4! Qd6



21.c5 The sneaky 21.Nxb6+! Nxb6 22.c5! is a more effective way to open lines, when the

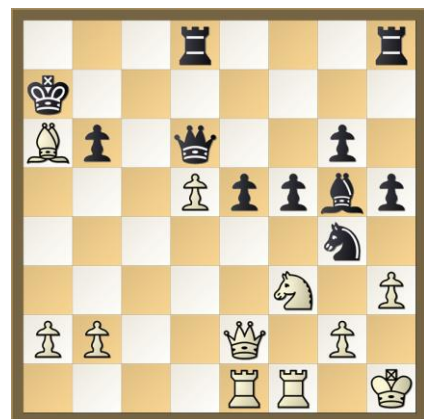
black king quickly becomes exposed. 22...Qxd5 (22...Qxc5? 23.Rc1) 23.Bxe7 Qxd3 (23...Rd7 24.Bd6 e4 25.Bxa6 exf3 26.Rxf3) 24.Bxd8 Qxd8 25.cxb6.

21...Nxc5 22.Nxc5 22.Bxe7! Qxe7 23.Rc1 Kb8 24.Nxc5 bxc5 25.Bxa6 is a bit more accurate.



22...Bxg5 Too ambitious - 22...bxc5! 23.Bxe7 Qxe7 24.Bxa6 e4! leaves all to play for.

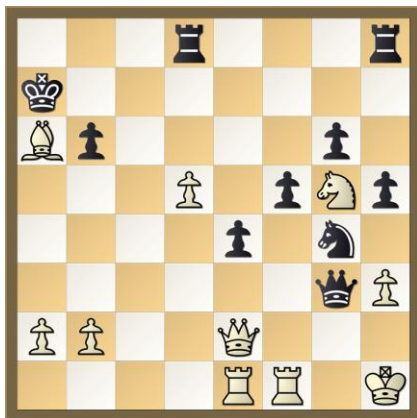
23.Nxb7 Kxb7 24.Bxa6+ Ka7



25.Nxg5 e4 Black has plenty of play for the material, albeit objectively insufficient.

26.g3! It's crucial not to allow Black's rook to join the attack: 26.hxg4? hxg4+ 27.Nh3! (27.Kg1 Qh2+ 28.Kf2 Qf4+ 29.Kg1 Qxg5; now Black's attack is too dangerous: 30.Qc4 (30.g3 Rh3) 30...Rh7 31.Bb5 g3 32.Qa4+ Kb8 33.Bc6 Rh1+ 34.Kxh1 Qh4+ 35.Kg1 Qh2 mate) 27...Qg3! 28.Bb5 gxh3 29.Kg1 hxg2 30.Qxg2 Qe5 is very messy.

26...Qxg3

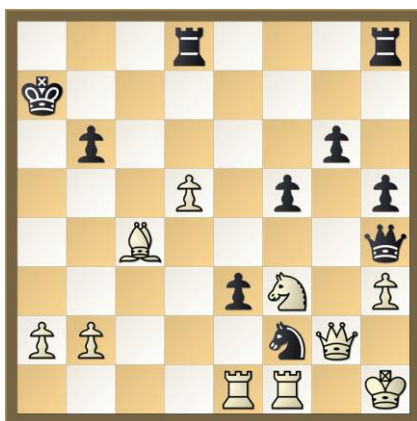


27.Bc4! A calm move, securing the bishop, and protecting the important pawn on d5. Black doesn't have that many pieces in the attack.

27...e3 27...Qh4 is a good practical try: 28.Qd2! e3 29.Qc3! is the strongest, with the idea of 29...Rh7! (29...Qxg5? 30.Qg7+ Kb8 31.Ba6) 30.d6! Qxg5 31.Bd5 wins for White, but this is a very difficult line to say the least.

28.Qg2 28.Rf3! was cleaner: 28...Nf2+ (28...Qh4 29.Nf7) 29.Qxf2 Qxf2 (29...exf2 30.Re7+) 30.Rxf2 exf2 31.Rf1 consolidates the material.

28...Qh4 29.Nf3 Nf2+

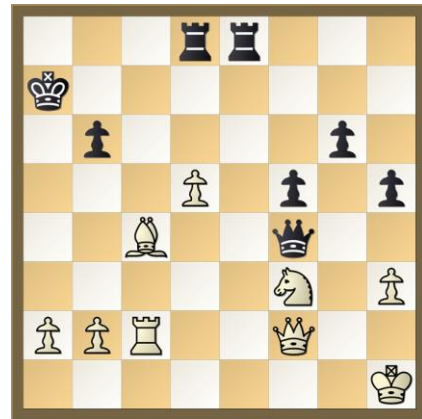


30.Rxf2! It's essential to remember that White's bishop is now loose: 30.Kh2? Qxc4.

30...exf2 31.Rc1 Qf4 32.Rc2 After this, the game is back in the balance. 32.Rc3! was

correct; Ra3+ ideas might be useful, but equally importantly the e3 square is covered preventing a black rook entering. After 32...Rhe8 33.Qxf2 g5 34.Ra3+ Kb7 35.Ba6+ Kc7 36.Rc3+ White arrives first.

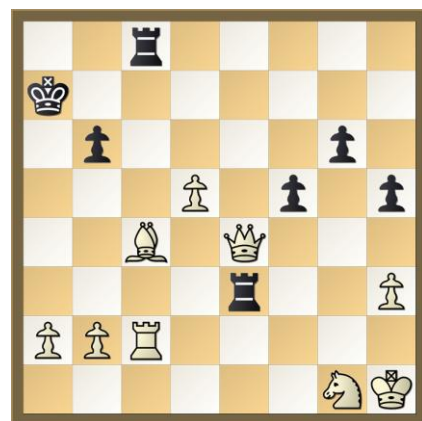
32...Rhe8 33.Qxf2



33...Re3 33...Rc8! 34.b3 Re3 35.Ng1 Qe4+ 36.Qg2 b5 achieves Black's dream of getting all his major pieces in the game. 37.Bd3 Qxg2+ 38.Kxg2 Rxc2+ 39.Bxc2 Rc3 leaves White needing accuracy to survive.

34.Ng1! The knight is safe here, and h3 is covered.

34...Qe4+ 35.Qg2 Rc8 36.Qxe4



36...fxe4? The final mistake, and from now on Mark is merciless. The pawn on e4 looks nice, but it leaves the rook on e3 hopelessly impeded, with too few squares available. More importantly, 36...Rxe4! keeps up the

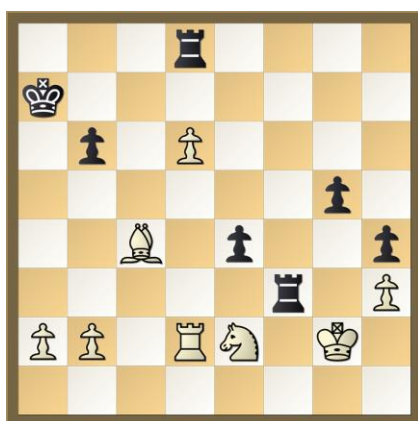
momentum by attacking the bishop, not allowing White any time. 37.Bd3 (37.b3 b5) 37...Rxc2 38.Bxc2 Re1 39.Kg2 Kb7 should lead to a draw.

37.d6! Advancing the passed pawn is very strong, as it can be reinforced by either bishop or rook.

37...Rd8 38.Rd2 g5 38...Re1 39.d7 e3 40.Rd4 leaves the e-pawn stuck.

39.Kg2 h4 40.Ne2! The knight re-emerges, preventing a check on g3.

40...Rf3



41.Nd4! Now there are forks everywhere.

41...Rg3+ 41...Rf6 42.Nc6+!

42.Kh2 e3 43.Re2 b5 All the tactics work like clockwork now: 43...Rxd6 44.Nb5+!, or 43...Kb7 44.Nf5! Rf3 45.Bd5+.

44.Nc6+ Kb6 45.Nxd8 bxc4 46.Nf7!

Black resigned. 46...Kc6 47.Ne5+ Kxd6 48.Rxe3 Rxe3 49.Nxc4+ is one way the game could have wrapped up.

September 2022

Jovanka Houska has been a reassuring presence on board one of the English

Women's team for many years; this game showcases her strengths.

Jovanka's superior positional understanding enables her to gradually get a good position, but with her dangerous opponent loading up pieces on the kingside, ready to attack if given any opportunity, the situation requires careful handling. As the game approaches a crisis between moves 17 -24, Jovanka takes a string of excellent decisions, blending calculation, assessment, and material considerations. This favourably brings clarity from chaos, and she ends up controlling all the key areas of the board.

Mobina Alinasab – Jovanka Houska

Women's Olympiad Chennai 2022

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.f3 e6 The Fantasy variation has been in vogue recently, 3...dxe4 4.fxe4 e5 5.Nf3 gives White a pretty good version of the King's Gambit, and otherwise Caro players have to adapt their usual plans, the light squared bishop being denied its customary post on f5.

4.Nc3 Bb4 5.Bd2 A French Winawer with the extra moves c6 and f3 has arisen, reducing the theoretical load, but increasing confusion.

5...b6 5...Ne7 6.a3 Ba5 was another option.

6.a3 Be7 More circumspect than 6...Bxc3 7.Bxc3 dxe4, when either 8.d5, or 8.Nh3 give White good play. Not 8.fxe4? Qh4+.

7.e5 I would have preferred 7.Be3 intending Qd2, and perhaps castling long later. Fixing the pawn structure reduces White's options, and dynamism.

7...c5 8.Nce2 Mobina understandably wants to play c3 to reinforce the central pawns, but this creates a bit of a logjam of minor pieces.



8...Nc6 Black should certainly avoid 8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 helping White's development.

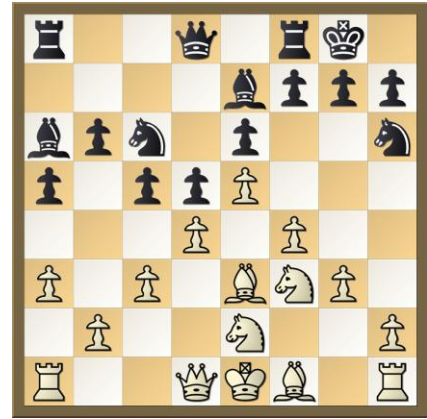
9.c3 a5 I like this patient move, gaining space before developing the bishop, but 9...Ba6 immediately was also possible.

10.f4 Ba6 11.Nf3 The sacrifice 11.f5! exf5 12.Nf3 was interesting, Nh6 is prevented, and White could continue Nf4 with an active position - a stack of knights like this covers a lot of territory and is often effective in French structures.

11...Nh6 12.Be3 12.Ng3 Bxf1 13.Nxf1 0-0 14.Ne3 is fine for Black, but at least it clarifies how to complete White's development.

12...0-0 I will mention again that it is crucial to keep the tension in the centre. After 12...cxd4? 13.Nexd4 is a good response, but 13.cxd4 also allows White's knight a handy square on c3 to unravel.

13.g3 If White tries to be active 13.h3 Nf5 14.Bf2 a4 15.g4 Nh4 is a good response.



13...a4! A good plan, creating a pathway for the knight to enter the sensitive queenside light squares.

14.Bh3 Na5 15.Qc2 Not 15.Qxa4 Nc4 16.Bc1 Nxb2 17.Bxb2 Bxe2. If White plans 15.g4 it might as well be played immediately, then 15...Nc4 is met by 16.Bc1.

15...Qd7 16.g4 Nc4 17.Bc1 17.Bf2 seems more logical now that the queen is covering b2.



17...f6! 17...cxd4 18.Nexd4 is still not a good idea. 17...f5 18.g5 Nf7 19.Bf1 is possible, but the blocked position is a relief for White.

Jovanka realises that if the position is opened White's lagging development and king stuck in the middle will be a problem, and that exposing her own king somewhat is a small price to pay for opening lines. Over the board this judgement would be far from simple with a board full of pieces, and her clarity of thought

25.0-0 Na5 26.Be3 White has to part with material: 26.Re1 Nb3 27.Rb1 Bd3.

26...Bxf1 27.Rxf1 Nc4 28.Bf4 Rc6



29.Qg3 Rac8 30.Ng2 30.Bg2 seems like a better attempt at untangling.

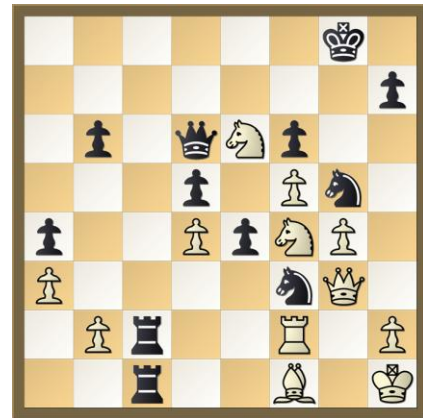
30...Bd6! More practical than the greedy 30...Nxb2.

31.Bxd6 Qxd6 32.Ngf4



33...Nd2! This square became available due to the bishop swap, smoothly opening the way for the rooks to infiltrate down the c-line.

33.Rf2 Ndf3+ 34.Kh1 Rc1+ 35.Bf1 R8c2! The rooks dominate.



36.Rxc2 Rxc2 A bit simpler than 36...Rxf1+ 37.Kg2 Rg1+ 38.Kf2 Rxc3 39.Rc8+ Kf7 40.hxc3.

37.Be2 Nxe6 38.fxe6 Nxd4 38...Rc1+! 39.Kg2 Rg1+ makes sense now though. The game is almost finished in any case.

39.g5 39.e7 Qxe7 40.Nxd5 Qe5 decides.

39...Nxe2 40.Nxe2 Qxg3 White resigned. After 41.Nxg3 fxc3 the White e-pawn is easily covered by Black's king, and conversion is simple.

Keith Arkell – Arkell’s Endings



The Rook and the Bishop

No one asks ... why the castle may only go straight and the bishop obliquely. These things are to be accepted, and with these rules the game must be played

- W Somerset Maugham

Rook and bishop v rook. I have managed to win this endgame every time, which is about once every two years. However, I have only been able to do so because I had some ideas of how to make the defence as hard as possible, whereas my opponents were either unaware of or not attentive to some key defensive techniques.

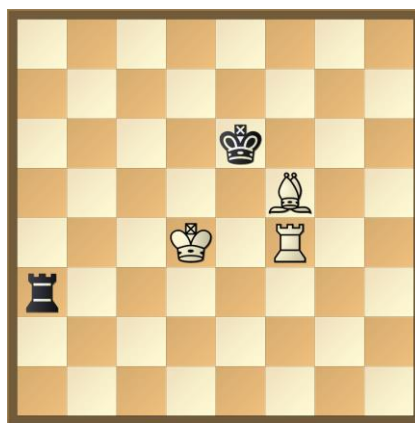
In today's article I want to highlight where some of my opponents went astray, and how they could have defended successfully.

Arkell, Keith - Gayson, Peter [D38]

BCF-ch, 1989

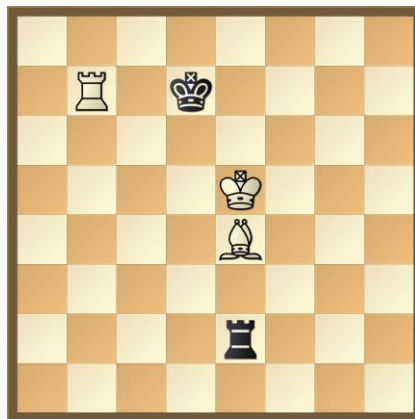
1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.d4 Nf6 4.Bg5 Bb4+ 5.Nc3 h6 6.Bxf6 Qxf6 7.e3 c6 8.cxd5 exd5 9.a3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 0-0 11.c4 Bg4 12.cxd5 cxd5 13.Be2 Nc6 14.Qb3 Qd6 15.h3 Bh5 16.0-0 Rfc8 17.Rfc1 Rc7 18.Rc5 Ne7 19.Rac1 Rac8 20.Qb4

Rxc5 21.dxc5 Qc7 22.Rb1 Bg6 23.Rb2 a5 24.Qb5 Qxc5 25.Qxc5 Rxc5 26.Rxb7 Nc6 27.Bb5 Be4 28.a4 Bxf3 29.gxf3 Ne5 30.f4 Nc4 31.Kf1 Nd2+ 32.Ke2 Ne4 33.f3 Nd6 34.Rb8+ Kh7 35.Bd3+ g6 36.e4 Kg7 37.Rd8 dxe4 38.fxe4 Nc4 39.Rb8 Nd6 40.Ke3 Rh5 41.Bf1 g5 42.f5 Rh4 43.Bg2 Nxf5+ 44.exf5 Rxa4 45.Be4 Kf6 46.Rb6+ Ke5 47.Rb5+ Kf6 48.Rc5 h5 49.Rb5 Ra1 50.Kd4 Rd1+ 51.Bd3 g4 52.hxg4 hxg4 53.Ke3 g3 54.Be4 Rf1 55.Rb2 a4 56.Ra2 a3 57.Rxa3 g2 58.Bxg2 Rxf5 59.Ra6+ Kg5 60.Be4 Rb5 61.Bd3 Rb3 62.Ra5+ Kf6 63.Rf5+ Ke6 64.Rf4 Ra3 65.Kd4 f5 66.Bxf5+



If Peter can now reach move 116 without losing his rook or getting mated the result will be a draw through the 50-move rule.

66...Kd6 67.Bd3 Ra1 68.Rh4 Rd1 69.Rh6+ Kd7 70.Ke4 Kc7 71.Bc4 Rd6 72.Rh1 Kc6 73.Rc1 Rh6 74.Bd5+ Kd7 75.Kd4 Rh2 76.Rf1 Rd2+ 77.Ke5 Re2+ 78.Be4 Ke7 79.Rb1 Kd7 80.Rb7+

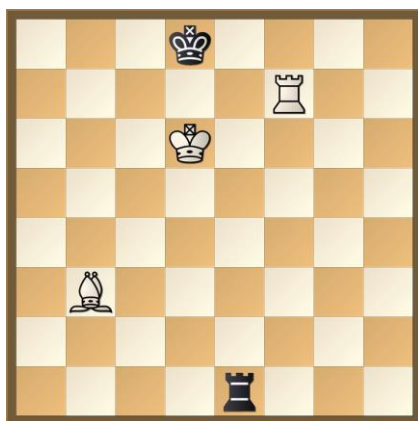


Black has defended perfectly so far but my last move has given him a chance to go wrong. Of the three possible moves only two draw, but can you see which one loses?

80...Ke8

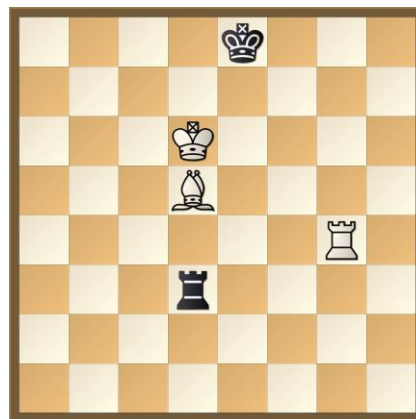
This is the toughest nut to crack; 80...Kc8 draws but in a slightly riskier manner, whereas 80...Kd8 was the move I was hoping for. The point is that White is trying to reach the same set up with the bishop shielding the king but pushed forward one rank.

After 80...Kd8 White exploits the threat of a back rank mate to improve his king and bishop and obtain a won ending. The play is still very complex and there isn't the space in this article to analyse it all, but the game might finish 80...Kd8? 81 Kd6 Ke8 82 Bd5 Kf8 83 Rf7+ Ke8 84 Rf1 Kd8 85 Ra1 Rc2 86 Ra7 Rc1 87 Rf7 Re1 88 Bb3!



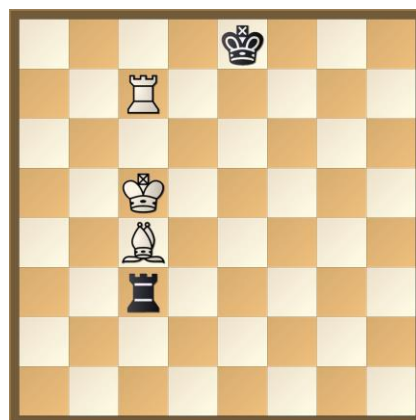
This idea is worth remembering. it is designed to Zugzwang the rook onto a worse square.

88. ..Re3 (or 88...Ke8 89 Rf4 Kd8 90 Rb4 Rc1 [90...Ke8 91 Bd5 Kf8 92 Rg2] 91 Bg4 Ke8 92 Rf4 and there is no sensible defence against Bd7+) 89 Be6 Rd3+ 90 Bd5 Re3 91 Rd7+ Ke8 (or 91...Kc8 92 Ra7 is the end) 92 Rb7 Kf8 93 Rf7+ Ke8 94 Rf4 Rd3 95 Rg4

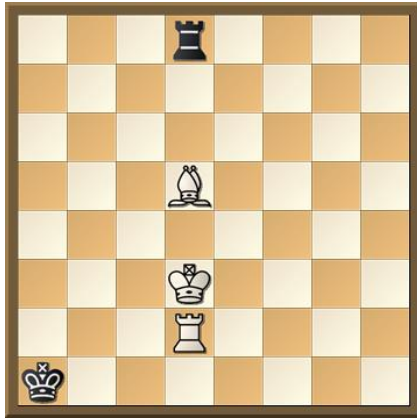


and we can now see why it was important to force the Rook onto the third rank with 88 Bb3!

81.Kd5 Kf8 82.Bf5 Re7 83.Rb1 Kf7 84.Rf1 Ra7 85.Bd3+ Ke7 86.Bc4 Ra3 87.Kc5 Rc3 88.Rf7+ Ke8 89.Rc7



This is another idea worth bearing in mind. I used the same concept to win against Colm Daly in the Dublin Zonal tournament of 1993. The idea is to make progress with Kd6, as the Rook now defends the bishop from c7. Here is the position in Arkell v Daly after 80...Rcd8?

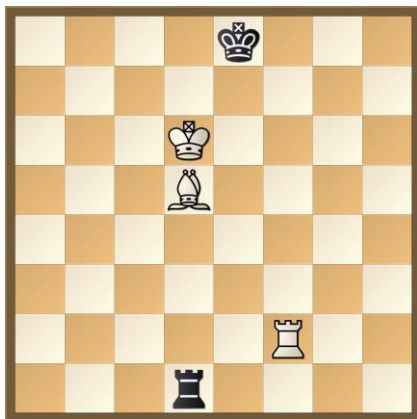


I now forced the win with 81 Kc3 Rb8 82 Bb3 Rc8+ 83 Bc4 Rb8 84 Rd5 1-0

89...Rc1

The secret to winning this endgame is to bring about positions in which reasonable looking moves fail to draw. If Black could pass he would still be safe, but the rook is better on c3 than c1. With the rook on c3 Black can defend as follows: 90 Kd6 Kf8 91 Rf7+ Kg8! 92 Be6 Kh8 and now after 93 Ke7 Rg3! because after 94 Rf8+ Kh7 95 Bf5+ Kh6 96 Rh8+ Kg5 97 Rg8+ doesn't win the rook, whereas it would do so were it on g1 in the corresponding variation.

90.Kd6 Rd1+ 91.Bd5 Kf8 92.Rf7+ Ke8 93.Rf2



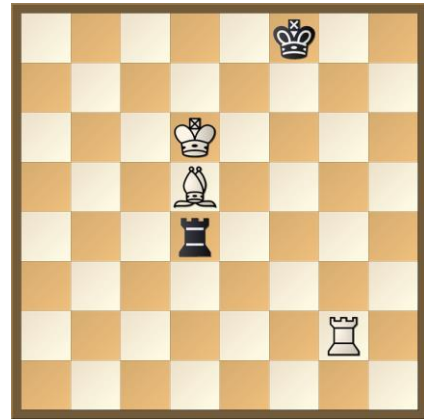
Zugzwang rears its ugly head again! Black must now put his rook on d3 or d4 and in both cases it is fatally restricted.

93...Rd4 Or 93... Rd3 94 Rg2 and the rook can't defend on the f-file.

94.Re2+ Kf8 94...Kd8 95 Rh2 and the rook hasn't got access to the e-file.

95.Rg2

And Black resigned.



1-0

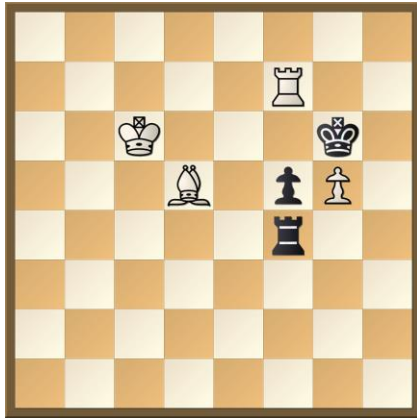
Postscript – KA, 14th Feb

By an amazing coincidence, no sooner had I submitted this article than I had my 26th R+B v R after a two year hiatus.

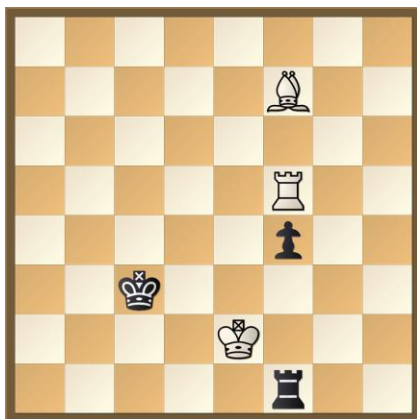
Arkell, Keith C - Cont, Arya

4NCL Main League 2022, 13.02.2022

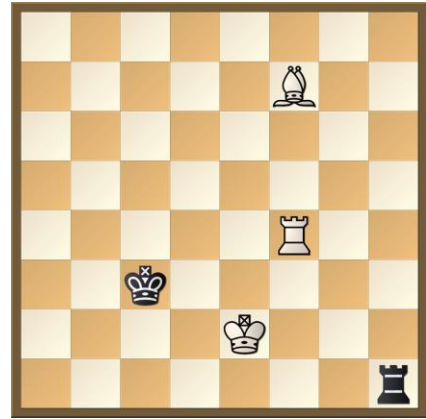
1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Qa4+ Nc6 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.e3 0-0 10.Be2 Rd8 11.a3 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3 Bg4 13.0-0 b6 14.c4 Ne7 15.Rfc1 c6 16.cxd5 Rxd5 17.h3 Ra5 18.Qd1 Bxf3 19.Bxf3 Rd8 20.Qe2 c5 21.dxc5 Rxc5 22.Rd1 Rdc8 23.Rab1 Rc2 24.Rd8+ Rxd8 25.Qxc2 Qf5 26.Qxf5 Nxf5 27.Rc1 Nd6 28.a4 Rd7 29.Rd1 Kf8 30.Bg4 Rd8 31.Rc1 Ne8 32.Kf1 g6 33.Be2 Rd7 34.g4 Rc7 35.Rd1 Ke7 36.h4 Nd6 37.Rd4 Rc5 38.Kg2 f6 39.f4 Ke6 40.Kf3 g5 41.hxg5 hxg5 42.Bd1 gxf4 43.exf4 Rc3+ 44.Ke2 f5 45.g5 Ra3 46.Bc2 a6 47.Rb4 b5 48.axb5 axb5 49.Bb3+ Ke7 50.Kd3 Ra1 51.Kd4 Rb1 52.Kd3 Rf1 53.Ba2 Rg1 54.Kd4 Rd1+ 55.Ke3 Re1+ 56.Kf3 Ne4 57.Rxb5 Rf1+ 58.Ke3 Re1+ 59.Kd4 Rd1+ 60.Ke5 Nd6 61.Rb1 Rd2 62.Bd5 Re2+ 63.Kd4 Rd2+ 64.Kc5 Rc2+ 65.Kb6 Rf2 66.Re1+ Kf8 67.Kc6 Nf7 68.Ra1 Rxf4 69.Ra8+ Kg7 70.Ra7 Kg6 71.Rxf7



71...Kxg5 72.Rg7+ Kf6 73.Rg8 Rg4 74.Rf8+ Ke5
 75.Kc5 Rg1 76.Re8+ Kf4 77.Bc4 Rg3 78.Kd4
 Ra3 79.Rg8 Rg3 80.Rh8 Rg1 81.Bd3 Rg4
 82.Rh1 Rg3 83.Ra1 Kg5 84.Rf1 f4 85.Be2 Re3
 86.Bf3 Kf5 87.Rf2 Re8 88.Rg2 Rd8+ 89.Kc3 Rd6
 90.Bg4+ Kf6 91.Be2 Ke5 92.Rg8 Rc6+ 93.Kd2
 Rd6+ 94.Ke1 Rh6 95.Re8+ Re6 96.Ra8 Rh6
 97.Ra5+ Ke4 98.Ra4+ Ke3 99.Ra3+ Kd4
 100.Kf1 Rb6 101.Kf2 Rh6 102.Ra4+ Ke5
 103.Ra5+ Kd4 104.Kf3 Rf6 105.Bd1 Kd3
 106.Rd5+ Kc4 107.Rd8 Kb4 108.Bc2 Kc3
 109.Be4 Kc4 110.Rd5 Rf8 111.Ra5 Kd4 112.Bf5
 Re8 113.Ra4+ Kd5 114.Be4+ Ke5 115.Ra5+
 Kd4 116.Bg6 Rg8 117.Bf7 Rg1 118.Rd5+ Kc3
 119.Rf5 Rf1+ 120.Ke2

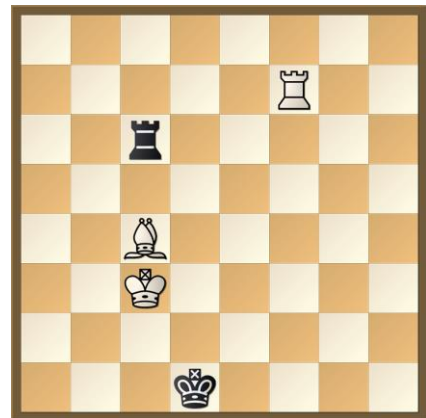


120...Rh1 121.Rxf4 And here we are.



