



Chess *Moves*

March 2024



Full reports from Cambridge and the British Rapidplay, and news on the British and English Championships

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the March edition of *ChessMoves*.

We kick off with full details of this year's British Chess Championships, which will take place at Hull City Hall and the DoubleTree by Hilton in Hull City Centre. Events run from Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August 2024 across the two city centre venues. This is always an extremely well-run event, with lots of action over the chess board and plenty of social events away from it. The entry form is now live on the British website here: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>, along with further details of the tournaments. Do try to play if you can!

This month's issue features comprehensive reports on the Cambridge International Open and The British Rapidplay Championship, plus lots of other news and congress reports - and our usual top quality cast list of writers contributes articles on all aspects of chess including opening ideas, annotated games, endgames, tactics, problems and studies. In short, a great chess experience.

Looking through the magazine, I'm struck by the sheer amount of chess activity going on in England right now. Long may it continue! A comprehensive calendar of forthcoming events tops everything off.

All the games within are presented in PGN format here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/March-ChessMoves.pgn>, but note that you will need to use ChessBase or a PGN viewer to access the games.

Have a good month!

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EVENTS

British Chess Championships 2024

by Nigel Towers



This year's British Chess Championships will be held in **Hull**, with events running from Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August. Chess events will be taking place at two Hull city centre locations – The City Hall and the DoubleTree by Hilton. These will be the 110th British Chess Championship in a series which has run almost unbroken since 1904.

The British Championship, British Junior Championships and British Senior Championships are restricted to citizens of the UK, British Overseas Territories, or the Republic of Ireland, or players who have been resident for the last 12 months in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man.

In addition, players wanting to take part in the main British Championship will need to qualify based on their title, rating or other qualification criteria as set out below:

- a) the [British Championships eligibility and qualification regulations](#);
and
- b) the supporting [British Grand Prix rules](#)



Main Playing Schedule

This year's Championships will be played over 11 days from 25th July to 4th August. The summary schedule is as shown below:

	Location *	Thurs			Fri			Sat		Sun		Mon		Tue			Wed			Thurs			Fri		Sat			Sun	
		25/07/24			26/07/24			27/07/24		28/07/24		29/07/24		30/07/24			31/07/24			01/08/24			02/08/24		03/08/24			04/08/24	
		A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	A	P	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	A	P	E	A
Championship	Hull City Hall							1			2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		PO		
Major Open								1			2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9				
Over 50												1		2		3		4		5		6		7					
Over 65												1		2		3		4		5		6		7					
Under 16									1			2		3		4		5		6		7							
Under 14									1			2		3		4		5		6		7							
Under 12									1			2		3		4		5		6		7							
Under 10									1			2		3		4		5		6		7							
Under 8									1			2		3		4		5		6		7							
Under 16 Rapidplay Champ						1-6			7-9																				
Under 14 Rapidplay Champ						1-6			7-9																				
Under 12 Rapidplay Champ						1-6			7-9																				
Under 10 Rapidplay Champ						1-6			7-9																				
Under 8 Rapidplay Champ						1-6			7-9																				
Under 16 Blitz Champ				1-9																									
Under 14 Blitz Champ				1-9																									
Under 12 Blitz Champ				1-9																									
Under 10 Blitz Champ				1-9																									
Under 8 Blitz Champ				1-9																									
AM Open												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Under 2050												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Under 1900												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Under 1750												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Under 1600												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Under 1450												1		2		3		4		5		6							
Weekend Atkins Open						1	2	3	4	5																			
Weekender Penrose U2000						1	2	3	4	5																			
Weekend Soanes U1750						1	2	3	4	5																			
Weekend Yates U1500					1	2	3	4	5																				
Rapidplay																								1-9					
Blitz															1-9						1-9								

Key

Key	Session
	40/90 + G/30 + 30'
	G/90 + 30'
	G/15 + 10
	G/3 + 2'

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

* Please note that locations for some of the quickplay events are provisional at this stage and may move between venues depending on entry numbers.

The entry form for this year's British Championships is now live on the British website here: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>, together with details of the tournaments as listed above, eligibility rules for Championship events, qualifiers to date for the main British Championship, and where to find accommodation in Hull.

Social Programme

As in previous years, there will be a full programme of social and outdoor events, including lectures, simuls, drop-in chess, and local tours/walks around the fascinating city of Hull. We are currently working on the schedule of events which will be published shortly.

History of the British Chess Championships



British and British Women's Champions from 1905 onwards

The British Chess Championships have run in an almost unbroken series since the first British in 1904, which was played in Hastings and won by William Ewart Napier as British Chess Champion and Kate Finn as British Women's Champion. Hull's association with top level British events predates the first British Championship by almost 30 years, with Hull player Amos Burn tying for first place with Joseph Henry Blackburn in the recently formed British Chess Association's second and third BCA Congresses in 1886 and 1887. H. E. Atkins won the second event in 1905, and still holds the record for the most Championship title wins – nine wins from eleven appearances between 1905 and 1925. WGM and IM Jovanka Houska holds the record for the most British Women's title wins, with a total of nine wins between 2008 and 2019. You can find out more about the history of the British Chess Championships in the Wikipedia article here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Chess_Championship, and please refer to the excellent Britbase for a comprehensive collection of BCC games going back to 1904 here: <https://www.saund.co.uk/britbase/>

English Championship Series 2024 by Nigel Towers



English Seniors Championship



2023 winners (from left to right): Over 65 IM Chris Baker, joint Over 50 GM Keith Arkell and GM Mark Hebden

Just a reminder that the **English Seniors Championships** will take place between **Friday 24th May and Tuesday 28th May 2024** at the **Holiday Inn in Kenilworth, Warwickshire**. These will be the fourth English Seniors Championships in the new format since the relaunch event in 2019.

Eligibility

Over 50: players must be aged 50 or over on 31st December 2024.

Over 65: players must be aged 65 or over on 31st December 2024.

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

Rating

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

Schedule

The playing schedule will be as follows over the long bank holiday weekend:

Round 1: Friday 24 th May	16.00
Round 2:- Saturday 25 th May	10.00
Round 3: Saturday 25 th May	16.00
Round 4: Sunday 26 th May	16.00
Round 5: Monday 27 th May	10.00
Round 6: Monday 27 th May	16.00
Round 7: Tuesday 28 th May	11.00

Website and entry form

For more information and the entry form, please go to:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships-2024/>.

Please note that we have seen a high number of entries for the English Seniors Championships to date with almost two months to go, so please do enter soon if you are interested in playing.

English and English Women's Championships



Last year's champions – GM Mickey Adams and WGM Kata Toma

Also a reminder that the **English Championships and English Women's Championships** will take place between **Thursday 20th June and Sunday 23rd June 2024** at the **Holiday Inn in Kenilworth, Warwickshire**. These will be the third English Championships since their relaunch in 2022.

Eligibility

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

Capacity

We will be implementing a venue-based limit on player numbers across the two championships, together with a rating floor.

Qualification for the English Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players, subject to capacity limits, where:

They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st April 2024; or

They have a rating over 1900 ECF or FIDE in the respective April rating lists.

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

Qualification for the English Women's Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players where:

They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st April 2024; or

They have a rating over 1700 ECF or FIDE in the respective April rating lists.

The minimum rating of 1700 may be lowered to 1600 ECF or FIDE if there is still space available based on entries received up to 7th June.

Reflections on the 2nd Cambridge International Open, Part 1 by Peter Wells



The University Arms

One year ago I managed to miss out on playing in the inaugural Cambridge International by sustaining a tennis injury a couple of days before the event. Having chased the ball with an enthusiasm which belied my years, I landed face down on the court with rather hideous (albeit thankfully temporary) consequences and an inordinately lengthy trip to A&E. Perhaps this misfortune increased my eagerness to make it this time, although the main impetus came from the appealing strength of the event, and still more from the very positive reports which I had heard on the first edition from just about everyone who had been there. Restricted to about 120 entries, this year's tournament – in an era when the unprecedented popularity of chess online is not necessarily being reflected in numbers at over the board events – was having to turn players away for many weeks. It is, quite simply, a wonderful new addition to the UK's chess calendar and players have responded with appropriate enthusiasm.

In terms of the quality of the setting and organisation, this year's event fully lived up to the standard set last time, and honestly felt very special. The University Arms hotel is a truly outstanding venue, steeped in a history which it clearly reveres, and situated right in the centre of one of

my favourite UK cities. I really liked the phrase of the English junior Rock Yu, who performed the highly impressive feat of capturing some of the atmosphere of the event in a YouTube video lasting less than a minute! ([I Played An International Chess Tournament \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)). The University Arms hotel 'was as grand as you would hope' he commented, with a pithiness which is, I guess, essential to such an unfeasible project. Yet for me it actually surpassed expectations, combining its grandeur and exemplary service with a welcoming friendliness which seemed to embrace the (sometimes benignly eccentric) variety which the chess community can bring to an occasion.

I really appreciated the elegant, well-lit, and nicely spaced playing hall and, from a player's perspective at least, the organisation seemed to run seamlessly in respect of both Nigel Towers' handling of the run-up to the event and an excellent arbiting team headed by the reassuringly calm and charming presence of Shohreh Bayat, ably assisted by Matthew Carr. The schedule felt tough, for sure, featuring three double-round days which - perhaps for the older players in particular - generally represent something of a challenge, but it did benefit from one extra day compared with last year, for which I was profoundly grateful.



Chief Arbiter IA Shohreh Bayat with (left to right) IM Martin Haubro, GM Sergey Tiviakov, and GM Michael Adams with the Cambridge Trophy

There was excellent commentary online, with Natasha Regan supported by a formidable team of Matthew Sadler, Danny Gormally and John Emms, joined in the later rounds by several players coming to offer their thoughts (more or less) fresh from doing battle. Again, I think their readiness to do this even in the relatively brief intermission between games on the double-round days speaks volumes for the high esteem in which the event is

held by the players and their consequent desire to give something back.

Place	Seed	Title	Name	FED	FIDE rating	Pts
1	1	GM	Michael Adams	ENG	2673	7
2	3	GM	Sergey Tiviakov	ENG	2534	7
3	14	IM	Martin Haubro	DEN	2421	7
4	4	GM	Daniel Fernandez	ENG	2526	6.5
5	10	IM	Matthew Wadsworth	ENG	2444	6.5
6	13	IM	Peter Roberson	ITA	2426	6.5

One more thing in common with last year: Michael Adams won the tournament despite again kicking off his campaign with a draw. However, this is honestly about as far as the comparison goes. Whereas last year he responded to the shock of reaching a horrible position in round 1 by utterly dominating the field with an astonishing run of seven wins thereafter, this time his route back was considerably more turbulent – a journey to which we will return shortly.

Another important difference was that with accelerated pairings came the promise of some very high-powered struggles right from the start, and the loss of half a point to the experienced and highly-respected Rafe Martyn was considerably less of a shock. Neither was Mickey alone in this. Things also kicked off far from smoothly for the second seed.

Francesco Sonis – Jeevan Karamsetty

2nd Cambridge International 2024 Round 1

1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 Nf6 5.c4 0-0 6.Nc3 c6 7.0-0 Bf5 8.Ng5 e5 9.d5 a5 10.dxc6 bxc6 11.b3?! e4 12.Ba3 Re8



It feels risky in principle to concede so much space in return for nothing more than pressure on the d6 pawn. However, the real problem with White's set-up is that he has so many loose pieces and – as John Nunn's *Secrets of Practical Chess* famously reminded us, these tend to 'drop off'.

13.Qxd6? Nfd7!

I assume this elegant retreat came as a nasty shock to White. It is bad enough that Black is attacking *both* knights, but the bishop on a3 is also loose, with an unpleasant threat of ...Bf8 lurking in the shadows. So White tries to create a little mess, which turned out to be enough to persuade Black that a draw some moves later would represent a good day out.

14.Nxf7!? Kxf7 15.Qd2 Nc5 16.Qc1 Nba6 and agreed drawn some moves later, although objectively, of course, Black had good chances to aspire to more than this.

Accelerated pairings are generally a phenomenon which divides opinion, and it is not difficult to see both sides of the argument. One drawback is that lower-rated players will usually have to win a number of games in the early stages in order to get a shot at one of the leading players (although I guess a case could be made that these opportunities are, in such cases, really well earned). It can also have a strange effect on the tournament when the acceleration stops, with some of these 'master vs amateur' encounters occurring as late as Round 6. For players such as myself, however, as keen to play strong players and recover some rating as to fight for prizes - and whose usual complaint is that too many treacherous games need to be navigated against mostly under-rated players in order even to get a game against a similarly rated player – the acceleration was a real treat. Even better, getting the chance to play a higher-rated GM as early as round 2, I made pretty good use of it.

Peter Wells – Eldar Gasanov

2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 2.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c6 5.e3 a6 6.Qc2 c5

In his otherwise excellent commentary Danny Gormally suggested to Natasha that I had 'prepared' this very well. Just for the record, I had pretty much forgotten the existence of the move 5...a6, and only after Eldar met 6.Qc2 with this pawn break was I reminded that this second move of the c-pawn is the recommended recipe, and possibly a reason to have preferred 6.b3. So much for preparation! Still, after some thought I concluded that whilst c2 might not be the optimal square in isolated

queen's pawn (IQP) positions, I could at least try to keep the tension by delaying a capture on d5, with some possible scenarios (not least the game) in which the queen might prove well placed.

7.dxc5 Bxc5 8.a3 0–0?!

Certainly no major inaccuracy, but I was still pleased to see this. The simplest recipe seemed to me to be 8...dxc4 9.Bxc4 b5 10.Bd3, and, while it is reassuring that 10...Bb7? would be met with 11.Nxb5!, the chances are that 10...Nbd7! 11.Ne4 Be7 is just going to be rather dull with c2 a less than optimal square for the queen.

9.b4 Ba7

9...Be7 looks safer, although then I should probably play 10.cxd5!? since the IQP position looks a bit more promising with the bishop passive.

10.Bb2 Qe7 11.Rd1! Rd8 12.Be2 dxc4

Of course, it is logical in principle to play this once the f1 bishop has already moved. However, I was by now becoming more enthusiastic about my lead in development, and looking feverishly at chances to sacrifice the c4-pawn for an attack.

13.Rxd8+ Qxd8



14.Ne4! Nbd7 15.0–0 b5?!

The kind of move which annotators often describe as 'principled', which I take to mean that it is the critical test of the opponent's idea – the move which, if anything were to put White off sacrificing the pawn, it would have to be this. This, of course, does not necessarily make it a good move! While I had missed a couple of significant details (of which more later) I was confident that pursuing the attack was the right decision, and I still am. In fact, there are already no very enticing options for the defence, but 15...Nxe4 16.Qxe4 Nf6 at least forces White to make a decision. I believed that after 17.Bxf6 Qxf6 18.Bxc4 Black's

development difficulties would provide compensation for the bishop pair, although I had not yet noticed 18...Rb8 19.Rd1 b5 20.Bd5!, which is arguably pivotal to really demonstrating this. 17.Qxc4 Bd7 18.Rd1 Rc8 19.Qh4 also offers some pressure, although after 19...Nd5 Black perhaps has decent chances to defend.

16.Nxf6+ Nxf6 17.Ng5!



The none too sophisticated, but still quite effective point of White's play. The threat to take on f6 immediately is not too scary, but prefacing this with Rd1 is genuinely dangerous.

17...h6?

A surprising blunder, after which the attack simply crashes through. I was quite touched the following morning at breakfast when Eldar came to me with extremely good grace and explained what he had missed. His intention had been to play 17...Bb7 18.Rd1 Qe8! (but not 18...Qe7? 19.Bxf6 Qxf6 20.Qxh7+ Kf8 21.Rd7! which I had seen right back at the attack's inception), when I had begun to realise during his long think that White does not have a knockout blow. In fact 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Qxh7+ Kf8 leaves nothing better than liquidation with 21.Nxf7 Qxf7 22.Qxf7+ Kxf7 23.Rd7+ Kg6 24.Rxb7. White is a pawn up and I think he believed that he would be hopelessly tied up here, having overlooked that he can begin to unravel with 24...Bb8!. White certainly remains considerably better, and I like the idea of 25.f4 e5 26.g3! to restrict the bishop, but particularly as I had already consumed a lot of time the protected passed c-pawn would certainly offer Black some hope.

18.Rd1 Qe8 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Qh7+ Kf8 21.Rd8! 1-0

The fact that Michael Adams struggled to find his best form essentially made for a much more open and unpredictable tournament this year, with several players making a powerful impression and even finding themselves challenging for honours. I had expected a strong showing from several of the emerging English

generation, and Daniel Fernandez and Jonah Willow were both in contention for much of the event, although they eventually succumbed to a resurgent Adams in the final two rounds. I think I owe Daniel a correction of what I wrote for *ChessMoves* back in August last year, when I described him as being part of that tradition of English players who look as if they want to 'get the opening out of the way and get on with the game'! Almost as soon as I wrote these words, I felt like I kept encountering Daniel's theoretical work and game annotations (especially for the *Chess Publishing* website) which were authoritative, articulate and generally of very high quality! I have therefore revised my view. He is in fact part of a far smaller and newer tradition – of those players who *are* interested in the openings and have invested lots of time in them, but who (from this position of strength) are then acutely aware – perhaps exaggeratedly so – of the value of being unpredictable, willing to tread less-explored pathways and even to take considerable risks in order to present the opponent with practical problems to solve. In fact, problem-setting is something which he seems to me to do very effectively at all stages of the game, and I think this accounts to a fair degree for his improvement over recent years.

