



Chess*Moves*

July 2023



Middlesex – New County Champions!
British Championships Preview
Mickey Adams on the English Championships
Plus all the usual features

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EDITORIAL



Greetings all!

The British Championships will have just started when you receive this issue of *ChessMoves*, and this year has broken all previous entry levels – no fewer than 850 players have signed up for what's bound to be a fantastic festival of chess. If you're not playing I do hope that you'll be able to visit – there's a full schedule of tournaments and events inside. I've also just taken part in two ChessFest days in Nottingham and London (which saw over 14,000 people attend) and was struck by the current popularity of chess, particularly among the young.

Congratulations must go to the organisers of remarkable events like these, which are a slam-dunk win for chess.

This month's magazine includes an interview with all-time English chess great Nigel Short and comprehensive coverage of Middlesex's win in the Open Final of the County Championships, together with the usual star-studded array of contributors including Michael Adams, John Nunn, Peter Wells, Nigel Davies, Danny Gormally and Paul Littlewood. We're lucky to have such a talented bunch of authors writing for us.

Finally, just a reminder that if you would like the chance to have one of your games annotated by a top player and published in *ChessMoves*, please send it to office@englishchess.org.uk with some words about the background to the game, why it was important to you etc.

Enjoy the feast of news and games in this issue!

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EVENTS

British Chess Championships 2023

by Nigel Towers



As we go to press for July the British Chess Championships will be just starting at **The Venue, De Montfort University** in **Leicester**, with events running from 20th to 30th July 2023: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>
The schedule of tournaments and festival events will be as below.

British Championship Saturday 22 nd to Sunday 30 th July	Major Open Saturday 22 nd to Sunday 30 th July	
British 50+ & 65+ Champs Monday 24 th to Sunday 30 th July	British Junior Champs Tuesday 25 th to Saturday 29 th July	
Weekender Congress Friday 21 st to Sunday 23 rd July	Weekday AM / PM Congresses Monday 24 th to Saturday 29 th July	
Rapidplay Events Friday 21 st July, Monday 24 th July, Saturday 29 th July	Blitz Events Thursday 20 th July, Tuesday 25 th July Thursday 27 th July (Junior Blitz)	
Commentary <u>GM commentary and broadcast</u> Saturday 22 nd to Sunday 30 th July	Coaching <u>Junior coaching at The Venue</u> Tuesday 25 th to Saturday 29 th July	Bookstall <u>Well-stocked bookstall from Chess & Bridge</u> Thursday 20 th to Sunday 30 th July

Festival Events	
Outdoor Drop-In Chess Friday 21 st and Friday 28 th July pm GM Simuls Saturday 22 nd July and Sunday 23 rd July	Chess Film Mini-Season Phoenix Cinema Saturday 22 nd , Wednesday 26 th and Saturday 29 th July evening
Social Chess and Team Events The Venue, Sunday 23 rd and Friday 28 th evening	Zwischenzug Lecture and Puzzles Wednesday 26 th July evening BCPS Problem Solving Evening Thursday 27 th July evening
National Chess Library Visits at the Kimberlin Library (Special Collections) Tuesday 25 th – Thursday 27 th July pm	Quiz Evening Leicester Heritage Tours And more...



At the time of going to press there are 850 players taking part across this year's tournaments, with more than 1400 entries in events across the 11 days of the Championships. Entries are still open for the majority of tournaments, with entries allowed up to the day before the tournament starts.

There are now over 60 players in the main nine-round **British Championship**, with a particularly strong field this year including top seed GM Michael Adams, along with defending Champion IM Harry Grieve and a number of top GMs and IMs from across the British Isles.

The **Major Open** is open to all players regardless of eligibility or qualification and will run over nine rounds alongside the main Championship and with 10 qualification places for next year's British. The competition has a strong field this year, headed up by top seed IM Brandon Clarke.

As well as the main Championship we will have the usual 50+ and 65+ Senior Championships and the Junior Championships, including sections for U8, U10, U12, U14 and U16.

We are also running the usual programme of open tournaments including the traditional Weekender tournament for three days over the first weekend of 21st to 23rd July, the AM and PM standard play tournaments with a game a day over seven days, and a selection of rapid and blitz events across the Championship period.

Commentary and Coaching

The venue will include seating for spectators and a separate commentary room with top commentators IM Adam Hunt and GM Danny Gormally, with games broadcast from live boards at the event. We will also have coaching available from top local coach Alan Agnew together with supporting coaches for the duration of the

junior events. Games will be broadcast on Chess.com and Lichess from live boards at the event.

There will also be a full programme of festival events running alongside the tournaments as summarised below.

Outdoor Drop-In Chess

There will be two outdoor events open to all and hosted by FM Jonathan Blackburn. The first drop-in chess welcome event will be held at the Semi-Circle, New Walk in Leicester from 1pm to 6 pm on Friday 21st July. There will be a number of tables with some strong local players taking on all comers. The second Championship drop-in event will be in Mill Lane within the DMU campus from 1pm to 6 pm on Friday 28th July. The second event will also be hosted by Jonathan Blackburn with support for drop-in chess, together with broadcasting of games from round 7 of the Championship on the large screen television in the square.

Film Nights at the Local Phoenix



The local Phoenix Cinema and Arts Centre will be showing a Checkmate Chess mini-season, with three films during the Championships including Pawn Sacrifice (7.30pm on Saturday 22nd July), Queen of Katwe (7.30 pm on Wednesday 26th July), and The Seventh Seal (7.00 pm on Saturday 29th July):

<https://www.phoenix.org.uk/events/checkmate-chess-films/>

The Phoenix is a cinema, art gallery and café bar in the cultural quarter in Leicester city centre, about 20 minutes' walk through town from The Venue. All three films are highly recommended, and in addition to the screenings we are planning for a number of local players from the Wigston club to be available in the café/bar area for some casual drop-in chess before the films on Wednesday and Saturday.

GM Simuls

There will be two evening simuls with Grandmaster Keith Arkell taking on players on Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd July.

Social/Team Chess Evenings at The Venue

There will be two team event evenings including Hand and Brain and Bughouse tournaments on Sunday 23rd and Friday 28th July.

Zwischenzug! Lecture



WIM Natasha Regan and NI Matthew Ball will be hosting a lecture and puzzle solving contest on Wednesday 26th July as co-authors of the new Chessable course Zwischenzug!.

Problem Solving Event at The Venue organised by the British Chess problem Society on 27th July. Prizes will be available for the top solvers, and this will be a great opportunity to learn more about the art of problem solving. Spaces will be limited, so please register via the ECF website if you would like to attend.

British Chess Library Visits

The Special Collections team at the DMU Kimberlin Library will be hosting visitors to view the British Chess Library in the Archives room between Tuesday 25th and Thursday 27th July. To organise a visit to the archives please contact Special Collections - Email: archives@dmu.ac.uk Tel: 0116 207 8776



Entry Forms and Details

You can find an entry form for the various tournaments at the link here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/british-chess-championships-2023/>

Entries will be accepted up to the day before the various tournaments.

There is a separate entry/registration form for Festival events which can be found at the link below:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/british-chess-championships-2023-festival-events/>

English Championships by Michael Adams

My success in the English Championship was aided by the momentum I gained with a desperate, highly fortuitous save against the reigning champion Mark Hebden in round 3. After this great escape I won three games in a row; this, the third of the sequence, was a very interesting strategic battle which was not easy to navigate. In some ways it was a pity it came to an anticlimactic finish after an uncharacteristic slip by Ameet, but the win was very welcome from my point of view!

Adams, Michael - Ghasi, Ameet

English Championship 2023

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3 a6
Black makes a useful move, retaining the option to choose between the main development schemes 6...Bg4, 6...g6, or 6...e6, which are also viable immediately.

7.h3 I also play a waiting game, maintaining the central tension and removing an option from the bishop on c8.

7...g6 8.c5 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Qb3? Be6! 10.Qxb7? Na5, winning, shows how the inclusion of a6 can be very handy. Instead, I take some queenside space, which is a definite asset, but the unstable pawn chain means that the key pawn on d4 can become a liability later.

8...Bf5 Grabbing the diagonal, which I could control after 8...Bg7 9.Bd3.

9.Be2 There was a case for mirroring Black's last with 9.Bf4!

9...Bg7 9...Qc7! would have been disruptive. The same comments apply to the next two moves.

10.0-0 10.Bf4!

10...0-0 10...Qc7!

11.Bf4



11...h6 Ameet had a think here, but couldn't find a move he liked. The natural 11...Ne4 12.Na4! seems problematic, as the rook on a8 is in trouble. The machine proposes a sublime solution here, however: 12...Qe8! 13.Nb6 Rd8 14.Bc7 h5! 15.Bxd8 Qxd8, a spectacular and brilliant sacrificial solution - all Black's pieces are well placed and co-ordinated and d4 is very vulnerable. This line is hardly possible to find at the board, though. Ameet mentioned 11...Be4 12.Ne5 Nd7 afterwards, which I hadn't considered much; 13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Qa4! keeps an edge.

12.Re1 I thought this rook move was the most useful based on the line 12.Rc1 Ne4 13.Na4 g5 14.Bh2 g4 (14...e6! 15.Nb6 Ra7 is best) 15.hxg4 Bxg4, but here 16.Nb6! Ra7 17.Ne5! Bxe2 18.Qxe2 Nxd4 19.Qd3 is good for White.

12...g5 Creating some room for his pieces, but at the cost of loosening the kingside.

13.Bh2 e6 13...Ne4 is still met by 14.Na4, but this was a more consistent follow-up.

14.Bd6! Re8



15.Ne5! My pieces jump into the centre.

15...Nd7



16.Bh5!

The bishop is not badly placed here, preventing the freeing 16.Bf1 Ndx5 17.dxe5 f6!

16...Ncxe5 A difficult choice. 16...Ndx5 17.dxe5 b6 18.cxb6 Qxb6 19.Rc1 is also not pleasant.

17.dxe5 Rc8 18.b4 b6



19.Na4 Rc6 During the game I couldn't understand the situation arising after the variation 19...bxc5 20.Nxc5 Nxc5 21.bxc5 Qa5 very well, but eventually realised that 22.Qb3!, planning Qb7, is very strong.

20.Rc1 bxc5 21.Nxc5! Much better than 21.bxc5 Qa5.

21...Nb6 After 21...Nxc5 22.bxc5 Qa5, either 23.Qb3 or 23.Re3 Rec8 24.Rb3 are strong. Crucially, White is the first to get a major piece to the open file.



22.Be2 A key moment; the position seems ripe for a combination, but calculating correctly is not easy. 22.Nxe6 Rxc1 23.Bxf7+ Kh8 24.Qxc1 Bxe6 25.Bxe8 Qxe8 with Nc4 coming isn't sufficient.

Reversing the move order is equally enticing: 22.Bxf7+! Kxf7 23.Nxe6! Qc8 (23...Bxe6 24.Rxc6, 23...Rxc1 24.Nxd8+) 24.Rxc6 Qxc6 25.Nd4 Qd7 looked right to me, but I couldn't find the rather deep follow-up here.



26.Bc5! (26.Qh5+ Bg6 27.e6+ Rxe6 28.Qf3+ Rf6 doesn't work) 26...Nc4 27.Qh5+! Bg6 (27...Kg8 28.Nxf5) 28.e6+! Rxe6 29.Qf3+ Rf6 30.Re7+ Qxe7 31.Qxd5+ - the point; 26.Bc5 drove the knight away from the defence of d5.

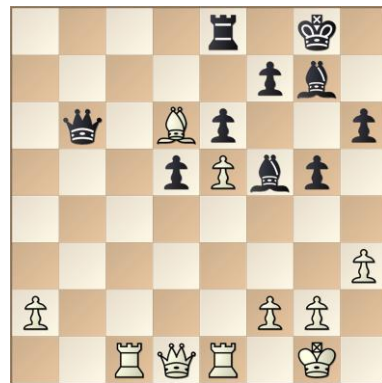
There were also less direct approaches that have their merits: 22.Qf3! Qc8! (22...Nc4 23.Rxc4!, 22...Bg6 23.Bxg6 fxg6 24.Qd3 Nc4 25.Qxg6 Rxd6 (25...Nxd6 26.exd6 Rxd6 27.Nb7) 26.exd6) 23.Bxf7+ Kxf7 24.g4 Kg8 25.gxf5 exf5 26.a4 Nxa4 27.Qxd5+ Kh8, although this is much less clear to me than my machine.

I took a totally different approach, swinging the bishop from coast to coast to focus on Black's disintegrating queenside.



22...Qa8? My opponent missed that 22...Nc8 23.Qa4 Rxd6 24.Nb7? can be met by Qd7!, and I also initially overlooked this. Instead 24.exd6 Nxd6 25.Qxa6 Bb2 should be good for White; 26.b5!, returning the exchange seems very practical, but the position is far from simple despite the computer assessment, even if that precise move is discovered. The immediate 22...Rxd6 isn't possible due to 23.Nb7!

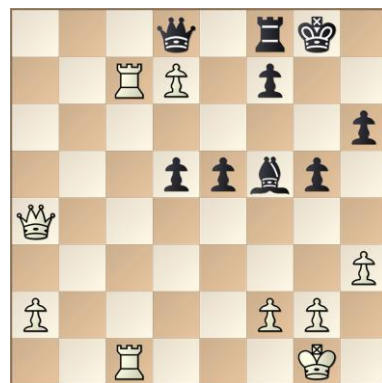
23.Bxa6 Rxc5 24.bxc5 Qxa6 25.cxb6 Qxb6 White has won the exchange and maintained a better position; my next move removes any doubt about the result.



26.Qa4! The rook on e8 can't be conveniently defended.

26...Qd8 27.Rc7 Bf8 27...Qa8 was a little better.

28.Rec1 Bxd6 29.exd6 e5 30.d7 Rf8



31.Qc6! Qe7 31...d4 32.Qd6!, threatening Rc8, decides.

32.Qxd5 Be6 33.Qxe5

Black resigned in this prospectless position.

1-0

English Women's Online Blitz Championship 2023



The second English Women's Online Blitz Championship will be held during August 2023. The top finishing player will become the English Women's Online Blitz Champion for 2023. The event is open to all female ECF members or supporters (QGS). You will need to join the [English Women's Online Blitz Club](#) on Chess.com and fill in the registration form:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/english-womens-online-blitz-championship-2023/> as a condition of entry.

General Rules

- The tournaments will be played on Chess.com.
- All players must be members of the English Women's Online Blitz Club on Chess.com:
<https://www.Chess.com/club/2nd-english-womens-online-blitz-championship>
- Chess.com anti-cheating checks will be in operation.
- The final stage qualifiers list, draw and results will be published using players' real names rather than their Chess.com handles. It is a condition of entering the final stage that this is adhered to.
- Players should make themselves aware of the Chess.com rules for maximum time for the first move, disconnects and reconnects, losing on time, drawing and insufficient material, as well as other internet chess concepts like pre-moving and automatic promotion.

Format – Group Stage

- Date
- Saturday 5th August (Qualifier A)
 - Sunday 6th August (Qualifier B)

Start time – 4.00pm

Tournament type – two x nine round Swiss tournaments. Players may play in one or both tournaments.

Time limit – 3|2 – All moves in three minutes, plus two seconds per move.

Rating – All games are ECF online blitz rated.

Qualifiers – There will be 16 places in the final, with qualification places available to the top eight players in each tournament. All players can play in one or both tournaments including the eight qualifiers from the first tournament. Where there is a withdrawal from the final or the same players win qualifiers, extra players will be invited to the final based on their rank in the final standings, starting with 9th place in Qualifier A, then 9th place in Qualifier B etc.

Tie-breaks – Chess.com tie-break scores will be used.

Final

Date – Saturday 12th August

Start time – 3.00pm

Tournament type – Knockout format with four stages (last 16, quarter-finals, semi-finals, and final) Two games per match in each stage – i.e. each player will play two blitz games against their opponent with colours alternating. There will be a four-game match to decide the winner and runner-up.

Time limit – 3|2 time control – all moves in three minutes, plus two seconds per move.

Rating – All games are ECF online blitz rated.

Tie-breaks – Play-off matches for each stage of the final will be based on an Armageddon match with the drawing of lots for colours, and the match set up with support from the online controller, who will add time-odds to the white clock. A draw will count as a win for Black.

Time limit: All moves in five minutes (White); all moves in four minutes (Black).

Prizes

Winner – £200

Runner-up – £100

Non-qualifying Semi-finalist (3-4) – £40

Non-qualifying Quarter-finalist (5-8) – £15

Last 16 (9-16) – £10 each

Total – £520

Entries and Donations

The event will be open to all female ECF members or supporters. Donations of £5.00 or above will be invited to support the prize fund.

Pairings for the Knockout

Qualifiers from the first event will be seeded 1-8 in order; qualifiers from the second event 9- 16 in order.

The player seeded highest chooses White or Black in Game 1.

Colours for an Armageddon play-off will be based on drawing of lots, with the online controller setting up the time odds.

Zoom

Qualifier: There will be a Zoom call to assist players in case they need technical support.

Final: Players will be required to join Zoom (the link will be provided to them by email).

They must:

- Share their screen;
- Have their microphone on;
- Have their webcam on.

They must not:

- Use a phone or tablet;
- Use a virtual background.

ECF Open National Final – Middlesex win 30th title!

A report by Anthony Fulton, Middlesex Open Captain and Author of 'The Southern Counties Chess Union – a Retrospective'



Counties Controller Mark Murrell (centre) and ECF Events Director Shohreh Bayat (left) present the Open trophy to Middlesex Captain Anthony Fulton – photograph by Philip Staniland

'We are the champions! We are the champions! No time for losers for we are the champions of the ECF!'

OK, not as dramatic as Queen's '...of the world!' but you never know what's next on the cards!

On 1st July 2023 Middlesex played Surrey in the 102nd edition of the Open National County Championship Final at The Hythe Centre, Staines. The final venue was appropriate as, just as with the tussle for the Löwenthal Trophy, so too the disagreement over whether Staines

should be considered as being in Middlesex or Surrey. Both counties have a reasonable claim to the area, Middlesex's of course being the greater, but the real tussle on the day was about who would be crowned national champions. Both teams were itching to become champion, as it had been over a decade since either could make the claim.

By defeating Greater Manchester in a dramatic and, as my deputy on the day said, 'nerve-wracking' semi-final, Middlesex progressed to our first final since 2016 where

we met a familiar foe, Surrey. The match was the third time the two counties had met at this stage, all under my tenure as captain (2006 to date – am I the longest-serving current county match captain?) The teams had shared the previous two spoils: 2012 (Middlesex) and 2013 (Surrey) in two close encounters, with the final score of both being 8½-7½. The match was also the eighteenth time that the Open final was contested by two SCCU counties, and was the one that broke the hegemony established by the NCCU in recent years. Prior to this final Surrey had form, as they were the last SCCU representative in 2019 which saw the crowning of the 100th champion. For the record, there have been nine finals where both contestants were from the NCCU, the only other Union to have two representatives in Open National Finals.

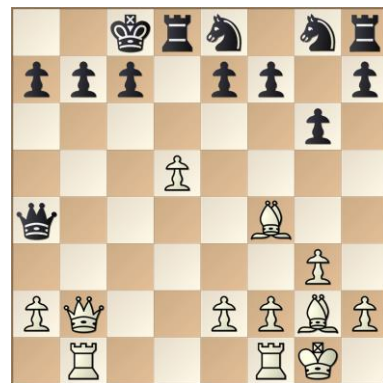
The vagaries of the National Stage mean that board order is based on strict FIDE rating and consequently you get odd board orders. For example, is Surrey's Peter Lee really stronger than Graeme Buckley? Should Stanley and Frankie Badacsonyi be playing as low as boards 12 and 14 for Middlesex? Clearly, plenty of anomalies. In the past there was some wriggle room (80 points), but not now. The randomness of board order therefore added to the uncertainty of the day. FIDE rating indicated a 9-7 win to Surrey, as Middlesex after all were outrated on average by 100+ points. However, if we acknowledge the fact that FIDE rating is not a true reflection of Middlesex's playing strength, the teams were evenly matched on ECF rating (Middlesex 2166; Surrey 2202) and so a close match was on the cards, replicating the previous two encounters. This proved to be the case.

The opening hour or so's play saw the teams struggle for dominance, with Colin Mackenzie's result coming in first with a respectable draw on board 11 against an opponent who outrated him by a significant margin on both rating lists. Surrey may have been looking to this board and a few others in middle order as a 'gimme', but by Surrey ceding the draw, it could be argued Middlesex gained a psychological edge. Would this be the board that made the difference to the final score? The real action though happened soon after, and effectively set the scene for the remainder of the match.

Event: ECF County Championship Match: Open – Surrey vs Middlesex

Bd3: Venkat Tiruchirapalli (Middlesex) - Silverio Abasolo (Surrey)

1.d4 g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Bg2 Nc6 7.Nc3 Qa5 8.d5 Bxf3 9.Bxf3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Ne5 11.Bg2 Qxc3+ 12.Bd2 Qd4 13.Qc1 Ng4 14.0-0 N4f6 15.Be3 Qa4 16.Rb1 0-0-0 17.Bf4 Ne8 18.Qb2



18.. Ngf6 19.Bh3+ e6 20.dxe6 fxe6 21.Bxe6+ Rd7 22.Rfd1 Rf8 23.Qxb7+ Kd8 24.Bxc7+ Ke7 25.Bxd7 Nxd7 26.Bf4 Rf5 27.Rb3 Nef6 28.Re3+ Kf7 29.Red3 Ke7 30.e4 g5 31.Bd6+ 1-0

I have been a long-term county captain, so in my time have seen many matches accrue many draws, but the early wins for Steve Coles (board 13) and Venkat Tiruchirapalli (board 3) meant that victories had to be sought by both sides as board count already favoured Middlesex, so Surrey couldn't afford to tie. Richard Bates' victory on board 1 put even more pressure on Surrey, as in the event of a tie board count most certainly favoured Middlesex. Surrey really had to play to win the match outright, but this would be no mean feat as Middlesex already led 3½-1½.