Rh2+ 122.Ke3 Rh3+ 123.Ke4 Rd3 124.Rf1 Rd4+
 125.Ke5 Rd7 126.Be6 Ra7 127.Rf3+ Kd2
 128.Kd4 Ke2 129.Rf8 Rg7 130.Bc4+ Kd2
 131.Rf2+ Ke1 132.Re2+ Kd1 133.Rh2 Rg3
 134.Bd3 Rg8 135.Kc3 Rc8+ 136.Bc4 Ke1?
 137.Re2+ Kd1 138.Re7 Rc6 139.Rf7.

And Black resigned as mate is unavoidable.



1-0

The importance of pawn structure

Pawns: they are the soul of this game, they alone form the attack and defence
 - François-André Danican Philidor

Pawn endings are to chess what putting is to golf – Cecil Purdy

I had intended to devote this month's column to a selection of my games from the ECF marathon in aid of Ukraine, but on reflection I decided that they lacked depth and quality. I was able to rack up a big score by keeping it simple and playing instantaneously in order

both to maximise the number of games and conserve energy. The result was that I completed 248 games, scoring 87% against a field which included a surprisingly large number of strong opponents.

Such an approach is only possible if you play according to a set of well-defined principles, in my case a superficial form of my normal style - namely, play for the better pawn structure and make favourable exchanges wherever possible, heading for endgames which hopefully I would understand well enough to reel in the points.

Instead of offering you a bunch of those games I have selected one which I played 35 years ago where that same policy of maintaining the better pawn structure into the endgame enabled me to win against the then second-best player in India, after Vishy Anand. Today it is difficult to imagine that at the time of this game, played in Calicut in 1987, India had no grandmasters at all! This soon changed though when first Vishy and then Barua himself obtained the title.

Dibiendu Barua v Keith Arkell

Calicut International, 06.03.1987

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5



I am as happy to see this position as I am to play the QGD Exchange variation because in both cases I have made a significant gain

according to my 'Hierarchy of Pawns', in which they increase in value as you work your way from the a - pawn across to the g-pawn. I explain this in some detail in my book.

4.Bd3 Nc6 5.c3 g6 6.Nf3 Nh6 7.0-0 Bf5 8.Re1 Bxd3 9.Qxd3 Bg7 10.Nbd2 0-0 11.Nf1 Nf5 12.Bf4 e6 13.Re2 a6 14.g4



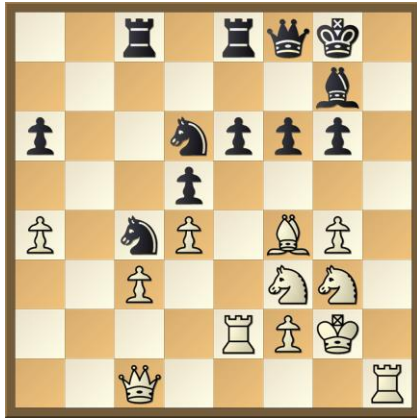
Certainly a principled move as White typically looks to operate on the kingside while Black concentrates on the other flank with a minority attack.

14...Nd6 15.Ng3 b5 16.h4 b4 17.h5 bxc3 18.bxc3 Qd7 19.Kg2 Rfc8 20.hxg6 hxg6 21.Ng5



I put a lot of trust in long-term advantages, but it is still a bit scary when your opponent aims their pieces at your king!

21...Nc4 22.Rae1 Re8 23.Nf3 Rac8 24.Qb1 Na7 25.Qc1 Nb5 26.Bh6 Qe7 27.a4 Nbd6 28.Rh1 Qf8 29.Bf4 f6



Ideally, I would like to leave myself with a rock-solid pawn structure while banging away against the weakness on c3, but I need to give my king a bit of luft against White's plan of Qg1 to h2.

30.g5 f5 31.Qg1 Ne4 32.Qh2 Kf7 33.Nh4 Qh8 34.Rb1 Re7



35.Nxe4

Defending with 35 Rc1 would be too passive and allow me all sorts of options, perhaps the best of which is 35...e5!

35...dxe4

If in doubt the rules of my pawn hierarchy dictate that I capture towards the opponent's king. I find this to be a very handy maxim.

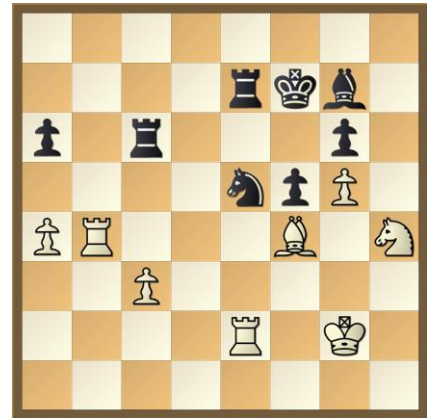
36.Qg3 Qe8 37.Rb4 Qc6 38.f3 exf3+ 39.Qxf3



39...e5?

Although Black still maintains a slight plus in the endgame after this, I could more profitably have redeployed my knight to d5 via b6 when Barua would have been firmly on the ropes.

40.Qxc6 Rxc6 41.dxe5 Nxe5



Despite the error on move 39 I have at least maintained the better pawn structure. Look at the difference in quality between the one on c3 and that on f5! Objectively though I have let him off the hook as his pieces are sufficiently active.

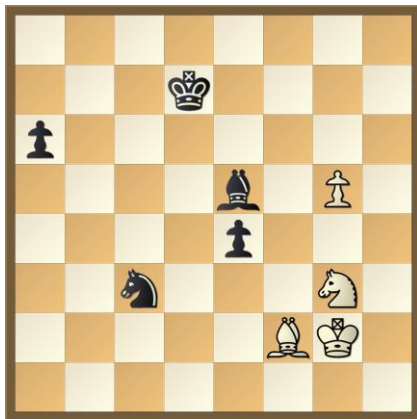
42.Re3 Nd7 43.c4 Nc5 44.Rxe7+ Kxe7 45.Be3 Nd7 46.c5 Kd8 47.Nf3 Kc7



48.Rc4

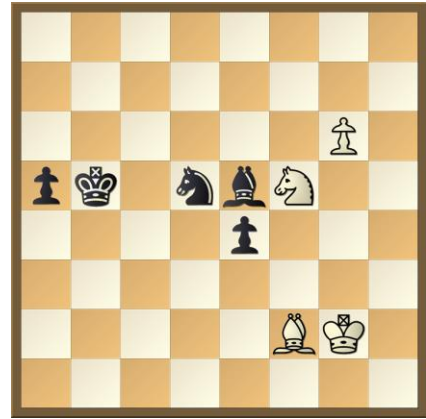
48 Bf4+ would most likely have led to a draw, but this momentary opportunity doesn't hide the fact that for most of the game White has been facing an uphill battle.

48...Re6 49.Bf2 Kc6 50.Rb4 Re4 51.Rxe4 fxe4 52.Nh4 Nxc5 53.Nxg6 Nxa4 54.Ne7+ Kd7 55.Nf5 Be5 56.Ng3 Nc3



There are not enough pawns left to force a win, but White must continue playing accurately to hold the draw.

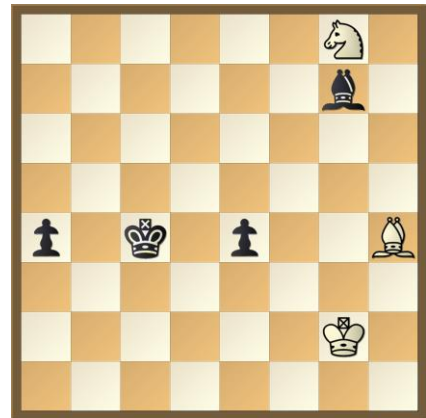
57.Be1 Ke6 58.g6 Kd5 59.Nf5 a5 60.Ne7+ Kc5 61.Bf2+ Kb5 62.Nf5 Nd5



63.Nd4+?

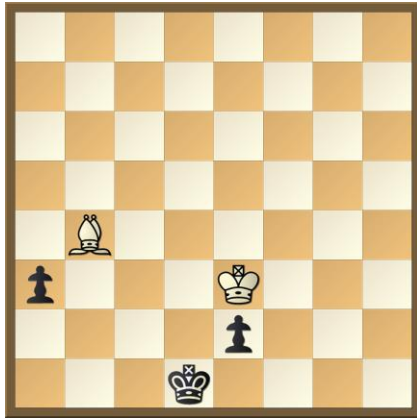
After defending very accurately for the previous ten moves White at last goes wrong. Barua would have hung on after 63 Bg3! Bh8 64 g7 Bxg7 65 Nxg7 a4 66 Nf5 Kc4 67 Bd6

63...Kc4 64.Nc6 Bc3 65.g7 Nf6 66.Ne7 a4 67.Bh4 Ng8 68.Nxg8 Bxg7



The point being that although I am a piece down I am well enough coordinated to ease one of the pawns home.

69.Be7 Kd3 70.Nf6 Bxf6 71.Bxf6 e3 72.Be7 Kd2 73.Kf3 e2 74.Bb4+ Kd1 75.Ke3 a3



0-1

Rook and Knight v Rook and Knight

I played the following game a few months before I turned 54. I was at the height of my powers and beginning a run of four (superfluous) consecutive GM norms over a nine-month period (at the IOM, World Senior, Hastings and Vienna).

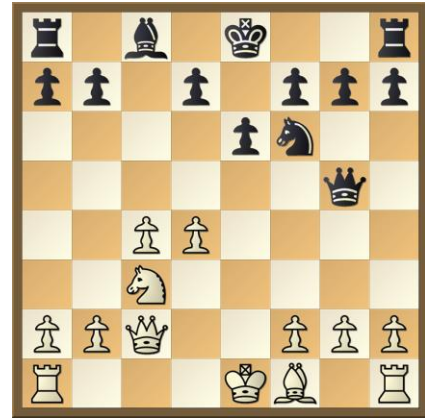
In my article on the recent English Championship, I sang the praises of the vast amount of young talent rising up through the ranks, but I'd like to dedicate this month's column to those senior players who still remain ambitious.

If you are lucky enough to be in good health and are motivated to make progress, there is nothing to stop you from doing so!

GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2555) - GM Keith Arkell

PokerStars IoM Masters 2014 (3), 06.10.2014

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qc2 c5 5.dxc5 Nc6 6.Nf3 Bxc5 7.Bg5 Nd4 8.Nxd4 Bxd4 9.e3 Qa5 10.exd4 Qxg5



11.g3 The most common move here is 11 Qd2, but I'm happy to play a queenless middlegame with only a slight disadvantage.

11...Qa5 12.a3 Qc7 13.Qd3 d6 14.Bg2 Bd7 15.0-0 0-0 16.Nd1



Tiger is a creative player who likes to think 'out of the box'. Here he visualises a harmonious position in which his rooks support a queenside expansion, backed up by a knight on e3.

16...a5 17.b3 Rab8



With the positional threat of ...b5 I took the bull by the horns and persuaded him to think twice about the knight redeployment.

18.Nc3 Rfc8 19.Rac1 Qb6 20.Rb1 Qa6 21.a4



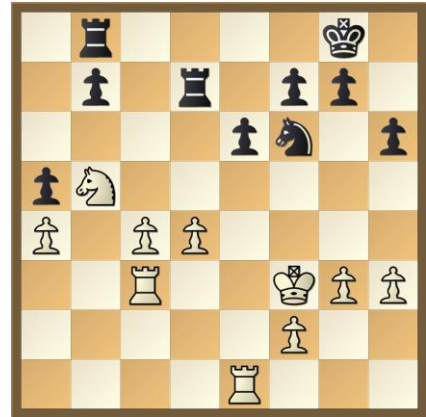
If I can achieve the break ...b5 I will create weaknesses in my opponent's queenside pawn structure.

21...d5 22.Nb5 Bc6 23.Rbc1 dxc4



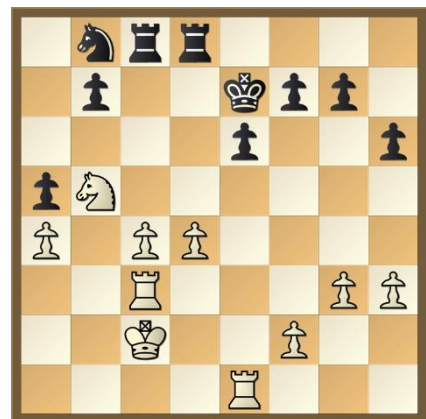
Whether I make this exchange or not the position is about equal, but I wanted to loosen up White's pawns and leave three of them a little exposed.

24.bxc4 Bxg2 25.Kxg2 Rd8 26.Rfe1 Qc6+ 27.Qf3 Rd7 28.h3 h6 29.Rc3 Qxf3+ 30.Kxf3



And so, the queens do indeed disappear, but on move 30 instead of move 11. I would slightly prefer to play Black here because my knight can jump around attacking c4, a4 or d4, but if my opponent plays precisely I may feel a little uncomfortable as I have less space.

30...Rc8 31.Re5 Rdd8 32.Re1 Kf8 33.Ke3 Ke7 34.Kd3 Nd7 35.Kc2 Nb8



Eyeing d4 and b4.

36.Kb3 Kf8 37.f4 Nc6 38.Rd1 Rd7 39.d5

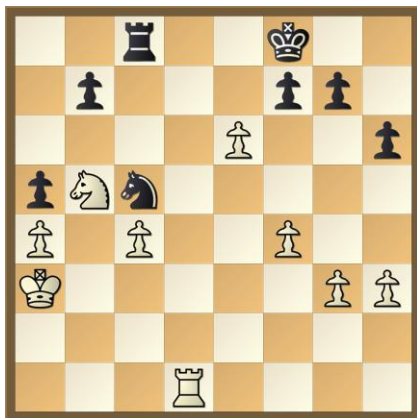


I didn't expect Tiger to sit there passively waiting to see what I would do next. After, for example, 39 Rcd3 Rcd8 40 Kc3 b6 I might chip away at his position with ...g5 at some moment. For the time being the game is about equal whether or not Hillarp Persson plays 39 d5.

39...Nb8 40.Rcc1

A little passive. Something vigorous like 40 g4 or 40 Re3 was called for to maintain the balance.

40...Na6 41.dxe6 Nc5+ 42.Ka3 Rxd1 43.Rxd1

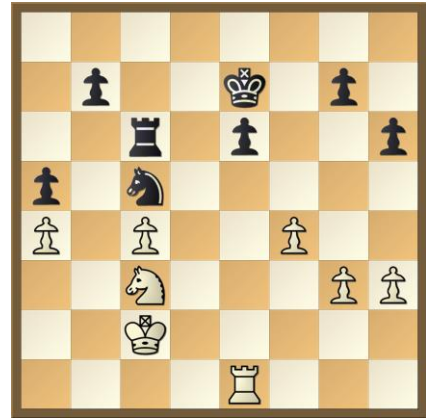


43...fxe6!

This is a very instructive moment. The pawn has much more influence on e6 than on f7. It keeps White's rook out of d5 and provides a nice shelter for my king on e7. It also has the potential to become a strong passed pawn, depending on how my opponent reacts to a later ...g5. That the pawn is technically isolated

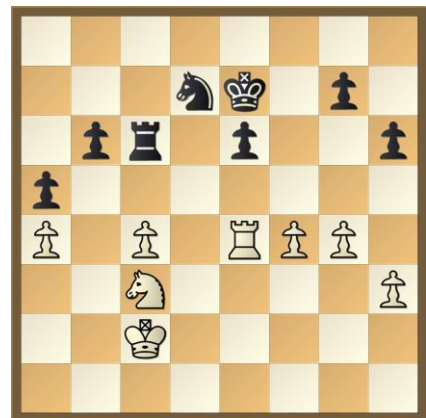
matters not one iota as it requires no extra effort from Black to keep it secure.

44.Nc3 Ke7 45.Kb2 Rc6 46.Kc2 Rb6 47.Re1 Rc6



Those familiar with my playing style will already know that I like to potter around patiently once I have a grip on the position. By using repetitions you just might extract an error from your opponent, while otherwise you've lost nothing. Had he gone back with 48 Rd1 I intended 48... Rd6, as the knight ending would be very unpleasant for White; his a-pawn needs constant protection, and the break...e5 looms large.

48.Re5 b6 49.Nd5+ Kd6 50.Nc3 Nd7 51.Re4 Ke7 52.g4



52...g5 Here it is at last - my favourite chess move!

53.Rd4 53 f5 was an improvement but there is no doubt that I am on top after 53...Nc5 54 Re3 Kf7 55 fxe6+ Rxe6.

53...gxf4 54.Rxf4 Ne5 55.Kb3 Nd3 56.Rf3 Nc5+ 57.Kc2 Rd6



58.Rf4 To prevent ...Rd4, but White can't cover all the entry points.

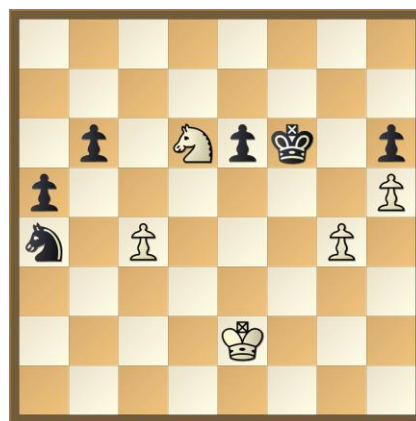
58...Rd3 59.h4 Rh3 60.h5 Rh2+ 61.Kd1 Rg2



Over many moves I have slowly improved my position and now White is completely stuck - perhaps even in Zugzwang.

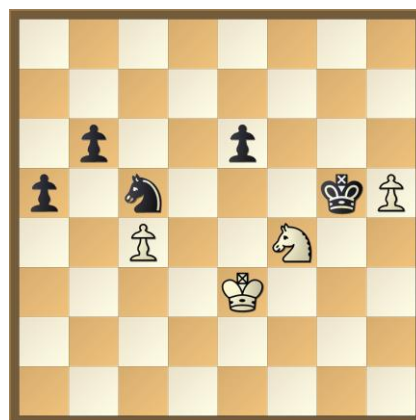
62.Rd4 Kf6 63.Rd6 Rg3 64.Nb5 Or 64 Kc2 Rxc3+.

64...Rd3+ 65.Ke2 Rxd6 66.Nxd6 Nxa4



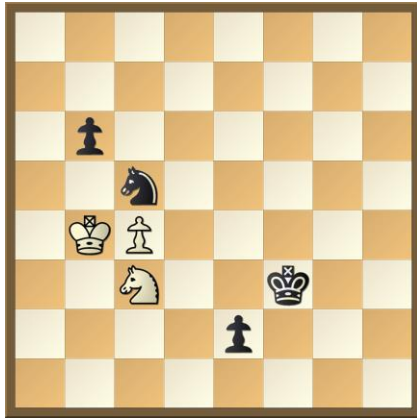
Although I am now winning, there is still the need to work out long lines, a common feature of knight endings.

67.Ne4+ Kg7 68.g5 hxg5 69.Nxg5 Nc5 70.Nh3 Kh6 71.Nf4 Kg5 72.Ke3



72...a4 As White has only one sensible move each time it was fairly straightforward to calculate the finish.

73.Ne2 a3 74.Nc3 e5 75.Kd2 Kxh5 76.Kc2 Kg4 77.Kb1 Kf3 78.Ka2 e4 79.Kxa3 e3 80.Kb4 e2



After 81 Nxe2 Kxe2 82 Kb5 Nd7 83 Kc6 Kd3 84 Kb5 Kc3 it's all over.

0-1

Netting De Wolf

I continue to receive requests for endings resulting from the Carlsbad structure, so here is another, played in the Netherlands 19 years ago.

Arkell, K (2513) - De Wolf, J. (2149) [D35]
Vlissingen Open (2), 03.08.2003

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Bg5 Be7 7.e3 Bf5 8.Bxf6 Bxf6 9.b4 0-0



10.Bd3 When White plays the Queen's Gambit Exchange variation with a minority attack in mind, as opposed to central and kingside pressure with plans involving f3 and e4, it is helpful to exchange light-squared bishops. This is because the d3 bishop has no role to play in such positions, whereas Black's opposing

bishop can be very useful both in attack and defence. And there is a more subtle reason for the bishop exchange: d3 is the ideal square for a white knight, and I can't park both pieces there!

10...Bxd3 11.Qxd3 a6 12.0-0 Be7 13.Rab1 Nd7 14.a4 Bd6 15.Rfc1 Qf6



I have played many games involving the sequence ...b5 a5, one of which is explained beautifully by Matthew Sadler in a YouTube video entitled 'AlphaZero king march and piece manoeuvres - Middlegame Strategies #1'.

16.b5 axb5 17.axb5



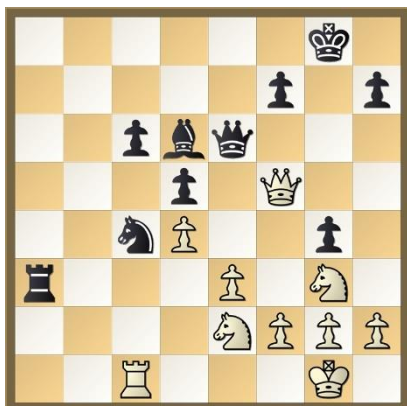
17...g5 My opponent understands that his chances lie in counterplay on the kingside, as without such a distraction he will suffer constant pressure against his weakened right flank.

18.bxc6 bxc6 19.Ne2 g4 20.Nd2 Ra3 21.Rb3 Rfa8



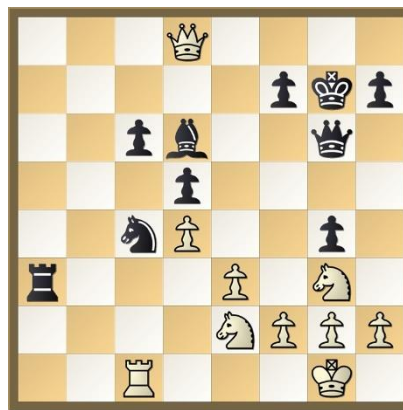
22.Nf1 The downside of the g-pawn march is the permanently weak squares left in its wake.

22...Nb6 23.Nfg3 Nc4 24.Rxa3 Rxa3 25.Qf5 Qe6



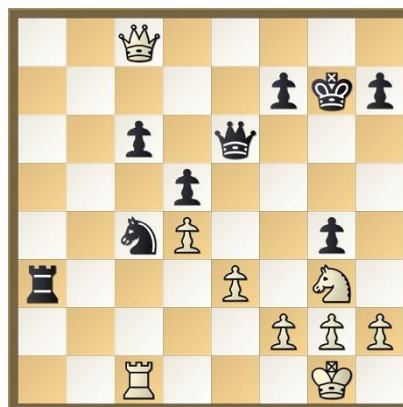
26.Qg5+ By diverting some of Black's pieces from the kingside I can now cause trouble with my queen and knight.

26...Qg6 27.Qd8+ Kg7



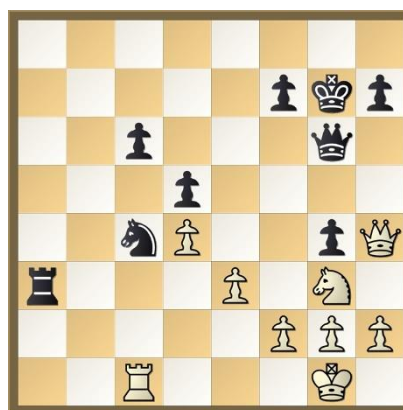
28.Qc8 This move eyes up all the sensitive points in De Wolf's position: f5, g4 and c6.

28...Bxg3 29.Nxg3 Qe6



30.Qd8 Some players naively think I will always exchange Queens in conjunction with a minority attack, or even in any position! But in reality I try to play each position according to its demands.

30...Qg6 31.Qh4

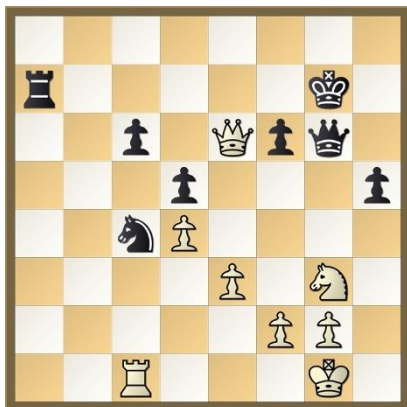


31...f6 Nh5+ was a big threat.

32.h3 This is a multi-purpose move. 1) I give my king a bit of luft; 2) I create more scope for my queen and 3) it further damages Black's pawn structure.

32...gxh3 33.Qxh3 Ra7 To prevent Qd7+. Compare the isolated nature of Black's pawns with my own healthy chain.

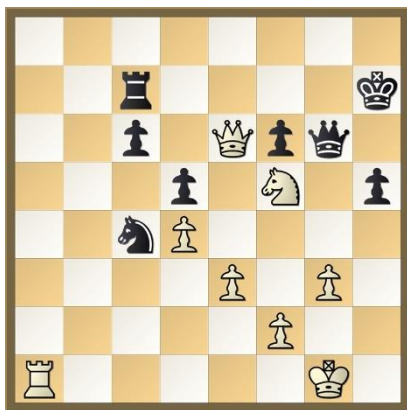
34.Qe6 h5



35.Nf5+ When playing these technical games you are constantly engaged in the calculation of minor skirmishes. Here it would be foolish to grab the c6 pawn and allow ...Nxe3 in reply.

35...Kh7 36.g3 Keeping everything nice and tidy. There is often no rush when playing against permanently fixed weaknesses.

36...Rc7 37.Ra1



37...Qf7 My opponent has defended well and understands that his king wouldn't be able to withstand the entry of my rook.

38.Qxf7+ Rxf7 39.Ra8



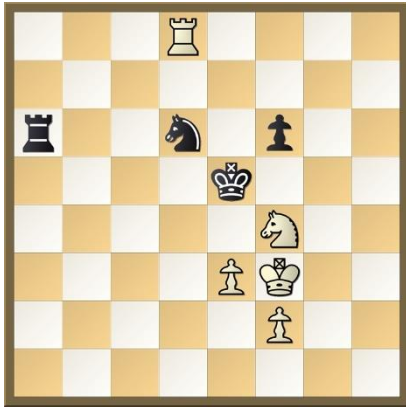
39...Rc7 The position is extremely difficult to defend, but Black is correct to try to reduce the number of pawns and eliminate one of his weaknesses.

40.Re8 c5 41.Rd8 cxd4 42.Nxd4 Rc5 43.Rd7+ Kh6 44.Kg2 Ra5 45.Nf5+ Kg5 46.Ne7



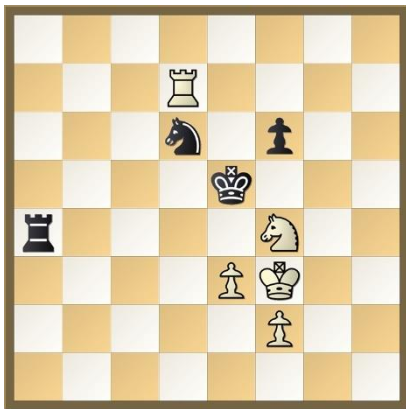
46...h4 A pawn will soon drop off but my opponent is hoping to gain drawing chances by reducing the position to 2 pawns v 1. However, while R v R or N v N can usually be held, the defence is much harder when dealing with the combination of both.

47.gxh4+ Kxh4 48.Nxd5 Kg5 49.Kg3 Kf5 50.Rd8 Ra6 51.Nf4 Nd6 52.Kf3 Ke5



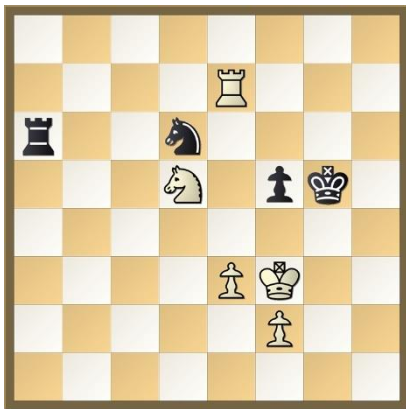
53.Rd7 The net is beginning to tighten around the black king. It's important to remember that in the endgame you can often use your own king to help with a mating attack...