Matthew Wadsworth also finished well to reach a solid, unbeaten 6½/9, as did Peter Roberson, who ended up on board 1 in contention for the highest honours, and whose excellent win against Gasanov which is covered by Danny in his piece. Ameet Ghazi never really found his stride, although a total absence of draws in itself says something for his fighting spirit, and similarly Shreyas Royal, who also struggled to match his recent excellent form, although any event in which a player blunders a whole piece in a slightly better position (as he did in round 3 against Craig Hanley) is going to face additional challenges thereafter.

Yet some of the foreign IMs also impressed me a lot. Nikolas Wachinger (Luke McShane's Bundesliga team mate at SV Werder Bremen) looked very powerful when he had the wind behind him, although he did struggle against Daniel Fernandez, as the latter showed his impressive capacity to create problems even in what should have been a fairly innocuous rook ending. Denmark's Martin Haubro – of whom I was previously only dimly aware – had a superb performance, even going into the last round half a point clear of the field. He eventually had to settle for tied first after a tense tussle with Pete Roberson in which both sides were fighting hard for the full point, but which eventually fizzled out to a draw.

Martin Haubro – Peter Roberson

2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 9

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Bg5 e6 7.Qd2 a6 8.0–0–0 Bd7

As a long-time Classical Sicilian player for whom the appeal has largely worn off, my impression is that the engine’s advocacy of Nxc6 has rendered many of the lines without ...Bd7 less attractive, but I am firmly of the view that in the type of ‘English Attack’ set-up which White chooses here I would much rather have the bishop coming to b7 instead. Still, given that such well-prepared players as Pete and also Shreyas have included it in their repertoires, they must feel that there is a way to square this apparent circle!

9.Kb1 Be7 10.f3 Nxd4 11.Qxd4 Qc7 12.Qd2 b5



13.Bd3 b4 14.Ne2 a5 15.g4 0–0 16.Be3 Rfb8?!

Somewhat in support of the comment I made above, the engine is critical of this, and wants to relocate the bishop, preferring either 16...Bc6!? or even 16...Bc8. Crucially, Black’s knight does feel like something of a liability on e8 – so freeing up d7 instead makes a lot of sense.

17.g5 Ne8 18.h4 a4 19.Rc1

The main effect of this seems to be to prompt an exchange of queens, which could make sense given that Black’s attack with ...b3 seems to land in advance of White’s analogous blow with g6. However, even after the straightforward 19.h5!? b3 20.cxb3 axb3 21.a3 I am really not sure how Black seriously threatens the white king without a sacrifice on a3, but the very direct 21...d5 22.exd5 Bxa3 23.bxa3 Rxa3 24.Qc3! seems objectively to miss the mark, albeit in nerve-wracking circumstances.

19...Qa5 20.h5 b3 21.cxb3 axb3 22.a3 d5 23.Qxa5 Rxa5 24.e5 Bd8 25.Nd4 Bb6 26.Bd2



It was a fair general rule when playing the Richter-Rauzer with Black that, if a ...d5 pawn break can be met with e5 and the consolidation of the knight on d4, then White is likely to stand well. I suspect Pete felt this, and therefore decided that sacrificing the exchange probably represented the best hope here.

26...Rxa3!? 27.bxa3?!

Missing the useful intermezzo 27.Nc6!, when, after 27...Bxc6 28 bxa3, Black has a bishop threatened with capture, rather than a healthy one on d4 menacing the white pawns, while if 27...Raa8 Black will struggle to find significant compensation without the passed b-pawn.

27...Bxd4 28.Rh4 Bxe5 29.Bf4 b2



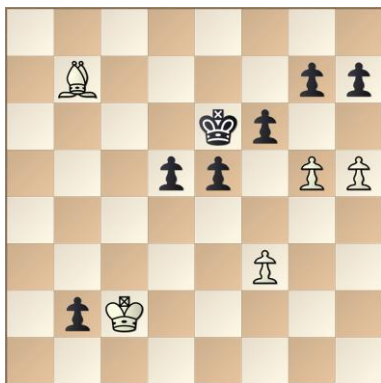
30.Rc2?!

This in all honesty probably represented Martin Haubro’s last chance to try to win the tournament outright. It may look natural to harass the b2-pawn, but White would have done well to think in terms of a ‘division of labour’ between the rooks. With the exchange of dark-squared bishops now guaranteed, it is the h4-rook coming to b4 which should clinch the b2 pawn’s fate whereas its colleague would be better placed defending the bishop with 30.Rd1, noting that of course 30...Ba4?? would be a blunder due to the capture on e5.

30...Bxf4 31.Rxf4 Rb3! 32.Be2 e5 33.Rb4 Rxb4 34.axb4 Bf5

Winning back the exchange, although the advanced b-pawn will cost Black his knight. It feels a little unfortunate that after the dust settles at move 40 (as it sometimes seems to, even in the absence of a time control!), the resulting bishop vs pawns endgame is just a draw with mutual care, although I remember thinking that this was far from obvious at the time!

35.b5 Bxc2+ 36.Kxc2 Nd6 37.b6 f6 38.Ba6 Kf7 39.b7 Nxb7 40.Bxb7 Ke6



41.Bc8+ Ke7 42.Bb7 Ke6 43.gxf6 Kxf6 44.Bxd5 Kg5 45.Be4 Kxh5 46.Bxh7 Kg5 47.Kxb2 Kf4 48.Be4 g5 49.Kc3 g4 50.fxg4 Kxe4 51.g5 Kf5 52.Kd3 Kxg5 53.Ke4 Kh6 54.Kxe5 ½-½

It is difficult to report on tournaments these days without being drawn at some point towards the subject of age. Mostly this seems to be the trend of under-rated young players giving the older players (the over-50s in particular) a tough time, with it sometimes feeling as if Michael Adams is bucking this trend almost single-handedly. However, this time prominent Dutch GM Sergei Tiviakov was also among the winners reaching the magic 7/9. He has one of those styles I have discussed before which seems to stand the test of time well – a good understanding of structure which plays a pivotal role in his thinking, and a number of ‘pet’ opening systems which he knows very well and which are just sufficiently quirky that the rest of the world has not necessarily devoted the necessary hours to achieving any comparable mastery. So we were treated to the unusual sight of over 50 players taking two of the three top spots.

Sometimes it is difficult to try to do everyone justice in these reports. Tiviakov played some excellent chess, but it was precisely because he had only once found himself not amongst the leaders over the first seven rounds that

his strange loss of control in round 8 felt like such a pivotal moment.

Sergei Tiviakov – Martin Haubro

2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 8



With two pawns and a protected and ‘potentially supported’ passed pawn on c6 White, clearly has good value for the exchange. Black should sit tight, and at least compete for one key light square with 39...e6!. Instead, Haubro made a move which should have been a decisive mistake, but which in fact probably worked to his advantage, as Tiviakov immediately returned the favour.

39...Rb8? 40.c7?

Not infrequently an exchange of rooks benefits the player nursing an extra exchange, but here it would simply render the task of containing White’s pawns much more problematic. After 40.Rxb8! Rxb8 41.Bd5! (controlling those key light squares again) 41...Ke5 (or 41...Kc5 42.b4+ Kb6 43.f4 Re8 44.Be6! - fighting for that e6-square once more 44...Kxc6 45 g5 and the g-pawn will cost Black his rook) 44...e6 can be met elegantly with 43.f4+! Kf6 44.b5!, giving up the bishop to ensure that the rook will be no match for the pawns.

40...Rbc8 41.Rb7 e6 42.Rb6 Ke5 43.Rc6 Rf7 44.f3 Rd7 45.f4+ Kf6



46.f5

It is very difficult even for such an experienced campaigner to keep their calm as the position turns. Instead of this panicky move, simply 46 b4 Rxc7 47 b5 still offered decent chances to hold. After this, we are looking at a full-point swing which left the tournament wide open again.

46...exf5 47.c5 Rxc7 48.Rxc7 Rxc7 49.c6 fxg4 50.b4 Ke5 51.b5 d5 52.Kxg4 Kd6 53.Kh5 d4 54.b6 Rxc6 0–1

It is immensely to Tiviakov's credit that he managed to bounce back the next day with an excellent win against Francesco Sonis. Though he was denied this time by the tiniest of tie-break margins, this kind of resilience really is the hallmark of champions.

Sergei Tiviakov – Francesco Sonis

2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 9



32.Nxe5 dxe5 33.Bxf6!

Objectively powerful, and practically strong too, a sacrifice yielding a durable attack against which it will be very hard to defend.

33...gxf6 34.Nxf6+ Kg7 35.Ng4! Kh8 36.Nxe5 Rg7 37.Ng6+ Rxf6 38.fxg6 Qg3 39.Re7 Kg8 40.Qb2

Natural and good, although oddly it seems that 40.Qd2!? - threatening to land on d8 – leaves Black without a decent move, given that 40...Rf8 would just be driven off by 41.g7.

40...Qxg6 41.Rd6 Qg5 42.Qe2 Qc1+ 43.Rd1 Qg5 44.Rd4 h5 45.h4 Qf6 46.Re5 Rc7 47.Qxh5 Rg7 48.Rg4 Ne6 49.Rxg7+?

I'm guessing time pressure was at work for both players here, since this is an odd blip in an otherwise excellent conversion. Had Black had time to grasp that 49...Qxg7! would leave White's pieces a bit awkward, and oblige either the very loosening 50.g4 in order to prevent the threat of mate or the loss of the exchange, the outcome

would have been a lot less clear. After recapturing with the knight Black never gets another moment, and we are reminded again quite how tough chess can be, and how tiny are the margins which decide everything at the end of these events.

49...Nxc7? 50.Qg5 Qd6 51.h5 Kh7 52.Re7 Qh6 53.Qxh6+ Kxh6 54.g4 Bf3 55.g5+ Kxh5 56.Rxg7 Bd1 57.Rb7 Bxb3 58.c5 1–0

Which brings us back to the man who eventually pipped Tiviakov by the tiniest of tie-break margins, Michael Adams, whose event, as I said above, was far from plain sailing. Having had a further taste of the 'rating dangers' which many of us have to navigate quite routinely - being convincingly held to a draw by an in-form Lorenzo Fava in round 5 - Mickey almost tripped up against Richard Pert the following day (as Danny Gormally recounts elsewhere on these pages). For someone whose excellent practical skills constitute a significant element in his armoury, he also came perilously close to losing on time in a favourable position(!) against Francesco Sonis in round 7. Even after steering through all this he still found himself a full point behind the leader with just two rounds to go, and even going into the final round his tie-break (which eventually clinched his victory) did not yet unambiguously look like an asset.

I say none of this to diminish Mickey's achievement. There is, of course, something supremely professional about topping the table for the first time in the entire tournament at just the moment when it really matters! It is more to make the point that the tendency of some of the coverage to suggest that Mickey got there in the end 'of course' was in fact describing events which could have ended very differently. Last year I cautioned against those who regarded Adams' achievement in dominating various English events as something virtually 'inevitable', precisely because I felt this tended to diminish what has in fact been an extraordinary record of consistency. In a sense, I think it maybe took his victory at the London Chess Classic as well to remind people quite how remarkable this series of successes has been. This year it is more a matter of simply correcting the record. We should also take a look at Mickey's excellent last-round performance – following on from another impressive display against Daniel Fernandez the previous afternoon (again covered by Danny Gormally in his article). It should be noted that Jonah also needed to win for a GM norm – an added pressure he probably could have done without as the defence became increasingly difficult!

Jonah Willow – Michael Adams

2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 9

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Bc5 6.c3 b5
7.Bc2 d6 8.d4 Ba7 9.a4 Bg4 10.axb5 axb5 11.Ra6 Bb6
12.Rxa8 Qxa8



13.d5

I am no expert on this system, but it feels to me that if White is intending to close the centre and attack b5 there might be a case for encouraging the bishop to h5 first with 13.h3!?, since Black seems quite harmonious as the game develops. If the bishop retreats instead to d7, then there is no pressing need to clarify things in the centre, while 13...Bxf3? is not an issue due to 14.Qxf3 exd4?! 15.e5! dxe5 16.Bg5, when the pinned c6-knight is likely to encounter an unpleasant accident.

13...Ne7 14.Na3 Ng6 15.h3 Bd7 16.Nh2 0-0 17.Bd3 h6
18.Ng4 Nxc4 19.hxg4 Qc8

Perhaps Jonah was reckoning on Black's needing to attend to b5. Instead, there is the suspicion that the standard Spanish manoeuvre Nh2-g4 has here largely served to give Black a target with which to seize some initiative.

20.Be2 Nf4



21.Bf3

Again, there is no way to net the b5-pawn with any degree of safety, since 21.Bxf4 exf4 22.Nxb5 is nicely met by 22...h5!, and if White captures with 23.gxh5 the attempt at deflection 23...f3! forces 24.gxf3 and thus offers promising counterplay.

21...Qd8 22.g3 Nh3+ 23.Kg2 Ng5 24.Bxg5 Qxg5 25.Qe2 g6

Black may not yet have any clear advantage, but this feels like a nice position to reach when playing for a win. There is potential to generate activity on either side of the board, and b5 is for the moment Black's only tangible weakness. In any case, Jonah decides – probably rightly – that taking that off would leave the knight poorly placed to tackle Black's coming attack.

26.Nc2 f5 27.gxf5 gxf5 28.exf5 Bxf5 29.Be4?!



This looks like quite a natural move to me (and, judging by his response, probably to Mickey too), but it is noteworthy and possibly instructive that the engine is very unimpressed. I wonder whether this arises from our high estimation of the bishop pair and the (mostly justified) assumption that if one of them can be exchanged off, then the resulting knight vs a single bishop generally represents a better deal. Whatever the reason, it is interesting that both players missed that an exchange of bishops in this case would have considerably accelerated the black attack.

29...Bg4?!

The engine gives 29...Bxe4+ 30.Qxe4 h5 when the threat of ...Rf4 and ...h4 is not so easy to cope with.

30.f3 Bd7 31.Rh1 Rf7 32.Ra1?

It is no fun trying to contend with Mickey's knack for relentlessly increasing the pressure, but this does feel like something of a dereliction of duty by White's rook. The engine's recipe here - sitting tight and taking what comes - is, of course, not so easy to tolerate in practice. Notably, though, it does not see 32.Qe1 Rg7 33.Rh2 h5 34.Kf1

Qxg3?! 25 Qxg3 Rxg3 26 Rxh5 as any breakthrough for Black, so probably Mickey would have needed to revisit the plan of exchanging bishops which he had previously eschewed. Black is better, but there were clearly still chances to defend.

32...Rg7 33.Qe1 h5?!

For me, one of Mickey's greatest strengths is the kind of logical schematic thinking very often advocated in endgame books. He can work a plan through stages, consistently and patiently. The flip side of this is that occasionally – as here – he is not on the look-out for opportunistic solutions. In this case, the realisation that White's rook can no longer connect with the king-side could lead to the search for the very effective 'quick fix' 33...Qh5!, which secures the invasion on h3 since 34.Qh1?! allows a brisk mating attack with 34...Rxg3+! 35.Kxg3 Qg5+ 36.Kh2 Qh4+ 37.Kg2 Qf2#.

34.Ra8+ Kf7 35.Rh8



35...h4 36.Rh7?

36.Kh1 would have been tougher, since while 36...hxg3 37.Kg2 Bf5 38.Bxf5 Qxf5 39.Qe2 is not pretty for White, he can at least battle on. Now White's queen will be overworked defending different entry points, and he will drop material by force.

36...Rxh7 37.Bxh7 hxg3 38.Qxg3 Qd2+ 39.Kf1

Or 39.Kh1 Qh6+ 40.Qh2 Bh3!.

39...Bh3+ 0-1

Yet youth certainly also had its say, with a number of standout performances. Even in the era when juniors have the incredible volatility of k-factors of 40 built into their numbers and many are visibly under-rated, it is incredible to see four players achieving rating gains of more than 120 points in a tournament: Alexander Pereslavltssev (who even got to play against Jonah Willow

in round 6) and Junyi Zhang (who lost only one game against a field all bar one of whom were rated over 2000) were two of these very notable successes. As for the other two, I had the less than marvellous fortune to play both of them in a single day which – for my own tournament – represented something of a setback. I was extremely impressed by Lorenzo Fava, something of a regular on the English circuit, who had come within a whisker of winning the Harrogate Open outright in January and who – having lost to Jonah Willow in round 1 here – played an absolutely stellar field and suffered no subsequent defeats. He was in fact quite unlucky not to make an IM norm – robbed only by unfortunately playing too many players from a federation (England) which is not even his own! I had first played against him a year ago, when he struck me as talented, self-confident but somewhat rough around the edges. The contrast in a year is truly staggering. The confidence is still manifest, but he is stylistically so much more rounded, and I am left really wondering quite how far he can go from here.



