



December 2023

Chess *Moves*



**Reports from the UK Open Blitz 2023,
the London Chess Classic ... and much
more in our Christmas edition!**

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the December edition of *ChessMoves*!

We lead this month with the outstanding news that Mickey Adams has won the London Chess Classic. We get used to Mickey winning chess tournaments, but this result, as Mickey himself says, is one of his very best. We congratulate Shreyas Royal on his well-deserved second GM norm, and congratulations also to Malcolm Pein and his team on organising another very successful Classic. In Malcolm's own words, 'It could not have gone much better'. We have a comprehensive report on the tournament from Peter Wells inside, in which he gives his reflections on the tournament and annotates some of the Classic's key games and positions.

We also feature the UK Open Blitz finals, with GM Eldar Gasanov winning the UK Open Blitz title and IMs Andrew Horton and Ameet Ghasi sharing the English Blitz title. Junior players prevailed in the Women's section, with Elis Dicen winning the UK Open Women's Blitz title and sharing the English Women's Blitz title with Bodhana Sivanandan.

ChessMoves is always first with reports and views from around the country, and I would like to encourage you to send in your news, as we are keen to publicise all that is good about our wonderful game.

This month's *ChessMoves* has its usual wide range of articles which are bound to attract your interest. In addition you can download a PGN of all the games in this edition here – <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/December-Chessmoves.pgn>. You will need to use Chessbase or a PGN viewer to access the games. There are various free chess programs with PGN viewers available online for desktop access, and you can also download a PGN/chess viewer app to your iOS or Android-based phone. Please contact the office if you need any help.

Have a great festive season!

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

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EVENTS

UK Open Blitz Finals 2023 by Nigel Towers



The finals for the UK Open Blitz Championships 2023 were held at the Woodland Grange, Leamington Spa on 2nd December. The Championships included an Open and a Women's final, each event having 16 players with 15 rounds of blitz games at 3|2 time control in an all-play-all format.



The winners and UK Open Blitz champions for 2023 are:

- **UK Open Blitz Champion** – GM Eldar Gasanov
- **UK Open Women's Champion** – Elis Dicen

Congratulations to Eldar and Elis and well done to all who took part. Final standings and titles awarded for the two events are as follows, including UK Open Blitz and English Blitz titles:

Open Championship



Open Winner - GM Eldar Gasanov



Joint English Blitz Champions IM's Andrew Horton and Ameet Ghasi

Rk.		Name	Rating	Pts.
1		GM Gasanov, Eldar UK Open Blitz Champion 2023	2465	11½
2		IM Horton, Andrew P Joint English Open Blitz Champion 2023	2393	10½
3		IM Ghasi, Ameet K	2558	10½

Joint English Open Blitz Champion 2023					
4		FM	O’Gorman, Tom	2288	9½
5		FM	Dong, Bao Nghia	2305	9
6		GM	Speelman, Jon S	2523	8½
7		FM	Kozusek, Daniel	2306	8
8			Boswell, Jacob Connor	2128	8
9		IM	Sarakauskas, Gediminas	2343	8
10		IM	Camacho Collados, Jose	2265	7½
11		IM	Willow, Jonah B	2368	7
12		GM	Arkell, Keith C	2393	6
13		IM	Al-Saffar, Araz Basim Mohammed S	2301	5
14			Maxwell, Daniel	2109	5
15			Norris, Ethan	2068	3½
16			Sanger, Jake M	1995	2½

Women’s Championship



Pictured left to right – Elmira Mirzoeva, Eunice Mei-Xian Hng, Bodhana Sivanandan and Elis Dicen

Rk.		Name	Rtg	Pts.
1		Dicen, Elis Denele, UK Open Blitz Women’s Champion and Joint English Women’s Blitz Champion 2023	1916	11
2		Sivanandan, Bodhana, WCM Joint English Women’s Blitz Champion – 2023	1944	11
3		WFM Hng, Mei-Xian Eunice	1949	10½
4		WGM Mirzoeva, Elmira	2078	10½
5		Hryshchenko, Kamila	2010	10½
6		WFM Hng, Mei-En Emmanuelle	2116	8½
7		Orlovska, Madara	1970	8
8		Barwick, Carmel J	1845	7½
9		Bhatia, Kanishka	1768	7½

10		Hariharan, Shambavi	1723	7½
11		Sainbayar, Anuurai	1496	4½
12		Kong, Emma	1399	4
13		Briggs, Irina	1560	2
14		Walker, Elmira	1578	1½
15		Ou, Siyao	1387	0½

Further details are available at the link below:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/uk-blitz-championships-2023/>

All games were played on live boards and broadcast via the DGT cloud and various online providers. We will also be organising commentary for the finals on Twitch.tv.

The full set of pairings and results for the Championships are available at these links:

Open Championship

<https://chess-results.com/tnr851244.aspx?lan=1>

Women’s Championship

<https://chess-results.com/tnr851246.aspx?lan=1&art=1&flag=30>

All games were played on live boards and broadcast via the DGT cloud and online providers with games available at the links below:

DGT Livechess Cloud

Open Blitz 2023 (UK Blitz Championship Open Final 2023)

<https://view.livechesscloud.com/#78a3fab-c75c-41fc-ade4-87908542c7ee>

Women Blitz 2023 (UK Blitz Championship Women Final 2023)

<https://view.livechesscloud.com/#d63a360b-ac5b-4d72-a1ae-cb6e5568f6a4>

Lichess

Open

<https://lichess.org/broadcast/uk-blitz-championship-open-final-2023/round-1/IVIdHrg5>

Women

<https://lichess.org/broadcast/uk-blitz-championship-women-final-2023/round-1/GEw8Nckx>

Chess.com

<https://www.chess.com/events/info/2023-uk-blitz-championship-final>

Below, Eldar Gasanov annotates five of his games from the event ...

After a tough and nervous UK Open Blitz qualifier in London, the finals in Leamington Spa were just a pleasure to play in.

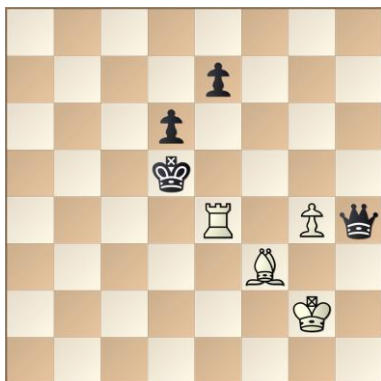
Playing blitz is always about luck, and if you have it on the right day you need it you can win. A blitz tournament is

quite unpredictable - anyone has a chance to beat anyone.

I think that one of the key moments in the final for me was my 11th round game with Ameet Ghasi.

Gasanov, Eldar - Ghasi, Ameet K

2023 UK Open Blitz 02.12.2023



Ameet has been trying to break the fortress for the last 80 moves, but he overpresses with his last move 23..Kxd5?. After:

124.g5!

It suddenly turns out that Black is losing his queen.

124...Qxe4 125.Bxe4+ Kxe4 126.g6

1-0

Interestingly, in the next game there was a similar motif.

Kozusek, Daniel - Willow, Jonah B

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



20...cxd4? 20...Qh4=

21.Rxe6 Probably Jonah considered only **21.Bxe6+ Bxe6 22.Rxe6 Qf7.**

21...Bxe6 22.Rxe6+ and Black is not able to save his queen.

1-0

Games in tournaments with a short time control usually have a lot of moments to learn from but are often about missed opportunities. I would like to share a few of those moments with you.

Al-Saffar, Araz Basim Mohammed S - Speelman, Jon S

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



The game continued:

14.Kxd2 14.Qxf7+!! Kxf7 15.Bxd8 Raxd8 16.Kxd2 and White is a healthy pawn up with good winning chances.

14...Qxe7 White is slightly better, but eventually Black won on move 28.

0-1

We can see the power of coordinated knights in the next position.

Sarakauskas, Gediminas - Camacho Collados, Jose

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



23...Rxe1+ Black misses a forced win: **23...Nh3+! 24.gxh3 Rxe1+ 25.Qxe1 Nf3+.**

24.Qxe1 Nxd3 25.cxd3 Nxb3 26.Qc3+–

1–0

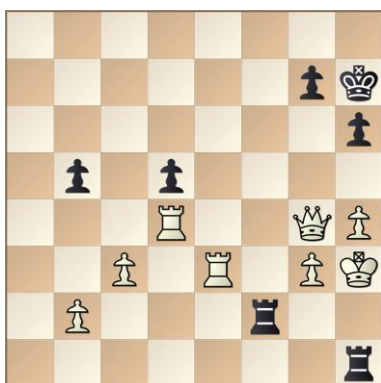
And finally, my own missed win.

O’Gorman, Tom - Gasanov, Eldar
2023 UK Open, 02.12.2023



34...Qh3 After this the game is about equal, but Black eventually lost.

34...Rxf2!! 35.Qxe6+ (35.Rxg4 Rf1+ 36.Kg2 R8f2+ 37.Kh3 Rh1#) Kh7! 36.Qxg4 Rf1+ 37.Kg2 R8f2+ 38.Kh3 Rh1#



1–0

Commentary



WIM Natasha Regan provided commentary on the live board broadcasts from the finals on her Twitch channel at https://www.twitch.tv/WIM_natasharegan starting with Round 2 at 12.20pm on Saturday and running until

the end of Round 15 at about 6.30pm. Natasha was joined by a top level commentary team with the detailed schedule as follows –

12.20pm – 2.00pm – Rounds 2-5

Stanley Badacsonyi and WIM Natasha Regan

2.15pm – 4.15pm – Rounds 6-10

GM Matthew Sadler and WIM Natasha Regan

4.30pm – finish (around 6.30 pm) – Rounds 11-15

GM Peter Wells and WIM Natasha Regan

The full commentary stream is available on the ECF’s Youtube account:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/EnglishChessFederation>

London Chess Classic – Adams Wins with ‘Best Ever Result’ while Royal Achieves Second GM Norm



GM Mickey Adams had what he said was probably his best-ever result to win the London Chess Classic 2023 at the age of 52. He clinched the title with a draw against top English junior 14-year-old IM Shreyas Royal, who described himself as ‘really happy and really excited’ to make a second grandmaster norm.

A full report on the event can be found here:

<https://www.chess.com/news/view/london-chess-classic-2023-round-9?fbclid=IwAR2HTVbPEyyYjbcXUJLZ2HvpOcmelj7XQSJt wVWcJiTz8zOzYeui56XAArk>

Here’s the cross table of the event -

Rk.	Name	Rtg	FED	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Pts.	TB1	TB2	TB3	TB4	TB5
1	GM Adams, Michael	2661	ENG	*	1	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	6	0	3	1	4	26.5
2	GM Tabatabaei, M. Amin	2692	IRI	0	*	½	1	1	½	0	½	1	1	5.5	0	4	2	5	22.8
3	GM Gukesh, D	2720	IND	½	½	*	1	1	0	½	0	½	1	5	1	3	0	4	22
4	GM Volokitin, Andrei	2659	UKR	½	0	0	*	1	1	1	½	½	½	5	0	3	0	5	21.3
5	GM Bartel, Mateusz	2659	POL	0	0	0	0	*	1	1	1	½	1	4.5	1	4	2	5	17.3
6	GM Niemann, Hans Moke	2667	USA	½	½	1	0	0	*	1	½	½	½	4.5	0	2	0	5	20
7	IM Royal, Shreyas	2438	ENG	½	1	½	0	0	0	*	1	½	½	4	1	2	1	5	18.3
8	GM Moussard, Jules	2635	FRA	0	½	1	½	0	½	0	*	1	½	4	0	2	1	4	17.5
9	GM Vitiugov, Nikita	2704	ENG	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	*	½	3.5	0	0	0	4	16
10	GM Mcshane, Luke J	2631	ENG	½	0	½	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	3	0	0	0	4	13.5

In Mickey's own words, 'I think it's huge because to win any tournament at the age of 52 is just really amazing, and this one is a completely different level to the other successes I had this year, so I think in many ways it's probably my best-ever result! Because other tournaments that I won were when I was in my prime as a player, and it's completely different now, a completely different challenge to play when you're playing people so much younger than yourself.'

Mickey said of Shreyas that 'at his best, he has no problem to play with high-2600 players.' Adams noted a big recent improvement in Shreyas's play: 'It's just a huge step forward for him, I think, because I was checking his games a bit before the Grand Swiss. Of course, he was a promising player, but suddenly he's just jumped hugely in level. The Grand Swiss and here, he just looks very accomplished, totally happy playing with top players, and it's just a massive leap forward for him, and it's great news.'

Shreyas described himself as 'really happy and really excited' to make a second grandmaster norm. Shreyas, who came into the event rated around 200 points lower than any other player, drew in the last round to finish on 4/9 and post a 2600+ performance. Shreyas said, 'No, not really, actually,' when asked if he'd felt pressure before the final round, later explaining that it made all the difference that he needed just a draw. 'If you have the white pieces against Mickey and you need a draw, I think he's probably actually the best guy to face. If you need to beat him, then I think he's the worst to face!'

Peter Wells has provided some commentary on the event together with some annotated games below.

The Return of the London Chess Classic: Some Reflections by Peter Wells

It is sometimes amazing what can be achieved at the last minute, and if the fortnight or so between the announcement of the 13th London Chess Classic and the start of play did not afford very much time for anticipation, it nonetheless gave us plenty to look forward to. Despite some regrets at the lack of public access to the venue and the absence of supporting events – aside from a ProBiz Cup which proved as successful as ever - the tournament in other ways represented a return to something enticingly reminiscent of its early glory days. The top English players were not quite up against the world's very best this time it is true, since the extraordinary Indian talent Dommaraju Gukesh - still just

17 years old - was the only representative from the world top 20. Nonetheless, the tournament did pit three of our best players and one rising talent against a very powerful field at classical time controls – an event strong enough, indeed, to count as part of the FIDE circuit which afforded it the possibility to influence qualification for the 2024 Candidates. Moreover, if the organisers – Chess in Schools and Communities with its energetic Chief Executive Malcolm Pein – were looking to maximise both media interest and entertaining fighting chess, then their selection of players worked supremely well.

The early interest focused heavily on both Gukesh's aspiration to reach the Candidates – which essentially required his winning the tournament - and the participation of the controversial Hans Niemann. Gukesh was looking to return to his best after two shaky (by his exalted standards) performances in the Isle of Man and Doha which I wrote about last month. Niemann, by contrast, arrived fresh from an extraordinary success in Croatia which for many helped to confirm his immense ability, but which also reminded us that for some time to come there will be no easy way to shake off the suspicions of others.

As the tournament progressed the narrative developed in a way which I guess tournament organisers dream of. It was the incredibly high proportion of decisive games and fighting chess which increasingly became the centre of attention. Even after a relatively peaceful final round, decisive games still outnumbered draws, a rare outcome at this level. Of course, this achievement doesn't 'necessarily' correlate strongly with an absence of errors – as we shall see, there were an unusual number of serious mistakes and dramatic swings – but more of this later.

For the other story which developed in the final days was of possible English success, which finally culminated in a GM norm for Shreyas Royal and clear first place for Michael Adams. Back in the September issue of *ChessMoves*, when covering the British Championship, I cautioned against underestimating the scale of Adams' achievement there, and similarly in the English Championship and the Cambridge International earlier in the year. He may have been the top seed in these events but proving that superiority at the age of 52 is no mean feat. In the meantime, he has also notched up the World Senior (Over 50) title as well, so his victory in the Classic was the culmination of a truly remarkable year. However, as Mickey himself said, this result was something else. To win an event of this strength at his age is a staggering achievement, which he suggested might be the result which he is most proud of from his entire career. It is undoubtedly testimony to his continued professionalism, hard work, and a style which ages much better than most.

Even as I was writing these words, the legendary Vishy Anand tweeted, hailing Mickey's result as 'a victory for our generation' (I hope I am just about young enough to join in with this bit 😊) adding 'When I look at his games, what comes to mind is how simple chess looks...the pieces simply go to good squares and that is it'.

Michael Adams – Mateusz Bartel

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 3

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 Nd7 6.0–0 a5!?

One of those moves which barely existed even three to four years ago, but has now been tested innumerable times. Clearly the potential weakness of the b5-square discourages Black from 'undermining the pawn chain from the base' thereafter. However, the idea is rather to continue with an ...f6 break and - assuming that White will want to prevent the further advance of the pawn in order to secure b3 for his knight as Mickey did - throwing in these two a-pawn moves seems to make sense for the related reason that any c4-break by White thereafter will in turn weaken the b4-square – albeit not to quite such a drastic degree.

7.a4 f6 8.Be3 Qb6!?



I suspect that this new idea has as much to do with preparing ...Bc5 as it does with grabbing the b-pawn, although the possibility of the latter certainly gives White something to think about. In general in the Advance Caro-Kann - since White enjoys extra space - Black often suffers a bit of developmental congestion; in particular, either of the two kingside minor pieces would often sit most happily on the e7-square given the chance, which creates a decent case for exchanging one of them off. For all that, I suspect that while 8...Qc7 9.c4! also looks scary, 8...dxe5 may over time prove to be the soundest try.

9.Nbd2! fxe5

I should declare that I am something of a fan of Mateusz Bartel. I thoroughly enjoyed his Chess24 course on

exchange sacrifices, featuring much striking play from his own games – although it was a bit sad for me that it was Luke McShane who turned out to be the victim of the rather nice example which he generated here in the fourth round. I also admire the fact that he took to YouTube to analyse his games from the tournament regardless of whether he won or lost (draws did not feature for him until the final round!), suggesting to me a player for whom passion for chess tends to trump considerations of ego. Indeed, at the point where he was analysing 9...Qxb2 in particular, I rather wished that it was me rather than my seven year old daughter who had taken to Duolingo to learn some Polish. All I can say is that he seemed to be focusing on the natural 10.Rb1, which my engine finds quite unclear after 10...Qxc2 11.Rxb7 Qxd1, but there are other moves to consider – even the 'ugly' 10.Bd3! Bxd3 11.cxd3 Qb6 12.exf6! - using the weakness of e6 to discourage 12...Ngxf6 - which would likely lead to some nervous moments for the defender.

10.Nxe5 Nxe5 11.dxe5 Bc5 12.Bxc5 Qxc5 13.Nb3!

Clearly the reorganisation that Mickey wants – eyeing the d4-square, safe in the knowledge that after 13...Qxc2?! 14.Qxc2 Bxc2 15.Nd4 White will net the e6-pawn, since 15...Bf5 16.g4 does not help the defence.

14.Bh5+!

A typical Mickey nuance. Rather than the routine 14.Nd4 Nh6, the text teases out another weakness at a moment where 14...Bg6 15.Bxg6+ hxg6 16.Qg4! would be awkward to meet.

14...g6 15.Be2 h5 16.Qd2 Qc7 17.Bd3 Nh6

This might have been a moment for Black to consider competing for the d4-square with 17...c5! since the check on b5 is not terminal, and although 18.Bxf5 gxf5 19.Qc3 b6 20.Nd4 looks threatening, exchanging queens with 20...Qe5 21.Nxe6 Qxc3 22.bxc3 offers chances to defend.

18.Nd4 Qe7

Not now 18...Qxe5 since 19.Bxf5 Nxf5 20.Nxe6! crashes through.

19.Ra3!

Finding an upside to both the advances of the a-pawns and the exchange of the dark-squared bishops! Another illustration of Vishy's comment that Mickey makes it all look so simple, but – much as those who sought to emulate Karpov's style have found – this alertness to

positional nuance is among the hardest of chess skills to learn, never mind replicate.

19...Bxd3 20.Rxd3 Nf5 21.Nxf5 gxf5 22.c4?!

The right pawn break in principle, but - unusually for Mickey - this might be a bit too direct, since the injection of extra tension in the centre at a point when the e-pawn is not yet defended affords Black an unexpected opportunity to find a relatively safe home for his king.



22...Kf7?

Probably the decisive error of the game. It is easy to see why Black might not have been hugely enthusiastic to castle long here, but it was in fact the safest, since neither 22...0-0-0! 23.cxd5 Rxd5 24.Rxd5 exd5 25.Qxa5 Qxe5, nor 23.Qxa5 dxc4! are entirely convincing. Of course White can play more slowly, but then the degree of control which Black enjoys over the b4-square (alluded to earlier) may reveal itself as a more tangible asset for the defence.

23.cxd5 exd5 24.Re1 Ke6

A very ambitious idea, but it is not too surprising that it falls short. There is a fairly clear hierarchy of effective blockaders in chess, with knights generally appearing at the top and queens often thought to be at the bottom, but 'the king in the middle game' must put in a serious bid for that spot too. Mickey simply opens a second front, which proves to be too much for Bartel to cope with.

25.Rg3 Qf7 26.b4! h4 27.Rb3 f4 28.bxa5 Rag8 29.Qb4 Rh7?!

It looks more natural to threaten mate with 29...Qg7 – in spite of allowing White's queen to enter d6 – but White can calmly respond with 30 g3! since after 30...hxg3 31.Qd6+! Kf5 32.fxg3! it becomes clear fairly quickly that Black's errant king is in a lot more danger than White's.

30.Qd6+ Kf5



31.Rxb7!

A nice deflection to break through. White will win back the rook by force, and the combination of his opponent's exposed king and his own powerful e-pawn makes for a straightforward conversion.

31...Qxb7 32.Qf6+ Kg4 33.Qe6+ Kh5 34.Qxg8 Rg7 35.Qf8 d4 36.e6 c5 37.Qxg7!

1-0

One of the great fascinations for me with this tournament came from the stark clash of styles and approaches. In particular, I was struck by two of the players: Amin Tabatabaei and the aforementioned Mateusz Bartel, who injected a highly creative approach into the opening with a seeming willingness to embrace high levels of risk. Two examples (with notes, hopefully light in the variations) which I especially enjoyed.

Mateusz Bartel – Jules Moussard

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 2

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.Qb3 c5 5.a3 Ba5 6.g4 h6 7.Rg1 Nc6 8.h4



This is definitely not the position you get with White if you are wedded to your engine during preparation! Although at first it may seem logical to attack on the kingside with the black bishop absent from the action on a5, it is not

clear that White's development really supports such ambitions either. More specifically, the well-known defensive technique (notably from the Sicilian Scheveningen) of trying to force the issue with 8...h5! before the attacker is ready to open files at leisure might have worked quite well here. Moussard's response – a strike back in the centre – clearly has plenty of pedigree too.

8... Nd4 9.Nxd4 cxd4 10.Nb5 d5 11.c5 Ne4 12.Nxd4?!

12.Qf3! using the threat of the fork to prevent 12...Nxc5 looks more consistent.