53...Ra4 54.Re7+ Kf5 55.Rd7 Ke5



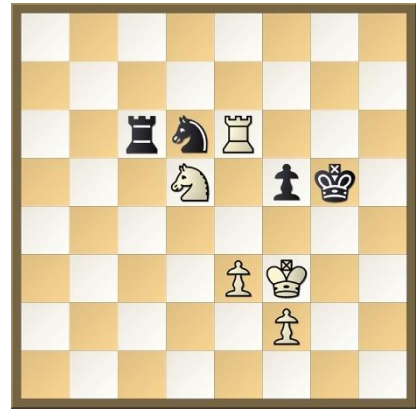
56.Kg4 ...and here we see just that: my king covers f5, threatening Re7# and inducing a further weakening move.

56...f5+ 57.Kf3 Ra6 58.Re7+ Kf6 59.Nd5+ Kg5



60.Re6 Finally he is irreversibly tied up and I can continue weaving the mating net at my leisure.

60...Rc6



1.Kg2! Again the king is useful in blocking escape routes. Here it will plug g4 and h4, after which the game is over.

61...Ra6 62.Kh3 Rc6 63.Nf4

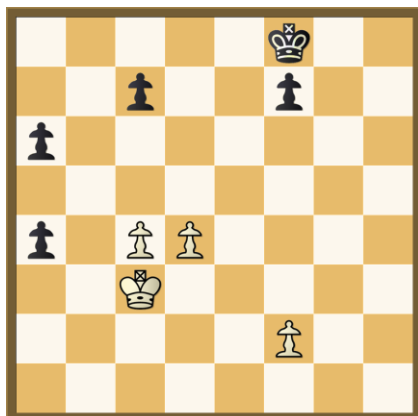


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King and Pawn Endgames

In order to assess king and pawn endgames correctly calculation is everything, and sometimes the best moves can be counter-intuitive! In each of the three examples try to assess the position first, and then see if your analysis bears out your judgement.

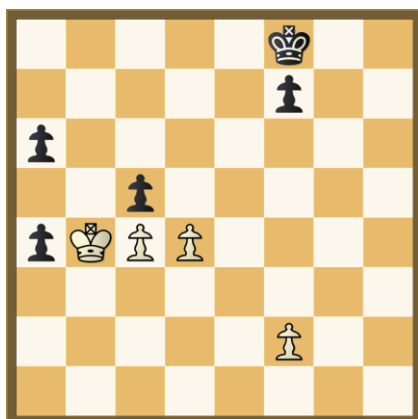
IM Goran Markotic - IM Keith Arkell
Cappelle, 1993



White to play. What is the best move, and what should the result be?

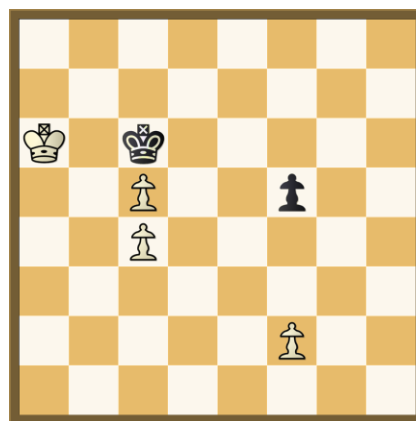
34.Kb4? This wins both my a-pawns but loses the game. The best move is 34 Kb2, after which I would have had to defend accurately to force a draw, e.g. 34...Ke7 35 Ka3 Kd6 36 Kxa4 Kc6 37 Ka5 Kb7 38 d5 Ka7 39 Kb4 Kb8 (not 39...Kb7? when 40 Kc5 utilises Zugzwang to penetrate decisively to c6) 40 c5 Ka7 41 Ka5 Kb7, and if 42 c6+ Ka7. So now it is Black to play and win.

34...c5+!



35.dxc5 35 Kc3 cxd4+ 36 Kxd4 Ke7 and Black will win by virtue of the outside passed pawns.

35...Ke7 36.Kxa4 Kd7 37.Ka5 Kc6 38.Kxa6 f5

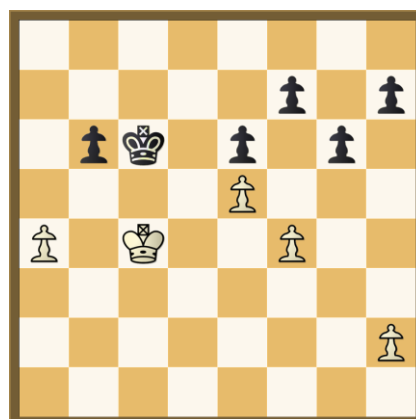


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Despite the material imbalance, my solitary pawn will now win the game.

Vladimir Georgiev - Keith Arkell
Cappelle, 1992

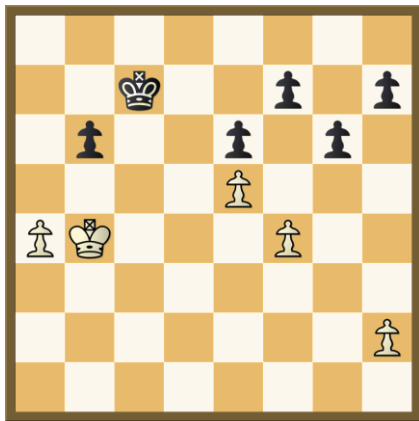
1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.dxc5 Nc6 5.Bb5 e6 6.b4 Qh4 7.c3 Qe4+ 8.Ne2 Qxg2 9.Ng3 Qh3 10.Bg5 Nh6 11.f3 Be7 12.Bf1 Qxf1+ 13.Rxf1 Bxg5 14.f4 Bh4 15.Nd2 Nf5 16.Qf3 Bd7 17.0-0 Nce7 18.Nb3 g6 19.Nxf5 Nxf5 20.Na5 b6 21.c6 bxa5 22.cxd7+ Kxd7 23.bxa5 Rhc8 24.Kd2 Bd8 25.Qd3 Rc4 26.Rb1 Bxa5 27.Rb5 Bxc3+ 28.Qxc3 Rxc3 29.Kxc3 Rc8+ 30.Kd3 Rc7 31.Rfb1 Ne7 32.Rb8 Nc8 33.a4 Nb6 34.Rb4 Rc4 35.Rb7+ Kc6 36.R7xb6+ axb6 37.Rxc4+ dxc4+ 38.Kxc4



In this one I clawed my way back from Q v B+N down, but am I now winning? It looks as if my opponent can play h4 at some moment to prevent my making any breaks on the kingside.

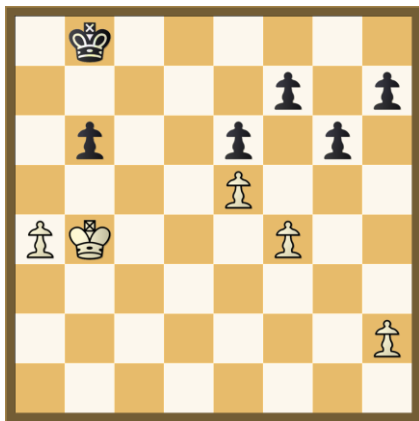
However, I can again use Zugzwang in order to penetrate to the fourth rank with my king via the a file.

38...Kc7 39.Kb4

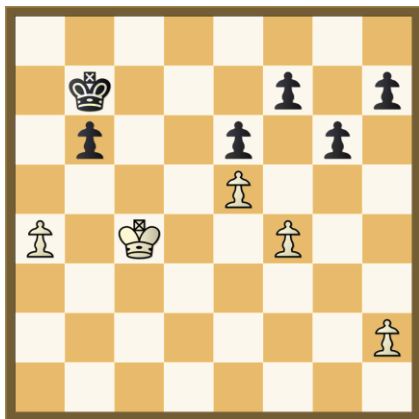


39 h4 Kb7 40 Kb5 h6 41 Kc4 Ka6 42 Kb4 h5 and White must give way with his king.

39...Kb8

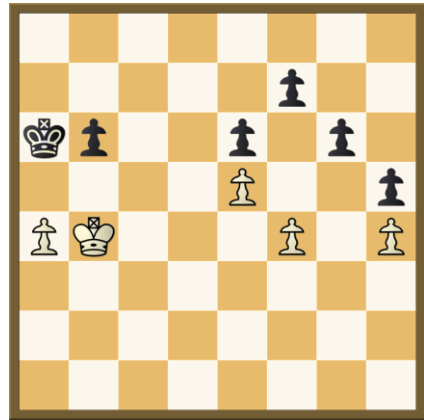


40.Kc4 Ka7 41.Kb5 Kb7 42.Kc4

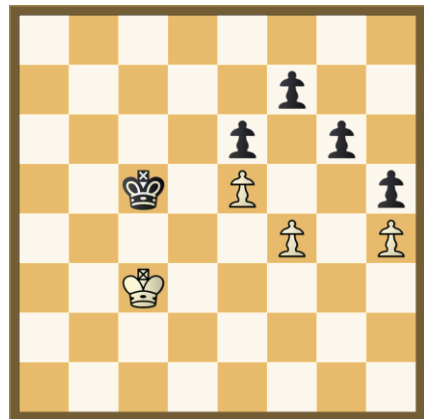


42 h4 (or 42 h3 h6, when I still have spare moves with my h-pawn) 42...h6 43 Kc4 Ka6 44 Kb4 h5 45 Kb3 Ka5 leads to the same winning plan as the game.

42...Ka6 43.Kb4 h6 44.h4 h5



45.Kb3 Ka5 46.Ka3 b5 47.axb5 Kxb5 48.Kb3 Kc5 49.Kc3

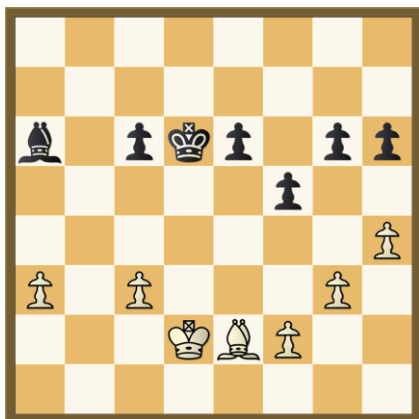


This is where I get to use my extra pawn by breaking up the kingside with my favourite chess move!

49...g5! 0-1

Oystein Dannevig - Keith Arkell
12th Monarch Assurance IOM 2003

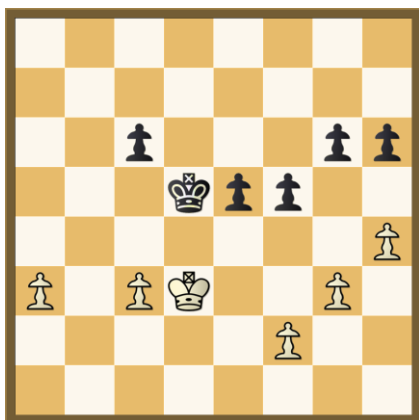
42.Be2



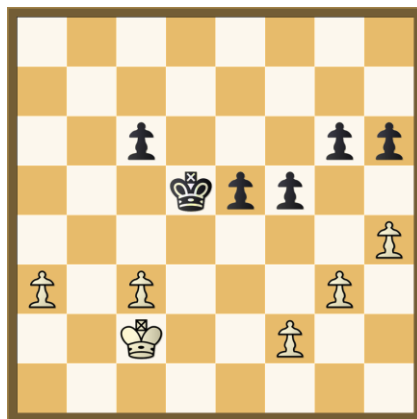
In the third example I have to decide whether to exchange bishops and go into a K+P ending in which my opponent has an outside passed pawn. So should I play 42...Bxe2 or retreat my bishop?

42...Bxe2 I concluded that only Black had winning chances in the K+P ending, and my reasoning was as follows: Normally an outside passed pawn would act as a decoy while White gobbled up the kingside pawns, but in this case I can clog up the centre sufficiently to deny my opponent access to that part of the board.

43.Kxe2 e5 44.Kd3 Kd5

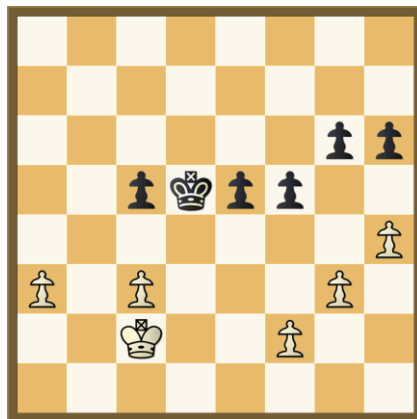


45.Kc2



It may even be that White has no defence to my plan of hunting down the a-pawn while his king is wondering which way to go. The problem is that the king also has to keep an eye on a potential black central breakthrough. Here is a typical line: 45 a4 Kc5 46 f3 h5 47 Kc2 Kb6 48 Kb3 e4 49 fxe4 fxe4 50 Kc2 Ka5 51 Kb3 c5 52 Kc4 Kxa4 and White is stuck.

45...c5?



Allowing my opponent the opportunity to force a draw. Instead he would have been powerless to save his queenside after 45...g5! 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 Kd3 g4!

46.Kb3? After 46 Kd3 c4+ 47 Ke3 Kc5 48 f4 Black has no way of winning.

46...e4 Now I can shut his king out while targeting the a- and c-pawns.

47.Kc2 g5 48.hxg5 hxg5 49.Kd2

Peter Wells – Articles

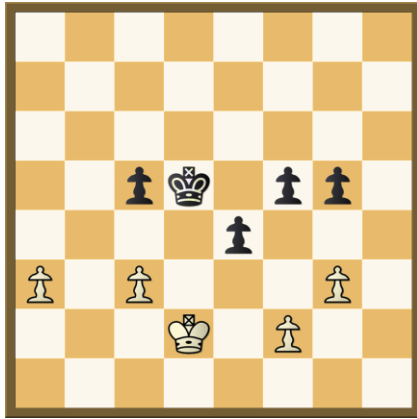
The World Championship 2021

Carlsen – Nepomniachtchi: Reflections

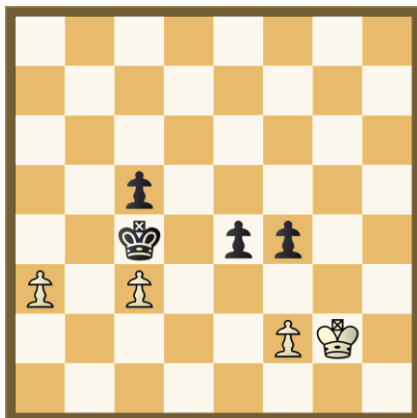


On December 11 2021, the third in a series of increasingly perplexing blunders put an end to Ian Nepomniachtchi's (Nepo's) World Championship challenge and saw his opponent, Magnus Carlsen crowned as Champion for an extraordinary fifth time. As someone who had suggested before the match (in the November edition of *Chess Moves*) that the pundits may be dismissing Nepo a little too lightly, I guess this is the moment to eat some humble pie. The emphatic score line of 7½ – 3½ meant that the match even wound up three games before its scheduled finish. In the old system, where draws 'didn't count' it would have sounded even worse as a simple 4-0, so in one sense it is difficult to object to Malcolm Pein's reference in *Chess* magazine to Nepo being 'swept aside'.

However, particularly since Covid prevented me from submitting my intended 'interim report' for the December issue, it feels incumbent on me to recall quite how different the match felt at that stage. For, in a way perhaps not seen since Kasparov's 'officially' thwarted comeback against Karpov in 1984,

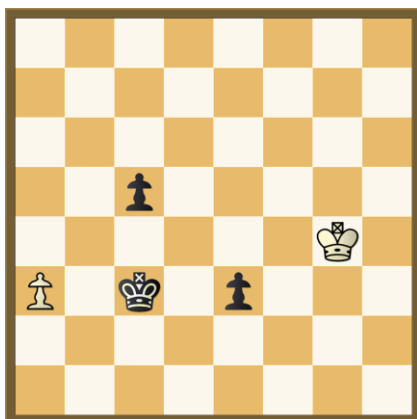


**49...f4 50.gxf4 gxf4 51.Ke2 Kc6 52.Kf1 Kb5
53.Kg2 Kc4**



54.Kh3 Or 54 a4 Kd3 55 a5 e3 56 fxe3 fxe3 57 a6 e2 58 e7 e1=Q 59 a8=Q Qe4+ and we're back to a won K+P ending.

54...Kxc3 55.Kg4 e3 56.fxe3 fxe3



0-1

this was a ‘match of two halves’. It is in no way seeking to diminish the portion of pie which I ought to ingest, to claim that a huge part of the tension generated by the most viewed chess match in history, would fail to be captured by overly focusing on Nepo’s collapse following the historic sixth game. After five games and for much of the sixth the match was delicately poised, and the general sense was that Nepo could feel quite content with the way he had settled in. Taken as a whole, having followed much of the commentary including that on social media, the match also forms a fascinating study of quite how transient both our narratives and the issues they apparently throw up can prove. It also offered considerable vindication of those who have talked up the importance of psychology in the game. More than any title match I can remember, it felt as if Nepo’s demise following Game 6 was, at the risk of brazen self-promotion, *All in the Mindset*.

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

In particular there were rich pickings for students of contemporary opening preparation and ample evidence not only of very hard graft but also considerable creative thinking on the part of both teams. Indeed, the

very first two games vividly illustrated how advances in opening theory can occur rapidly at the point where assumptions which have long been held sacred begin to be questioned. Take for example the 8 h3 anti-Marshall position of Round 1.



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

Game 2 also brought home quite how swiftly an opening can evolve once fresh possibilities

come into view. The Catalan with 7 Qc2 a6 has been popular for decades, with 7...b5, intending to meet 8 a4 with 8...b4, more recently establishing itself as a more or less respectable alternative.



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

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



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

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

There are, I would suggest, two versions of this narrative. The more radical is that classical chess itself is in crisis – that the ever deeper

penetration by engines in the opening phase (and beyond) has gradually squeezed the ability of White not just to obtain an advantage, but even to reach a sufficiently interesting position that playing for a win is realistic in the absence of blunders. If I understood him correctly, I think I am with Peter Heine Nielsen on this: we may be headed in this direction, but we are not there yet. Moreover, when this does become a more urgent worry, my sympathies will almost certainly lie with those who wish to mix things up through modifying the time control etc. rather than by moving to Chess 360 or otherwise messing significantly with the rules. The less drastic version of the argument is that it is the structure of World Championship matches specifically which render this crisis far more acute – the lengthy preparation over several months directed at one specific individual which enables it to reach far more threatening proportions than in other events. Add to this the fact that coming back from a defeat in a match of just 12 or 14 games is notoriously difficult - thus tipping the players in the direction of a ‘safety first’ mentality - and I am inclined to agree that this adds up to a significant issue. Once again, though, I think reform should be approached with caution. Unprecedented viewing figures for this match suggest once again that a head-to-head World Championship contest has a special appeal, and that the chess world should be especially judicious in how it seeks to improve the format. It bears repeating that it is our rich history which does so much to ensure that chess is not perceived as ‘just another board game’. It should also be mentioned that some attempts at reform were implemented this time: the slightly longer match – scheduled at 14 games, alongside a less generous time control (30 second increment only after move 60) and fewer rest days. With regard to the latter in particular, it is arguable that what is an advantage in terms of trying to break a deadlock might prove detrimental once the situation changes into one of a player seeking

to come back from behind. We can only speculate whether a bit more time to rest might have offered Nepo the chance to recover some of his composure.

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



There has been significant debate about Nepo’s match strategy, whether he was overall a bit too tentative and not really true to his dynamic style. Some said this during the early games, but concern grew at the stage when he needed to strike back. For many, these concerns manifested themselves in terms of opening advice – some calling for the Italian or the English (both of which seemed plausible and eventually made an appearance), a further group for the Scotch (seemed less likely to me) and a vocal minority for the King’s Gambit (well, each to their own). What is clearly true, is that for the approach he opted for to work, it was essential that he should seize any chances that came along. Magnus had placed his pieces slightly strangely here and White’s obvious plan of seizing space by pushing the c-pawn with 20 c4! (looking to push further)

would have likely placed Black under some tangible pressure. In the press conference, Nepo seemed keen to suggest that his preference for 20 Red1 was merely a stylistic choice, motivated by a keenness to keep the c4 square for a piece. Deep down, though, I suspect he knew. Matthew Sadler informs us that Black tended to hold the position after 20 c4! in games between the top engines but did so with 20...Qe6! This makes sense in that it pins the pawn against the b3 bishop, but nonetheless looks very awkward to the human eye. In any case, the point is that White's goal in such positions is to put pressure and make the defender uncomfortable and Nepo here missed his single best chance to do this in a risk-free setting.

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

Firstly, there is no real debate that this was *the* turning point of the match. Not only was it the game which broke the deadlock, but from the point where the queenside pawns were cleared away, Magnus's extraordinary, remorseless technique throughout the different phases, never mind the record number of moves for any World championship (an impressive 136!) must have been utterly exhausting for the defender. For Magnus too, but it is much easier to take this gruelling schedule (the game ended after midnight!) when victorious. This grinding is prime Magnus territory anyhow and combining relief with deep satisfaction he was clearly ecstatic at the end.

Somehow, this mammoth achievement did a great deal to dampen the narrative that classical chess is in crisis. Curious, in a way, since if the only way to break the deadlock were to put the two players through an ordeal

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



I liked Jan Timman's insightful observation that "It's hard to see how Black could realistically play for a win with his weakened king's position," but at the same time the whole picture was blurred by Magnus's rare time pressure and - as a matter of record - there is no denying that Black's best chances to emerge victorious came later, with his curious failure to play ...Bxb4 on either moves 35 or 36. If this has an impact on the relevance of this game to the classical chess debate, it pales in comparison with the effect it probably had on Nepo. Losing an exhausting game after a heroic defence is one thing, but where it is possible to look back on moments which make it feel like a full-point swing, the pain is increased considerably. None of this fully explains the subsequent collapse, but I had the feeling that people underestimated the extent to which Nepo should take time out for

recovery and not try to force the pace. In fact, he did this – very sensibly – for one round, but in Game 8 he looked (actually for the first time in the match) totally out of shape. He seemed to invest time at the wrong moments, be unsure as to his aims in the game – for all that the use of the Petroff Defence should have offered a clue – and then blundered to render his overall task in the match essentially insurmountable. I don't want to dwell on the sad demise – I am worried that this is the part of the match which will, thanks to the headlines, be all too easily remembered. However, one further moment is worth recalling.



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

We are all accustomed now to chess spectators playing the instant expert thanks to the proximity of an engine, but this time when there was a chorus of discontent at the primitive nature of the blunder, it was hard to disagree. Yes, most amateur players would indeed spot the problem with 27 c5. I couldn't help recalling one of Capablanca's outrageously immodest annotations which,

from memory, ran something like "My opponent should have realised that a player of my skill and experience would never have allowed such a move, if it were good!" Probably some such thought from Nepo would have sufficed to realise that such an 'ideal' move must have a flaw if Magnus had permitted it. I also had nagging away at me a Twitter exchange from a couple of days before where I had replied to an excellent general point from @Duffman, by indicating that it was a bit far-fetched to imagine that a piece blunder might decide a game at this level. More humble pie.

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

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

Afterword

So where did the match leave us? First and foremost, in great admiration of Magnus. Yes, he only prevailed by a single win in the phase of the match in which his opponent played at the level of which we know he is capable. Yet the fact that Nepo collapsed in the way he did is itself down to Magnus. As Jonathan Rowson wrote in *The Moves that Matter* "At some

point you have to accept the brutality of competition. The strength of really strong players lies in their ability to make other strong players play below their strength...The strong weaken the weaker because strength is ultimately a function of the will, and in a context where there is no escape, one side's will ultimately yield to the other." Yes, Magnus is unmatched in simple positions in particular, but it is probably his astonishing will to win which ultimately gives him the edge. It is hard to imagine any other player who could have triumphed in the crucial sixth game, and it was this essentially which won him the contest.

Magnus didn't wait long after his celebrations to drop a bombshell. Despite having appeared unusually content through much of the match, his reservations about the World Championship match system, together perhaps with the limited satisfaction which he derived from Nepo's psychological collapse, led him to suggest that he may elect not to defend his title next time. This was not, he hastened to add, an announcement of retirement but rather a refocussing on a new goal – to be the first player to reach 2900. This may, of course, help to foster a fruitful discussion regarding the future of the World Championship and perhaps some moves towards reform. Or, regrettably, it could lead to a World Championship without the player generally acknowledged to be the best in the world.

Intriguingly, but in my view a little disturbingly, Magnus did suggest that the qualification of Alireza Firouzja for the next match could motivate him to play. This struck me as a little odd on two levels. First, the days in which the World Champion could seek to influence who would be his challenger appeared to be gone and un lamented. There is nothing wrong *per se* with what Magnus has said – he has a perfect right to try or not to defend his title – but the situation which has pertained under his reign

in which we could be confident that he would compete with whichever player was thrown up by the system had a very healthy feel to it. Even more than this, I couldn't help wondering whether Magnus had fallen victim to the phenomenon of being swept up by possibly transitory narratives which I discussed earlier. Alireza is a fantastic player, obviously with tremendous potential, and at the time of Magnus's statement he had just enjoyed a magnificent result in the European team championship which had propelled him to the No 2 spot in the World. Perhaps Magnus is simply right and a match with him would be a uniquely compelling prospect. But possibly we might ask, what of Ding Liren, whom Magnus has yet to play in a match and who would have great significance as the first Chinese player to compete in an Open World Championship. Or Nodirbek Abdusattorov who by sensationally winning the World Rapid Championship (in which, incidentally or perhaps not so incidentally, Nepo gave notice that his recovery may not be the slow process that I had feared) perhaps offered a reminder that there may be other major talents in the coming generation. Whatever the future holds, let us hope that our extraordinary World Champion may be at the centre of it for years to come.

Learning to Love the Engines

A homage to Matthew Sadler's extraordinary *Silicon Road*

Back in my very first column for *ChessMoves* I indicated that I had no intention of using this platform to write book reviews. I am not sure how close I will sail to that particular wind here, but I am very happy to admit that what follows is largely inspired by Matthew Sadler's awesome new tome *The Silicon Road to Chess Improvement* (New in Chess, 2021), which somehow manages to weigh in at a remarkable 560 pages without ever seeming heavy going. Still, I would claim that my theme extends beyond just this book to Matthew's extraordinarily constructive and enthusiastic

engagement with engines more generally – all considered in the context of how the chess world overall has managed to adapt to their growing influence. Anyone who has engaged with Matthew’s output on Twitter over the last couple of years might well have predicted the appearance of a book about chess engines. For anyone who has followed it *since* the appearance of *Silicon Road* it would have become clearer than ever that for Matthew this was not just about delivering a book, but rather an ongoing passion for what chess engines can contribute to the game - one which shows no signs of abating.

Matthew was, of course, one of the players whom we interviewed for *Chess Improvement: It’s All in the Mindset* and his contribution was, both for Barry Hymer and myself, one of the most inspiring. The very first sentence of the conclusion to *The Silicon Road* reminds me vividly of why. “Looking back over my chess career, it strikes me that my most abiding memories are not of victories, but of moments of discovery.” It would be difficult to capture the message of our book more incisively than this – the priority given to learning over extrinsic rewards and the constant quest for growth and new vistas.

Furthermore, the four examples he cites as the most significant instances of discovery really resonated with me. The first couple we mentioned in our book – his joyous experience of working with Dvoretsky, which convinced a player who had hitherto been something of a ‘coaching sceptic’ quite what a superlative coach could offer him; and the eye-opening experience of playing alongside the creative force that is Jon Speelman, in the England team of the 1990s. The third – a tribute to another England colleague – also struck a personal chord with me. He tells of how Luke McShane’s ‘subtle and unexpected moves’ in the early part of his game against Magnus Carlsen in the 2012 London Chess Classic reinvigorated Matthew’s belief in the wealth

of possibilities in the game, at a time when he had been feeling somewhat disillusioned. I remember this game very well as I was seconding Luke at the time and experienced, intensely, both the excitement at his creative build-up and the disappointment as we were reminded – as chess so often likes to – that a series of fine ideas can be cancelled out by one moment of inattention.

The fourth moment of discovery is, however, the most important for our topic here. Matthew describes how he sat in DeepMind’s offices in 2018 playing through the games from the celebrated AlphaZero-Stockfish match with astonishment at the sheer beauty of the play and the apparent clash of styles between the combatants. It became clearer at that moment how AlphaZero’s acquisition of chess knowledge through deep learning – by playing itself innumerable times rather than by dependence on human programmers - augmented the possibility that we in turn might learn substantial lessons from studying this material.

I have long been fascinated by the differing ways in which chess players have responded to the ‘encroachment’ of engines on the game - as readers of my previous work will likely have noticed. I think we can identify a spectrum of responses which have been present in some form ever since it became clear quite how significant this impact would be.

There have always been the genuine Luddites – those with nothing but antipathy towards engines, blaming them for the closure of certain exciting avenues in the openings, the near demise of older and more ‘authentic’ working methods, and – especially in the earlier days – very tangible fears that the game might be imminently ‘solved’ and abandoned. A portion of these intentionally eschewed the opportunities represented by working with engines but some, frankly, were players who had probably reached a point in their careers

where the option of taking a step back seemed more attractive than engaging with this entirely fresh approach. A much larger group shared these concerns but were content to juxtapose their unease at the role of technology with an almost insatiable appetite for utilising the efficiency which engines could bring to their opening preparation. If the creativity of the game was being strangled, they wanted to make sure they had a part of it!