Shohreh Bayat with Truan Asgarova, CM Bodhana Sivanandan and Ruqayyah Rida

My other opponent on that fateful Friday was, of course, Ruqayyah Rida, and I became a reluctant component of the story of her success as she followed up a win against Mark Hebden from the previous day by holding me with all too little trouble. This made her – in Leonard Barden's words – 'probably the youngest female player ever to score against two GMs in successive classical games'. She also became – at 11 years old – the top female player in the tournament, just ahead of the even younger Bodhana Sivanandan to whose successes, at the age of just eight, we are becoming very accustomed indeed. Both of these players are, of course, on the Accelerator programme, and both were already very well-established hopes for the future. Still, while many of the English juniors find that their FIDE ratings are lagging behind their strength, and some rating gains can represent little more than a

'correction', these felt like something of a wholly different order. I am confident from listening to Ruqayyah's analysis in the commentary afterwards, and looking at her games, that she is in the process of a real breakthrough, and will hopefully join Bodhana in making real waves – and that her ambitions will be similarly limitless. As a fitting end to this part of the story, it is also great to report that Bodhana's rating gain at Cambridge took her to a richly-deserved position as the world's top under nine player.

I agonised a little about which game of Ruqayyah's to finish with. I decided to go with entertainment over historical significance – not to spare any grandmasterly blushes, but rather because this crisp attack offers another facet of the well-rounded style which she is already developing.

Norman Hutchinson - Ruqayyah Rida,
2nd Cambridge International Open 2024 Round 2

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.d3 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 7.a4 Rb8 8.axb5 axb5 9.0-0 0-0 10.Nc3 h6 11.Nd5 d6 12.Be3 Bxe3 13.fxe3



13...Nxd5 14.exd5?!

White's handling of the opening has not been the most incisive, and even after 14.Bxd5 I would slightly prefer Black after 14...Nb4 15.Bb3 c5. Still, this feels like a decision which is likely to assist Black in building her kingside initiative.

14...Ne7 15.Qe1 f5! 16.Nxe5!?

An understandable decision to simplify, the main consequence of which is to enhance *both* of the bishops. Nonetheless, without wanting to be guilty of excessive hindsight, the improvement in White's bishop feels potentially rather cosmetic, whereas Black's bishop can easily become rather menacing.

16...dxe5 17.d6+ Kh7 18.dxe7 Qxe7 19.Kh1 Bb7 20.Qg3 c5 21.c3 Rf6 22.Qh4?!

A couple of rather planless moves by White, and he is faced with a build-up on the kingside which begins to look quite scary. Still, placing the queen on such an undefended square does feel like an unnecessary courting of danger.

22...Rbf8

More prudent than 22...Bxg2+ 23.Kxg2 Rg6+ 24.Kh3, when the awkward position of White's king does offer serious compensation, but there are no practical grounds for taking such a risk at this stage.

23.Bc2 Kh8 24.e4?

This definitely hastens the end. The loose queen will not drop off here, but this will serve to emphasise the danger from the long diagonal, rather than succeed in closing it.

24...fxe4 25.Rxf6 Rxf6 26.Qg3 Qf7 27.Kg1 Rg6 28.Qxe5?



28...Rxf6!

A really elegant blow to finish. The white king is caught in a very neat and well-calculated mating net.

29.Kxg2 e3+ 30.Kh3 Qf3+ 31.Qg3 Bc8+ with mate in 2 after 32.Kh4 g5+. 0-1

Reflections on the 2nd Cambridge International Open, Part 2 by Danny Gormally

Adams, Michael - Fernandez, Daniel Howard
Round 8: Adams, Michael - Fernandez, Da lichess.org, 23.02.2024

I wasn't invited to the Cambridge International Open this year, partly because they had a limited budget and space

and couldn't invite everybody, and partly because I had made a typically theatrical post on Facebook recently about how I was quitting chess; this led the organisers to make the mistake of believing that I meant what I said.

In any case, this gave me a chance to observe the action from the sidelines, often in the company of Natasha Regan, who was streaming live commentary from the tournament.

Some of my reflections are as follows:

1. Michael Adams remains the player to beat. Despite being in his early 50s, Adams seems to play more than any of the younger English 2600+ crowd, all of whom have their own reasons for not playing much chess recently. We can see that Adams is clearly hungry and motivated for more titles and records, and surely one of his main goals is to smash Jonathan Penrose's record of ten British Championship titles.

2. The younger brigade like Bodhana continues to impress. In my view, Bodhana is the best prospect we have had in this country for many a year, and she seems to have improved and added a solidity to her game. It wouldn't surprise me if she was picked to play for England in the Olympiad later this year.

3. FIDE rating deflation is continuing to harm the older generation of grandmasters. Mark Hebden lost over 30 rating points in this tournament, at the hands of players like Lorenzo Fava. Although Fava gained over 100 points in this event and scored a deserved IM norm, you wonder why he was rated at only 2100 in the first place. Surely it is time that organisers made more of an effort to rate internal club matches and tournaments, which would have the effect of raising the ratings of younger players in line with their true strength, and at a much faster rate.

4. It is only a matter of time before Daniel Fernandez takes down a big one on home soil. I think that about a year ago Daniel took the view that he wasn't taken seriously in this country, was compartmentalized by some as an OK but nothing special GM, so has made a big effort to improve to prove these people wrong, and is now reaping the benefits. As stated, Daniel often looks like one of the form horses in these events, but the big issue is getting past Adams. As Morpheus explains to Neo in 'The Matrix', the agents are guarding every door, every key; for British chess you could substitute Agent Smith for Agent Adams. I believe that Fernandez made a crucial competitive error in taking a bye in round 7, although I am also aware that this is only my opinion, and others might take a different view. Having gone into the lead, he lost momentum and control of the tournament to Tiviakov. If Daniel had

played round 7 he might have lost, but would still have had two rounds to bounce back and potentially tie for first place. Admittedly, taking a bye should leave you refreshed, giving you a big advantage over an opponent who had a long endgame in the morning. But it would seem that players like Adams are made of something different and don't abide by normal rules.

1.e4 c6 A sensible decision. In Leicester in the British Championships Daniel played a suspect line in the Scandinavian against the same opponent, and never really got into the game. To match these players you have to meet fire with fire, theory with theory.

2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 6.0-0 Nc6 7.c3 a6 8.Be3 Qb6 Natasha suggested this in the commentary. Black is placing pressure on b2.

9.Qd2 Bg4 10.Rd1 h5?! as Daniel stated later, if he has a weakness it is pushing his rook pawns too often. I don't think there was any reason to be this creative.

I suggested on the stream that a decent way for Black might have been the straightforward **10...Bxf3 11.Bxf3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Nge7**:



... based on the logic that if you can survive the opening in the Caro-Kann your game is so strategically sound that your long-term chances are likely to be excellent. **13.Bg4!** is rather annoying however, as this discourages ...Nf5 and it is not clear if Black will feel comfortable playing ...g6, or placing the knight on a less desirable square on g6 and potentially inviting f4-f5, or the longer-winded g3, h4, h5. (13.Nc3 Nf5 doesn't seem to pose any great issues to Black). The engine recommends the developing move **10...Rc8!**



This makes perfect sense. When we think about it here, Black is hardly in a rush to castle, as his king is not in any immediate danger. So this useful developing move is very logical. 11.h3 (11.a3 cxd4 12.cxd4 Bxf3 13.Bxf3 Na5! =; 11.c4 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 cxd4 13.Bxd4 Qxd4 14.Qxd4 Nxd4 15.Rxd4 Ne7, when it turns out the rook is performing a useful function on c8) 11...Bxf3 12.Bxf3 Nge7 13.Bg4 cxd4 14.cxd4 h5!, and now White doesn't get Bh3 any more, so we will get the knight to f5.

11.c4! As already stated, if Black players can survive to the middlegame in the Caro-Kann they often stand well, so it makes sense for White to mix it up and try and ensure that life is not that easy.

11.h3 Bxf3 12.Bxf3 cxd4 13.cxd4 Nge7 was probably Dan's idea, as now Black no longer has to worry about the annoying reply Bg4, so will comfortably complete development with ...Nf5 and ...Be7.

11...dxc4? A careless reaction, obviously overlooking White's next.

11...Bxf3 12.Bxf3 cxd4 13.Bxd4 Nxd4 14.Qxd4 Bc5 15.Qd2 d4 was the best, albeit unpleasant, choice that Black had. 16.Qg5 Ne7 17.Nd2.

12.Na3!



White will take back on c4 with tempo, crushing Black's hopes of harmonious development.

12...Qa5 13.dxc5 Qxd2 14.Rxd2 c3 15.bxc3 Nge7 16.Nc4 Nd5 17.Bd4 f6 18.h3! Typically ruthless by Adams, and it is in technical positions like this one that he seems most comfortable. The accumulation of small advantages is one of the greatest weapons in the armoury of the technical player, and White, who is already up a pawn, is playing for another advantage in the shape of the bishop pair.

18...Bf5 Now Adams calmly and unhurriedly builds up his forces.

19.Re1 h4 20.Bd1!? Be7 21.Bb3+–



By relocating the bishop to b3, White is freeing up the rooks for full activity on the d- and e-files. Of course, you could argue that it doesn't matter, as Black is hopelessly lost in any case, down a pawn and with a bad position to boot. But one of the things I noticed from doing commentary in the British is how accurate Adams is in winning positions. In situations where I'd get lazy and sloppy and assume any move will do the trick, Adams is still beaver away, trying to play the best move.

21...Kf7 22.Nd6+ Bxd6 23.cxd6 Rad8 24.Bxd5 exd5 25.Bb6 Rd7 26.exf6 gxf6 27.Rxd5 Be6 28.Rd2 Rh5 29.Bc7 b5 30.a3 Rc5 31.Nd4 Nxd4 32.Rxd4 Rxc3 33.Rde4 Bf5 34.Re7+ Kf8 35.Re8+ Kf7 36.R1e7+ 1-0

Roberson, Peter T - Gasanov, Eldar

Round 8: Roberson, Peter T - Gasanov, E lichess.org, 23.02.2024



Obviously, during the course of a relatively compressed event you are going to get a lot of missed chances. One of the quiet men of British chess, Peter Roberson, had an excellent result. Like other quiet but strong players such as Jonah Willow and Matthew Wadsworth, Peter is unlikely to make a song and dance about it on social media; but he did find himself on the top boards at the business end of the event, which seems to constitute clear improvement.

18.b3?! Perhaps not the most combative, although solid enough. Peter has a robust and universal style which combines good positional play with a sharp tactical eye, although here he missed a much more potent possibility.

At first sight this position looks about equal, and just seems like a normal, if unbalanced, position that you can get from the Sicilian. However, look deeper and you quickly see that this isn't the case. White is close to winning here for a number of reasons:

1. Black is lacking defenders around the kingside.
2. White is placing heavy pressure on the f-file, and also on the pawn on e6.
3. White has considerable favourable dynamic factors, like knight jumps and pawn pushes with e5 at any moment.

All of these factors combine to allow an immediate tactical breakthrough. **18.fxe6 fxe6 (18...Bxe6 19.Nd5 Bxd5 20.exd5 is just plain bad for Black, even if material parity is maintained for now - White is threatening Nf5, and there isn't much to be done about it 20...Nxd5 21.Nb5!+-) 19.Nf5!** would have wreaked havoc on the under-defended black kingside. **19...Bc6 (19...Be8 20.Nxe7+ Qxe7 21.Qd4 just seems bad for Black: 21...e5 22.Nd5 Nxd5 23.Qxd5+-; 19...exf5 20.Nd5 Nxd5 21.Qxd5+ Kf8 22.Bxe7+ Kxe7 23.exf5+ Kf8 24.f6+-) 20.Nxg7 Kxg7 21.Qg3!:**



... is the typical carnage that the engine will inflict, if you just let it run free.

18...a6 18...Qc5 would have resolved some of the immediate tactical issues for Black, who isn't running into any Nd5 forks any more.

19.Qh3 Qc5 Perhaps the best practical chance lay with **19...b5**, although this is also bad if White responds accurately. **20.Qg3 Qc5 21.e5:**



... is one rather gruesome variation that the computer suggests is winning for White.

20.fxe6 fxe6 21.e5! dx5 22.Nxe6 Qd6 23.Bxf6 Bxe6 24.Bxe7 Qxe7 25.Rxe5+-



White is simply a pawn up for nothing.

25...Re8 26.Qg3 Qd7 27.h3 Bf7 28.Rd1 Qc6 29.Rd6 Qc8 30.Rg5 g6 31.Nd5 Bxd5 32.Rgxg6+ hxg6 33.Qxg6+ Kf8 34.Rf6+ 1-0

Pert, Richard G - Adams, Michael

Round 6: Pert, Richard G - Adams, Michael lichess.org, 22.02.2024



Piotr Denderski - Ameet K Ghasi

Round 1: Piotr Denderski - Ameet K Ghas lichess.org, 19.02.2024



Adams wasn't in the devastating form he had been in last year's edition, which made for more of an open event. In round 6 he nearly lost to Richard Pert, who missed a winning combination. I made an observation on social media that I believe Adams has not lost a classical over the board game to a fellow British player in the British Isles since losing to David Howell in the Isle of Man, but a later perusal of the database shows that this game took place way back in 2014. There is possibly a more recent example, but what is clear is that Adams does not lose in this country very often.

39.Nxb3?? Missing a golden chance with 39.Rxe7! Rxe7 (39...Ra1+ 40.Kg2 exd4 41.c7 Rc1 42.g5! is agony for Black, who cannot improve and has to helplessly watch as White brings his king into the game) 40.Nb5 when Black will have to part with the rook to stop the c-pawn. After 40...Re6 41.c7 Rc6 42.Nd6 Kf8 43.c8Q+ Rxc8 44.Nxc8 Ke8 45.Kf1 Kd7 46.Nb6+ Kc6 47.Na4 Black may as well resign, as the winning process is now slow but inevitable.

39...Nxc6 40.Rc8 Nb4 41.d4?! As so often happens when players miss their chance, things only get worse from there.

41.Nc5 was more resilient, with the idea of playing Rb8 and gaining counterplay with the b-pawn.

41...e4! Fixing the pawn on d4.

42.Nc5 Ra1+ 43.Kg2 Nd3 44.g5 44.f3 was a better chance, although even here you are in the Mickey grinder after 44...f5 45.b4 Nf4+ 46.Kg3 Ne2+ 47.Kf2 Nxd4--.

44...Nf4+ 45.Kh2 Rf1!→ Smartly winning material.

46.Kg3 Ne2+ 47.Kg2 Rg1+ 48.Kh2 Rxc5 49.h4 Rg4 50.Rd8 Nf4 51.b4 Rg2+ 52.Kh1 Rxf2 53.b5 Rb2 54.Rb8 e3 0-1

It seems harder than ever now to get the grandmaster title, and talented players like Harry Grieve, Matthew Wadsworth, Jonah Willow, Brandon Clarke and others are struggling to get over the line, when if it were not for rating deflation they would probably be there already. Perhaps closest of all, along with Shreyas Royal (who was also playing in Cambridge and is trying to become the youngest English GM ever), is Ameet Ghasi. In fact, it seems remiss to call Ameet an international master given that he's been grandmaster strength for years, and considerably stronger than most ageing GMs like me. Ameet is one norm away from closing the deal and would surely already be a grandmaster if he hadn't been working full-time. Sadly though for Ameet, he perhaps hadn't fully warmed up by the time round 1 took place, and became one of the many victims of underrated players when he lost to Denderski.

22...fxe4?! this seems to be quite a crucial error, as White gains control over the e4- square, from where he is able to launch a platform for the c5-break.

In fact Black had a fine position, and one of several good possibilities was 22...f4 23.Bf2 Bxf2+ 24.Qxf2 g5, intending ...Ng3 and then ...h5, with the typical kingside all-in attack. Simply keeping the tension with 22...Qe7!? and waiting for better opportunities later was another excellent possibility for Black. 22...Ng3 is also interesting: 23.Nd3 Qe7 and I would be quite fearful here if I had White, especially if facing a deadly King's Indian counter-attacker like Luke McShane or Ameet himself. Black's position carries considerable stored potential.

23.Nxe4 Bf5 Perhaps when he took on e4 Ameet intended to play 23...Bxh3 24.gxh3 Rxf3, but wisely thought better of it. White easily beats off the attack after 25.Qe2 Rf5 26.Qg4--.

24.Bd3 Qe7 25.Ne2 Ng7? But now 25...Bxh3! represented a much better practical opportunity, when White would have to react with precision. 26.c5! (26.gxh3 Rxf3:



... and the computer judges this as OK for White, but I think over the board you could easily collapse here and get mated quickly) 26...bxc5 27.bxc5 Bc8, when there is still a full fight in progress.

26.c5!+-



White's game flows very logically after this, and Denderski played excellently for the rest of the game.