This season Middlesex have been good front-runners and have generally held on to their lead. However, with this being a final and Surrey being stronger on paper (based on FIDE rating) and determined to avoid a hat-trick of defeats to us this season, it never does well to count chickens or tempt fortune or even the gods. The next seven games bore this out as Surrey levelled the match, but worse was to follow as, having trailed by two, Surrey opened a two-point lead, and the match had yo-yoed! The match seemed to be going back to FIDE form.

However, if anyone paid attention to the Greater Manchester match Middlesex had trailed by three at the halfway stage and nicked an 8½ -7½ win, so although trailing by two there was no need to panic – yet – as we knew how to dig deep! At this point Middlesex trailed 5-7.

Event: ECF County Championship

Match: Open – Surrey vs Middlesex

Bd5: Bob Eames (Middlesex) - Chris Baker (Surrey)

With annotations by Bob Eames

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Transposing to the Philidor Defence, and avoiding the dull and equal exchange of queens with 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ 4...Nbd7

5.Bc4 Avoiding the hacky lines like 5.g4, a favourite of Alexei Shirov. **5...Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.Re1** Preventing the tactic ...Nxe4 and ...d5. **8...b6**



9.h3 A popular alternative for White here amongst grandmasters seems to be 9.b3, Bb2, Bd3, Ne2 and Ng3.

9...a6 10.Ba2 Rb8 11.b4 Bb7 12.Rb1 Qc7

Chris thought after the game that this had been a mistake, giving White chances to plonk a knight on the attacking square f5.

13.Nh4 Rfe8 14.Nf5 Bf8 15.dxe5 Nxe5 After 15...dxe5 I was planning 16.Qf3 with a good attacking position.

16.Bg5 Qd8 17.Re3 h6 18.Bh4 Ng6 19.Bg3 Ne5 20.f4 Ng6 21.Qe2 21.Rd3 may well have been better in hindsight!

21...d5



Black tries to break out and gain some counterplay.

22.e5 d4 23.Qc4 winning the d4 pawn, as taking the rook on e3 leads to mate after Qxf7+ and exf6.

23...Nd5 24.Nxd5 cxd5 25.Qxd4 Qc8 26.Qd3 Qd7 27.c3 Qxa4 28.Bb3 Qd7 29.Nd4 Rbc8 30.Bc2 Qd8 31.f5 Nh8 32.f6 g6 33.Rf1



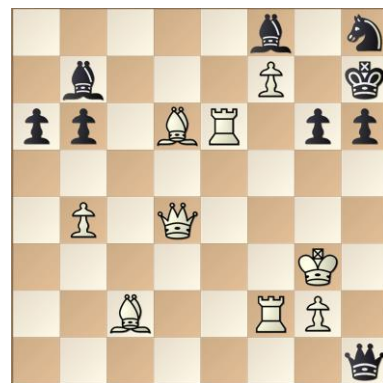
defending the f6-pawn and preparing for the final push with e6.

33...Rc4 34.e6 Rxe6 35.Nxe6 fxe6 36.f7+ Kh7 37.Rxe6 Qg5 38.Bd6



I had played 38.Bf4?! originally without letting go of the bishop, but quickly retreated it back to where it had come from when I was shocked to see that it blundered the bishop after 38 ...Rxf4 39.Rxf4 Qxf4 ... but even that was winning for White after 40.Rxg6!

38...d4 Threatening mate in one. 39.Rf2 Rxc3 40.Qxd4 Qc1+ 41.Kh2 Rxh3+ 42.Kxh3 Qh1+ 43.Kg3



and Black runs out of checks.

1-0

Twelve games down, four to go. Marco Gallana is winning on board 2, Bob Eames has a huge attack on board 5, Alex is at least level on board 10, as is Mat Dydak on board 15. It is looking as though the match will be tied, with Middlesex winning comfortably on board count – predicted at Middlesex 24' Surrey 38. Thus Surrey have to find wins, and this just does not look likely. As expected, Bob hammers home his advantage and Alex attains a draw. Middlesex trail 6½-7½ (current board count Middlesex 22, Surrey 38).

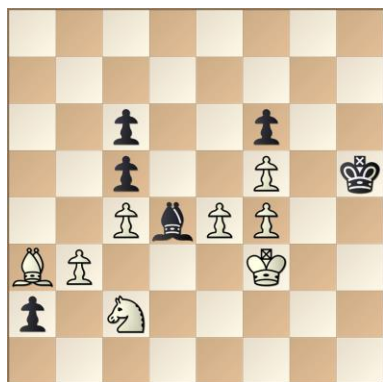
So, the match was going to the wire, with two games left, Middlesex trailing by one point, and needing a win and a draw to tie the match with a comfortable win on board count.

Event: ECF County Championship

Match: Open – Surrey vs. Middlesex

Bd15: Mateuz Dydak (Middlesex) vs. Robin Haldane (Surrey)

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Bg4 6.h3 h5 7.d3 Qf6 8.Nbd2 g5 9.Nc4 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 Qxf3 11.gxf3 f6 12.Be3 0-0-0 13.Rfd1 Ne7 14.d4 exd4 15.Bxd4 Bg7 16.Ne3 b6 17.c4 c5 18.Bc3 b5 19.b3 b4 20.Bb2 c6 21.Kh2 Rxd1 22.Rxd1 Rd8 23.Rxd8+ Kxd8 24.Kg3 Ke8 25.Ng2 h4+ 26.Kh2 Kf7 27.f4 Ng6 28.f5 Nf8 29.Ne3 Nd7 30.Kg2 Bf8 31.Ng4 Bd6 32.Kf3 Bf4 33.Ke2 Ke7 34.Ne3 Kf7 35.Ng2 Be5 36.Bc1 g4 37.Nxh4 gxh3 38.Kf1 h2 39.Kg2 Bd4 40.f4 a5 41.Kxh2 Nb6 42.Nf3 a4 43.Ne1 a3 44.Nc2 Nxc4 45.bxc4 b3 46.axb3 a2 47.Ba3 Kg7 48.Kg3 Kh6 49.Kf3 Kh5



50.Nxd4!? a1Q 51.Bxc5 Qc3+ 52.Ke2 Kg4 53.e5 Qb2+ 54.Kd3 Qb1+ 55.Kc3 Qc1+ 56.Kb4 Qd2+ 57.Ka4 Qa2+ 58.Kb4 Qd2+ 59.Ka4 Qxf4 60.exf6 Qc7 61.Kb4 Qb7+ 62.Ka5 Qf7 63.Be7 Kf4 64.Nxc6 Kxf5 65.Nd8 Qe8 66.c5 Qd7 67.b4 Qa7+ 68.Kb5 Qb8+ 69.Ka5 Qa7+ 70.Kb5 Qb8+ 71.Kc6 Qc8+ 72.Kb6 Qb8+ 73.Nb7 Qe5 74.c6 Qd4+ 75.Kc7 Qc4 76.Nd6+

1-0

It seemed this was going to be the case, but when Mat Dydak allowed his opponent to queen (50. Nxd4 (??, !? or !!) a1=Q), soon after Marco Gallana had agreed a draw, it looked as though we were going to lose 7½-8½ as somehow Surrey contrived to find the additional ½ point to take them over the winning line. OK - should we panic now? No, as Mat's decision proved inspired; yes, his opponent had queened but it was never possible for the king to support her as Mat had too many pieces left (K+B+N+6P vs. K+Q+2P), thereby taking away key squares so the opponent's king could not infiltrate. With careful play, Mat went on to bring home the point, tie the match and see Middlesex win on board count by the closest margin possible: 37-38.

Now, dear reader, you may say that I am putting a positive spin on Mat's game, but I say that Mat channelled his inner Carlsen and had the position completely under control – which is easy to say when you've won! For those of you not familiar with the reference, in the recent Global Chess League match between Anand and Carlsen Carlsen underpromoted and so had K+B+N+4P vs. K+Q+2P: [see here](#). OK - so not quite identical, but the same principle! When the dust had settled the only conclusion to draw is that we had seen a match that had it all: plenty of wins (10), both sides having a fragile lead (+2), positional and tactical oversights, and inspirational play. A hard-fought match played in good spirit between two familiar foes. Commiserations to Clive Frostick, who has done a fantastic job in reviving Surrey's pride, but he and his team came up against a redoubtable Middlesex. My congratulations to the Middlesex team and squad. It seems that the Middlesex giant has finally awoken at the National Stage!

Victory, albeit on first tie-break board count, sees Middlesex lift their 30th national title, thereby setting a new record – although to be fair ever since Middlesex won the first BCF title in 1908 they have always set new records in the County Championships, the most notable being that up to 1957 Middlesex had won the same number of titles (19) as ALL the other counties put together! Further congratulations go to the team and squad as they not only secured the 30th national title but attained Middlesex's 26th SCCU/national double! Their last was in 1988-89. It is to be noted that Middlesex lead Lancashire in this statistic too (Middlesex – 26; Lancashire – 16). Not bad for a county that many say does not exist, supported by the musings of former Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman:

'Dear Middlesex, dear vanished country friend,
Your neighbour, London, killed you in the end.'

I think is safe to say, 'Middlesex beg to differ!'

We look forward to defending both titles in 2023-24. Go on the Middlesex!



Middlesex National Open Champions: L-R Mark Davey, Alex Freeland, Chris Skulte, Mark Murrell (County Controller), Andrew Stone, Anthony Fulton (Middlesex Captain), Shohreh Bayat (Chief Arbiter) Steve Coles, Marco Gallana, Mateuz Dydak, Bob Eames, Venkat Tiruchirapalli, Rick McMichael, Dimitar Mogilarov. Missing: Richard Bates, Colin Mackenzie, Frankie Badacsonyi, Stanley Badacsonyi, Nigel Fleming

30th 4NCL Congress, Daventry by Nigel Davies

Nigel R Davies - Jacob Connor Boswell

Round 4: 18.06.2023

It was nice to finish first in another 4NCL congress, this time scoring 4½/5. As usual the organization was spot on, and the venue could hardly have been better. Generally speaking, I did not play too badly, but there were a couple of dubious positions during my games. The following game was my best and most convincing, once again featuring the Torre Attack.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bg5 Bg7 4.Nbd2 d5 5.e3 c5 6.c3 cxd4
This does not feel right with the bishop on g7. White can now recapture with either pawn, getting a promising position in either case.

7.exd4 0-0 8.Bd3 Nc6 9.0-0 Qc7 10.Re1 a6 11.Nb3 Bf5 12.Bxf5 gxf5 13.Nc5 Ne4 14.Nd3 Nxd3 Making matters much worse.



Black should have played 14...f6 15.Bf4 and now 15...Qd7, when Black's position is still tenable. Note that 15...e5? would lose because of 16.dxe5 fxe5 17.Ndxe5! etc..

15.Nxd3 h6 16.Nh3! The knight is coming to f4, and then maybe h5. Meanwhile White can lift a rook to the third rank, and even contemplate opening the kingside with a later g2-g4.

16...e6 17.Nhf4 Bf6 18.Re3 Bg5 18...Kh7 was relatively best, but still bad for Black.



19.Rg3 e5 Perhaps the original intention was 19...Kh7, but now Black saw that White has 20.Rxg5 hxg5 21.Qh5+ Kg7 22.Qxg5+ Kh7 23.Nh5 etc. So he tries to drum up some complications.

20.dxe5 Nxe5 21.Nxe5 Opting for the simple solution.

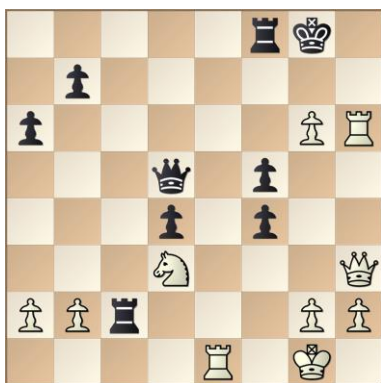
I was calculating 21.Nxd5 Qd6 22.Nxe5, but then did not see how to refute 22...f4. Actually it is easy; White can play 23.Rxg5+ hxg5 24.Nd7, at the very least winning the exchange and emerging a piece up.



21...Qxe5 22.Nd3 Qe4 23.f4 d4 24.c4 Once again keeping it simple.

24...Rac8 25.fxg5 f4 26.Rh3 Rxc4 27.Qg4 Rc6 28.Re1 Playing with every piece.

28...Qd5 29.Rxh6 Rc2 30.g6 f5 31.Qh3 1-0



ChessFest



The UK's largest chess event took place on Sunday 16th July in London's Trafalgar Square. Now in its third year, the annual open-air chess festival saw over 14,000 people attend the free event organised by the charity Chess in Schools and Communities to promote and raise awareness for the game we all love.

After two previous years of scorching 30+ degree temperatures, the 2023 event took place under cooler conditions and thankfully remained rain-free, not that we're convinced that any of the 350+ chess boards would have been vacated for anything less than a deluge.

The highlight of the day was the living chess displays which have been the centrepiece of previous events. With actors taking the place of the pieces, they re-enacted some of the best games played by UK players, with GM David Howell on hand to commentate on the re-enactment of his game against Ivan Sokolov from the 2009 Staunton Memorial.

ChessFest also offered a 'Challenge the Chess Master' where the masters had two and a half minutes to the public's five, with prizes to those who managed a win or a draw. The number of masters was steadily increased throughout the day from the scheduled four to nine to cope with the long queues that formed. It was a veritable 'Who's Who' of the chess world, with GM David Howell, GM Gawain Jones, GM Luke McShane, GM Ravi Haria, GM Stuart Conquest, IM Andrew Martin, IM Harriet Hunt, IM Richard Palliser, IM Tom Rendle, IM Callum Kilpatrick, IM Malcolm Pein, WGM Katarzyna Toma, FM Tim Wall, FM Jonathan Pein and FM Akshaya Kalaiyalahan all taking turns. Even titled players like GM Jonathan Rowson and IM Gavin Wall, who had turned up to spectate, were co-opted into pitching in!

At the other end of the spectrum, one of the UK's brightest prospects and the World Under 8 Rapid and Blitz Champion, Bodhana Sivanandan, challenged the USA's

own prodigy, nine-year-old Megan Paragua in a match played live on the internet from Trafalgar Square and broadcast on the giant screen with commentary for the public. Although, ahead in both games Bodhana lost the match ½:1½, but captained a London Juniors team to a win in a match played against ChessFest Liverpool, who were having their own outdoor festival at Liverpool ONE Chavasse Park.

New for 2023 was the interactive chess puzzle competition organised by ChessKid starring the star of the online platform, FunMaster Mike (FM Mike Klein). All children attending ChessFest were given new accounts to ChessKid and given ten minutes to solve as many puzzles as possible on their mobile phones or devices. Hundreds took part, with the giant screen showing a live leader board. If the results are anything to go by, the future of UK junior chess is looking bright, with some awesome scores being recorded.

To cap it off, Chess in Schools tutors were offering children and adults a free chess lesson in the 'Teaching Zone'. Lessons ranged from how the pieces move to the ultra-advanced nuances of the Accelerated Dragon. A total of 35 tutors provided close to 500 lessons throughout the day.

ChessFest also took place in Nottingham on Saturday 15th July and in Hull on Sunday 16th July, with the juniors from Hull emerging victorious in their online challenge game against London.

ChessFest will be back in 2024, and will be looking to build on this year's success by bringing chess to more people across the UK.

SCCU / London Club Championships



Photograph by Brendan O'Gorman

Some days are hotter than others, and this day was at the sizzling end of the thermometer. The chess was scorching too. The Southern Counties Chess Union put on its 2nd Club Championships on Saturday 24th June 2023, in the middle of a heatwave, at St Luke's Church in Kidderpore Avenue, London NW3 7SU. Thirty-six teams from Essex, Kent, London, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex came to play chess in three sections with average ratings of no more than 2100 (Major), 1850 (Intermediate) and 1600 (Minor). The event was *SOLD OUT* weeks before the first opening move. Chess in the South-East is back in abundance!

Tactics were clearly in play. The trick was to get as close as possible to the average rating limit. Some teams went big on the top boards, giving chances to lower-rated players at the bottom. Others decided to spread their resources evenly. To thwart any cunning rating plans, anyone rated more than 300 points below the section average counted as being exactly 300 points below the average.

Final Tables

Major Teams	P	W	D	L	Pts	Games
Richmond & Twickenham	6	6	0	0	12	17½
Streatham & Brixton	6	4	0	2	8	14½
Muswell Hill	6	3	0	3	6	13
Kent Juniors A	6	3	0	3	6	13
DHSS	6	2	0	4	4	11½
Imperial College	6	0	0	6	0	2½

The all-conquering Richmond & Twickenham Team were made up of IM Gavin Wall, Maks Gajowniczek, Andrew Hebron, Michael Healey and Roger Scowen.

Intermediate Teams	P	W	D	L	Pts	Games
Wanstead & Woodford Dynamos	6	4	0	2	8	16
Charlton Juniors	6	4	0	2	8	15½
Pimlico	6	4	0	2	8	13½

Intermediate Teams	P	W	D	L	Pts	Games
Wanstead & Woodford Cavaliers	6	2	3	1	7	13½
Lewisham	6	3	1	2	7	13
Sidcup	6	2	3	1	7	12½
Crowborough	6	2	2	2	6	12
HM Treasury A	6	2	2	2	6	11
Kent Juniors B	6	2	1	3	5	12½
Streatham & Brixton	6	1	3	2	5	9½
Beckenham & Bromley	6	1	1	4	3	8
HM Treasury B	6	1	0	5	2	7

By the skin of their teeth (the chess equivalent to half a game-point!) the winners on tie-break were Wanstead & Woodford Dynamos, made up of Istvan Karacsony, Matthias Lataille, John Cawdery and David Spearman.

Minor Teams	P	W	D	L	Pts	Games
Wanstead & Woodford All Stars	6	4	2	0	10	18½
Guildford Juniors	6	4	2	0	10	16½
GLCC - A	6	4	1	1	9	15
Crowborough	6	3	2	1	8	13½
GLCC - C	6	3	1	2	7	13
GLCC - B	6	3	1	2	7	12½
Lewisham	6	3	1	2	7	12½
East Grinstead Bookshop	6	2	3	1	7	11½
Streatham & Brixton	6	3	0	3	6	12½
DHSS	6	2	2	2	6	12½
Dorking	6	2	2	2	6	10½

Minor Teams	P	W	D	L	Pts	Games
Latymer School A	6	2	1	3	5	11
Wanstead & Woodford Warriors	6	2	1	3	5	11
She Plays To Win A	6	1	2	3	4	11
She Plays To Win B	6	1	2	3	4	11
Latymer School B	6	2	0	4	4	9
Kent Juniors C	6	0	2	4	2	8
Wimbledon	6	0	1	5	1	6½

Another really close section won by Wanstead & Woodford All Stars. The Wanstead Club had a particularly exciting day! Their team consisted of Keith Jones, Peter Nickals, Ryan Colclough and Zoe Veselow.

Thanks to our arbiters, Lance Leslie-Smith, Alan Atkinson and Rob Hammond. Congratulations to everyone who took part. It was a smashing day.

--- David Gilbert, SCCU Organiser

½-½

FEATURES

Interview with GM Nigel Short by Mark Rivlin

Nigel Short was the stand-out player among a large cohort of English GMs who enjoyed success in the 1980s and 1990s. Having left school at the age of 17 and attaining the GM title at the age of 19, Nigel enjoyed a great career, playing at the highest level into his 50s. His pinnacle came in 1993 when he challenged Garry Kasparov for the 1993 World Championship, which was then under the auspices of the newly formed Professional Chess Association. A three-time winner of the British Championship, Nigel has been a prolific writer and commentator on chess, and in 2022 he became FIDE Director for Chess Development. His 2021 book *Winning* was Chess.com's Book of the Year, and was Highly Commended by the ECF. In 1999 Nigel was awarded an MBE for services to chess.

Following a superb career over the board, you are now FIDE Director for Chess Development. What does this role entail, and how much do you enjoy it?

My job entails assisting what I call the 'smaller' federations – that is, in the sense of their level of chess development, rather than population. It is a fascinating job, as federations tend to vary quite a lot, and have very different challenges. Some are inexperienced, and benefit from simple advice. For example, I was recently in Belize, where quite a lot of people play chess, thanks to an extensive chess in schools programme that ran for some years. However, when I contacted the federation, their executive was in total disarray, and their acting President seemed unsure as to whether they were members of FIDE (they are), or had statutes (they do), or anything.

I considered my main task was to bring people together. I usually give a simul, which is partly to engage with the chess community, but mainly to obtain publicity. I asked the British High Commissioner, Nicole Davison, whether she could offer the Residence in the capital, Belmopan, as a venue, and she kindly agreed. As a consequence, we obtained good television coverage, and the event was attended by the Sports Minister.

To cut a long story short, there is now a functioning executive team, and a Grand Prix (five events in different regions) where none had existed before. The official website has been improved. There is also a new club in the scuba diving paradise of Caye Caulker – which was my first stop on the trip. Of course, I cannot claim full credit

for all these positive moves, but my visits are frequently a catalyst for change.

Your book *Winning* (Quality Chess) was well received by chess writers and enthusiasts. The premise is a study of your overall performance in eight selected tournaments that you won. Your publisher wrote: 'GM Nigel Short realised that every tournament win has a unique narrative and challenge'. How did the concept and writing of this book evolve?