A further group, of which I would probably claim 'membership' – at least in recent times – also had concerns about the ubiquity of engine analysis, the increasing emphasis on the opening phase and the concomitant decline in creativity, especially at higher levels. However, this was balanced by an appreciation of the new insights which the engines brought. I had a sense that, for every avenue that was closed, a new one was opening up. This didn't assuage all of my doubts, but for me too, the positives became much more apparent with the appearance of AlphaZero's dynamic, 'adventurous' brand of chess.

Once stereotyped for their extreme materialism, engines had, even for some time before this, been setting the pace in terms of a thrilling readiness to sacrifice, to look beyond 'formal' material values to an alertness to what the pieces could concretely achieve in any given position. I think for many stronger players the accelerating erosion of overt materialism has become normalised almost subconsciously, but it is still possible to be surprised. Take a look at the following, which I was really struck by, as I stumbled across it during some relatively casual opening work.

In a reasonably significant line of the 2... Nf6 Scandinavian I noticed that after **1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Nf6 3.d4 Nxd5 4.Be2 Bf5 5.Nf3 e6 6.0-0 Be7**, White's top choice is 7 a3, presumably based upon the assumption that after the more direct 7 c4 Nb4, White (in order to play for a win) will have to defend c2 with one or

other slightly awkward knight move (8 Na3 or 8 Ne1). However, when I checked this, Stockfish seemed to show considerable enthusiasm for **7.c4!?** and after **7...Nb4 8.Nc3 Nc2 9.Rb1 Nb4**



it wants simply to give the exchange with the impressively calm **10.Bf4!?** Eye-opening in itself, I was further impressed that the compensation – based on White's superior piece deployment generally and specifically the fact that the knight which 'should' guard the kingside has wandered to b4 - would in most variations be maximised by opening the position with a quick d5 break, not always the advice when 2-1 behind in terms of rooks. This is just one example amongst many. As I said, this tendency was well under way even before the appearance of AlphaZero and has, at the very least, helped to quash the notion that the increasing influence of engines is likely to render the game increasingly dry and technical.

Finally, at the end of this spectrum of opinion is the group of almost unabashed engine enthusiasts. I am unsure how many of them there are amongst the stronger human players, but I am confident in asserting that Matthew is very significant within their number and unusually public in his belief that engine games represent a tremendous and neglected opportunity for learning and improvement. He seems to feel no need to qualify the claim that these are "the strongest

chess players the planet has ever seen.” He is confident that we can learn from engines, just as we do from the stronger human players. What is more, we are not restricted by the publicly available games which they have played – we are in a position to set them to battle, generate fresh study material and analyse the ensuing action at will.

Matthew, of course, had already helped to capture the excitement which arose when AlphaZero first burst onto the scene in *Game Changer*, written together with Natasha Regan. In Garry Kasparov’s words from the foreword, “After decades of stuffing as much human chess knowledge as possible into code” a self-taught program (learning for a period of just 24 hours!) showed itself more than capable of competing with the top engines. That its propensity for h-pawn pushes and long-term material sacrifices have already become the stuff of legend is in no small part because the authors did such a great job of putting AlphaZero’s play into a human context and making its thought processes accessible to a wider audience.

In some ways though, I am even more impressed by *Silicon Road*, since whereas last time the authors were granted privileged access to AlphaZero’s unpublished games and analysis, this time Matthew generated much of the material himself. Some was publicly available for sure, notably games played between the leading engines at the ongoing TCEC events, Matthew’s gratitude for which is always in evidence. However, much of the remaining material is a direct reflection of the imaginative variety of ways in which Matthew deploys the engines.

I will mention just two here which really impressed me:

- 1) Setting engines to play matches from key positions as a route into understanding an opening:

I should mention at this point that for me, a big part of the impact of Matthew’s recent work has been a reminder of how much the engines have to offer us in other phases of the game *beyond* either the opening or technical endgames. However, this recommendation, whilst opening-focused, is also a fair departure from the way in which engines are customarily used for high level preparation. This is not about deep analysis of a position with a view to generating new moves. It is very much about getting a feel for the positions and using the engines as tools at an early stage of the process. Matthew is explicit that he personally finds analysing the way in which engines handle the opening over a large quantity of games preferable to tackling, say, an advanced opening manual as a route to grapple with the fundamentals. He might choose to do the latter as well, but probably only from a feeling of strength derived from the engines’ insights.

- 2) Playing against Leela (the strongest open-source engine which uses similar learning methods to Alpha Zero) with the engine restricted to one node – that is, essentially playing without calculation.

When Matthew mentioned for our interview that he plays games against engines as part of his training regimen, it came as a bit of a surprise. I guess many of us did a bit of that 20 years ago, but then came basically to heed Matthew’s advice definitely not to do this “to boost your ego.” In fact he does make a convincing argument for the value of playing seriously against engines at least to assist with the opening phase when seeking to capture a feeling for the difference between playing and merely studying positions. Nonetheless, it made sense to hear that he also plays games with the engines on modified settings. This time, however, my amazement was in the opposite direction. We are so accustomed, I think, to priding ourselves on the quality of human intuition and judgement, that our tendency is to regard engine superiority as

almost entirely the product of calculation. So, hearing that Leela has developed sufficient positional acumen to play at a pretty decent level (scoring more than 25% against Matthew) with the immense handicap of ‘not calculating’ at all was quite hard to comprehend.

I am still quite baffled as to how Leela can produce anything like the following in the absence of calculation - as to be fair is Matthew himself – but it is well worth seeing!

Leela Zero (1 node) - Matthew Sadler
Matthew Engine Games, 2020



27.Qg2!

1 Nd5 was also possible, but the force of the text move was overlooked by Matthew. After his slightly passive reply, the rest is a relentless onslaught.

27...Rg8?! 28.Nd5 Qa5 29.Rxh5! cxb3 30.Nxb3 Qa3 31.Nc7+ Kd8 32.Qd5 and it's all over. The game finished **32...Bd6 33.Qxg8+ Kxc7 34.Qc4+ Bc6 35.Rh7+ 1-0.**

This seems very important to me. I have always felt that one obstacle to learning from the engines is insufficient awareness that engine evaluations will often depend upon details within a long line of calculation which may, at least in practical terms, be beyond human comprehension. However, whilst this necessarily remains an issue, to know that the

engines have reached such a high level even abstracted from their calculation, feels very reassuring; relying on acquired intuition alone, Leela Zero's moves appear likely to make excellent 'human sense'.

I have focused a lot on attitudes towards engines and consequent reluctance to exploit their full potential. However, we are now beginning to touch upon another key question – the 'ability' to learn from engines. Is this really an 'elite activity', or given the right approach, can anyone hope to learn in this way? The cynic might say that Matthew's answer to this is something of an 'only move', but he utterly convinces me of his conviction that engine games are a very valuable and under-utilised resource for the wider community of chess improvers. Certainly, I defy anyone to read this book without picking up many valuable lessons.

I do believe there remain some dangers to the whole enterprise, linked in part to the problem of complex, scarcely understandable computer variations to which I alluded above. Any attempt to draw general rules about how to handle a given chess position is vulnerable to the danger that apparently convincing examples may 'work' due to specific features which may not be replicated with quite small adjustments to the position. The more complex the variations, the more this problem is likely to kick in and engines are prone, by the very nature, to offer more complex variations. For this reason, a rule of the type 'Do X in any situation Y', tends to be more vulnerable than those which argue for broadening the mind. I particularly loved chapters like the one on 'Whole Board Play', using the engines as a counter-weight to such palpable human failings as tunnel vision. At all levels, we can get fixated by a part of the board, and the exhortation to look more widely – to consider option Z even if option X is screaming at us – can (the danger of time-trouble aside) be immensely valuable.

Similarly, Matthew was rightly impressed that after a series of overtly aggressive moves reaching the diagram position

Stockfish Classical – Houdini TCEC Season 17 , 2020



White came up with the astonishingly restrained **20.Rf1!** Yes, a human player would observe the potential threats to the back rank and perhaps attend to these before resuming the attack. However, I think it is almost inconceivable that they would do so by withdrawing one of the key attacking pieces. In fact, by doing so White also puts a stop to any ...Qe3 resources and correctly assesses that Black will struggle to bring further defenders to the critical zone. It would be fraught with danger to build a 'general rule' around this decision, but as an example of keeping an open mind and not ruling any options out, it seems highly instructive.

One more cautionary note. Computer games can be very confusing and are crying out for human explanation and interpretation. This requires balance. We somehow need to understand the engine's moves in human terms without trying to assign human motives to the engines. In my view Matthew performs this tricky function superbly, trading the line convincingly throughout. Whatever the future holds for those who feel moved to 'try this at home', there is an incredible amount to be

gained by Matthew doing it for us and on this basis I cannot recommend his efforts enough.

Celebrating Hard-Fought Draws

Welcoming back the Schachbundesliga and doing a deep dive into Luke McShane's exciting draw against Vincent Keymer

The German chess league – the Schachbundesliga – bills itself as “the strongest league in the world” and this is no idle claim. Not only does it boast a dazzling array of talent in its top two divisions and its women's divisions, it also features astonishing strength in depth. Indeed, it is far from unusual to find teams in the many regional Oberligen which boast at least a couple of grandmasters in their ranks.

So the start of the 2022 season on the weekend of 5-6 March is news in itself, following as it does hard on the heels of a season which kicked off in 2019, but (courtesy of the Covid pandemic) was completed only towards the close of 2021. However, with a new crisis placing a very dark cloud indeed over Europe - even before we emerge from these previous tribulations - this first weekend also saw a touching gesture of solidarity with Ukraine. The hosts of their matches on this first weekend, SV Werder Bremen, faced with the unavailability of two of their stars - Alexander Areshchenko and Zahar Efimenko who were engaged in a struggle to leave their besieged country with their families - decided simply not to field players on these boards. In this usually most fiercely competitive of leagues, their two opponents - OSG Baden-Baden the current Champions and Schachfreunde Deizisau - responded in the appropriate manner and the customary battles on boards 2 and 3 were replaced by the arresting image of sunflowers placed on the boards alongside the Ukrainian flag.



This does not mean that serenity was the order of the day on the neighbouring boards, and it is to the exciting struggle on board 1 of the match Werder Bremen against SF Deizisau that I would now like to turn. In addition to the poignant circumstances, there are two other grounds for putting my focus here.

The first is that I think there is something to be said for reminding readers every now and again that even drawn games with relatively few moves can be hard-fought, full of content, and rewarding to play through. I am accustomed to some level of antipathy towards draws played at a high level, and on occasion it is not hard to sympathise with this. Right now, though, there seems to be renewed conviction that in addition to the widespread use of the Sofia rules (a restriction on draw agreements before some given number of moves) the football-inspired system of 3 points for a win is a great way to persuade lethargic Grandmasters out of their indolence.

For sure, there have been some recent outings in which '3 points for a win' appears to have worked well, but I have concerns. One is that I tend actually to be quite impressed by the determination of many top players to unearth new avenues to reach complex positions even

without any such inducements, and I do believe that some of the concern comes from a failure to appreciate quite how difficult this can be. However, more fundamentally, I find it troubling that a 'perfect game of chess' – which we are virtually certain would end in a sharing of the spoils – should be under-rewarded in this way. Not just 'perfect' games either. It bothers me if fiercely contested games in which the defender succeeds in somehow matching the attacker's energy become undervalued too. At least, I am sceptical that win percentages are necessarily a reliable metric for assessing even the entertainment value - never mind the quality of play - that any given tournament produces. The second reason is that a battle between our own Luke McShane and the exciting young German talent Vincent Keymer, who so impressed at the recent Airthings Masters, is an appealing prospect in itself. When Luke was kind enough to guide me through some of his thinking in the fireworks which ensued, the prospect became irresistible. Many thanks indeed to Luke for his insights which have inspired a good deal of what follows.

Luke McShane – Vincent Keymer

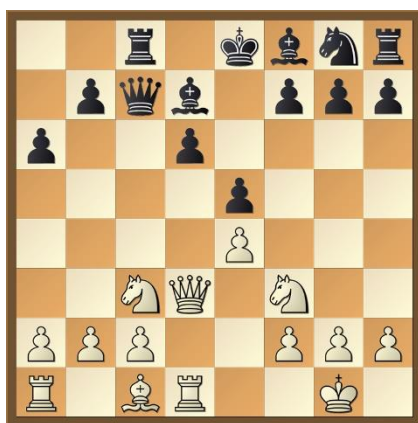
Bundesliga 2021–22, Bremen March 6 2022

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.d4 cxd4 5.Qxd4 a6 6.Bxd7+ Bxd7 7.Nc3 e5

When I first looked at these positions, I felt that Black ought to be able to do without weakening d5 in this way, but I soon found that White obtains plenty of pressure against more 'Scheveningen-style' attempts to play with the black pawns on d6 and e6. In any case, the narrative here is somewhat paradoxical – White has given up his king's bishop in order to attempt to gain ascendancy on the very light squares where its influence will be missed - d5 in particular! To try to understand this, we might do worse than to focus on tempi. In fact, Bb5+ and Bxd7+ is rather an economical mode of development, whilst exchanging this knight also enables the relatively efficient Qxd4-d3,

saving further time over Najdorf lines in which White has to play Nf3, then Nxd4, then knight back to f3 and then develop the queen. Development might not appear to be the paramount issue when White is unable to open the position rapidly, but it does afford White some time to place his pieces in a way which really threatens to smother all of his opponent's pawn breaks.

8.Qd3 Rc8 9.0-0 Qc7 10.Rd1



For the moment, Black is using pressure against c2 to keep the knight out of d5. There is, however, no need yet to restrain Black's 10...b5, since it is well met with 11 a4! b4 12 Nd5 Qxc2 13 Qxc2 Rxc2 14 Nxb4 Rc4 15 Nxa6 Rxa4 16 Be3 when Black really can fear the consequences of opening lines with his kingside pieces still at home.

10...Be6

Black's development requires care. It is worth mentioning that any unprepared ...Nf6 move will be well met by Bg5, which is why his set-up probably has to involve the slightly weakening ...h6 move securing both of the minor pieces which he wants to point at the d5 square.

11.a4 h6 12.Nd2

This manoeuvre may look a little ponderous, but I am inclined to think that if White secures his goal – knights on c3 and e3 eyeing up both of Black's natural pawn breaks ...d5 and ...f5,

with his a4 pawn ruling out any b5 ideas – then he has achieved a Najdorf structure with unusual degrees of comfort even without undue theoretical exertion. It isn't hard to see the appeal. So Black's aggressive response – securing the f5 break even whilst his kingside remains undeveloped - looks absolutely critical and it is easy to understand why Vincent Keymer's attention was drawn to this in his preparation for the line.

12...g6!? 13.Nf1 f5 14.Ne3



14...Nf6!?

These are the moments where it is really invaluable for us to have some idea what was going on in the players' heads. Seeing White respond to this novelty with such vigour could easily lead to the conclusion that he 'had it all covered', but Luke assures me that at this point whilst they were still in Vincent's preparation, he himself was very much on his own. Indeed, he spent a full half hour here, realising that White's acceptance of the pawn offer rests pivotally upon a willingness to seize back the initiative by offering significantly more material. On examination with an engine, this novelty looks quite appealing. White no longer has an attractive option to handle the position quietly and needs to play with great energy to avoid slipping into a passive position.

To be honest though, the previously played 14...Ne7, sacrificing a different pawn, doesn't

look so bad either. After 14...Ne7 15.Qxd6 Qxd6 16.Rxd6 Kf7 17.Rb6 Rb8 18.Ned5 Nc8 19.Rb3 White is successfully tying Black down to the defence of b7, but the rook on b3 looks otherwise rather awkward. Still, the most concrete continuation, in which Black sacrifices an exchange with 19...Nd6 (19...f4!? perhaps) 20.Be3 Nxe4 21.Ba7 Nxc3 22.bxc3 Bxd5 23.Bxb8 Bg7! 24.c4 Bc6 though visually pleasing, is probably not especially easy to handle with Black.

15.exf5 gxf5 16.Nxf5 d5!



Thematic – Black boasts a strong and mobile pawn centre as well as the bishop pair for his pawn and it is unsurprising that the engine confirms that ‘normal moves’ are not at all promising here. So Luke steps up...

17.Bf4!

I love this sacrifice. White pinpoints the key problem in Black’s set-up, namely that his pieces - though full of potential - are not yet fully mobilised and he strikes in a way which opens lines, whilst also serving to complete his own development. When I saw this, I was reminded that Luke had been kind enough to commend two of my piece sacrifices on f4 (one of them itself a Bc1-f4 development) in his review of *Chess Improvement: It’s all in the Mindset*, but I was even more delighted to hear that these were very much on his mind at this moment during the game. As I suggested, it would be easy to glance through this game

and assume this to be ‘all preparation’, but even having indicated that it wasn’t, it is worth emphasising quite how much calculation and intuition needed to be deployed in order to go for this, especially with the opponent giving every indication of having analysed it before.

17...exf4 18.Nd4!

The only good way. 18 Re1 Kf7 19 Nd4 Re8 falls short as White misses the pressure on d5.

18...Bg8

The most sensible way to keep the bishop as the king will often need the f7 square. Luke mentioned that he had hoped for 18...Bg4, but Black’s helplessness after 19 Nxd5 Nxd5 20 Qg6+ Qf7 21 Qxg4 is a good example of how retaining this bishop is usually pivotal to a successful defence of the various vulnerable light squares. Having said this, Black seems curiously able to survive after 18...Kf7 19.Nxe6 Kxe6 20.Nxd5 Qxc2! 21.Qh3+ Kf7 22.Nxf6 Kxf6 23.Qh4+ Kg6 24.Qg4+ Kf6 25.Rd4 Rc5! but lines which require such well concealed ‘only moves’ are obviously fraught with practical danger.

19.Re1+



19...Be7?

A serious error and at first sight a bit hard to explain, since as well as being a position Keymer had no doubt analysed before, it feels intuitively likely that adding Nf5 into White’s pot of ideas might not end well. It does,

though, prompt me to challenge a couple of potential misconceptions about players 'wheeling out' their preparation:

- 1) Commentators often fail to distinguish openings which have been covered as part of the player's overall opening work from those covered for a particular game. Remembering everything you have checked over for a specific game may be manageable enough (at least for players in Keymer's demographic, if not for those in mine). However, dredging up knowledge acquired months or even years before is extremely challenging even for those with the most awesome memories and in fact Black had in no way predicted that Luke would go down this line.
- 2) We often hear that top GMs look for lines which, whilst they may be drawn with best play, can seriously test their opponents' ability to find good or even 'only' moves at the board. If this is a tempting strategy with White, it is doubly so with Black and it might even be possible to explain Keymer's novelty here in those terms. However, in such a position, the task of finding tough moves can switch very abruptly. Once Luke hit upon 17 Bf4! it was suddenly Black who was faced with the prospect of fending off a direct attack with very little leeway. Complex positions are tough *for both players* and unless the moves have been reliably memorised, it will often be the 'defender' who falters first, even if they have seen the position before.
- 3) One further thought. Misremembering preparation will sometimes prove more treacherous than having never encountered the position before. This is perhaps a case in point and Luke's impression was that 19...Be7? was probably the product of confusing lines - arguably an unlikely error to make if coming to the position afresh.

In fact, Black may even have had a choice of reasonable king moves here, but 19...Kd8 20.Re6 Qf7 21.Rae1 Bc5! 22.Nxd5 Nxd5 23.Qe4 Nf6 24.Qxf4 Nd7 demands quite a lot of the defender before White is obliged to bail out with 25.Qh4+ Kc7 26.Qg3+ Kd8 27.Qh4+ and perpetual check.

For this reason, I think Luke was right to give 19...Kf7 as the main line, after which Black should hold easily enough by 20.Re6 Rd8 21.Qf5!? (no need to clarify with 21.Rxf6+ Kxf6 22.Qf5+ Kg7 23.Qg4 yet - White can safely check Black's accuracy first) 21...Bg7 22.Rae1 Bh7! 23.Rxf6+ Bxf6 24.Qe6+ Kg7 25.Qg4+ Kf7 and again neither side can reject the perpetual.

20.Nf5 Bh7



21.Nxd5?

Assuming that Black is alert to the danger on his 23rd move, this leads to an early perpetual, throwing away a probably winning advantage, but nonetheless an eminently understandable decision in the circumstances. Especially when short of time and calculating at some length, I think it is easy for the type of forcing sequences you are exploring in some variations to impact upon the moves which you consider in others. Specifically, I suspect that with the pin on the knight resulting in several plausible forcing variations, it is not easy to take a time out from choosing between

these in order to consider moves which involve a slow build-up.

Since the pin against White's knight on f5 is not an absolute one, White has two tempting options to recoup his material by simplifying the position, both of which Luke considered at length:

After 21 Nxe7 Bxd3 22.Nexd5+ Kf7 23.Nxc7 Bc4! Black traps the knight, forcing the weakening 24.b3, when 22...Rxc7 25.bxc4 Rxc4 doesn't look especially appealing for White.

Luke was also unconvinced by 21.Rxe7+ Qxe7 22.Nxe7 Bxd3 23.Nxc8 Bxc2 and when visualising and trying to assess this position in time pressure it is easy to see how the d-pawn and the bishop might appear to have spelled counterplay. In fact, the engine reminds us that White can apply general principles to good effect and blockade the d-pawn with 24 Ne2! (for the record, 24 Rc1 Kf7 25 Nd6+ looks quite strong too, although considerably less instructive) with a pleasant pull once the d-pawn is controlled.

In fact, the best chances were offered by rejecting all of these captures in favour of applying more pressure with 21 Re6!. The trick here is to realise that any time Black exchanges the knight on f5 he will be merely inviting another powerful attacking piece to take its place, whilst he cannot both defend e7 and secure h7. The key line may be 21...Rf8 (21...Bxf5 22 Qxf5 Rf8 23 Rae1 Rf7 fails simply to 24 Rxf6) 22.Rae1 Rf7 which might secure the second rank but for the neat tactic 23.Rxf6! Rxf6 24.Ng7+ Kd8 25.Qxh7 and again, the capture of the bishop leaves Black's position falling apart on the white squares.

Luke admitted that he played 21 Nxd5 aware that the coming perpetual was one possible outcome, but harboured the illusion that he still had some attacking chances. It soon becomes clear that neither player can afford to deviate from the checks.

21...Nxd5 22.Qxd5 Bxf5 23.Qxf5 Rd8!

Necessary, since White is threatening a devastating capture on e7, when the queen is overworked and taking back with the king would leave it fatally exposed

24.Qg6+ Kf8 25.Qf5+ Ke8

25...Kg7 26.Qg4+ Bg5? 27.h4 only courts unnecessary danger for Black

26.Qg6+ Kf8 27.Qf5+ Ke8 ½–½

I hope the reader will share my excitement at this intense tussle. A reminder of how much can be going on both on the board and disguised in the notes when the point is shared and above all, a game well worthy of the unique occasion.

Maintaining Chess Strength

An age-old problem ... but there's room for optimism!

We are constantly reminded these days that top chess players are becoming younger and younger, perhaps spurred on by the increasing use of powerful engines to generate complex and very concrete opening theory which naturally benefits those whose memories are in peak condition. We have just witnessed a new generation breaking through at the level of the Candidates tournament, whilst the chase to follow Abhimanyu Mishra into the record books as the world's youngest grandmaster continues unabated, however unmatchable his achievement of 12 years, 4 months might appear to be. Even as I write these words, Dommaraju Gukesh has just become the youngest player ever to reach 2700, which - even factoring in difficulties comparing ratings realistically over time - is a hugely impressive achievement.

There is much truth to all this lauding of youth. Yet this is why it feels so refreshing that, at least in a UK context, those at a much later stage of life have been stealing the show in the last couple of months. At a team level, England enjoyed a triumph at the World Senior Team

Championships with all three of our teams in the Open Over 50, Women's Over 50 and Open Over 65 taking gold (as reported elsewhere in this issue). Hot off the press, there have also been very notable successes in the European Individual Over 65 with Terry Chapman (seeded 10th) taking the silver medal and Anthony Stebbings achieving a very creditable bronze.

In case these are open to the suggestion that they are in a sense 'English' successes rather than 'senior' successes by virtue of the tournaments in which they were achieved, it should be noted that there have also been notable achievements by senior players in open events. Mark Hebden has been in extraordinary form, following up his success at the English Seniors by scoring 6/7 to dominate the Chessable English Championships, including (as reported last month) wins against such central figures of our younger generation as Marcus Harvey and Borna Derakshani. Most recently, he again looked in good shape at the July 4NCL Congress in Leamington Spa, beating Danny Gormally and only dropping half a point in the last round as he secured first place. I do think such senior successes have been more conspicuous at home – partly a hangover (in the most positive sense of the word) from the English Chess explosion and a reminder of the demographic of many of our GMs. However, it is not only happening here. Last week Simen Agdestein - former trainer of the World Champion Magnus Carlsen and probably still unique amongst GMs for having enjoyed a significant career in professional football – added an astonishing victory to his career successes. Exactly 40 years after he first won the Norwegian championship as a 15-year-old, he struck again, scoring a sensational 7/8 in a field headed by Jon Ludvig Hammer – one which well reflected much of the strength which Norway can now boast as a result of Simen's former pupil's inspiring example.

I can also make a claim to have struck a blow for the 'oldies' by winning the South Wales International with 8/9 last week, a score which I never recall achieving at any open in my younger years (notably and most disappointingly, the occasion on which I led the Bad Woerishofen Open in Bavaria with 7/7 proved no exception to this)! Prior to last week, it looked from the outside as if – at least on my return since lockdown - I was achieving little more than slowing my descent or perhaps stabilising my level on a good day. This has been discouraging for sure, but I have tried to remain optimistic that, given more time for working on my own chess and finding greater motivation to do so, I should still be able to perform again at something much closer to my level of 20 or so years ago. I guess the question for me and others in my position is this. In spite of the outliers such as Kortchnoi and Smyslov who offer a shining example in this respect, can these hopes be regarded as realistic?

I claim no originality in posing this question. Matthew Sadler's and Natasha Regan's well-received debut book *Chess for Life* was devoted to an analysis of how a number of strong players have retained both their enthusiasm and a fair portion of their playing strength over time. There have also been further notable contributions on Barry Hymer's *Chessable* blog, giving food for thought and in the main some comfort to those facing the ravages of chess ageing. There has also been interesting research from Matt Jensen which suggests that the oft-cited peak age of 30-35 may apply only to stronger players and that in lower rating bands there is much more scope for development through middle age, with the expected peak at a much higher age – see *At What Age Do Chess Players Peak?* on Chess.com

(<https://www.chess.com/article/view/chess-players-peak>).

This is a very encouraging thought for many adult improvers, but I suppose I have been left to seek solace with the thought that my

perceptible decline may at least be a function of how strong I became. So - great news!

I guess my own views on the matter could be summarised something like this. Yes, age brings issues of stamina and a greater probability of error towards the end of long sessions. It also impacts on memory, and, for the majority of players, it seems to reduce their capacity to calculate long complex variations reliably. I have certainly felt a bit of all of this. However, it feels as if there ought to be some compensating gains arising from what we have learnt - and continue to learn - from experience. The problem is that the losses seem very tangible. The compensating gains, perhaps less so!

I have had an additional worry – to some extent echoed by John Nunn in *Chess For Life* - revolving around playing style. Given that we have identified memory and calculation as elements especially vulnerable to decline, players who relished sharp, complicated positions at their peak - often backed by openings which carried a bit of a punch too - may simply find their styles of play present them with daunting challenges as they advance in years. If this has been bad enough for 'the Doc' then it will likely prove tougher for me, with a clear tendency towards perfectionism contributing to poor time management to throw into the mix. That older players tend to struggle to handle extreme time pressure - this seems frankly beyond dispute.

Indeed, it was strongly implied by Matthew and Natasha's extensive coverage of Keith Arkell's play, that his style offers one attractive model for ageing players: largely eschewing complex theoretical openings; exhibiting a deep familiarity with structure and elements of the game which endure both within positions and over time; seeking positions in which decisions will be relatively light on calculation and thus on time consumption, all combined with proficient and confident

endgame technique. Mark Hebden's style is somewhat different and displays, of course, an excellent feel for the initiative - a much more obvious evolution from his early attacking years. Yet there are common elements, not least the speed with which he makes decisions, a strong feeling for positional elements and a deep familiarity with his opening systems. In 2019, when we coached together in the Czech Republic, I certainly impressed him with the *breadth* of my opening knowledge – clearly an asset in that domain. However, for practical purposes, the *depth* of knowledge which he has developed in part by a high degree of loyalty to (mostly not tending towards an irrational inflexibility!) and finessing of his systems clearly pays dividends.