26...bxc5 27.bxc5 Nd8 28.Rb4 Nf7 29.Rxa4 Bxe4 30.Bxe4 Rxa4 31.Qxa4 Bg5 32.Bf2 dxc5 33.Qc2 Nd6 34.Bxc5 Ra8 35.a4 Qd7 36.Ra1 Ngf5 37.Bxf5 Nxf5 38.Qe4 Ra5 39.Bf2 Kf7 40.Nc3 Be7 41.Rb1 Bd6 42.h4 Ne7 43.h5 Qf5 44.hxg6+ hxg6 45.g4 Qf4 46.Qxf4+ exf4 47.Rb5 Ra8 48.a5 Nc8 49.Bd4 Ke8 50.Ne4 Kd7 51.Kf2 Be7 52.Bc3 Ra6 53.Bd2 g5 54.Rb8 Kd8 55.Bc3 Kd7 56.Rb7 Ra8 57.Ke2 Nd6 58.Nxd6 Bxd6 59.Rb1 Re8+ 60.Kd3 c6 61.Rb7+ Bc7 62.a6 Kd6 63.Bb4+ c5 64.Bxc5+ Kxc5 65.Rxc7+ Kxd5 66.a7 Re3+ 67.Kc2 Ra3 68.Kb2 Ra5 69.Kc3 Kd6 70.Rg7 Ke6 71.Kb4 Ra1 72.Kc5 Kf6 73.Rh7 Ke5 74.Kb6 Kd4 75.Re7 Kd5 76.Rd7+ Ke6 77.Rd4 Ke5 78.Rb4 Kd5 79.Kb7 Kc5 80.Rb2 1-0

British Rapidplay Report, Part 1 by Danny Gormally

Badacsonyi, Stanley - Gormally, Daniel W

British Rapidplay Championship 2024 lichess.org (5.4), 02.03.2024

You could tell the tournament was very popular because practically every promising junior or young player from these shores was in attendance. If Shreyas is likely to win several British titles at every time control you can think of in the future, Stanley Badacsonyi (known as Stanisbad online) is quite likely to join him, especially at the faster time controls that he excels at. In my opinion Stanley is something of a raw talent who can probably improve even more if he polishes up his positional and strategic play a little (his tactics are already amazing, which is why he is so strong at blitz) and perhaps adds some main line openings to his repertoire. But who am I to give advice, given he beat me in round 5?



29...Qb4?! Perhaps a sign that I was already getting nervous. My original intention had been to play 29...Qf4, but I backed off it because I was vaguely concerned about some Qa3 counterplay for White, even though that probably doesn't work for him. Already I was spending too much time, and that became a critical issue later in the game.

30.Na3?! I had been more concerned about 30.Nd2! Rd8 31.Rb1, because now I won't have the ... Re1 resource that was available in the game.

30...Rd8 Missing a neat win with 30...Nxb6! 31.hxg6 Re1 32.Rg1:



... 32...Rh3!! 33.Qxh3 Re2, but, given that I missed much simpler wins later, it is hardly likely that I am going to display this level of tactical genius.

31.Rb1 Re1 32.Rg1 Rxc1 33.Rxc1 Nd7 34.Qg3+! Played quickly. He wasn't giving me any time to think!

34...Ka7 35.Nc2 Qxc4 36.Qc7 Qc3+ 37.Kb1 Nb6 Later I regretted not going for a technical ending with 37...a3 38.Nxa3 Qb4+ (I saw the variation 38...Nb6 39.Nb5+! which would have been embarrassing) 39.Kc2 (39.Ka1 Qxd4+→) 39...Qb6:

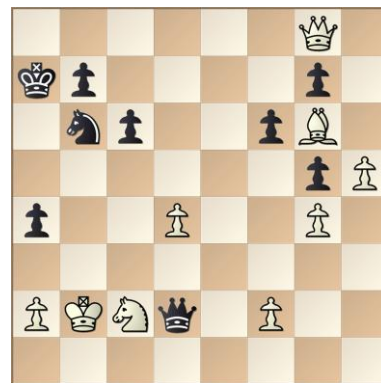


... which removed the danger and would have been a decent practical decision, given how short of time I was getting. It's much easier, I think, to play a lot of moves quickly in a better endgame than it is in a complex middlegame.

38.Rg3! Stanley plays a lot of blitz online, and that is really good training for this kind of sharp scenario where you are forced to make only moves. I had actually seen this resource earlier and had judged (correctly as it turned out) that I was still doing well.

38...Nf3! 39.Rxf3 Qxf3 40.Qxd8 Qd1+ 40...Nc4 41.Ne3! bugged me.

41.Kb2 Qd2 42.Qg8?



At the time I thought this was a great defence, but apparently Black is winning now.

42...Nd5?? 42...a3+! was what I was lining up when I played ... Nd5, but why wait! 43.Kxa3 (43.Kb3 Nd5 is also winning for Black) 43...Qc3+ 44.Qb3 Nc4+ 45.Ka4 Qa5#.

43.Qf8! Nc3? What I had missed was that 43...a3+ 44.Qxa3+, and the attack is over for Black.

44.Qc5+ 1-0

Han, Yichen - Gormally, Daniel W

British Rapidplay Championship 2024 lichess.org (11.1), 03.03.2024

Even though I lost in round 5 I was quite happy with my play in that game overall: I just hadn't taken my chances at the end. After I won in round 6, I was on 4½/6 and feeling quite positive about my chances, even though I was trailing the leaders who were on 5½/6. Having played the British Rapidplay many times before, and other similar events, I have experienced being up there on board 1 or 2 for round after round, and how you gradually feel the pressure. I didn't envy the leaders, and I realised it could be an advantage to be in the chasing pack. So when I was paired against Yichen Han in the final round I thought it was quite ironic because we had been the top two seeds going into the event, both had quite up and down tournaments and here we were on board 1. It reminded me of all these Keith Arkell posts on Facebook about how he'd always find himself on board 1 come what may.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bd2 This system seems tame, but has been played by Magnus Carlsen amongst others, and it definitely contains some poison for Black. I would definitely recommend studying it from the white side if you need to find a variation against the Grünfeld.

5...Bg7 6.e4



6...Nb6!? I had studied this recently, and felt that this was the best way to aim for an uncompromising position.

7.Be3 0-0 8.Be2 f5 Somewhat radical as the kingside is weakened, but I already felt I had to mix it up.

He was playing all his moves at speed, and I sensed he would have been very comfortable after 8...Nc6 9.d5 Ne5 10.Bd4 with the intention of playing f4 and exchanging dark-squared bishops.

9.exf5 Bxf5 Maybe on a good day you could play 9...gxf5, but this is probably a step too far for such an important game.

10.Nf3 Nc6 11.0-0 11.Qb3+ Kh8 12.0-0-0 is perhaps the way to play for a big edge, with the quite obvious idea of playing h4-h5 as quickly as possible. Ng5-e6/f7 is another attacking idea for White.

11...Kh8 12.h3 Qd6 13.Qb3 Be6! Now I felt that I had survived the opening, but at the same time I knew that he was a strong player and that he would continue to pose me problems. Yichen is also a big talent, and it is interesting that he discovered chess in a park in the Netherlands when he was fairly young. It rather places the campaign to place chess tables in parks in its proper perspective, because here you have an example of someone who directly benefited from this.

14.Qc2 Bd5 15.Ne4 Nb4 16.Qb1 Qc6 17.Ned2 17.Nc3 Bxf3 18.Bxf3 Rxf3 19.gxf3 Qxf3 20.Qe4 Qxh3 seems to give Black plenty of play; you already have two pawns for the exchange. 21.Qxb7 N4d5=.

17...Qc2 18.a3 Qxb1 19.Raxb1



19...Nc6?! As Sadler pointed out during Twitch commentary on the final round with Natasha Regan, and my opponent mentioned after the game, this is an inconsistent and strange decision. Maybe I was getting tired and confused, because I definitely didn't intend to play this earlier. 11 games in two days is a lot!

19...Nc2 was what I had intended earlier, but now I noticed that the rook was no longer on a1 so he could move the bishop. But if he goes to g5 then d4 hangs, so this chain of thought made no sense at all. 20.Rbc1 Nxe3 21.fxe3 c6 definitely feels more comfortable for Black than what occurred in the game.

20.Rbc1 Rad8 21.Rfe1 Rd7 22.Bb5 a6 23.Bd3?! Afterwards Yichen mentioned 23.Bxc6 Bxc6 24.Ne5 Bxe5 25.dxe5:



... as a possible chance, when White will likely continue with Nb3-c5 or Nb3-a5, in both cases placing pressure on the queenside.

23...Bxf3 24.Nxf3 e5? 24...Nxd4 25.Nxd4 Bxd4 26.Bxd4+ Rxd4 27.Rxc7? was a variation that Yichen mentioned to me later where he pointed out that Black was doing well. Nerves, fatigue or just the fact that it was a fast time control meant that I had missed the simple detail that in this line the bishop is now hanging. (27.Bf1 Rd7 and Black can happily grind away) 27...Nd5!→ (27...Rxd3? 28.Rxe7).

25.Bxa6! exd4 26.Bd2 bxa6 27.Rxc6 d3



28.Ne5? As Sadler said on the broadcast, a Mickey Adams would just play 28.b3! here which kills the counterplay, and then calmly sit back and let you worry about all the weak pawns in your position. I was expecting him to play this and was resigned to defeat; and I'm sure Yichen would have gone for this option at a classical time control. However, it would seem that at rapidplay time controls it can become tempting to play more actively and directly.

28...Rd5 29.f4 Nd7! Now the game rather fizzles out, much to my relief.

30.Rxc7 Nxe5 31.fxe5 Rxe5 32.Rxe5 Bxe5 33.Rd7 Bxb2 ½-½

The British Rapidplay Championships 2024, Part 2 by Peter Wells

The British Rapidplay Championship took place this year across the first weekend of March and resulted in victory for Danny Gormally, who clinched the title by convincingly winning the play-off against Ireland's young star Trisha Kanyamarala. Her superb performance in joining him on the magic score of 9 points – a crucial half-point ahead of as many as seven players just behind on 8½ - was one of the great stories of a Championship full of fascinating twists and turns. It did, of course, also secure her the Women's title, a full 1½ points ahead of the long-time England number 1 female player Harriet Hunt.

Although the Rapidplay has been in existence since 1986, this was only the second time it has been held since a three-year break courtesy of Covid. It was also the first time (so far as I am aware) that the Championship has not been held in the North of England, having found itself for many years a preserve of various Yorkshire venues. As befits someone who has played for White Rose in the 4NCL over 15 years, I have a great fondness for the friendliness of northern cities and for Yorkshire in particular. So I greeted the news that this year's event

was to be held in Peterborough with mixed feelings. In fact, I needn't have worried. The Holiday Inn came up trumps both as high quality accommodation and, perhaps even more, for its very spacious and comfortable playing halls.

This tournament was *huge* – 217 players registered and even after a handful of withdrawals and '0 point byes' more than 100 games were in play over each of the 11 rounds. Dealing with such numbers, it is truly remarkable that there was never any sensation of feeling cramped or crowded in – certainly in the principal playing hall - and, from what I could see, not in the additional hall either. The tournament seemed to be run seamlessly too, keeping pretty much to schedule, despite a handful of the customary 'nightmare' endings such a rook and bishop vs rook, which could threaten the timing of any event which requires 11 rounds to be fitted into two days. Personally, I would be in favour of always producing pairings in advance whenever possible – notably after the Saturday night round. But this is a very small gripe in the context of an otherwise excellent event.

My sincere praise of the venue may raise questions for those who have read Leonard Barden's report in the Guardian in which he discussed concerns that the vast number of participants (and parents, given the incredible turnout from the country's younger generation) had left nowhere for many players to rest between rounds, particularly on the Sunday. From this, he pondered whether the event may have become *too big* and whether it might therefore be time to introduce some lower rating restrictions, or at least return to rated sections rather than just one large open. I do have some sympathy with the first of these points. There was, at times a shortage of space in the public areas of the hotel, and (for me at least) this could have become more of an issue had the weather not been fairly conducive to taking short breathers outside. It is clearly important for players to be able to relax between rounds, since the whole event can frankly feel quite intense.

However, while it is very easy to play the role of grumpy old man in the face of hordes of (often under-rated) juniors - and I have not by any means always been opposed to 'elitist' solutions to such issues - on this occasion I feel that something important would be lost by making any significant changes. This tournament really did showcase so much of the best of junior chess in the UK, gave so many of these young players opportunities for a crack at established names which might otherwise be hard to come by, and seemed to me to have quite a special atmosphere as a result. I guess there could be a case for a more elite championship as well, but the almost festival-like vibe which this tournament exuded feels to

me like something well worth protecting. If the numbers tell us anything, it is that the hunger for a rapidplay event of this nature is definitely there!

The task of trying to work out who were likely to be contenders for top honours in this tournament was not just rendered problematic by its size, but also by the fact that (despite the organisers' best efforts to create a plausible list of seedings by counting the higher of either the player's FIDE rapid or ECF rapid ratings) many of the these ratings are lagging behind strength even more blatantly than in the case of slower time controls. A quick glance at the top of the rankings would indeed disguise almost as much as it would reveal. It was actually quite striking, as Danny points out in his article, that the number 1 and 2 seeds ended up on the top board in Round 11, and it is true that all of the top-seeded players performed commendably. Still, you needed to look a little more discerningly to appreciate the tournament's true strength in depth. There was also Shreyas Royal at number 14, Jonah Willow at 16, and most frighteningly such talented juniors as Bodhana Sivanandan at 69, Freddie Waldhausen-Gordon at 71, and Lorenzo Fava, fresh from his stellar performance in Cambridge seeded 89! As things turned out, there was also something spectacularly misleading about the eventual runner-up Trisha Kanyamarala starting out ranked at 64 with a FIDE rapid rating of 2073.

So while there were notable absentees compared with last year – Ameet Ghasi in particular, the 2023 Champion, who has earned himself a well-deserved reputation as the man to beat at any fast time controls in the UK – this was a very strong event in which a number of different players came to shine. Leonard Barden singled out Shreyas Royal for the quality of his play for much of the tournament, and he was indeed impressive. I was somewhat amused when the pairings produced an England-Scotland encounter of the young talents - Freddie vs Shreyas as early as round 2. I suspect this match-up may produce a lot of tense battles in the future, but this time Shreyas cleared up quite comfortably in a rook ending. I was also impressed by Jonah Willow and by Artur Davtyan, who both brought strong preparation and sensible solid openings, and who clearly have the essential ability to play consistently strong moves at speed. Yichen Han also looked formidable at times. It is never easy for someone in their mid-teens who has usually had the psychological boost of being the 'promising young player' to have to play a number of still younger talents. Yet he managed to produce something of a 'massacre of the innocents' by taking down some of our best (Bodhana, Supratit Banerjee and Freddie) in successive rounds on Sunday. He then eventually emerged at the top of the group just tucked behind the winners at the end, even after failing

to exploit serious chances in the last round game (as Danny himself relates in detail on these pages).

I tend to ponder long and hard when deciding which games to show in such a report. Part of me wants to be fair to everyone who has performed well, despite the limited space. On this occasion, though, I have decided to let Danny speak for his own excellent performance, even though he has been self-effacing enough to include no wins, despite a number to choose from! Moreover, I also hope to entertain and possibly throw in some instructive examples as well. So, somewhat outrageously, I want to begin with the nice combination from Peter Roberson's model f4 Sicilian with which he beat Trisha Kanyamarala in round 2:

Peter Roberson – Trisha Kanyamarala

British Rapidplay Championship, Peterborough 2024
Round 2.

1.e4 c5 2.Be2 d6 3.f4 Nc6 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.d3 g6 6.0-0 Bg7
7.Qe1 0-0



I have enjoyed using the f4 Sicilian in teaching high-ability classes over the years as an archetype of an opening which comes with a very clear plan. On occasions I have even invented examples to illustrate how dangerous White's attack can be if Black fails to take counter-measures. What struck me about this game is that it really comes to resemble one of those examples, and honestly, if a player of Trisha's quality can fall victim to this, it shows quite how dangerous this set-up can still be, especially in rapid games.

8.Qh4

One of the curiosities of this whole saga is that Peter attempted to make a unique 'double' by repeating this system against Trisha's older brother Tarun (incidentally also an international master) just two rounds later! I guess maybe Peter had checked this game with the engine and found that it recommends 8...b5!? after the move played here. So he deviated in the later encounter with 8.a4 Rb8 9.Qh4 e6!? (it would be simplistic to say

that this move is all Black needs for a successful defence, but the possibility to oppose the queens when necessary is certainly something I would be keen to make work when defending this) 10.c3 (it is always worth checking 10.f5, but the engine's cool recommendation of 10...exf5 11.Bg5 Re8!? 12. Nc3 h6! intending to meet 13 Bxh6 with 13...Nxe4! looks quite a convincing response) 11...a6 11.e5?! Nd5 12.Qg3 b5 13.axb5 axb5 14.Kh1 b4 15.d4 bxc3 16.Nxc3 (in view of 16.bxc3?! Rxb1! 17.Rxb1 Nxc3 18.Rb2 Nxe2 19.Rxe2 Ba6) 16...cxd4 17.Ne4 dxe5 18.fxe5 Ne3 19.Bxe3 dxe3, and things were clearly going well for Black in Peter Roberson – Tarun Kanyamarala, British Rapidplay 2024, Round 4).

8...Rb8 9.f5 Nd4?! 10.Nxd4 cxd4 11.Bh6 Re8

Black really needs to do something which affects the flow of the play. Perhaps 11...Bxh6 12.Qxh6 e5 13.Nd2 Kh8 is a better attempt to defend.

12.Nd2 Bh8 13.Nf3 Qb6 14.fgx6 fgx6 15.Ng5 Qc5?