12...Nxc5 13.Qb5+ Nd7 14.b4 Bb6 15.Bb2 a6 16.Qa4



16...0-0?

Whatever happened to good old materialism when you need it? Of course, there may always be the nagging doubt in the defender's mind that since pawn storms are primarily designed to open files, then automatically opening files by snatching pawns may not be the optimal way to pre-empt them. Nonetheless, pawn storms can – as will be the case here – also end with pawns wedged unpleasantly near to your king, at which point the case for having removed them in the first place becomes rather clearer. For all this, I am surprised that Moussard wasn't confident that 16...Qxh4! was the best way to thwart White's attacking ambitions, particularly as he was brave enough to grab an h-pawn against Gukesh just two rounds later which was laced with a fair bit more poison (although he got away with that one, as we shall see later...).

17.g5 Ne5 18.gxh6 g6 19.Qb3 Qxh4 20.h7+ Kh8 21.Qe3



For all that Black could still be OK here, this feels like just the sort of position which his opponent's opening was designed to reach. In the midst of a playful exchange with Anish Giri (on what used to be recognisably known as 'Twitter' in the good old days 😊) Mateusz promised a 'potential course on "get an inferior position and have some fun"' which 'might spice your chess up'. Now I must say I am pretty sure that the notion that 'getting an inferior position' is part of the game plan is just banter, but 'having fun' may well be a genuine component, whilst a willingness to free oneself from an obsession with engine assessments in the interests of setting the opponent fresh challenges is absolutely the crux of this approach. It is worth reflecting on how the 'natural' move which Moussard chose here – plugging the dangerous long diagonal with a pawn – virtually loses, whilst the engine's preferred move 21...Qf6 involves placing the queen on that very key diagonal with only some very case-specific and tough to calculate counter-pins preserving its safety.

21...f6?

Presumably missing the elegant simplicity of White's reply. I suspect that 21...Nc4! would be unlikely to occur in a human game, but it is worth a look, because the tactical blows on both sides well illustrate the complexity of the position after 22.Nf5+ Nxb2 23.Qe5+! f6 24.Nxh4 Bxf2+! 25.Kxf2 fxe5+ 26.Ke1 Kxh7 27.Rc1! when Black probably needs to parry the rook's seventh rank influence with 27...Bd7 28. Rc7 Rad8, but White still has good compensation for his pawns after 29. Bh3, with active pieces and plenty of threats. As I mentioned, 21...Qf6! Instead seems to be the best. But this again goes against enough human intuitions that it is difficult to find. Essentially Black is continuing to show that the queen is tied to the awkward e3-square, since even after 22.Bc3 Re8, for example, 23.Qg3?! is inadvisable due to 23...Bxd4! 24.Bxd4 Nf3+ liquidating key attacking pieces.

22.Nf3! Nxf3+ 23.Qxf3

Suddenly 21...f6 is revealed to be very weakening, since there is no decent way to defend both g6 and f6 at once.

23...e5 24.Rxg6 Be6 25.Rc1 Rf7 26.e3 Re8 27.Bd3 Bd8



28.Bxe5!

A very elegant tactic. The bishop is immune from capture, since 28...fxe6 29.Rxe6! Rxf3 30.Rxe8+ leads to a very large accident on Black's back rank.

28...Rxxh7 29.Rxf6! Qh1+ 30.Ke2

Black can finally exchange queens, but only at the expense of an immediately destructive recapture!

1-0

M. Amin Tabatabaei - Nikita Vitiugov

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 7

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.f4 e5 7.Nf3 Nbd7 8.a4 Qc7 9.g4!?



Not an entirely new move, but so far as I can see it had only been played once at the start of the year, so certainly fresh and exciting territory. From the point of view of preparation, it is fair to say that blindly following the engine will not bring you here, but even after Vitiugov's very appropriate initial response he is faced with tough and unusual decisions from a very early stage.

9... d5!

Again the classical blow in the centre in response to an early flank attack. A much better response than 9...exf4 10.g5 Nh5 11.Nd5 Qd8 from E. L'Ami,-Yilmaz Wijk aan Zee 2023, when something like 12.Nd4! g6 13.Be2 Nb6 14.Bxh5 Nxd5 15.exd5 gxh5 16.Bxf4 would have offered White excellent play.

10.g5 d4 11.gxf6 dxc3 12.fxg7 Bxg7 13.f5



13...cxb2 14.Bxb2 Qb6

When I first saw this I thought it looked a bit risky. However moves such as 14...Nc5 would leave e5 very weak after the simple 15.Rg1 Bf6 16.Qd5, so there may be no easier solution.

15.Ba3 Qe3+?!

This, however, probably does cross the line into excessive bravery, but what I want to bring home is the practical difficulty of the choices Black already faces. The engine already mentions some interesting counter-attacking options, including 15...Nf6 16.Bd3 Bxf5! with an early ...0-0-0 and ...e4 on the table in some lines. However, this would be hard enough to decide on at the best of times, and it is worth recalling that Vitiugov may have had little idea yet as to the depth of his opponent's opening preparation.

16.Be2 Qxe4 17.Rg1 Bf8 18.Qd2!

For the moment 18.Ng5 can be met by a rather disruptive 18...Bb4+!, so Tabatabaei removes that possibility.

18...Nc5?!

Again, Black's best line requires impressive calculation, and even at the end of 18...Nf6! 19.Bxf8 Rxf8 20.Qd6 Nd5 21.Rd1 Qb4+! 22.Qxb4 Nxb4 23.f6 Be6 24.Nxe5 White retains the more active pieces.

19.Ng5! Qh4+ 20.Rg3 h6 21.Nxf7! Ne4

21...Kxf7 22 Qd5+ is clearly no fun at all for the defence.

22.Qd5 Nxc3 23.Qxe5+ Kxf7 24.hxc3 Qh1+ 25.Kf2 Qc6



26.Bh5+?

It is hard for to gauge quite how surprising this slip is, since I was guilty of watching it at the time in the company of an engine – a habit which tends to persuade spectators that every error constitutes some kind of unforgivable negligence. I think that even in the heat of battle, it probably should have been clear enough that since 26.Qxh8 Bxa3 27.Bh5+ Ke7 28.Re1+ just wins and 28...Bc5+ 27.Bxc5 Qxc5+ 28.Kg2 Bxf5 29.Bh5+ Ke6 30.Re1+ leads to similar carnage, it was right to take the rook. At least, I am confident in asserting that this decision was easier than the many impressive things which White got right in this game. Still we would then have been deprived of some notable endgame artistry.

26...Kg8 27.Bxf8 Rh7 28.Bg6 Rc7 29.Bxh6 Qc5+ 30.Qxc5 Rxc5 31.g4 Rxc2+ 32.Kg3 Bd7 33.Re1 Rc6 34.Re7 Be8

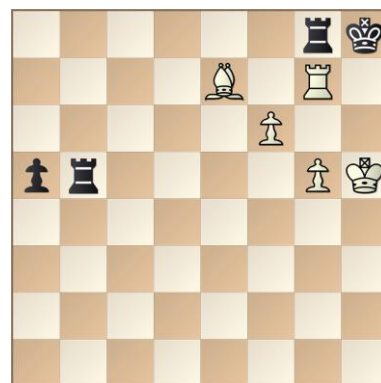
I don't want to clog up this phase of the game with too many notes, but it is worth observing that seeking to return the exchange to seek solace in a rook and opposite-coloured bishop ending with 34...Rxc2+ 35.fxc2 Bxa4 fails to stem the flow of White's direct attack after 36.Rg7+ Kh8 37.Rh7+ Kg8 38.Bg7! Bc2 39.Bb2, when Black is obliged to give up a piece to avoid mate with 39...Bxc2 40.Rg7+.

They (rightly) say that opposite-coloured bishops tend to favour an attack on the king in the middlegame, but one reason this can be a tough judgement call is that these 'middlegame' features can sometimes persist through a lot of liquidation of pieces as well.

35.Bh7+ Kh8 36.Bf4 Rc5 37.f6 Bxa4 38.Bg6 Rf8 39.g5?!

For the second time in the game a rather odd decision – presumably the product of time trouble. This time I didn't need an engine to see that that 39.Bh6! leads to a straightforward win.

39...Rc3+ 40.Kf2 Bc2 41.Bxc2 Rxc2+ 42.Kg3 Rc5 43.Rxb7 Rb5 44.Ra7 Kg8 45.Rg7+ Kh8 46.Kg4 a5 47.Bd6 Rd8 48.Be7 Rc8 49.Kh5 Rg8



At first glance it looked as if Vitiugov was pulling off another of this tournament's miracle escapes, since 50. Rxc3+ Kxc3 51 Kg6 does not secure the advance of the f-pawn after 51...Rb6! and if then 52.Kh6, Black can reroute to check from behind with 52...Rb1!

However, White can gain a vital tempo by threatening mate and thereby force his opponent to make the exchange, with the key difference that the black king remains on h8.

50.Rg6! Rxc3 51.Kxc3 Rb6 52.Kh6!?

This also came as a big surprise to me, since 52.Kf7 Rb8 53.g6 Rc8 54.Bf8! looked thematic and quite convincing. However, the similar key bishop move will work in the game too.

52...a4 53.g6 Rb1 54.f7 Rh1+ 55.Kg5 Rg1+ 56.Kh5 Rh1+ 57.Kg4 Rg1+ 58.Kh3 Rf1 59.Bf8!

A very elegant finish, and already the only winning move. With the black king trapped on h8, it no longer matters where the white king sits, so long as he avoids blundering g6. The threat is Bh6 followed by g7+ forcing one of the pawns through.

59...Rg1 60.Bc5! (threatening the rook and two mates in one!) so 1-0

Fascinating chess which, of course, was also quite a blow to the new British number 1's tournament. However, as for so many players here, it was ultimately missed opportunities – winning positions which Vitiugov let slip against Gukesh and Royal - which took the greatest toll, something of a surprise from someone with such outstanding technique.

Of course, in terms of the clash of styles, a case could be made that it was the players who prioritised solidity and the taking of their chances when available – notably Adams and Royal, whose approach ultimately won the day. For one thing, it ought to be noted that not just Bartel but Tabatabaei too was the victim of Mickey’s other most convincing victory.

Shreyas, of course, was assisted by the fact that in this company any draw was a good result, and therefore solid play – especially with White – placed the onus upon his opponents to create something. This approach worked especially well in round 3 against Tabatabaei, who looked unsure quite how much risk he was happy to take and ended up taking on the burden of some weaknesses in return for essentially no counter-play and getting ground down in a very mature game.

Another player who had a huge influence on the outcome of the tournament was Jules Moussard. I don’t think it would be unfair to point out that he was involved in no fewer than four of the most striking turnarounds in the whole event. This is not intended to be unkind criticism. At least these cases were distributed evenly – two in his favour, alongside the two in which he spoiled winning positions – and he was certainly the only player in the tournament who could make the claim that he had outplayed the tournament winner over most of their game. What can be said is that from the English standpoint he was something of an unwitting hero, not just sparing Mickey and Shreyas but holding Tabatabaei from a very scary position in the final round, having also turned the tables on the favourite and early frontrunner, Gukesh.

This one will, I fear, appear in collections of tactics for longer than Gukesh might ideally wish.

Dommaraju Gukesh – Jules Moussard
London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 4



White is not only winning but has so far shown a good balance between snatching material and making strong

consolidating moves. Unfortunately, here – where the natural 26.Qd4 would have been very strong, he chose instead **26.Rd2??**. Moussard’s tactical antennae were alerted, and the devastating retort **26...Bxa3!** appeared shortly after. Neither 27.Qxa3 Ra8! nor 27.bxa3 Qxc3 28.Rd4 (28.Bd4 Qxf3) 28...Rec8 offer any hope for White, while after **27.Rd4 Bxb2+ 28.Kd2 Ne6 29.Rd3 Bxc3+ 30.Rxc3 d4 31.Rd3 dxe3+ 32.Qxe3 Rxd3+ 33.cxd3 Nd4!** Gukesh also felt obliged to call it a day. **0–1**

Moussard’s oversight against Shreyas was also on a comparable scale. Having nurtured a substantial space advantage and an extra pawn over several moves, he missed a neat tactic activating Black’s sorry pieces.

Jules Moussard – Shreyas Royal
London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 8



Far from providing the white queen with the extra stability she needed, White’s last move – **41.Kd3?** (from e3) did quite the opposite - a great example of the need to stay vigilant even in positions where tactics might be felt unlikely to play any role. With **41...Nf6!** Shreyas’s worst piece is suddenly en route to becoming a monster, and cannot be captured since the opening of the c7-g3 diagonal supports a winning **42...Rxc3+**, while (perhaps most extraordinarily) even **42.Qh6+** is no ideal solution, since after **42...Qh7 43.Qxh7+ Nxh7** it is impossible to retain both the g3- and h4-pawns. For all that, it would have been an improvement on **42.Rg1 Ne4 43.Kc2 Qh7! 44.Kb3 Bxh4 45.Bc3 Nxc3 46.Bf3 Rg6 47.Rg2 Qh6 48.Bd2? Bg5 49.Qxc3 Bxd2 50.Qh2 Rxc3 51.Qxh6+ Bxh6 52.Bxc2 Bd2** which left Black in total control with a relatively simple technical task ahead.

Hans Niemann, was of course, another player whose extraordinary flair in his previous tournament had raised significant expectations. Yet somehow here he seemed to lack the same ambition. He appeared all too willing to share the spoils in his games with Black, a strategy which took a knock when a fine game by Andrei Volokitin – the man whose victory in the UK-Ukraine match a few months ago had put one of the few slight dampeners on Mickey

Adams' year – made it look as if it was, perhaps, over-reliance on the Berlin defence which was speaking for itself. He took Hans on in the ending which so many players with White now seem to avoid, somehow established threats against the black king, and then rounded off with an elegant (if not strictly necessary) exchange sacrifice.

Hans did have his say in the final round, beating Gukesh in a sharp game in which the latter momentarily over-extended with the black pieces in his attempt to retain chances to catch Mickey. So, for the second month in a row, I find myself reporting on a slight disappointment for Gukesh, who had to content himself with third place. He remains for me one of the very most exciting players of the future, and since he is such an established superstar - surrounded by so much excitement and expectation wherever he plays - it is worth reminding ourselves that he is just 17 years old. Even if he doesn't make it to the Candidates in this cycle, time could hardly be more on his side.

Coulsdon Chess Late Autumn Congress by Daniel Gliddon

The weekend of 25th – 26th November saw players from far and wide come and play at the Coulsdon Late Autumn Congress in south east London. We had three sections, namely Open, Premier (U2000) and Major (U1750) with a time control of 90 minutes plus 30 seconds per move, with all sections being fully ECF- and FIDE-rated.

With three rounds on day 1 and two rounds on day 2 we had lots of good chess being played, with fillers found every time we had an odd number of players. We had a number of regular players returning and a lot of new faces, and everyone, as always, went home happy having competed hard against similar-rated opponents.

Our next standardplay congress will be on 26th – 27th May. This congress will be slightly different, as day 1 will be a Sunday and day 2 will be on the bank holiday Monday.

If you would like to enter a tournament at Coulsdon or simply be added to our mailing list, please email chess@ccfworld.com and the team will assist you as best they can.

Full results can be seen on www.ccfworld.com/Chess; the prize winners were:

Open: 1st= Timothy Rogers & Timur Kuzhelev (4), 3rd Stanley Badacsonyi (3½)

Premier: 1st Eoin Moore (4), 2nd Hooman Honarvarmahalati (3½), 3rd Paul G Jackson (3), U1750 Zoe Veselow (2½)

Major : 1st= Gary Slegg, Susan Chadwick, Joshua Doyle (4), U1250 Nuvvee Konara (2½)

The Keddie Cup by Steve Westmoreland



Wednesday 13th December saw the completion of the David Keddie Cup at Holmfirth Chess Club. With teams of three, and two rapidplay games during an evening, the Cup was held over four nights and finished as near to David's birthday (15th December) as we could get it.



A festive Drew has the advantage over Awen, while Dave Colledge is deep in thought against Bien

The Cup is held in memory of David Keddie, one of the original players who helped us set up the club in a small room in the Farmer's Arms in 2019. David came over from Huddersfield with me and his son Sean and we created the new Holmfirth Club. We are both local to the Town.



Sam faces off against Dan, with Gaz and Harley deep in concentration

As well as being a massive chess enthusiast, David was a keen attendee at the Holy Trinity Church at Holmfirth. He sadly died from cancer in 2022.

For the Keddie Cup match nights were full, often running to 30 players at our home ground of The Stumble Inn. 41 players took part, including 11 juniors from the club. Players from Huddersfield, Dewsbury, Belgrave (Halifax) and Honley all joined in.



Much to our delight and consternation (as we may have trained them too well), our all-junior team 'The Smothered Mates' won the competition, with Isaac Fossey and Alex Burke demolishing all opposition. The winning team was put together by Jacob Westmoreland, who with a degree of cunning realised just how strong at rapid Alex and Isaac are and immediately grabbed them for the team before anyone else.



Tony and John of Dewsbury Chess Club are about to get taken down by Isaac and Alex

The boys were presented with a new trophy, kindly provided by David's family.



Isaac with the trophy with Alex and a towering Jacob, with Mike and Sean Keddie at the back

The event was an amazing tribute and legacy to David. He would have been delighted to see all the people playing, and especially the juniors. He helped us start a tiny chess club, which grew into something truly special. The Keddie Cup will return in 2024.



Parents and players applaud the winning team

FEATURES

Endgames All Club Players Should Know by Glenn Flear



Same Coloured Bishop Endgames

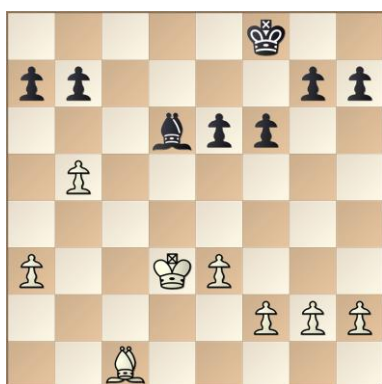
In the case of endgames involving bishops of the same colour, there are certain general rules that are worth highlighting:

1. In order to win, the stronger side generally needs to invade into the opposing camp with his king.
2. If there is a choice, both sides should generally place their pawns on the opposite colour complex to the bishops.
3. Control of one or two key squares in a contested part of the board can make all the difference.
4. When one player is seriously restricted, then Zugzwang is close.

Maybe the most famous bishop endgame shows that, at any level, one should be careful not to get the bishop stuck out of play.

Spassky, B – Fischer, R

World Championship Match, Reykjavik 1972



At this point, Fischer baffled the world by deciding on a very risky strategy, when there was no real danger.

29...Bxh2?! 30.g3

The bishop is clearly in some danger. Apparently Black can still draw with very precise play, but it's sufficient for our

purposes to note that White has the easier game and it's not a surprise that Spassky went on to win.

30...h5 31.Ke2 h4 32.Kf3 Ke7 33.Kg2 hxg3 34.fxg3 Bxg3 35.Kxg3 Kd6 36.a4 Kd5 37.Ba3 Ke4 38.Bc5 a6 39.b6 f5 40.Kh4 f4 41.exf4 Kxf4 42.Kh5 Kf5 43.Be3 Ke4 44.Bf2 Kf5 45.Bh4 e5 46.Bg5 e4 47.Be3 Kf6 48.Kg4 Ke5 49.Kg5 Kd5 50.Kf5 a5 51.Bf2 g5 52.Kxg5 Kc4 53.Kf5 Kb4 54.Kxe4 Kxa4 55.Kd5 Kb5 56.Kd6

1-0

A more typical source of worry for a defender is when there are several pawns fixed on the same colour as the bishop. The problems are three-fold: one's own bishop is restricted; the pawns can be attacked by the enemy bishop; and there isn't much left to defend the opposite colour complex.

Averbakh, Y – Matanovic, A

Belgrade 1961



Here the best approach for Black would be to just sit put and temporize with a semi-useful move such as 37...h6.

37...Nc6+?! 38.Nxc6 Kxc6

After the trade of knights Matanovic finds himself with a highly restricted position.

39.f4! f5

Hoping for an across the board blockade. This sometimes works, but here Zugzwang enables White to soon break through.

After the alternative 39...h6 White should be patient: 40.Kc3! (I believe that I saw 40.e4!? analysed somewhere, but I don't think that it quite works. Such a committal move has to be calculated exactly, and it's not advisable to force matters unless manoeuvring isn't going to get anywhere: 40...dxe4 41.Bxe4+ Kd6 42.Kc4 Bg4 43.Kd4 Be2 44.Bc2 and Black seems to be able to hold the fort with 44...Bb5! 45.Bb3 f6 46.Bf7 g5, noting that he is able to

position most of his pawns on dark squares because they weren't fixed in place. Hence the preference for a slower approach where White angles to fix the black kingside pawns on light squares.) 40...Kc5 41.h4! (stopping ...g5) 41...Bb7 42.g4 Bc8 43.g5 hxg5 44.fxg5! Bb7 45.Bf1 Bc8 46.Be2 Bb7 47.h5! with a decisive advantage.

Alternatively, 39...Kd6 40.g4! f6 (40...Bxg4 41.Bxa6 and the passed pawn will be too strong) 41.g5 and White turns the screw.

40.h4

Note the colours - all of White's pawns are on dark squares whereas Black's are fixed on light squares.

40...Kd6

If 40...h5 41.Bc2 Kd6 then 42.Ba4 threatening Be8, and 42...Ke7 would then be met by 43.Kc5, and the invasion will be decisive.

41.h5! gxh5

If 41...Kc6 42.h6 (pawns advancing up the board increase in value, as they are closer to the promotion square!) 42...Kd6 43.Kc3 Kc5 44.Be2 (Zugzwang) 44...Bb7 45.g4! fxg4 46.Bxg4 Kb5 47.f5! and one of White's pawns will be going the whole way.

42.Kc3!

1-0

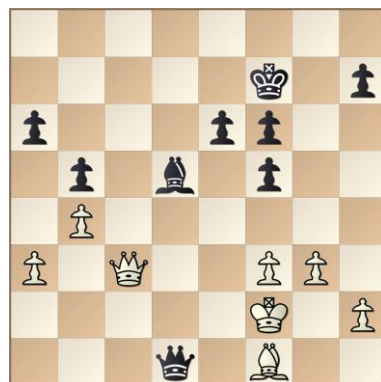
Black resigned (at the adjournment, perhaps?), but the following line perhaps illustrates why:

42...Kc5 43.Bf1 Bb7 44.Be2 Bc8 45.Bd3 (Zugzwang!) 45...d4+ (or 45...h4 46.gxh4 h6 47.Bf1 Bb7 48.Be2 Bc8 49.Bd3, and again Black is obliged to make an unfortunate move) 46.exd4+ Kd5 47.Bc4+ Kd6 48.d5 Kc5 49.d6! (it's more important to be able to penetrate the black camp rather than count pawns) 49...Kxd6 50.Kd4 Bb7 51.Bf1 Bc8 52.Bd3, and again it's Zugzwang.