The concept was suggested to me by Allard Hoogland, the owner of *New in Chess*, over dinner some years ago. It seemed very appealing. First of all, it satisfied my vanity in that I could include some interesting and important tournaments that I won. But at the same time, it would be far more realistic, and indeed instructive, than a typical 'best games' collection, because it gave context and also showed the hard struggle involved in finishing on top. The format had another distinct advantage: despite having written many hundreds of articles for newspapers and magazines, I had never really written a book. But each chapter is like a separate story, and so I could write it like eight different (lengthy) articles, which made completing it easier. They can be read in any order.

It still took far too long to complete. I felt a lot of self-revulsion while writing it. But when I saw the finished product I realised it was actually pretty good. I am quite proud of it. The comments and reviews have been overwhelmingly positive. It won the 2021 Chess.com Book of the Year award. It did not win the ECF book of the year - although it did receive a glowing endorsement.

Younger ECF players were not around when you played for the World Championship with Garry Kasparov in 1993. What are your memories of that match?

Those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) do not generally enjoy reliving their experiences.

As a former world top 10 player, what are your thoughts on the current state of elite chess, particularly Magnus Carlsen relinquishing his World Champion crown?

I thought the recent match between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi was tremendously exciting. I have absolutely nothing against Nepo - indeed he is a nice chap - but I wanted Ding to win because he is very sweet and modest, and his victory may help us crack open the massive Chinese market.

As to Magnus, he can do whatever he wants to do. He seems exhausted by the grind of World Chess Championships. But the game is much bigger than any

one individual. I would have preferred to see him defend his title, but so be it. Life goes on.

What is your favourite chess game, and why?

I don't have a favourite game, just as I don't have a favourite song. It depends on one's mood. Right now it is subdued, so I won't suggest anything too flashy or ostentatious. However, I quietly enjoyed my victory over Vasily Smyslov in the 1987 Subotica Interzonal. It was very satisfying to defeat the former World Champion and renowned endgame expert in the endgame. The game can be viewed here:

<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1124291>

Outside chess, what are your interests?

I thoroughly enjoy travel, by which I mean on arrival, not the getting there. Each passing year takes a greater toll on my body. Luckily, my job has enabled me to travel extensively - although I have consciously worked on that over the years. Right now, the tally is 143 countries and counting. I have a soft spot for Africa.

I play the guitar every day when at home. Believe it or not, I think I am improving after years of stagnation, mainly due to instructional videos which one finds on YouTube.

I enjoy swimming in the sea during the warm summer months. I usually begin my days that way. My taste in literature is largely confined to histories and biographies, but I occasionally dabble in novels. I love a glass or two of good wine.

You are a prolific writer and commentator on chess, and you have also had success in coaching. What are your plans over the next few years?

I hope to make a real difference to the smaller federations through my work in FIDE. This is my top priority. It is a full-time job which doesn't leave me with much space for other things. I don't really do coaching these days, other than the occasional lecture - which is not quite the same thing. Commentating is great fun though. I hope to complete the second volume of my trilogy (on matches) 'slowly, slowly', as the Greeks say.

I also hope to continue playing a little – perhaps twice a year.

What should be the top priorities of the ECF?

The number one priority of the ECF must be to obtain recognition as a sport. All efforts must be directed this

way. Even the most miserable, unimpressive minority sport in the UK receives a baseline £750,000 per annum in Sport England funding. This is an amount that would be totally transformative for the game in the UK.

The All India Chess Federation generates a lot of money internally, as it doesn't allow anyone to play over the board chess unless they are registered. Membership fees should be set low, but they must be collected. They also receive about \$1m directly from the government. By establishing a sound financial footing some years ago, the AICF laid the groundwork to making India a chess superpower. Incidentally, their chess strength is increasing all the time.

India of course has a vast population, which gives it a great advantage, so perhaps you may feel there are no lessons to be learned from them. In that case, let's examine a different country, Uzbekistan (population 36 million) for comparison. They receive about \$4m per annum from the Government. Uzbekistan, as you recall, won the gold medal at the last Olympiad. I thus offer the daring hypothesis that funding makes a big difference.

Of course, it would help the cause of government recognition if the UK had one federation, rather than four. I am wryly smiling at the thought of this happening. Petty privilege almost invariably trumps greater good.

What advice can you give to young ECF players finding the 1700 to 2000 rating a tough assignment?

Ask a proper coach.

What are the positive highlights of your career, and your regrets?

The greatest highlight of my career was defeating Anatoly Karpov in 1992 6-4 in the Candidates semi-final in Linares. I am happy to be the only person in chess history to have won tournaments in six continents. In retrospect, my three Commonwealth Championship titles gave me great satisfaction. I have won stronger events, of course, but there are a lot of countries in the Commonwealth. Incidentally, I have visited more Commonwealth countries than King Charles III.

Regrets? I've had a few, but then again too few to mention.

Margins, Errors and Lots of Tactics: the South Wales International 2023

by Peter Wells



With the dramatic final rounds of the 18th South Wales International still at the forefront of my mind, I thought I should pen my thoughts: my decidedly mixed feelings about my own play, together with some reflections prompted by

the extraordinary turnarounds which characterised some of the decisive games. There is nothing so unusual about the final stages of open tournaments feeling brutal for that group of players (in which I thankfully no longer really count myself) for whom their results have a pivotal impact upon their ability to make a living from the game. The prize structure is usually such that there is a half-point cut-off between significant prizes and those prizes which represent little more than a consolation, and this can lead either to very tense struggles or to those short draws which receive so much opprobrium - but which could perhaps evoke rather more understanding when viewed in this context. In short, the margins very tight. Yet sometimes the outcomes can feel almost random as well, as in all honesty was the case here.

First some words on the South Wales International more generally, an event which began (I believe) in 2004 and has been held every year since, with the exception of a two-year Covid-induced hiatus. It has been one key component of organiser Kevin Staveley's tremendous contribution to Welsh chess over many years, and his unobtrusive but always friendly approach has for me been another part of the event's appeal. I still remember one year when I decided to take a problem with the accommodation to Kevin after receiving little joy from the hotel itself, and returning later in the day to find that his advocacy had resulted in a very substantial upgrade, far exceeding anything I had either sought or anticipated. I decided this was a man I want on my side!

The tournament has shifted over the years between various locations. These have included Caerleon (the charming Roman settlement on the outskirts of Newport), one hotel in the very centre of Cardiff just opposite the historic castle, the then University of Glamorgan at

Trefforest in the 'Valleys', the attractive coastal town of Penarth on the southern side of Cardiff, and currently Bridgend, close to one of the most spectacular stretches of the southern Welsh coastline. The schedule has tended to combine very tough double-round days (tough at least from the perspective of the less youthful participants), with some single-game days in which I find that a round as late as 5pm affords more options than usual, whether I feel the need for preparation, rest, or even something more akin to 'tourism'. I can offer little better testimony to my affection for this tournament than the fact that I have competed in no fewer than 12 of its 18 editions, and I am by no means alone in my enthusiasm. In this time I have seen various strong players come and go, but part of the appeal has been that it attracts many loyal regulars - from the West of England as well as Wales. I suspect, for example, that Cornwall's Jeremy Menadue can boast even more appearances than I can...

So why was it that the end of this year's event felt even more riddled with 'might have beens' than usual, and even more likely to give credence to the old (and upon reflection presumably deeply flawed) adage that 'chess is 99% tactics'? Well, for starters there was the dramatic final round game between Oleg Korneev - who had by that stage led the tournament for several rounds - and the young Englishman Jacob Connor Boswell, who emerged as joint winner due to the following fine piece of tactical alertness.

Jacob Connor Boswell - Korneev, Oleg
South Wales International 2023 (Round 9)

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e3 e6 5.Nf3 Nbd7 6.Be2

There is nothing wrong with this, of course, but given that White plays Bd3 just six moves later, he could maybe ponder whether the theoretical knowledge required to kick off with Qc2 and Bd3 would be so much more onerous.

6...Bd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.b3 b6 9.Bb2 Bb7 10.Qc2 Qe7 11.a4!?

I hadn't seen this before and found it a bit jarring at first. However, given that Black does seem to need to take the further advance of the a-pawn seriously, the claim is presumably that after 11...a5, the b5 square is likely to be more relevant than the b4 square in the type of isolated queen's pawn position arrived at in the game, and this indeed appears to have some validity.

11...a5 12.Bd3 e5 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.dxe5 Nxe5 15.Nb5?!



Definitely not like this, though! There somehow seem to be more positions than there used to be in which White's king can sit safely enough behind doubled f-pawns, perhaps even with the hope that the g-file will become a real asset in counter-attacking Black's king. However, this definitely looks too much - the b5 square notwithstanding - not least since Black has the means to introduce both bishops into the attack. Either 15.Nd4 conceding the bishop pair but keeping both knights well placed, or simply 15.Nxe5 Qxe5 16.g3 Rac8 17.Qe2 were more circumspect.

15...Nxf3+ 16.gxf3 d4! 17.Nxd4

The engine proposes 17.Nxd6 Qxd6 18.Bxd4 Bxf3 19.Rfc1 as being only slightly worse for White, but to the human eye it looks like a likely white-square nightmare and I am not at all surprised that Jacob rejected it.

17...g6

This doesn't spoil too much yet, but Korneev could have set serious questions with the very direct 17...Ng4! based on the elegant but familiar 18.fxg4? Bxh2+! mating pattern. This looks at first as if it may nonetheless run into some vicious discovered check after 18.Bxh7+ Kh8 19.Nf5 (with Bxg7+ to follow), but in fact Black has one solution - 19...Bxh2+ 20.Kg2 Qg5! finding the perfect square for the queen to ensure that after 21.Bxg7+ Kxh7, the discovered check is meaningless and Black has numerous decisive threats. White can do better with the more restrained 18 h3, but after 18...Rfc8! 19.Qe2 Nh2! matters are very different from the game continuation with Black's pawn still on g7. After 20.f4 Nxf1 White survives this flurry of the attack, but certainly cannot claim full compensation for the exchange.

18.Qe2?! Ng4?

Black has similar ideas to those seen in the last note, but there is now a fatal flaw. I hesitate to suggest alternatives here - you either see in advance the fiendish resource which White is about to unleash, or you simply have no

reason to look at the 'promising pressure' which moves such as 18...Qd7 19.f4 (or 19.Nf5?! gxf5 20.Bxf6 Qe6!) 19...Qh3 20.f3 Rae8 probably yield.

19.f4! Nxh2?!

Not suspecting what is to come, although there is no easy route back now. After the game, I got the impression that Oleg believed that his opponent had missed this move, although from what I know of Jacob's chess this seems very unlikely - as I mentioned, the basic pattern is anyway very standard, and he is a very tenacious defender. What is not standard is the sting in the tail!

20.f3! Nxf1



21.Nf5!

And suddenly Black is completely lost, with nothing to offer against the dual threats of mate and simply capturing the queen. Why is this so easy to miss? I think it is that prior to 20.f3, the assumption is that any fun to be had on the g-file will belong to Black. This move appears at first to be wholly defensive, but in fact the queen's fresh access to the g-file decides all. The rest is easy.

21...Rfe8 22.Nxe7+ Rxe7 23.Rxf1 Bc5 24.Qc2 Rxe3 25.Kg2 Rd8 26.Bc4 Bb4 27.Bc1 Rc3 28.Qe2 Rxc1 29.Rxc1 Rd2 30.Qxd2 Bxd2 31.Rd1 Bb4 32.Rd7 Bc6 33.Rc7 Be8 34.Rc8 Kf8 35.Bb5 1-0

I met Korneev shortly after this game - whilst I was harbouring my own disappointment at drawing with White in the last round and thereby failing to join the leaders (albeit in a game in which my opponent had at least as many grounds for regret towards the end). Oleg seemed almost more baffled than angry, and (perhaps as a response to my observation regarding some of the skills which become more challenging as we become older) launched into an interesting discussion about Vasily Smyslov, and not only the extraordinary longevity of his career (famously qualifying for the Candidates Final at the age of 62) and the energy-conserving style which may

have enabled this, but also Smyslov's spiritual beliefs and his conviction that his fortunes were somehow being looked after by higher forces. This view, I suppose, would not have been exactly damaged when, following the stalemate in his Candidates semi-final match against Robert Huebner, his progress came to be decided at the roulette wheel.

I certainly don't think that Oleg was quite buying into the idea that invisible forces play a role in determining success, but it was as if the logic of the game had let him down to the degree that he was exploring some non-rational elements in seeking to explain why some players seem to prevail ahead of others who exhibit just as much aptitude. For me, the difference is first and foremost psychological strength. Certainly I do not share Smyslov's spiritual beliefs, but I have no trouble understanding that – just as strong players probably tend towards being optimistic rather than purely objective - so the *belief* that there are higher forces looking after your interests could be extremely beneficial and serve to pretty much rule out the kind of fundamental self-doubt which I fear that I (for example) experience far more often than I should.

So what of my own tournament? Well, after the terrible year at the board which I have endured since winning convincingly in Bridgend a year ago, I felt neither pressure nor illusions from being the 'defending champion', but rather was primarily focused on stopping the recent rot. In some ways I managed this, but there were several blips along the way. I was reminded early on of the need for constant tactical vigilance, even in favourable positions which look relatively safe.

Peter Wells - Dillan Duke

South Wales International 2023 (Round 3)



Fortunately by the time I played 15.Qb3 to reach the very favourable diagram position I was totally clear in my mind that Black's most aggressive response 15...Ne5 should definitely be met with 16.Bxb7!, prudently clearing a square for the White king to run to g2. However, in my earlier deliberations, I came perilously close to the line of

thinking which ran 15...Ne5 16.Qxb7(??) and there can't be any scary discovered checks after 16...Nd3+ 17.Kf1 'because I am attacking his queen'. I will leave the reader to consider the naivety in this logic, whilst adding that although my time-trouble remains a terrible enemy, the virtues of spending time rechecking tactics are sometimes not to be underestimated.

Tactics also worked well for me against the eventual joint winner.

Peter Wells – Jacob Connor Boswell

South Wales International 2023 (Round 6)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3 c6 5.a4 Bg7 6.h3 Qa5 7.Bd3 0-0 8.Nf3 e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.0-0 Na6 11.Qe2 Nc5?!



For some reason I think I was more heavily focused on the knight's two forward moves, which 11.Qe2 prepares to meet rather well, but less on the sensible retreat 11...Nc7! which would have left everything to play for.

12.Nxe5! Ncxe4 13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Nxe4 Nxe4 15.Bxe4 Bxb2 16.Rab1 Qxa4?!

Since 16...Ba6 can be met with 17.c4, Black should probably reconcile himself to the loss of a pawn here. The text is more ambitious, but such 'zwischenzugs' frequently inadvertently introduce tactical opportunities, and so it proves here.

17.Qf3! Qa3



18.Rfd1!

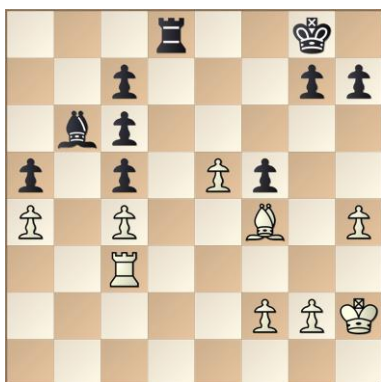
A pleasingly venomous move. Since retreating the b2-bishop would now lose a whole rook, there is really no defence to White switching to a direct attack on the dark squares.

18...Rb8 19.Rxb2! Rxb2 (or 19...Qxb2 20.Bd4) 20.Qf6 Qxe3 21.fxe3 Rb6

I should point out that lest Black's decision to play on here might seem a bit cheeky, he had both my time trouble and my failure to convert a gigantic advantage in our last game from the English Championship to point to as pretty reasonable justifications!

22.Rd8 Be6 23.Rxf8+ Kxf8 24.Qa1 Rb4 25.Bxc6 Rc4 26.Ba4 Bf5 27.Bb3 Rc7 28.e4 Bc8 29.Qh8+ Ke7 30.e5 1-0

In case anyone begins to believe that chess really is 99% tactics, I had already received a deeply embarrassing reminder in round 2 that this is not the case. Following one of the worst positional decisions of my life I reached the following position as Black against David Roberts.



For someone who frequently focuses on minor pieces in both his coaching and his writing it is difficult to describe the horror of possessing such a piece, which makes both the famous bishops from Winter-Capablanca and Short-Kramnik look like pictures of relative health (the interested reader can hopefully look these up!) Trying to

understand after the game how this could happen, it felt at first like a failure of calculation. On one level it was – I had believed that I could force White's rook away from c4 'reinvigorating' the shocking bishop but ended up having to capture it without even being able to win the a4-pawn. Yet of course the real lesson was not a failure of calculation, but a crime which transcends calculation. You simply cannot do this to your pieces, since the price of being wrong is just too high!

In the following game against the other joint winner, I at least succeeded in mixing creativity with my moment of extraordinary blindness.

Peter Wells – Boris Chatalbashev

South Wales International 2023 (Round 7)

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 c5 4.e3 b6 5.Nc3 g6?!

I had already been somewhat surprised by both my opponent's second and fourth moves, but my instinct told me that this was really pushing it a bit. Yes, there are perfectly respectable Hedgehog set-ups with all of ...b6/...e6 and ...g6, but with weaknesses on both d6 and along the f3-a8 diagonal he feels a bit short of time to take all the necessary precautions. In general, my theoretical preparation is way behind where it was 20 years ago, but I still have a good enough general knowledge to smell opportunity. Here this overrode my awareness that the impulse to try and 'punish' every non-theoretical move is a dangerous game, against which Jonathan Rowson's work rightly cautions.

6.e4! cxd4 7.Nxd4 d6! 8.Bg5! h6 9.Bxf6 Qxf6 10.Ndb5 Qe7



This was the position I had been hoping for when I played 6.e4, and it can reasonably be regarded as already winning for White with correct play. The problem (of course) is that I had already invested considerable time on the clock and was now faced with numerous tempting courses of action.

11.c5!?

Probably the most creative and perhaps objectively the strongest too, although other options were arguably more 'risk-free'. After the game Boris suggested that netting a pawn might have been the simplest by means of 11.Qd4!? Rg8 12.O-O-O Nc6 13.Nxd6+ Qxd6 14.Qxd6 Bxd6 15.Rxd6 Bd7. It is not necessarily to my credit that I was seeking more than this, nor that I failed to spot that 16. c5! would have been a promising way to press White's advantage. I think this probably reflects an interesting psychological phenomenon. In my head, I suspect that I had divided my options into (crudely) the dynamic option and the simplifying option. For this reason, I suspect that we had also (both) missed that after 12...Nc6 in the variation above I had the interesting option of 13.Qe3! - a promising dynamic twist to what he had both assumed to be the line in which White 'cashes in' with an extra pawn for the endgame.

For the record, I also spent quite a bit of time on 11.e5 dxe5 12.c5 Qxc5 13.Rc1. This is quite promising too but can hardly compete, and felt in retrospect (come the later time pressure) like a bit of a luxury.

11...bxc5 12.e5! d5 13.Nd6+ Kd8 14.Nxd5

This was the move which all my instincts led me to, but the rich range of possibilities present here may again not have worked to my practical advantage. For the record, 14.Qa4!? is a genuinely dangerous way to maintain the pressure without further investment.

14...exd5 15.Qxd5 Nd7



16.0-0-0??

Breathtaking blindness. I would like to be able to claim that I missed some intricate detail at the end of a long variation, but the truth is that I somehow got bogged down with lines in which I capture the rook on h8, rejected them, and finally failed to see that the coming check on g5 would uncover the possibility to capture the

knight on d6(!) Having been in total control, White is suddenly faced with an inferior position and no time on the clock. For the record, I cannot find fault with my reluctance to head for lines such as 16.Nxf7+ Kc7 17.Qd6+ Qxd6 18.exd6+ Bxd6 19.Nxh8 Bb7 20.Nxg6 Be4 with definite counterplay for Black. However, 17.0-0-0! simply maintains the threat to both of Black's rooks, and after 17...Nb6 18.Qd6+ Qxd6 19.exd6+ Bxd6 20.Nxd6! White again has a huge advantage.

16...Qg5+ 17.Kb1?

The sharp eye of the engine reveals another error here, but it is far from easy to appreciate that self-pinning is really the way to accelerate doubling on the d-file. The point is that this after 17.Rd2 Bxd6 18.Qxa8 Bxe5 White can play the very direct 19.Ba6! Bxb2+ 20.Kc2 Qf5+ 21.Kxb2 Qf6+ 22.Kb1 and Black should give a perpetual check on b6 and f6, since 22...Qxa6?! 23 Rhd1 is dangerous only to Black.

17...Bxd6 18.Qxa8 Bxe5 19.Bb5!

But here certainly not 19.Ba6? Qf5+ 20.Ka1 Bxb2+ 21.Kxb2 Qf6+ 22.Kb1 Qxa6.

19...Qf5+ 20.Ka1 Bd4 21.Qxa7! Qxf2?!

I fully expected this move – grabbing another pawn with a threat of mate - although I was pleased that I had managed to hold my emotions together in time-trouble and began to appreciate that Black would no longer have an easy route to victory. He should have tried to transfer the king to the kingside with 21...Ke7!, although White is not without resources here either.

22.Qa3! Qf6 23.Rhe1!



This all looks rather tenuous, but in fact it is very hard for Black to unravel, whilst ideas of Bxd7 followed by Qa7+ and sometimes even Rxd4 all amount to sufficient counter-play. What happened next was an even greater moment of blindness from a player who had somewhat ridden his luck in our two previous encounters. Again, the

blunder process is approximately the same. Frustrated by the hitches in the lines you have been heavily analysing, you 'try something else'.