Nonetheless, I am largely in agreement with John Nunn. Attempts to manufacture a wholesale change of style would simply not be true to self and would likely prove counterproductive. Yes, even at my age I think there is a lot to be said for trying to take small steps towards a more universal style (and certainly steps to consume less time!), but a player's essential approach will more than ever need to be based on fundamental strengths. The absolute crux of the matter, though, is that we must ask these questions and think in these terms. Just as we concluded in *Chess Improvement: It's all in the Mindset*, the key ingredient remains metacognition. Yes, we might pick up some useful things here and there just by the experience of playing a lot, but the real lessons are there to be gained by subjecting that playing experience to thorough and reflective scrutiny and thinking hard enough to realise that the crucial lessons to take away from them may not always be those which jump out at us. We then need to reflect on how to incorporate these into our strategy going forward – keeping in mind both our strengths and weaknesses and possibly the desire to narrow the gap between the two. Metacognition is good for everyone (apart possibly from some manifestations of the

bowdlerised version of it to which children in UK schools now often seem to be subjected from a very young age). However, our ability to think metacognitively should definitely improve with age, as psychologist Trevor Harley made clear in his nice guest contribution to Barry’s blog – see *The Aging Chess Player - Revisited - Chessable Blog* (<https://www.chessable.com/blog/the-aging-chess-player-revisited/>).

When we look for the expanding capacity which compensates for the shortfalls we have already identified we should look here. Yes, this is about wisdom, but the trick is to keep expanding that wisdom by reflecting on our experiences to make sure that we tangibly ‘learn from defeats’, rather than just trotting it out as a soothing slogan. This is how we can keep compensating for the elements of our play which are not wearing well and done assiduously, I don’t see why it cannot fully compensate. On a good day, I still believe that I can buck the trend. For, as Barry Hymer said in *Chess – An Older Person’s Game? - Chessable Blog* (<https://www.chessable.com/blog/chess-an-older-persons-game/>),

“even the best designed research, conducted meticulously and with huge sample sizes, has little to say about the individual.”

As I suggested above, there is no one chess trajectory which is likely to encapsulate the experience of all players. Sometimes, of course, retirement from a demanding career can bring with it fresh opportunities for chess for players who have endured a prolonged enforced break – resulting in higher levels being achieved at a relatively advanced age. This was the pattern for Terry Chapman in the early stages of his return to the game. The following – from his recent silver medal success - suggests that he may be able to aspire to resuming this healthy trajectory.

Leon Lederman – Terry Chapman

Over 65 European Senior Championship
Round 8

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6 7.Bd3 0–0 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5(!)

A move which has built quite a following, likely further boosted recently as Erwin L’Ami made it a pivotal component of his advocacy of 5...exf6 in his superb *Chessable* course on the Caro-Kann. In the sharp lines where White castles queenside, this move (perhaps counter-intuitively) seems to form less of a target for White’s attacking designs than 9...g6 which was once the main line. If White heads for short castling as here, then Black frequently pushes the h-pawn further which helps disrupt his opponent’s attempts to prove that any h-pawn move simply constitutes a weakening of the light squares.

10.0–0 h4 11.Bd2 Nd7 12.Rae1 Nf8 13.f4 g6!?

The engine isn’t very enthusiastic about this, but Terry threatens 14...f5, which all but forces White’s hand and invites a structure in which either pressuring the centre with ...c5 or creating play along the b8-h2 diagonal seem to offer decent chances. White will need to play with great energy to reveal the downsides of this structure.

14.f5 g5



15.Kh1

Stockfish wants to try and chip away at Black's pawn chain with 15 g3!?, inviting the h-pawn to detach itself from its colleagues with 15...h3, enabling White to round it up with 16 g4 followed by Rf3. This makes sense, but it remains complicated after 16...c5 17 d5 b6 and none of this would have been easy for White to assess.

15...Qc7?!

This looks entirely reasonable, but Stockfish makes a convincing case that striking in the centre with 15...c5! was much safer. The point is that after the text move White could ignore the threat and play 16 c4! intending to meet 16...Bxh2 with either 17 Qd1 swinging to the king-side, or 17 c5!? interfering with the bishop's retreat. Neither does 16...c5 17 Nc3! provide a solution. It is true that c4 and Nc3 are often on the agenda for White in these lines, but the detail here is far from straightforward and Lederman's response therefore is eminently understandable.

16.h3 Bd7 17.Qd1?! c5!

Having provoked weaknesses on the dark squares around White's king, it makes sense to switch to the centre break, in advance - as we have seen - of White advancing his c-pawn with Nc3 on the cards.

18.Ng1?!

It looks plausible to manoeuvre this knight to defend h2, but it was still the case that it could have achieved more by heading for an active square and playing the role of distracting Black from his ambitions. Over the coming moves an elegant dark-square strategy crystallises very nicely and Terry executes it with great energy.

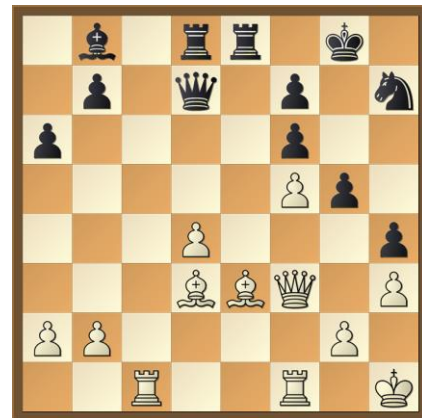
18...Nh7 19.Qh5 cxd4 20.cxd4 Bc6 21.Rc1 Qd7 22.Nf3 Bxf3!

I like this move. It can be appreciated on a positional level (removing a piece which can impact dark squares for one which cannot) or a more dynamic level (removing one of the

impediments to a kingside attack, aiming ultimately to land a blow on h2)! Best of all is that we don't have to choose. Both goals are legitimate, and White will suffer problems in both regards.



23.Qxf3 Rad8 24.Qd5 a6 25.Qf3?! Bb8 26.Be3



26...Rxe3!

Again, a beautifully thematic sacrifice in which positional and dynamic goals neatly reinforce each other. One thing I like about this decision in conjunction with the previous minor piece exchange is that Black is methodically constructing a position with opposite-coloured bishops which beautifully illustrates why these are so favourable to the attacker. White's queen being tied to the defence of h2 will be woefully inefficient!

27.Qxe3 Qd6 28.Qg1?!

I think Lederman's last chance was to try 28 g3. This is just too passive!

28...g4!

Another simple but attractive clearance sacrifice. Black's knight will be beautifully placed on g5 and his rich compensation becomes clearer to the naked eye.

29.Be4 Qb4 30.Rc3 Ng5 31.Re1 Qxb2 32.Rce3 Bg3 33.hxg4 Bxe1 34.Qxe1 Rxd4 35.Bf3 Kg7 36.Qxh4



36...Rd8!

Not the only way, but there is something very logical about punishing Qxh4 by threatening a return to the h-file.

37.Qe1 Rc8 38.Re2 Qd4 39.Qf2 Rc1+ 0-1

An unusual and attractive game. Terry chose a modern variation and interpreted it with creativity and vigour. For anyone inclined to stereotype seniors chess, I think this should give pause for thought!

Consistency: The Most Elusive Chess Virtue?

To anyone aware of my fluctuating chess fortunes this summer, the progression of subject matter in these pieces will hold few mysteries. My July column was explicitly a consequence of the brief optimism arising from my success at the South Wales International, which prompted me to explore the ways in which older players could leverage the advantages which come with experience to

mitigate their declining faculties in other areas. This column is undeniably to some degree a response to my horrible performance at the British Championships – which unsurprisingly has placed that renewed confidence under profound pressure.

However, I haven't embarked on a discussion of the elusive nature of consistency based upon my tribulations alone. In the first place, I think most players will identify to some extent with the bumpy character of our chess journeys. In my youth we used to talk about periods of rapid progress followed by plateaux, which might most optimistically (even euphemistically) be referred to as 'periods of consolidation'. Now – not least due to the high k factors which young players carry with them everywhere – any reversals can easily look like significant backward steps, at least on paper. I was also alerted to the fact that over the last few months, the kind of drastic inconsistency between tournaments within a short time period which I had suffered has been neither that unusual, nor by any means restricted to players in my demographic. I was especially struck that Harry Grieve - following the extraordinary *tour de force* of his performance at the British Championships – appeared to be struggling a bit in the GM group of the Northumberland Masters just a few days later, which led me to the more surprising realisation that his events *preceding* Torquay had not been especially auspicious either. This is in no way to diminish what Harry achieved in Torquay. I was really excited by his play there and genuinely delighted for him that he managed to win the tournament in such a dramatic and deserving manner. However, it is precisely because he seemed there to epitomise all the virtues of the up-and-coming young player: energy, confidence, great preparation, clinical finishing and a mindset capable of exhibiting such incredible courage in the final round (a game covered by the man himself elsewhere on these pages), that I

found his apparent struggle for consistency so intriguing.

Reflecting on all this, it seemed worth stressing that in striving for 'chess improvement' we are really aiming at two distinct goals. On the one hand we want to attain fresh knowledge and hone skills which have not hitherto been a part of our weaponry. However, we also should be looking to ensure that skills which we have already sometimes shown to be within our grasp can be demonstrated more convincingly and consistently. I was certainly aware of this dichotomy when writing *Chess Improvement: It's all in the Mindset*, but I think it is worth making it more explicit here, not least because I think there is a risk that when we set about trying to make progress, we are easily drawn to want to learn the new and to master fresh techniques with perhaps a consequent tendency to underestimate how much is already there, but latent and in need of constant practice.

It is hard enough to analyse our own reasons for fluctuating form across tournaments, never mind speculating upon the causes of other players' inconsistency. For one thing no two tournaments are identical. There are such a range of 'external' factors which can affect performance: any 'real life' distractions which might impact upon the level of focus; accommodation and quality of sleep; overall levels of health and fitness; playing conditions; even how well any given tournament works socially and the extent to which a player feels supported, especially in adversity. In the 1990s I played in a number of events in which I was the only UK player and sometimes even the only one with English as their mother tongue and can testify that this can have a significant impact, even if a degree of isolation is not always a disaster from the point of view of facilitating hard work.

Fairly self-evidently, all of these will feed into a player's psychological state, and I am ever more convinced that this is the key to so much

variation in form both between events and within them. Returning to my own case, I definitely gained momentum during the South Wales International, not just from the favourable results, but from the sense that I was both seeing a decent amount and avoiding beating myself up too much at the board when things did not go to plan. The latter was probably the key to the final two rounds, in both of which I felt more than usually sanguine when I found myself under a degree of pressure. Arriving in Torquay with the hope that this momentum might endure across events, it was, needless to say, a massive shock to the system to start with 0/2. Moreover, since this score was so richly deserved in terms of my multiple failings in those early games – disastrous time consumption, poor preparation, and a failure to keep control of the position being just the start of a longer list – it became clear that something was fundamentally wrong. What was interesting was that the subsequent apparent 'recovery' didn't remotely convince me either, my fourth win in a row doing no more than provide a particularly graphic example of my shortcomings.

Peter Wells – Max Turner

British Championship Round 6 Torquay 2022

**1.c4 e6 2.g3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.0-0 0-0
6.d4 c6 7.Nc3 Nbd7 8.b3 b6 9.Nd2 Bb7 10.e4
a5 11.Re1 Rc8 12.Bb2 Ba8 13.Qe2 dxe4
14.Ndxe4 Qc7 15.Rad1 Nxe4 16.Nxe4 Rfd8
17.h4 h6 18.Rd3**



9 Nd2 is a slightly unusual way to give priority to achieving the e4 break which I have played a few times over the years, and here Black's passive reaction has afforded me something like a 'perfect Catalan position'. However, following the useful 17.h4, it is not obvious what is the best way to make further progress and I was consuming too much time constantly eyeing the d5 break and various other violent attempts to break through. Definitely one of those times when finding good moves rather than feeling an almost moral obligation to look for the 'best' ones would have been the wisest course.

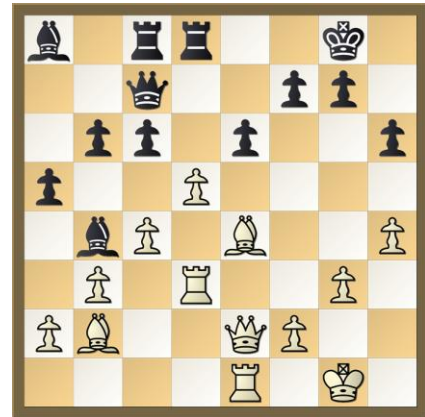
18...Nf6 19.d5?!

In the end this was played more as a panicky response to looming time pressure than as the consequence of rational analysis. For sure, I did see a good deal of the variations to come, but if Max had appreciated how easily his position could become 'cut in half' by the advancing d-pawn he would have eased the pressure with a simplifying exchange, solving far more of his problems than he should ever have been allowed to do.

19...Nxe4 20.Bxe4 Bb4?

One defender deserts the battle and when others also get cut off, Black's kingside becomes a lost cause. A simple solution was available with 20...cxd5! 21.cxd5 Bb4! (but not 21...exd5 22 Bf5) 22.Red1 Bxd5 23.Bxd5 Rxd5 24.Rxd5 exd5 25.Rxd5 and White's mistimed

pawn break has done little but simplify the position, and with it Black's task.



21.dxe6! Rxd3 22.Bxd3 Bxe1 23.e7! Qd7
 23...Re8 24.Qg4 f6 25.Qe6+ Kh8 26.Bxf6 is not much fun for the defence either.

24.Qe4

Black seemed to set too much store on denying access to g4, but White has another simple route to the key squares around the king. It is critical that Black cannot play 24...f5 since after the simple 25. Qe5!, Black's pieces are hopelessly badly placed to contest the long diagonal.

24...f6 25.Bxf6 Qe8 26.Qe6+ Kh8 27.Be5 Bb4
28.Qxh6+
1-0

There could be several ways to react to such a game. I guess I could at least have taken solace from the fact that luck had been on my side, and certainly the finish did give me some pleasure. However, I chose to dwell more on my tentative and then borderline irresponsible handling of a very promising position which, unsurprisingly, didn't do much for my confidence, regardless of my recovering score. This raises an interesting general question: I am convinced that the advice to players to give priority to analysing their games rigorously and honestly with a view to identifying problems from which they can learn is correct, and the sooner they do this after they have been

played, the more they will be able to recreate an authentic record of their thought processes. However, doing this mid-tournament can also clearly endanger morale, particularly as any use of the engine tends to put even the most beautiful and satisfying games into disheartening perspective. I think the absolute key – and in this respect I have definitely improved since the experience of working together with Barry Hymer on our book – is never to bring identity into the equation. In other words, the sometimes all too natural leap from ‘I played terribly’ to ‘I’m a terrible player’ must be avoided at all costs. However, I am still vulnerable to the more plausible but harmful claim that ‘I’m in hopeless form here’ or ‘I’m seeing nothing in this tournament.’ This is a kind of limited identity claim but still very damaging. Somehow this has to be combatted – the ideal should be that the kind of adjustment after a bad *tournament* of which many players seem to be capable should be undertaken after every bad *game*. Yesterday didn’t go well, but I am a strong player and today is a new day! Herein, I suspect, lies one of the clearest causes of inconsistency, but evidently one of the hardest to conquer.

Another key variable in seeking consistent high performance is clearly preparation. Perhaps the most useful thing to say about this is that the sense of one day entering a tournament ‘fully prepared’ motivates many players to do a lot of hard work but is nonetheless likely to remain a pipe dream. There is now so much to know, and theory still evolves at such an impressive speed that we can expect to be always on a journey with regard to getting the opening phase right. However, feeling well prepared before an event and at least sometimes getting specific preparation on the board does make a huge difference. I think it is also helpful to quash those narratives which pit preparation against ‘natural talent’ as some kind of antithesis. Good preparation involves a lot of chess intelligence, and it makes no sense to me to view it as anything other than a key

component of whatever we mean by talent. My impression was that excellent preparation was one source of Harry Grieve’s success in Torquay, and again as he triumphs in the Mindsports Masters GM group even as I write these words. His mastery of sharp lines of the Taimanov Sicilian has clearly served him well, as has the range of weapons upon which he seems able to draw. His game against Shreyas Royal a few days ago was a case of a side-line which may or may not be shown to have enduring appeal, but which packs a surprising punch for an occasional outing.

Harry Grieve – Shreyas Royal

Mindsports Masters (GM group) Round 6
Hammersmith 2022

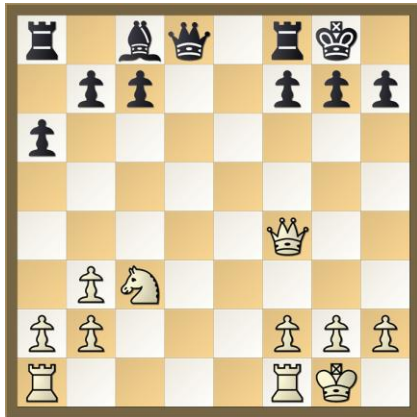
1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d4 exd4 6.0–0 Be7 7.e5 Ne4 8.Nxd4 Nxd4

This game has prompted me to look at 5.d4 anew and realise that there is more than I thought to this attempt to turn the Spanish into something more akin to other Open games. I think my previously rather dismissive attitude might stem from the old line 8...0–0 9.Nf5 d5! 10.Bxc6 bxc6 11.Nxe7+ Qxe7 12.Re1 Re8! preparing to meet 13 f3 with the neat 13...Nd6! with comfortable play. However, assumption is as usual the greatest enemy of innovation, and White has been showing lately that there are intelligent alternatives to 9.Nf5 such as 9.Re1 or 9.Bf4 which keep the tension and may lead to positions more akin to the main line here.

9.Qxd4 Nc5 10.Nc3 0–0 11.Bb3 Nxb3 12.cxb3!?

An interesting moment. Prior to the last twelve months or so, the capture towards the centre had been automatic here. Yet there is a logic to the text move, not just as the c-file could be handy – not least to support a knight on c5, but also because attacking a pawn on c2 is one obvious road in for Black’s light-squared bishop.

**12...d6 13.Bf4 dxe5 14.Qxe5 Bd6 15.Qd4 Bxf4
16.Qxf4**



This doesn't feel like it should be too terrifying for Black, although the fact that he is likely to need the move ...c6 (as we shall see shortly) adds to the sense that White may be able to show something on the dark squares. Still, if I suggested that White will be able to execute a decisive rook sacrifice in just eight moves time, it might all feel a bit far-fetched!

16...Be6 17.Rad1 Qe7 18.Rfe1 c6

As mentioned above, this is structurally a move which Black might prefer to avoid, but his queen sits best on e7 and Nd5 really does need to be prevented. In any case, if Black's bishop could secure itself on the d5 square then support from the c-pawn could be useful – one reason, incidentally, why simply heading to c5 with the White knight would not be such a great plan.

19.Rd3 Rfe8 20.Rg3!? Kh8 21.h4 Rad8 22.Ree3

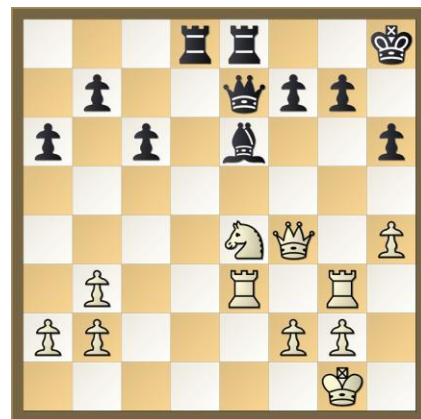
It is interesting, and somewhat surprising, how dangerous these rook swings to the kingside turn out to be. I think Black can find improvements over the next couple of moves which may render this variation one for limited if not actually single use. Still, the decisions which Shreyas faces are far from simple and so much effective modern opening preparation is just this: the recognition that it is tough to gain an advantage with White, but that for practical purposes it may be sufficient to force the

defender to make tough choices on unfamiliar terrain.

22...h6

Stockfish plausibly wants to offer to trade queens here with 22...Qd6!? and meet 23.Qg5 with 23...Rg8. I think it is easy to feel that ...Rg8 is rather passive, but it is noteworthy that White then has to depart from his approach in the game, since 24.Ne4? would be met by 24...Qd1+ 25.Kh2 Qf1! and it is no longer White doing the attacking!

23.Ne4



Another critical position. As I was commentating on this game with Natasha Regan, we were highly impressed that White has managed to conjure genuine threats (Rxg7 needs to be urgently addressed!) in just a few moves. Again, the safest way of dealing with this may turn out to be 23...Rg8, which looks rather passive. I like the fact that 23...f6? 24.Rg6! Bf7? 25.Nxf6+ provides no respite, but 23...Qb4!? pinning the knight may help, and if 24.Kh2 Bd5! (but not 24...f5? 25 Rxg7!) when White may have nothing better than a draw by 25.Rxg7 Kxg7 26.Qf6+ Kg8 27.Qxh6 Bxe4 28.Rg3+ Bg6 29.Rxg6+ fxg6 30.Qxg6+ and so on. Most surprising, perhaps, is that Shreyas's apparently 'safety first' choice, fails to meet the threat!

23...Qf8? 24.Rxg7!

Beautiful, and a nice echo of Harry's powerful tactic against Danny Gormally at the British Championship. If g7 wasn't previously the new British Champion's 'favourite square' it probably is by now...

24...Qxg7 25.Nf6!

Only this way! In the commentary, we correctly predicted the sacrifice and saw that 25.Rg3 allows Black 25...Bg4! with the point that 26.Rxg4 allows simplification with 26...Rd1+ 27.Kh2 Qe5. However, I missed that 26.Nf6 instead can be met with 26...Re6 27.Nxg4 Rg6 and Black consolidates. Now Black is helpless against the threat of Rg3, meeting ...Qf8 with Rg8+ and Qxh6+ mating. Black does what he can, but the fact that Rxg7 will always threaten mate on h7 seals his fate. Note the vital role of the h4 pawn in all this taking the g5 square from the black queen. This is a super-efficient attacking set-up!

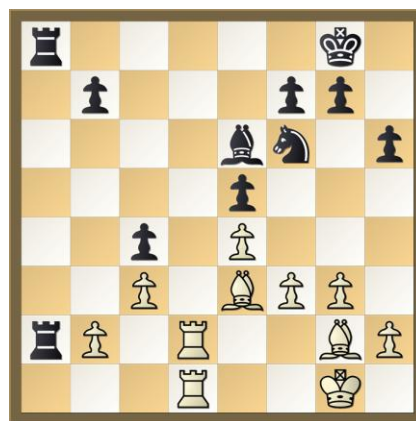
25...Rd1+ 26.Kh2 Re6 27.Rg3 R1d4 28.Rxg7 Kxg7 29.Qe5 Kf8 30.Nh7+ Kg8 31.Nf6+ Kf8 32.h5 Rd2 33.Ne4 Re2 34.f3 Bd5 35.Qh8+ Ke7 36.Qf6+ Kd7 37.Nc3 Rd2 38.Nxd5 cxd5 39.Qxf7+ Kc6 40.Qf6+ 1-0

Impressive stuff, but it was the less glamorous end of the preparation game and a very interesting judgement call which first alerted me to Harry's challenge in Torquay as early as Round 3.

John Emms - Harry Grieve

British Championship Torquay 2022 Round 3

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 Nc6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4 Qc7 6.g3 a6 7.Bg2 Nf6 8.0-0 Nxd4 9.Qxd4 Bc5 10.Bf4 d6 11.Qd2 h6 12.Rad1 e5 13.Be3 Bb4 14.Nb5 axb5 15.Qxb4 Rxa2 16.Rxd6 0-0 17.Rd2 (17.Bxh6? Ne8!) 17...Be6 18.f3 Rfa8 19.Rfd1 Qc4 20.Qxc4 bxc4 21.c3



What struck me here (evidenced by the speed at which Black got these moves on the board) is not just that we were clearly witnessing preparation, but that Harry was emerging with a position which I personally wouldn't want to touch with Black – it looked to me as though the bishop pair might mean something, that his pawn structure was not that tidy and that the lack of active counterplay would render it tough to play. I especially wouldn't have fancied it against a player with the grinding credentials of John Emms! Yet White made little impact and Harry's judgement was vindicated. Selecting the games where you will not fight for a win and assessing that you will be able to hold such a position without excessive suffering is another important chess skill and plays every bit as much of a role in a whole tournament campaign as the flashy wins.

However, it also reminds us of how such preparation is geared to a specific occasion. If you have positions like this in your repertoire, you clearly need diverse lines for playing different levels of opponent. Not much fun reaching this when needing a win against a lower-rated player! Which in turn gives us a clue as to how a player can look very well prepared in one event and not another. For, having outlined some of the factors in which fluctuations in performance can be very real, I think it is also important to note that what might appear to be huge inconsistency in playing level on paper might rather exaggerate

what is going on in reality. For one thing, lockdown has left us with a lot of underrated (mostly young) players, who have not yet had the opportunities to bring their ratings in line with their new found strength. This creates some quite treacherous games for higher-rated players in rating terms and may well increase the importance for the stronger player of succeeding in the early rounds and possibly escaping too many of these encounters. It is also worth acknowledging that the margins between success and failure in chess are anyway often marginal. Frequently a few key decisions at the critical moments are the key and a player can be playing at a perfectly decent level for much the game but end up with results which create an image of abject failure. I also see so many tournaments in which a player just doesn't seem to get positions which they like or (especially at the higher level, as Mickey Adams candidly described when Barry Hymer interviewed him) the opponents just clamp down and don't make mistakes which can afford few opportunities for victory without any particular lapse in form. I make these points not because they come with a particular remedy, but because a bit of perspective in judging the apparent fluctuations in a player's form might not go amiss.

If this lengthy exploration of the factors which can affect consistency has been quite serious for some tastes, I have two suggestions for those preferring a short-cut to some insight on the subject. As Matthew Wadsworth follows his strong form at the British with two straight tournament wins inside a month (the GM group in Northumbria and the IM group with an amazing 7½/9 at the Mindsports masters) it might just be worth working out what he is doing and just trying to replicate it! Alternatively, you could consider that at any given level a player who is profoundly inconsistent will tend to win much more money (and many more plaudits) than one who produces something like the same level of

chess in every event! In other words you could - with Luke McShane for company, albeit in a rather different context - believe that consistency is an overrated virtue. On one occasion I recall Luke having the audacity to accuse me of being inconsistent. I hit back with the obvious point that he had often declared this to be unimportant, to which - with a more than usually impish grin - he launched the killer blow 'Yes, but I don't have to be consistent about it, do I?'

John Nunn – Great British Chess Players



Howard Staunton (1810 - 1874)

Howard Staunton is generally regarded as the world's strongest player from 1843 to 1851, but he was a controversial figure in his time and remains so today. Almost nothing is known about his early life. No birth certificate has ever been found, so the exact date and place of birth are a mystery; even the '1810' given above is based on Staunton's own claim and not on any documentary evidence. There was no official world championship title in the mid-19th century, but Staunton's decisive win against Saint-Amant in 1843 (+11 =4 -6) is generally reckoned as giving him a good claim to be the world's strongest player.

In addition to his over the board achievements, he also wrote extensively on chess and organised the great London International tournament of 1851. Both organising and playing in a tournament is generally a recipe for disaster, and Staunton's loss to Anderssen, who went on to win the event, marked the end of his claim to be the world number one. Later in the 1850s, Morphy came to Europe with the intention of playing a match with Staunton, and this is one of the

main sources of controversy in Staunton's life. The match never took place, with Staunton hinting repeatedly that it could but finding various excuses not to play. Staunton was apparently an arrogant man, and he started the tradition, which continues to the present day, of using chess journalistic outlets for personal ends.

I am dealing solely with the chess side of Staunton's life, but it is worth mentioning that he was also a Shakespearean scholar and published extensively on this subject in the 1850s and 1860s. A quick check on Amazon shows that Staunton's editions of the plays are still available today. He also endorsed a design for chessmen which is named after him and remains the international standard today.

Playing over Staunton's games, for the most part it's hard to be especially impressed. Although his name is often associated with the English opening, he only played this in a small percentage of games, starting mainly with 1.e4. His main strength lay in the openings, and more than his contemporaries he appreciated that quick action was necessary to exploit lax opening play. Morphy is generally credited with recognising the importance of quick development, but Staunton's games to some extent anticipated this advance. When he had the chance, Staunton could be ruthless, but his middlegame and especially his endgame play did not match his handling of the openings.



The following is one of his best positional efforts.

Elijah Williams - Howard Staunton
Game 9, match, London 1851
Sicilian Defence

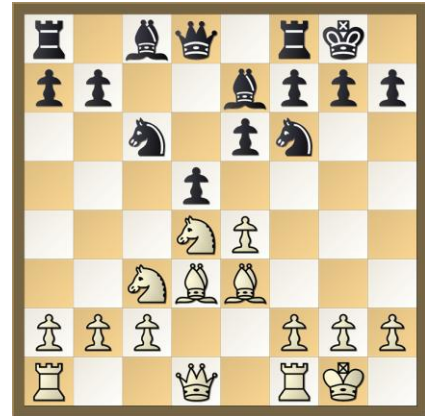
1.e4 c5

Staunton most often answered 1.e4 with 1...e5, but he also played the Sicilian. In those days the Sicilian was met with a wide variety of moves, with 2.f4 (still played today) and 2.c4 (very rare today) being amongst the most common. Several of his Sicilians started 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5, which looks very modern.

2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Be3 Nf6
6.Bd3 Be7 7.0-0 0-0

Black's Taimanov-style development is typical of Staunton's opening play; avoiding unnecessary pawn moves, he concentrates on getting his pieces out.