The stronger side is also handicapped when he has pawns stuck on the wrong colour.

Filipowicz, A – Flear, G

Manchester 1982



I needed to win this game for a norm, but it's no easy task with or without queens.

45...Qb3

If one keeps queens on the board the black king would be vulnerable to checks.

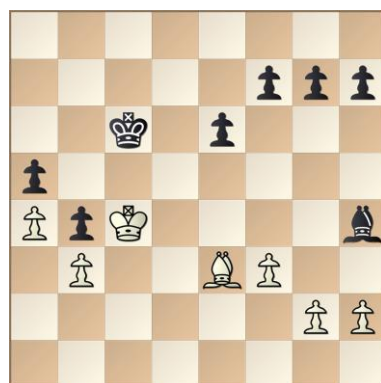
46.Qxb3 Bxb3 47.Bd3 h6 48.Ke3 Ke7 49.f4 Kd6 50.Kd4 Bd1 51.Bb1 Be2 52.Bc2 Bc4 53.Bb1 Bd5 54.Bc2 Ba2 55.Bd1 e5+ 56.Ke3 Bb1 57.Bf3 Kc7 58.Bd5 Kb6 59.Bf7 Kc6 60.Be6 Bc2 61.Kd2 Be4 62.Ke3 Bc2 63.Kd2 Be4 64.Ke3 Bb1 65.Bc8 Kb6 66.Bd7 Kc7 67.Be6 a5 68.Bf7 axb4 69.axb4 Kd7 70.Bg6 Ke7 71.Kd2 Be4 72.Ke3 Kd6 73.g4 Bc2 74.Bh7 Kd5 75.Bg8+ Kd6 76.Bh7
½-½

Having so many pawns fixed on the same colour as the bishops and no entry route made the extra pawn unusable.

In the following example my opponent missed the chance to draw:

Meynard, T – Flear, G

French League 2006



Here White's handily placed king, plus the fact that Black has pawns on a5 and b4, means that there are excellent

drawing chances.

32.Bd4 g6 33.g3

Not necessary.

33...Bd8 34.f4?!

This just feels like the wrong approach.

White should instead take the opportunity to place his pawns on light squares: 34.g4! Bc7 35.h3 and then it's more difficult for Black to make any progress, e.g. 35...e5 36.Be3 f5 looks like the normal way to create any winning chances, but after 37.Bg5 Bb6 38.Bf6 e4 39.fxe4 fxe4 40.Be5 e3 41.Kd3 Kd5 42.Bf4 e2 43.Kxe2 Ke4 44.Bh6 there is no penetration into the white camp.

34...g5 35.fxg5 Bxg5 36.g4 f5

Hoping to create a passed pawn that can drive back the white king.

37.h3?

A fatal mistake.

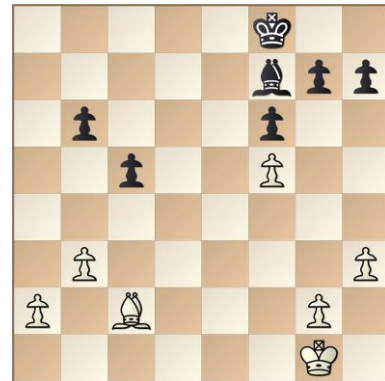
It's better to face an isolated passed pawn rather than two connected ones:

37.gxf5! exf5 38.h3 Bd8 (38...f4 39.Kd3 Kd5 40.Bb6 and Black has to start thinking about how he is going to avoid losing) 39.Be5 Bc7 40.Bf6 (in general, it's best to avoid a pure king and pawn endgame when a pawn down, especially when a safe alternative exists. Here 40.Bxc7? does lose: 40...Kxc7 41.Kd5 Kb6 42.Ke5 Kc5 43.h4 f4 44.Kxf4 Kd4) 40...Kd6 (40...f4 41.Kd4=) 41.Bd4 f4 42.Kd3! Kd5 and White seems to be holding, e.g. 43.Bf2 f3 44.Ba7 Bd6 45.Bb6 Bc5 46.Bxa5 f2 47.Ke2 Kd4 48.Bxb4 Bxb4 49.Kxf2 etc.

37...f4 38.Be5 f3 39.Kd3 Kd5 40.Bg3 e5 41.h4 e4+ 42.Kc2 Bf4 43.Be1 e3 0-1

In the following example White has all his pawns on the wrong colour, but it's the fixed one on f5 which is the root cause of his woes, especially as it is readily attackable.

Cooley, C – Flear, G
Borehamwood 1982



34...Ke7 35.Kf2 Kd6 36.Ke3 Ke5 37.a3

If 37.g4 Bd5 38.Bd3 Bg2 39.h4 Bh3 40.Be2 h5 41.gxh5 Bxf5 42.a3 Bd7 43.b4 f5 Black has a decisive advantage.

37...Bd5 38.g3 Bg2 39.h4 Bh3 40.b4

In the space of four moves my opponent has placed as many pawns on dark squares, but there's no escaping the loss of the fifth one.

40...cxb4 41.axb4 Bxf5

My technique was up to the task of converting my advantage, but in the following play you may notice that I took my time. This is often a good idea when the opponent is not able to undertake anything. The golden rule being 'work out properly the way forwards before committing oneself!'

42.Bb3 h6 43.Bc4 Bc2 44.Be2 Ba4 45.Bc4 Bd7 46.Be2 Bc6 47.Bc4 g5

This leads to the creation of a passed pawn.

48.hxg5 hxg5 49.Be2

The try 49.g4 isn't any better, as 49...Bd7 50.Be2 Kd5 already seems to be Zugzwang.

49...Ba8 50.Bc4 Bb7 51.Be2 Bd5 52.Bb5 f5 53.Kd3 Bg2 54.Ke3 Be4 55.Bf1 f4+ 56.gxf4+ gxf4+ 57.Kd2 Kd4 58.b5?!

A slower death results from 58.Be2 f3 59.Bb5 Bd5! 60.Bf1 Bc4 61.Bh3 f2.

58...Bd5

White resigned, as ...Bc4 is coming.

0-1

The moment of transition towards a simplified endgame often requires some reflection.

Meyer, N – Flear, G
Vaujany 2021



48.Qxc6

Maybe my opponent expected me to now grab the f-pawn, but by recognizing that the pure bishop endgame is a win I was able to keep things simple.

A tougher defence is 48.Bxc6 Qxf2+ 49.Bg2, when the win involves keeping control and wriggling a little before finding the way through: 49...Qd2 50.Qb8+ Kg7 51.Qe5+ Kh7 52.Qc5 Bd7 53.Qc4 Kg7 54.Qe4 Qb2 55.Qc4 Kg8! 56.Kg1 Qb4 57.Qxb4 (otherwise White loses the a-pawn for nothing) 57...axb4 58.a5 b3 59.Be4 b2 60.a6 Bf5—.

This wouldn't have been easy with only limited time available.

48...Qxc6! 49.Bxc6 Ke7 50.Bf3

Or 50.Kg2 Bd7 51.Bxd7 Kxd7 52.Kf3 Kd6 53.Ke4 Kc5 and Black wins.

50...Kd6 51.Be2 Bd7 52.Bc4 Be8 53.f3 Kc5 54.Be2 Bxa4 55.g4 Bb3 56.gxh5 gxh5 0-1

Arnaud, J-C – Flear, G
Narbonne-plage 2011



Here Black can invade, but he has to step across a mined square, so it needs calculating carefully.

36.Kd3 fxg4 37.fxg4 Ke5! 38.c4+

Alternatives don't hold either: 38.Bc1 b2 39.Bxb2 Kf4 40.Ke2 Kg3 41.Ba3 Kxh3 42.Kf3 Kh2 43.Be7 h3 44.Bc5 Be5; or 38.Ke3 Bb6+ 39.Kf3 d4.

38...Kf4 39.cxd5 Kg3

It's the soon-to-be passed h-pawn that really makes the difference.

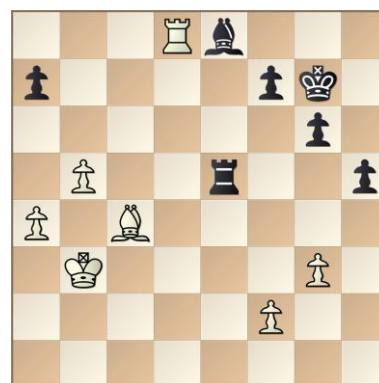
40.Ba3 Kxh3 41.d6

Or 41.Be7 Kxg4 42.d6 Bb6 43.d7 h3.

41...Bd8 etc. wins.

On a more open board, piece activity and control of some key squares are primary factors. In addition, challenging for domination of a particular diagonal is typical.

Flear, G – Prakken, G
Creon 1998



Here White's advantage comes about because his pieces

are operating more effectively, which in turns ensures that he has the better majority.

29...g5 30.Kb4 h4 31.Rd5

Exchanging rooks feels like the simplest way.

31...Kf6 32.Rxe5 Kxe5 33.gxh4 gxh4 34.Kc5!

It's important to control some key squares before pushing the majority. After this precise move, Black is helpless in the face of White's queenside advance, whereas the h-pawn isn't particularly dangerous.

34...f5 35.Bd5

The long light-squared diagonal is White's domain.

35...f4 36.Bf3 h3 37.a5 Bd7 38.b6 axb6+ 39.axb6 Bc8 40.b7 Bxb7 41.Bxb7 Kf5 42.Bf3 1-0

Carlsen, M – Kramnik, V
Moscow 2013

Here's an example of Carlsen in action. Note that he doesn't push his pawns too quickly; instead, he prefers to gradually get his pieces on ideal squares in preparation for a more timely advance.



46.Kf4 d2 47.Ke3 Ke5 48.g3 Bf5 49.h4 Be6 50.Kxd2 Ke4 51.Ke2 Bg4+ 52.Ke1 Be6 53.Kf2 Ke5 54.Ke3 Bd7 55.Bc2

The slack 55.g4?? is met by 55...Bxg4, allowing an easy draw.

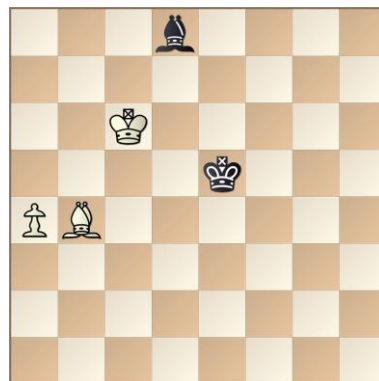
55...Bg4 56.Bg6 Bd7 57.h5!

The h-pawn is used to oblige the opposing king to retreat.

57...Kf6 58.Kf4 Be6 59.Be4 Kg7 60.Kg5 Bd7 61.h6+ Kh8 62.Kf4 Be6 63.Bf5 Bf7 64.g4 Bh5 65.g5
No thanks!

65...Kg8 66.Be6+ Kh7 67.Kf5 Bg6+ 68.Kf6 Kh8 69.Bd7 Bh5 70.Bc6 Kh7 71.Bd5 Bg6 72.Bg8+ 1-0

Thomas, G – Maroczy, G
Weston-super-Mare 1922



Here White wins by taking control of the a5–d8 diagonal. The fact that he can do this with check is perhaps fortuitous, but Black is punished for getting his king caught on the same coloured square as the opposing bishop.

1.Bd6+

The slower 1.Bc5 enables Black to switch diagonals: 1...Ba5 2.Kb5 Be1 3.Bb4 Bxb4 4.Kxb4 Kd6 5.Kb5 Kc7 being just a draw.

1...Kd4

Or 1...Ke4 2.Bc7.

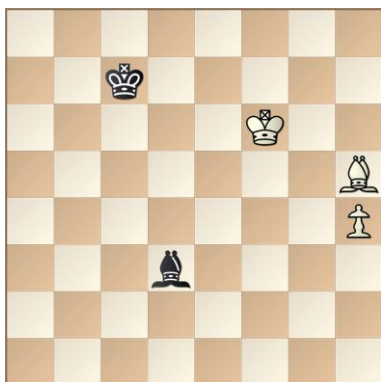
2.Bc5+!

A second check does the trick. Not however 2.Bc7? Bxc7 3.Kxc7 Kc5=.

2...Kc4 3.Bb6 Kb4 4.a5

The pawn can't be stopped.
1-0

Eliskases, E – Bogoljubov, E
Germany (Match) 1939



An important rule for defending in bishop and pawn vs. bishop is that each diagonal should ideally be at least four squares long. Here Bogoljubov defended successfully, taking into account that he couldn't allow the pawn to advance any further.

1...Bb5!

But not 1...Kd8? as following 2.Bg4 Ke8 (after 2...Bh7 3.Kg7 the bishop is pushed off the rather short g8–h7 diagonal) 3.Kg7 Ke7 4.h5 Bc2 5.h6 Bd3 6.Bh5 Bc2 7.Bg6 the pawn will soon promote.

2.Ke7

There's no joy for White after 2.Bg4 Be8! 3.Ke7 Bg6 (there are four squares on the diagonal; two can be controlled by the king, one by the bishop, but there's still a fourth one remaining!) 4.Be6 Bh5 (preparing to switch diagonals) 5.Bf7 Bd1.

2...Bd3! 3.Kf7

Other moves don't work either: 3.Bf7 Be2; or 3.Kf6 Bb5.

3...Kd8 4.Bd1 Bb5 5.Kf6

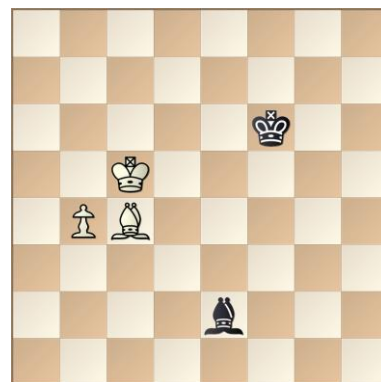
If 5.h5 then 5...Be8+.

5...Be8 6.Bg4 Kc7 7.Ke7 Bg6 (this position again!) 8.Bd7 Bh5! 9.Be8 Be2

and draws.

The following successful defence by me was particularly satisfying, as I'd had something similar 18 months earlier and made a total mess of the endgame. Meantime, I'd worked on my bishop endgames.

Paunovic, D – Flear, G
Geneva 1986



In this case, Black has to find a way to slow the b-pawn down whilst getting his king close.

1...Bd1

Another way that works is 1...Bh5 2.Kd6 (or 2.b5 Ke7 3.b6 Kd8 4.Be6 Bf3 5.Kd6 Bb7! attaining a notable position which turns out to be mutual Zugzwang. If the black bishop were on any other square along the long diagonal then Bd5 would win. However, with the bishop on the b7–square 6.Bd5 Kc8 is a comfortable draw.) 2...Be8 (despite White being able to place his king favourably, he can't get his b-pawn going in time) 3.Bd5 Bb5 4.Bc6 Bf1 5.Kc5 Ke7 6.Bd5 Kd7, and Black is well on the way to drawing.

On the other hand, 1...Bf3? is a poor move, because after 2.Kd6! White seizes control of many useful squares and Black can't stop the inevitable advance of the b-pawn.

2.b5 Ke7 3.b6 Kd8 4.Be6 Bf3 5.Kd6 Bb7!

Reaching a key position, as discussed above. In the actual game my opponent tried a few more moves but was unable to trick me.

6.Bf5 Bf3 7.Bd7 Be4 8.Bg4 Bg2 9.Be6 Bb7! 10.Kc5 Bf3 11.Bd5 Bg4!

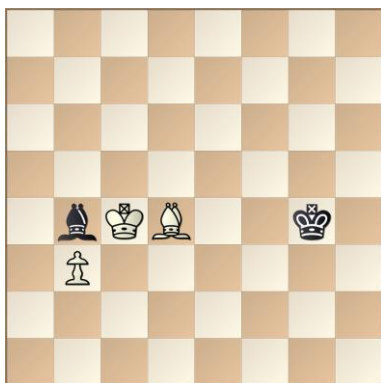
But not 11...Bxd5? 12.Kxd5 Kd7 13.Kc5! Kd8 14.Kd6! as this wins for White.

12.Bb7 Be2 13.Kb4 Bf1 14.Ka5
½–½

Taimanov, M – Fischer, R
Buenos Aires 1960

In same-coloured bishop endgames, there is a slightly surprising way to defend (that sometimes works) which

involves coming round the back of the pawn.



Fischer couldn't get his king in front of the pawn, but was able to draw by bringing his king round the back!

1...Ba5!

1...Bd6? is bad, because White makes quick progress starting with 2.Bc5.

2.Bc3 Bd8 3.b4 Kf4 4.b5 Ke4 5.Bd4 Bc7 6.Kc5 Kd3!

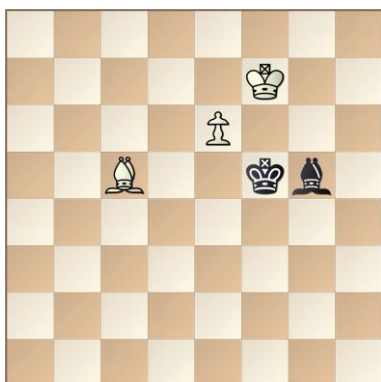
The right direction.

7.Kc6 Kc4! 8.Bb6 Bf4 9.Ba7 Bc7!

... and draws in style. Apparently, Fischer knew this endgame from reading an article some years earlier in a chess magazine. So maybe you should keep reading my column?

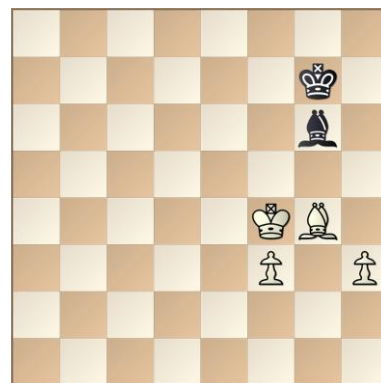
Here's another example of this theme.

Centurini (1856)



This is drawn. Both defensive diagonals are four or more squares long, and the fact that Black has decent control of the f6-square stops White bullying the black bishop off both diagonals.

Exercise 1



This is from a game Fischer – Keres (Zürich 1959) which the American was able to eventually win. In more recent times, Carlsen won a similar endgame against Caruana (Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012). I suggest playing it out against a friend and seeing if you can convert your advantage (careful about the opponent sacrificing his bishop for the f-pawn). The solution is below, but I reckon that one gets a better grip on the technique by trying to work it out first.

Solution:

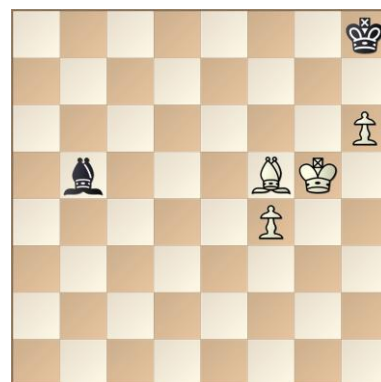
1.Kg5!

Taking control of some key squares, as it's important to stop ...Kf6.

1...Bd3 2.h4 Bc2 3.f4 Bd3 4.h5 Bc2 5.Be6

Naturally, 5.f5?? Bxf5 is a draw, as Black can sit in the corner and wait for stalemate to come about.

5...Bd3 6.h6+ Kh8 7.Bf5 Bb5



So far, so good.

I've used this endgame on several occasions to test students. They would get this far but then, to a man, tried to further improve their king position. However, the king is on the ideal square for now because of the following

manoeuvre.

8.Bg6! Bd7 9.Bh5! Kh7 10.Bg4

The white king supports a bishop intervention on both of the f5- and g4-squares.

10...Ba4

Note that 10...Bxg4 11.Kxg4 Kxh6 12.Kf5 Kg7 13.Ke6 Kf8 14.Kf6 is a straightforward white win.

11.f5

The pawn is finally able to advance safely.

11...Bb3 12.f6 Bc4 13.Bf5+ Kh8 14.Kf4

... and the white king can now be brought to e7, with Black just waiting for the end.

14...Bb3 15.Ke5 Bf7 16.Kd6 Bh5 17.Ke7 Kg8 18.Bd7 Bg6 19.Be8 and so on.

Exercise 2



Black can win if he finds the right move here. Sometimes the way to win involves anticipating what the opponent's next move is going to be. If you want a hint, play through the Paunovic. D – Flear. G again!

Solution

1...Be3!

Zugzwang!

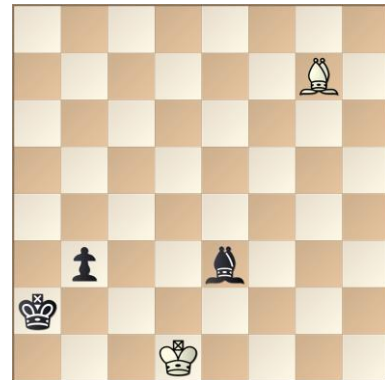
2.Ba3

If 2.Bf6 then 2...Bd4! 3.Bxd4 Kxd4 4.Kd2 Kc4! 5.Kd1 Kd3! 6.Kc1 Kc3 7.Kb1 b2–+; Naturally, 2.Bc1 Bxc1 3.Kxc1 Kc3 is also –+.

2...Kc3 3.Bf8

After 3.Bc1 Bc5! 4.Bg5 Kb2 the black king makes it to a2 - see below.

3...Kb2! 4.Bg7+ Ka2



Here Black can win because White's bishop is easily pushed off both diagonals.

5.Bf6 Bc5 6.Bg7 Ba3 7.Bf6 Bb2 8.Bg5 Be5 9.Bc1 Bd6

9...Bf4 also works.

10.Ke2 Ba3

...and all becomes clear.

Pirc Bashing by Andrew Martin

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7



The variation with 4.Be2 is flexible. White can return to quiet classical systems, or he may lash out on the kingside with g2–g4 or h2–h4. In this article I will show you yet another approach which is promising and not that well-known.

Liu, Wenzhe - Donner, Jan Hein

Olympiad-23 Buenos Aires (8), 02.11.1978

Let's begin with a bit of history. The following game caused shock waves, as I believe it was the first time a Chinese player had beaten a grandmaster.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.g4!?