23...Nb6??

23...Bb7? 24.Bxd7 also fails, but 23...Kc7 24.Bxd7 Bxd7 25.Qa7+ Kc6 26.Qa6+ Kc7 27.Qa7+ Kd6 forces White to find either 28.Rf1 Qe5 29.Rxf7 Bc6 30.Rg7! or more likely 28.Re4!?, given the extent to which I had started to focus on exchange sacrifices here. In former times I would have regarded a blunder of this magnitude sufficient to rule out the game for publication, but I tend to feel now that a lot of interesting insights can be lost by such purism. I hope the reader agrees!

24.Qxc5 Bd7 25.Rxd4 Re8 26.Qxb6+!

1-0

Great British Chess Players

by John Nunn



Vera Menchik (1906-1944)



Vera Menchik was born in Moscow to a Czech father and an English mother, but moved to England in 1921 after her parents split up. Vera, her mother and her sister Olga settled in Hastings, which was a centre of English chess activity. She could only speak Russian when she arrived but seems to have settled into her new country well and was soon receiving coaching from club champion James Drewitt and, for a limited time, Geza Maroczy. By 1925 it was clear that Menchik was the strongest female player in Great Britain and her chance to achieve fame came in 1927 when FIDE organised the first women's World Championship. This was a 12-player round-robin tournament and Menchik won decisively with a score of 10½/11, a full 1½ points ahead of second-placed Katarina Beskow (Sweden).

This was the start of a remarkable run of success in the Women's World Championship, which Menchik held continuously from 1927 until her death in 1944, the longest any person has held the title. Her dominance over the other female players can hardly be overstated. All the pre-war Women's World Championships were in the form of tournaments, and Menchik won the 1931, 1933, 1935 and 1937 events with a 100% score, finally dropping two draws in the mammoth 19-round event at Buenos Aires

1939. Unusually for the time, Menchik was a chess professional, playing regularly in tournaments while also coaching, writing and giving simultaneous displays. In 1937 she married Rufus Henry Streatfeild Stevenson, a prominent chess organiser, and became a British citizen. Stevenson died in 1943 and a year later Menchik was killed in a German V-1 missile attack, along with her sister and mother.

Menchik's tournament record in mixed events was patchy. She had some successes in individual games, beating Euwe, Reshevsky and Sultan Khan amongst others, and in shorter tournaments she had some good results, such as third place at Maribor 1934 ahead of Spielmann. However, in very strong events she fared less well, scoring 3/21 at Carlsbad 1929 and 1½/19 at Moscow 1935. Her style was positional, and she tended to avoid complications whenever possible. Menchik favoured the Queen's Gambit with both colours, also playing the Catalan as White, while against 1 e4 she almost always used the French Defence. Playing over her games I feel that her strongest area was the endgame, and I have chosen an example which shows the strengths and weaknesses of her style.

Reginald Michell - Vera Menchik

Scarborough 1928

Queen's Gambit Declined

1.d4 e6 2.c4 Nf6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Bg5 Nbd7

These days it's more usual to play ...Be7 and ...0-0 first, but there's nothing wrong with this move.

5.e3 Be7 6.Nf3 0-0 7.Rc1 b6

Black has a wide choice here, with 7...a6, 7...c6 and 7...h6 all common alternatives.

8.cxd5 exd5 9.Bb5 Bb7 10.0-0 c6 11.Ba4

11.Bd3 looks better, as it makes it harder for Black to achieve the freeing move ...Ne4.

11...Rc8

The immediate 11...Ne4 was simpler.

12.Qe2

Once again the bishop should control e4, so 12.Bc2 was better. Then 12...Ne4?! 13.Bxe4 Bxg5 14.Bf5 would be unpleasant for Black.

12...Ne4!

After this the position is very close to equality.

13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Nd2 Rfd8



16.f3?!

An ambitious but not especially good move. White aims to open the f-file and target the f7-pawn with a later Bb3, but the danger is that he will be left with weak centre pawns. 16.Rfd1 was safe and solid.

16...c5

Menchik's style tended towards simplicity, and in view of her endgame skill she had no reason to fear exchanges. 16...exf3 was also good.

17.fxe4 Bxe4 18.Nxe4 Qxe4

White has bishop vs knight but potentially weak central pawns. The position is dead level.

19.Qc2?

A risky and unnecessary pawn offer. 19.Bb3 Nf6 20.dxc5 would have maintained the balance.

19...Nf6?

Sometimes finding the best move involves calculation. Menchik chooses a safe line, but she should have accepted the offer by 19...Qxe3+ 20.Kh1 Qxd4. This looks risky, but after 21.Rcd1 (21.Bb3 Nf6) 21...Qg4 22.h3 Qe6 23.Qd2 (23.Rfe1 Ne5) 23...Nf8! 24.Qxd8 Rxd8 25.Rxd8 Qc4! 26.Re1 Qxa4 27.Ree8 g6 Black has a winning position since she will win at least one more pawn on the queenside.

20.Qxe4 Nxe4 21.Bb3 Rd7 22.Bc2

White also aims for exchanges, and the game seems to be heading towards a tame draw.

22...Re7 23.Bxe4 Rxe4 24.dxc5 bxc5 25.Rc3 Re7

This passive move doesn't seem essential as White has no real threat, so 25...Kf8 is more logical, with total equality.

26.Rfc1 Rec7 27.Rc4

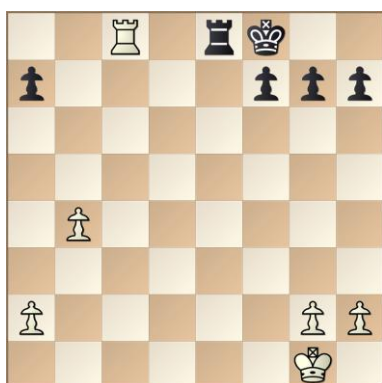
27.b4 c4 28.Rd1 also gives White chances for a slight advantage.

27...Kf8 28.b4 Re7 29.Rxc5 Rxc5 30.Rxc5 Rxe3

White can perhaps claim a faint edge after 31.Ra5, which forces Black to drop her rook back by 31...Re7, although there is no doubt that the result should be a draw. Instead, White falls for a tempting but fatal possibility.

31.Rc8+ Re8

Setting a neat trap.



32.Rxe8+?

At first this seems a no-brainer because it looks like a classic case of the outside passed pawn: White makes a passed pawn on the queenside, and while Black's king is dealing with that the white king marches into Black's kingside and gobbles up several pawns. The trap is that, contrary to first impressions, the position is winning for Black and not White. The point is that Black's active king prevents White making a passed pawn on the queenside, and then it is Black's kingside majority which is 'outside'. Any rook retreat would have led to a draw.

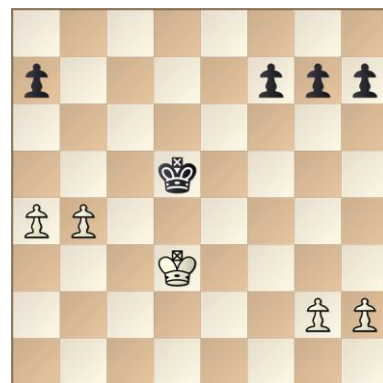
32...Kxe8 33.Kf2 Kd7 34.Ke3 Kc6!

This winning move is the only one not to lose. After 34...Kd6?? 35.Kd4 Kc6 36.a4 White does indeed win according to the standard recipe.

35.a4

Forced, since after 35.Kd4 Kb5 36.Kc3 Ka4 Black wins a pawn. However, this gives Black the tempo she needs to get her king to the fourth rank.

35...Kd5 36.Kd3



In this fascinating position there's only one winning move for Black, but it's not at all easy to find. The first point to note is that pushing a queenside pawn doesn't help White, since b5 is met by ... Kc5 and a5 by ...a6 or ...Kc6 (which one depends on the exact position of White's king). In both cases the change in the pawn structure can only favour Black. There's no way White can use his queenside majority to create a passed pawn, but that doesn't mean that Black's win is automatic.

36...f5?

In order to draw White must try to eliminate as many kingside pawns as possible, while Black must try to create a passed pawn while leaving an additional pair of kingside pawns. The winning line was 36...h5! 37.h4 (37.g3 g5! 38.Kc3 f5 wins much as in the game) 37...f6 38.g3 g6! (this cunning move leads to a position of reciprocal zugzwang; after 38...g5? 39.Ke3! gxf4 40.gxf4 Kc4 41.Ke4 Kxb4 42.Kf5 White has a surprising draw by 42...Kxa4 43.Kg6! Kb5 44.Kxh5 a5 45.Kg6 a4 46.h5, leading to a drawn queen ending) 39.Kc3 (39.Ke3 Kc4 is hopeless) 39...g5 40.Kd3 gxf4 41.gxf4 f5 42.Ke3 Kc4 43.Kf4 Kxb4 44.Kg5 f4! (this deflection is the crucial difference compared to the line given after 38...g5?, since if White now takes the h-pawn then the f-pawn promotes) 45.Kxf4 Kxa4 and Black wins by one tempo.

37.Kc3?

37.h4! was the only drawing move. Black can now only make a passed pawn on the kingside by ...g6, ...h6, ...g5 and ...f4 but this results in all White's kingside pawns disappearing, and he makes a draw by a single tempo after 37...g6 38.g3 h6 39.Kc3 g5 40.hxg5 hxg5 41.Kd3 f4 42.gxf4 gxf4 43.Ke2 Kc4 44.b5 Kb4 45.Kf3 Kxa4 46.Kxf4 Kxb5 47.Ke3 Kb4 48.Kd2 Kb3 49.Kc1.

37.a5? is also wrong and loses after the precise sequence 37...a6! 38.Kc3 Kc6! 39.Kc4 g5 40.g3 h5 41.h3 f4 42.gxf4 gxf4 43.Kd4 Kb5 44.Ke4 Kxb4 45.Kxf4 Kxa5 46.Kg5 Kb6 and so on.

37...g5!

Menchik finds the only move to win. It's crucial to prevent White's h4, which would lead to a draw as in the previous note.



38.a5

38.h3 might seem to repair the damage by forcing an exchange of pawns after a later ...g4, but once Black's pawns are far enough advanced she can win by a breakthrough; for example, after 38...f4 39.Kd3 h5 40.Kc3 g4! 41.hxg4 f3! 42.gxf3 h4 43.g5 h3 44.g6 Ke6 the h-pawn decides the game.

The line 38.g3 f4 39.gxf4 gxf4 40.Kd3 f3 41.Ke3 Kc4 42.Kxf3 Kxb4 shows why having an extra pair of pawns on the kingside favours Black. Without the h-pawns this would be a draw, but as it is Black wins easily by taking on a4, then running to the h2-pawn with her king.

38...Kc6!

Another excellent move. 38...a6? allows White to escape by 39.b5! axb5 40.a6 Kc6 41.a7 Kb7 42.Kb4 f4 43.Kxb5 g4 44.Kc4, and the king makes it back in time.

39.Kc4 a6

White will sooner or later have to move his king and allow ...Kb5.

40.g3 f4 41.gxf4 gxf4 42.Kd4 Kb5 43.Ke4 Kxb4 44.Kxf4 Kxa5 45.Ke3 Kb4 46.Kd2 Kb3 47.Kc1 Kc3

The extra kingside pawns doom White.

48.h4 h5 0-1

The Vulture

by Andrew Martin



Kanyamarala, Tarun - McShane, Luke J

Bunratty Online Chess.com INT (8), 20.02.2021

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 Ne4!?



We have not seen much of the Vulture recently at the highest levels of chess. Perhaps he has retired to the tallest treetops, awaiting the extermination of all known chess engines and databases. Whilst desirable, this does not seem as though it will happen any time soon, so he will have to live on scraps for the time being. The Vulture ('Der Geier' in German) was an invention of Stefan Bücker, an innovative German FM. It still holds the

element of surprise and could be a good shock weapon; sharp positions are reached right from the off. The first general idea is to check on a5.

4.Qd3 Qa5+ White does not want to surrender the bishop pair so early, nor does he desire doubled pawns. So he blocks with the knight, slowing down development.

5.Nd2 5.Nc3 Nxc3 6.Bd2 is a clever way to play and I think Black should meet it with 6...b5! This type of strike is typical of the unorthodox positions that the Vulture can create. 7.cxb5 (7.Bxc3 b4 8.Bd2 g6 is not bad for Black at all.) 7...Qxb5 8.Qxc3 Ba6 (8...Na6 9.e4 Qb6 10.Nf3 Rb8 11.b3 Qf6 12.e5 looks good for White.) 9.Nf3 d6 10.e4 Qb7



This is a funny position. Black would like to play ...e7–e5 if he could. If he can't, he will have to try to get the knight to f6 and complete development after that. The position appears better for White, but might not be easy to play.

5...f5 As this is a blitz game, McShane is happy to take a few risks and mix it up.

6.a3 Black can survive 6.g4!? d6 7.gxf5 Bxf5 8.Bh3 Nxd2 9.Qxd2 Qxd2+ 10.Bxd2 Bd7!

6...b5 7.b4



What is going on here, you might well ask.

7...cxb4 8.Nb3 bxc4 9.Qxc4 Qa6 10.e3 e5 10...Qxc4! 11.Bxc4 Ba6 would turn out well for Black.

11.dxe6 11.Qc7 Bd6 12.Bxa6 Bxc7 13.Bxc8 seems to win, until you see 13...Nd6! 14.axb4 (14.Bxd7+ Nxd7 15.axb4 Nb6 16.Nf3 Nxd5 17.Nxe5 Nxb4; 14.Bb7 Nxb7 15.axb4 0–0 16.Bb2 Rc8) 14...Nxc8. All of these lines are rather bizarre.

11...dxe6 12.Qxa6 Bxa6 13.f3 Nc5 Black is suddenly much better, with easier development and an extra queenside pawn.

14.Bxa6 Nxb3! 15.Bb5+ 15.Bb7 may be met by 15...Nxa1 16.Bxa8 bxa3 17.Ne2 Nb3 18.Kf2 Kf7, and Black is two pawns up.

15...Kf7 16.Rb1 Nxc1 17.Rxc1 bxa3 18.Rc7+ Kf6 19.Nh3 a6 20.Bc4 Bd6 21.Rb7 Rc8 Clearly this is blitz, but it does not mean that the game is devoid of interesting ideas. The Vulture is an opening for the adventurer, the risk-taker and the lover of unorthodox positions.

0–1

Kaidanov, Gregory S - Martin, Andrew D
Lloyds Bank op 14th London, 1990

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 Ne4 I have dabbled with the Vulture myself, but this cannot be any sort of guarantee. Perhaps the only openings I have not been associated with are the Bongcloud (1.e3 and 2.Ke2) and the Bongcloud Delayed (1...e6 and 2...Ke7). There is always time.

4.Qc2 Qa5+ 5.Nd2 Nd6



This move was an integral part of Bückers's idea. Although the black pieces seem restricted by the knight, he could support ...b7–b5 at the right moment.

6.e4 g6 7.Ngf3 Black does not fear 7.e5 Nf5 8.Ngf3 Na6, when there is the danger of White's over-extending.

7...Bg7 8.Bd3 0-0 9.0-0 Na6 9...Ne8 was an alternative, awaiting events. I think I was afraid of 10.e5...



but Black can counterpunch with **10...d6 11.Re1 Nd7 12.exd6 exd6**. This position is Benoni-like, with the knight on d2 and the knight on e8 unusually placed. Black is not devoid of hope.

10.a3! The greatest danger to Black in the Vulture comes when White settles for a small edge, taking space and trying to methodically improve his position move by move. There is no need to shoot the Vulture, just let him starve in the trees. But you need really good technique to do this, and an inventive opponent will always find a way to mix it up.

10...b5 I felt this had to come, but it does hand White the use of c4 on a platter.

The position after **10...Nb4 11.axb4 Qxa1 12.bxc5 Ne8 13.Nb3 Qa6 14.Bg5! f6 15.Bf4...**



did not appeal to me at all.

11.cxb5 Nxb5 12.Nc4 Qd8 13.Bg5 Qe8?! 13...d6 14.e5 f6 15.exf6 exf6 is bad for Black, but not so bad.

14.Rfe1 I recall I was intending **14.Na5 Qd8**, but in the cold light of day **15.Qa4 Nd6 16.Nc4 Nxc4 17.Bxc4** looks ghastly for Black, whose knight on a6 hangs and with d5-d6 in the air.

14...Nac7 15.a4 Nd4 16.Nxd4 Bxd4 17.Bh6 Na6 The best chance.

17...Bg7 18.Bxg7 Kxg7 19.Na5! d6 is not nice for Black at all: **20.b4**.

18.Qd2!



A mature decision. Kaidanov settles for keeping his edge.

After **18.Bxf8 Nb4 19.Qd2 Qxf8** the position is not so clear, despite White's extra exchange.

18...Nb4 19.Bf1 Rb8 20.Rac1 Qd8 21.d6 It seems to be the right moment to capture: **21.Bxf8 Qxf8 22.Na3 a6 23.Nc4 d6**, and although Black still has chances thanks to his dark-squared control an exchange is an exchange.

21...e6 22.Na3 I don't exactly recall what was discussed in the post-mortem, but I think he may have said that he forgot that the rook could be captured!

22...a6 23.Nc4 Re8 Well, if he won't take it, I guess I will have to move it.

24.Be3 Nc6 25.Bxd4 Nxd4 26.Rc3 Bb7? Black is OK now, but not after **26...Bb7**. Instead **26...e5!**, intending to defend with **27.Qh6 (27.Ne3 Rb6!)** **27...Qf6 28.Rh3 Qg7**, was correct.

27.b4! cxb4 28.Rh3 e5 29.f4!? I am not sure why he did not play **29.Qh6 Qf6 30.Qxh7+ Kf8 31.Nb6! Qxd6 32.Bc4**, when Black is in a mess. Perhaps he could not see a forced win after **32...Ke7 33.Qxf7+ Kd8**, but **34.a5** turns the screw.

29...Ne6 30.Nxe5 Bc6 I fail to take the opportunity to play **30...f6 31.Ng4 h5 32.Nf2 Qb6 33.f5 Ng5 34.Rg3 Bxe4!**, when Black can at least try to mix it up.

31.Bc4 Rf8? 32.f5 32.Bxe6 fxe6 33.f5 was pretty strong too.

32...Qg5 33.Qf2 Bxa4 34.Nf3 At a distance of 33 years, I cannot recall whether we were both in time trouble, but it certainly looks like that. I think 34.fxe6! would have finished matters quickly: 34...Qxe5 35.e7.

34...Qf4 35.fxe6 fxe6 36.Qa2 36.Qc5.

36...Bc6 37.Qd2 a5 38.Qxf4 Rxf4 39.Ne5 Rc8? Black would have been right back in the game after 39...Bb5! 40.Bxb5 Rxb5 41.Nd3 (41.Nxd7? Rf7) 41...Rf8 42.Rf3 Ra8.

40.Rhe3 Rff8 41.Ra1 a4 42.Rb1 b3 43.Nxc6 Rxc6 44.Bb5 a3 45.Bxc6 a2 46.Rexb3 axb1Q+ 47.Rxb1 dxc6 48.e5 Kg7 49.Rb7+ Kh6 50.Re7 After all that, a dead-lost ending. Despite the mistakes, I did not feel too disheartened by the defeat.

1-0

Goh, Zi Han - Zakarian, David

Titled Tuesday Early Chess.com INT (5), 25.10.2022

Why would we ever play the Vulture? To surprise, I think, and to get to a position which is radically different from the normal queen's pawn fare.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 Ne4 4.Nd2 Nd6



Black does not want exchanges, he wants complications!

5.e4 g6 6.Bd3 Black would probably look forward to 6.e5 Nf5 7.Bd3 d6, when he has immediate counterplay.

6...Bg7 7.Ngf3 0-0 8.0-0 e5 We will now return to a King's Indian-like position, where Black has the clear plan of ...f7-f5.

9.b3 Ne8 10.Bb2 d6



White needs to aim for f4 or b4, but those pawn breaks seem a long way off.

11.Ne1 f5 12.exf5 Bxf5!? I think I prefer 12...gxf5. Possibly Black did not want to allow 13.f4, but then comes 13...e4 14.Bxg7 Nxg7 15.Be2 Qf6 16.Nc2 a5! and Black has sufficient counterplay. White normally tries to play g4 in this type of position, but I am not so sure that this will be easy to arrange.

13.Qe2 Nd7 14.Ne4 Black ceded control of e4 once he played 12...Bxf5.

14...h6 15.Nf3 Ndf6 16.Nfd2 Nh5 17.g3 Qd7 18.f3 Nh6 19.Rae1 a6!? Also worth consideration was 19...Nxe4 20.Nxe4 Nf6, with the game heading for a draw. Zakarian does not want that, as all good Vulture players would not...

20.a4 Kh7? It was time to exchange: 20...Nxe4 21.Nxe4 (21.fxe4 Bh3 22.Rxf8+ Bxf8 23.Qe3 Nf6 24.Bf1 and the position is roughly level: 24...Bg7).

21.g4!



White is suddenly on top, as he will obtain strong light-squared control.

21...Bxe4 22.Nxe4 Nxe4 23.Bxe4 This is a blitz game, but even so 23.Qxe4! was screaming to be played, with White much better after 23...Qf7 24.f4 Nf6 25.Qg2.

23...Nf6 24.Bb1 Qf7 24...Rae8.

25.Kh1 Kh8 26.Qd3 g5 27.Qf5 Rae8 28.a5 Qg8 29.Qg6 Qh7 30.Qxh7+ I cannot be too critical of the players given the time control. Let's just say that 30.Qxe8 won out of hand.

30...Nxh7 31.Bf5 Nf6 32.Bc3 Perhaps White will get b4 in after all.