8.Nc3 d5



By missing out ...a6 and ...d6, Black has gained time to strike immediately in the centre.

9.Nxc6

This gains time but improves Black's pawn-structure. 9.exd5 exd5 10.h3 would have been better, with a typical isolated queen's pawn position in which White might have a slight edge.

9...bxc6 10.e5 Ne8

This looks slightly odd, since it seems more natural to play 10...Nd7. However, after the reply 11.f4 it's not easy to find a good move for Black. The obvious 11...c5 runs into 12.Bxh7+ Kxh7 13.Qh5+ Kg8 14.Rf3 with a likely draw by perpetual check after, for example 14...f5 15.Rh3 Qe8 16.Qh7+ Kf7 17.Qh5+.

11.Ne2

11.f4? is no longer possible as 11...d4 wins a piece.

11...f5?!

11...f6 is better, with an edge for Black as White's foothold in the centre will be eliminated, allowing the knight on e8 back into the game.

12.c3

Too passive. 12.c4! followed by Rc1 would have given White a clear advantage, since the e8-knight will remain out of play for some time.

12...a5



13.f4?

This was White's last chance to play the important move c4. It's crucial for White to be able to meet ...c5 by cxd5, because once Black has played ...c5 he can meet c4 by ...d4, creating a pawn-structure which favours Black due to the weak long light diagonal which can be occupied by ...Bb7.

13...c5 14.b3

Now that White lacks c4, it's harder to suggest an active plan for him. Black's pawns control the squares along White's fourth rank, denying White's pieces useful squares.

14...Bb7 15.h3 Qd7 16.Kh2 Qc6

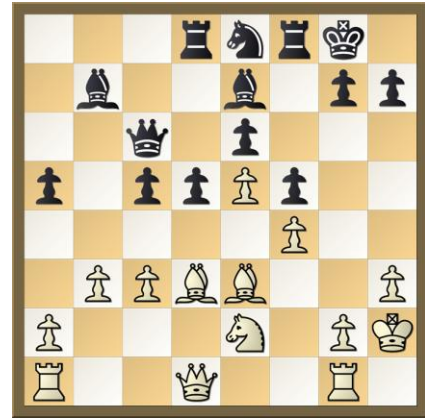
Threatening to win a piece by 17...d4.

17.Rg1

Covering the sensitive g2-square.

17...Rd8?!

17...Nc7 is more to the point, as the knight will need to be activated at some point, while it's not at all clear that the rook is better posted on d8 than on a8.



18.g4?!

White is attempting to create kingside play, but it's obviously risky to open the long diagonal leading to his king. During this phase of the game, both players miss the key point that White needs to play b4 to gain the d4-square for his pieces. Indeed, 18.b4! is especially effective now as a later Nd4 will attack the black queen and the weak e6-pawn. Then 18...axb4 19.cxb4 cxb4? is impossible due to 20.Nd4 Qd7 21.Bb5 Qc8 22.Rc1 Nc7 23.Nxe6. This could have been avoided if Black had played 17...Nc7 to reinforce the e6-pawn.

18...g6 19.gxf5 exf5 20.Qc2?

A more serious mistake. White threatens to take on f5, but this is easily countered. More seriously, White cannot now play b4 because ...c4 traps the bishop. Instead, 20.a3 Ng7 21.b4! was correct, with a roughly equal position.

20...Ng7



Once Black has unpinned the g-pawn, his knight can occupy an excellent post on e6.

21.Ng3 Kh8 22.Qe2 Ne6

Black has a decisive positional advantage. White's kingside play has come to nothing, and his knight is useless on g3, while all the time he has to worry about Black's potential threats on the long diagonal.

23.Rac1 d4!

Staunton realises it is time for action and strikes in the centre.

24.cxd4 Nxd4 25.Bxd4 Rxd4

Attacking f4 and intending to double rooks, so White plays to reduce Black's attacking force by exchanging one pair.

26.Rc4 Rfd8 27.Rxd4 Rxd4

There's no way White can defend f4, cover the mating squares g2 and h1 and meet moves such as ...Rd2 or ...Bh4; for example, 28.Rf1 allows 28...Rxd3.

28.Bb5 Qf3 29.Rf1 Qd5

29...Qc3 would have won material immediately, since 30.Rf2 may be met by 30...Bh4, but the move played is also good enough to win.

30.Bc4 Qd8 31.Qe3 Qd7

Black has no need to rush as his advantage is not going to disappear.

32.Ne2?!

Allowing black's rook onto the seventh rank makes life easy for Staunton. 32.Rf2 would have been a better defence, when Black would have had to add a new ingredient to the mix in order to win, for example ...h5-h4.

32...Rd2 33.a4 Qc6

Back to the long diagonal.

34.Rg1 Qf3



Now material loss is unavoidable.

35.Qxf3 Bxf3 36.Rg2

36.Re1 Bh4 is also hopeless.

36...Bh4 37.Kg1 Bxg2 38.Kxg2 Kg7

White limps on for some time, but the result is never in doubt.

39.Kf3 Rd8 40.Nc3 Rd2 41.Ne2 Rd1 42.Kg2 h6 43.Ng3 Bxg3 44.Kxg3 g5 45.Kf3 Rc1 46.fxg5 hxg5 47.e6 Rc3+ 48.Kg2 Kf6 49.Bd5 Ke7 50.Bc4 f4 51.Bd5 Kd6 52.Bc4 Re3 53.Kh2 Rg3 0-1

The Zugzwang wins further material.

Alexander McDonnell (1798 - 1835)

Alexander McDonnell was born in Belfast in 1798 but settled in London in 1820 and spent the rest of his life there. Curiously, no picture of McDonnell has survived. These days he is remembered mainly for the mammoth series of six matches played against the French master La Bourdonnais in London during 1834. La Bourdonnais was regarded as perhaps the strongest player in the world at the time, and while McDonnell lost by 51½-33½ overall, the result showed that he was a talented player. Wikipedia, quoting Walker (1850), adds the detail that, 'La Bourdonnais was an ebullient and garrulous individual. When winning, he grew talkative and affable; but when things went against him, he swore tolerably round oaths in a pretty audible voice'. Perhaps the most famous game is the 16th game of the fourth match, in which La Bourdonnais won

with three connected passed pawns on the seventh rank. I have always felt it rather unfair that some very strong players are remembered mainly for a game they lost (von Bardeleben being a good example) and McDonnell suffered from this to some extent. Despite his overall loss in the matches, McDonnell won some good games, the following being one of the most modern-looking.

McDonnell - La Bourdonnais

Game 5, 1st Match, London 1834

Sicilian Defence

1.e4 c5 2.f4

The Grand Prix Attack, 1830s style.

2...e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.e5

4.Bb5+ is a modern alternative.

4...Nc6 5.c3 f6

Black seeks to undermine White's centre, but Nimzowitsch's doctrine that it is better to attack the base of the pawn-chain rather than its head still lay far in the future. These days Black tries to put pressure on d4 rather than e5 by playing his king's knight to f5 and queen to b6.

6.Na3

6.d4 is more accurate, to prevent a possible ...d4 by Black.

6...Nh6 7.Nc2 Be7

In the early 19th century, there was a tendency for players to get on with their own plans and devote less attention to frustrating their opponent's. Black is happy to develop his pieces but bearing in mind that White's whole strategy is based on playing and supporting d4, this would have been a good moment to throw a spanner in the works by 7...d4. Preventing d4 by White would also have made Black's pressure against e5 more effective.

8.d4 0-0

Although the game started as a Sicilian, now the pawn-structure is typical of the French Defence.

9.Bd3



9...c4

This move looks odd to the modern eye, because it surrenders the pressure against d4, but it's not bad since Black can develop queenside play quickly. 9...cxd4 10.cxd4 fxe5 11.fxe5 Nf5 12.0-0 Bd7 followed by ...Qb6 is a good 'modern' alternative, when Black is not worse.

10.Be2 Bd7

Black's decision to push the c-pawn means the subsequent play will be a straight battle between White's kingside play and Black's efforts on the queenside.

11.0-0 b5 12.Ne3

Currently White's pieces are clumsily placed for any kingside activity, and he has to reorganise them before he can make real progress.

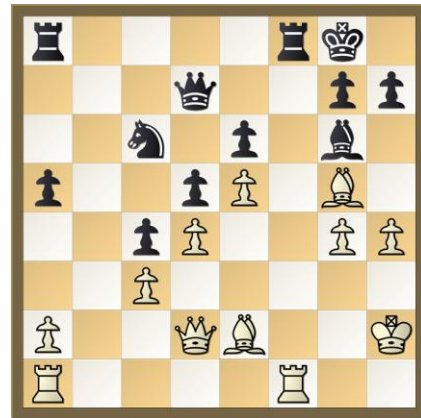
12...a5

Players of this era often failed to appreciate the importance of the time element. Black could have played 12...b4 immediately and moving the a-pawn first doesn't really improve the situation.

13.Kh1?

13.b3! may seem a little counter-intuitive, but it would have held Black up for some time since he cannot now play ...b4 until he has further supported the c4-pawn.

13...fxe5 14.fxe5 Nf5 15.g4 Nxe3 16.Bxe3 Be8
 Playing the bishop outside the central pawn-chain is a common strategy in the French Defence and the manoeuvre ...Be8-g6 (or h5) is still often used today. The direct 16...b4 was also good for Black.



17.Qd2 Bg6 18.Ng5 Bxg5!

At first sight it looks odd for Black to surrender his good bishop, but this gains time and seizes the initiative.

19.Bxg5 Qd7?!

Having achieved a large advantage, the French master starts to play too passively. 19...Be4+ 20.Kg1 Qb6 keeps White off-balance by attacking the e5-pawn. Then 21.Bf4 b4 followed by ...a4-a3 gives Black a large advantage.

20.h4?

White wants to push the pawn to h6, weakening the dark squares around Black's king, but this gives Black a tactical chance.

20...b4?

Missing 20...h6 21.Bf4 Qe7 and the attack on h4 would have been very awkward.

21.Kh2 bxc3 22.bxc3

22...a4?

Once again Black underestimates the importance of time. He wants to play ...a4-a3 and then transfer a rook to b2, but this plan is extremely slow. Instead, 22...h6 23.h5 Be4 24.Be3 Rab8 would have maintained the balance, the important point being that the advance of White's pawn to h6 has been blocked.

23.h5 Be4 24.h6!

Now Black loses control of f6 and his king will be permanently vulnerable.

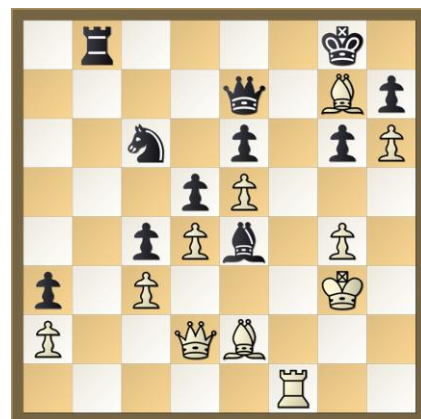
24...g6 25.Bf6 Rab8?

25...Rf7 26.Bg7 Nd8 was a much better chance since the knight will be a good defender on f7.

26.Bg7 Qe7

Threatening mate by ...Qh4+, but this is just a pinprick.

27.Kg3 Rxf1 28.Rxf1 a3



29.Rf6

White is of course winning, but the game still must be won. The simplest method is to activate the e2-bishop, the only white piece not currently participating in the attack. Therefore 29.Bd1! is correct, intending Ba4, and meeting 29...Nd8 with the attractive 30.Qg5!.

29...Na5

A clever but unavailing defence, intending to block the bishop's path to a4 by ...Nb3.

30.Bd1 Nb3 31.Qf2?!

The queen and rook are the wrong way round since with the queen in front White would threaten mate on both f7 and f8. Therefore, he should have played 31.Qg5 (threat Rf8+) 31...Qd7 32.Rf2 followed by Qf6, with a winning attack.

31...Nc1 32.Ba4

The bishop gets to a4 anyway, but Black has gained time to improve the position of his knight. The position is still winning for White, but unlike the situation a few moves ago accurate play is required.

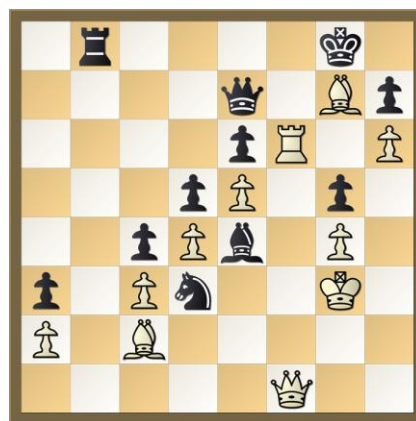
32...Nd3 33.Qf1?

A serious mistake, allowing Black to hold the game. White must prevent ...g5 and so 33.Qe3! was correct, followed by Qg5, much as in the note to White's 31st move.

33...g5!

Black pounces on the mistake and secures the f4-square for his knight. Suddenly Black threatens ...Nf4 followed by ...Rb2, with a decisive attack.

34.Bc2!



The only move to avoid an immediate loss.

34...Nc5?

Having rescued his lost position, La Bourdonnais makes a fatal misjudgement. After 34...Nf4! 35.Bxe4 dxe4 36.Qxc4 e3 37.Qc6 e2 38.Kf2 the position is very double-edged, yet curiously neither side would be able to undertake any action without fatally exposing their own king.

35.dxc5 Bxc2 36.c6

The mate threat on f8 already ties Black's forces down and he cannot cope with the passed c-pawn as well.

36...Ba4 37.c7 Re8 38.Qc1

38.Bf8 Qxc7 39.Bd6 is another way to win.

38...Qxc7 39.Qxg5 Bc2 40.Bf8+ Bg6 41.Bxa3 Qd7 42.Bd6 d4 43.Qf4 Qc8 44.Qxd4 Qc6 45.Qa7 1-0

A rather fluctuating game, but with many surprisingly modern motifs.

Henry Edward Bird (1829 - 1908)

Henry Bird, from Portsea, Hampshire, was a strong but erratic player who could pose a danger to anybody in the world. He scored wins against Staunton, Blackburne and Lasker over a chess career spanning more than half a century, but lack of consistency prevented him reaching the top levels of world chess. He was an accountant by profession, but despite being an amateur player he found time to take part

in 13 strong tournaments. By all accounts he was a chess fanatic, first attending Simpson's Divan in 1846 and indulging in games against all-comers for several decades. It is claimed that the Brilliancy Prize he won at New York 1876 for his game against the winner Mason was the first such prize awarded in the history of the game. The combination for which the prize was awarded was in fact totally unsound, so this started a long tradition in the awarding of such prizes.

Bird wrote about railway finance, but also produced a few chess books which history has not viewed kindly. However, I couldn't help but be amused by the chess etiquette advice: 'It is bad form for spectators to remove the pieces from the board without the consent of the players, even if it be done for the purpose of demonstrating more forcibly what move should be made.' (from *Chess History and Reminiscences*, 1893).

He is remembered today mainly for his contributions to the openings, with 1.f4 (Bird's Opening) and 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4 (Bird's Defence to the Ruy Lopez) being named after him. However, to the 21st century eye his adoption of the Accelerated Dragon, which he handled in a quite modern form, looks most ahead of its time. His style was not especially sound, and the number of games he won from bad positions is quite remarkable. He had a good eye for tactics, and everyone knows how hard it can be to beat someone who keeps setting traps even when things are going against him. Here is an interesting attacking game from early in his career.

Henry Bird - Bernhard Horwitz

London 1851 (Game 2, Round 1)

Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nf6 4.d4

Bird often played this against what is now known as the Berlin Defence. While perhaps not standing up to detailed scrutiny, it

provided Bird with a few quick victories against strong players, including a 22-move win over Steinitz.

4...Nxd4

A sound reply, as is 4...exd4 5.e5 Ne4 6.0-0 a6.

5.Nxd4 exd4

5...c6! is probably the most accurate, when the position looks dead equal, but none of Bird's opponents found this move.

6.e5 Nd5

6...c6 is no longer so effective, since both 7.Qxd4 and 7.0-0 give White chances for an edge.

7.0-0

The strongest move, and better than 7.Qxd4, which was played in most modern games with this line.

7...Bc5 8.c3?!

A typical Bird move, planning to offer a pawn for a lead in development. A more restrained player would have preferred 8.Qg4, which is rather awkward since 8...0-0 loses the exchange to 9.Bh6.

8...a6?!

Black should have played 8...c6, since 9.cxd4 Bb6 10.Qg4 Ne7! leads to equality.

9.Bc4

9.cxd4 is also good.

9...Nb6 10.Bb3 dxc3 11.Nxc3

White has a lead in development for the pawn and has diverted Black's minor pieces away from the kingside.

11...0-0 12.Ne4 Qe7

Now Black's position is critical. 12...Be7 was better, although 13.Bf4 gives White good play for the pawn.



13.Qh5?!

The simple 13.Nxc5 Qxc5 14.Be3 Qxe5 15.Rc1 followed by Re1 and Bd4 would have given White a huge initiative in return for the two sacrificed pawns.

13...d6?!

Too slow. 13...d5! was better, with just a slight advantage for White after 14.exd6 Bxd6 15.Re1 Qe5 16.Bg5 Qf5.

14.Bg5?

It wasn't necessary to give the e-pawn. Instead, 14.Re1! was very strong, since 14...Qxe5 15.Qxe5 dxe5 16.Nxc5 and 14...dxe5 15.Bg5 both lead to the loss of a piece.

14...Qxe5 15.Rae1 Nd5?

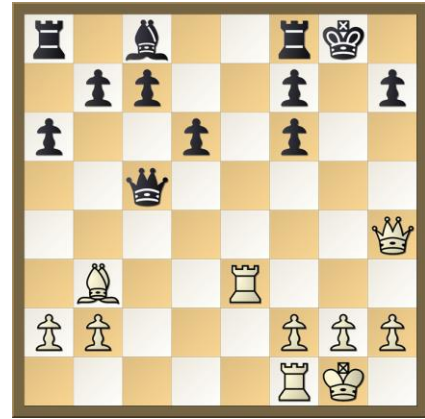
An ingenious defence, but not the best. Rather surprisingly, 15...Qf5! 16.Bc2 Kh8 leaves White with no obvious attacking continuation.

16.Nxc5 Nf6

This was the point of Black's previous move; if now 17.Rxe5 Nxe5 18.Re7 dxc5 19.Rxc7 Be6, when Black largely escapes from his difficulties.

17.Qh4 Qxc5 18.Bxf6 gxf6 19.Re3?!

Typically for Bird, a rather unnecessary flourish. Simply 19.Qxf6 Bf5 20.Re7 Bg6 21.Rfe1 reduces the material deficit to one pawn; moreover, Black can hardly free himself in view of White's total control of the e-file.



19...Bf5 20.Qxf6 Bg6 21.Rg3?!

After this the attack loses some momentum. 21.h4 Qf5 22.Qc3 followed by Rg3 was more dangerous.

21...Qe5 22.Qh4 Qxb2

Black sees no reason not to grab another pawn.

23.f4 Qd4+

Slowing White's attack by pinning the f-pawn.

24.Kh1 Rae8?

24...Kh8 25.Qg5 f5 was a sounder method of preventing the further advance of the f-pawn. Although Black's position looks passive and his bishop inactive, White's attack is slowed, and Black has the consolation of two extra pawns.

25.Qg5 Qf2

This looks good but turns out to be only a mild inconvenience.

26.Rf3 Qd2

Again pinning the f-pawn, but now the h-pawn joins the attack.

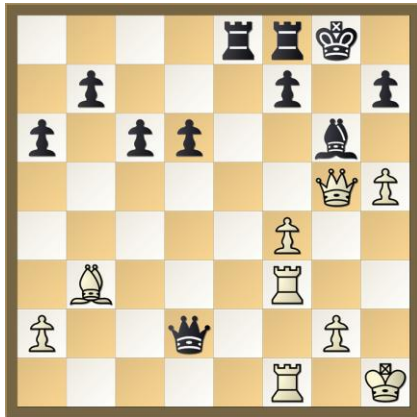
27.h4 c6

A clever idea, setting a trap for White. Not 27...Re1? 28.Rxe1 Qxe1+ 29.Kh2 and Black is in serious trouble.

28.h5?

Bird falls into the trap. 28.Kh2! leaves Black almost paralysed since after 28...d5 the e5

square is not defended by the pawn and so White really can play 29.h5.



28...Re5!

The queen is no longer defended by the h-pawn, so this tactic becomes effective.

29.Bxf7+

The only way to play on, but now Black is at least equal.

29...Rxf7 30.Qd8+ Rf8 31.Qxf8+ Kxf8 32.fxe5+

This forced sequence leaves White with two rooks against a queen and two pawns, although White may be able to win one back. Normally this material balance would favour Black, if only slightly, but he must still be careful with his king.

32...Kg7?!

An inaccuracy since the king is safer if it heads for the queenside by 32...Ke7. Then 33.hxg6 hxg6 34.Rf7+ Ke6 35.exd6 Kxd6 36.Rxb7 a5 may give Black a slight edge. Horwitz's desire to keep both his extra pawns soon proves costly.

33.hxg6 dxe5?

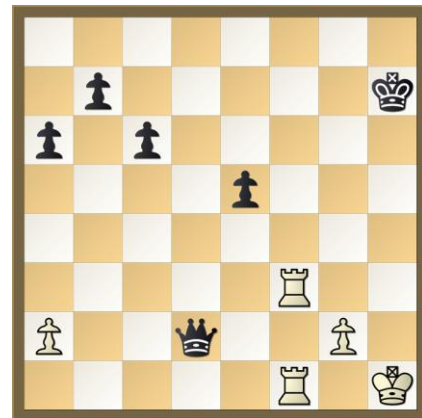
Instead, 33...hxg6 34.e6 Qe2 35.Rf7+ Kh6 36.e7 d5 is correct. It looks risky to let the pawn advance to e7, but White's king is too exposed to checks for him to win.

34.gxh7

Black's king is totally without pawn cover and in this situation the two rooks make a dangerous attacking force.

34...Kxh7

There's nothing better, since 34...Kh8 (34...Qd6 35.Rg3+ Kh8 36.Rf5 transposes) 35.Rh3 Qd6 36.Rf5 e4 37.Rg5 Qd1+ 38.Kh2 Qd6+ 39.Rhg3 Qh6+ 40.Kg1 e3 41.Re5! wins for White. Once the rooks are doubled on the g-file, Black will almost always lose his queen.



35.Kh2?

This cautious move should have let Black off the hook. 35.Rh3+ Kg6 36.Rg3+ Kh6 37.Rf6+ wins much as in the game.

35...e4?

Black fails to take advantage of his reprieve. 35...Qd6 36.Rh3+ Kg6 37.Rg3+ Kh6! saves the game since Rf8 is no longer possible.

36.Rh3+

White hits on the correct plan of transferring his rook to g3 with gain of time.

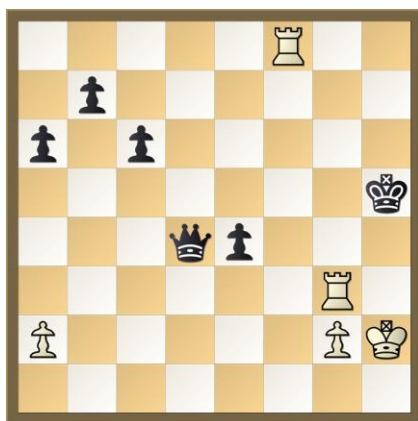
36...Kg6 37.Rg3+ Kh7 38.Rf7+ Kh6

38...Kh8 39.Rf5 Qd1 40.Rfg5 also wins.

39.Rf6+ Kh5

39...Kh7 40.Rfg6 e3 41.R6g4 is hopeless for Black.

40.Rf8 Qd4



41.Rh8+!

A motif which is common in endgame studies but is not often seen over the board.

41...Qxh8 42.Rh3+ Kg4 43.Rxh8 Kf4 44.Rf8+ Ke3 45.Kg3

Bird makes surprisingly heavy weather of this simple ending. Instead, 45.g4 wins easily.

45...c5 46.Rb8 b5 47.Rb6 c4 48.Rxa6 c3 49.Rc6 Kd2 50.Kf4 e3 51.Rd6+

51.Rxc3 Kxc3 52.Kxe3 Kb2 53.g4 was a simple win as White promotes with check.

51...Ke2 52.g4 Kf2

By now White has made it sufficiently hard for himself that he only has one move to avoid losing but, fortunately for Bird, it even wins the game.

53.Rh6 e2 54.Rh2+ Kf1 55.Kf3 e1N+

This underpromotion sometimes saves the game when there are no other pawns on the board, but here it only delays the end by a few moves.

56.Ke3 Ng2+ 57.Rxg2 Kxg2 58.g5 b4 59.Kd3

1-0

Joseph Henry Blackburne (1841 - 1924)

Joseph Henry Blackburne was born in Manchester in December 1841 but did not learn chess until he was 17 or 18. It's amazing that, without the early start typical of

grandmasters, he nevertheless became one of the top players in the world. Within a few years he was already showing signs of great promise and was invited to take part in the London 1862 tournament. There he finished modestly but beat Steinitz in their individual game, a remarkable achievement considering he had only been playing chess for three years. His participation in this event cost him his job (according to some accounts this was in a hosiery warehouse) and as a result he became a professional player.

This was the start of a long career during much of which Blackburne was in the world top five. He not only participated in many tournaments but also gave regular simultaneous exhibitions and was especially proficient at blindfold chess. There's no doubt that his efforts over several decades contributed greatly to the development of British chess. Blackburne had many tournament successes; perhaps his greatest was at Berlin 1881, which he won by the colossal margin of three points. However, he had an unfortunate habit of finishing second in several top events, such as Nuremberg 1883 (half a point behind Winawer), Hamburg 1885 (half a point behind Gunsberg), Manchester 1890 (behind Tarrasch) and London 1892 (half a point behind Lasker). Blackburne also played several matches, but here his results were less convincing, good wins being interspersed with indifferent results. His tournament career lasted an exceptionally long time, and he was still able to compete at the highest level in the famous St Petersburg 1914 event, where he beat Nimzowitsch using 1.e3.

In style, Blackburne was much more of a universal player than his nickname of 'The Black Death' would suggest. Many 19th-century players had glaring weaknesses, but by the turn of the century it was impossible to succeed at the highest level without an all-round mastery of chess. Many of his games would pass scrutiny by today's standards and

he had the tenacity to win long endgames, which he played surprisingly well; for example, he ground down Zukertort with R+N vv R+2P at Paris 1878. Despite his many successes, Blackburne did not leave much of a chess legacy; there are no openings named after him, for example. He did, however, suggest the use of clocks to replace sandglasses for timing chess games, an advance we can all be thankful for.



Here is a fine endgame win against a top-class opponent.

Joseph Henry Blackburne - Carl Schlechter
Vienna, 1898
King's Gambit

1.e4 e5 2.f4

Blackburne played 2.Nf3 most of the time, but he occasionally experimented with other moves.

2...exf4 3.Bc4

The King's Bishop Gambit is not very popular today, but it has been played several times by Ivanchuk and Short.

3...d5 4.exd5

Considered inaccurate today, the usual line being 4.Bxd5 Nf6 5.Nc3 with a roughly level position.

4...Qh4+ 5.Kf1 Bd6

Best, as the superficially tempting 5...f3 is well met by 6.Bb5+ c6 7.Nxf3.

6.Nf3 Qh5 7.Nc3 Ne7

In MegaDatabase, White only won twice from this position and suffered 12 defeats, an indication that it isn't exactly a challenging line for Black. Material is equal, but the white king is awkwardly placed, and White has trouble activating his bishops.

8.d4 Bg4

This is too committal; instead, the flexible 8...Nd7 or 8...0-0 should be preferred.

9.Ne4 Nxd5 10.Nxd6+ cxd6 11.Qe1+ Be6

11...Ne7 might still give Black an edge, since this rules out the check on b5. Then 12.Qe4 0-0! enables Black to complete his development.

12.Bb5+



12...Nd7?!

Now White gains an advantage. Instead, the piece sacrifice 12...Nc6 13.c4 0-0 is interesting,

although probably not quite correct after 14.cxd5 Bxd5 15.Be2 Rae8 16.Qf2. The best line may well be 12...Kd8! 13.c4 Nc7 14.Bxf4 Nxb5 15.Qa5+ b6 16.Qxb5 Qxb5 17.cxb5 Nd7, which looks odd but leads to equality.

13.c4 Ne3+ 14.Bxe3 fxe3 15.d5 Bg4 16.Qxe3+ Kd8

Both sides have lost the right to castle, but White's space advantage gives him an edge.

17.Re1 Kc7 18.Bxd7!

A good decision. White's bishop was not very effective due to his central pawns being stuck on light squares, so he swaps it off for the knight which could, after a piece exchange on f3, come to a good square on e5.