If you like outright aggression you will like this line. It is especially effective when Black castles too soon.

5...h6 6.h3 c5 7.d5 0-0? Black should prefer 7...Na6-Nc7.

8.h4! White focuses on the target.

8...e6 9.g5 hxg5 10.hxg5 Ne8? 10...Nh7 intending ...Re8 and ...Nf8 was a better stab at defence.

11.Qd3 exd5 12.Nxd5 Nc6 13.Qg3 Be6 14.Qh4+- f5 15.Qh7+ Kf7 16.Qxg6+!!



Worth a diagram.

16...Kxg6 17.Bh5+ Kh7 18.Bf7+ Bh6 19.g6+ Kg7 19...Kh8 20.Rxh6+ Kg7 21.Rh7#

20.Bxh6+ The variation with 5.g4 became popular as a result of this game.

1-0

Kovacevic, Vlatko (2510) - Seirawan, Yasser (2510)

Hoogovens Wijk aan Zee (9), 26.01.1980

Black can do better than Donner's effort, and the coming game is a work of genius by Yasser Seirawan. Black displays no fear facing 5.g4, displaying both adaptability and counter-aggression in his approach.

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.g4 c6 6.g5 Nfd7 7.h4 b5 8.h5 Rg8! 9.hxg6 hxg6 10.Nf3 b4 11.Nb1 a5 12.a4 c5 13.d5 Nb6 14.c4 Kd7!



Black prepares to regain the open file with ...Rh8 and places his king very safely on c7.

15.Nbd2 Rh8 16.Rg1 Kc7 17.Rb1 Rh3 18.b3 Qh8 19.Nf1 N8d7 20.Bf4 Ne5 21.Nxe5 Bxe5 22.Bxe5 Qxe5 Black has completely taken over the position.

23.f3 Bd7 24.Qc2 Qd4 25.Rg2 Rh1 26.Rf2 Qh8 27.f4 Qh4 28.Rd1 f6 29.gxf6 exf6 30.e5 fxe5 31.fxe5 Rf8 32.exd6+ Kb7 33.Bd3 Re8+ The two games we have seen are classics, and the latter game certainly shows why 5.g4 isn't that common these days.

0-1

Wall, Gavin (2301) - Karamsetty, Jeevan (2218)

Newcastle Northumbria Masters IM Newcastle on Tyne (4), 25.08.2023

If White does not like 5.g4 he may try another brazen kingside advance.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 d6 3.h4!? Nf6 4.Nc3 Bg7 5.Be2 c5!



You will just have to imagine that the game began 1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.h4, when it is thought that 5...c5 gives plenty of counterplay, although obscure positions can arise.

6.dxc5 Qa5 7.Kf1 Qxc5 8.Be3 Qa5 9.h5 This is what they do, but Black is quite OK.

9...Nxf5 Black should probably avoid 9...Nc6 10.h6; Also possible is 9...gxf5, but I think White gains slightly by keeping the light-squared bishop. Thus 10.Nh3! leads to complex play, where White's position is easier to handle: 10...Nc6.

a) 10...Bg4 11.Nf4;

b) 10...Bxf3 11.Rxf3 Nbd7 12.Nd5! Nxe4 (12...Nxd5 13.exd5 Bxb2 14.Rb1 Bf6 15.Rxb7) 13.Rxf5.

11.Nf4 Bg4 12.f3 Be6 13.Ncd5.

10.Bxf5 Bxc3 11.bxc3 gxf5 12.Ne2 Nc6 13.a4 Be6 14.Qd3 14.Qb1 Bc4! gives Black a good attack: 15.Qxb7 0-0! 16.Qxc6 Qxc3!

14...a6 15.Bd4 f6 16.Ng3 Bf7 17.Kg1 0-0-0



Black has equalised, and maybe a bit more.

18.Qe3 Rg8 19.Nf5 Qc7 19...Bg6.

20.Nh6 Rg7 21.Nxf7 Rxf7 22.Rxf5 Qd7 23.c4 23.g3

23...Rg8 24.Rf5 Rg4 25.f3 Nxd4 26.fxf4 Nxc2 27.Qc3 Nxa1 28.Qxa1 Qc6 29.Qd4 Rg7 30.c5 Rxf4 31.cxd6 Rxe4 32.d7+ Kd8 33.Qd2 Qb6+ 34.Kh2 Qd6+ 35.Qxd6 exd6 36.Rxf6 Kxd7 The full story of 5.h4 has yet to be played out, but Black certainly has plenty of counter-chances, and I have not even mentioned 5...h5, 5...Nc6, or 5...c6.

0-1

Lee, Graham D (2375) - Vigus, James (2245)
BCF-ch 83rd Nottingham (4), 1996

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.Be3!?



Here it is. Not exactly a new or original idea, but scarcely covered in various works on the Pirc. In essence, 5 Be3 is a simple enough move, keeping all options open. White may play with g4, h4 or f4, or may return to the quieter classical system. Meanwhile, Qd2 and Bh6 has become available. I think 5 Be3 is a clear improvement on 5.g4 or 5.h4. As far as I know, FM Graham Lee used to play this line regularly and won a lot of games with it, including defeating your author in the Southern Counties Championship decades ago. I gained a healthy respect for 5.Be3 after that. Here is Lee in action, displaying his wares.

5...0-0 5...c5 has to be considered, but with the bishop on e3 I think White can keep an edge. 6.dxc5 Qa5 7.Qd3! dxc5 (Black can easily fall for a trap: 7...Nxe4?? 8.Qb5+ Qxb5 9.Bxb5+ Bd7 10.Bxd7+ Nxd7 11.Nxe4 and White has won a piece for nothing.) 8.Qb5+ (8.Nf3) 8...Qxb5 9.Nxb5 (9.Bxb5+ Bd7 10.f3 a6) 9...Na6 10.f3 0-0 11.0-0-0 and Black is in the game, but I slightly prefer White.

6.g4!? Could this be a better moment to start the charge?

Other options include 6.f4, which cannot be bad; 6.Nf3 with safety first as the motto; and the caveman-like 6.h4.

6...c5 Black has a number of other options: 6...c6 looks a bit slow and should be met by 7.g5 Nfd7 (7...Ne8) 8.h4 when White is on the attack. 6...e5 can be met by 7.g5 Ng4 (7...Ne8 8.h4 Nc6 9.Nf3 Bg4 10.d5 Bxf3 11.Bxf3 Nd4 12.h5) 8.Bxg4 Bxg4 9.Qxg4 exd4 10.Bxd4 Bxd4 11.Nge2 Bg7 (11...Nc6 12.Nxd4 Nxd4 13.0-0-0) 12.h4 and Black may be able to defend, but it is not going to be easy.



7.g5 Nfd7 8.Nf3 a6 9.h4 b5 10.h5 Bb7 10...b4 leads to wild play: 11.Na4 Qa5 12.b3 Nb6 13.Nxb6 Qxb6 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.d5! Bxa1 (15...a5 16.Nd2 a4 17.Rc1) 16.Qxa1 f6 17.gxf6 exf6 18.Rh6 Kg7 19.Kd2, and, with Nh4 or Qh1 coming up, Black is lost.

11.Rh4 e6 was the correct way to gain counterplay.

11...b4 12.Nb1 cxd4 13.Nxd4 Nc6.

12.Qd2 Qa5 13.Kf1 Rd8 14.hxg6 hxg6 15.d5 b4 16.dxe6 bxc3 16...fxe6 17.Bc4 Nf8 18.Nd5! is good for White.

17.exf7+ Kxf7 18.Qxd6 Nf8 19.Rf4+ Ke8 20.Rxf8+! Lee finishes brutally.

20...Bxf8 21.Qe6+ Be7 22.Ne5 Rd6 23.Qg8+ Bf8 24.Qf7+ Kd8 25.Qxf8+ Kc7 26.Nc4. I would suggest that the range of choice and approaches open to White after 5 Be3 0-0 makes this line an attractive prospect.

1-0

Arizmendi Martinez, Julen Luis (2501) - Moskalenko, Viktor (2436)

Valencia Cuna op 4th Valencia (7), 14.07.2023

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3 c6 5.Be2 Bg7



Let's try the Seirawan approach, which is so typical of the Pirc. Black delays castling, working up counter-play elsewhere before committing the king. Seeing the early ... c7-c6, Arizmendi heads for an Austrian Attack formation.

6.f4! There is also 6.a4, which cannot be a bad idea. One would expect White to return to the Classical after this, but there seems to be the chance of a direct attack: 6...Nbd7 7.Qd2 0-0 8.Bh6 e5 9.Bxg7 Kxg7 10.h4!? Qb6 (Perhaps 10...h5 was more careful, after which White will place a knight on g5 and claim an edge: 11.Nh3 Qa5 (11...Nh7 12.Ng5! Nxe5 13.hxg5) 12.Ng5 Re8 13.0-0) 11.dxe5 Nxe5 12.h5 (I prefer 12.b3, when I still like White, but in this game Route One is the only highway in town.) 12... Neg4 (12...Qxb2 calls the bluff: 13.Rb1 Qa3 14.h6+ Kg8 15.f4



The engines say equal. I think Black should be able to defend, but there will be many practical obstacles to overcome.) 13.Bxg4 Nxg4 14.Nh3 Qxb2 15.Rb1 Qa3 16.f3 Ne5 17.Nf2 Rh8 (If 17...f6 White has a convincing sequence: 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.Rb3 Qc5 20.Qh6+ Kf7 21.Qh7+ Ke8 22.Nd3 Qe3+ 23.Ne2 Qg5 24.Nxe5 dxe5 25.Qc7! with the rook coming to the seventh rank.) 18.h6+ Kf8 19.f4 Ng4 20.Qd4 (20.Nxg4 Bxg4 21.Rxb7 Qc5 22.Ne2) 20...Rg8 21.Nd3 (21.Nxg4 Bxg4 22.Rxb7 Qc1+ 23.Nd1 Bxd1 (23...Qxd1+ 24.Qxd1 Bxd1 25.Kxd1 g5 26.f5) 24.Qxd6+) 21...f5 22.Kd2 d5 23.exd5 Qd6 24.Ne5 Nf6 25.Nc4 c5 26.Qe3 Ne4+ 27.Qxe4 1-0 (Podder, M (1951) -TM (2104) Germany 2005) This is the sort of game that occurs at club

level all the time. Pirc/Modern players have to be skilled at the art of counter-attack, but this does not make the defence you sometimes have to undertake any easier.

6...0-0 7.e5 Tempting.

7.Nf3 b5 8.e5 Ng4 9.Bg1 was an alternative, when it is possible, but difficult, to handle the black position.

7...Nd5 8.Nxd5 cxd5 9.c3 Nc6 10.Nf3 Bg4 10...dxe5 11.fxe5 f6 looks better to me, with counterplay for Black and no ceding of the bishop pair.

11.h3 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 e6 13.h4!



Awkward to meet.

13...f6 He may have to do this, but the absence of the light-squared bishop makes the black position very loose.

14.exd6 14.exf6 Qxf6 15.h5 Ne7 is less convincing.

14...Qxd6 15.h5 Ne7 16.h6? A trap or an oversight?

16.Qd3 was a superior option.

16...Bh8? Did Moskalenko see 16...Bxh6! when 17.Rxh6 (He may have to settle for 17.g3 Bg7 18.Qe2 and claim some compensation, but I am afraid I do not see it.) 17...Nf5 18.Rh3 Nxe3 is no good for White at all.

17.g4 The attack is back on track.

17...g5 17...f5 18.g5 Nc8 19.0-0 leaves you wondering how the bishop on h8 is going to move again. Meanwhile, 17...e5 may have been best, but even then 18.Qb3 (18.dxe5 fxe5 19.Qb3 exf4 20.Bf2 Qe6+ 21.Kd2 leaves Black a pawn up, but with a set of passive pieces.) 18...exf4 19.Bf2 a5 20.a4 Ra6 21.0-0-0 Rb6 22.Qc2 Rc8 23.Rde1 and White plans to double rooks on the e-file. The black pieces look impressive, but are they working together?

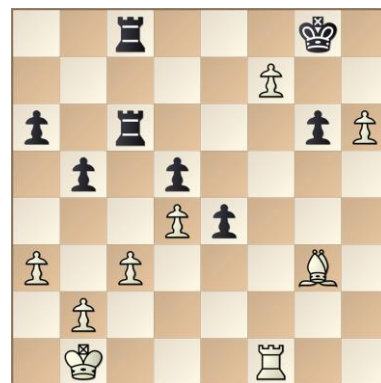
18.Qd2 gxf4 19.Bxf4 e5 20.Bg3 Qe6 21.0-0-0 e4 22.Be2 a6 23.Rdf1 b5 24.Kb1! Rac8 25.Rh5!



The prisoner on h8 has to sit and watch while White improves his position move by move.

25...Rc6 26.Qf4 Rfc8 27.a3! Kf7 28.Re5 Qd7 29.g5 The attack is very well played by Arizmendi.

29...Ng6 30.Qf5 Qxf5 31.Rexf5 Ne7 32.Bh5+ Kg8 33.R5f2 Does Black have a move after 33.Rxf6! Bxf6 34.gxf6 Ng6 35.Bxg6 hxg6 36.f7+?



33...f5 33...fxg5 34.Bf7+

34.Rxf5 Nxf5 35.Rxf5 Rf8 36.Rxd5 e3 37.Kc2 Re6 38.Kd3 Rfe8 39.Bxe8 39.Rd7! would have been nicer: 39...R6e7 (39...R8e7 40.Rd8+; 39...e2 40.Bf7+ Kf8 41.Bxe6 Rxe6 42.Rd8+ Kf7 43.Rxh8 e1Q 44.Bxe1 Rxe1 45.Rxh7+) 40.Bxe8.

39...Rxe8 40.Ke2 Kf7 41.Bf4

1-0

Summary

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be2 Bg7 5.Be3 We have only scratched the surface of what might happen after 5.Be3, but it looks like a good practical weapon for the club

player to me. White keeps a number of approaches open, including the kingside smash, but if you don't feel aggressive there are always the calmer, classical waters to sail in.

Great British Chess Players

by John Nunn



Tony Miles (1955-2001)



Anthony ('Tony') John Miles was born in Birmingham on 23rd April 1955, just two days before my own birth in London. He achieved considerable success in junior events, winning the British Under-14 Championship in 1968, despite losing his individual game to myself, and the British Under-21 Championship in 1971. This soon translated into international triumphs, culminating in his victory in the World Junior Championship in 1974. Although Miles started a degree course at Sheffield University, he soon abandoned it to pursue chess professionally.

Tony made steady progress on the international circuit and became the first British-born over the board

grandmaster in 1976. Over the next 20 years he travelled the world and was dangerous to anybody, most famously beating Anatoly Karpov as Black with 1 e4 a6 (European Team Championship Final, Skara 1980). Tony was not much interested in domestic events, and only won the British Championship once, in 1982. His best tournament result was at Tilburg 1984, where he outclassed a top-level field by a massive 1½ points. In January 1984 he broke through the 2600 rating barrier and was above that rating as late as 1999. Tony only struggled against the very highest-rated players; in particular he had a dismal overall score against the 'two Ks', Karpov and Kasparov. He was also not especially successful in World Championship cycles, and never qualified for the Candidates.

Tony was a controversial figure almost throughout his life. His refusal to play in the 1977 European Team Championship Final without a fee was widely criticised in the British chess press, at that time dominated by an 'old guard' of chess journalists. However, Tony stuck to his principles, and fees appeared at the very next major team event, the 1978 Olympiad. He also stirred up controversy with his criticism of the Hastings tournament, although having played there myself during this era his comments on the dismal playing venue and run-down hotels seem largely justified. British chess certainly owes a lot to Tony, not only for his efforts over the board but also for putting it on a more professional footing.

Having said that, Tony could be a difficult person to get on with. His biting wit could be entertaining, but he had a flaw far from unknown amongst grandmasters, namely an inability to appreciate another person's point of view. He also suffered from periodic mental health issues, which became more serious later in life. He died on 12th November 2001 from heart failure, with diabetes being a contributory factor.

At his best, Tony could beat very strong grandmasters with deceptive ease, as in the following game from his great Tilburg success.

Tony Miles - Jan Timman

Tilburg 1984

English Opening, Reversed Dragon

1.c4 e5 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2

The Dragon was one of Miles's favourite openings, so he must have been happy to have the same variation with an extra tempo.

6...Nb6

At that time this was the main line, but more recently the alternative 6...Bc5 7.0-0 0-0 has become fashionable. It looks risky to allow tactical tricks based on Nxe5, but it turns out that it is not so easy to exploit them.

7.0-0 Be7 8.a3 Be6 9.d3 0-0 10.b4

The extra tempo means that the lines of the Classical Dragon involving ...f5 (f4 for White) are not possible, since the e5-pawn is more vulnerable.

10...f6?!

A rather passive line. The more active 10...a5 11.b5 Nd4 offers better chances of equality, since 12.Nxe5 is impossible due to 12...Bf6 13.f4 Nb3, with the double threat of ...Nxa1 and ...Qd4+.

11.Ne4

Miles plays directly to occupy c5, and this move has scored the highest percentage for White. 11.Bb2 is the main alternative, but then Black can again play 11...a5 12.b5 Nd4 with just an edge for White.

11...Qd7

Now 11...a5 12.Nc5 favours White, so Timman adopts the straightforward plan of exchanging the Dragon bishop by ...Bh3.

12.Bb2 a6



Timman doesn't want to keep worrying about b5 every move, so he rules the move out completely, but it's another tempo spent on an essentially defensive measure.

13.Qc2 Bh3 14.Nc5

Now Black must surrender a bishop or lose the b7-pawn.

14...Bxc5 15.Bxh3 Qxh3 16.Qb3+?!

This preliminary check doesn't seem necessary, and I think it would have been better to hold it in reserve; for example, after 16.bxc5 Nd7 17.d4 White is threatening to win a pawn by Qb3+, so Black may be forced to play 17...Kh8 in any case, when White has saved time.

16...Kh8 17.bxc5 Nd7 18.d4

Not 18.Qxb7? Qe6, and the white queen is in trouble.

18...Rab8

The best move, because White was now threatening to take on b7.

19.dxe5

There is now nothing better, since 19.d5 Ne7 20.Rac1 b6 gives Black good counterplay.

19...Ndx5?

A definite mistake since Black's position lacks active prospects once this knight is exchanged. Instead, 19...fxe5 20.Rad1 Nf6 is close to equality. White must meet the threat of 21...Ng4 by 21.Ng5 Qh5 22.Ne6, but even then 22...Rf7 followed by ...Re7 maintains the balance.

20.Nxe5 fxe5

20...Nxe5 21.Bxe5 fxe5 22.Rad1 is also unpleasant for Black, as he cannot challenge the d-file while White is attacking b7. Note that the attempt to mate White by 22...Rf6 fails to 23.Qxb7!.

21.Rad1 Rf6

Black has pinned his hopes on the counter-attack with ...Rh6, but it turns out that White can easily defuse it.

22.f4

The simple 22.f3 Rh6 23.Rf2 is also good, intending Rd5 to attack the isolated e5-pawn.

22...Rxf4?

This natural move leaves Black in serious trouble. 22...Rh6 23.Rf2 is also bad, as 23...exf4 24.Qf7 Rg6 25.Rd7 gives White a winning attack, but 22...Qg4 would have been better; for example, 23.fxe5 Rxf1+ 24.Rxf1 Qxe2 gives Black good defensive chances since White's bishop is obstructed by the e-pawn.

23.Rxf4 exf4 24.Qf7



White takes over the initiative and demonstrates why bishops are stronger than knights in open positions.

24...Rg8 25.Rf1

Miles wants to regain the pawn without releasing the pressure on g7. The computer suggests the remarkable idea 25.Rd7! Qg4 26.Kf2 fxg3+ 27.hxg3 and apparently White is winning since he can play Qf4 and then eat the c- and b-pawns. However, I can't imagine that many players would want to play like this!

25...Qg4

25...fxg3 26.Qxg7+ mates, so Black must surrender the f-pawn.

26.Rxf4 Qg5 27.Kg2?!

This gives Black an unnecessary defensive chance. 27.Re4! was more accurate, since 27...Qxc5+ 28.Kg2 transposes to the game, while 27...Nd8 28.Qxc7 wins a pawn while retaining strong pressure.

27...Qxc5?

After this White's attack is irresistible. 27...Nd8! 28.Qd7 Qg6 was better, intending ...Ne6. Bringing the knight back into play restricts White's advantage.

28.Re4



Threatening 29.Qxg7+ or 29.Bxg7+, so Black has no time to move his knight.

28...Qf8

28...h6 29.Qg6 Qg5 fails to 30.Bxg7+ Rxg7 31.Re8+ and mate next move.

29.Qh5

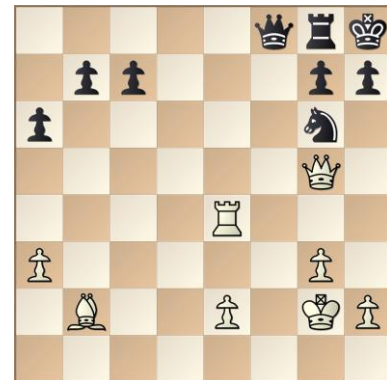
Now the threat is 30.Rh4.

29...Ne7 30.Qg5!

30.Rh4? is met by 30...Qf5.

30...Ng6

Allows a neat finish, but even the best defence 30...Nf5 loses after 31.Rf4 Ne3+ 32.Kf3 Qe8 33.Qc5! Nd1 34.Bxg7+ Kxg7 (34...Rxg7 35.Rf8+) 35.Qd4+ Kh6 36.Qf6+ and mate next move.



31.Qxg6! 1-0

Mark Rivlin Interviews Ali Shahruhki



Ali Shahruhki was a strong junior player in the 1980s who gave up a promising chess career as a teenager. After a 35-year absence, he is back in action through online chess and some friendly OTB games with me. As a good mate on the comedy circuit, I was delighted to hear that Ali was a junior prodigy and aside from dropping one blitz game, he has sent me packing the other times we have locked horns. As you will see below, however long you may be out of chess, the bug mutates, even at 50 years of age. Ali and I are considering putting together a four-board team made up of open-mic comedians in the London Chess League next season.

We have a lot in common; we are both on the open-mic comedy circuit with one-liner jokes and we both love chess. I'm a patzer-plus 1690 and you were around 165 (old currency) as a junior in South Bucks 35 years ago. Please tell us about those years.