32...Rb8 33.Ra1 Don't hang around, play 33.b4!

33...b5 34.axb6 Rxb6 35.Ra3 Rfb8 36.Bc2 e4 37.fxe4 Nxg4 38.Bxg7+ Kxg7 39.Rfa1 Ne3 40.R1a2 Rf8 The game has turned. Having failed to make the most of his chances, White collapses.

41.Bd3 Rf3 42.Rxa6 Rxb3 43.Be2 Rb1+ 44.Bf1 Rbxf1# Does all this want to make you rush out and play the Vulture? Probably not, but as an occasional surprise weapon it is certainly worth consideration. Bucker wrote an original book on his invention, full of worthwhile ideas, which you can apparently still snap up on Amazon very cheaply:

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Vulture-Associated-Systems-StefanBucker/dp/1852232935/>

Please help to save the Vulture from extinction!

0-1

e-Board Review: Square Off Pro

by Martin Lambert

Any views, thoughts, or opinions expressed by the author are solely that of the author and do not reflect the views, opinions, policies, or position of the English Chess Federation, its directors or its employees.

Welcome to what is potentially the first of a series of in-depth reviews of chess e-boards. This article is about the Square Off Pro rollable e-board.



e-Boards have been around for a while, but are they more interesting now as we return to over-the-board (OTB) play after the Covid hiatus? I think so, because they promise to bridge the gap between OTB and online chess.

Should you believe the celebrity GM endorsements? Or the angry customer reviews about lost rating points? e-Boards aren't cheap and sound a bit technical, so why not look over my shoulder as I put them through their paces? I'm a 1700-ish club-level OTB and online chess addict and a software and hardware engineer, so I'll be looking at both playability and design - which are of course closely related. I have no axe to grind, and if anything am sympathetic to e-board teething problems (so long as they get fixed or can be worked around), but less sympathetic to misleading marketing or low quality products.

Before launching into the review I want to take a few steps back (my kids hate when I say that and just want the answer to their maths homework). What are e-boards?

e-Boards are electronic chess boards and pieces that enable you to play OTB chess against engines or online opponents.

And my real focus is on OTB vs online gameplay. I think engine-only e-boards are a bit yesterday.

Now you can already play against a Chess.com or Lichess.org opponent (I love Lichess, but I'm going to use Chess.com to refer to online chess) using your old wooden chess set by copying moves between the Chess.com app and the board. No cost or complexity, and it works fine for slower time controls (e.g. 15min+10sec). How do e-boards improve on this? Potentially in many ways.

The Holy Grail is pieces magically gliding across an e-board under the control of an online opponent. This is what our inner child demands. I could try and further justify the coolness of moving pieces but if you aren't already convinced, please check out our more exciting sister publication 'Actuarial Tables'.

Most e-boards do not move the pieces but do reduce the faffing involved in playing OTB vs an online opponent or engine. This is useful because 'seeing' chess positions on a 2-D screen clearly uses a different part of your brain than 'seeing' a 3-D board. If you have only played online for a few years and you show up at an OTB tournament you are in for an unpleasant shock. e-boards enable you to sharpen your OTB board 'seeing' at home.

This could be generational (sigh) but there is something soulful about handling and pushing and plonking down nice, weighted chess pieces that no mouse can ever replicate. This incidentally means that in my opinion a good e-board must not feel like a cheapo plastic classroom set.

Most e-boards can record games played on them for later analysis, without the need to write down moves. This could be useful in, say, a chess club where you don't want to practise your notation, but you do want to analyse.

OK, two last digressions before the review. First, a brief observation on the fraught psychology of e-boards, and then how I try to make my e-board reviews fair and objective.

I'm no psychologist, but I am a chess addict. Chess is an intense and focused activity and most chess players care about winning and losing and their rating. Which means players want an e-board to NOT get in the way of the chess. If an e-board works perfectly it's a cool improvement over a regular board. But if it screws up, even just a few times, causing you to lose - by refusing to accept a legal move half an hour into a rated rapid game - it's VERY annoying! That's what I mean by the fraught psychology of e-boards. A major challenge for e-board developers is that chess players are fussy and there is little forgiveness for error.

Right. My ground rules for a fair e-board review. This may evolve with future reviews but I will try to be consistent.

- I won't judge an e-board until I am beyond its learning curve. The e-board is under scrutiny, not my numptiness.
- I'll play eight OTB vs online games (on Chess.com): two x 5+0 blitz, two x 10+0 borderline blitz and four x 15+10 rapid. I will suppress my inner Magnus Carlsen and not worry about winning or losing, but rather focus on whether I can complete the games without the e-board getting in the way.
- I'll experiment with moves that can confuse e-boards, like sliding vs lifting pieces, changing which piece I move first when taking, en passant and pawn promotion.
- If I have time I'll play some games with any integrated engine: full games, or starting from a custom endgame position.

- I'll use Google to survey customer reviews. While informative, this should be taken with a pinch of salt, as customers complain more than praise.

So here is my review of the Square Off Pro rollable e-board.

There are cool videos on the manufacturer website <https://SquareOffnow.com>, and if you Google for Square Off Pro you can find many other reviews, including several from celebrity Twitch chess streamers like GM Anish Giri, IM Anna Rudolf and WFM Anna Cramling.

Hardware



It's hard for a design review to avoid subjectivity, but I think the hardware is very well designed and productised.

Its key differentiator is that the board is a rubbery mat that can be rolled up, with the electronics in a neat little black plastic side panel. So it is theoretically very portable. The board and pieces are tournament-sized and -weighted, and despite being plastic look and feel great. The board has internal sensors to detect and relay your moves to an online opponent and LEDs at the sides of each square to indicate moves. These LEDs are a high point of the rollable design because they are so unintrusive, in fact they are invisible until they flash. The board includes a rechargeable battery which works for several hours between charges. It sounds fantastic, but there are two risky aspects to the design.

The first is that the Square Off Pro uses magnets in the pieces instead of RFID chips, so the board knows if a piece is on (or not on) a square, but not *which* piece. This approach has a significant implication. It means the e-board 'brain' has to interpret the rules of chess to figure out where each piece is after each move by looking at which squares have changed occupancy. This doesn't sound hard until you think about the different ways humans move pieces. Humans lift or slide or exchange pieces at different speeds (so they transit multiple squares in varying times). Taking involves lifting and replacing two pieces in different orders. Pieces fall over. And then there is en passant, which the Square Off Pro still struggles to recognise. Lots of scope for losing track.

So there's a fair bit of added complexity and risk from this decision to use magnets instead of RFID.

The second is that the board is rollable. The first Square Off Pro delivered to me had a broken sensor on the b5 square. I have no experience of the long-term reliability of the internal flat flexible wiring that makes a rollable e-board possible, and I don't know what broke the b5-sensor, but given the price of the board I won't be cavalierly rolling it up and stuffing it in my backpack. I will bring it to my club, but tenderly in its box. The problem is resilience. All it takes is a single sensor or cable break and you can scratch out the 'e' from your e-board. I love the rollable idea, though, and it turns out to be easy to detach and reattach the rubbery playing surface from the side panel containing the electronics, so one obvious solution would be for Square Off to stock low-cost replacements (which they don't currently do).

Hardware: 4/5 ★★★★★

I would give the Square Off Pro hardware 5/5 if it weren't for my concerns re the long-term resilience of the wiring within the rollable board, and worrying whether their magnet-only decision will prevent software updates ever achieving completely reliable move recognition.

Software



The Square Off Pro, as with most modern e-boards, depends upon two types of software. Firmware runs in the on-board electronics and is probably limited to scanning the per-square sensors for piece occupancy, flashing the LEDs and generating annoying beeps. The 'brain' of the e-board is implemented in a Square Off phone app that communicates with the e-board via Bluetooth and Chess.com via the Internet. Both of these softwares can easily be upgraded via the phone. This upgradability is ESSENTIAL, because for my first months of Square Off Pro ownership the software and hence the e-board was effectively unusable. But a few months and updates later progress has been made (see playing experience below).

I've only used the Square Off app on Android and would characterise it as usable but not great, but that doesn't really detract from the e-board experience. The app is cluttered with Square Off's attempt to create its own Chess.com complete with challenges, puzzles, arenas, etc., which to me seems silly given they can never hope to compete. I would prefer them to focus on improved detection of piece moves. Other app features like its post-game analysis are equally irrelevant. All it needs to do is easily export PGN files to mainstream analysis engines.

Software: 2/5 ★★☆☆☆

The Square Off app is a bit feeble, but the whole point of an e-board is that you don't spend too much time on its screen, so it doesn't really detract from the e-board experience. It connects reliably to the e-board and Chess.com, and just needs to perfect its move recognition (see playing experience below) sooner rather than later.

Playing experience

For the first few months the Square Off Pro was unusable for OTB-vs-online play, with something like one in three games lost or aborted due to a laundry list of irritating bugs, including getting stuck in its error state (where it believes pieces are not on their correct squares, with no way to rectify the error), incorrect moves registered (if I slid a piece too slowly), random light flashes all over the board, inability to take en passant, occasional lack of sound, or long and distractingly delayed move notifications. It was a horror show, but after a few months a firmware and app update has considerably improved matters.

For this review I started by playing two x 10+0 challenge games against random Chess.com opponents. I struggled with time in both games, which is understandable as I had to physically move my pieces (a mouse is much quicker) and my opponents' pieces (based on flashing LEDs). Say a game lasts 40 moves (80 piece moves) and assume two to three seconds per piece move - that's three to four minutes I was giving up to my online opponent. And that's exactly how it felt.

In the first 10+0 game I missed a winning opportunity when the e-board misregistered a b4-pawn push as b3. This was almost certainly because I slid the pawn forward, rather than lifting and plonking it, but it rattled me and I lost the game. I squeaked a draw in my second 10+0 game, almost flagging, but with all moves correctly registered.

The time deficit led me to not bother with my proposed two x 5+0 games, so I proceeded to the four x 15+10 games. I think this is the fastest time control for serious chess on this e-board (faster games are possible and fun).

I won three and lost one, and it felt like useful practice, although I still struggled on time. It felt like I was always five minutes behind, regardless of how fast I tried to play. Out of four games I only had one misregistered move, again probably because I slid my queen rather than lifting and plonking. In a competition this would be irritating, but I'm sure Square Off can fix it, probably by slowing down their move recognition a little bit (waiting for the board position to stabilise). This will add even more delay, but I doubt the Square Off Pro is realistically cut out for blitz.

This enjoyable and useful 15+10 game experience is light-years from the experience when I first received the e-board. **It shows how hardware quality is more important in the long run than software quality, provided the software can be (and is) regularly updated.**

None of the four games involved en passant, so I used the Square Off Pro app's useful feature of playing against its engine from a custom position.



This is the Scotch Gambit (1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. d4 exd4 4. Bc4 Nf6 5. e5 d5). I knew the engine would likely play 5...d5 so I could (as White) try an en passant take. It took me well over a minute to figure out how!

For some reason the e-board only recognised exd6 if I picked up the e5 pawn and placed it on d6. Then it recognised the take, even before I removed the taken pawn from d5. If I did this in reverse order (in my opinion the more 'natural' way of lifting the taken pawn from d5, then moving the taking pawn from e5 to d6) it had a little electronic hissy fit complete with angry beeps and flashing LEDs.

So en passant is still fairly badly broken, which would be very annoying mid-game. I don't see any reason why this cannot be fixed, as there are really only small differences between this and a normal take (the number of squares involved). Perhaps the Square Off app logic is trying to

figure out what moves are being made as they are made, rather than looking at resulting positions and seeing what legal chess moves could explain them. Regardless, I'm sure Square Off can fix this and would appreciate them doing so as soon as possible (as a Square Off Pro owner).

I brought the Square Off Pro to my local Watlington Chess Club - [facebook.com/watlingtonchess](https://www.facebook.com/watlingtonchess) - to see how it fared recording games for later analysis. It fared better than I expected, even faultlessly recording a fast five-minute blitz game. There were few misregistered moves, probably because I coached my opponents to exaggeratedly lift and plonk the pieces. And, somewhat comically and mysteriously, the e-board emitted sarcastic beeps after most of my opponents' moves but not mine. I have no idea what was going on but it helped me from a psychological warfare perspective. In the end I had to put my phone into 'do not disturb' mode to avoid a club revolt against the machine.

Playing experience: 3/5 ★★☆☆☆

Great for slower time controls. Fixing the intermittent move registration bugs (en passant and registering the final position of a sliding move, so the player doesn't need to worry about how they move the pieces) would earn 4/5. 5/5 requires fixing minor but distracting bugs with random beeps and LED illuminations, almost as if there is a fault in the Bluetooth comms between the e-board and app.

Cost and customer experience

I originally bought a Square Off Pro direct from Square Off in May 2022, taking advantage of the free UK delivery promised on their site. Unfortunately, it never arrived so I eventually cancelled my order.

In August 2022 I bought the Square Off Pro from a US retailer called Chess House. With UK shipping included it was £250 plus an unexpected £60 of import duties, so £310 in total - which I think is pretty expensive for an e-board that doesn't magically move the pieces. By comparison, it costs almost exactly what one would pay for a beautiful wooden chess set (pieces and board) from Indian retailers like Royal Chess Mall.

When I found the replacement Square Off Pro to be unusable because of numerous bugs their online customer service was unhelpful.

If you Google 'customer reviews Square Off Pro' you will find a LOT of cross people who share that negative opinion. Which is why I wanted to write this review, so you can take a closer (and hopefully more careful and

balanced) look at this example of an intriguing chess technology.

Cost and customer experience: 1/5 ★☆☆☆☆

Bottom line

Getting to grips with the Square Off Pro e-board has been a fairly long and fraught journey, but I am now getting value and pleasure from it. I think being a developer myself has given me the confidence to persist with the e-board (and to keep chasing Square Off for bug fixes). If Square Off fixes the remaining intermittent move recognition issues I think gadget-minded chess players should buy it if they are happy with the price.

Bottom line: 3/5 ★★☆☆☆

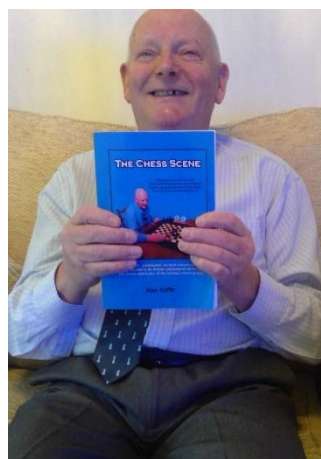
Books of the Month by Ben Graff



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

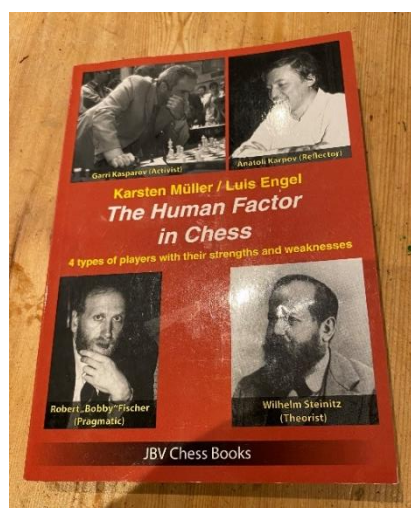
I expect this column will be published around the time of the British, the perfect occasion to play some interesting chess and to catch up with friends old and new. I am taking part in various events and am really looking forward to it. There is always something particularly special about chess in high summer, far removed from the grind of trips to away league games on a freezing November night. Very best wishes to all who will be taking part!

It has been a huge privilege to write this column over the last eighteen months of so. As with last year, I will be taking a break in August, but will be back in September with further reviews. If you have a particular favourite book that I haven't featured do let me know, and we will see if we can write it up.



Now to business, with an intriguing new title to explore, and first a shout out to Alan Ruffle. Alan recently published an updated version of his excellent *The Chess Scene*. Alan has done so much for chess over the years, and I thoroughly enjoyed the first edition of this book, so do check out the new version if you can.

The Human Factor in Chess, Karsten Muller and Luis Engel (JBV Chess Books)



'To get squares you got to give squares.'

Bobby Fischer – illustrating the 'pragmatist' approach to chess.

Have you ever wondered what type of chess player you might be? Do you have a distinct style? If you are playing someone you know would you have a good understanding of their game, and some concrete ideas to turn this to your advantage? If you are not sure how you would go about answering these questions (and even if you think you are), *The Human Factor in Chess* might be just the book for you.

Grandmasters Karsten Muller and Luis Engel contend that all chess players fall within four categories as either 'activists,' 'pragmatists,' 'theorists,' or 'reflectors'. They set out to demonstrate this by grouping many famous players throughout history, exploring the relative strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, and illustrating their theories through a host of well-annotated games and puzzles. As Vincent Keymer says in the preface '... One of the important messages in this

book [is that] you can actually influence or change your player characteristics through insight, will and training.'

Amongst the 'activists' are Alekhine, Spassky and Kasparov, and we learn that such players' strengths include the way in which they highly rate the initiative and attacking options, while placing a lesser emphasis on material. Such players are often good at calculating concrete lines 'based on intuitive evaluation,' but can on occasion 'overestimate their own attack on the king while underestimating their opponent's attack'.

If the above feels a little broad brush, it is more a reflection on the brevity of any review than it is on the authors' categorisation. Indeed, the section on 'activists' at sixty or so pages is the longest in the book, and three times the length of that dedicated to the 'theorists', and is all material that any chess student will enjoy playing through.

I particularly liked the examples given on how players with differing styles might fare against each other. For example, the first Kasparov-Karpov match is seen as a duel between an 'activist' and a 'reflector', which (presumably just in the phase where Karpov moved into a 5-0 lead) demonstrated that in such battles 'the strengths of the activists don't come into their own, because the reflectors know how to prevent it with their good sense of active prophylaxis'.

The sections on the other three types of players might be shorter but are equally interesting; however, this does not mean that this is a book without its challenges. While highlighting that 'the goal should be to become as universal as possible' and that 'in positions where there is only one move, every good player should find it', the book is predicated on the notion that there are sufficient positions where the 'wide range of possibilities' enables four relatively distinct styles to emerge.

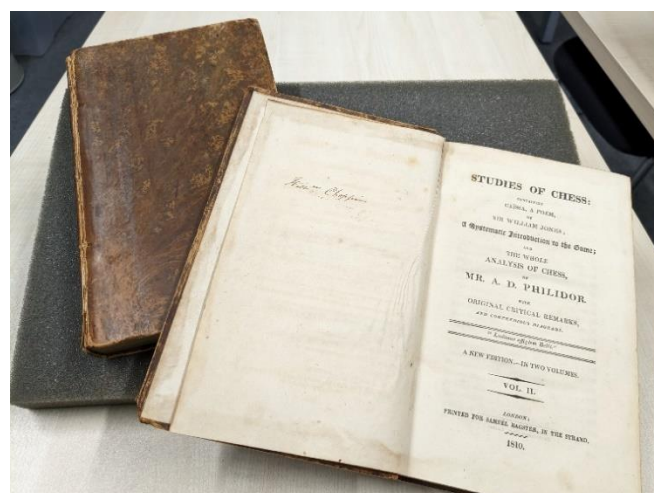
This may well be the case, but perhaps is not wholly a given. I recall Tal originally being sceptical of the early chess computers because he felt that humans could play in a wide variety of equally good styles, which a machine would never be able to replicate. Over time, he would come to revise this view and recognise that often there was a best way to proceed (even if marginally so). This could be taken to argue that an emphasis on four different styles is a little contrary to the realities of the modern-day game.

Perhaps also a style-based approach risks over-simplifying the flesh and blood practicalities of an over the board player. Even for those who, unlike me, can characterise their approach as something other than terrible/ vaguely passable, I would argue that on different days we all play

a bit differently. Fatigue, general mood, how well we happen to know the position we find ourselves in, are all important factors, and ones which mean that it may be less easy to label an opponent (or ourselves) than this book suggests.

If some of the above sounds a bit critical, it really is not meant to be. *The Human Factor in Chess* is an excellent book, well-presented, well-argued and something that the reader will get a lot out of, irrespective of whether they wholly buy into the four-player type model. Above all else, this is a work that made me think and reflect on my own approach to the game and that of others. It makes for an interesting and accessible read, and is very much worthy of study.

From the ECF Library and Archive



Here at De Montfort University the cataloguing work on the ECF Library is well underway, and we are working on some of the rarer editions in the collection. This two-volume English translation of François-André Danican Philidor's *Analyse du jeu des Échecs* was published in 1810. Philidor was born in 1726 into a musical family. By 1740 he was living in Paris, composing operas, and studying chess under the tutelage of Legall de Kermeur. His 1749 book was a huge success, running to a third edition in 1790 and being translated into five languages.

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This English copy of Philidor's manual also features a poem *Caissa* by Sir William Jones. Jones (1746-1794) was a colonial judge in India as well as a scholar of Indo-European languages. He wrote *Caissa* in 1763 at the age of 17. The poem invents a 'goddess' of chess by imagining that the Roman god Mars has the God of Sport invent the game of chess so that Mars can use it to seduce the nymph Caissa:

*He fram'd a tablet of celestial mold,
Inlay'd with squares of silver and of gold;
Then of two metals form'd the warlike band,
That here compact in show of battle stand;
He taught the rules that guide the pensive game,
And call'd it Cassa from the dryad's name:
(Whence Albion's sons, who most its praise confess,
Approv'd the play, and nam'd it thoughtful Chess.*

A reminder that you can see this book and the other volumes in the ECF Library during the British Chess Championships which are being held here in Leicester. We look forward to meeting you!

It's a Puzzlement!



Welcome to our puzzles section! Here are this month's puzzles - all hand-picked by ChessPuzzle.net

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

When you click on the links below you need to play a move to see the hint and/or solution.