There is probably no way back after this. Black should at least keep the queen on b6, since if White were simply to continue analogously with the game there is 15...Bd7!? 16.Rf2 Qxb2 17.Raf1 Qxa2 which covers f7, and therefore complicates the breakthrough. Still, even then either 18.g4!? - intending to follow-up with Bf8 - or 18.Bd1!? followed by c3 are dangerous options in the arsenal.

16.Rf2 Bd7 17.Raf1 Rbc8 18.Bd1!? a5



19.Bg7!

It is obvious that White has a fierce attack, but this denouement is still very elegant.

19...Bxg7 20.Rxf6 exf6

There are some lovely lines if Black tries instead 20...h6 21.Rxg6 hxg5. It is true that 22.Rxg5 would suffice, but it is much more elegant (and clinical) to find 22.Rxg7+! Kxg7

23.Rf7+! Kxf7 24.Qh7+ Kf6 25.Qh6+ Kf7 26.Bh5+ Kg8 27.Bg6! Be6 28. Qh7+ Kf8 29.Qh8+ Bg8 30. Qh6#.

21.Qxh7+ Kf8 22.Rxf6+ Ke7 23.Qxg7+ Kd8 24.Rxd6! Qb5 25.Bg4 Kc7 26.Rxd7+ Kb8 27.Nf3 and White won a few moves later.

Nothing impresses me more these days than players who bounce back from adversity, and this must have come as quite a jolt. The truth is that Trisha recovered brilliantly, dropping only one more loss (against the tournament winner), and building a string of wins with victims including both the aforementioned Artur Davtyan and her brother, as well as the following final round game against a player who has marked himself out as something of a rapidplay specialist in recent years - Tom Eckersley-Waites, who, incidentally, had put considerable pressure on Jonah Willow in the previous game. Remarkably, neither Trisha nor Tarun drew a single game in the entire 11 rounds – a really striking testimony to their fighting chess.

Trisha Kanyamarala – Tom Eckersley-Waites

British Rapidplay Championship, Peterborough 2024 Round 11

1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.e3 Nf6 4.Bxc4 e6 5.Nf3 a6 6.0–0 c5 7.Nbd2!?

I am feeling fairly ignorant about this relatively unusual line, but it is not hard to see the appeal. I can believe that 7...cxd4 8 Nxd4 may be an edge, and any attempt to preface this with ...b5 is likely just to drive the bishop via e2 to the optimal f3-square. Otherwise, it affords White the rare chance to play the move dxc5 (often irritating to Queen's Gambit Accepted players, while keeping the queens on the board.

7...Nc6 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.a3 0–0?!

This seems a bit odd. Surely it must be better to get ...b5 in as soon as possible here, especially if your own bishop is going to be driven back to b6?

10.b4 Bb6 11.Bb2 Bd7



12.Be2!

Always a nice reorganisation. This is essentially 'clearance'. The bishop is well enough placed on c4, but Trisha knows that the knight will have much more purpose there.

12...Ne7 13.Nc4 Bb5

No doubt not Black's original intention, but he is already facing some serious pressure.

14.Nxb6 Qxb6 15.Bd4 Qd8 16.Bxb5 axb5 17.Qe2 Qd5 18.Bc5! Rfe8 19.Qxb5 Ne4 20.Rfd1 Qb3 21.Nd2! Nxd2 22.Rxd2 Nd5 23.Bd4 Rec8 24.Rb2!?



It is a bit difficult sometimes to interpret these moments. This is virtually the first move of Trisha's which the engine hasn't fully endorsed, since it believes that Black could now minimise the damage by trading queens with 24...Qc4! with perhaps some slight light-square compensation for the pawn. It prefers to dislodge the knight with 24. e4! which objectively would almost certainly have set tougher problems. Yet it was precisely the move played - which superficially leaves the back rank weak - which provoked a decisive blunder, after which Black is simply lost.

24...Qxa3?? 25.Rbb1! Nc3

The black queen is out of squares, but at first glance this may offer some respite. However, Trisha (much to the excitement of Matthew Sadler and Natasha Regan, commentating, who were very tuned in to the historic nature of the moment) can threaten mate and end all resistance.

26.Qe5! Ne2+ 27.Kh1 Nxd4 28.Rxa3 Rxa3 29.Qxd4 Rb3 30.Qd1 1-0

Examining this tournament more closely has rekindled my interest in the question of what characteristics make for a relatively strong rapid player, or even a rapid specialist. At this point I hope I will be forgiven for a brief exploration of my own case. For players such as myself, whose poor clock-handling has become notorious at slower time controls over many years, it is sometimes assumed that there would be scarcely much point in even turning up to something faster. In fact, for many years around the time that I won this event three times in seven years (2002-2008), I believe that rapidplay was probably my strongest time-control. In my case, it seemed relatively easy to diagnose what helped me to perform at faster time limits. As something of a perfectionist in both the more positive sense (eager to play the very best and most creative moves that I could) and the highly destructive sense (haunted by a deep-rooted fear of making mistakes), my classical games could easily get bogged down in this unrealistic, if subconscious and often involuntary, quest. Somehow the speed of rapidplay took away much of the pressure. While I never entirely endorsed John Nunn's claim that many players get into time-trouble in order to use it as an excuse, I do appreciate the strong relationship between this and what I was feeling. Quite simply, the speed of rapidplay seemed to remove even the possibility of perfection, and therefore permitted me to just get on with playing the game. On occasion this sense of liberation seemed to generate a real flow, and for the first time in many years of competing (and in spite of a couple of horrible losses) I kind of felt this sensation again in the last four games on the Sunday. Once you have experienced the feeling of playing decent moves quickly - backed by a reasonable amount of tactical awareness - a degree of confidence can be generated which would probably take much longer to build in any other format.

My best effort - against one of our fast-improving and popular young players:

Peter Wells – Stanley Badacsonyi

British Rapidplay Championship, Peterborough 2024 Round 10

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5

Having played Stanley in the Bristol qualifier for the British Blitz last year and obtained a rotten position against his King's Indian, I decided this was a good moment to take refuge in my old, but not invariably trusty friend – the Trompowsky. It turned out to be a good choice. I was surprised after the game to see that the set-up he chose with ...e5 and ...g5 has in fact been played by a number of strong players, but it looks positionally quite suspect to me.

2...e6 3.e4 h6 4.Bxf6 Qxf6 5.c3 d6 6.Bd3 e5 7.Ne2 Nc6 8.0-0 g5?! 9.Bb5 a6



Of course Black should not fear the doubled c-pawns, but he certainly should be nervous about an exchange of light-squared bishops, which will highlight the serious weakness of f5. The problem is that after my next move it is not easy to find a plausible way to keep these on the board.

10.Qa4! Bd7

I sort of respect the fact that Normund Miezis cared about his light squares enough to play 10...Ra7!? in this position, but I don't think it will be enough to have people flocking to the system in their droves.

11.d5 Nb8 12.Bxd7+ Nxd7 13.c4 h5 14.Ng3 h4

Driving me where I want to go, but it is important to continue advancing these pawns to hint, at least, at some counterplay against my king. I had initially been a bit concerned by 14...Qf4, but then I realised that after 15.Nc3 h4 I can drive the queen back with the harmonious 16.Nce2! - but certainly not 16 Nf5? h3!, with just the kind of threats against my king that he is looking for.

15.Nf5 g4 16.Nc3 Kd8?!

It is natural enough to want to unpin, and Stanley realises that castling is unlikely to play a role in his king's career in any case. Still, this is probably the best moment to use the threat of counterplay to distract White from his plans, and

16...Rh5! would be a clever way to do this. The knight on f5 is such a beast that Black should consider any means of challenging it anyway, and specifically after, say, 17. b4?! he can initially flick in 17...h3! and meet 18. g3 with 18...Rxf5! 19.exf5 Qxf5, and suddenly it is no trivial matter to stop the queen from invading on f3. Of course I don't have to allow this. I could for example retreat with 17. Qc2, but this genuinely slows me down, and provides an excellent illustration of how the old cliché 'counter-attack is the best method of defence' is about taking the sting out of the opponent's attack, as well as about punching back.

17.b4 Be7 18.Rad1!

So far as I recall I consumed a bit more time on this move. I decided that I wanted my other rook to stay on the f-file for defensive reasons (for example, possibly meeting 18...Rh5 with 19 f3!?) and that the threat of c5 - followed by an immediate d6 - was the best way to try to break through. For this purpose, the rook is more effective here than on the 'natural' c1-square.

18...Qg5

Crucially, the breakthrough is very effective even if the king moves. I had in mind 18...Kc8 19.c5 dxc5 20.d6! Bxd6 21.Rxd6! cxd6 22.Nd5 Qe6 23.Qa5, which does indeed seem to be decisive.

19.c5 Nf6



20.Qa5!

Somehow this provided me with some satisfaction. Renewing the threat to take on d6 ruins Black's hopes of undermining my f5-knight.

20...Ne8 21.Nb5 Kd7 22.Rc1 Bd8 23.cxd6 c6

Somehow I had missed this, having only considered the natural 23...cxd6, when 24.Qa4 is a killer. Getting surprised when you have calculated a lot and are short of time is not one of the most pleasant experiences in chess,

but I recovered quickly enough to appreciate that there must be a way to use these files opening against his king.

24.dxc6+ bxc6 25.Nc7!?

The very powerful 25.Qa4! cxb5 26.Qc2 simply didn't cross my radar!

25...Nxd6

25...Nxc7 26.dxc7 Bxc7 27.Rfd1+ is, of course, carnage.

26.Qc5! Nxf5 27.Qxc6+ Ke7 28.Nd5+ Kf8 29.exf5! Ra7 30.Qc5+ Kg7 31.Qxa7 Qxf5

Rather strangely (and frankly illogically), I find the new rapidplay time control (15 minutes + 10 second increment) overall less congenial – or at least tricky to get used to - after specialising in the old 30 or 25 minutes. However, with this kind of winning advantage it of course provides an extra, very welcome, layer of safety!

32.Ne3 Qe6 33.Rc4!?

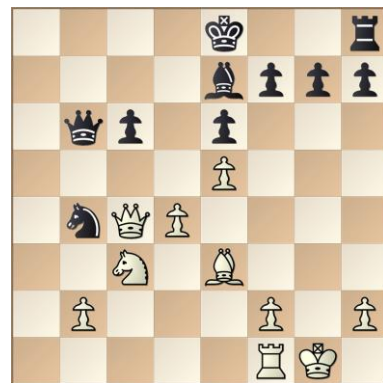
When I 'tweeted' (sorry – old labels die hard) that I had sacrificed the exchange twice in this event, I must admit that what follows was not included. It is in fact a very efficient way of 'tidying' the position, but to be a sacrifice it needs to be intentional 😊, whereas I had in fact completely overlooked 33...Bb6!

33...Bb6 34.Rxg4+! Qxg4 35.Qxb6 and the rest was just a matter of ensuring that I didn't blunder while playing with little more than the increment. Black resigned a few moves later.

To finish, I wanted to show two interesting tactical moments arising in two of Shreyas's games from successive rounds – one which ended to his benefit, and the other of which could have spelled a serious reversal.

Yichen Han, - Shreyas Royal

British Rapidplay Championship, Peterborough 2024 Round 7



20.b3?!

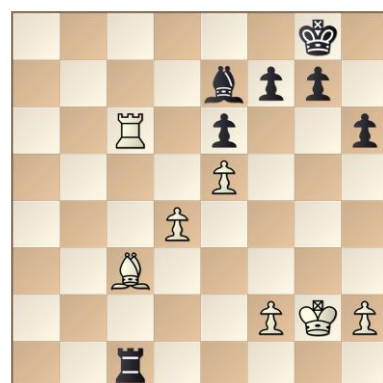
This doesn't look so strange at first sight, but the engine really doesn't like it, and on reflection it does make this pawn quite a bit harder to defend over time.

20...0-0 21.Ra1 Qb7 22.Ne4 Nd5 23.Bd2 Rb8 24.Rc1

24...Qxb3?!

This feels a little bit rushed. Probably Shreyas could have made useful 'waiting moves' starting with 24...h6!?, since if White then commences the captures with 25. Qxc6?! Black is in no way obliged to exchange queens, but could instead capture on b3, when the dormant factor of White's weakened kingside could suddenly become very salient again.

25.Qxb3 Rxb3 26.Rxc6 h6 27.Nc3 Nxc3 28.Bxc3 Rb1+ 29.Kg2 Rc1



There are many reasons that blunders occur, and it is sometimes hard enough for the players themselves to determine the reason, never mind outsiders. Still, that doesn't stop us having a guess 😊. I suspect that Yichen had felt the pressure over the last few moves and reacted to the relative easing of this with some degree of relief. It also doesn't help the necessary detective work that Shreyas's last move clearly makes sense, even if the obvious threat (30...Bb4) were not backed up with a

better disguised one. In fact this moment requires absolute precision from White. He needs to break the pin without delay and head towards a rook ending with 30.Rc8+ Kh7 31.Re8!, which should be sufficient to hold. Instead, one 'casual' move and the game is over!

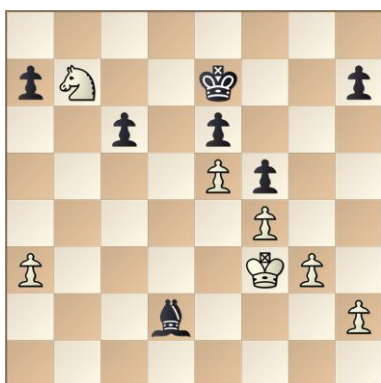
30.Rc4? Ba3! 31.Rc7 Bb4!

Preventing 31.a5 and simply winning.

**32.d5 Rxc3 33.d6 Rd3 34.Kf1 Rd5 35.f4 Bd2 36.Rc4 f6
37.Ke2 fxe5 38.fxe5 Bg5 0-1**

Artur Davtyan – Shreyas Royal

British Rapidplay Championship Peterborough 2024
Round 8



Black stands slightly worse after a high-quality encounter in which Artur Davtyan again impressed, but should hold with a 'normal move' such as 33...h5!? Instead, Shreyas put his bishop on a square which looks plausible enough, but proves most unfortunate.

33...Bc1? 34.Na5!

The point. Not only c6 (and with it a7) are attacked, but the knight also intends a venomous retreat which 'dominates' the opposing bishop.

34...Kd7 35.Nc4! c5 36.Ke2 Kc6 37.a4?

An understandable error, because it is easy to assume that Black has covered the threat. However, with a little more time it would be much easier to see that in the pawn ending that arises after 37.Kd1! Kd5 38.Kxc1 Kxc4 White has the thematic breakthrough 39.g4!!. Clearly 39...fxg4 40.f5 is hopeless, but neither is there respite in 39...Kd5 40.gxf5 exf5 41.Kb2 c4 42.Kc3 Kc5, when White can win either by exhausting Black's tempo moves or by immediately forcing the issue with 43.e6 Kd6 44.Kxc4 Kxe6 45.Kc5 a6 46.a4 a5 47.Kc6! and the superior king is decisive.

37...Kd5 38.Kd3 h5 and the crisis has passed, with a draw being agreed a few moves later.

When you study a tournament like this in detail (which I would recommend – the games are easily available and there are many fascinating tussles) I think it is very easy to make one of two polar opposite mistakes. The first is to assume that the top players are playing at a depth which others cannot possibly understand and that the processes by which one side prevails are necessarily shrouded in mystery. This is not true. As we have seen, quite accessible tactics often decide even the highest quality encounters. However, the other danger is equally real. Struck by how many rapidplay games – even at the higher level – are decided by tactics, sometimes against the run of play, led at least one of my opponents to suggest that it is all 'random' anyway. This is certainly not true. Yes, tactics play a huge role, but it is *generally* the side who has been putting on the pressure who obtains the tactical opportunities, and – with a few exceptions – the ability to make a lot of sound moves at speed is a fundamental prerequisite to obtaining these opportunities in the first place. What I do conclude from this event is that it produced enough exciting chess to easily explain its immense popularity.

Reykjavik Open 2024

The Reykjavik Open was first held in 1964, and this year's event was held from 15th to 21st March. English players were very well represented, with no fewer than 34 players making the journey to the land of geysers, glaciers and expensive beer. Particular congratulations go to Matthew Wadsworth, who scored 7/9 to come joint second with a performance rating of FIDE 2568 and adding nearly 15 FIDE rating points in the process. Special mention should be made too of Peter Large's performance, scoring 6½/9 to come in joint ninth with a performance rating of FIDE 2473, gaining 51 FIDE rating points.

The complete results, with English players' results highlighted, can be viewed here:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr792656.aspx?lan=1&art=1&rd=9&fedb=ENG&fed=ENG&flag=30>

Matthew Wadsworth will be writing about Reykjavik in next month's issue.

39th Crowborough Chess Congress 24th February by David Fryer



66 players competed in the 39th Crowborough Chess Congress, which attracted players from Sussex, Surrey, Kent and London.

The six-round rapidplay tournament was split into two sections offering a total of £700 in prizes.

The Championship Section was a very competitive event, with a number of past champions vying for the Joe Berberich Cup.

A key game determining the outcome of the tournament was played in round 3 between last time's runner-up Callum Brewer of Brighton Chess Club and previous multiple winner Russell Granat of Worthing Chess Club (see annotated game).