I started playing chess in 1986. I remember turning up at the school chess trials that year and everyone beat me. I couldn't quite fathom why that was, so I started reading quite intensively from then on, including opening and endgame theory, some of the famous books like 'Think Like a Grandmaster', and books by Alexey Suetin, but also a lot of puzzle-solving. I've always loved chess puzzles and feel like I have good tactical instincts. Within two years I became captain of the school chess teams (at the Royal Grammar School, High Wycombe) and in 1988 I took our first team to the quarter-finals of The British Schools Chess Championships, sponsored by The Times. We lost to Ipswich. I played Board 2 as a junior for South Bucks in the late 1980s. I was champion in my year group in those years.

What has rekindled the chess spirit and how much do you play?

I'd always felt like I'd abandoned chess somewhat. The last year or so, I have taken it up seriously again, and started studying and revising theory, with a view to increasing my playing level. My ICC rating is generally around the 1750-1900 mark. As a medium-term goal, I would like to see it consistently over 2000. To keep my focus on chess, I have also started chess tutoring for beginner and intermediate players.

ashahrukhi@yahoo.com).

Why did you give up playing as a junior?

My mother stopped me from playing for the school and county. She felt like the intense focus I had on chess would be better focused on schoolwork. It was really devastating at the time to have had chess taken away from me.

Are you excited by the thought of competitive over-the-board chess?

Yes, very much. I've really enjoyed our recent games, Mark, and you have really been an important part of re-lighting the fuse. I've also played a few games with the Hackney team at their Sunday get-togethers. The psychological and physical element of playing a person (as well as the game) is much more exciting than playing online.

Tell us about some of your achievements as a junior player, and about coaches who helped you become strong.

In addition to the above achievements I've mentioned, I won a few tournaments in the Buckinghamshire and Berkshire regions, and generally placed well in all the tournaments I entered. A lovely guy called Brian Lacey used to run the county team in South Bucks. He would sometimes organise chess days/seminars for the stronger players. I remember going to a seminar led by IM Shaun Talbot, on positional chess, which was really excellent. I do wish there had been more opportunities like that for established players to pass on their knowledge to the next generation.

What are your standout games since your comeback?

I feel I am getting more competitive with higher-rated players on ICC. I beat GM Mark Hebden recently (after he miscalculated). I also really enjoyed this recent drawn game with the white pieces against Sarimmahlina (2148).

1. d4 d5 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. Nc3 a6 5. e3 b5 6. cxb5 cxb5
7. a3 Bb7 8. Bd3 e6 9. O-O Ne4 10. Qe2 Nd7 11. Nd2 Nxc3
12. bxc3 Bd6 13. e4 O-O 14. e5 Be7 15. f4 g6 16. Rf3 f5
17. exf6 Rxf6 18. Rh3 Qb6 19. Nf3 Rf7 20. Ne5 Nxe5 21.
fxe5 Rc8 22. Bd2 Bf8 23. Rf1 Rcc7 24. Bg5 Rxf1+ 25. Qxf1
Rf7 26. Qe2 Be7 27. Qg4 Qd8 28. Rxh7 Rxh7 29. Qxe6+
Kh8 30. Qxg6 Qg8 31. Bf6+ Bxf6 32. Qxf6+ Qg7 33. Qd8+
Qg8 34. Qf6+ Qg7 35. Qd8+ Qg8 36. Qf6+ Qg7 (Game
drawn by repetition)

The opening transposes into what is basically the Exchange variation of the Slav, which is notoriously drawish. With 11. Nd2 I decide to let myself be saddled with a weak, backward c-pawn for the sake of playing for a quick e4 pawn-break and a kingside attack. I think it's a mistake for Black to allow the pawn advance e5, as he does, as this pawn wedge in the middle of the board means Black's light-squared bishop remains forever cut off on the queenside. This means, if White can mobilise all his pieces, he will, in effect, be material up. I took a very direct approach in this game, playing a quick f4 and transferring all my pieces to the kingside as quickly as possible. 18 ... Qb6 is an error, leaving the black queen on the wrong side of the board too. In time-trouble, I missed 28. Bxg6 hxc6, 29. Qh4, which gives White a decisive advantage and played the far too 'clever' 28. Rxh7, seeing that 28 ... Kxh7 runs into 29 Bxg6+ Kg8, 30 Qxe6. In the game, 30 ... Qg8 is a further error in time-trouble. I should have played 31 Qxg8+ Kxg8, 32. Bxh7+, transitioning into what should be a winning endgame. The end position is an aesthetically pleasing perpetual check: Black can never block with Rg7 as then Qh4+ wins. I missed some possibilities in this game, but the game is a good illustration that tactical possibilities always flow from a correctly-judged and clearly-executed strategy.

There is a link between comedy and chess (look at some of my games). Two years ago, GM Jonathan Levitt wrote an excellent book about humour (Contemplating Comedy) and comedians Josie Long and a handful of players on the circuit play at decent club player level. Is there a link between writing gags and finding moves?

This is a really interesting question, which I have thought about a lot, and there is definitely a link. A joke is a combination of the everyday (an ordinary or mundane phrase or situation, for example) and a surprise (or unexpected connection). Winning at chess also involves seeing possibilities in a normal-looking position that your opponent is, as yet, unable to see. A good or pleasing combination always has a 'punchline' – an unusual and counter-intuitive move which comes to you by way of feeling and instinct rather than analysis.

Who are your favourites from chess history to the present?

I grew up when the great battles between Karpov and Kasparov were just beginning. I was always glued to the TV coverage and bought *British Chess Magazine* and *Chess* so I could study the annotated games. Garry Kasparov has always been a great hero. I'm not sure anyone else has ever combined such subtle positional acumen with monstrous tactical ability. They used to do games on the BBC where he would voice annotate his games after, and you'd hear him rattle off a 15-move variation and evaluate the end position, as, for example, 'slightly better for White,' which would blow my mind. He's like a hybrid of Mikhail Tal and José Raúl Capablanca, which should, in theory, be impossible, because you're always supposed to be one or the other. Kasparov always used to play 1 d4 back then. So I did too. It's why I always used to play the Sicilian (2 ... e6, instead of 2 ... d6, after Kasparov reinvigorated the Taimanov and Scheveningen variations). I also used to play the King's Indian for the same reason.

Chess today is very different from your days as a junior, particularly with so many online options to play and learn. Would you rather have been a junior today?

I have to say, and to show my age at the same time, I liked studying chess via books. I found that learning this way also helped my visualisation develop, as I would often read on the move (or in a library) without a board, which forced me to play through the different variations for a move in my head. Having said that, I do watch a lot of chess videos online (YouTube and ICC), and there are some great teaching materials available, especially when it comes to learning, for example, standard endgame theory, like rook endings.

What advice would you give to young players who find it hard to combine chess with their studies?

Well, let me say first of all that I never got the balance right! So, I'm probably not in a good position to give advice. I was totally obsessed with chess, almost immediately. I sense that this is probably the case with a lot of players. The game demands such attention to detail, planning and focus, that you can't easily dip in and out of it. So, I've had a rather all-or-nothing relationship to it. Chess is such a beautiful and unique mixture of science and art or intellect and intuition. Once you are a chess player, you are forever a chess player. Just when I thought I was out, it pulled me back in. Chess has always been a big part of who I am, and it's wonderful to be rediscovering that fact.

Chess players like a good laugh, so please give us a couple of your best one-liners.

As a kid, I was expected to get top grades in everything. I got a B once. My mum made me retake the blood test.

I grew up on a council estate. Had a lot of girlfriends. Nothing serious – just friends on benefits.

Rating Corner

by Brian Valentine, Manager ECF Rating

One question that has cropped up recently may interest a few readers. Looking at the average over-the-board full ratings for rapidplay chess (1251) compared with standardplay (1648), the huge difference could be an issue - the issue being that in restricted rating events, where one or other of the ratings is missing, the other might be the nearest alternative. A quick glance would suggest that there is no comparison.

Diving into the data, we find that rapidplay chess is the preferred format for junior chess. We find that over 30% of the rapidplay chess list has a rating of less than 1000, whereas the proportion of such standardplay ratings is 2%. So next we compared the ratings of those common to both lists; the difference drops to 38 points.

This difference is more manageable but still irritating; more so when looking back as there was a minimal difference at the start of ECF Elo ratings in July 2020. Diving deeper, we find that the difference is arising mainly from three sources:

1. Juniors who outperform have a higher k-factor. This feature injects points into the system. Given that juniors play a higher proportion of rapidplay chess games, the feature will add more points to the rapidplay chess average. An estimate is that this explains about half the difference.
2. Full ratings are affected by performance against those with p-ratings. Dummy ratings used for early p-ratings were designed to be marginally higher than that which one would expect for new players, as an incentive for existing players to play new players. A higher percentage of rapidplay chess is between full and p-rated players, and this seems to explain about 20% of the difference.
3. To compensate, the dummy rating for standardplay is set at 1800 for standardplay chess, but 1700 for rapidplay chess. This difference seeps into full ratings and means

that the average standardplay rating is about 7 points higher than if its dummy rating had been set at 1700.

We know that the turnover of rated players is higher on the rapidplay chess list. Unlike the three sources above, there is no reason to believe that any changes to date form a trend. If you have got this far you will notice that doesn't explain everything. That is because in moving between the full lists (difference 397) and the common player list (difference 38 points) certain short cuts have been taken, but it looks as if we have found the kernel of the problem.

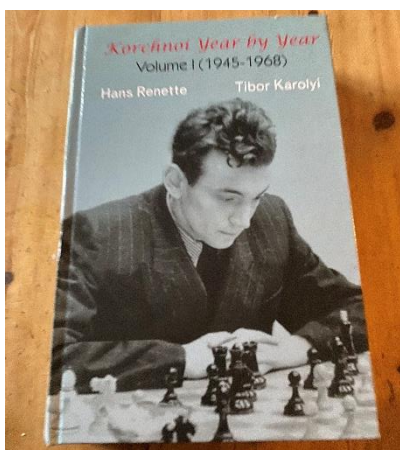
So what do we do? Nothing for now. In an earlier article I explained that we could not tell if the system was in deflation or inflation. This was because as we emerged from Covid the population of rated players was changing. In particular, very few were losing their rating; leavers tend to increase the average of the next list. We know that the rapidplay chess list is relatively more inflationary than standardplay, but it might be that the standardplay average rating is deflating. We will continue to monitor the situation and will eventually tweak the system to keep average ratings stable.

Book of the Month by Ben Graff



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

Korchnoi Year by Year – Volume 1 (1945 – 1968) by Hans Renette and Tibor Karolyi (Elk and Ruby)



The authors highlight that when Yusupov was asked to name the chess player of the twentieth century, he did not plump for Kasparov or Karpov. Nor did he select Fischer, Botvinnik or indeed any of the twelve men who reigned as world champion in this hundred-year period. Instead, he selected Korchnoi, on the basis of his fifty years of continual improvement, 'during which he always tried to find new and better ways'.

Yet if this risks sounding somewhat sentimental, Korchnoi's statistics go some way toward making the case. He claimed the scalps of nine world champions (the joint most in history), was a four-time Soviet and six-time Olympic champion, and competed for the world title between 1955 and 2002. His 1978 world title encounter against Karpov 'was the most hostile and belligerent match ever played in the history of chess,' and their 1970s and early 1980s world championship battles gifted the

chess world a story as compelling as the struggles between Fischer and Spassky that had preceded them. The ageing defector, who did not peak until his mid-forties, gave Karpov, the young Soviet superstar, a fight for the ages, and Korchnoi immortalised his story both through the brilliance of his play and his seminal autobiography *Chess is my Life*.

Whether or not we quibble with Yusupov's precise positioning of Korchnoi within the pantheon of twentieth-century giants, it is clear that he is worthy of immense study, and *Korchnoi Year by Year* exquisitely does him justice. Consisting of more than 181 games (mainly analysed by Karolyi) and extensive narrative (mainly written by Renette), as with all the historical books Elk and Ruby publish, this is of the very first rank.

No one would suggest that Korchnoi was the easiest of people to get along with. I myself witnessed first-hand at a London Chess Classic simul, late in Korchnoi's life, the organisers trying to pacify a man who gave the appearance of being just moments away from exploding with rage. Yet if Korchnoi could appear 'hostile and sullen', the authors do an excellent job of explaining why this was, with the cause lying deep in his childhood. 'Victor spent his childhood in a city surrounded, besieged and isolated by Nazism for 100 days.' This shaped who he was and made him a 'survivor', a trait he would retain for the rest of his days.

Perhaps two things set Korchnoi apart from his peers. Firstly, his sheer love for playing never diminished. Timman apparently thought he would be clever by requesting the same fee as Korchnoi to participate in a simul. To his shock, he then discovered that Korchnoi charged a lot less than he did, such was Korchnoi's eagerness to get to the board. I still remember seeing video footage of Korchnoi in tournament action soon after his 1978 world title defeat. Most of us would be gloomy, depressed by the thought of how close we had come to being world champion. But Korchnoi wasn't. The board was set out in front of him. He was about to play the game that mattered to him most. What had gone had gone, but here was another chance to immerse himself in the world of chess.

Secondly, Korchnoi's questionable sportsmanship when defeated (which became worse with age) was legendary, and is neatly captured by Spassky within this book. 'But Korchnoi, he always overreacted after losing. Ever since the Leningrad Pioneer Palace. He would throw the pieces from the board, scream, insult his opponent. If someone was better than him at anything, Korchnoi was ready to tear them apart.' While such behaviour might strike some as unedifying, and it probably is, at least it shows how

much Korchnoi cared. How far removed he was from the cynical professionals who have long since fallen out of love with their sport. His was a passion that never dimmed.

Renette and Karolyi set out in excellent fashion Korchnoi's progress through the chess world between 1945 and 1968, and in doing so also provide insights into a host of other characters along the way. To give but one example, the portrait painted of Reshevsky, who played Korchnoi in the Candidates quarter-finals in 1968, is fascinating. Reshevsky enlisted Benko as his second for this match. Once, when visiting Reshevsky's house, Benko asked, "Where are your chess books?" To my horror I found he only owned three or four, and they were ones that he wrote... One problem Sammy had was his memory, which was terrible. During preparations for the Korchnoi and Hort matches, we would study openings all day, and by the evening he wouldn't remember anything we had looked at.' For all Reshevsky's natural talent, he was never quite world champion material, and despite being 'armed with a new hairpiece' which made him 'look younger than ever,' Korchnoi, who 'looked disheartened, had watery and tired eyes and was chain-smoking', would unsurprisingly win the match comfortably.

A single review cannot do justice to the scope, breadth and quality of this book. The Korchnoi that emerges is one of many paradoxes. He has no interest in money, and when he first earns some ends up inadvertently loaning or giving away the clothes he had purchased with his prize. Yet at other moments he is 'infuriated' by how much of his winnings the State takes from him. After playing in a simul in a shoe factory and finding that his payment for doing so was a pair of shoes, 'Korchnoi went right away to the embassy and confronted the officials. "Which one do you want?", he asked, "the right one or the left one?"', procuring himself a travel ban for his troubles.

The authors highlight that Korchnoi, although 'happily' married, was also something of a 'womaniser'. That said, when a glamorous journalist catches his eye, things end extremely abruptly when she asks Korchnoi probably the worst question anyone could ask him: 'Do you still play chess?' 'Korchnoi turned his head, growled and his eyes filled with blood. "If you ever want to get good at your job, I suggest you do your homework."'

While this was a moment from later in his life, it is clear that Korchnoi's somewhat uneasy relationship with the State was there from the very beginning. Unlike Botvinnik, the model Soviet, Korchnoi's study of 'history' (which essentially consisted of reading the writings of Lenin and Stalin) led him in a different direction. 'I felt

some kind of internal protest. No, what do you mean, I was not a dissident, I was a chess player, and therefore I was looking for, if not the truth of life, then at least some logic in what I studied. And it didn't exist.' Coupled with his outspokenness, it is clear that the potential seeds for his future defection can be spied in this period.

For all his genius, the Korchnoi in Volume 1 has yet to peak. His play is inconsistent, erratic. He doesn't always quite get the results that his talent deserves. While his behaviour isn't always relatable (or excusable), his desire to make the best of himself at the chess board really is. Perhaps the fact that he never quite became world champion makes him more like one of us. He wrote in the foreword to Leonard Barden's *Play Better Chess* that he could not understand his son's approach to chess - that it was a game to the child, whereas for him it was his work, his profession. I think now that Korchnoi had this wrong. Chess was never 'work' to him.

There are three further volumes of this biography to follow, and I very much look forward to reading all of them. They are likely to prove to be the definitive word on this most famous of players. In particular, the thought of reading about the Karpov – Korchnoi matches which lie in the period to follow through the eyes of such skilful writers is a prospect to relish. I have felt privileged to review many excellent books in this column during 2023. With *Korchnoi Year by Year, Volume 1*, I can say with confidence that we have saved the best for last.

It's a Puzzlement!



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

FM Ledger, Dave J – Zakarian, Dimitrios Levon
4NCL 2023-24, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2

WIM Steil-Antoni, Fiona – Ciocan, Maria-Alexandra
4NCL 2023-24, England



White to win - [Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3

Chan, Sheng Liang Bernard – IM Han, Yichen
4NCL 2023-24, England



Black to win - [Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4

WIM Yao, Lan – GM Cramling, Pia
24th European Teams Women, Budva MNE



White to win - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5

FM Haydon, D – GM Darini, P
Titled Tuesday 31 Oct Late, Chess.com INT



White to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6

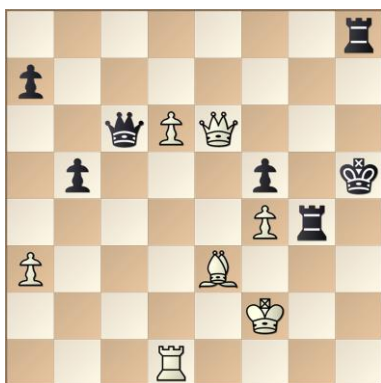
WFM Stojkovska, Monika – IM Houska, Jovanka
24th European Teams Women, Budva MNE



Black to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7

FM Hamperi, F – IM Grieve, Harry
47th Guernsey Open 2023, St James GCI



Black to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8

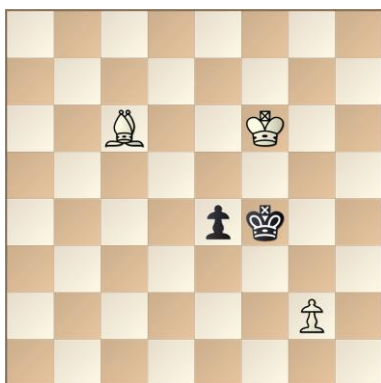
Zakarian, Dimitrios Levon – Hryskichenko, Kamila
4NCL 2023-24, England



Black to win - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9

IM Houska, Jovanka – IM Narva, M
24th European Teams Women, Budva MNE



White to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10

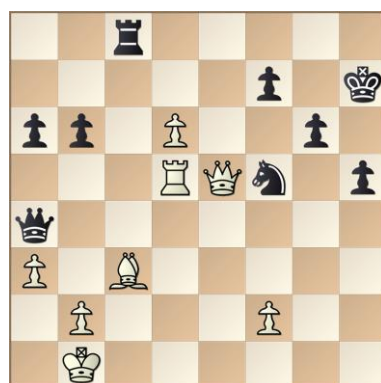
Li, Harry – Badacsonyi, Stanley
4NCL 2023-24 England



White to win - [Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11

Parligras, Mircea-Emilian – Fernandez, Daniel Howard
4NCL 2023-24, England



Black to win - [Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12

Varley, Joe – CM Walton, A
ECF National Club 2023, Hull ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit https://chesspuzzle.net/List/9338?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=decembernew by clicking the link or via the QR code.



You Can Win Something with Kids!!!

by Alan Burke

Steve Rigby, founder of 3Cs chess club, was recently granted a national honour by the Prime Minister, who personally selects individual volunteers to receive a 'Points Of Light' award for their work in making a significant difference to the community.

The award is the culmination of a very memorable twelve months for 3Cs, during which both the club itself and individual members achieved the following in 2023 - the club's 45th anniversary year....

National Club Champions

Manchester League Champions (8th consecutive year)

British Chess Educational Trust award winners

Alannah Ashton – British Girls' Under 12 Champion

Edward Jackson – Represented England at the World Schools Championships

Kyle Pelling – Represented England in the Glorney Cup

Featured on the BBC 1 television programme 'The One Show'



The BBC filming at a 3Cs' club night and shown on their primetime television programme 'The One Show'

Formation

3Cs was formed from necessity in 1978, when local junior players were being turned away from joining an existing club due to their young age, despite having already proven their ability at the game.

Two Oldham-based teachers, Steve Rigby and Roy Williams, were already coaching chess at their schools, and so, once efforts to provide their pupils with more competitive matches had been rebuffed, they set about forming a club of their own.



1981 - Roy Williams and Steve Rigby, founders of 3Cs, during the club's formative years second from the left is Stuart Clarke, now a FIDE master, while on the extreme right is Dale James, who won the 1984 British Under 14s Championship and is now one of 3Cs' coaches and winner of the 2022 ECF 'Contribution to Junior Chess' award (Photograph courtesy of the Oldham Evening Chronicle).

Club Principles

So just what is 3Cs ? An often-asked question within the chess community throughout Britain - and even further afield - because exactly what is it: what does it mean, and why is it often spoken about in glowing terms when

discussing factors that have been important to chess in this country for several years, as well as a beacon to which those responsible for taking the game forward into the future could maybe look towards for how junior chess should progress ?

3Cs is just the name of a chess club - and yes, possibly its unusual name is itself one factor why it might be more well-known than many others; no hint of a location, as well as the mystery of just what is meant by it. Therefore, let's begin by explaining both, which can be done by simply revealing the club's actual full name – 'The Children's Chess Club of Oldham'.

The club was formed originally to provide local schoolchildren in the Oldham area with an opportunity to learn the game, but it has since evolved into one of the major production lines of young talent throughout the country, with several of our home-grown players now competing regularly at the highest level, both nationally and Internationally. How many other clubs throughout the country could field a team of players who have all progressed via their own junior ranks to challenge a side containing GM Stephen Gordon, IM Andy Horton, FM Adam Ashton; FM Daniel Abbas, FM Stuart Clarke, FM Alex Longson and CM Alan Walton ?

It is also testament to the principles which the club has always adhered to since its formation that 3Cs, despite mainly fielding teams consisting of genuine products from its own club ranks, have been able to compete for many years alongside the somewhat manufactured sides of titled players which profess to represent 'local' clubs in the 4NCL, while in 2017 and 2018 3Cs also qualified to represent England in the European Club Cup – a feat described as like Oldham Athletic only using players from their own youth academy, and yet progressing to take part against the financially superior heavyweights in the UEFA Champions League.