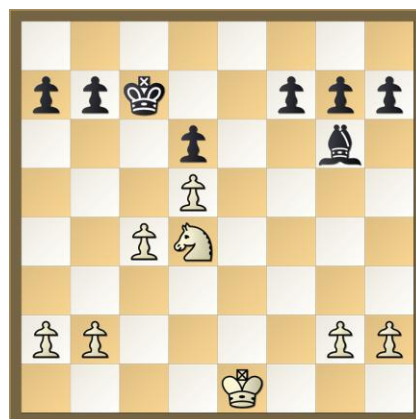
18...Bxd7 19.Kf2 Rhe8

When writing about historical games, there is often an issue with determining the moves played. Mega Database gives 19...Rae8, but this just loses a pawn after 20.Qxa7 Ra8 21.Qd4 Rxa2 22.Qxg7, so I wondered if 19...Rhe8 was played instead. I consulted chess historian Edward Winter, who reported that contemporary sources are split pretty much 50-50; for example, the tournament book also gives 19...Rae8, while the August 1898 *Deutsche Schachzeitung* gives 19...Rhe8. I have given ...Rhe8, because I can't see any reason why Black might have preferred the other move, but unless a new source turns up there will be an element of doubt.

20.Qf4 Qf5

Black heads for an ending with bishop v knight in a relatively open position, and it's easy to see why he might have believed this to be a safe option, especially as some of White's pawns are fixed on light squares. However, this is an instructive exception to the general principle. While White's advantage is slight, it is Black who must take care.

21.Qxf5 Bxf5 22.Nd4 Bg6 23.Rxe8 Rxe8 24.Re1 Rxe1 25.Kxe1

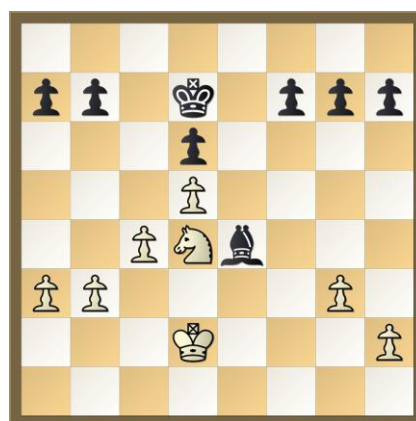


Blackburne's judgement in heading for further liquidation is fully justified. His space advantage and well-placed knight are significant assets and, although the position is far from closed, there isn't enough open space for the bishop to be truly effective.

25...Bd3

To begin with, Black doesn't appear to realise there is any danger and just waits. The simplest route to a draw lay in taking immediate action by 25...Bb1! and after 26.a3 (26.a4 a5 is similar) 26...Ba2 27.b3 a5 28.a4 Bb1 White's queenside pawns are blockaded and it will be very hard for him to make a passed pawn.

26.b3 Kd7 27.Kd2 Be4 28.g3 Bb1 29.a3 Be4



It is often said that the advantage of a pawn majority is that it can create a passed pawn. What is less often said is that the majority is usually at its most dangerous before the passed pawn is actually created, because the additional pawns control vital squares in the

enemy camp. It follows that, to defend against a majority, it is often best to arrange the pawns so that exchanges are unavoidable when the majority advances (for example, this is a standard method of defending with R+3P v R+4P with all the pawns on the same side). Here Black should have played 29...a5 so that any queenside pawn advance by White would lead to exchanges.

30.Ke3

Over the next few moves, neither player appreciates the importance of White's b4 since Black misses various chances to play ...a5, which White could prevent by getting b4 in first.

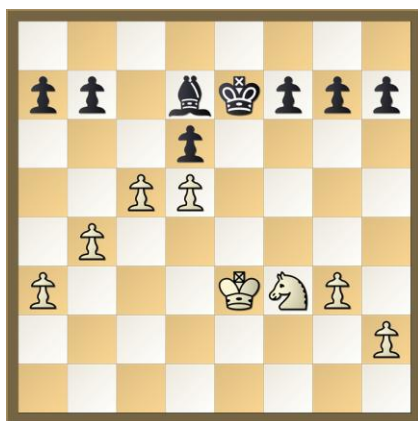
30...Bb1 31.Nf3 Ke7 32.b4!

White finally realises that this is the key move, and he now has a large advantage. Trying to hold White up by 32...b6 just loses a pawn after 33.Nd4 Kd7 34.Nc6 a6 35.Nb8+.

32...Bf5

It's remarkable how ineffective Black's theoretical advantages are. He has bishop v knight and a kingside pawn majority, but the pawns never get going, while the bishop just moves backwards and forwards without really achieving anything.

33.c5 Bd7



Here White doesn't want to take on d6, as the resulting isolated d-pawn would be hard to

advance, while Black doesn't want to play ...dxc5, since bxc5 would provide pawn support for the d-pawn.

34.Kd4 Be8 35.Nd2

The knight is heading for c4 or e4 to force Black to exchange on c5.

35...Bd7 36.Nc4 dxc5+ 37.bxc5

White has achieved a winning position by deceptively simple means. The immediate threat is 38.Na5 b6 39.cxb6 axb6 40.Nc4 b5 41.Nb6 followed by Kc5.

37...f6 38.Nb2?

Too slow. White should have simply executed the threat mentioned in the previous note. Blackburne wants to improve his position further by advancing the a-pawn, but this gives Black time to organise his defence.

38...Bf5?

Blowing his one defensive chance, which was to play the king to c7 and challenge White's queenside pawns. After 38...Kd8 39.a4 Kc7 40.a5 b6! it isn't easy to find a win; for example, 41.axb6+ axb6 42.c6 Bc8 leaves the passed pawns awkwardly blockaded, while 41.Nc4 bxc5+ 42.Kxc5 g5 at last starts to create some kingside counterplay for Black.

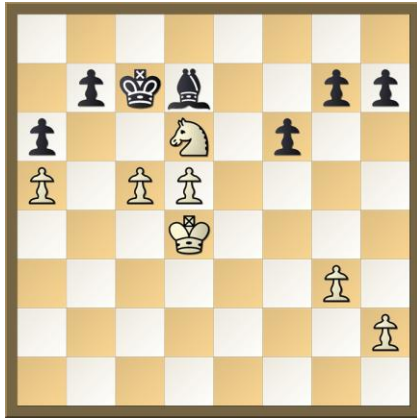
39.a4 Kd7 40.a5

White can now clamp down on the possible break by ...b6, and everything is back under control. The immediate threat is 41.a6, since in this position Black cannot blockade the resulting connected passed pawns.

40...a6

40...Kc7 41.Nc4 followed by Nd6 wins.

41.Nc4 Kc7 42.Nd6 Bd7



Black is almost paralysed and White now wins by advancing his kingside pawns in a kind of minority attack, with the aim of liquidating to a king and pawn ending.

43.Ke4 Ba4 44.g4 Bc2+ 45.Kd4 Bg6

Or 45...Bd1 46.h3 h5 47.gxh5 Bxh5 48.Ke4 Bg6+ 49.Kf4 Kb8 50.Kg4 Kc7 51.Nf5 Bf7 52.d6+ Kd7 53.Nxg7 and wins.

46.h3 Kb8 47.Nf5 Bxf5 48.gxf5

The king and pawn ending is hopeless for Black as the passed d-pawn is too strong.

48...Kc7 49.Ke4 Kd7 50.Kf4 Ke7 51.Kg4 Kd7 52.h4 Kc8

After 52...g6 53.fxg6 hxg6 54.h5 gxh5+ 55.Kxh5 Kd8 56.Kg6 Ke7 57.Kf5 Kf7 58.d6 Black loses his f-pawn and the game.

53.h5

Threatening h6, a curious echo of the threat to play a6 earlier.

53...h6 54.Kf4 Kc7 55.Ke4 1-0

55...Kd7 56.d6 Kc6 57.Kd4 Kd7 58.Kd5 followed by c6 is an easy win.

Paul Littlewood – Littlewood's Choice



April 2022

I was looking through some recent chess articles and I came across the following game which was played recently at the Blackpool Congress.

Kushal Jakhria v Bob Kane

Blackpool U1850 Intermediate

Round 4 13/03/22

1.d4 e6 2.c4 f5 3. g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 d5 5.Nf3 c6 6.0-0 Bd6 7.b3 0-0 8. Ba3 Bxa3 9.Nxa3



White has played a classical set-up against the Stonewall Dutch, exchanging the black-squared bishops so that the e5 square can come under his control.

9...Qe7 10.Nc2 Bd7 11.c5 Be8 12.b4 Nbd7 13.Qd3?!

However, it is now logical to play Nce1 intending to bring this knight to d3 and e5. An alternative is to press on with his queenside expansion with a4 which is also quite strong.

13....Ne4 14.a4?! Rf6?

This is a poor move; better was simply 14...Bh5 bringing his white-squared bishop into action or even 14....f4 immediately.

15.h4?

However, White makes an immediate error in return. 15.Ne5 leaves him clearly better.

15....Rh6?

Fortunately, Black carries on with his intended manoeuvre and misses the very strong 15...f4 which gives him a powerful attack as the natural 16.g4 can be met with the exchange sacrifice 16...Rg6 17.g5 h6 18.h5 Rxc5 19.Nxc5 Nxc5 when Black is clearly better.

16.b5 g5?! 17.Qe3 f4 18.gxf4 gxh4?!

Better was the pawn sacrifice 18...gxf4 19.Qxf4 Qg7 when Black can still fight. Whereas now White gets control of the whole board.

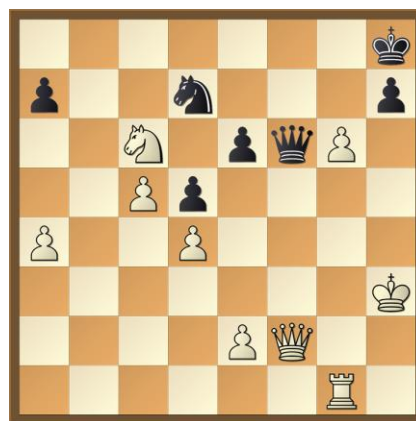
19.Bh3 Qf6 20.Kh2 Bg6 21.Nb4 Bf5 22.Rg1+ Rg6 23.bxc6 bxc6 24.Nxc6 Bxh3 25.Kxh3 Re8 26. Nxc6 Rxc6 27.Rxc6 Kh8 28.f5?!

Stronger was 28.f3 which wins the black knight on e4. However, White's position is so good that even this slight error does not mess things up.

28....Rg8 29. Ng6+! Rxc6

Not 29....hxg6 30.Qh6 mate.

30.fxc6 Nxf2+ 31.Qxf2!



White finishes off in style with a queen sacrifice.

31....Qxf2 32.g7+ Kg8 33. Ne7+ Kf7 34.g8=Q+ Kxe7 35.Rg7+ Kf6 36.Qf7 mate.

The loser of this game, Bob Kane, was the 2021 winner of the Scarborough Major, so no slouch. However, the winner was the remarkable junior Kushal Jakhria who is only six years old! He went on to tie for first place in the tournament with 4½/5.

An incredible achievement and what a prospect for the future!

August 2022

Shreyas Royal is one of our top juniors who is now having real success at a senior level.

He recently played in the Dortmund Sparkassen A-Open and scored 7/9, finishing joint third in a field which included several grandmasters.

He had several good games, but the following was his best effort against GM Daniel Hausrath.

D. Hausrath v S. Royal

Dortmund Sparkassen A Open Round 8

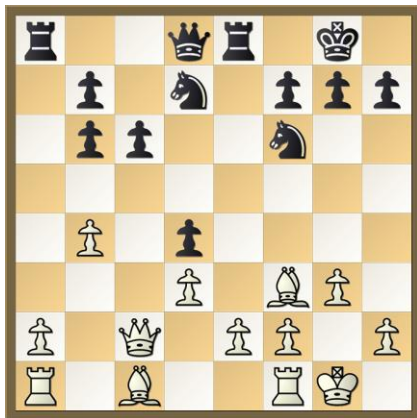
1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 Bg4 3.Bg2 c6 4.c4 e6 5.0-0 Nf6 6.cxd5 exd5 7.d3 Nbd7 8.Nc3 Bc5 9.Qb3 Bb6 10.Na4 0-0 11.Nxb6 axb6 12.Qc2 Re8



White now has the two bishops and a slightly better game. However, if Black plays energetically then he will always have some chances based on his control of the half open e-file.

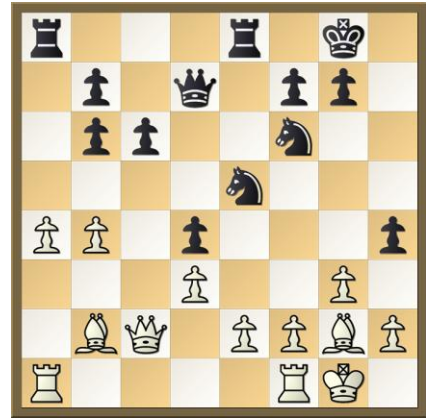
13.b3 Bxf3!? An interesting choice. Personally, I would have waited with say 13...h5 and only play Bxf3 when White plays h3. However, it does seem to give Black equal chances so is a reasonable option.

14.Bxf3 d4 15.b4?!



This is a poor move which hands the initiative to Black. Better was 15.a4, which leaves White slightly better for choice.

15...Ne5 16.Bg2 Qd7 17.a4 h5 18.Bb2?! h4

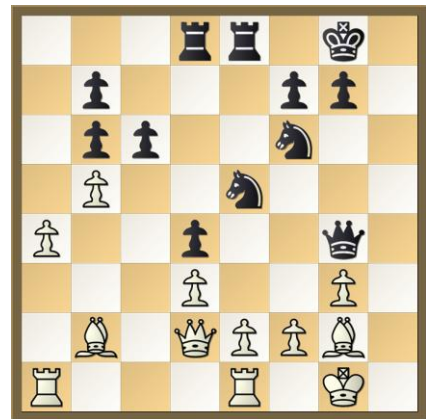


Now White has to be really careful as Black has a dangerous kingside attack.

19.Qd2?! A better choice was 19.a5 but after 19...bxa5 20.Rxa5 Rad8 Black still stands well.

19...h3 20.h3 Qg4?! This sortie is slightly premature. Preferable is 20...Rad8, bringing all his pieces into play.

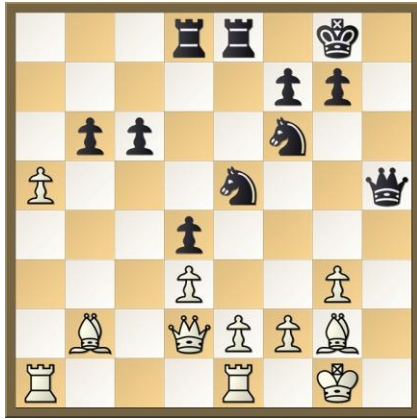
21.Rfe1 Rad8 22.b5?



The last chance was 22.Qf4 to try and bolster the kingside defences. However, Black is still better after 22...Qe6.

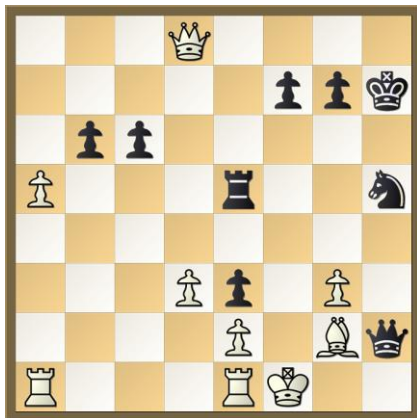
22...Qh5 23.bxc6 bxc6?! Even stronger was 23...Nfg4 24.c7 Rd6! with a crushing attack.

24.a5??



However, this is suicidal... the last chance to survive was 24.e3 when Black is better, but it is not totally clear. Shreyas now finishes off nicely.

24....Neg4 25.Qf4 Qh2+ 26.Kf1 Ne3+! 27.fxe3 Nh5 28.Qg5 dxe3 29.Be5 Rxe5 30.Qxd8+ Kh7



31.Resigns

A very mature game from Shreyas with a sparkling finish. A great prospect for the future!

October 2022

Youngsters have certainly been taking centre stage over the summer months, with the young teams of Uzbekistan and India dominating the Olympiad in Chennai, whilst on the home front Harry Grieve won the British Championship, coming ahead of several more seasoned Grandmasters.

Today, however, I want to focus on Harry's last-round opponent at the British – Matthew Wadsworth. He has made great strides over the last couple of years and any player would find him a redoubtable opponent.

One of his best games at the Championship was against the English Grandmaster John Emms.

John Emms v Matthew Wadsworth British Championship 2022 Round 7

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 h6?! This unusual move has been played before, notably by Vereslav Eingorn, but I do find it difficult to understand what the point is!

4.Ngf3 Nf6 5.e5 Nfd7 6.c4 Be7 7.Bd3 c5 8.0-0 Nc6 9. cxd5 exd5



The first critical position has now arisen. White could have taken advantage of 3...h6 by playing the sharp 10.e6! fxe6 11.Bg6+ Kf8 12.Re1 Kg8 13.dxc5 when the position is complex, although my computer reckons that White has an advantage. However, this is the kind of line which John doesn't like as it is rather messy, so I am not surprised that he avoided it.

10. Re1 0-0 11. Bb1 Re8 12. dxc5 Nf8?!

Simpler was 12...Nxc5 13. h3 a5 14.Qc2 g6 15.Nb3 Ne4, when Black has a decent position. No doubt Matthew wanted to provide some

cover to his king, but it is a tad passive. Best was now 13.h3, with a slight advantage to White.

13.a3?! a5 14.Nf1 Bxc5 15.h3 Qb6

Black has now got a decent initiative and White has to be careful not to slip into an inferior position. Perhaps he should now have opted for the sharp 16.Be3 d4 17.Bf4 Qxb2, when White has compensation for the pawn sacrifice.

16.Re2?! Be6 17.Ng3 Ng6 18.Bxg6?



However, this is now a serious mistake. Although Black's pawn structure is weakened, he has ample compensation in the two bishops and White is now definitely worse. Better was 18.Nh5 d4 19.Nf4 when the position remains unclear, although perhaps still slightly better for Black.

18....fxg6 19.Qd3 Bf7?!

19....Kh7 would cement the advantage whereas now Black is only slightly better. However White now plays another poor move.

20.h4?! Rac8 21. Bf4 Nd4 22.Nxd4 Bxd4 23.Rae1 Rc4

Black's initiative has increased, and White has to be very careful. Best would be 24.Bd2 a4 25.Bc3 Bxc3 26.bxc3 Qc6, when Black has a slight advantage. However, he makes a blunder, so I suspect time pressure was starting to play a role.

24.Bc1? Rxe5! 25.Rxe5 Bxe5 26.h5 gxh5 27.Nf5 Qf6 28.Bd2 b6 29.b3 Rc7 30.Ne3 d4 31.Nc4



Black is now two pawns up and clearly winning. With the time control looming, he just needs to ensure he does not make any serious errors. In fact, the simplest line is now 31...Bxc4! 32.bxc4 Rf7 33. f3 h4 with a very powerful position. Understandably, Matthew does not want to give up his powerful white-squared bishop and so preferred....

31...Bf4 32.Bxf4 Qxf4 33.a4 Qf6 34.Rd1?! 34.Ne5

was better and may have made Matthew regret having not taken the knight on move 31. In fact Black is still winning, but it could easily become rather messy.

34...Rd7 35.Nd2 Bg6 36.Qb5 Rd8 37.Nf3 Kh7 38.Ne5 Be4 39.Nc4 Qg6 40.g3 Qg4 41.Re1 Qf3 42.Rxe4 Qxe4 0-1

The time control has been reached, and of course White's position is now hopeless.

A very mature game from Matthew and hopefully a sign of better things to come!

Tactics - April 2022

Today I am going to look at the discovered attack. This is a more subtle form of aggression than the double attack, which we looked at last month, but it is equally as effective.

In this motif a piece or pawn moves off a line in order to “discover” (actually, uncover) an attack by another piece.

Consider the following game I played as a youngster.

B. Macadam v P.E. Littlewood 1970

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 Ne4 4.Nf3 d6 5.exd6 Bxd6 6.g3? Nxf2! 7.Kxf2

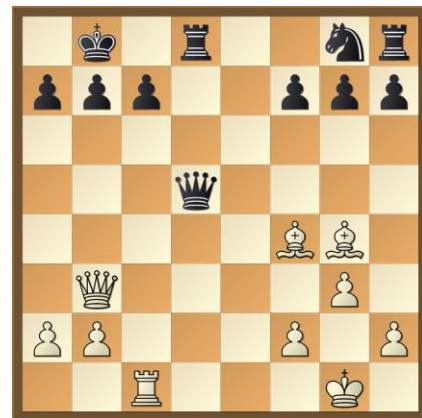


Black now wins by **7...Bxg3+!** This move checks the white king and at the same time uncovers an attack on the white queen by the black queen.

A discovered check is an even more powerful example of the discovered attack however its close relation, the double check, is even more deadly as in that case only the attacked king can move.

The following example from one of my own games illustrates the strength of the discovered and double check.

P.E.Littlewood v J.Goldberg 1982



White has several ways to win but I chose the most aesthetically pleasing:

1.Rxc7!

Now if -

- (a) 1...Qxb3 then 2.Rc8+ is double-checkmate
 - (b) 1...b6 2.Rd7+ discovered check wins the black queen
 - (c) 1...Ka8 2.Qxd5 Rxd5 3.Rc8 mate
 - (d) 1...a6 2.Rxb7+ double check Ka8 3.Rb8+ Rxb8 4.Qxb8 mate
- ...so Black resigned.

Defending against a discovered check or a double check is very difficult, but an ordinary discovered attack can be countered in various ways.

Consider the following two examples:



Black plays **1...Nf5** attacking the white bishop on e3 and discovering an attack by the black bishop on the white queen. However, White escapes by playing **2.Qc1** defending his attacked bishop whilst moving his queen.



White appears to be winning a piece after **1.Nc4** as he directly attacks the black queen whilst discovering an attack on the black bishop on e7 by his rook. However, Black escapes by **1...Qc6** as this threatens mate on g2 and so does not allow time for **2.Rxe7**. Note, however, that in the original position White could have won by **1.Nf5!** as this doubly attacks the Black Bishop on e7 and he has no escape.

Here are two examples involving discovered attacks to solve for yourself. The solutions will follow at the end of the article.

P.E. Littlewood v E. Teichmann 1980



How did White win the exchange by discovered attack?



How did Black force checkmate?

Solutions

P.E. Littlewood v E. Teichman

White wins by **1.Bg8+ Rxd6 2.Rxd6**

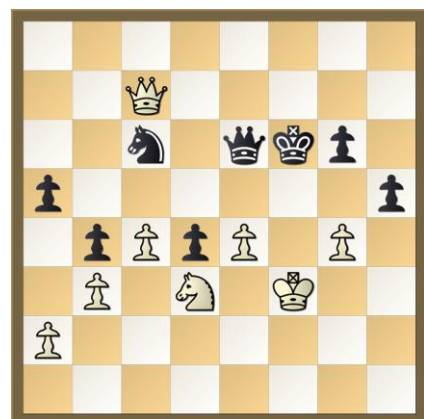
Position 2

Black wins by **1...Qg2+! 2.Kxg2 Rxd6** double checkmate.

Tactics - August 2022

A decoy in war is usually used to lead an enemy into a trap. It is similarly possible in chess to decoy a piece into a trap or into a position which allows a winning combination.

Consider the following position:

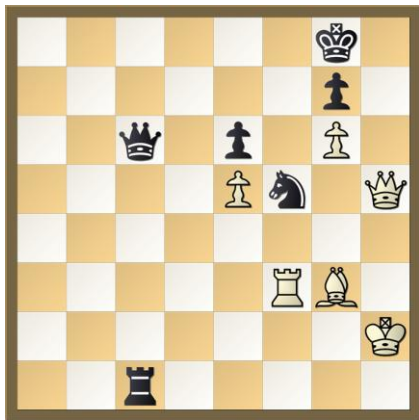


Ustinov v Ilivitsky

USSR 1959

White plays **1.g5+** decoying the black king onto a fatal square and after **1...Kxg5** then **2.Qf4** mate.

The decoy is often used in conjunction with a knight fork. For example:

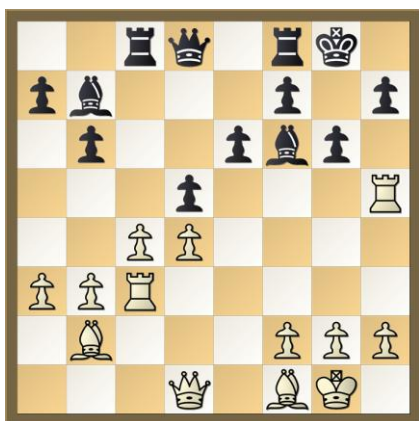


Dementiev v Dzindzichashvili USSR 1972

Black won by **1...Rh1+** decoying the white king to h1 and after **2.Kxh1 Nxc3+** won the white queen.

To defend successfully against a decoy it is usually vital to spot the decoy before it happens.

However, there are examples when it is possible to escape, even after the decoy has occurred. Usually this involves not accepting the decoy sacrifice and the following example is a classic case of how to defend.



Keres v Smyslov Zurich 1953

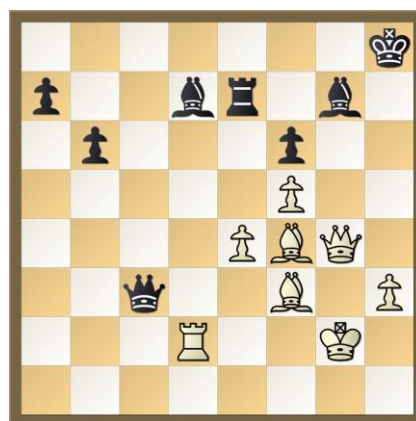
In this interesting position Keres played the imaginative move **1.Rch3**, leaving his rook on h5 as a decoy. Smyslov thought for a long time and decided not to take the rook... a decision which on later analysis was shown to be correct, as Keres appears to have a forced win after **1...gxh5 2.Qxh5 Re8 3.a4!** with the devastating threat of **4.Ba3** and **5.Qh7** mate.

Therefore the game continued **1...dxc4 2.Rxh7 c3 3.Qc1!** ... another fine decoy, but again Smyslov declines to capture the bishop (if **3...cxb2?** then **4.Qh6 Qxd4 5.Rh8+ Bxh8 6.Qh7** mate) and the game continued **3...Qxd4! 4.Qh6 Rfd8** and Black is now safe.

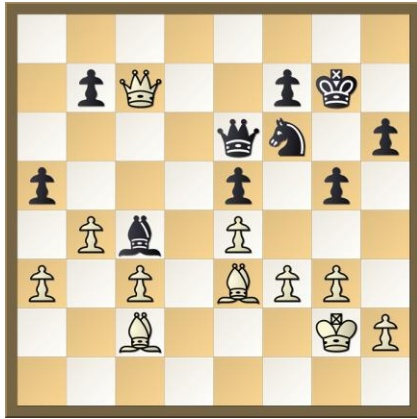
The finish was: **5.Bc1 Bg7 6.Qg5 Qf6 7.Qg4 c2 8.Be2 Rd4 9.f4 Rd1+! 10.Bxd1 Qd4+ 0-1.**

A marvellous defensive achievement by Smyslov!

Here are two examples for you to solve yourself with the answers at the end of the article:



P. E. Littlewood v J. Mestel British Championship 1979 How did White win a piece?



U. Andersson v W. Hartston
Hastings 1972-73

Black's winning decoy took White completely by surprise. What was it?

Solutions

P.E.Littlewood v J.Mestel

White wins by 1.Rxd7! Rxd7 2.Qh5+ Kg8 3.Qe8+ Kh7 4.Qxd7 and wins

U.Andersson v W.Hartston

Black wins by 1...Qh3+! With two variations: (a) 2.Kxh3 Bf1 mate (b) 2.Kh1 Qf1+ 3.Bg1 Qxf3 mate

Mark Rivlin – Interviews



Chris Ross



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

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

Initially, I wrote notes for myself as a record of analysing some of my best games. Friends gave me feedback saying it was very helpful and it just spiralled from there. Essentially the book is a collection of my best 80 annotated games, and it is both educational and aspirational. These games show my chess journey from 2003, in particular how I managed to go from 180 ECF to around 200-plus in 2005-6. The book shows how I got better and enabled me to be more consistent.

Can club players benefit from the book?

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

Please tell us about your chess journey

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

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

How is blind chess played?

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

I have a bit of an advantage because I was sighted as a child, so I understand colour and space. I am able to play on a regular board because I can visualise the game and I also have exceptional spatial awareness. However, these attributes are unique – most blind players do not have these attributes. At university I played with another team player, and we analysed games in our minds on the bus going home. It's all about 'visualising' the board, which is important for all chess players. Knowing how many moves ahead is not as important as the overall bigger picture. For instance, I may have a strategy of how my rook can penetrate the seventh rank or where I want pawns to be in 20 moves.

Who are your chess mentors?

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

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

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

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

Outside chess, tell us about your work and other interests

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

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

What would you still like to achieve in chess?

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

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

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

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

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

Blind Faith can be purchased here:

Ebook -

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

Book -

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

WIM Lan Yao



WIM Yan Lao recently won the 2022 Chessable English Women's Championship with an excellent 6/7. This was preceded by her victory at the English Women's Rapidplay at the London Chess Classic in December 2021. Combining chess with her studies at University College London (UCL), she is also a FIDE trainer and writes and broadcasts about the history of chess.