Winners Callum Brewer (holding the cup) and David Graham

Round 4 saw the two eventual winners Callum Brewer and David Graham play out to a draw, both finishing on an identical 5/6 score.

The fight for the Albany Cup presented to the best player from Crowborough Chess Club was no less exciting, with four players going into the last round with a chance of picking up the trophy. This ultimately went to Gary McCulloch, who won his last four games on the bounce after losing in the first round to the number 1 seed and winner of the veterans prize Russell Granat.



Gary McCulloch – best player from Crowborough Chess Club

It was pleasing to see so many juniors and new tournament players competing in the Challengers with three players, Sidhanth Pai, Raina Jithendra and Daniel Walvin, each scoring 5/6.

Of course, and as usual, the most coveted prizes were the Easter eggs awarded to the two best team performances. These went to Worthing Chess Club scoring 14½ points and, competing for the first time, Medway Chess Club on 12½ points.

Granat, Russell - Brewer, Callum

39th Crowborough Rapidplay lichess.org (3), 24.02.2024

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.d4 Nf6 5.c4 g6 6.Nc3 Bg7
7.Be3 Nc6 8.Be2 0–0 9.Ne5



9.0-0 keeps the balance.

9...Be6 9...dxc4! 10.0-0 Be6.

10.Nxc6 bxc6 11.c5 Rb8 12.b3 Ne4 13.Nxe4 dxe4 14.0-0 Rb4 15.Qd2



15...a5N 15...Qb8 16.Rad1 a5 17.Qc3 Rd8 18.Rd2 a4 19.Bf4 Qxf4 20.Qxb4 axb3 21.axb3 e3 22.fxe3 Qxe3+ 1-0 (46) Dong,V (2155)-Nguyen,H Quang Binh 1997.

16.Rfd1 Bd5 17.Rac1 f5 18.g3 f4 19.gxf4 19.Bxf4 Rxd4 20.Qc2=.

19...e6 20.Rc4



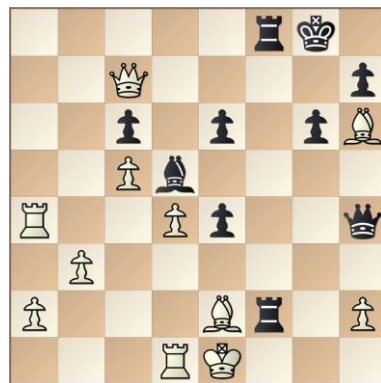
20...Rb7!-+ 20...Bxc4 21.Bxc4 Rxc4 22.bxc4=.

21.Ra4? 21.Rc3.

21...Rbf7 22.Kf1 22.Qxa5 is no better: 22...Qh4 23.Qe1 Rxf4 24.Bxf4 Qxf4 25.Qf1 Rf5-+.

22...Bh6 23.Qxa5 Qh4 24.Ke1 Rxf4 25.Qc7 If only White now had time for Ra7....

25...Rxf2 26.Bxh6



26...Rxe2+ 0-1

Tiviakov Thrashes Kent Chess Players 26-0

by David Lettington



On 27th February Snodland Chess Club were delighted to host three-time Dutch champion Sergei Tiviakov for a simultaneous display against local club players. Fresh off the back of an excellent performance in coming joint first with 7/9 at the Cambridge International Open, Tiviakov was clearly in excellent form.



Sergei Tiviakov in action at Snodland Chess Club

Players from Snodland Chess Club and Medway Chess Club made up over half of the participants, with other players coming from Kent clubs, and one player even making the journey from Nottingham!

The games were played on brand new chess sets which had been purchased thanks to a grant from Kent County Council, with the bid for funding being supported by local Councillor Sarah Hohler, enabling the purchase of 30 chess sets, ten DGT clocks, and a laptop computer for analysis at the club.



Robert Mitchell with Sergei Tiviakov

The event is one of several that the chess club will be organising in 2024 as part of a relaunch of the club after membership numbers began to dwindle post-Covid.

The club were put in touch with Tiviakov through his friend and fellow Russian-speaker FM Steve Giddins, who is a former club member at Snodland and has provided coaching for several members.



Volodymyr Mylovanov – winner of best game

It took Tiviakov only two and a half hours to polish off all of his opponents, and, although a few of the participants put up a good fight, there was only one game where Tiviakov was in any real trouble. That meant that after the

simul there was only one choice for the best game prize, which was awarded by Tiviakov to Volodymyr Mylovanov of Reading Chess Club.

Event organiser David Lettington said 'It was fantastic to have a former World Championship quarter-finalist visit us. It's rare for club players to get the opportunity to face such a strong player over the board. Everyone had a great time, and it's given us a real boost to organise more events and attract more members to the club.'

Further information about the simul and future event announcements will be made here:

www.snodlandchessclub.com

Gosforth Chess Club Supports Alzheimer's Society with Charity Blitz Event by Andrew Burnett

Saturday 2nd March saw Gosforth Chess Club play host to a six-round, 10 minutes per player charity tournament in aid of Alzheimer's Society. A wide-ranging field of players turned up to support the event, covering all ages, unrated to master strength, and representing many local clubs including Forest Hall, Jesmond, Newcastle, Newcastle University, South Shields, Tynemouth and Tynedale.

The random draw saw some big hitters facing off, with Andrew Dunn and Kavin Velmurugan triumphing over FMs Tim Wall and Andrew Burnett respectively.

By the time the final round arrived David Mooney was half a point behind Andrew Dunn, and needed to win to leapfrog his rival. In a tense game he did just that, taking the trophy with 5½/6, half a point clear of Dunn, Burnett and Wall.

The under 1800 trophy went to Marco Checchi with 4 points, and the under 1400 was won by Jere Koskela, while the real winner was Alzheimer's Society, for whom £386.86 was raised.

An enjoyable time was had by all, newcomers to the game and veterans alike.

The club plans two more charity events this year, in May (Homeless) and September (Ukraine). If you have a cause you would like us to support, please mail mickriding@hotmail.co.uk.

To close, here are a couple of games from the tournament:

Burnett, Andrew - Cornwall, Gary [E05]

Gosforth Charity Blitz, 02.03.2024

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.Nf3 Be7 5.g3 0-0 6.Bg2 c5
7.dxc5 dxc4 8.0-0 Bxc5 9.Ne5 Qc7 10.Bf4 Rd8 11.Nxc4
Rxd1 12.Bxc7 Rxa1 13.Rxa1 Na6 14.Bd6 Ne8 15.Bxc5
Nxc5 16.Rd1 Kf8 17.b4 Nd7 18.a4 Rb8 19.Nb5 a6 20.Na7
Ke7 21.a5 Nef6



22.Nd6 1-0

Mohindra, Raj - Burnett, Andrew
Gosforth Charity blitz, 02.03.2024

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.f3 Nc6
7.Be3 Bg7 8.Qd2 0-0 9.0-0-0 d5 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.Nxc6
bxc6 12.Bd4 e5 13.Bc5 Be6 14.Bxf8 Qxf8 15.Nxd5 cxd5
16.Kb1 Rb8 17.c4 Bf5+ 18.Bd3 e4 19.fxe4 dxe4 20.g4 Qa3
21.b3 exd3 22.gxf5



22...Rxb3+ 23.axb3 Qa1# 0-1

NCCU Championship U1850 Yorkshire vs Merseyside Match Report by Steve Westmoreland

Date: Sunday 17th March 1:30 start
Location: The Stumble Inn, Holmbridge



The Stumble is proving a popular venue for Yorkshire and ideal for the match as being close to the Manchester border

Holmfirth can sometimes be horrendous for traffic, and the backlog up Dunford Road caused delays to many Yorkshire players. The Merseyside team was similarly affected by a cycling event in Liverpool. However, the captains and players quickly came to a swift agreement to delay the start of the match to eat the delicious food put on by Diane, the landlady of the Stumble Inn.



Only one sandwich was left in the end - I could not photograph the food quickly enough!

Players engaged well, and it was very friendly atmosphere, with several making arrangements to play a centenary match between Liverpool and Leeds. This was based on a correspondence match held between 1838 and 1841.

We commenced play around 1.30pm, in between bowls of chilli and rather nice sandwiches. This set up the bulk of players well for some lengthy games. This was with the exception of Sanjoy Banerjee who erred early on and lost to Peter Mason. Peter, as the owner of the Stumble Inn was OK, however, as Diane cornered him quickly and took him round the pub to discuss what she wanted doing.



Dave Patrick and Lee Jordan deep in thought

Much later there was a rash of positive results for Yorkshire, including our youngest player and Holmfirth junior Isaac Fossey, age 13. Yorkshire were seemingly cantering towards victory when several players decided to give (acting) captain Steve Westmoreland a near heart attack.

Rob basically froze for a whole hour, whilst Paul went on a complete go slow. Consequently, both players had 5 minutes left on the clock, compared to the hour 20+ minutes on their opponents'. Anxiety levels rose with the watching Yorkies, as both players went into seconds before moving and getting the 10-second increment back. Rob prevailed, and Paul fell.



Handshake between Rob and Shay

There was a huge tussle on board 1 where Alex Burke drew with Phil Ramsey. Alex at 13 has made astounding progress for Holmfirth this season. His rating has moved from 1660 to 1912 since September, and his enthusiasm is fantastic.



Alex and Philip run through their game on the analysis board

It was 5-3 to Yorkshire, with heartbreak and drama hitting the remaining boards in play. Draws and defeats followed, and it all rested on the last game, which Zak Tomlinson was able to convert. 7-5 to Yorkshire, with players retiring downstairs to watch the rest of the FA Cup Final.

Merseyside are a fantastic team, and are always welcome back.

UK Armed Forces Chess Club Show Themselves a Force to be Reckoned With! by Carl Portman and Peter Hornsby



On Monday 18th March a selection of players from the UK Armed Forces (some of whom had travelled considerable distances), including current serving personnel and veterans from the Army, Navy, Royal Air Force and MOD, visited Parliament to play their first ever match against the UK Parliamentary Chess Club. Armed Forces players participated at their own time and expense, so we are very grateful to them for making this match happen.



It was hosted in the prestigious Boothroyd Room in Portcullis House, named after former Speaker Betty Boothroyd. The proceedings began with a warm welcome speech from one of the Deputy Speakers, Rt Hon Nigel Evans MP, who then made the first move of the match.

The UK Parliamentary team was mostly made up of parliamentary staffers, including one who works at Downing Street and another who was thrown into the deep end last minute on work experience, an experience that one would never forget!

Rt Hon Alex Chalk, the Secretary of State for Justice, made his debut on board 3 against chess author and columnist Carl Portman, and three MPs joined him below, along with two members of the House of Lords. International Master Malcolm Pein, who played WO2 Dave Onley, and Chris Fegan, who was engaged in battle against Wg Cdr Glen Parker, made up the top three boards. The top two parliamentary players were selected for the valuable work they do for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Chess.



The match began at 6.30pm, with each player playing two 10+5 rapidplay games back-to-back against the same

opponent. Fortunately there were no votes called, so there were no excuses for anyone to be distracted.

UK Parliamentary Chess Club	8½-19½	UK Armed Forces Chess Club
IM Malcolm Pein	0-2	WO2 David Onley
Chris Fegan	1-1	Wg Cdr Glen Parker
Rt Hon Alex Chalk MP	0-1	Mr Carl Portman
Jamie Njoku-Goodwin	1-0	
Oliver Lawrence	1-1	Off Cdt William Bradley
Lord Trevethin and Oaksey	1-1	Mr Jack Cooney
Griff Simon	1-1	Flt Lt Ben Woolf
Oliver Moorhouse	½-1½	SSgt Jacob Thomas
Lord Dafydd Wigley	2-0	Sgt James Blair
Adam Afriyie MP	0-2	Maj Tristan Searle
Conor Kehoe	1-1	Mr Christopher Peacock
John Baron MP	0-2	PO Michael Weston
James Grundy MP	0-1	Mr Eric Bradley
Annabel Bartlett	0-1	
Chris Waterman	0-1	Sgt Adam Pinnington
Daniela Stuhlmann	0-1	
Luke Dyde	0-1	Capt Edward Malan
Hadley Wells-West	0-1	

The UK Armed Forces Chess Association had picked a team to make it a fair fight at the chess board, and so it proved to be across all but the lower boards. Major Tristan Searle did well to win both his games, as did PO Michael Weston. Special mention must be made of WO2 Onley for beating an international master twice. This is no mean feat!

This was just the fifth fixture the UK Parliamentary Chess Club had played since being relaunched in September after decades of absence, and it was particularly pleasing to see Lord Wigley, co-chair of the APPG for Chess, putting in his best-ever performance by winning both his games. Flt Lt Ben Woolf, as chairman of the UK Armed Forced Chess Association should be congratulated for his hard work in making this match happen, along with Peter Hornsby.

Ultimately the visitors' experience triumphed in the end, convincingly winning by 19½-8½, though chess was the real winner. Afterwards the members of the UK Armed Forces Chess Association were taken for a tour around the Parliamentary Estate, which included watching the live proceedings in the House of Commons and visiting Westminster Hall and St Mary's Undercroft Chapel.

Flt Lt Woolf noted that 'The Armed Forces Chess Association players relished the chance to come and play against the Parliamentary team. Opportunities such as this have a very beneficial effect on retention across the

three services, and we are looking forward to a rematch between our two inextricably linked organisations in the summer.'

Everyone then celebrated at the famous Red Lion pub, and reflected on what had been an enthralling evening which we look forward to repeating again. If you would like to challenge either/both of these teams for a match, please feel free to contact:

Ft Lt Ben Woolf: Ben.Woolf222@mod.gov.uk
Parliamentary Assistant to Mark Eastwood MP: peter.hornsby@parliament.uk

Carl Portman (UK Armed Forces Chess Club) and Peter Hornsby (UK Parliamentary Chess Club captain)

4NCL Update by Jonathan Rogers

Here is my analysis of the state of play in Division 1 after eight rounds. And it is fairly positive!

The pairing system has worked better than last year, with more matches between equally matched teams spread over the season. Only this last weekend consisted of seeded teams beating weaker teams (and then some: 12-0) as opposed to three weekends largely of mismatches as of last year. If there has to be one weekend of mismatches - which there does, if you want two of out of three matches in the final weekend where the seeds play each other, and likewise the non-seeds - then you probably should indeed have it in Telford, which surely is the venue captains dread the most, and where one might therefore want to host a weekend with relatively little at stake.

So far, the disappointment of the season has been White Rose 1, and the positive package has been Alba, even after last weekend's massacre of the non-seeds. This has been helped in some regard by Alba's own win over White Rose 1, which is still the one victory of a non-seed over a seed (that part has not worked out so well, but what can you do? It has not all been massacres, one might add; Oxford, though having lost all their matches, have twice lost only 4½-3½ to two seeded teams. And to two others, alas ...)

We still have a three-way fight for the title: Wood Green on 8/8 (including a win over Shark), with Manx and Sharks on 7/8 (the Sharks having beaten Manx). The race tightened significantly in round 7 when Manx, not exactly noted for piling on the game points against weaker teams in the way that Guildford did, suddenly showed awareness of the table and made 7½-½ against Celtic

Tigers, while Wood Green laboured to 5-3 over White Rose 2. This keeps Manx in the race, insofar as a conceivable 5-3 win over Wood Green in round 10 might suffice, given they have perhaps easier opposition in the other matches (both teams play White Rose, but Manx plays White Rose 2, while Wood Green plays against Blackthorne). But the real beneficiary from a Manx victory over Wood Green in round 10 would be the Sharks, just one game point behind Wood Green as it stands and thus liable to overtake them in that scenario, should they carry on winning. Who, indeed, would be incentivised to stop them? Well, they are yet to play Wood Green 2...

How common are (realistic) three-way races for the title going into the last weekend? Naturally, very uncommon. I might stand to be corrected regarding last season, which I did not follow too closely, but I would go back to 2000/1 and 2002/3. Yes, here comes the history bit.

2000/1 is the closest analogy. Again there was one team on 8/8 (Beeson Gregory, formerly Invicta Home House, etc) and two on 7/8 (Slough and Wood Green, Slough having won their direct encounter but having lost to Beeson), and so again the team on 8/8 (Beeson) had yet to play against perhaps the strongest team of all in the final weekend (Wood Green). But here Beeson had a substantial game points lead too over both teams. and could afford to (and did) lose 3-5 to Wood Green in the last round. This year, Wood Green cannot plan on having that luxury, unless perhaps the Sharks slip up against their own second team in the meantime (they play in round 9).

In 2002/3 again there were three teams in this familiar position: Wood Green on 8/8 (having beaten Barbican) with Guildford and Barbican on 7/8 (Barbican having beaten Guildford). Again, Wood Green had enough game points in the bag to be able to lose to Guildford (in the event, it was drawn, and Barbican had lost ground by losing in round 9, which, as mentioned, is the round of which the Sharks will be very wary).

On the whole, I would still back Wood Green to win, but that is partly precisely because of the Sharks vs Wood Green 2 obstacle, in addition to their own chances of avoiding defeat against Manx.