The same principle also bore fruit during 2023 when 3Cs won the National Club Championships while fielding a full team – Adam Ashton, Alan Walton, John Bentley and Alex Longson – who had all progressed via the club's own coaching set up.



*3Cs 2023 National Club Champions - Alan Walton, Adam Ashton, John Bentley, Alex Longson. Winning such a prestigious national trophy was made even more special for the 3Cs club by the entire team being products of the club's own junior coaching system
Photograph by Brendan O'Gorman*

Recruitment

The club draws its members mainly from schools competing in the Oldham Primary Schools League, although every child is welcomed to the club. Its official name, 'Children's Chess Club' (hence 3Cs) is a constant reminder of their priorities – to encourage a far greater youth participation in the game irrespective of skill level. The club's members are representative of all Oldham's diverse backgrounds and cultures, with the children happily competing on equal terms either as part of a team representing the club or individually in various tournaments.

Club founder Steve Rigby is also a previous winner of the ECF President's Award for Services to Chess, as is 3Cs' head coach Phil Adams, while Dale James (the 1984 Under 14 British Champion) won the 2022 ECF 'Contribution to Junior Chess' award, mainly due to his work in providing chess coaching each week in eight local schools. It is from those sessions that Dale then recommends any interested youngsters to attend 3Cs to further develop their knowledge of the game.

Therein lies the crux of why 3Cs maybe appears to have succeeded where many other clubs have failed in both the recruitment and the success of junior players – the club members do not just wait for youngsters to come to them; existing members go out and offer their services to local schools by organising and supervising coaching sessions as an extra-curricular activity.

However, the club's reputation has spread wide enough that its club nights attract young players from well outside the Oldham area, while it also has members whose origins are in Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, China, France, India, Ireland, Israel, Jamaica, Japan,

Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia and Ukraine, as well as all four nations of the British Isles.



One of 3Cs' junior coaching groups receiving plenty of expert tuition

Coaching Method

Once those children come to 3Cs they are first given coaching appropriate to their own level of play and can then progress through the various groups as their ability increases. They also come together with others who have a similar interest for the game, and then as their skill improves - and irrespective of their age - they are given frequent opportunities to play for 3Cs in the local adult leagues, which also highlights another possible reason for the club's continuing production line of young talent. When giving their young players the chance to take on more experienced opponents (both in age and ability), 3Cs are not bothered if they win, lose or draw, as long as they enjoy themselves. It is that removal of any pressure of expectation which appears to encourage many youngsters to enjoy staying with the club and therefore give themselves more time to improve.

Furthermore, club nights don't just consist of those in attendance playing a few games against each other, nor only the teaching of moves and tactics to the various coaching groups which are themselves organised to ensure that each young player gets the correct level of instruction. The club also believes that if these children know more about the history and traditions of the game then it will add even more to their enjoyment and understanding of it. Photographs of every world champion are on the 3Cs club wall, with details of their achievements frequently relayed to its younger members, while a vast library of chess literature is also available whenever required. Such items can be borrowed at will and just returned at any time in the future once any useful information has been gleaned. Yet again, the club is convinced that if the children are treated at the club in the same way as the adults, then they are more likely to repay the trust and respect afforded to them, and thus want to continue their association with 3Cs despite the

many other attractions which the modern-day world may offer.



The 3Cs' match room - photographs of every world champion help youngsters learn about the history of chess, while an extensive library is available where books can be borrowed and returned without cost.

Encouragement

3Cs don't charge a membership fee, or even set a weekly charge for coming to their club nights... an honesty box is just left near the door for those attending to drop in whatever they wish, while youngsters are also able to buy items from the club's tuck shop, and are again left to their own devices with regard to putting any money in the box without being supervised.

Hence youngsters are happy to attend club nights and therefore the willingness of such players in wanting to continue representing 3Cs – together with friends they have come through the ranks with – has resulted in the club dominating the local Manchester League since the turn of the century and highlighted by again winning last season's A Division Championship, making them the first club in the 132 year history of the league to win the title eight seasons in a row. However, what is more remarkable is that it has not just been the same few players achieving success year after year – 52 different players were involved in those title-winning teams, thus proving the ongoing turnover of talent at the club.



Different ways of amusing the youngsters keep them interested (circular, 5x5 and 16x12 boards)

Recognition

3Cs have also been successful away from the board, having twice been honoured with the ECF Club of the Year Award (2006 and 2014) – the only club to have won the trophy on two occasions – and in 2023 having been awarded the British Chess Educational Trust Award for their efforts in promoting and encouraging chess at junior level. The club was also given national exposure when selected by the BBC to feature on their prime time television programme ‘The One Show’ to highlight how chess is becoming increasingly popular with the younger generation.



Steve Rigby (right) receiving the 2006 English Chess Federation's Club of the Year Award from ECF official Stan Goodall - the honour was also bestowed on 3Cs in 2014, making them the only club to have won the award twice. Photograph courtesy of the Oldham Evening Chronicle

Volunteers

All the hard work involved in organising the 3Cs' various teams as well as the club's day-to-day business is purely voluntary, including that done by many of the parents whom the club actively encourages to assist in a variety of ways, hopefully to also give them the feeling that they too are a part of the club's success. Even if a parent is not very chess-wise but there is a youngster in need of a game on a club night, the parent is encouraged to just sit down and play a game – the young player is often happy to be playing an adult irrespective of the opponent's ability.

Many of the current 3Cs club officials began their association with the club just as a parent of a young player, yet now play an active part behind the scenes. Tony Ashton, John Walton, Alan Burke, Usma Khan and Rose Kaliski all assist in various ways to keep the club as an attractive option for young players, while Adam Ashton, himself having come through the 3Cs junior ranks, now sees his wife Crystal also involved as one of the club coaches.

3Cs volunteers have also been willing to assist at a more national level with Vic Pelling and Neil Jackson (again both starting off as parents of young 3Cs players) having been head of delegation for England junior teams when travelling abroad to play international competitions.

Activities away from the chess board also assist in keeping the children's interest in the club. Head coach Phil Adams issues a fortnightly newsletter which is sent to every member of the club, including details of forthcoming tournaments to enter, coaching tips on various styles of play, as well as recent chess news items from all over the world. Phil also encourages every player to submit their match notations to him so that he can provide them all with expert analysis of each game.

Furthermore, on match nights 3Cs provide refreshments for all players, both home and away, while a tuck shop is open on club nights which, thanks to sponsorship, provides a vast array of goodies for the young players at very minimal cost along with free hot drinks for mums and dads.

So why do these volunteers do it? For the children's sake! Dedicated club members are convinced that chess brings great benefits to the children both educationally and socially. They also strongly feel that Oldham youngsters deserve the same opportunities as others and are fully capable of competing proudly as 'Oldhamers' with the very best, whether that be locally, nationally or internationally.

And yes, club members can be rightly proud to look around their premises at the various trophies and honours that have come their way, but that is not the ultimate aim of 3Cs... far greater satisfaction is gained by seeing youngsters coming through the door on club nights.



The 3Cs tuck shop. Note the open cash tin – youngsters are trusted to do the right thing

3Cs Aims

The number of 3Cs players with master titles may not appear great in comparison with the amount of youngsters who have attended the club during its 45 years, but such aims are not what 3Cs is about... the club's ethos ever since its formation in 1978 has always been that we would rather have 100 juniors playing chess, even at a lower level, rather than concentrate all our efforts in producing just a small handful of elite players, while the club would return all their trophies and honours if, in exchange, they could be guaranteed a regular room full of young players who will enjoy chess for years to come.



A product of the 3Cs' junior coaching system, grandmaster Stephen Gordon, who joined the club while still at primary school, being tested by another generation of young 3Cs players

So does the 3Cs approach work ?

Well, it all depends on what your club's aims are - but although 3Cs don't look to 'win at all costs', the club's honours boards (27 British champions and 39 junior England internationals) as well as winning the Manchester League Championship on 18 occasions in the last 20 seasons, does seem to indicate that their method of putting the interest of young players before glory has still brought success.

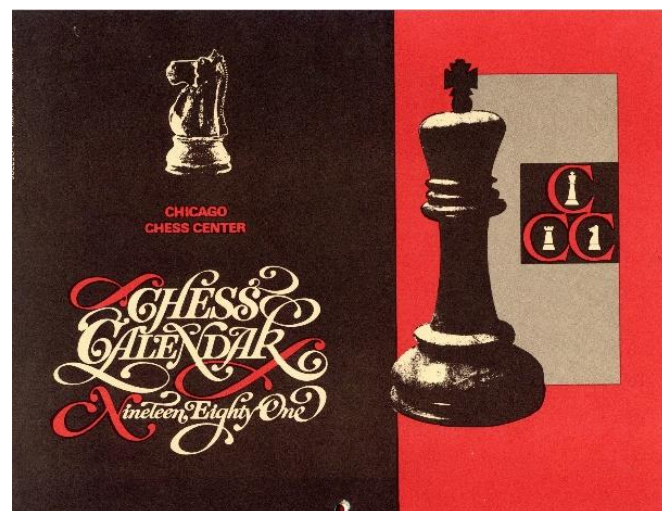
Yes, you can win something with kids - but first of all you have to do your part by encouraging them in the right way to do so.

And finally...

Please, please, please ... for anyone ever referring to 3Cs via the written word (or whichever form of electrical communication you may use), note that the name of the club does NOT have an apostrophe between the 'C' and the 's'. (The 's' is purely to indicate a plural... i.e. three Cs !!!)

More details about 3Cs can be found on their website here: <https://www.3cscchessclub.com/>

From the Archive



It's the time of year when you might be thinking about getting a new calendar or diary for 2024 – so we thought we'd share these fantastic chess-themed calendars from 1976 and 1981. A perfect Christmas gift for the chess-lover in your life!

BENJAMIN JOEL

chess is ageless

KOLTANOWSKI

DECEMBER 1981

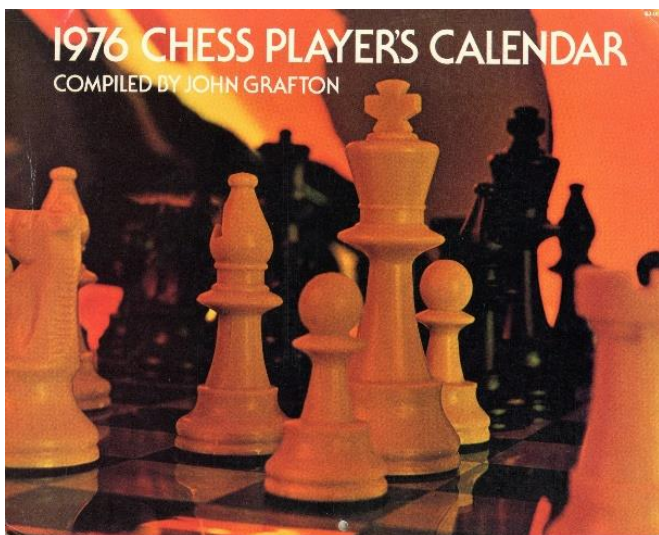
sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
		1	2	3 <small>1982 birth of Robert Byrne</small>	4 <small>1927 birth of Nathan Aspinall</small>	5 <small>1917 birth of Harry Pillsbury</small>
6	7 <small>1927 birth of Emanuel Lasker</small>	8	9 <small>1915 birth of Joseph Hooper</small>	10	11	12 <small>1907 birth of Akiba Rubinstein</small>
13	14	15 <small>1878 birth of Wilhelm Steinitz</small>	16	17	18	19 <small>1927 birth of Nigel Short</small>
20	21	22	23	24 <small>1908 birth of Mikhail Botvinnik</small>	25 <small>Christmas</small>	26 <small>1901 birth of Vladimir Kramnik</small>
27	28 <small>1900 birth of Garry Kasparov</small>	29	30	31 <small>1988 birth of Boris Gelfand</small>		

CANDIDATES

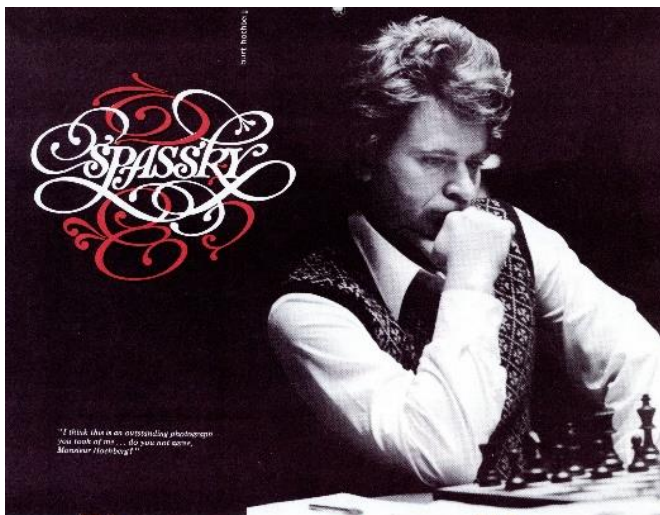
TAL SPASSKY HUEBNER PORTISCH KORCHNOI PETROSIAN POLUGAEVSKY ADORJAN

FEBRUARY 1981

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
1	2 <small>1922 birth of Viktor Korchnoi</small>	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 <small>1921 birth of Paul Morphy</small>	11	12	13	14 <small>1921 U.S. Amateur Chess Championship, winner Robert Byrne, Lawrence, NY</small>
15 <small>1905 U.S. Amateur Chess Championship, winner Frank Marshall, Worcester, MA</small>	16 <small>1901 U.S. Amateur Chess Championship, winner Frank Marshall, Worcester, MA</small>	17	18	19 <small>1920 birth of David Bronstein</small>	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28 <small>1910 birth of Mikhail Tal</small>



The team here at Special Collections would like to wish all English Chess Federation members a very happy festive season and a lovely New Year. We hope to welcome you to the library at some time in 2024!



MAY 1981

sunday	monday	tuesday	wednesday	thursday	friday	saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 31	25	26	27	28	29	30

Chess in the Park – Early Adopters

by Nigel Towers



One of two newly installed tables in Redditch – overlooking the lake in Arrow Valley

Back in August the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced a combined package of measures worth almost £1 million to help develop the next generation of chess players, bring chess to a wider audience, and support the development of elite players. The investment will include DCMS support for players to receive world-leading training and development opportunities, Department for Education grants for schools in disadvantaged areas to get more primary school children playing chess, and support from the Department for Levelling Up for 100 new chess tables to be installed in public spaces.

Full details can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-investment-to-transform-future-of-english-chess-announced>

The Chess in the Park programme is now well underway, with the grant funding allocated to local authorities in designated Levelling Up areas, and local authorities in the process of planning for and/or installing tables and seating and making arrangements for sets and equipment.

Local authorities have been given some discretion as to how they spend their grant funding, and there are a number of choices to be made, including selecting a suitable location, procuring and installing a concrete or recycled plastic table or tables with seating, and making arrangements for supporting equipment (including sets and potentially clocks and/ or giant sets to support events). A key consideration is how to make sets available for players to use the tables, with the expected approach being to locate the table near to a café or park facility, with the staff making the sets available on request and retrieving for storage.

In this article we look at three of the early adopters – Redditch, Hull and Leicester – and how the local authorities are being supported by their local chess community.



The table in Arrow Valley with set on a frosty morning in November

After receiving their grant, Redditch Borough Council have acted quickly to procure and install two tables with seating – one in Arrow Valley Country Park, and a second in Morton Stanley Park on the other side of Redditch. The Arrow Valley table (pictured at the start of the article) has been installed in a fine location overlooking the Arrow Valley lake and in the grounds of the visitor centre. The plan is to make sets available from a stock of basic tournament-style plastic sets held at the Visitor Centre and issued on request. The local Redditch Chess Club have been in contact with the Parks team and will be looking to run a launch event in the spring to promote the facility as the weather gets warmer. This may be a stand-alone event, or part of one of the park's spring events. The club will be bringing some of their trestle tables and sets to add to the concrete table in Arrow Valley and will be aiming to take on park visitors and all-comers.



An earlier 'Chess in the Park' event run at 'Pebworth Party in the Park' by the Redditch club secretary Dan Lambourne within the classic car display

Kingston Upon Hull is a second early adopter and will be installing tables in Pearson Park and East Park.

You can find further details of the Council's plans at the BBC News link here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-67296951>



Chess in Pearson Park, Hull

The local Association (Hull and East Riding Chess Association) have been extremely active in supporting social chess playing and have run 'Play Chess' Festivals for the past three summers.

Plans are underway for Leicester City Council to install their two chess tables in the historic 69-acre Victoria Park, which is situated in central Leicester next to the University Campus. The installations will be based on recycled plastic tables with bench seating and accessible access. There will be two boards per table to allow multiple games at once. Leicester has a long history of supporting British chess, with De Montfort University's Venue hosting the 2023 British Championships which included a well-attended outdoor chess programme with drop-in chess events held in the Circle in Leicester city centre and on the De Montfort University campus.



Drop in chess on the campus

The Local association (LRCA) is supporting the council in the installation programme, and hopes to organise promotional events once the tables are in place via local Leicester clubs.

The ECF is keen to contact local authorities and local chess associations and clubs to support the implementation work. We have set up a web page here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/chess-in-the-park/> where we will be providing helpful supporting information and sharing experience from the various table implementations across England.

NEWS and VIEWS

Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress

The Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress this year celebrates its 97th edition, and will take place from 28th December to 7th January, 2024.

The organising committee is making some changes, while keeping the overall 'look and feel' of this famous and traditional event, with tournaments for players of all levels. The Hastings Masters will be played over nine rounds, with a minimum of **£10,000** in prizes. Many titled players are expected to take part, and last year's winner, Sarunas Sulskis from Lithuania, has confirmed his participation.

New this year are the Con Power Christmas tournaments, six-round Swisses played over four days. Con Power was Congress Director from 1983 to 2015. The five-round New Year events are followed by the Weekend Congress, now in its 39th year.

The popular venue for all events remains the Horntye Park Sports Complex, which has hosted the Congress since 2000/01.

Make a strong move and come and play in the longest running traditional chess congress in the world!

For more information and online entry – <https://hastingschess.com/>

31st 4NCL Congress – 19th to 21st January

The 31st 4NCL Congress will be held at the Old Swan in Harrogate on the above dates. You can find further information and enter the event at the following link – https://4ncl.co.uk/fide/information_31.htm

British Universities' Chess

Entries for the 2024 British Universities' Chess Association Team Championship on 25th-26th February in Leicester have now opened. You can find the relevant information and entry form here:

<https://www.bucachess.org.uk/news/2024-championship-entry>

Manager for Accessible Chess

Owen Philips has decided to stand down from the post of Manager for Accessible Chess on health grounds.

During his tenure Owen has taken forward a number of initiatives to support disabled players and has prepared a very helpful report with areas to consider for further ECF support. The ECF would like to thank Owen for his valuable contribution in a short period. As Owen is standing down, we are now looking for someone to take on the role, which is an important one for the ECF, as input to our future plans.

If you are interested in the role and feel that you can contribute to the ECF's support for accessible chess, please apply to

director.homechess@englishchess.org.uk

Please use the same email address for general enquiries about accessible chess support.

Nigel Towers, Director for Home Chess

Points of Light Award for Steve Rigby of 3Cs Chess Club



Photo courtesy Oldham Evening Chronicle

3Cs Chess Club has once again been given national recognition with the club's founder Steve Rigby having secured a 'Points of Light' award, which is a national honour personally bestowed by the Prime Minister to individual volunteers who have made a significant contribution to their community.

Steve founded 3Cs (Children's Chess Club) 45 years ago, and has since seen it grow into one of the most prestigious chess clubs in the country, culminating in its winning the National Club Championships earlier this year.

Further details of Steve's award can be seen on the 3Cs website at the links below:

<https://www.3cschessclub.com/>

<https://www.3cschessclub.com/ExternalAwards>

You can also see the Downing Street announcement here:

<https://www.pointsoflight.gov.uk/3cs-chess-club/>

IM Norm and FM Title for Sohumi Lohia in Rome

Congratulations to 14-year-old Sohumi Lohia, who achieved his first IM norm at the Roma Citta' Aperta – Master 5th International Chess Festival in early December. Sohumi, who scored 6/9 and had a performance rating of 2448, also achieved the FIDE FM title.

European Blitz English Success

Congratulations to Bodhana Sivanandan, who was both the top English player and the top female player in the European Blitz. You can see Bodhana's results from the event here:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr835051.aspx?lan=1&art=9&fedb=ENG&fed=ENG&flag=30&snr=328>

IM Irina Bulmaga congratulated Bodhana in the following tweet:

<https://twitter.com/IrinaBulmaga/status/1736077518363382168>

You can read the Financial Times article written by Leonard Barden at

<https://www.ft.com/content/cc325257-6479-4ad5-843c-0a3e913498e7>

Here are some more links celebrating her success:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67770604>

<https://news.sky.com/story/british-chess-phenomenon-bodhana-sivanandan-8-named-best-female-player-at-european-championship-13034714>

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2023/dec/20/british-girl-8-crowned-best-female-player-at-european-chess-tournament>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/20/sport/bodhana-sivanandan-eight-year-old-european-blitz-chess-intl-spt/index.html> and on Sky News at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLQCeU9E_JY

Bloxwich Junior Chess Academy Presentation and Party by Ray Dolan

There was a presentation and party at Bloxwich Junior Chess Academy on Saturday 25th November with guests of honour Councillors Corin and Mark Statham, and Welsh international player Jonathan Blackburn in attendance.



All 30 members received a trophy and certificate for all their achievements. Club champions for the past year were Amraya Johal (U14 Girls) and Aarav Sohi (U14 Boys). Josh Le took U11 joint first at the Staffordshire Junior Chess Championships 2023. There was a big surprise for founder members Eunice and Ray Dolan when the coaching team, together with parents and children, congratulated them and presented a bouquet of flowers and a voucher for a meal for two at a Toby Carvery. We were both touched by this and completely lost for words, as you can imagine.



The Bloxwich Junior Chess Academy has been running for over 13 years. In that time 448 children have come through our doors. Over the years we have produced England players and UK champions plus Staffordshire champions. All that we do is to inspire children to achieve - that is our reward. The coaching team give their time every week without payment, and are great ambassadors for the game. As Eunice, the President of MCCU, said in a speech on Sunday 19th November at the Staffordshire Junior Chess Championships, chess is a game to be enjoyed - win, lose or draw.