Tell us about your tournament victories.

I was excited when I won the English Women's Rapidplay. At that time I was really busy with my university studies and did not have much time for chess. Also, a lot of strong players such as Harriet Hunt participated in the tournament. At the Rapidplay, I focused on each of my own games without concern for other players' results and rankings. I took the lead on the first day and did not sleep well. On the second day I tried to play solidly, drawing the other three games, and still managed to win the tournament. At the Chessable English

Women's Championship I lost in the second round but I adjusted my mental state and won the rest of the games.

Your quirky YouTube videos on the history of chess are fascinating; I particularly like the one on smoking during matches. How do you come up with the topics you are covering?

Initially, I established a programme called *Mustachess* with Peter Kokol, in which I wrote about chess history on the WeChat channel in Chinese and English. Topics included chess-related fields such as chess psychology, culture and education. We also post these articles on mustachess.com. I do thorough research about chess history before writing these articles, including the origin and development of chess, personal stories and some controversial issues around world champions. These articles gradually became popular among Chinese chess lovers.

I then went on to make videos about these topics, presenting chess history in a more vivid style. I carefully selected clothes and hairstyles, adjusted the lighting, and sometimes used different accents and tones according to different topics to make my narrative more intriguing and at the same time instructive to the audience.

You have peaked at 2342 FIDE and your current rating is 2276. What are your chess ambitions for the next few years?

I hope to achieve the WGM title. Also, I hope to achieve more good results in big events such as the Olympiad and the European team and individual championships.

You are about to graduate from UCL. What are your future career plans outside of chess?

I will graduate from UCL with a Bachelor's degree this summer and will continue to take a Master's degree at UCL. I studied History for my Bachelor's degree and will major in History

Education for the Master's. I have years of experience teaching History and other humanities subjects, so I am thinking about teaching History or other relevant subjects in secondary schools.

You are now playing under the England flag. Why did you decide to play for England, rather than your native China? And how was the transition from the Chinese Chess Association to the ECF?

I am studying in London, and I hope to work in England after graduation. Transferring to England will give me more chances to play in local tournaments. More importantly, the Chinese Chess Association values chess players who give up school and completely focus on chess. They do not support those who want to keep a balance between chess and academia. When I was 14, I won the Chinese National Youth Championship, ahead of a professional chess player who had completely given up school. One famous national team trainer told me that he was willing to offer me training. He said that it was impossible to play chess well while studying and refused to teach me unless I gave up school.

During those years most coaches were not willing to work with me, and I hardly played in national tournaments while other professional players weaker than me were invited. In England it is different. Many strong players here attend top universities and make great contributions in other fields besides chess.

I really like the chess culture and atmosphere in England. I have studied the history of chess in England and appreciate the educational ideas of Chess in Schools and Communities. Having played in several tournaments here, I have found that English chess players are friendly and willing to help each other.

My transition was really successful as the ECF was happy for me to represent England. The

Chinese Chess Association had called me and said that I should think carefully before making the decision, but they respected and enabled my decision.

How different is the approach to chess between China and England?

In China there is a clear distinction between those who want to become professional chess players and those who play as a hobby. Sometimes parents get anxious when seeing other children improving quickly, and hope that their children can spend more time on chess and improve faster. For professional chess players China has efficient training for quick improvement. These players often play one to three classical games a day, and trainers will immediately review their games. Before important events they receive closed training for months. A lot of Chinese chess players improve quickly, but the problem is that it can be too stressful, and chess becomes the only thing in their lives.

Staying in provincial or national teams and playing chess tournaments are their main source of income. Provincial or national teams provide them with monthly salaries and will give them extra bonuses if they play well in significant tournaments. Also, some Chinese universities have the policy of admitting strong chess players. In England I do coaching, and see many players take chess as a lifelong hobby. Those who are more talented study more and spend more time on training and playing tournaments. I feel that compared to China they feel less anxious and enjoy the process of playing chess more. Also, they do not give up school to become professional chess players. In addition, unlike in China, English players usually do not play chess for a living or for the purpose of getting into good universities. But a potential negative side of this aspect is that some players may lose the motivation for playing chess and give up chess

for other pursuits that have better financial returns.

Which players and coaches have had the most influence on your chess career?

Actually, quite a lot of players have had great influences on me, varying from world champions to English chess celebrities. I really admire those who play chess at a high level and also succeed in other areas. They show how chess can positively influence other aspects of life.

I have had a lot of coaches, but currently none of them have been able to stay with me for a long time. I am still waiting for a coach who can inspire my chess career.

What ideas do you have to improve women's chess in the UK?

I think many young female chess players in the UK are talented, but the main problem is that they lack motivation. Some of them give up chess when they attend secondary school because they lack support for playing in national or international tournaments, and unlike in the US and China, chess cannot help them to get into good universities. I think there should be more WIM and WGM norm events along with tournament bonuses for girls.

In addition, it would be great if good universities could have policies of admitting strong chess players, even if they may have slightly lower grades in exams. For stronger female players who regularly play for the national team, I think a good way to improve their level is to train with strong male players.

Please show us an analysed game that you particularly enjoyed.

The whole game is too long, so I will just show the most exciting part of it.

Smith, Olivia - Yao, Lan

ECF Women's Norm Event Round 1



This move gives White chances to achieve an equal position. The best move is 29...Ne3!
30.Rxd6 Nc4 31.Rd7+ Ke8! 32.R2d3 (32.R2d5 Nb6+)
32...Nxb2 33.R3d5 Rc8 34.Kg2 Rxd1 35.Rxd1 Nxd1 36.Rxd1 Rxc2+—+

30.R5d3

30.Rxb5! Ne3 31.Kf2 the knight is captured.
31...Nxd1+ 32.Ke2 Nxb2 33.Rxb2=

30...Nf6 31.Re2 Rb1 32.b3 Raa1 33.Re1 Nxe4—
+

Mr Dodgy



If you like a spot of humour to go with your chess, Michael Duke (Mr Dodgy) is well worth a follow on Twitter, Twitch and Substack. Coming lateish to chess, Michael has a 2067 FIDE rating and thousands of social media followers. Aside from a day job with Chessable, he runs the Mr Dodgy Online Invitational that attracts the world's A-listers and he coached the Jersey Women's squad in the Chennai Olympiad.

How and why did you choose the handle Mr. Dodgy?

It's not the most exciting answer, I'm afraid! A long time ago, when I was making an account on ICC, I chose the name Dodgy. I figured it described my openings and my style – and it stuck!

With thousands of followers on Twitter, Twitch and Substack, along with your work for Chessable, you are a metaphorical social media pawn storm. Tell us about your rise to chess fame.

To be honest, it's all been quite random. I spent an embarrassing amount of time trolling Jan Gustafsson's and Peter Svidler's Chess24 commentary sessions from the chat; they seemed to like my silly jokes, so I kept going. I eventually shifted mostly onto Twitter and just continued to post my 'thoughts' about the chess world. I think because chess has the perception of being such a serious game, there is a nice contrast when humour is injected into the mix, so it seems to resonate with people.

Unlike the 2022 version of Howard Staunton who remains anonymous, you are happy to be known by your real name, Michael Duke. How different are your two personae?

I'm a bit less dramatic in real life, though I still think I'm pretty funny. Other opinions are available!

You have a FIDE rating of 2067; how much chess do you play online and offline?

I play regularly online but stick to rapidplay and blitz. Offline, my last tournament was pre-pandemic (I finished second in a Swedish local tournament with 5½/7). I do plan to play more over the board events, but I say that every year.

Tell us about your competitive chess journey in Scotland, England and latterly Sweden, where you now live.

I was a relatively late starter and didn't go to a chess club until I was 17, though I had played online. I was active in club chess for around ten years in England, though tournaments were less frequent. Since moving to Sweden six years ago I've only managed to play two tournaments, but I hope to be more active soon.

You were coach of the Jersey Women's team in the Chennai Olympiad. Prior to this work, had you done much coaching and how did the team respond?

I'm not a professional coach, though I do give some lessons, so this was a new experience for me. This was part of Chessable's sponsorship of the team, so, after discussions with the women, I suggested a study plan and courses for them to work on in the lead-up to the event. We also did weekly lessons focusing on the positions they were likely to see, along with training games and analysis of their games. The team worked incredibly hard and I couldn't be prouder of them. Three of the five players achieved conditional WCM titles and we lost out on a category bronze on a tie-break. It was a pretty good performance for a first-time event with four unrated players!

Your favourite chess tippie – standardplay, rapidplay or blitz?

As both a player and spectator, I have a big preference for slow chess. I think it's one of the near-unique aspects of chess, where that deep state of concentration can be reached when you play, and I find slow games much more instructive when commentators have time to dive into them.

Please show us a game that you particularly enjoyed.



This position from the Olympiad was a nice shot to hold on in a very tough position, so I was a very proud coach.

Aside from your coaching at the Olympiad, what are your thoughts on the overall event?

It was my first ever Olympiad and I was incredibly impressed. The Indian hosts went to extraordinary lengths in the scale of the event and also making sure everyone had what they needed. Thousands of fans arrived every day and the atmosphere was fantastic.

The ECF are delighted that Chessable are sponsoring the British Championships for the first time. What are the reasons behind this sponsorship?

In my day job I work for Chessable and we wanted to support English and British chess because we knew the pandemic had been rough on over the board events. We thought it could be a great cooperation because many of our users are based in England and would benefit from the support. We're very proud to

sponsor such an important historic event as the British Championships.

Your one-line Twitter quips are superb. How do you come up with these ideas?

I don't write in a very systematic manner, so it's mostly just a lack of filter and a willingness to post the first thing that pops into my head. It's also important to understand that some jokes will just flop and to be okay with that – I try to write things that make me smile and, if other people enjoy them, then that's a happy bonus!

The top players in the world are vying for a place in your legendary MrDodgy Invitational. How did this become an A-list event?

I was fortunate to be able to run two online super tournaments that included some of the best players in the world. To some extent it just kind of snowballed from Peter Heine Nielsen and Peter Svidler agreeing to play very early on, though Jan Gustafsson and of course Anish Giri turned it into something special. I think there's room in chess for fun tournaments and I hope to see more of them.

Tallulah Roberts played in the Jersey team you coached. A brilliant chess influencer. What was it like having her in the squad?

Lula was the driving force behind the team and I think it would've been tough for them to get there without her tireless work on engaging sponsors (both Chessable and Chess.com). She takes her chess very seriously and worked hard in the lead-up to the event. She had a tough event on board 1 but managed to put some nice games together and achieved the conditional WCM title. It's important to recognize she has only been playing since December 2020, so I expect big things from her in the future!

Harry Grieve



This year you won the British Championship as 16th seed with 7½/9 and 59 ELO points, a final IM norm and a first GM norm. You were also joint winner in the Roquetas Open, beating GM Karthik Venkataraman, and won the First ECF Online Blitz Grand Prix along with the Mindsports Masters. How do you explain this amazing year?

I'm not sure myself! From crossing 2300 and becoming an FM in August 2018 to still being rated 2330 at the start of this year, on the face of it I had hit a long plateau, despite having periods of working fairly hard on chess. Eventually that work paid off in January with a breakthrough performance at Roquetas. I made my first IM norm and was not far off a GM norm performance, and this gave me a big confidence boost. Combined with putting all my efforts into chess since graduating a few months ago, this has led to some more improved performances, most notably of course at the British Championship. I still have a few more events planned for this year and my main goal will be to raise my consistency, as there are still too many bad tournaments mixed in with the good at the moment.

The final round game with your Cambridge University colleague Matthew Wadsworth was a thriller in the English Riviera (Torquay).

Leonard Barden described your win as one of the best ever championship deciders. How do you remember this game?

Of course, objectively speaking there are plenty of mistakes from both sides, but I hope we both managed to play with a lot of creativity and I've received many kind messages from people who enjoyed watching the game. It's amazing that one of the most interesting games I've ever played also came at this critical moment to decide the British Championships. I think the instincts built up from thousands of games before this took over throughout, and I didn't think too much about what was on the line until the final moments of the game.

You have completed a degree in Mathematics from St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge. You have said you are concentrating on chess over the next year. What are your longer-term plans regarding chess and career?

It largely depends on the progress I'm able to make within the next year or so, before I decide whether my pursuits beyond that will be within chess or elsewhere.

Which people have had an influence on your chess career?

Of course many people have helped me in various ways, but I'll just mention my parents for giving up their time and money driving me around to tournaments in my junior days, which is ultimately essential for any young player to make it within the chess world.

Outside chess and university, what are your other interests?

I play and watch just about any sport you can think of when I have time, probably to be able to further exercise my competitive streak.

Standardplay, rapidplay or blitz?

Standardplay of course, although I do always enjoy over the board blitz tournaments.

The late and great footballer Frank Worthington replied to the question 'Most difficult opponent?' with the answer 'The wife.' Who has been your most difficult opponent?

In the search for an equally witty answer, I'd have to say it's myself, which is probably true for many of us! I can't think of a specific person I have a particularly bad score against – I just go into every game believing that if I play my best chess, I can win.

At what stage in your chess career did you believe you could become a titled player?

I don't know if I ever thought about it as such – when you are very young you don't tend to look so far ahead. My rating crossed 2100 after the Under 14 World Youth Championships, so I guess it's clear by that point that you can at least get to FM strength if you choose to keep playing chess actively.

Advice for club players in fewer than 20 words?

Whoever you are playing, just trust yourself and fully believe that you can win.

Not much is known about the annual chess Varsity Match other than occasional analysis from interesting games. Tell us what the occasion is like.

It's definitely a unique event which I'm pleased to have been part of for the last three years, including once as captain. There's generally a great atmosphere with lots of fighting chess on display – you would never really see an unnecessarily quick draw in a Varsity Match game. All the matches I've played in have been closely fought between the two teams.

Do you think club players are over-concerned with ratings?

Probably yes, and maybe I am too! Both in the sense of worrying too much about your own rating and also judging your likelihood of beating an opponent by their rating. Maybe if someone is 100 points above you they are a stronger player on average, but there are many factors at play on any one day so this can easily be overcome in an individual game.

In football, a great coach does not necessarily need to have a great career as a player (think of Sir Alex Ferguson and Jose Mourinho). What are the qualities that make a good chess coach?

Most of all, an understanding of the typical problems and obstacles to improvement people at different levels face. Also, remember enough of your own journey and use that experience to help the students overcome obstacles.

Your current standardplay FIDE rating is 2410 and ECF 2497. What are your expectations for 2023?

I won't set specific rating targets, but I'm very happy with the way the process of both studying and playing chess has been going recently. I have a lot of belief and ambition to move further towards the GM title.

Chess Problem News

by Ian Watson (ian@irwatson.uk)

The post-COVID chess world, like the world in general, is not quite the same as before the pandemic. Chess problem composition continued throughout COVID, but chess problem solving competitions became entirely online. Physical events have now restarted, including the annual Winton British Chess Solving Championship, whose first post-COVID final is taking place in Nottingham in May. Online solving hasn't stopped, however, and at the end of this article you'll find details of a website where you can practise online and take part in online solving tourneys. Before you do that, see if you can solve the six problems and puzzles below, which were all published during 2022.

Your first challenge is a two-mover (White to play and force mate in two moves). Your task is to find the key move (White's first move). Of course, to be sure you have found the correct key move, you need to examine all Black's possible replies to make sure there's a mate against each one. Michael McDowell is one of Britain's leading composers, with many fine problems to his name, but I think this is one that will be specially well remembered.

M McDowell
Schach 2022

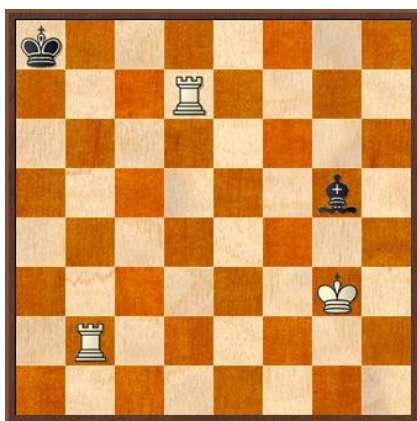


Mate in 2

Michael Lipton has been composing for some 60 years, but still finds new ideas to puzzle and impress us. His three-mover below looks very easy, but it has several 'tries', moves that don't quite solve the problem but are defeated by only one black response. White plays first and forces checkmate in three moves.

M Lipton

The Problemist Supplement 2022



Mate in 3

Next, we have a mate in four. It's somewhat surprising that White can't achieve this easily, given his enormous material advantage and that Black has only two legal moves. Expect the unexpected.

Q Thwaites

The Problemist Supplement 2022



Mate in 4

The problem below isn't White to play and force checkmate; rather it is a helpmate, which means White and Black are cooperating together to give checkmate to the black king. In helpmates, the move sequence is unusual in that Black plays first; in this three-move helpmate the move sequence is BWBWBW, with the third white move giving checkmate. This problem has two solutions, and you can expect them to have a thematic relationship without being near-identical. It's a joint composition by Mark Thornton and by Christopher Jones, the latter a grandmaster of chess composition and arguably the world's leading helpmate composer. Christopher's new book 'Selected Helpmates - 1989 -2021', was published this year.

M Thornton and C Jones

The Problemist 2022



Helpmate in 3 - two solutions

Now for an unusual type of problem, a reflexmate. Reflexmates are similar to selfmates, in that White is trying to get himself checkmated and Black is trying to avoid giving mate; however, there's an additional condition - if at any point, either player can give mate on the move, he is obliged to do so. White is trying to set up a position where Black can give mate immediately and so must do it, but Black can defend by setting up a position where White has a mate on the move. In this position, if for example, White were able to move a

piece to f1, Black would be forced to take it and to promote to queen or rook. The move sequence goes, WBWB, with Black's second move giving mate. In this particular reflexmate, White has five 'tries' which you need to find (and avoid!) To appreciate the composer's artistry, you need to find the tries and see how Black defeats them.

C Lytton

The Problemist 2022



Reflexmate in 2

Our final problem is a completely new type. Perhaps it should be described as a puzzle rather than a problem. You are asked to change the location of five of the Black men in such a way that, in the resulting position, White can force a draw. There are three different solutions.

N Postance

The Problemist 2022



Reposition five black units so that White can force a draw - three solutions

To see more chess problems, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at www.theproblemist.org

If you enjoyed solving these problems, you could try some online solving. At the netchex.club website there are many problems to try your skills on. Every month there are also several online tourneys, where you solve against the clock. There are tourneys for beginners, intermediate solvers, and experts. The tourneys include a range of types of problem, direct mates (such as mates in two), helpmates, selfmates and endgame studies. Have a go! Visit <http://www.ihandicap.mobi/chess> or just Google 'netchex.club'

Solutions

(McDowell)

1.Bd4 (threatening 2.Qe5). Black can capture this bishop in five (!) different ways. 1...Kxd4 2.Rd8; 1...cxd4 2.bxc4; 1...Rxd4 2.Rxc5; 1...Ncxd4 2.Ne3; 1...Nexd4 2.Nf4. This was inspired by a problem by W.A.Shinkman, a leading composer over a century ago. White sacrifices his bishop to all five Black pieces; notice also, that defences by Black's RNNp are met by mates by White's RNNp. Together with wonderful economy of material. A splendid work.

(Lipton)

1.Re2 (threat 2.Re8+), meeting **1...Bh4+/Bf4+/Be3** with **2.Kxh4/Kxf4/Rxe3**. The other defences are **1...Be7/Bd8/Kb8**, met by **2.R2xe7/Re8/Re8+**. The tries are: 1.Rd4? Be3!; 1.Rd3? Be7!; 1.Rf2? Bh6!; 1.Rh2? Bf6!.

(Thwaites)

1.Bc2 with **1...Kd5 2.Bb3+ Kd6 3.Nf8 g5 4.Bc5** mate and **1...g5 2.Kc6 gxf4 3.g5 fxe3 4.Rg4**

mate. The mate with Rg4 is hard to imagine from the diagram position, unless you start to wonder why the rook is there at all.

(Thornton and Jones)

1.d6 Bc6 2.Qg3 cxd6 3.Qd3 Bd5 mate and 1.Qxe4 Kg7 2.Qd3 Bxf7+ 3.d5 cxd5 e.p. mate.

(Lytton)

1.Qb1 (threat **2.Qf1 gxf1Q/R mate**). The tries are: 1.Qxa6? (same threat) refuted by 1...Ke4! 2.Qd3 mate; 1.Qxf7+? Kc6! 2.Qb7 mate; 1.Qf5? Kc4! 2.Qxf7 mate; 1.Qd3+? Ke6! 2.Qd7 mate; and 1.Rxf7? Kc4! 2.Qe6 mate. In the tries, the Black king goes to e4/e6/c6/c4 - those are called 'star flights'.

(Postance)

(a) **Move K to g1, B to h2, N to e2, e and f pawns to g2/g3 for 1.Kxe2 stalemate.**

(b) **Move K to g1, B to h3, pawns to g2/g4(+)/g5 for 1.Kxg3 Kf1/Rh2 stalemate.** (c)

Move B to e1, N to g2, pawns to h4/h5/h7 for 1.Kxg2 and then 2.KxR leaving a drawn wrong-colour bishop ending.

Endgame Studies in 2022

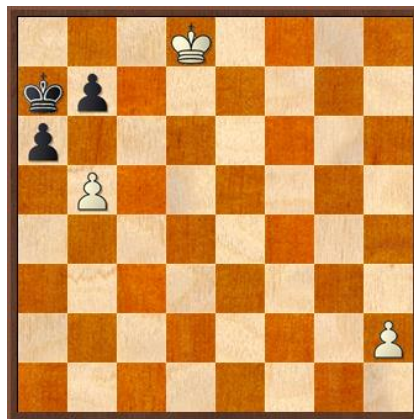
by Ian Watson (ian@irwatson.uk)

2022 saw the publication of an important book celebrating British endgame studies. It's by John Beasley and is titled 'Endgame Wizardry'. It contains many of the finest studies that British composers have ever produced.

Which prompts the question: what is the finest British endgame study ever? Yes, of course it depends on your taste, but if there was a vote among experts, perhaps our first diagram might win. Strictly, it's not entirely a British composition; David Joseph published his study in 1921 but the diagram position is an improved version of Joseph's that was published anonymously in Czechoslovakia. It appeared in 1923, so exactly a century before this edition of the ECF Yearbook.

It looks innocent, just a 'simple pawn ending'.... 'simple'?? ...you have been warned - but do try solving it. You'll find the solutions to all the studies at the end of this article. As usual in studies, it's White to play, White is moving up the board, and White's task is given underneath the diagram.

D Joseph (version) 1923



Win

Now we have two studies by Paul Byway, Britain's 'master of the miniature'. A 'miniature' is a chess composition with seven or fewer pieces. The first appeared in January 2022 in my monthly column in the ECF newsletter (which is now called *ChessMoves*).

P Byway

ChessMoves 2022



Win

This Byway rook ending was published in my monthly column in BCM in August 2022.

P Byway
BCM 2022



Win

Paul Michelet is another of Britain's leading study composers. This study of his was in BCM in January 2022.

P Michelet
BCM 2022



Draw

The next study uses a theme called 'staircases'. The solution is twenty (yes, twenty) moves long, but astonishingly it's not impossibly tough. All White's twenty moves are queen moves.

P Michelet
ChessMoves 2022



Win

To finish, a study by John Nunn. John is a chess polymath - he plays, he writes, he publishes, he solves, and he composes. In 2022, he became the Senior Over 65 World Champion at over the board chess. This study of his took part in the WCCT (World Chess Composition Tournament); that's a composing competition between national teams. The latest WCCT was completed in 2022. Studies that take part in such events are often very complex and difficult to solve. John's isn't impossibly hard, but it will still seriously challenge your solving skills. During the course of the play, all four knights are sacrificed.

J Nunn
WCCT 2022



Win

To see more endgame studies, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at www.theproblemist.org or the ARVES site at www.arves.org

For more study-solving, visit the netchex.club website, where there are monthly online study-solving tourneys.

Solutions

(Joseph)

1.b6+ Kb8 2.h4 a5 3.h5 a4 4.h6 a3 5.h7 a2 6.h8Q a1Q 7.Qg8 Qa2 8.Qe8 Qa4 9.Qe5+ Ka8 10.Qh8 wins.

1.h4? axb5 and Black draws. 1.bxa6? b5 and after the mutual promotions ...Qb8+ wins for Black. After 1.b6+, Black can't take because White's queen will control a1. So, Black relies on a stalemate defence, and sets it up by 1...Kb8.

7.Qe8? Qg7 locks in the white king. If at any time White plays Qf8, Black plays ...Qa3 and can then meet Qe8 with ...Qd6+ winning the pawn. So White has to go to g8 and then e8, from where he can triangulate back to h8 and in the process force the black king to a8 thereby eliminating the stalemate defence. All that from a pawn ending, and a very natural looking one too.

(Byway - bishop and knight)

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

The sidelines are: 1...Kf1 2.Nd2+ Ke1 Nxb3; 2...c1N 3.Bf3+ Kg1 4.Bg2; 6...Kg1 7.Ne2 mate. Paul points out the 'sting in the tail', that 5...b2 is answered by a second knight fork. Neither he nor I know if this is a novel feature with such limited material, but it's new to us both.

(Byway - rook)

1.Kf2 Kd3 2.Rb1 g3+ 3.Ke1 Kc3 4.Ke2 b3 5.Rc1+ Kd4 6.Kd2 Ke4 7.Rc4+ Kf3 8.Ke1 b2 9.Rb4 g2 10.Rb3+ wins. White's king has to oscillate in the centre, to keep an eye on both Black's pawns.

Here's the supporting evidence, in case you're unconvinced:

1.Rh4? b3 and 1.Kf1? Kd3 2.Ke1 b3 are draws. In the main line, 1...Kc3 Ke2 or 1...g3+ 2.Ke2 win. 3.Kxg3? Kc3 4.Kf3 b3 5.Ke2 Kc2 draws. 3...g2 4.Rb3+ Kc2 5.Rg3 g1Q+ 6.Rxg1 b3 7.Rg2+ Kc1 8.Rg5 Kc2 9.Rc5+ Kd3 10.Kd1. 4.Rc1+ Kd3 5.Rb1 Kc3 is simply a loss of time. 4...g2 5.Rc1+ Kd4 6.Rg1 Kc3 7.Rxg2 b3 8.Kd1 b2 9.Rg3+. 5...Kb4 6.Kd2 b2 7.Rg1 Kb3 8.Re1. 8...g2 9.Rc3+ or 8...Kg2 9.Rc1. 9.Rc3+ Kg2.

(Michelet - minor pieces)

1. Bg3+ Kxg3 2.Nf1+ Kg2 3.Nxh2 Bxc8 4.Ng4 Bxg4 5.c8N Bxc8 6.Kb6 and **7.Kc7** draws.

White surrenders all his diagram pieces, and indeed another one - the 'phoenix' knight on c8. Survival after many sacrifices.

(Michelet - queens)

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

(Nunn)

1.Kd2 Nc3 2.Rxb1 Nxb1+ 3.Kc1 Nxa2+ 4.Kxb1 Nc3+ 5.Kb2 Nd1+ 6.Kc1 Nxe3 7.gxh5 Ng4 8.Nd5 Kxd5 9.Ne3+ Nxe3 10.h6 wins.

The sidelines include: 1.0-0? Nxc2; 2.Nxb4? Rxh1 3.Kxc3 hxg4; 3.Kd1? Nxa2 4.gxh5 Nbc3+ 5.Ke1 Ke6; 3...hxg4 4.Nxb4 g3 5.Nc4+ Kc5 6.Ne5 g2 7.Nf3; 5.Kc1? hxg4; 7...Nf5 8.Ne3 Nxe3 9.h6; 8.Ne3? Nf6 9.h6 Ke6 10.Nbd5 Nh7 11.Kd2 Ng5 12.Kd3 Kf7; 8...Ke6 9.Nce3 Nh6 10.Kd2 Ke5 11.Ke2. The WCCT was a theme tourney, and the theme required the studies to have positions in which there were two active sacrifices, one a solution move and the other a try - hence why John's study has several such sacrificial tries.

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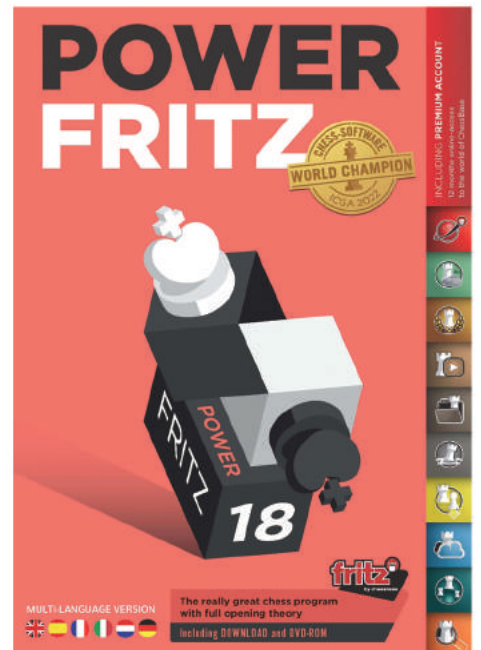
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