Puzzle 1

Will Laver – Marcus Fung

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



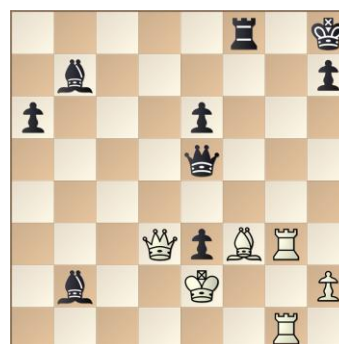
Black to win

[Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2

Ben Robinson – Vitaliy Klymenko

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



White to checkmate

[Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3

P. Ackley – Alexander Hertog

30th 4NCL Congress 2023, Daventry ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4

Oliver Shaw – Kian Shah

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5

Ian Gao – Ranesh Ratnesan

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



Black to win

[Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6

Joel Dyter – Velavan

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



Black to win

[Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7

Jai Kothari – R De Coverly

30th 4NCL Congress 2023, Daventry ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8

Will Laver – Max Pert

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



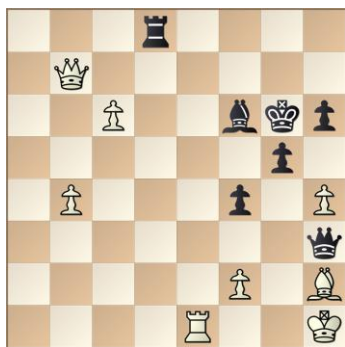
Black to checkmate

[Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9

Alex Botgros – Ezra Brass

ECF National Schools Final 2023, Nottingham ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10

Lorenzo Fava – IM G Lawton

30th 4NCL 2022-2023, Daventry ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11

Okwose Marc Obi – James Clarke

30th 4NCL Congress 2023, Daventry ENG



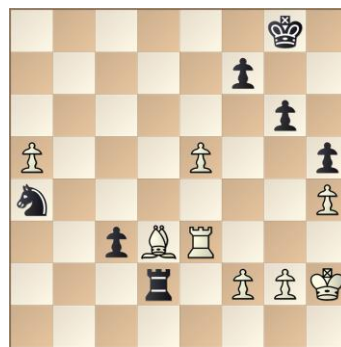
Black to win

[Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12

Zain Patel – Shabir Okhai

30th 4NCL Congress 2023, Daventry ENG



White to win

[Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit

https://chesspuzzle.net/List/8782?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=julynews

by clicking the link or via the QR code below.



NEWS and VIEWS

ECF Awards 2023 – Closing Date Extended

Submissions are open for this year's ECF awards. **The closing date for nominations has been extended to 5th August 2023.**

Details for this year's ECF awards are now available and can be found here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/ECF-Awards-2023.pdf> together with information on how to apply and the assessment criteria. We are pleased to announce that the awards are now sponsored by a grant from The Chess Trust. There are nine award categories – Contributions to Accessible Chess, Community Chess, Online Chess, Junior Chess, Women's Chess, plus Club, Small Club and Congress of the Year, together with the President's Award for Services to Chess. Nominations may be made until 5th August to the Awards Committee.

Game Fee

The game fee page on the ECF website has been updated. Information for 2023/24 can be found at: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/pay-to-play-and-game-fee-2023-24/>

The existing rules can be seen at: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/pay-to-play-and-game-fee-22-23/>

New Arbiters

An ECF Level 1 Arbiter course was held in person over the weekend of 10th and 11th June at Bridge in Kent. 11 candidates were successful at the examination and they now become ECF Level 1 Arbiters. The Lecturers were IAS Alan Atkinson and David Clayton.

The successful candidates were Patrick Burns, Don Richards, Domenico Napolitano, Finn Schell, Evelina Engelaityte, Owen Pennington, Robert Starley, Graeme Boxall, Clive Le Baigue, Stephen Berkley and Frank Usher.

Our congratulations are extended to them all.

Peter Campbell Gibbs 1934-2023



Peter on board 1 at the 1960 World Student Team Championships playing Boris Spassky, courtesy of [Dr John Upham/BCM](#)

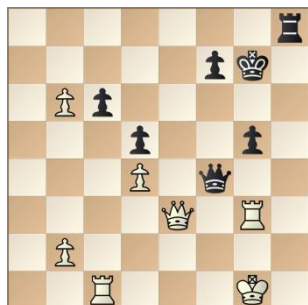
The chess community is much saddened by the news of the death of former MCCU President Peter Gibbs. Peter was educated at Bradford Grammar School and trained as a solicitor. He first came to notice in chess circles when he shared first place in the 1952 British Under 18 Championship with Bernard Cafferty and Peter Sanderson. In 1954 he came second to Bernard Cafferty in the Under 21 British Championship and he was British Universities Champion in 1956.

He represented England in the World Student Team Chess Championships on four occasions between 1954 and 1960, where he played against the world's best players.

Between 1955 and 1962 Peter played in the British Championship with a highest finishing place of 6th in 1957. He beat Gerald Abrahams in the 1962 British in Whitby with a Ruy Lopez Worral attack, and with some fine attacking play.

Peter Campbell Gibbs - Gerald Abrahams
BCF-ch Whitby ENG (1), 13.08.1962

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Qe2 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.a4 Na5 9.axb5 Nxb3 10.cxb3 Bb7 11.bxa6 Bxe4 12.Nc3 Bf5 13.d4 e4 14.Ng5 d5 15.f3 0-0 16.fxe4 Bg4 17.Qd3 h6 18.e5 hxg5 19.exf6 gxf6 20.Bd2 Kg7 21.Ne2 Rh8 22.Ng3 Rh4 23.h3 Be6 24.Nf5+ Bxf5 25.Rxf5 c6 26.Ba5 Qh8 27.Be1 Re4 28.Bf2 Bd6 29.Bg3 Be7 30.Bh2 Qc8 31.g4 Qe6 32.Rf3 Bd8 33.Bg3 Bb6 34.Bf2 Ba7 35.Rc1 Re8 36.Qc3 Rc8 37.b4 Bb8 38.b5 Rh8 39.b6 Rxc4+ 40.hxg4 Qxc4+ 41.Bg3 f5 42.a7 f4 43.axb8Q Rxb8 44.Kf2 fxg3+ 45.Rxc3 Qf4+ 46.Kg1 Rh8 47.Qe3



1-0

Following Peter's appearances in the British Championships he played in the Britain vs The Netherlands match in 1964, where he won both of his games. Peter was for many years a member of Birmingham Chess Club, usually playing board two below Bernard Cafferty.

Although Peter's work as a solicitor for the Royal Borough of Sutton Coldfield precluded competing in international events at the highest level he was keen to promote the game and could still beat up-and-coming players such as Tony Miles in 1970. He was also three-time Warwickshire individual champion in 1956, 1966 and 1970.

Peter retired from the post of deputy town clerk of Sutton Coldfield in 1974 when local government in England was reorganised. Although he continued as a solicitor working for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, he had more time for chess. He moved to Burbage in Leicestershire and played for Nuneaton, which became his main club. He played board 1 for Leicestershire, securing a draw against Keith Arkell in 1978. Peter was also a keen correspondence player, winning the 1999-2000 British Veterans Correspondence Championship.

Peter did not confine his chess activities to playing. He was a British Chess Federation arbiter and an English Chess Federation accredited coach. He jumped at the chance when in 1967 he was asked to be chess correspondent for the Birmingham Post. Peter was a stalwart for his club, Hinckley, and gave simultaneous exhibitions and visited schools to generate local interest. He contributed greatly to the organisation of chess for the blind and correspondence chess. He helped organise training for blind players and accompanied the British Braille team when they played abroad. In the field of correspondence chess he was active in committees of the English Federation for correspondence chess between 1965 and 2007, a tournament organiser between 2000 and 2011, and donated a trophy for the MCCU individual Correspondence Chess Championship.

Peter's contributions to the game have been recognised by many chess organisations. He was a Life Vice President

of three county associations: Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Yorkshire – and was President of the Midland Counties Chess Union and the English Chess Federation for correspondence chess. He received the British Chess Federation President's Award in 1988. He will be much missed within the chess community given his outstanding contributions across so many areas. Ray Dolan, CEO Midland Counties Chess Union, writes 'A legend ... a gentleman of the game of chess'.

Peter is survived by his wife Celia and two children. The funeral will be held on Friday 4th August 12:30pm at [Heart of England Crematorium, Eastboro Way, Nuneaton](#). Family flowers only, donations in Peter's memory to the Braille Chess Association.

Written by Ray Collett with input from Ray Dolan, and with many thanks for the illustrative game from Nigel Towers and information from Colin Green, Alex Holowczak, John Saunders, and David Thomas.

New Chess Club in Crawley

Crawley Chess Club
 Official Chess Club In Crawley
 Meeting at Crawley Baptist Church
 CrabTree Road West Green
 9am to 11am Saturday
 Cold Drinks Provided.
 Always wanted to learn a new skill of logic and meet new people?
 Please Contact me at mrjaing007@gmail.com for dates and further information.
 Check out our facebook group at
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/755360592638515/>

We are a friendly club, and we enjoy bringing chess to the local community of Crawley West Sussex. We are a mixed group of adults with juniors.

Crawley had a club a long time ago, but closed down in 2009 due to a lack of members and support. So we are the new Crawley Chess Club that has arisen from the ashes to bring chess back to Crawley. We would like to extend our hospitality and invitations out to other clubs and communities to come and find out our exciting stuff that goes on at the Crawley club.

It has been an amazing ride so far; we've had plenty of interest and we've been able to please and help people in Crawley to find a local chess club they can belong to.

We would also like the opportunity to dive into a league or tournament at some point.

16 and under juniors are most welcome, but we ask for a supervising adult to stay with them at all times.

We would like to say a massive thank you to our chess club members for making Crawley a chess community.
Alexander Laing, Founder

British Chess Championships on the BBC

You can hear a British Chess Championships interview with BBC Radio Leicester's Ben Jackson, featuring the ECF's Home Director Nigel Towers and Paul Mottram, Leicester Chess Association President, on BBC Sounds. The interview can be found here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p0fzc8rt>

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



The Delancey UK Chess Challenge, which was started by Michael Basman, is now brilliantly run by Sarah and Alex Longson. It is one of the biggest junior competitions in the world and attracts thousands of UK Juniors every year.

The tournament is divided into various stages, and recently the Megafinals were held around the country. In the U12 section of the Manchester

Megafinal, Dylan Prothero (pictured) won with the excellent score of 5½/6.

Here is a game he played earlier in the year at the 46th Blackpool Congress.

D Prothero vs A Desantos

Blackpool Congress 10/02/23

1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 dxc3 4.Nxc3

The Morra Gambit is nowadays regarded as slightly unsound for White, but Black has to be very careful as he can easily go astray in the light of White's advantage in development.

4...e6 5.Nf3 h6?!

Wasting time, and so giving White good chances.

6.Bc4 Bb4 7.Qd3?!



White should simply castle. He need not fear Bxc3 as his Black-squared bishop will then become very active on the a3-f8 diagonal.

7....Ne7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Nb5

An interesting idea, but Black should now counter in the centre with 9...d5!, when he has a decent position.

9..a6?! 10.Nd6 Bxd6 11.Qxd6 b5 12.Bb3 Bb7 13.Re1



The position is now finely balanced, and Black should bolster his kingside defences by playing 13....Ng6.

13....Nc8? 14.Qg3! Kh8

White now stands better, and should continue his development by 15.Bd2. A possible continuation is then 15...Ne7 16.Rad1 Qe8 17.Bc3 f6 18.Qd6, with White having the better chances.

15.Qe5?!



Moving the same piece too many times in the opening, and indeed this is not very good as it gives Black the opportunity to complete his development with gain of time.

15...d6 16.Qc3?!

Better would have been 16.Qh5, keeping his queen on the kingside and maintaining the pressure on Black's position.

16....Nc6?



However, Black now blunders and justifies White's previous two moves. With 16...Kg8 instead he could have maintained the balance.

17. Bxh6 f6 18.Ng5!

A neat combination which leaves Black defenceless.

18.....gxh6 19.Qh3 fxg5



Forced, because if 19...Kg7 then 20.Nxe6+ wins.

20.Qxh6+ Kg8 21.Bxe6+ Rf7 22.Qg6+ Kh8 23.Bxf7 Qf8

Stopping 24.Qh6 mate, but Dylan now finishes off nicely.

24.Re3 Qg7 25.Rh3+ Qh7 26.Qg8 mate



A game not without its flaws, but nevertheless an excellent example of how Dylan can produce the tactics necessary to win brilliantly. He is certainly a bright prospect for the future.

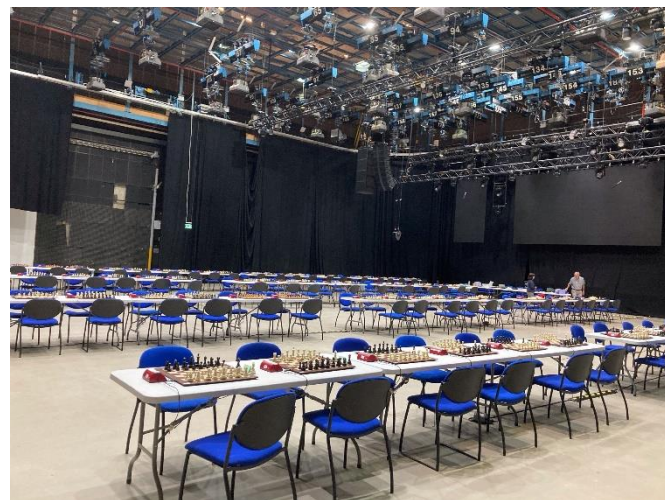
Meanwhile if you have played any exciting games as a youngster that you would like to have published in my column then please send them to me at plittl@hotmail.com. I cannot promise that they will appear, but I will give them every consideration.

--- Paul Littlewood

National School Chess Championships 2022-23

by Neill Cooper

Report on the 29th and 30th June National Final
Sponsored by Winchester College



This year's finals of the National School Chess Championships were held at the University of Nottingham on 29th and 30th June. The event took place in the spacious Studio 7 of their King Meadow Park Campus, which was originally built as a TV studio. The five-round Swiss tournament had a record 26 teams playing. The top three teams had average ratings of over 2000, including last year's champions Westminster School.

Round 1 went largely with seeding, with the majority of matches being one-sided. There were, however, also a couple of drawn matches, and the fourth seeds Hampton School only just beat Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet 3½-2½. The top three seeds again won convincingly in round 2. They were joined on maximum points by Hampton School who again won 3½-2½.

Round 3 was played late on 29th June and saw King's College School, Wimbledon defeat Westminster School 4-2, while Hampton beat Wilson's School 3½-2½.

The fourth round on Friday morning saw the crucial match of the tournament between Hampton School and King's College School, Wimbledon. As in the previous rounds, Hampton again prevailed 3½-2½. Other leading winners in this round were Wilson's School, Westminster School, Exeter Maths School and Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet.

So in the final round Hampton School only needed a draw against Westminster School to win the Championship,

which is exactly what they did. Wilson's School beat Exeter Maths School to come second (on tie-break) and be awarded the Richard Haddrell Trophy, while Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet who defeated King's College School, Wimbledon won the Plate (awarded to the highest-placed team which lost their first match).

Congratulations to Hampton School on winning the National School Chess Championships.

There were lots of other interesting matches. You can find all the results at:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr786558.aspx?lan=1>

An added bonus at this tournament was the use of live boards for all 78 games. These games can be found at the following locations:

<https://view.livechesscloud.com/#79837208-64fe-435d-bb95-df6cec725a54>

<https://Lichess.org/broadcast/ecf-national-schools-chess-championship-final-2023/round-1/hXiYLwuw>
<https://www.Chess.com/events/2023-ecf-national-schools-championship-final>

The ECF wish to thank a wonderful team of arbiters: Hambel Willow, Richard Buxton, Julian Clissold, and Réjean Dupuis. They also thank the University of Nottingham for a wonderful venue, and Winchester College for their sponsorship, which meant that each school attending was presented with an inscribed chess clock.

Below are two games from the tournament.

The first is from Hampton School vs King's College School, Wimbledon:



The Hampton School team

Makkar, Rajat - Ratnesan, Ranesh
Round 4

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. h4 Bg7 4. Nc3 d6 5. e4 c5 6. d5 e6 7. Be2 exd5 8. exd5 Qe7 9. Kf1 Nbd7 10. h5 gxh5 11. Bxh5 Ne5 12. Bg5 Bf5 13. Nf3 Bg6 14. Qa4+ Kf8 15. Bxg6 Nxf3 16. gxf3 hxg6 17. Rxh8+ Bxh8 18. Re1 Qc7 19. Kg2 Kg8

20. Ne4 Nh5 21. b4 cxb4 22. Qxb4 Be5 23. c5 dxc5 24. Qxc5 Nf4+ 25. Bxf4 Bxf4 26. Nf6+ Kh8 27. Qd4 1-0

The second is from Wilson's School vs The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School:



The Wilson's Team

Verma, Shlok - Dias, Savin
Round 4

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Nge2 O-O 6. Ng3 c5 7. d5 e6 8. Be2 exd5 9. cxd5 a6 10. a4 Nbd7 11. O-O h6 12. f4 Nh7 13. Be3 Rb8 14. Qc2 h5 15. Rae1 h4 16. Nh1 f5 17. Bd3 Nb6 18. Nf2 Bd7 19. b3 g5 20. exf5 Bxc3 21. Qxc3 Bxf5 22. fxg5 Nxe5 23. Qc2 Bxd3 24. Qxd3 Nh7 25. Ng4 Qd7 26. Nh6+ Kh8 27. a5 Na8 28. Bd2 Nc7 29. Bc3+ Nf6 30. Bxf6+ 1-0

ECF Secondary School Rapidplay Chess Tournament

Sunday 1st October 2023 at Eton College, Berks

Play will be in the spacious Whiteley Hall; team rooms will be shared and in the maths department.

Time: Registration from 10.15am, play starts 11.00am, finish about 5.00pm.

Event format: Five round Swiss rapidplay tournament. Digital chess clocks: all moves in 20 minutes + 5 sec/move. All games will be ECF rated.

Teams: Teams will consist of six players in school years 7 to 13. Schools can enter one or two teams.

Chess supplies: Tim Onions will be running a chess bookstall: www.onionschess.co.uk

Reserve games: We may need to include a team of reserves in the tournament. We should also be able to arrange reserve games which may be rated.

Cost: £25.00 per team.

It would be appreciated if those schools which have suitable chess equipment (sets, boards and digital clocks) could bring it to this event – see details on the entry form: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/ecf-eton-college-rapidplay-2023/>

More information from Neill Cooper:
manager.secondary@englishchess.org.uk

Forthcoming European and World Youth Championships

Parents are invited to register their children for three forthcoming European and World Youth Championships:

[European Youth Championship](#) (U8, U10, U12, U14, U16, U18) in Mamaia, Romania from 4th –15th September — please note that entries for this event have now closed.

[World Cadets Championship](#) (U8, U10, U12) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt from 14th –27th October - deadline Monday 31st July.

[World Youth Championship](#) (U14, U16, U18) in Montesilvano, Italy from 12th –25th November - deadline Friday 1st September.

Parents should note the minimum recommended ratings and other mandatory requirements prior to completing the form and booking flights.

England World Under 16 Team Selected

The England team for the World Youth U16 Chess Olympiad in Eindhoven has been chosen by the ECF's junior selectors as follows:

Kenneth Hobson
Theo Khoury
Ruqayyah Rida
Indy Southcott-Moyers

Shreyas Royal Selected for Kasparov Foundation's 'Young Stars' Programme



Shreyas has been selected for training by the Kasparov Chess Foundation ('KFC'). He was first invited to a training camp in Vienna; this was a preliminary camp of eight top European juniors, with only three moving on to train with Kasparov. Training was given by a number of legendary trainers from Ukraine and other former Soviet Union countries. This training camp was held from 1st July to 3rd July.

Shreyas was one of the three participants to move onto the next and final stage in Zagreb. During this stage he and three other top European prodigies received training with Kasparov himself. They were first asked to present some of their own complicated games, followed by being faced with difficult tests and exercises. In the end, Shreyas was able to impress Kasparov and the selectors enough to get selected for the KCF's 'Young Stars' programme. The KFC will monitor the juniors for the foreseeable future, giving recommendations and online sessions, working alongside their coaches, and organising annual training camps with Kasparov and other top trainers.

Frankie and Stanley go to Batumi



Picture courtesy of <https://www.times-series.co.uk> – Dad Andy, Stanley and Frankie Badacsonyi

The link below opens an article by René Butler covering recent successes by Stanley and Frankie Badacsonyi, who took part in the English Chess Championships in Kenilworth and the World Youth Chess Championships in Batumi Georgia:

<https://www.times-series.co.uk/news/23592400.east-finchley-brothers-world-youth-chess-championships/>

The brothers will be playing again in the British Chess Championships in Leicester, in the British Championship and the Major Open events respectively.

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

Another common tactical motif occurs in the following position:



It is Black to move and he has the option to play 1...Nxg4 2.hxg4 Bxg4. This sacrifices a piece for two pawns, but it

feels as though White should be able to defend successfully and make his material advantage tell. However, things are not so easy, and White has to be extremely careful as the Black attack can quickly gain momentum.

In fact, this position was reached in the game **E. Ermenkov vs P.E. Littlewood** (Borovo 1980), and I did decide to sacrifice. The game continued:

1....Nxg4 2.hxg4 Bxg4 3.Qe2 Bg5 4.Nc3?

...and straightaway White makes a mistake, as this natural move does nothing to relieve the pressure on his knight on f3. Much better was 4.Na3, when this knight can come to c4 and then possibly to e3. However, Black still has good chances after 4...Qf6.