Ho Ho Ho! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from Meltham Chess Club! by Steve Westmoreland

Meltham is the newest chess club in the Huddersfield League. Founded in April 2023 by Rob Mitchell and Brendan Briggs, who came from Holmfirth and Huddersfield respectively, this club is going from strength to strength.



Food eaten and the junior competition complete, the adult section commences - Jacob and Harley take the opportunity to play both competitions

Many clubs like to steal players to compete in leagues, but Meltham has grown a team. They were able to stand up a squad to compete in the Silver Rook Yorkshire league competition, where they presently sit in seventh place. A junior team has gone into the Yorkshire Under 18 League, and Meltham are to fully enter the Huddersfield League after Christmas.



Meltham under 18s at Hull on 10th December in the Yorkshire Under u18 League

It is worth noting that Meltham is 6.3 miles from Huddersfield Chess Club, four miles from Honley, and 5.1 miles from Holmfirth. The explosion of chess in the area is remarkable.

Where Rob and Brendan have done particularly well is in attracting junior players, particularly of primary school age. Consequently, on 18th December the club drew the attention of none other than Santa during the Christmas junior and adult rapidplay competition!



Santa arrives early to meet the juniors and hand out gifts to the good boys and girls

Over 50 adults, juniors, parents, and a smattering of wider league players attended (including Jacob and me), enjoying the excellent spread put on by the Travellers Rest in Meltham. Many juniors, with interested parents looking through, were clutching brand new copies of Gotham Chess's *How to Win at Chess*.



A big thank you to the team at the Travellers Rest for their brilliant catering at the Meltham Christmas do

Congratulations to Meltham Chess Club in creating such a vibrant new adult and junior focused club.

Merry Christmas All!

OSCY – Online Solving Challenge for Youth

As the W FCC announce their new bi-monthly Online Solving Challenge for Youth (OSCY), never has there been a better time for young chess players from 5 to 21 years old to test their skills at chess problem-solving. It isn't unusual to find that those who have taken the plunge converting their modest FIDE ratings into much higher

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



solver ratings, earning norms and titles in the process. Free of the need for detailed knowledge of openings and strategy, their exceptional tactical skills have flourished with astonishing results. Rather than solving/composing a fast-evolving web of typical threats & traps set by/for their opponents, solvers are generally confronted with a few won positions (often composed by GMs of Chess Composition) of greater complexity and/or featuring an unusual concept. Greatest of the many success stories in this regard are GMs of Solving:

Danila Pavlov 21-year-old 3 x World Champion and No.1 (rated 2820 for solving, 2361 by FIDE)

Ural Khasanov 17-year-old World No.5 (solving at around 1000 rating points higher than he plays)

... not to mention 14-year-old Anna Shukhman, World No.1 for women.

Full OSCY details are provided at the tournament website <http://www.ihandicap.mobi/oscy/>, along with much of what needs to be known by beginners, PLUS World Champion coaching and, except for <€10 for coaching, it's all FREE. The WFCC Announcement is at <https://solving.wfcc.ch/calendar/y2024-q1.html> (click on "A" for Announcement in the OSCY entry).

As Online and @Home solving has become more popular (at both grass-roots and elite levels), a smooth pathway is emerging from informal to the many rated/physical tournaments at which titles are earned. So, please give OSCY a try and avoid missing out on what may be your personal chess paradise.

NOTE: Unusual pieces such as 'nightriders', 'grasshoppers', etc are not indulged in OSCY. They remain strictly for the 'fairies'.

As I started to think about this article it occurred to me that I have never included a game of mine played when I was a youngster.

In those early days of my chess career I dreamt of playing swashbuckling tactics like the old masters, and occasionally my aggressive attitude would pay off.

Consider the following, played over 50 years ago!

P. E. Littlewood - P. C. Griffiths

Hoylake Open 15/04/1972

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.f4 Qc7 10.Kh1?!

I wanted to get my king to safety, but this is a tad slow. Better is 10.f5 e5 11.Nf3 Nbd7 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4, which is about equal.

10...b5 11.a3 Bb7 12.Qf3 Nbd7 13.f5 e5 14.Nde2 Nc5 15.Nd5 Bxd5 16.Bxd5 Nxd5 17.exd5 Nd7 18.Nc3 Rab8?!

Black now stands slightly better, but here 18...Rac8 is more to the point.

19.g4!

Now the tactics begin, and immediately Black makes a mistake.



19....g5? 20.f6! Bxf6 21.Qf5

Black has underestimated the strength of 20.f6, which prevents him from blocking up the kingside. However, 21.Ne4 was even stronger, as after 21...Bg7 22.Bxg5 White is clearly better.

21....Bg7 22.Ne4?!

The simple 22.Bxg5 leaves White with a comfortable advantage. However, this seemed far too tame to me as I preferred to not waste time regaining the lost material.

22.....h6 23.h4 f6 24.Be3 Kh8 25.Rf2

This is the position I had in mind. Black's bishop is very bad, and White can double on the f-file with lots of threats. The computer thinks that Black is OK, but it is always much harder defending when you are under pressure.



25.....Nb6 26.Bxb6 Rxb6 27. Raf1 Rbb8?!

Black can exchange queens by 27...Qc8, but the ending is certainly better for White after 28.hxg5 Qxf5 29.Rxf5 hxg5 30.Nxf6 Bxf6 31.Rxf6 Rxf6 32.Rxf6. Perhaps best is 27...gxh4 28.Qh5 Rbb8 29.Nxf6 Qf7 30.Qxh4 Rbc8 31.c3 when the position is unclear, although White retains attacking chances.

28. Qg6 Qc4?

A desperate attempt to counter-attack, as the ending after 28....Qf7 29.Qxf7 Rxf7 30.hxg5 hxg5 31.Nxg5 is pretty grim for Black. However, this was his best chance, as the move in the game allows White a winning combination.



29.hxg5 fxg5 30.Nxg5!

Not the tempting 30.Rxf8+ Rxf8 31.Rxf8+ Bxf8 31.Nf6, because then 31...Qf1+ leads to a draw.

30.....Qxd5+

If 30...Qxf1+ then 31.Rxf1 Rxf1+ 32.Kg2 hxg5 33.Kxf1 wins for White.

31.Kg1 Qg8

If 31...hxg5, then 32.Rh2+ Kg8 33.Qh7 mate.

32.Rxf8 1-0

Black resigns, because after 32....Rxf8 33.Rxf8 Bxf8 34.Nf7+ he loses his queen.

This was one of my best games as a junior, and it gave me great pleasure at the time because I had made three sacrifices, so emulating my various chess heroes like Tal. If I had any advice for up-and-coming juniors, it would be to try and make your dreams a reality and don't worry too much about losing, as you can learn a lot from these games.

I certainly had that attitude and it eventually paid off when I was able to win the British Championship in 1981.

Good luck in your future chess career!

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.

Harrogate & District Primary Schools Chess Association 25th November by Mick Stokes



Harrogate & District Primary Schools Chess Association's team chess tournament was held on 25th November at The Manhattan Club, who sponsored the event. A total of 49 children represented 12 teams of four players, with one reserve allowed. The tournament was played on a jamboree basis, with teams playing other teams comprising four children from four different teams. Played over four rounds, three points were given for a win, two for a draw and one for a loss. The games were played under strict 'touch move' rules. The children all competed in a good spirit, in fairness, and in a sporting manner.

The final scores out of a possible maximum of 48 are shown below.



The triumphant Manhattan team with their trophies presented by Peter Lloyd, son of the late Ken Lloyd, who was the former Secretary of HDPSCA

Manhattan Junior Chess Club - 44 were awarded the Lloyd Duckworth Shield, with team members each receiving a trophy:
Blake Lewis

Aidan Ferguson
Charles Ferguson
Samantha Lusted
Servand Semak

There was a triple tie for second place, with runners-up trophies awarded to team members:



The Knights of Saltergate receive applause for their second place result

The Knights of Saltergate - 38

Kaiden Maesepp
Franklin Moffatt
Amy Primrose
Annabelle Kirby



Peter's presentation of prizes to Pannal Pawns

Pannal Pawns - 38

Ayrton Jacobs
Joseph Hirst
Louis Green
Freddie Leek
Rocco Leek

ECF Girls' Championships 2024



Oatlands Juniors show their delight at finishing amongst the prize-winners

Oatlands Junior Team 3 - 38

Thomas Tanner
Adam Harris
Ellie Huband
Georgia Wright

Other scores were:

Oatlands Junior Team 1 - 36

Richard Taylor Primary School Team One - 36

Oatlands Junior Team 4 - 31

Pannal Players - 27

Richard Taylor Primary School Team Two - 26

Richard Taylor Primary School Team Three - 23

Oatlands Junior Team 2 - 23

Saltergate Checkmates – 21

There were many other good performances from children who were not members of prize-winning teams, notably Henry Yallop on board 1 for Oatlands 1, Connie Mortimer on board 3 for Oatlands 1, Henry Wilkinson on board 2 for Oatlands 4, Joshua Williams on board 3 for Oatlands 4, Teddy Whitby on board 3 for Richard Taylor Team One, and Jack Thurley on board 3 for Richard Taylor Two, who all scored 10 points from a maximum of 12. These six were also awarded medallions.

The pictures, for which approval was given by parents/guardians for publication, can be seen here:

<https://www.facebook.com/100063802160059/posts/pfbid0tB9vdkxr5cGY2Cp8mpZFDdDdgs6FJ7u288vhVjYHaXkmvo6nVPJ8fdk2xCh5xg2n/>

A video of a game demonstration while I worked out the prize-winners can be seen here:

<https://fb.watch/oxValWjNs2/> or
<https://fb.watch/oxXRX1UFQE/>



Don't forget to register your entries for the above Championships. You can find more information on our website – <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/girls-championships-2023-24/>

Enquiries may be made to the Girls' Tournament Director Andrew Martin Email: a.martin2007@yahoo.co.uk

Download a flyer here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Girls-NSCC-202324.pdf>

Tournament rules here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/NSCC/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/National-Schools-Girls-Rules.pdf>

Under 19 entry form here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/u19-girls-national-schools-championships-2324/>

Under 11 entry form here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/u11-girls-national-schools-championships-2324/>

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

When I talk to people about chess they often don't believe me when I say that tactics are always around every corner.

Recently I played a simultaneous in Letchworth against 14 players of varying standards, and the number of tactics that cropped up was amazing.

Take the following position which I reached against Anthony Burrows.



P. E. Littlewood - A. Burrows
Letchworth Simul 13/11/23

In this position I played 1.Be3 and eventually came out on top. However, much stronger for White is **1.Nb5!** ...the main point being that if 1...Qxb2 there is the winning tactic 2.Qd8+! Rxd8 3.Nc7 mate.

Meanwhile if 1.Nb5 Qb6 then White can play 2.Qc3! (even stronger than winning the exchange by 2.Qxb6 Nxb6 3.Nc7+), and if 2...Nc5 then 3.Nc7+ Qxc7 4.Bb5+ is another winning tactic as Black's queen is lost.

Now consider another position against Kevin Ellis.



P. E. Littlewood - K. Ellis
Letchworth Simul 13/11/23

Black is a pawn up, and he is attacking the rook on f3. Should I move this rook, or is there something better? In fact I played **1.Bxf5!** and the game continued **1...Bxf3 2.Bxg6! Bd5 3.Bxf7+ Ke7 4.Bxe6 Rcf8 5.Bxd5 Rxf4** reaching the following position.



I now finished Black off by playing **6.Ne6! Bxe5 7.Nxf4 Bxf4 8.Qe6+ Kd8 9.Qf6+ 1-0**

Tactics galore... and I can assure you that they are always around in every chess game you play!

Here now are two more examples for you to solve yourself, with the answers at the end of the article:



P. E. Littlewood - R. Pearson

Letchworth Simul 13/11/23

White to play...is the queen sacrifice **1.Nxb6** sound?



P. E. Littlewood - A. Wallis

Letchworth Simul 13/11/23

White to play....is the sacrifice **1.Bxg5** sound?

Answers:

P. E. Littlewood - R. Pearson

The sacrifice is sound, but only if you find the continuation:

1.Nxb6 Rxd1 2.Rxd1 Qxb6 3.Ra8+ Nc8 4.Bc6+! Ke7 5.Be3 trapping the black queen and obtaining a winning material advantage. All other fourth moves such as 4.Rxc8+ are unclear.

P.E. Littlewood - A. Wallis

The sacrifice is sound, but you have to go all in after the best defence of 1.Bxg5 fxg5 2.Nxg5 Nf8. Now a slow move such as 3.Rad1 is not good enough, so the dramatic 3.Qh5! is necessary, and after 3...Qxd4+ 4.Kh1 Nbd7 5.Qxf7+ Kh8 6.Qh5+ Kg8 the winning move is 7.Rf3, because if 7...Nxe5 then 8.Rxf8+! Kxf8 9.Rf1+ Bf6 10.Qh8 mate.

Very well done if you spotted all the tactics!

Paul Littlewood Email: plittl@hotmail.com

Gormally's Coaching Corner

by Danny Gormally



Gormally's Endgames in Guernsey

When I went to Guernsey this year to take part in the Guernsey chess festival I was returning after a 21-year absence, as I hadn't played since 2001. And as I stepped onto the plane at Manchester airport I reflected that I hadn't flown to a chess tournament in over 17 years, since I came back from my disastrous Olympiad in Turin in 2006. There was less trepidation than you might expect, probably because a few months earlier I had completed a flying with confidence course from Edinburgh airport (which was run by EasyJet). This involved getting on an aircraft and flying around for a bit and going back to where we left. The other passengers at the airport must have thought we were bonkers, flying from Edinburgh to Edinburgh. But it did its job and alleviated some of my anxieties about flying. Just as well, because the journey to Guernsey otherwise would have been too much. It would have involved getting a long train journey down to Poole, and then staying overnight in a hotel before getting the ferry the next day. And in that case you run the risk that the Condor ferry gets cancelled, which in fact happened several times when I was on the island due to Storm Babet and other extreme weather conditions.

I was met at the airport by Peter Rowe, one of the organisers of the event. The main organiser of the tournament was Jonathan Hill, who did a stellar effort in making all of the players feel welcome, even the titled players with our huge egos and occasional strops. Jonathan also set up a simul and a couple of school visits for me to complete on the Friday before the main tournament began. (The Open started on the Sunday.) This was the highlight of my visit, and was featured in the local paper. I tried to inspire some of the kids with fighting talk about how they could be the first titled players to emerge from the Channel Islands. It was quite cool to speak with them afterwards, as they clearly hadn't spent

much time away from the islands and seemed to be impressed that I hailed from London originally.

Sadly, my bravery in tackling my fear of flying didn't extend to the main tournament, as there were a few quick draws made between myself and two of the other titled players to attend, Harry Grieve and Keith Arkell. This even invited some brio at the closing dinner with one wag referring to 'British pussies'. Such an occurrence might be prevented next year by the addition of Sofia rules. It was a shame because we fought in the blitz tournament- I would have liked to have fought in the Open as well, but sometimes concerns about whether you win enough prize money take precedence. The three of us scored 6/7, and Harry edged it on tie-break. On paper that looks like a carve-up from the titled players, and perhaps it was, but in reality a lot of the games were far from easy. In round 2 all three of us had tough games, and I was very fortunate to come through a long endgame against my experienced opponent.

Gormally, D. (2443) - Kraft, K-H. (1993)

Guernsey Chess Festival lichess.org (3), 16.10.2023



26.Qd2 I dismissed the line **26.Nxf5 Nxf5 27.Qe5** as this seemed to run into **27...Qd6**, when Black seemed very comfortable. **28.Re1!** though, and it's not so simple; if **28...Qxe5 29.Rxe5 c6** then **30.g3**.



This ending is probably holdable for Black, but has echoes of the famous Fischer-Taimanov ending from their 1970

match, where Fischer used the extra mobility of the rook and bishop to extract an unlikely win.

26...c6 27.h5 Bxd3 28.Qxd3 Nf5 29.hxg6 hxg6 30.Nxf5 Rxf5 Already I was becoming frustrated, as it was quite clear that I had nothing. The old me would have probably thrown down my pen and become rather angry round about here. However, I have learned through experience that the only thing you can do in these situations is to keep going. You have to tell yourself that eventually your opponent is likely to make a mistake. He/she is lower-rated for a reason.

31.g4 Rf6 32.Kg2 Qc7 33.f4 33.f3 Qf4 is very comfortable for Black. I just saw no chance of winning this, even against someone with a much lower rating - hence my decision to take something of a risk in pushing my pawns.

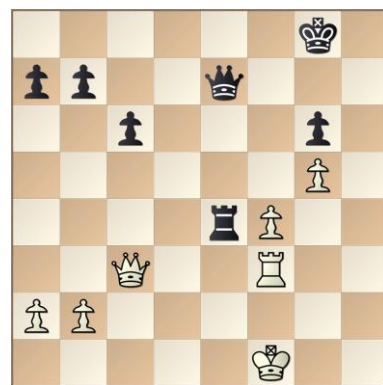
33...Qe7 34.Rf3 34.Kf3 Re6 35.c4 is rather similar to the game.

34...Re6 Now I was beginning to curse myself. Why, oh why, did I push my pawns up in front of my king? I even sensed that I might lose.

35.c4! Fortunately, I have this move, which prevents the rook anchoring itself on e4.

35...dxc4 36.Qxc4 Kg7 37.g5 Re2+! He continues to frustrate me, not budging an inch.

38.Kg3 38.Kf1 Re4 39.Qc3+ Kg8



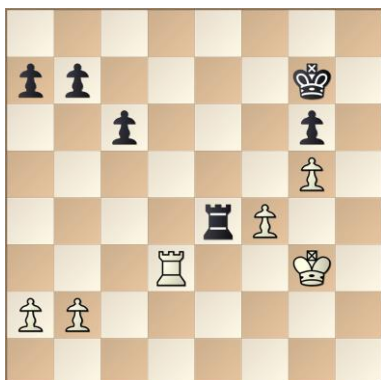
40.Rh3? Rxf4+ is why it was a good idea to lure the king to f1 earlier.

38...Qe4 my opponent criticised this later in our brief chat after the game, although this is far from the decisive mistake.

Perhaps from a practical perspective it was a good idea to play a move like **38...Re1**, as with the queens still on the board it is very hard to see how White could make any

realistic winning attempt. Pushing the f-pawn will just hang g5 with check, for example. White would have probably been forced to repeat with some queen checks.

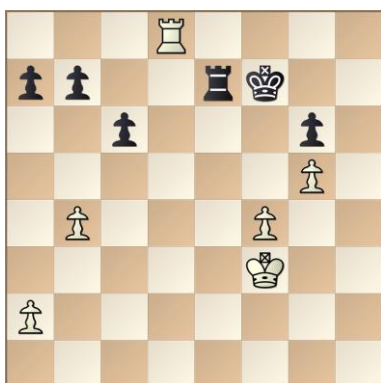
39.Qxe4 Rxe4 40.Rd3



My tiny edge in this endgame is based on the fact that g6 is weak, but with accurate play it is clear the game should end in a draw.

40...Kf7 41.Kf3 Re7 42.Rd6 Re6 43.Rd1 Re7 44.Rd6 Re6 45.Rd8 45.Rxe6 Kxe6 46.Ke4 c5 47.f5+ gxf5+ 48.Kf4 c4 49.g6 Kf6 50.g7 Kxg7 51.Kxf5 b5 52.Ke4 b4=

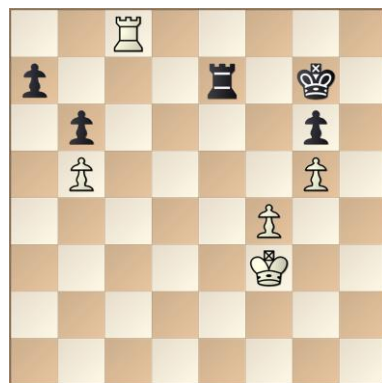
45...Re7 46.b4!



The last, admittedly rather feeble try. I want to prevent ... b6 followed by ...c5, and hint at the idea that I might create a minority attack on the queenside. As silly as it sounds, a lot of good endgame play I believe is about 'frightening' your opponent into mistakes, or rather 'bluffing' them. I kind of bluff this minority attack with Rc8, a4, b5, which in itself wouldn't be good enough to win anyway, but it is enough to induce an error from my opponent.

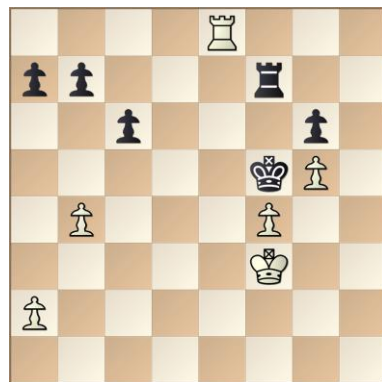
46...Ke6?? A serious mistake, as he needed to keep his king on the kingside, but, as he said later, he was getting tired around this point.

46...Kg7 47.a4 Kf7 48.Rc8 (48.Ra8 a6 49.a5 Kg7 and the only real plan to make progress is Rd8-d3-e3, in which case Black will simply move to rook to c7 or d7 and it is still a draw.) 48...Kg7 49.b5 cxb5 50.axb5 b6.



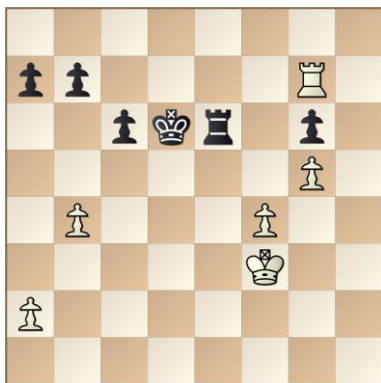
And I don't believe White can really make progress. Kg4 and f5 will always run into... Re4+. It's basically a draw; 46...Rc7!? with the plan of ... b6 followed by ... c5 should also be good enough if Black prefers to defend actively. If 47.Ke4 b6 48.Ke5 Re7+ 49.Kd6 Re4 50.Rd7+ Kf8 51.Rxa7 Rxf4 52.Kxc6 Rxb4=.

47.Rf8! Kd6? It is possible that he had overlooked that if 47...Rf7 48.Rg8 Kf5 then 49.Re8!.



This puts the black king in a mating net; 47...Rg7 48.Ke4 Re7 49.Rf6+ Kd7+ 50.Kd4 was the last chance, although this is also quite bad. The white king is now dominating, and g6 remains extremely weak.

48.Rg8 Re6 49.Rg7!