The relegation battle seems to be between five teams. Oxford are doomed but might still play a role in deciding the fate of others when they play Barnet (ninth), and the teams in tenth and eleventh places (White Rose 2 and Celtic Tigers) are playing each other and either might still hope to overtake Barnet. Blackthorne are not entirely safe, since they are due to play both White Rose 2 and Celtic Tigers, but just one draw from both these matches would surely suffice. This all sounds quite close, but since

round 9 features Oxford vs Barnet and Blackthorne vs Celtic, it is also possible that everything will be quite clear by the end of the next Saturday.

The league table is at the following link:

<https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2023-24/media/4ncl/xtab-div1.html>

I was going to write some reflections on the second division so far as well, on the well-worn theme of its being so much harder to predict than the first division. That is still true, but only in the sense that very many competitions are. This last weekend was in fact remarkably close to the seedings. As in division 1, the six seeds played six non-seeds on both days. Being seeded was not going to help Cambridge with their defaults on two boards on both days (not to mention that many of their missing players were their usual top boards), but if we exclude their two defeats it was 9½/10 for the seeds against the non-seeds.

This does at least make more difference to the table. CSC/Kingston, going into the weekend first on game points from Barbican, are now on third, having lost to Barbican, fielding seven players titled FM or above for the first time since before the pandemic, and Audible Checks. These teams now stand first and second respectively. Also, at the other end of the table Gonzaga's strengthened team finally performed to its seeding and looks determined to make its escape from relegation.

Not only that, but there is much more to play for in division 2 in the final weekend. Whereas for most competitive purposes those placed between fourth and seventh inclusive in division 1 have little left to play for, by contrast everyone is potentially looking up or down in division 2. Both Barbican and Audible Checks should be quietly confident of promotion, but CSC in third place lead Sharks 2 only on game points, and they lead ADs and SchachAttack only by one match point. In fact, Warwickshire Select, currently in seventh place a further match point behind, are not at all out of contention, for they have a good number of game points, have already played the top five teams, and are facing the two bottom markers in the final weekend. A plausible case could be made for any of these five teams claiming third spot with a good/very good final weekend, and only by the end of round 10 is the picture likely to look somewhat clearer.

By contrast, teams in eighth to twelfth positions have relegation to consider. Cambridge 2, in twelfth place, might be happy just for the season to end, but it is not clear which two teams will join them in relegation. Anglia Avengers are most in trouble in eleventh, but they are at least yet to play Cambridge 2, unlike their other rivals, though they will need to win another match too. Sussex

Martlets are in eighth and safer than the others, but, as with all the non-seeds, have two seeded opponents left to play and are only one match point above the team in tenth (Gonzaga). Since most of their matches are very close, even they face a tense final weekend. Cambridge 1 have the strength to stay up if their players are available, but they will need them, and they will need to beat Martlets at the very least, and, given their weak game point count, perhaps Gonzaga too. Gonzaga should be 'too good to go down' on the showing of this past weekend, but they too have tough pairings. Unless the Martlets have a bad final weekend, it is quite likely that Cambridge and Gonzaga will play a last round with relegation facing one of them, and with it a considerable fall from having been in division 1 last year.

I will have some sympathy for those relegated from division 2. Whoever finishes tenth will certainly have been strong enough to have avoided it in most seasons. Against that, in principle it is healthy that a league strengthens, at least when it does so organically rather than because some teams suddenly appear with money, and it is certainly more compact in strength than was the case when there were sixteen teams. I cannot say that I have asked anyone's opinion, but still I doubt that many, except perhaps the relegated, would argue for a return to the 16-team league experiment. The league table is at the following link: <https://www.4nclresults.co.uk/2023-24/media/4ncl/xtab-div2.html>

FEATURES

Benoni Mayhem by Andrew Martin

I've just finished a book on various unusual lines based on the Benoni pawn structure. It has been an eye-opening experience. The book should be out in the summer, and so let me present a few of the games and ideas here to whet the appetite.

5...e5!?

1.d4 g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c5 4.d5 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 e5!?



This is a recent idea, which has been adopted by some pretty strong players. I must admit it is new to me. In a positional sense, the move is logical. Black has ditched his dark-squared bishop, and so tries to erect a blockade on squares of that colour. I worry that White can blow Black away with a quick f2–f4, but the games have not gone in that direction. So: interesting, yes. Permanent, I am doubtful. As a shock weapon in quickplay, certainly. That sums it up for me at this point.

Gharibyan, Mamikon - Shimanov, Aleksandr

Julius Baer Play In Chess.com INT (9.41), 24.07.2023

1.d4 g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.Nc3 c5 4.d5 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 e5 6.h4!?



A move of the modern day, which seems relevant here as Black has no dark-squared cover on the kingside, aside from that provided by his pawns.

6...d6 6...Nf6 is also a move, but runs into 7.Bh6. Unsurprisingly, this is untried. Is Black's position so bad after 7...d6? (7.Bg5!? d6 8.h5 Nbd7 9.hxg6 fxg6 10.Nf3 Qa5 11.Qc2 Ne4! does not look that great for White to me; I am not sure how White intensifies the pressure, and meanwhile Black will get on with developing)

7.h5 g5 8.h6 f6



What an unusual position, and between two strong players. White is challenged to find a way to demolish the wall of pawns in front of him.

9.e4 Ne7 So that Black can block a check on h5.

10.g3 It looks as if White is going to rely on f2–f4.

10...Ng6 11.Qh5 Kd7!? Weirder and weirder, without doubt to run down the enemy clock.

I prefer 11...Qa5! 12.Bd2 Nd7, when White is asked to show how he is going to improve his position. Black's future plan might be ...Nb6, ...Bd7 and ...0–0.

12.f4 gxf4 13.gxf4 exf4 I don't really believe in the attack any more now that Black has control of e5. Black's king can sit quite comfortably on c7.

14.Nh3 Qa5 15.Bd2 Kc7 16.Rg1 Nd7 16...Bxh3 17.Bxh3 Qa4 was not bad either: 18.Bf1 (18.Rxg6!? hxg6 19.Qxg6 Nd7 20.Bxf4 Rag8) 18...Qc2! 19.Qf3 Nd7 Black is better in these lines.

17.Rb1? He has lost the plot.

17.Kf2 f3! 18.Qxf3 Nde5 is still rather nice for Black, but nothing like as nice as the game will be.

17...Qxa2! 18.Qd1 Nde5 19.Kf2 Nxc4 20.Bxc4 Qxc4 21.Nxf4 Qxe4 22.Re1 Qf5



Is it too early to resign?

23.Qh5 23.Qf3 Ne5 24.Qe2 Rg8 could not have looked appealing.

23...Nxf4 24.Re7+ Kd8 25.Qxf5 Bxf5 26.Rbxb7 Nxd5 27.Rg7 c4 Emphasising to White that he has absolutely nothing.

28.Bc1 Rc8 29.Rb5 Be6 30.Ba3 Rc7 31.Rb8+ Bc8 32.Bxd6 Rxg7 33.hxg7 Rg8 34.Bf8 Nc7 0-1



As in many queen pawn games, once the white bishop on c1 leaves home the pawn on b2 becomes a target. 4...Qb6 follows the logic of this variation, in that Black is going for immediate counterplay which he hopes will distract White from trying to bash him flat.

CLARENDON COURT

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5



The Clarendon Court is an opening popularised by GM Jon Levitt, and whimsically named after the block of flats he was living in at the time. The object of this intriguing start to the game is to get off the beaten track as early as possible, forcing opponents to think for themselves, after which anything can happen and often does. The position after 2...f5 is already giving the impression that this is an all or nothing variation. You will have to increase your risk threshold if you want to play the Clarendon Court. Nevertheless, one can only applaud original thinking at the chess board, and we must examine the line with an open mind.

Jelen, Iztok - Tukmakov, Vladimir B

Bled op 16th Bled (6), 1995

1.d4 c5 2.d5 f5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Qb6!

5...Rb1 This is the type of move Black wants to see.

5...h6 6.Bxf6 Qxf6 7.Nf3 g5! 8.e4 g4 9.Nd2 d6 10.Bb5+ Kd8



The machines think White is better, but one can see why many strong players would be happy taking Black. The potential of the dark-squared bishop is considerable.

11.exf5 Bxf5 12.0-0 Bg7 13.Bd3 Nd7 14.Nc4 h5 15.Re1 Rf8 16.Qd2 Bxd3 17.cxd3 Qf4! Well played. A queen exchange would release any grip that White may think he has.

18.Qc2 If 18.Qxf4 Rxf4 19.Ne4 Bd4! 20.Ne3 Ne5 21.Ng5 Kd7 22.Ne6 Rf6 would be a typical sequence, with considerable black counterplay.

18...Ne5 19.Re4 Qf5 20.Ne3 Qg6 20...Qf7 may have been more accurate.

21.b4 cxb4 22.Rbxb4 b6 23.Nb5 Rc8 24.Qb1 a5 25.Rb3 Bh6 26.Nf1?? Black's constant sniping at the white pieces brings a reward. Jelen should have played 26.Nd4! Bxe3

27.Rxe3 Ke8 28.Rxb6 Qf7 29.Rb2 Qxd5 30.Ne2, which is messy, but infinitely preferable to the game.

26...Rc1 Polishes White off, and is surely what Jelen missed.

27.Qxc1 If 27.Qb2 Nf3+.



27...Bxc1 28.Nd4 Ke8 29.Rxb6 Qf6 30.Rb8+ Kd7 31.Rxf8 Qxf8 32.Ne6 Qa8 The pattern of this variation is very clear. if White lets Black get into the game and survive the first ten to fifteen moves, then the black position becomes very playable. Any real gains for White must be made by this stage. 0-1

6...Be5

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.Nc3 exd5 5.cxd5 Bd6 6.e4 Be5!?



I believe it was the Dutch master Gerard Welling who came up with this unusual idea. If not, I stand to be corrected. Is 6...Be5 any good? The bishop will certainly be attacked quite soon, if it hasn't captured on c3 already, and then Black will have to watch out for the usual ideas of: 1) a white kingside pawn storm; 2) a central attack with e4-e5; 3) a white knight coming to c4. displacing the bishop. Against all these methods Black will usually have surprise on his side, and he can claim a solid position for the time being. My instinct tells me that this line is dodgy,

but in the computer age looks mean nothing. It is what works that counts.

Hodysh, Yuriy - Schwab, Rene

Vienna op 14th Vienna (7), 22.08.2003

CALL MY BLUFF! Since one of the main points of 6...Be5 is to set up the threat of ...Bxc3 followed by ...Nxe4, what happens if White ignores the threat?

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.d5 exd5 5.cxd5 Bd6 6.e4 Be5 7.Nf3!?

7...Bxc3+ 8.bxc3 Nxe4?! Black wins this game, but I don't like his position after the pawn grab. White gets a strong attack.

8...d6! is to my mind safer than 8...Nxe4. 9.Bd3 (9.Nd2 avoids the idea of ...Bg4 - Black should respond with 9...Qe7 10.f3 0-0 11.Nc4 Nh5!?).



This is uncharted territory. 9...Bg4! Black must remember he is playing a Benoni structure, where exchanging off the bishop is a good idea. (9...0-0 10.h3 Re8 also comes into consideration) 10.h3 Bxf3 11.Qxf3 Nbd7 12.Bf4 Qe7 13.0-0 (13.Qg3 Nxe4) 13...0-0 14.Rfe1 Ne5.



This does not seem too bad for Black.

9.Bd3 Nf6 9...f5? is horrible: 10.Bxe4 fxe4 11.Bg5 Qa5 12.0-0 (12.Nd2) 12...d6 13.Nd2 0-0 14.Nxe4 Qc7 15.Re1.



This is the best Black can do, but there can be no doubt about White's advantage in development.

10.d6! 10.Qe2+ Qe7 11.Qxe7+ Kxe7 12.0-0 d6 13.Re1+ Kd7 14.Bb5+ Kc7 15.Re7+ is also better for White, but keeping the queens on is appealing.

10...0-0 11.0-0 h6? I can understand that 11...Nc6 12.Bg5 h6 13.Bh4 does not seem attractive to Black, but 11...h6 is a blunder which White fails to take advantage of.

12.Bf4 12 Bf4 is good, but 12.Bxh6! gxh6 13.Qd2:



... is much stronger, putting the boot in, with the black queenside looking on. Play should proceed 13...Kg7 14.Nh4 Rh8 15.Qf4 Nc6 16.Rae1 and White has a crushing attack. One line might run: 16...a5 17.Nf5+ Kf8 18.Nxh6 Ra6. Try to find another move! 19.Re7! Nxe7 20.Qxf6:



... winning immediately.

12...Nc6 13.Qd2 Nd5 Since Black cannot now stop Bxh6, he tries to prepare for the onslaught as best he can.

14.Bxh6 Qf6 15.Bg5 Qxc3 16.Qe2 Ndb4 17.Be4 17.Bf5.

17...b6 18.Rac1 Ba6! Resourceful.

19.Bh7+ 19.Rxc3 Bxe2 20.Re1 Nxa2 21.Ra3 Bxf3 22.Rxf3 Nab4 23.Be7 a5 is not 100% clear.

19...Kh8 20.Qd1 Qb2 21.Bf5 Be2



Black has shown the required ingenuity to get out of a tight situation.

22.Rb1 Bxd1 23.Rxb2 Bxf3 24.gxf3 Nd4 25.Be4 Nbc6 26.Be7 Rfe8 27.Bd5 Kg8 28.Re1 Rac8 29.f4 Nxe7 30.dxe7 d6 0-1

7 Nf3 is clearly playable, but not the first idea to come to mind. I recommend snapping off the knight on c3 and following with 8...d6.

Endgames All Club Players Should Know by Glenn Flear



Queen Endgames

Some modern endgame series don't even consider them, but a case can certainly be made for having some general background knowledge about queen endgames.

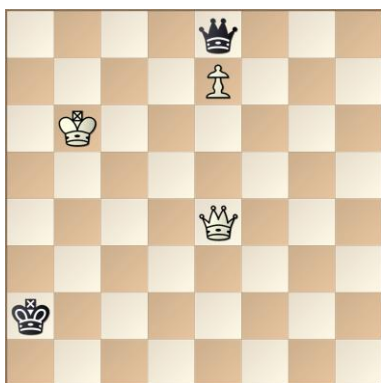
True, endgames with one queen apiece are by no means the most common (2-3%

of all games) but having some general knowledge is useful. It's handy to have some pointers in the case of a potential simplification from the middlegame, or in pawn endgames where there are races involved.

Here are some general considerations that will become more evident when one plays through the examples that follow:

1. Passed pawns can be very powerful, especially when well supported by a queen.
2. A centralized queen is often highly influential and helps limit the opposing queen.
3. A series of disruptive checks is often the only defensive attempt, so perpetual check is often the main aim of the defender.
4. The attacking king needs some sort of shelter, even if this means a long walk to get there!
5. If there are potential passed pawns, then it's often the relative threat of these pawns that matters, not the pawn count.
6. Tactical considerations are commonplace with such powerful pieces remaining on the board. So keep looking out for tricks and traps!

The most natural place for us to begin is the case of Q + P vs Q. Inevitably with such an open board perpetual check can be on the cards, so the player seeking victory needs to be on the look-out for potential king shelters. It seems that the closer the pawn is to the centre the greater the winning chances, as it's easier for the stronger side to hide their king when there is ample room on both sides of the pawn.



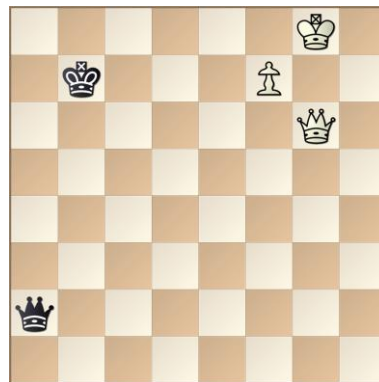
Black to play and give a few checks, but White ultimately wins.

1...Qb8+ 2.Kc5 Qc7+ 3.Kd4 Qb6+ 4.Ke5! But not 4.Kd3 Qb1+!= when there would be no escaping the checks.

4...Qb2+ 5.Kf4 Qf2+ Or **5...Qc1+ 6.Kg3 Qg5+ 7.Kf2.**

6.Kg4 Qg1+ 7.Kh3!+- Strangely enough the white king finds a refuge a long way from the pawn, but this becomes possible when the queen is well centralized and thus covers a large number of squares.

Stepushin - Malishev



Despite a highly favourable looking situation (white queen centralized, pawn on the seventh, and king sheltering from checks) it can still be a laborious process to get the pawn going that final step to promotion. So some 'wriggling' is required.

1.Qe4+ Ka7 If **1...Kc8** then **2.Kg7** e.g. **Qb2+ (2...Qa1+ 3.Kh7) 3.Kg6 Qb6+ 4.Kh7** and the checks run out.

2.Qc6 Possible seems to be **2.Kg7 Qb2+ 3.Kg6 Qb6+ 4.Kh7 Qc5 5.Qf3!**, another way to make progress.

2...Kb8 Or if **2...Qb3** then **3.Qc5+ Ka8 4.Qa5+ Kb7 5.Qe5.**

3.Qf3 Kc7 After **3...Qe6** then the following sequence seems convincing: **4.Qf4+ Ka7 5.Kg7 Qd7 6.Qe4 Qc7 7.Qa4+ Kb8 8.Qb3+ Ka7 9.Kg8.**

4.Kg7 Qb2+ 5.Kg6 Qb6+ 6.Kh5 Qc5+ 7.Kg4 Qf8 8.Qf5 Qb4+ The alternatives **8...Qg7+ 9.Kh5 Qh8+ 10.Kg6** (no checks!) **10...Qf8 11.Qf6**, or **8...Kd8 9.Kh5 Ke7 10.Kg6** don't work either. There is nothing Black can do to turn the tide.