4...Qf6 5.Kg2 h5

Now this is winning for Black, as the combined threats of pushing the h-pawn and bringing the rook into the attack via g6 are too much for White to cope with.

6.d3 Bxc1 7.Rexc1 Rh6 8.Qe3 Bxf3+

Now if 9.Qxf3 then 9...Rg6+ wins.

9.Kf1 h4

...and Black went on to win in a few moves, as he has regained the sacrificed piece and still retains a vicious attack.

The opportunity to make this sacrifice does not occur very often, but funnily enough I also had it against Peter Large in the Lloyds Bank Tournament in 1983.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Bxc6 dxc6 7.Nc3 Bg4 8.h3 Bh5 9.g4 Nxg4 10.hxg4 Bxg4 11.Kg2 Bc5

...reaching this critical position:



At this point it is very important for White to take his time and plan the best defence. A wrong move is likely to be fatal, as the Black attack can quickly gain momentum. Possibly the best option is 12.Ne2 to bring this piece over to the kingside to defend. However, after 12...h5 Black still has decent chances. As is often the case, though, White makes a mistake when faced with a dangerous looking sacrifice.

12.Rg1? Qf6 13.d3 h5 14.Be3 Bb4!

A very good move, as the white knight is a much better defender than the white bishop in this type of position.

15.Rh1 g5

Even stronger was 15...0-0-0, as White could now have given the piece back by 16.Bxg5 Bxf3+ 17.Qxf3 Qxg5+, when Black is a pawn up but his attack has been halted.

16. Nb1 h4 17.Rh2?

Better was 17.c3 Bc5! 18.Nbd2 (18.Bxc5 h3+ 19.Kg3 Qf4 mate) Bxe3 19.fxe3 0-0-0, when the two passed pawns on the kingside are very strong and give Black the advantage.

17....0-0-0 18.a3 h3+ 19.Kg3 Rdg8

With the terrifying threat of 20...Qf4+ 21.Bxf4 gxf4 mate... and if 22.Kxg4 Rh4+23.Nxh4 (23.Kg3 Qf4+ 24.Qf4+ Bxf4 25.exf4 mate) gxh4+ 24.Kxh3 Qe6+ 25.Kxh4 Be7+ and mates quickly.

20.Rh1 h2 21.Rxh2 Rxh2 22.Kxh2 Bxf3 23.Qc1 g4 24.Kg3 Rh8 25.axb4 Rh3 mate

These examples illustrate how dangerous the attack can be. So be very careful if you are going to allow the sacrifice on g4!

Here are two tactical positions of mine for you to solve, with the answers at the end of the article.



P.E. Littlewood vs P. O'Neill

Counties Online 2020

White to play and win



P.E Littlewood vs B.S. Thipsay

British Championship 2002

White to play and win

Answers:

P.E. Littlewood vs P. O'Neill

White wins by 1.Rxd5! cxd5 2.Bxd6 Rxd6 3.Qxc7 f5 4.Qc8+ Kf7 5.Qe8+ Kf6 6.Qe7 mate

P.E. Littlewood vs B.S. Thipsay

The sacrifice 1.Rxh6 wins for White, as after 1...gxh6 then 2.Re3 (threatening 3.Qh8 mate) Kg8 3.Rg3+ Kf8 4.Qh8+ Ke7 5.Re3 mate.

Paul Littlewood (plittl@hotmail.com)

Gormally's Coaching Corner by Danny Gormally



Secrets of Online Blitz with Magnus Carlsen

DrNykterstein - RebeccaHarris

Blitz Titled Arena July '23 Lichess.org, 01.07.2023

From relatively quiet beginnings, online blitz chess has become a monster that can barely be controlled. Whenever I think of online blitz and the large slice of my life that I have spent on this activity, I am reminded of the 2005 horror film 'Hostel', which is a good watch if you can bear it. In a scene towards the end of the film, one of the main protagonists is heading towards the truth of what happened to his friend. He is brought to a run-down building in the middle of nowhere. He asks a businessman who seems to be leaving the building (and is played by the famous Japanese horror director Takashi Miike in a cameo role) to explain what exactly it is like in there. The businessman gives him a warning. 'Be careful that you don't spend ALL of your money in there!'. Except when it comes to online blitz the warning should be time, not money.

How many hours days I've whiled away on sites like Chess.com and Lichess over the years when I could have been doing something constructive (like watching horror films on Netflix). This addictive tendency has led me to close more accounts than I can recall. The normal routine: either open a fresh account or ask the admin of such sites to reopen an old one. First few days, fine, only play for a few hours. But over time that addiction creeps up on you. Watching films or reading a book at home is boring. I'll push everything else aside and log into Lichess and click on 1min, and that sound appears which means you've been matched. How stimulating! Many hours of wasted time later, a horrible headache, a sense that the day has been completely wasted, and all I want to do is close the account. The top players are more disciplined and don't tend to close accounts. But that doesn't mean that they don't spend many hours playing online.

When sites like Internet Chess Club first appeared in the 1990s, the sight of the very best players in the world playing online was a rare occurrence. Now, they seemingly spend more time playing online than they do competing in tournaments over the board. Nakamura might spend one day streaming for ten hours - and makes a lot of money in prime subscriptions and donations in the meantime. That love for chess (you could easily describe it as an addiction) is part of what makes these players so strong. You have to be obsessed by chess to be that good, to be consumed by it. Is this a positive thing? Is this the dark side of chess, the side that is barely mentioned, that to play at that level you basically have to stare at a computer screen all day? Perhaps, but no one is forcing us to play for that long. Everything in moderation, you could say. But it is difficult to 'moderate' online play in my experience, especially if like me you have an addictive personality, because the adrenaline rush of competing online and the intellectually stimulating nature of playing blitz chess changes your brain chemistry. It wants you

craving more. And if, like Nakamura, you can make a living from your addiction, then why not?

So once we have accepted that we're going to spend a lot of time playing online, we might as well try and improve our results. One way is to watch the best players compete online and see what they do, to learn from what they do so well; so this is what this article is going to be about. I'm going to look at some games from the very best player in the world, Magnus Carlsen, and see if we can pick up any tips. A few days ago he competed in the titled Arena, a three-minute blitz tournament which is only open to titled players who have been verified on Lichess. In one of the later rounds he competed against Rebecca Harris, Daniel Naroditsky's online ID. Magnus played under his account DrNykterstein. Apparently Nykter means almost the same thing as sober, in Norwegian.

1.b3 Magnus is not averse to playing unusual openings when he plays online. In fact, you will much more often see him playing an off-beat line like this than entering the dark, deep depths of main line opening variations. Another great champion in Bobby Fischer also dabbled with this opening.

1...Nf6 1...d5 2.Bb2 Bg4 is what I normally play online. If the knight goes to f3 you take and give White doubled pawns. 3.Nf3 Bxf3 4.exf3 Nf6 5.g3 e6 6.Bg2 Nbd7 7.O-O g6 8.f4 Bg7 9.d3 O-O 10.Nd2 Ne8 is one possible sequence. If White takes on g7, you take back and you have the dark squares: 1...e5 2.Bb2 Nc6 3.e3 Nge7...



is another line I have seen the engine play. Black wants to play ... d5 and dominate the centre, but then White will put pressure on e5 with a combination of Nf3 and Bb5 (sometimes the pawn breaks c4 and f4 are also on the agenda) so by playing ...Ne7 Black is ready to give extra protection to e5 with ...Ng6. 4.c4 d5! 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.a3 f6=

2.Bb2 d5 3.Nf3 Bf5 4.e3 e6 5.Be2 Be7 Perhaps Black could have considered 5...h6 to give a retreat square for the bishop, anticipating White's next. Black can afford a slow move like this, as there is not much going on in the

position. After 6.c4 Be7 7.Nc3 0-0 8.0-0 I have no idea what is going on here or what various plans are available, for Black or for White. It seems to me though that with 1.b3 White is adopting a cautious strategy, a counter-punching strategy. You are not really making the play, you are waiting to see what Black does and you react to that. Novak Djokovic is arguably the most successful modern tennis player of time and his style is counter-punch. It seems that Magnus is the same. 8...c5!? 9.d4 (9.cxd5 exd5 10.d4 Nc6 11.dxc5 Bxc5 12.Rc1 and White has a bit of an edge which would justify the opening choice. The knight is ready to jump into b5 and then embed itself on the d4 square, creating a strong blockade.) 9...Nc6 seems playable to me.

6.Nh4! Carlsen's game is built on accumulating small advantages. First he grabs the bishop pair. However, objectively the game is still equal.

6...Bg6 7.Nxg6 hxg6 8.d3 c5 9.Nd2 Nc6 10.Nf3 10.f4!? Qc7 11.Nf3 Bd6 and Black is aiming to engineer ...e5 when he should be OK.

10...Qc7 11.c4! The counter-punching against the black centre has begun.

11...0-0-0! a risky if principled choice. The king seems slightly more vulnerable over here, even if it is not clear how White will attack on the queenside.

11...0-0 12.cxd5 Nxd5 13.0-0 Bf6 14.Qd2 seems about equal. White will quickly put a Rook on c1.

12.cxd5 Nxd5 13.a3 Bf6 14.Qc2 Qa5+! 15.Kf1 Bxb2 16.Qxb2 f6 Maybe 16...Qc3 perhaps?



but you are always reluctant to enter an endgame against Carlsen. He is like our own Keith Arkell, but an HGH version. 17.Qxc3 Nxc3 18.Rc1 Nxe2 19.Kxe2 now you have a problem defending c5. 19...b6? 20.b4!+-

17.Rc1 Kb8 18.g3 g5 19.Kg2 So White has sorted out his issues by castling by hand.

19...g4 Black needs to act quickly, as White has a very potent plan available. 19...e5 20.Rc2! Also called 'the stack' by Nakamura. 20...Rc8 21.Rhc1 Nce7 22.Nxe5 fxe5 23.Qxe5+ with a lot of pawns and initiative for the piece.

20.Nd2 After 20.Nh4? g5 21.Ng6 Rh6 the knight runs into trouble.

20...f5



21.h3 These players sense danger very well. White wants to break the pawn chain before Black is able to create unpleasant pressure down the h-file.

There was a hidden possibility here with 21.b4!? cxb4 22.Rxc6 bxc6 23.Nc4



when it seems to me that White has a dangerous initiative for the material sacrificed, although readers may want to check this with an engine (which will probably say this is all rubbish).

21...gxh3+ 22.Rxh3 Rxh3 23.Kxh3 g5 24.Kg2 f4 Our own Simon Williams has had a lot of success with this kind of direct attack on the kingside, but as already alluded to this is a dangerous strategy against Magnus, who is the ultimate counter-puncher. It's like going to the net against Carlos Alcaraz, only to be met by a penetrating cross-court pass. My own feeling is that Daniel probably sensed that Black's position was under pressure at this stage of the game, so lashed out, as he was aware that a

'slower' approach would also be unsuccessful. Sometimes it's better to go down in flames.

Perhaps a cagey move like 24...Rc8 was preferable. 25.Nf3 g4 26.Ne5 and there are still issues.

25.e4 Nde7 25...fxg3 26.exd5 exd5 27.fxg3 is not giving Black enough compensation for the piece.

26.Nc4 Qc7 27.Qf6! Magnus turns the screw. In blitz it's very easy to hit your opponent with a tactic that they have overlooked.

27...fxg3 28.fxc3 Nd4 Black could have set a minor 'trap' with 28...Rg8, defending the g-pawn. 29.Qxe6 Nd4 30.Qg4 Ng6 intends to win the game if White is careless enough to take on g5. However, if he doesn't then there is not much for Black here. 31.Bd1 Ne5 32.Nxe5 Qxe5 seems to offer some practical compensation for Black, though, as the white pieces are a bit passive for the moment.

29.Bg4 Nxb3 30.Rh1! Nc6 30...Rxd3 The pawn was hanging. 31.Rh8+ Nc8 32.e5 Nd4 33.Bxe6 Qc6+! when Black has a counter-attack of his own. 34.Kh3 Qh1+ 35.Kg4 Qd1+ 36.Kh3 Qh1+=

31.Bxe6



31...Nbd4? Most likely Daniel was very short of time and simply missed that the pawn on d3 was hanging, because in blitz if you see that you can play 31...Rxd3 you will certainly play it.

32.Bd5 Ne7? 32...Ne2 33.Qxg5+-- , but 32...Qe7 seemed to put up more resistance.

33.Rh7+-- Nxd5 34.exd5 Qc8 35.Nd6 Rf8 36.Rxb7+ Ka8 37.Rxa7+ Kxa7 38.Nxc8+ Rxc8 39.d6

1-0

chessmaster2006 - DrNykterstein

Blitz Titled Arena July '23 Lichess.org, 01.07.2023

There have been many players who have been aware of the dangers of playing too much blitz chess. The most famous of these was Mikhail Botvinnik, who forbade his students from playing blitz chess during serious over the board tournaments. It is true that blitz chess requires a different approach to that of classical chess. There is a larger emphasis on superficial tactics. At blitz chess you don't really need to think about long-term strategy; often it's more about spotting whether or not your opponent has left their pieces en prise. But there are certain strategies in blitz that I've spotted when observing the games of players like Magnus Carlsen that I believe can be applicable not just to blitz chess but to your chess game overall. I've listed some of them below:

1. A willingness to take risks. Often the game is veering towards a draw, but with the opponent short of time or aware that the class gap is too large to give an easy half a point, a player like Magnus or Hikaru will often take large risks in order to win the game. This maximalist attitude has served them well over the years.

2. Don't think, just play. When you watch Hikaru Nakamura play bullet chess, he is more often than not up on the clock. This means that he is spitting moves out at an incredibly rapid rate, and pre-moving a lot of the time. Adopting this attitude at bullet chess is likely to build your chess confidence overall. Often our results suffer because we are too afraid to make mistakes, too hesitant.

3. Be observant. Blitz chess teaches you to be observant of the opponent and what they are doing. When you're playing bullet chess, more often than not you're looking at the opponent's side of the board more than your own. Are they lining up a queen grab? Have they left something big en prise? Your own pieces you move subconsciously. Along similar lines, one of the aspects of Magnus' play that I've noticed is how tactically astute he is. He often finds incredibly clever tactical ideas even at quicker time controls. If we apply this tactically observant attitude to longer time controls then we become more ruthless, more able to spot the hidden ideas in the position. Of course, very few of us, if any, have the genius mind of Magnus Carlsen. But we can at least try.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 This is a slightly riskier move than the main alternative, because Black often loses a pawn and has to show compensation for it.

3...Bf5! Is in my opinion a more stable and better move.

4.dxc5 Nc6 4...e6 5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 Bb6 7.Nf3 has become a very popular line for White and is quite dangerous for Black to face. The pawn on e5 confers a useful space advantage and prevents the black knight from reaching its most natural square on f6. There are also the contours of a potential kingside attack for White; if we imagine that Black plays ... Ne7 and castles, then Bd3xh7, with the classical Greek gift sacrifice, would need to be calculated on every turn.

5.Bb5 e6 6.Be3 Bd7 7.Bxc6 Bxc6 8.Bd4 Ne7 9.Nf3 Nf5 10.c3



10...a5 Not just a useful space-gainer, this is also a prophylactic measure against White's plan of playing b4, which would in turn clamp down on Black's attempt to regain the pawn on c5. In fact, at this stage we are still following theory. I am continually impressed by Carlsen's ability to reproduce main line opening theory given that I often forget what I am supposed to play in openings I have played for years, yet Magnus plays a Caro-Kann, an opening he rarely uses, and yet is still able to play all the correct moves.

11.0-0 11.b4 axb4 12.cxb4 b6! 13.0-0 (13.cxb6 Bxb4+ 14.Kf1 0-0 is just bad for White, as the king is terrible on f1) 13...bxc5 14.Bxc5 Bxc5 15.bxc5 0-0 certainly doesn't favour White - the pawn on c5 is weak and likely to be quickly snapped off.

11...Be7 11...Nxd4 12.cxd4 b6 13.cxb6 Qxb6 14.Qd2 Rb8 also gives Black plenty of compensation. In general, it is difficult for White to prove much advantage in this line.

12.Nbd2 12.b4 axb4 13.cxb4 b6 14.cxb6 is no longer particularly reliable for Black as 14...Bxb4 no longer comes with check, a big difference. Also, Black has had to lose a move by playing ... Be7 first. 15.Qb3 Ba5 16.Bc5.

12...0-0 13.Re1 Qc7



14.Nf1 14.b4 is more testing. 14...axb4 15.cxb4 Nxd4 16.Nxd4 Ba4 17.Qb1 Rfc8 18.Qb2 b6 19.cxb6 Qxb6 20.a3 f6! leads to interesting play and the position is on a knife-edge. Both sides have to play with great vigour. If White doesn't, he's likely to lose the extra pawn and face the mighty bishop pair in an endgame. If Black doesn't, then he could get rolled over just as easily; after all, White has passed pawns on the queenside.

14...Nxd4 15.cxd4 b6 16.cxb6 Qxb6 17.Rb1 Rfc8 Black has fully equalised.

18.Ng3 Bb5 19.Nh5 When you play against Magnus you want to play with a plan, and therefore this makes sense. White would like to play Qd2-f4 and begin an attack. There is one problem with this plan - it is fairly easy to nullify. Not only can Black meet Qf4 with the reply ...Bd3, intending to put the bishop on g6 and block any attack down the g-file, but he can also do the same with the queen, as he manages to do in the game.

19...Qc6! 20.Qb3 20.Qd2 Qc2! 21.Qf4 Qg6 22.Ng3 Rc2: White is still a pawn up but this seems to be the only good news. It is Black who is creating all the pressure.

20...a4 21.Qe3 Qc2 22.h3 Qd3 23.Qf4 Qg6 24.g4



Understandable strategy, as to retreat this knight would be to admit that the 'attack' has failed. What now for White, though - how to increase the attack further? Such a solution doesn't seem obvious, while the attack on the

queenside for Black has only just begun. Moves like ...Rc2 andBc4 are easy to spot.

24...h6 25.Rbc1 Bc4 26.a3 Rab8 27.Qd2 Rb3 We are already seeing the counter-punching approach in full action. Black is allowing White to win a pawn and make the running, then is playing on the fact that White has created weaknesses.

28.Nf4 28.Rc3 Rcb8 and there is a threat on b2: **29.Rxb3 Rxb3 30.Re3 Qb1+**, winning b2 and probably the game.

28...Qh7



I doubt Magnus was reluctant to make such a move. It may look ugly to put the queen here, but it looks like the sort of move that a creative player like Bent Larsen would have been happy to make, and Magnus is very much in that mindset.

29.Re3 Rcb8 30.Rxb3 Rxb3 31.Rc3 Qb1+ 32.Kg2 Qxb2 33.Rc2 Qxa3 So Black is completely winning now. In fact, Magnus achieved a win here by strategy - knowing the opening fairly well and playing well after that, and knowing a clever defensive manoeuvre with ...Qc2-g6. There weren't any clever tactics in this game, so for a follow-up article I will try to find a Magnus game where he finds a smart tactical idea.

34.Ra2 Qb4 35.Qd1 Rxf3! Flexible thinking. Black is not afraid to lose the queen.

36.Rxa4 Qxa4 37.Qxa4 Rxf4 38.Qa7 Bh4 39.f3 Be2 40.Qb8+ Kh7 41.Qb1+ g6 42.Qc1 Bxf3+ 43.Kh2 g5 44.Qc2+ Be4 45.Qc8 Sadly for White the queen is fairly useless here, and there are no entry points to even create a smidgeon of counterplay.

45...Kg7 46.Kg1 Bf2+ 47.Kh2 Bxd4 48.h4 Bxe5 49.hxg5 Rf1+

0-1

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

HOW TO SOLVE A STUDY

by Ian Watson

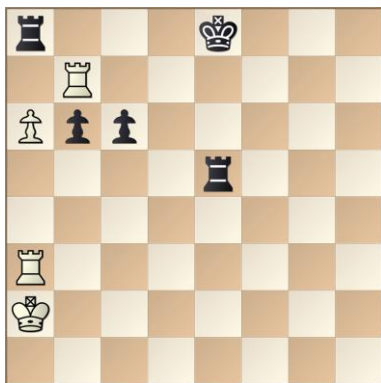
Castling, or No Castling

Vladimir Kramnik has done an excellent job of popularising No Castling Chess. (No Castling Chess has the usual rules, except that castling is not allowed.) He has attracted several top GMs to it; for example, the Dortmund No Castling tourney in June was won by Caruana. The no-castling rule changes greatly opening and middle game strategy, but makes no difference in the endgame because castling in a normal game never happens in the endgame. In the endgame study, however.... Yes, castling in studies is a fairly frequent phenomenon.

In studies you are given a position, but you aren't told what the moves of the game leading up to it were. So how do you know if castling is legal or not? The convention in studies is that castling is always permitted unless it can be shown from the position that it is illegal. You could do that, if, for example, Black had his king on e8, a rook on h8, and no other pieces; as studies are White to move, Black moved last, so he must have moved his king or rook and thus castling is illegal for him.

If you are given a study to solve, and White has his king on e1 and a rook on h1, then it's a strong bet that the solution will include the move 0-0 at some stage. Why? Because they surely aren't there by chance - the composer had a choice of sixty-four squares for the white king and another sixty-three for the rook, and yet chose to put them on those squares. Yes, the composer may have been malevolent, and may have deliberately done that to deceive you, but they very rarely do - composers are more interested in artistry than artifice.

Now, faced with this position and armed with that knowledge, let's solve. This was composed by Leonard Katsnelson and appeared in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in 1980.