White wins a pawn by force, and effectively the game.

**49...b6 50.Rxa7 c5 51.bxc5+ Kxc5 52.Rf7 Rd6 53.Rf6 Rd2
54.Rxg6 Rxa2 55.Rg8 b5 56.Ke4 b4 57.g6 b3 58.g7 b2
59.Rb8 Ra4+ 60.Ke5**

1-0

Fixing the Pawn

English chess players have a long history of playing in the Channel islands. I believe our esteemed editor Andrew Martin even met his future wife while playing in the Guernsey tournament. And it certainly is a beautiful island - on one of the early days I was there, I took a bus ride out to Pembroke Bay, which seemed like a bleak and lonely place, but there was a rainbow, and a cold and clear sea - so clear in fact that I could see out to an island in the distance. With towering cliffs it rose out from the water like something ancient, an Isla Nublar off the French/English coast. I thought it was perhaps Sark, but was told by Jonathan Hill that it was Alderney. Even 26 miles away it was clear to the naked eye. I looked up Alderney and apparently it is struggling to bring much money in, being dependent on Guernsey for its finances. So maybe Alderney is the professional chess player of the islands.

Thurlow, K. (2020) - Gormally, D. (2443)

Guernsey Chess Festival lichess.org (7), 21.10.2023

I eventually stumbled through to the last round unbeaten. I faced Kevin Thurlow, who reminded me that we had played over twenty years ago in a league match in Coulsdon. Of course, I had forgotten about this. Unable to really adjust to the early start, I soon messed up the opening and he reached a very promising position.



25.Kf1?! allowing Black to escape the danger zone.

Fixing pawns is a crucial factor in endgames and therefore 25.a4! was the right way. This is somewhat counter-intuitive, as White is handing the black knight the b4-square, but it turns out it is more important to fix the weakness on a5. 25...Rd7 26.Ba3 Rfd8 27.g4, and my position would have been very unpleasant, remaining without counterplay; 25.Rb5!? Rd7 26.Bc3 d5 27.Bxa5 Ra8 28.b4 was less convincing, as the bishop is somewhat awkward on a5. 28...e4!

25...Rd7 26.e4 g5 27.h3 h5 28.Ke2 g4 29.hxg4 hxg4 I started to get optimistic about my chances, as now the White e-pawn is quite weak, and can be exposed to attack by ...Rf4, and if he plays f3, supporting that pawn, I can take on f3 and open up lines on the kingside for my rooks. Kevin had played most of the game well, but, as I kept saying to myself, 'He's lower-rated for a reason'. In the past I probably would have got upset and thrown the game away, but I was determined to reel this one in. I still had memories of the 2001 Guernsey tournament where I lost to Susan Lalic in the final round, when I was so depressed after being outplayed from a better opening that I resigned in an objectively drawn position. I said to myself, 'Don't get flustered, believe in yourself and he will make mistakes at some point'.

30.Rh1?! Rdf7 31.Rf1 I think Kevin had overlooked that 31.Rh6+ Ke7 doesn't work out well for White, since if f2 drops then the white position will collapse.

31...Rf4 32.f3 Not falling for 32.Ke3??.



32...Rxe4+--

32...gxf3+ 33.gxf3 Rh4 34.Rf2 Rh1 35.Rd2 I thought this was a strange move, and it just helped to fuel my confidence that I might win this game. And I needed to win it - both Keith Arkell and Harry Grieve were already in the clubhouse with 6/7. I needed to win to tie with them.

35.Rd1, and Black has very little. The game should end in a draw.

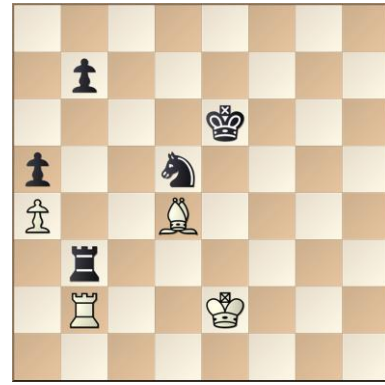
35...Ne7 36.a4 Ng6 37.Rc2? 37.Ke3!

37...Nf4+ 38.Ke3 d5! This helps to open lines, and White can hardly defend.

39.exd5+ Nxd5+ 40.Ke2



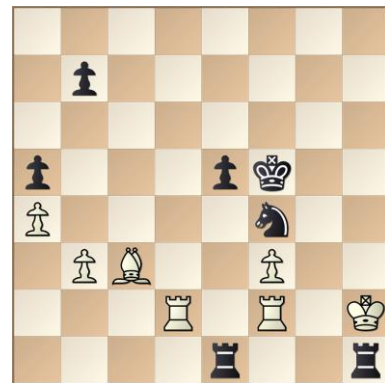
40...Nf4+ It was very tempting to try to force my way to a win with direct play, beginning with 40...e4 41.Bd4 exf3+ 42.Rxf3 Rxf3 43.Kxf3 Rh3+ 44.Ke2 (44.Ke4? Rh4+--+) 44...Rxb3 45.Rb2.



I got this far, and wasn't sure. To be fair, when you really need to win you have to be absolutely certain that you are winning to go for a line like this - the material is very reduced. 45...Nf4+! was pointed out by the engine, an idea I hadn't seen. 46.Kd1 Rxb2 47.Bxb2 Kd5 and Black will be able to win the a-pawn by the following method: the king goes to c4, the knight to c5.

41.Ke3 Re1+ 42.Kd2 Rb1 43.Ke3 Nd5+ 44.Ke2 Rg8 Torture for Kevin. There is no way to free the position, and the rooks and knights are dominating.

45.Rh2 Nf4+ 46.Kf2 Kf5 47.Rd2 Rgg1 48.Ke3 Rbe1+ 49.Kf2 Rgf1+ 50.Kg3 Re3 51.Rhf2 Rg1+ 52.Kh2 Ree1 53.Bc3 Rh1+



0-1

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

How to Solve a Study

by Ian Watson

Theme Puzzles

Your Christmas solving task will be to solve three studies that incorporate themes that we looked at in this column earlier in 2023 - you should both solve them and identify the themes they display. First, however, I want to show you an unusual study - unusual because it was composed specifically to display multiple themes. I'll go through the solving process for this one; then you have the task of identifying the themes that it displays. It was composed by the Norwegian expert Geir Østmoe, who is not only a well-known composer but also an over the board IM who has won a game against Magnus Carlsen. The study was awarded first prize in the ARVES tourney of 2014.



White to play and win

This is clearly going to be a tactical mess (or *mêlée*, to be politer). The white king is in dire distress, and to avoid immediate mate there is only 1.f8Q+. So, 1.f8Q+ Qb4 2.Qxb4+ Kxb4 3.Bc3+ Kxc3 is easy. (Well, OK, Black could throw in 1...c5, met by 2.bxc6 e.p.+ In a game, you'd ignore that possibility, but in a study you have to bear its possibility in mind - keep it as a fallback option for now.) Now 4.Rc1+ doesn't rescue the white king, so what else? Of course, you have remembered that this year we looked at castling in this column... and so when you saw the initial position you noticed that the white king and rook were on their original squares. You also remembered that in studies castling is legal unless it can be proved from the diagram position that it's illegal, and thus it's legal in this study. 4.0-0-0 it has to be. Now Black has 4...Rc2+, or he could deflect the white rook with 4...g1Q.

Somewhere around here you should pause to reflect. If you do, you may realise that there are stalemate possibilities. Once you have that thought, you will want to sac the g-pawn, and you will also go back to the start and insert 1...c5 - so that you can ditch those stalemate-preventing pawns. The insertion of 1...c5 2.bxc6 e.p.+ means that we are now on move 5 and we have 5.0-0-0 g1Q 6.Rxg1 Rc2+ 7.Kb1 Rb2+ 8.Ka1 Kc2 and now White has to be wary of stalemates. We get 9.d8R Bxd8 10.g8N Bb6 11.h8B and wins. You noticed, of course, that 11.h8Q? Bd4 12.Qxd4 Rb1+ 13.Rxb1 is stalemate, and that 9.d8Q? Rb1+ 10.Rxb1 Bd4+ 11.Qxd4 is also a stalemate.

We do need to verify that 5...Rc2+ doesn't work. 6.Kb1 Rb2+ 7.Ka1 Kc2 8.Rd2+ Kc1 9.Rxb2 Bd4 10.a3 Bxb2+ 11.Ka2 g1Q 12.g8Q Qxf2 13.Qg5+ Kd1 14.Qg3 Qxg3 15.d8Q+ Kc2 16.Qb6 does the job.

The full solution is **1.f8Q+ c5 2.bxc6 e.p.+ Qb4 3.Qxb4+ Kxb4 4.Bxc3+ Kxc3 5.0-0-0 g1Q 6.Rxg1 Rc2+ 7.Kb1 Rb2+ 8.Ka1 Kc2 9.d8R Bxd8 10.g8N Bb6 11.h8B** and wins.

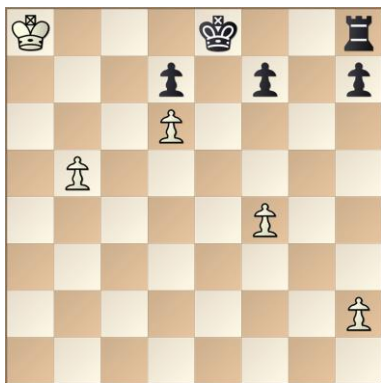
I've done the hard work, now over to you; first, decide which themes the Østmoe study has.

Here are the three studies for you to solve. The first is by Alexander Stavrietsky and was published in *Ceskoslovensky Sach* in 1998.



White to play and win

The next is by Evgeniy Kolesnikov, from the 1992 Moscow Championship .



- (a) White to play and win
- (b) Transfer b5 pawn to b6; Black to play and win

In this Kolesnikov study, first solve the diagram position (White to play and win); then set up the diagram position again, but this time with the b-pawn on b6, and solve the new position but with Black to play and win.

To finish, a study by Darko Hlebec from the van der Heijden tourney of 2011.



White to play and win

Don't forget not only to solve the studies, but also to say what themes the composers are showing.

The solutions are given at the end of the magazine

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Monthly Conundrum by Christopher Jones

First, here is the solution to the problem with which I left you last time.

Repeating last month's preamble, this is an orthodox problem – mate in 3. But it may prove quite challenging. There are five lines of play to find. One is the key move and its threat. The other four are defences with which

Black delays mate until White's third move. One at least of these defences is not very interesting (it wasn't part of what the composer wanted to show but was a necessity in order to make the problem sound), but as a competitor in a solving tourney you'd want to avoid dropping points by missing mundane lines of play.



L. A. Kuijers
Mate in 3
1st Prize, *Casopis Holandske sahovske federacije* 1920

Congratulations if you found the key move 1.Qe1!, with its nice threat 2.Qc3+ dxc3 3.b3#. The first defence is 1...Nxd6 Ne5+ Kc5 3.b4#; then there's 1...Kxd3 2.Rxd4+ and now either 2...Kc2 3.Rd2# or 2...Kxd4 3.Qc3#; 1...b5 2.Bxb5 Kxb5 3.Qb4#; and finally the pedestrian 1...Bd1 2.Qxd1, after which Black is defenceless against the threats of 3.Qb3# and 3.Qc2#.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find the announcement of a new initiative by the World Federation for Chess Composition (WFCC) providing an online solving tourney for young people. In recent columns I've given some ideas for getting an idea of the sort of experience it is to compete in such an event – e.g. the problems used in past solving tourneys that can be gleaned from the WFCC website, the archive of problems on the website of the British Chess Problem Society (www.theproblemist.org/), and participation in the relatively informal solving competitions on the Netchex website founded by Brian Cook. And of course, the vast majority of solving tourneys are open to all ages! (Don't hesitate to email me with any queries.)

Of course, there is another potentially absorbing aspect of the world of chess problems – the pleasures of working on, and achieving, a sound problem that may give solvers a good mental workout and, if it's a good problem, pleasure. The BCPS includes both people whose main interest is in solving problems and people whose main interest is in composing them. There are also intrepid souls who delve into both aspects of 'problem-dom'. In recent years British recruits have tended to be in the

former camp, though we always live in hope that some of them will diversify and enjoy also the challenge of composing problems.

One of the foremost British problemists has been Colin Sydenham, whose death in November was a sadness to his many friends in the BCPS, all the more so as it followed the death earlier in the year of Michael Lipton. (You may have read in a previous *ChessMoves* John Rice's tribute to Michael's composing career.) Colin was not a competitive solver, did not have any background in playing chess, and came to chess problem composing at the relatively late age of 37. The superlative quality of his composing output can be gauged from this example.



Colin Sydenham
Mate in 2
The Problemist 1977; 1st Prize=, Brian Harley Award

Colin was interested in showing correspondence between White's play and Black's. In this problem, White wants to capture the d7 pawn in order to threaten 2.Ne6#, and Black stands ready to deploy a corresponding motif by capturing the white pawn at d3. In principle this capture will save him, as it deprives White of one guard on e4, preventing White from interfering with the other guard on that square (2.Ne6+ Ke4). The various captures at d3, however, open up possibilities for other mating second moves. Consider first 1.Nxd7. Now if 1...cxd3 we have 2.Rxb4#; if 1...Rxd3 we have 2.Nxf5#; but if 1...Nxd3 we have no mate. So 1.Nxd7? is a try, uniquely refuted by 1...Nxd3.

It's tempting to think that 1.cxd7 will do the trick. Now we have a mate after 1...Nxd3, as that move withdraws Black's guard on the now vacant c6 square, permitting 2.Nc6#. 1...Rxd3 fails as before; but we find that now 1...cxd3 (capture by a *pawn*, to match White's capture at d7) succeeds: 2.Rxb4 has become an illegal move ('2...Bd5xK!').

If capture at d7 by a white knight failed against capture at d3 by a black knight and capture at d7 by a white pawn

failed against capture at d3 by a black pawn, what do we think will happen after capture at d7 by a white rook? Sure enough, after 1.Rexd7? we are OK after 1...Nxd3 2.Qxd5 (a nice changed mate) and 1...cxd3 2.Rxb4, but all of a sudden the defence 1...Rxd3 comes into play because now 1...Nxf5+ is met by 2.Ke4. So we eventually arrive at the key: the d7 capture must be made by the other rook – 1.Rbxd7!, when 1...cxd3/Nxd3/Rxd3 fail respectively to 2.Qxb4 (a changed mate)/Qxd5/Nxf5#.

If your appetite was whetted by that example, you may like to solve this one. I'll give the solution next time, although of course your computer will do so before then if you are stumped or want to check your answer. (As matters stand, a move by the black knight allows 2.Qxd4#, but if, as seems possible, the key move has to be by the e5-knight then 2.Qxd4 would no longer be a mating response to a move by the black knight. So you will have to tread carefully in working out the unique route to a forced mate on move 2.)



Colin Sydenham
The Problemist 1975
Mate in 2

Don't hesitate to email me with any queries at all to do with this column.

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EVENTS CALENDAR

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

Week Beginning 25 December 2023	
28 December - 7 January	97th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress
28 – 30 December 2023	London Junior Chess Championships U8, U12, U16
28 – 30 December 2023	London Christmas Chess Congress
29 December 2023	Fortun£ Friday\$ Christmas Edition
Week Beginning 1 January 2024	
1 January 2024	Sussex Junior Hastings Rapidplay
2 – 4 January 2024	London Ealing International U1400
2 – 6 January 2024	London Ealing International Congress
2 – 6 January 2024	London Ealing International GM and IM
2 – 5 January 2024	1st Winter Champions Camp with IM Mara Garcia Martin
5 – 7 January 2024	London Chess League FIDE Weekender
6 – 7 January 2024	4NCL Season 2023-2024 Weekend 2 Rounds 3 & 4
6 January 2024	Maidenhead Junior Tournament January 2024
Week Beginning 8 January 2024	
8 – 13 January 2024	Mitcham New Year International
8 – 12 January 2024	Mitcham Five Day Evening Congress
9 January 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapidplay 2024
9 January 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Standard 2024
11 January 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
12 – 14 January 2024	Shropshire Chess Congress 2024
13 – 14 January 2024	4NCL Season 2023-2024 Weekend 2 Rounds 3 & 4
13 – 14 January 2024	6th Somerset New Year Congress - Chess4U
13 January 2024	Golders Green FIDE Rapid 2024
14 January 2024	Cambridge FIDE Rapidplay
14 January 2024	NCCU Pennine Cup
Week beginning 15 January 2024	
19 – 21 January 2024	23rd Fareham Congress
19 – 21 January 2024	31st 4NCL Congress
20 January 2024	2024 Warwick Junior Open
20 – 21 January 2024	EACU Closed Championships
20 January 2024	Coulsdon Chess Junior Grand Prix Spring Term 2024
21 January 2024	1st Portishead Junior Rapidplay
21 January 2024	Kensington FIDE Rapid 2024
21 January 2024	Hillingdon & Ealing Junior Championships
Week Beginning 22 January 2024	
23 January 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Rapidplay 2024
23 January 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Standard 2024
26 – 28 January 2024	Gonzaga Chess Classic 2024
27 January 2024	2024 Online Junior County Championship
27 – 28 January 2024	Hastings Club Weekend Open Chess Tournament
27 – 28 January 2024	2nd East Midlands FIDE Congress
27 – 28 January 2024	Southall FIDE Congress
28 January 2024	36th Birmingham Rapidplay
28 January 2024	36th Stockport Rapidplay
28 January 2024	Hillingdon & Ealing Senior Championships & Schools
28 January 2024	Norfolk Rapidplay Congress 2024

How to Solve a Study – solutions

(Østmoe)

This study has underpromotions, en passant capture, castling, stalemates - give yourself a point for spotting each of those. In addition, it has 'Allumwandlung', meaning all four of the possible promotions (QRNB) - more points for noticing that, and bonuses for knowing the German word for that theme. There is another theme in this study: 'The Valladao Task', which means a study or problem that contains all the weird moves in chess, specifically castling, en passant, and promotion, blended into one composition; it's named after the composer Joaquim Valladao Monteiro who composed such a problem in 1964. If you saw that theme *and* knew its name, grant yourself a huge pile of points - why not, it's Christmas, isn't it?

(Stavrietsky)

1.Rf1+ Kb1 2.Qa1+ Kxa1 3.Kc2+ Bb1+ 4.Rxb1+ Ka2 5.Ra1+ Kxa1 6.h8Q+ d4 7.Kb3 g2 8.Qh1 Qh2 9.Rf1+ gxf1Q 10.Qa8+ Ra6 11.Qxa6+ Ra5 12.Qxa5+ Kb1 13.Qa2+ Kc1 14.Qc2 mate.

This is about queens running amok - a theme we looked at in the January column. There are also corner-to-corner moves, another favourite theme of composers.

(Kolesnikov)

(a) **1.b6 f5 2.b7 Kf7+ 3.b8Q Rxb8+ 4.Kxb8 Kf6 5.Kc8 Ke6 6.Kc7 h6 7.h3 h5 8.h4** and White wins.

1...f6 2.f5 Kf7+ 3.Ka7 Kg7 4.b7 Kh6 5.b8Q wins.

This is obviously about castling, but it's subtler than just that; part (a) relies on the fact that Black can't castle because his last move must have been with either his king or his rook. That makes it a 'can't castler'.

(b) I hope you noticed that the position for part (b) is the same position as after White's first move in part (a). So why on earth isn't White winning? Because it is now Black's move, we can't any longer prove that Black has moved his king or rook. White could have just captured a Black piece that had just moved. When we can't prove that the king or rook have moved, then the standard rule applies and castling is legal. So, the solution is:

1...0-0+ 2.Ka7 Kg7 3.b7 Kf6 4.b8Q Rxb8 5.Kxb8 Ke6 6.Kc7 f5 7.h3 h6 8.h4 h5 and Black wins.

Kolesnikov composed this to show a paradoxical result of the castling rule in studies. We all saw the first position, and we all played its first move 1.b6, but the second part is not the continuation of the first part - it's a completely new study.

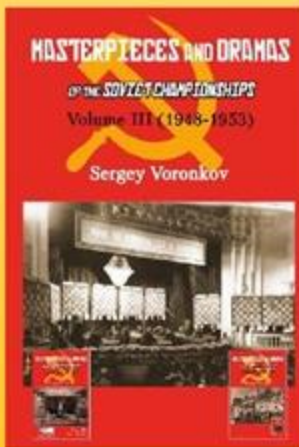
Both parts require a little retro-analysis, so that's an additional theme.

(Hlebec)

1.Qb8+ Bxb8 2.gxh7 Nd4+ 3.cxd4 Bb3+ 4.Rxb3 Be5 5.Rb8+ Rxb8 6.dxe5 Kd8 7.Kd6 Kc8 8.Kxc6 Rb6+ 9.Kxb6 a1Q 10.h8Q+ Kd7 11.e6+ and wins.

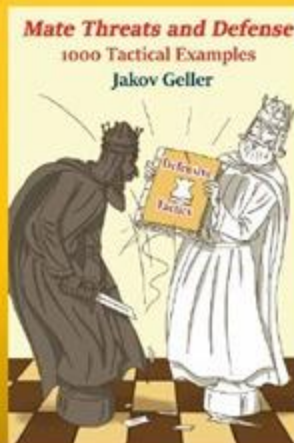
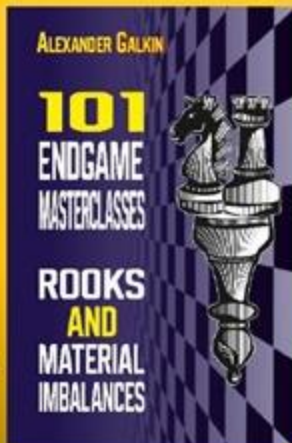
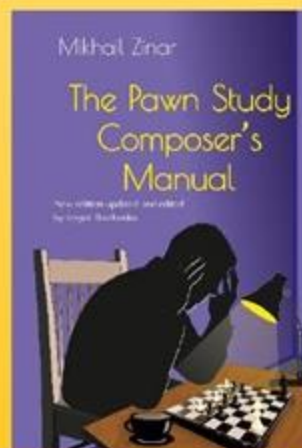
Not 1.gxh7? 0-0-0 and Black's king is safe.

This of course has a castling theme, and in particular the 'anti-castling' theme - White plays to prevent Black castling, and so to keep the black king in the danger area, and by playing 1...Bxb8 instead of 1...Rxb8 Black keeps alive for now his castling option. White repeats the anti-castling sacrifice with 5.Rb8+ and this time Black has to play ...Rxb8.



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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