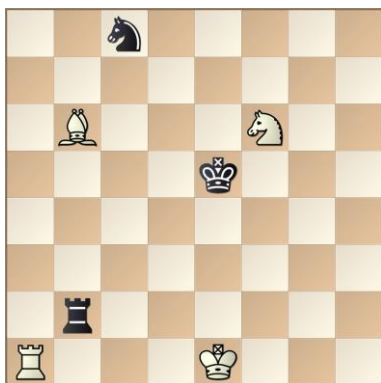
White to play and win

Black castling is legal, so we can assume it's part of the solution. How might it be useful to Black? Well, Black can give a lot of checks with the e5 rook, and if White's king tries to escape by playing to the d-file, 0-0-0 can happen with check. What's more, if White's rook on b7 is loose by then, the long castling with check will enable Black's king to capture that rook.

That might deter you from trying the obvious first move of 1.a7. Instead, you might change plan and look at 1.Rh7. The issue with 1.Rh7 is that Black plays 1...Re2+ 2.Kb1 and now 2...0-0-0, threatening mate in one. That gains him the time to move his king further across to stop the a-pawn.

So, you return to the natural 1.a7. Play will go 1...Re2+ 2.Kb1 Re1+ 3.Kc2 Re2+ 4.Kd1 0-0-0+ and Black will gobble that b7 rook, as you had already thought. Back to square one, or at least to move one... But. But it's a study, so you should always be on the look-out for ridiculous moves as you should here. 5.Rd7. It's one of those 'once you see it, it's obvious' moves. 5...Kxd7 6.Rd3+ Kc7 7.Rxd8 and wins. The full solution goes **1.a7 Re2+ 2.Kb1 Re1+ 3.Kc2 Re2+ 4.Kd1 0-0-0+ 5.Rd7 Kxd7 6.Rd3+ Kc7 7.Rxd8** and wins.

Your solving task this month was composed by Alexander Kozlov; it took part in the 1960 FIDE Tourney and appeared in the FIDE Revue in 1962.



White to play and win

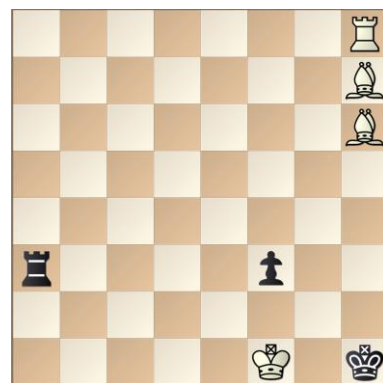
The solution is given on Page 60

Ian Watson Email: ian@irwatson.uk

A Lingerin Look at the Lipton Legacy by John Rice

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The issue of *Die Schwalbe* dated January 1961 carried an article by Michael Lipton, then in his early twenties yet with over a decade's chess problem experience behind him, on the subject of 'The half-battery with tries and changed play'. This article turned out to be highly significant in the history of the 2-mover, as it drew attention to a simple arrangement of white pieces that could be worked in a wide variety of ways to produce intricate problems showing rich and varied play and offering substantial solver-appeal.



A Michael Lipton
Jerusalem Post 1960

Among the examples quoted was the simple miniature A, in which the white Bs give shut-off mates after defences by the bR and bP.

1.Bg7? (>2.Bh~) Ra1+/Ra2/Ra4/Ra5/Ra6/Ra8
2.Bb1/Bc2/Be4/ Bf5/Bg6/Bg8; 1...Kh2! 1.Bf4? Ra7!
1.Bg6! (>2.Bh~) Ra1+/Ra2/Ra4/Ra5/Ra7/Ra8/f2
2.Bc1/Bd2/Bf4/Bg5/Bg7/Bf8/Be3.

It need hardly be said that Michael regarded the unprovided check in the diagram position as insignificant in the overall context of the problem, since it is obvious enough that one of the wBs must move to allow the other to answer the check. The point of the problem lies in the element of choice open to solvers in their search for the

key, and in the changes between the virtual and actual play.



B Michael Lipton
1 HM BCM 1969

B undeniably displays greater subtlety. Here the half-battery is masked by the wBc4, standing on a flight-square. White threatens mate on c5 by the Q, which Black pins in one of the thematic variations. Captures of the Bc4 by bK and bQ activate the half-battery after one of the wSs has occupied e6 to threaten 2.Qc5. 1.Sfe6? (>2.Qc5) Rg2/Qxc4/Kxc4 2.Sc6/Sc2/Sf3; 1...Bd5! **1.Sde6!** (>2.Qc5) Rg2/Qxe4/Kxc4 2.Sd5/Sd3/Sg2. The byplay rounds things off neatly: 1...Ra~/ bxc4/Bd5 2.Qxb5/Qxa5/Sxd5.



C Michael Lipton
3Pr Schach-Echo 1961

The half-battery is used to good effect in **C**, with changed double shut-offs following the captures on d1. 1.Bd5? (>2.Rd4) Bxd1/Rxd1 2.Se2/Sd3; 1...Rd2! **1.Sd5!** (>2.Qa1) Bxd1/Rxd1 2.Be2/Bd3, and 1...Re3/Bb1 2.Ra1/Qb3. It must have irritated Michael that he had to add numerous Ps to get this problem to work. His insistence on economy of force, often to the exclusion of other desirable features, was well known. I recall an occasion in the late 1950s when he and I were composing a problem in a pub. How to guard one square in the bK's field was the question causing him anguish, as a wP was clearly not a possibility. Eventually he exclaimed, 'Oh, let's add a knight and call it a day.' The guffaw that proceeded from him when he realised he had made a rather good if

unintended pun caused everyone in the pub to fall silent and stare at us!



D Michael Lipton
2 Pr BCM 1967

In the works we have examined so far the half-battery has been at the centre of the play. In **D**, however, it is used as a means to an end, this being a cyclic Nowotny on c4, with two of the thematic mates changed. To get such an arrangement to work, a pinned black line-piece is needed, here the bQc2. 1.Sec4?, with three threats separated according to Black's captures of the try-piece: 1...Qxc4/Rxc4/Bxc4 2.Sdxf7/b6/Qc5; but 1...Rxe8! refutes. So **1.Sdc4!** Qxc4/Rxc4/Bxc4 2.Sexf7/b6/Rc6, and 1...Bxe7 2.Qxe7. Needless to say, it annoyed Michael that he was unable to find a way to get all three mates changed. Can it be done?



E Michael Lipton
V \$ Pr Die Schwalbe 1956

We're moving away from the half-battery now to examine some of Michael's other compositions, in which everything focuses on the interplay of white and black force. In **E**, dating from early in his career, we find Java-style dual-avoidance in both phases: 1.Se4? (>2.Q,Rd4) Qb2/Qg7 2.Sc3[Sf6?]/Sf6[Sb2?]; 1...Rxf5! **1.Re4!** (>2.Qd4) Qb2/Qg7 2.Rd4[Re5?]/ Re5[Rd4?]. In typical Lipton style the wQ is fully used to give additional mates: 1...b2/Bc3/dxc5 2.Qa2Qa8/Qe5 (1...Rxe4 2.dxe4).



F Michael Lipton
Sp Pr *The Problemist* 1966



G Michael Lipton
2 Pr *BCPS Ring Ty* 1966

Nowotnys feature again in **F**, quoted in Jeremy Morse's book of tasks and records. Astonishingly, there are no fewer than eight Nowotnys here, on 4 squares on the f- and g-files. In each case the pair of threatened mates is separated by the captures by R and B. 1.f3? (>2.Be2/Rc3) cxd1S! 1.Bf4? (>2.Sd6/Rd4) Sxd7! 1.f4? (>2.Se5/Rd4) Sc6! 1.g4? (>2.Be2/Rd4) cxd1Q! 1.Rg3? (>2.Se3/Se5) Re4! 1.Bg3? (>2.Sd6/Rc3) Sd5! 1.Sg3? (>2.Se5/Rc3) Rd4! Key **1.g3!** (>2.Rc3/Se5) Rd4 2.Rxd4. Only four Nowotnys in **G**, but what economy! 1.Be5? (>2.Re7/Sg7) Sxh7! 1.Sd4? (>2.Sf6/Rd8) Re7! 1.Rd4? (>2.Sd6/Sf6) Re6! **1.Bd4!** (>2.Rd8/Sg7) Re7 2.Rxe7. Michael was justifiably pleased with this setting.



H Michel Lipton
1 Pr *Deutsche Schachzeitung* 1957

Michael had the good fortune to reach maturity as a composer in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a time when the 2-mover was developing in various directions. Themes and structural concepts were expanding rapidly, though not so much in Great Britain as in other European countries. The next few examples of Michael's work will focus on this period. **H** is a convincing setting of radical change; the five set mates stemming from moves of the bQ with shut-offs by the Se6 are eliminated by the key, which pins both the Q and the wS. The set play consists of 1...Qxb5/Qb8/Qh8/Qh5/Qg3 2.Sc5/Sc7/Sg7/Sg5/Sf4. Key **1.Sexd4** (>2.Rxe5), and now come unpins with dual avoidance: 1...Sac3/Sec3 2.Sc2[Sf5?]/Sf5[Sc2?]; also 1...Sg3/Rf2 2.Qf3/Qxf2. Like many of Michael's problems from this period, **H** was quoted in the book we wrote along with Barry Barnes, *The Two-move Chess Problem: Tradition and Development*. I recall sending Michael a batch of diagrams showing suggested problems for the book, among which I inadvertently included a blank diagram. Michael sent this back with the note, 'Good economy, but not much play'.



I Michael Lipton
C *Probleemblad* 1956

Among the structural concepts worked by various composers at that time was mate transference, exemplified in **I**. In three phases White gives flights on different squares: 1.Sg6? (>2.Sh8) Rdxg6/Rhxf6/ Kxg6 2.d8S/h8S/Qxf5; 1...Rxh7! 1.Bf6? (>2.Re,Rgf8) Rdxh7/Rhxf6/Kxf6 2.d8S/h8S/Qxf5; 1...Rxd4! **1.Se6!** (>2.Sd8,g5) Rdxh7/Rhxf6/Kxf6 2.d8S/h8S/Qxf5.



J Michael Lipton

2 Pr American Chess Bulletin 1961

The gift of different flights leads to a transference of mates again in the Meredith **J**, in just two phases but with a changed mate thrown in. 1.dxc5? (-) Kxc5/dxc5/e4/S~ 2.Ra5/Qd8/Qg5/Qc4, but 1...Se4! refutes. So **1.dxe5!** (-) c4/dxe5/Kxe5/S~ 2.Ra5/Qd8/Qg5/Qe4.



K Michael Lipton

HM BCM 1962

The set play of **K** contains battery-mates with promotions, the promoted unit being determined by the need to guard the flight-square d6: 1...Rb8/Sb6/ B~2.cxb8Q/c8S/cxd8Q; also 1...Kxd6 2.Qd5. The key **1.Rc6**, though perhaps a little obvious in view of the wBb4, forces the promoting P to choose differently after the same defences: 2.cxb8S/c8Q/cxd8S. When the bK takes the new flight with 1...Kxc6, the mate 2.cxd8S recurs. Finally, 1...Sxc6 leads to 2.Qg4 – a neat mate to round things off.



L Michael Lipton

3 Pr BCPS-40 1959-60

In **L** any move by the Bd4 will threaten 2.Sd4, but the wB must take care; Black must not be allowed to capture on e6 until one of the pieces able to effect the capture has been shut off. 1.Bb2? (>2.Sd4) Rcx6/Rex6 2.Sxe1/Sc5; 1...Qxe6! 1.Bc2? (>2.Sd4) Rex6/Qxe6 2.Sb2/Sxe1; 1...Rcx6! **1.Be3!** (>2.Sd4) Qxe6/Rcx6 2.Sc5/Sb2. Cyclic mating permutation; the black units lose control of the white battery through self-pin.



M Michael Lipton

C problem 1960

Michael was well known for his views on standards of judging, often feeling his problems were undervalued. But he was surely right to be unimpressed by the commendation awarded to **M**. Set 1...Rxc3/Rxe3/Kxc3 2.Bb6/Be5/Be5.

The try 1.Se5? introduces the first changes:

1...Rxc3/Rxe3 2.Rxe4/Rxc4; 1...Kxc3!

Key **1.Sd6!** Rxc3/Rxe3/Kxc3/Kxe3/Ke5/Kc5

2.Sf5/Sb5/Qf6/Bb6/Rxe4/Rxc4.

This combines a Rukhlis and a Zagoruiko, incorporating star-flights as an extra feature.



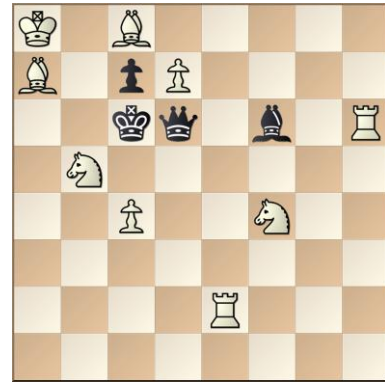
N Michael Lipton
3 Pr *Die Schwalbe* 1966

At first sight **N** looks similar, with its Rs standing beside one another. But the content is more complex, with changed play, transferences and pin-mates galore. 1.Be2? (>2.Se5) Rxd3/Qxd3 2.Qxe4/Qxd4; 1...Bxd3! 1.g8Q? (>2.Rc5/Rxd4) R4xd5/Qxd5/R7xd5 2.Qxe4/Qxd4/Qc8; 1...Rf7! 1.Qe6? (>2.Rc5/Rxd4/Qc6) R4xd5/Qxd5 2.Rxe4/Rxd4; 1...R7xd5! Key **1.Qe2!** (>2.Se5) Rxd3/Qxd3/Bxd3 2.Rxe4/Rxd4/Bb3. Some commentators were sceptical, claiming that the variations lacked sparkle, but the sheer quantity of play is impressive in itself.



O Michael Lipton
3 Pr *Die Schwalbe* 1962

O exemplifies threat correction – doubled! 1.Rxd2? (>2.Sd6) Be5 2.Rxe5; 1...Ra7! 1.Rd3!? (>2.Re3) cxd3/Kxd3/Bd4 2.Sd6/Sc5/Rxd4; 1...Be5! Attention now switches to the other wR: 1.Rxg5? (>2.Sc5) Bd4 2.Rxd4; 1...Ra5! Once again the threat must be corrected: **1.Rf5!** (>2.Bc2) gxf5/Kxf5 2.Sc5/Sd6. Unlike **M**, this problem was appropriately rewarded in its tourney.



P M. Lipton & J.M. Rice
3 Pr *Die Schwalbe* 1957

The Lipton/Rice composing duo produced a large number of originals over a long period of around 67 years. Being always fascinated by half-pins, Michael came up with the basic layout of **P** and then we worked on it together. The black moves shown are just some of those possible. Set 1...Bg5/Qxf4 2.Sd4/d8S. 1.Sg6? (-) Bg5/Qf4 2.Se5/Se7. 1...Qc5! Key **1.Se6!** (-) Bg5/Qf4/Qxe6/Qxd7 2.Sed4/Sd8/Rxe6/Bb7. Half-pin Zagoruiko.



Q M. Lipton & J.M. Rice
4 HM *Die Schwalbe* 1960

For **Q** we worked on an idea that had already brought me some success: self-pin of 2 different white units followed by unpins. For this example, we found an extra resource that added a third phase and so turned the problem into a Zagoruiko. 1.Bc8? (-) Kc4/Sc4 2.Ba6/Bf5; 1...c5! 1.Bxc6? Kc4/Sc4 2.Bb5/Be4; 1...Sd1! **1.Sxc6!** (-) Kc4/Sc4/Sd1/Sa~ 2.Se5/Sb4/Ba6/Rbxc3.



R J.M. Rice & M. Lipton
3 Pr *Problemblad* 2005

In **R** the wQ must somehow be brought into use. 1.Qa2? gives her access to a8: 1...Sc~/Sb3 2.c5/Qa8; but 1...Sa6! scuppers the plan. Moving Bc3 or Rb4 might work, but all attempts fail: 1.Be5? (>2.Qd4/Rf4) Se6! 1.Bf6? (>2.Qd4,e5) Sf3! 1.Ra4? (-) Sc~ 2.Qb7; 1...Sb3! 1.Rb5? (-) Sc~ 2.Re5; 1...Sd7! 1.Rb6? (-) Sc~ 2.Re6; 1...Sd7! So only **1.Rb8!** (-) succeeds: 1...Sb3/Se6/Se~ 2.Rbe8/Qb7/Bf3.



S J.M. Rice & M. Lipton
1 Pr *StrateGems* 2000

The idea for the 3-mover **S** was that a black Grimshaw should be answered by castling on each side. Our first

setting had a checking key, and although it worked perfectly, I thought a quieter introductory move might be a possibility. In the event the construction proved to be extremely difficult. **1.f5** (>2.Qe3+ Kg2 3.Qxe4) Bd3 2.0-0 (>3.Se1) Bxc2/Sg3 3.Be2/Qxg3; 1...Rd3 2.0-0 (>3.Se1) Rd1/Rxc3 3.Qe3/Sd4; 1...Rd1+ 2.Kxd1 (>3.Se1/Sd4) Ba4/Sg3 3.Be2/Qxg3.

Thank you, Michael, for your companionship and inspiration, not to mention that wonderful sense of humour of yours, displayed in your endless jokes and (mainly unprintable) limericks. The problem world will assuredly miss you.

How to Solve a Study – solution

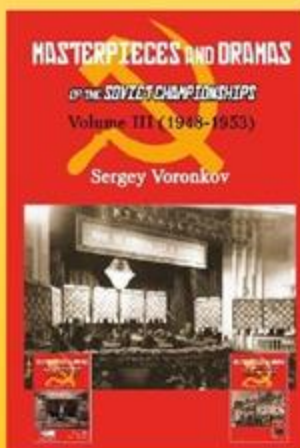
1.Bd4+ Kxd4 2.0-0-0+ Kc3 3.Ne4+ Kb3 4.Rd3+ Ka2 5.Nc3+ Ka1 6.Rd5 Ra2 7.Rb5 and mates.

Another castler that has a tough-to-anticipate rook move late in the solution. As in the Katsnelson study, castling is used to give check and attack an enemy rook, both at the same time - castling isn't a mere defensive move but rather a way to move two pieces into the attack simultaneously.

EVENTS CALENDAR

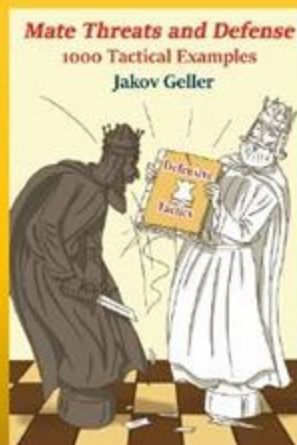
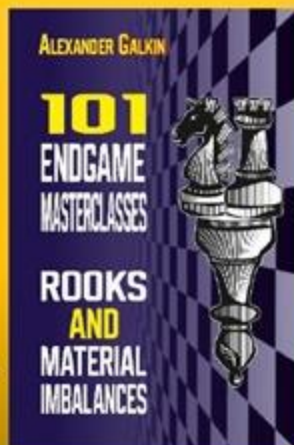
The full events calendar is updated daily, and can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>

Week Beginning 17 July	
20-30 July 2023	British Chess Championships 2023, Leicester (20th-30th)
22 July 2023	UKCC Southern Gigafinal, Esher
22 July 2023	Poplar Rapid Tournament
22 July 2023	Ealing FIDE Rapidplay
Week Beginning 24 July	
24 July-4 August 2023	North London Summer Chess Camp 2023, Coppetts Wood
24-28 July 2023	Il Kingston Invitational - Masters (IM Norm), Kingston
25 July 2023	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapid
26 July 2023	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club
30 July 2023	10th Graeme Thomson Memorial Rapidplay, Bristol
Week Beginning 31 July	
3 August 2023	Hendon FIDE Blitz
4-6 August 2023	Lancaster Standard Play Congress 2023
5-13 August 2023	Split Open 2023
5 August 2023	Golders Green FIDE Rapidplay 2023 Open
5 August 2023	Greenwich Peninsula Chess Rapid 2023
Week Beginning 7 August	
7-11 August 2023	Psyon Chess Masters - IM Norm Invitational Tournament, London
12 August 2023	Poplar Rapid Tournament
12-13 August 2023	East Midlands FIDE Congress, Wellingborough
13 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess Rapidplay
Week Beginning 14 August	
14 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess, Mini Tournament A
16 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess, Mini Tournament A
17 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess, Mini Tournament A
18 August 2023	Manchester Junior Chess Congress
18-20 August 2023	Manchester Summer Chess Congress
18-20 August 2023	51st Thanet & East Kent Chess Congress, Sandwich
19 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess Junior Chess Open Swiss A
19-20 July 2023	London Montague Congress
19 July 2023	Greater London Chess Club Summer Rapidplay
19 July 2023	Maidenhead Junior Tournament August 2-23
20 August 2023	London Montague Blitz
Week Beginning 21 August	
24-28 August 2023	Northumbria Masters, Forest Hall
26-28 August 2023	15th Leyland Congress
26 August 2023	2nd Brentwood Rapidplay Adults and Juniors 2023
26 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess August FIDE Rated Round Robin A
26 August 2023	World Chess League Live 2022-23 Playoffs, Chess.com
27 August 2023	Coulsdon Chess Juioir Chess Open Swiss A



New books from Elk and Ruby

- Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships: Volume III (1948-1953) by *Sergey Voronkov*
- The Pawn Study Composer's Manual by *Mikhail Zinar*
- 101 Endgame Masterclasses: Rooks and Material Imbalances by *Alexander Galkin*
- Mate Threats and Defense - 1000 Tactical Examples by *Jakov Geller*



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