9.Kh5 With no further useful checks available, Black's queen is forced to return to the blockading square.

9...Qf8 10.Qf4+ Controlling some key squares.

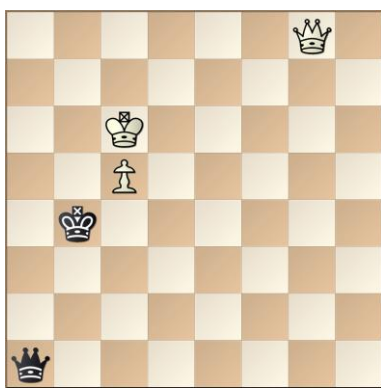
10...Kd7 Black cannot hold by staying where he is: **10...Kb7 11.Kg6 Ka8 12.Qf6 Kb7 13.Kh7 Ka8 14.Qg7** etc.

11.Kg6 Ke6 Neither 11...Kc6 12.Qh6 Qd6+ 13.Kg7 nor 11...Kc8 12.Qf6 Kd7 13.Kh7 are any better. In the second variation Black has to move his king away from the pawn with 13...Kc7, whereupon 14.Qg7 follows.

12.Qf6+ Kd5 13.Kh7 1-0The decisive Qg7 is coming.

I've only scratched the surface with my examination of the alternatives, as there are often multiple checks available. In a practical game the same applies to a player: one can't analyse everything! So at times the most pragmatic approach is to place one's pieces on good squares, have a possible shelter or two in mind, and ride out the storm of checks! Here's another example:

Velimirovic, D – Marjanovic, S
Vrbas 1982



In this case the first thing to do is push Black's king away from the pawn.

63.Qb8+ Kc4 64.Qb5+ Kc3 65.Kb7 Qh1+ 66.c6 Qe4 67.Qc5+ Kd2 68.Ka7! Qa4+ 69.Kb6 Qb3+ 70.Ka5 Qa2+ 71.Kb5 There are no decent checks available.

71...Qa8 72.c7 Qc8 Now the next stage of White's plan is notable. He has to find the right spot for his king to be able to prepare for promotion without giving any chance of a perpetual. Or 72...Qb7+ 73.Ka5 Qa8+ 74.Kb6 Qc8 75.Qc6, with Ka7 and Qb7 coming.

73.Kb4 Ke1 74.Qc1+ Kf2 75.Ka3 Where is the king going?

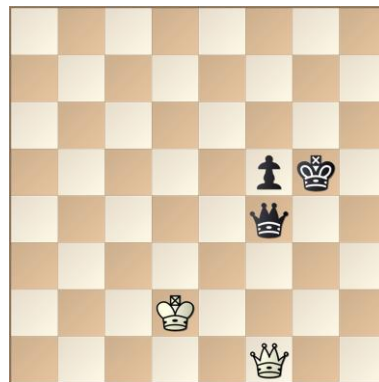
75...Kg3 Another try is 75...Qa6+ 76.Kb2 Qb7+ 77.Ka1 Qa6+ 78.Kb1 Qc8 (after 78...Qb7+ there is the 'cross-check' 79.Qb2+) 79.Qc2+ Kg3 80.Kc1! (amazingly, there are no checks to a king posted on c1!) 80...Kf4 81.Qc6! Ke5 (or 81...Ke3 82.Qb6+ Kd3 83.Qb8 Qa6 84.c8=Q, and Black's checks soon run out) 82.Kd2 Kf5 83.Qd5+ Kg6 84.Qd8.

76.Qc4 Kh2 77.Qc2+ Kg3 78.Kb2 Kf4 79.Kc1 Again a key square.

79...Ke5 80.Qc6 Kd4 81.Qd6+ Ke3 82.Qd8 Qa6 83.Qd2+ The immediate 83.c8=Q is also winning.

83...Ke4 84.Qc2+ Kf4 85.c8=Q 1-0

Szabo, L – Reshevsky, S
Dallas 1957



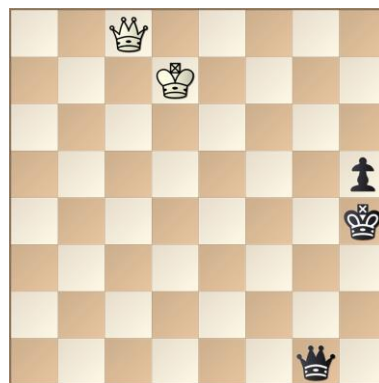
In the case where the defending king can get in front of the pawn potential pawn endgames are often drawn; hence a draw can be a quite straightforward affair.

1.Ke2 Qe4+ 2.Kf2 Kh4 3.Qd1 Qf4+ 4.Qf3 Qh2+ 5.Kf1 f4 6.Qg2 Qg3 7.Qf2 Kh3 8.Qe2 ½-½

The endgame of Q and h-pawn vs Q is often considered as a dead draw. However, the truth is that it can be a tricky affair for the defender when the opponent can avoid an immediate perpetual, especially when there is a risk of a cross-check coming in somewhere.

One of the main problems, when defending in such situations is what to do with one's king. Here is a case of a strong grandmaster going astray.

Gligoric, S – Timman, J
Bugojno 1980



61.Qc3 Qg3 62.Qc1 62.Qf6+=.

62...Qg4+ 63.Kc7 Qg7+ 64.Kb6 Qf6+ 65.Ka7 Qe5 66.Qg1 66.Kb6=.

66...Kh3 67.Qh1+ 67.Qg6=.

67...Kg4 68.Qd1+ Kf4 69.Qf1+ Kg5 70.Qg2+ Kf6 71.Qf3+ Ke7 72.Qa3+ Qd6 73.Qf3 White could also opt for 73.Qe3+ Kd8 74.Ka8 (or 74.Qf2).

73...Qd4+ 74.Kb7 h4 75.Qh5 Kd6 76.Qg6+ Kc5 77.Qc6+ Kb4 78.Qg2 Qc4 79.Kb6 Qc5+ 80.Kb7 Qd4 81.Kc6 Qc3+ 82.Kd7 I think that the defending king should be as far away as possible from the passed pawn in order not to get in the way of one's own queen when giving checks, but also to reduce the risk of a black queen intervention giving a countering check (a 'cross-check'). For the record, however, several king moves still draw with best play: 82.Kb6=; 82.Kb7=; 82.Kd5=.

82...Qd3+ 83.Ke6 83.Kc6=.

83...h3 84.Qh2 Kc3 85.Qe5+? 85.Kf6=; 85.Kf7=.

85...Kc2? The computer demonstrates a win starting with 85...Kd2!. The process involves a number of wriggly ideas that may seem to be beyond human limits(!) in terms of calculation: 86.Qb2+ Kd1 87.Qa1+ Ke2 88.Qb2+ Kf3 89.Qf6+ Ke3 90.Qh6+ Ke2 91.Qh8 Qa3 92.Kd5 Kd2 93.Qh4 Qc3 94.Qf2+ Kd3 95.Qh4 Ke2 96.Ke6 Qc6+ 97.Ke5 Qc5+ 98.Ke6 Qc3 99.Qh5+ Qf3 100.Qb5+ Kf2 101.Qb8 Qg4+ 102.Kd5 Kg2 103.Qb2+ Kg3 104.Qe5+ Qf4 105.Qg7+ Kf3 106.Qc3+ Kg4, and ...h2 is coming.

86.Qh2+? 86.Qf4!= is the only drawing move.

86...Kd1 87.Qh1+ Kd2 88.Kf6 Qe3? Better options are 88...Qd6+ or 88...Qg3 89.Qd5+ Ke1 90.Qe4+ Kf1 91.Qb1+ Kg2 92.Ke7 h2, which should both do the trick.

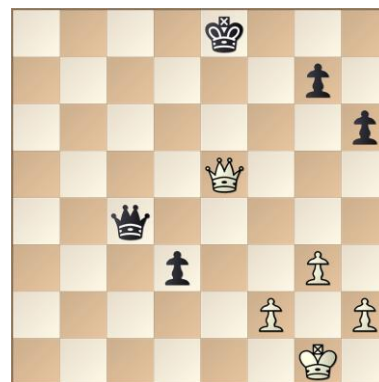
89.Kf5? The white king turns out to be badly placed on the f-file. Correct is 89.Qh2+! Ke1 90.Kg7 Qf3 91.Kh8.

89...Qf2+ 90.Ke5 Qe1+ 0-1

The defender can be ground down by the need to be precise at all times. One mistake and the attacker gets his way!

Najoukas, J – Flear, G

Blackpool 1982



The following example should be a draw, but I was able to gain the full point by walking down the board and taking my king to near the passed pawn. Such king walks are often necessary in order to try and eliminate any nuisance checks.

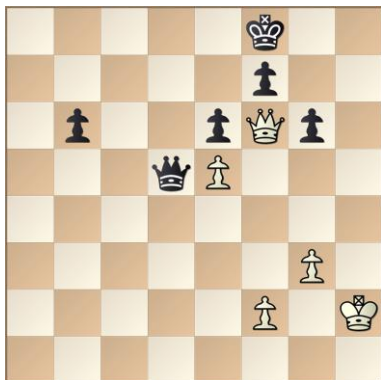
40...Kf7 41.Qd6 Qc3 42.Qd7+ Kf6 43.Qd6+ Kf7 44.Qd7+ Kg6 45.Qe6+ Qf6 46.Qe8+ Kf5 47.Qb5+ Ke4 48.Qc4+?! 48.Qb7+! stops any further forward advance.

48...Qd4 49.Qc6+ Qd5 50.f3+? More robust is the following: 50.Qg6+ Kf3! 51.Qxg7 d2 52.Qc3+ Ke2 53.Qe3+ Kd1 54.Qc3 Qe6 55.Qd3 Qa2 56.Kg2 Kc1 57.Qc3+ Kb1 58.Qb4+ Qb2 59.Qe4+ Kc1, but Black is still getting close to being able to promote.

50...Kd4 51.Qa4+ Ke3 52.Qe8+ Kxf3 53.Qf8+ Ke2 54.Qf2+ Kd1 55.Qf1+ Kc2 56.Qf4 d2 57.Qa4+ Qb3 58.Qe4+ Kb2 59.Qe2 Kc1 0-1

Here's another case of me walking my king to victory. In such endgames passed pawns are particularly powerful, as they can be shepherded forward by a queen without any assistance from a king. In this particular example I gave back my pawn advantage in order to enter a race where my passed pawn was the further advanced and thus the more dangerous. Having a strong passed pawn is often more important than the pawn count.

Rath, U – Flear, G
Esbjerg 1982



39.Qh8+ Ke7 40.Qf6+ Ke8 41.Qh8+ Kd7 42.Qf6 Kc6!
43.Qxf7 Qxe5 44.Qxg6 b5 Equal pawns, but the b-pawn is easier to get moving.

45.Qc2+ Qc5 46.Qe2 Qc4 A handy square to protect both pawns, and covering the king whilst preparing the advance of the b-pawn.

47.Qf3+ Kd6 48.g4 b4 49.Qf8+ Ke5 50.Kg3 b3 51.g5 Qc2
Now White just has to give checks, as the b-pawn is only two steps from touchdown.

52.Qf6+ Kd5 53.Qd8+ Kc4 54.Qc7+ Kd3 The e-pawn is sacrificed for the good of the team!

55.Qd6+ Kc3 56.Qe5+ Kd2 57.Qe3+ Kd1



Any part of the board will do if it means the checks are brought to an end!

58.Kg2? A 'nothing' move that costs valuable time. White can still save himself with 58.Qd4+! Kc1 (58...Ke1 59.Qe5+ Kf1 60.Qa1+ Ke2 61.Qe5+) 59.Qe3+ Kb1 60.Qe1+! Ka2 61.Qa5+ Kb2 62.Qe5+ Qc3+, and now the cunning 63.Kf4! leads to another queen endgame: 63...Qxe5+ 64.Kxe5 Kc1 65.g6 b2 66.g7 b1=Q 67.g8=Q Qb2+ 68.Kd6=.

58...b2 59.Qd4+ Kc1 60.Qf4+ Kb1 61.Qg4 Qc6+ 62.Kh2 Ka2 63.Qe2 Qd6+ 64.Kg2 Ka1 There are no checks of any worth.

65.Qe1+ b1=Q 66.Qa5+ Kb2 67.Qb5+ Ka2 68.Qa4+ Qa3 69.Qc4+ Qbb3 70.Qe2+ Kb1 71.Qe4+ Ka2 72.Qe2+ Qab2 73.Qa6+ Kb1 74.Qf1+ Qc1 0-1

In the next example the winning plan goes through a number of stages. At first the queen does all the hard work and the attacker's king is kept well covered, but later it needs to find a new shelter near the passed pawn.

Cuijpers, F – Flear, G
Ramsgate



37.Qe3 b6 If Black can use his majority to create a passed pawn on the queenside while keeping his kingside intact, then he would be well on the way to victory. This explains the first part of Black's plan. One could also consider 37...h5!? (just as in many endgames) to ensure a sound structure, plus some extra room for the king, as it may later be content to have access to the h7-square to escape checks.

38.Qc3+ Qe5 39.Qf3+ Kg7 40.g4 b5 41.Kg2 b4 The reasons behind this choice will become clear a few moves later. Otherwise, 41...a5 42.h4 h6 43.h5 g5 also looks promising, with ...a4 being threatened.

42.Qc6 h6 43.Qc4 a5 44.Qc6 Qc3! 45.Qd5 If 45.Qa4 Black has 45...Qb2 46.h4 Qa3.

45...a4! Creating an advanced passed pawn.

46.bxa4 b3 47.a5 b2 48.Qb5 Qc2 Only now does Black relinquish his control of the long diagonal.

49.Qe5+ Kf8 50.Qh8+ Ke7 51.Qe5+ Kd7 52.Qd5+ Kc7 The number of pawns is hardly important; it's finding a way to escape checks that counts.

53.Qxf7+ Kd6 54.Qf8+ Kd5 55.Qd8+ Kc4 56.Qc7+ Kb3 57.Qb7+ Ka2 58.Qd5+ Qb3 59.Qd2 Ka3 60.Qd6+ Qb4 61.Qd3+ Ka2 White could have played on, but after 62.Qd5+ Qb3 63.Qd2 Qc4!, and ...Ka1 is such a strong threat that White has to try 64.a6 Qxa6 65.Qd5+ Ka1 66.Qd4 Qc6+ 67.Kh2 Ka2 68.Qa7+ Kb1 69.Qe7 Qc4, and White is running out of defensive resources. 0-1

Flear, G – Gofshtein, L
Montpellier 1998

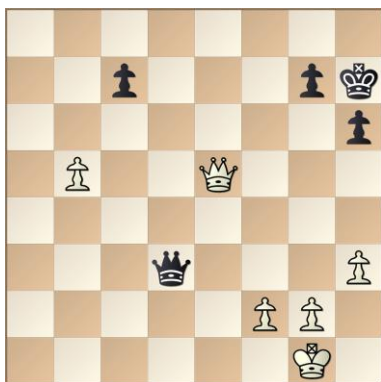


Zugzwang is an important weapon in all endgames, but we sometimes forget that it can still be the case with powerful queens patrolling the board. Here I was on the receiving end!

44.Qxc7 Qb4! If the king moves Black captures on a4 with check, whereas if the queen moves it can't keep its eye on both c4 and d6.

45.Qc8 Qxa4 46.Qg4 Qb4 47.Qd4+ Ka6 48.Qd3 Qc5 49.Kd2 a4 50.Kd1 Ka5 51.Qc3+ Qb4 52.Qd4 b6 0-1

Praggnanandhaa, R – Flear, G
Hastings 2017



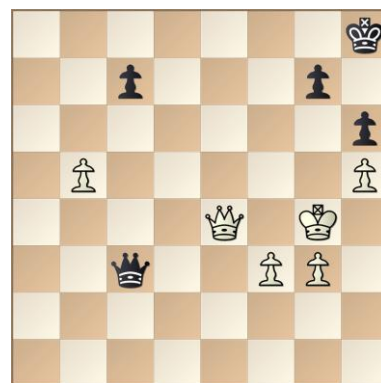
When defending a pawn down it's best (if possible!) to stay reasonably active with the queen, and generally to hide the king as best as possible. Here I was able to save my skin against the future superstar by staying vigilant.

44.Kh2 Qc2 45.f3 Qc1 46.Kg3 Qd2 47.Qe4+ If 47.Qxc7 then 47...Qg5+ 48.Kh2 Qxb5, with a likely draw.

47...Kh8 48.Qe8+ Kh7 49.Qe5 Kh8!? Sometimes the best defensive approach is just to wait and see, especially when the queen seems to already be on a pretty good square. Even so, 49...Qd7 is a reasonable alternative.

50.h4 Qd7 51.Kh2 Kh7 52.h5 Kh8 53.Qc5 Qe8 54.Qd5 Qf8 55.Kg3 Qf6 56.Kh3 Qb2 57.Qc6 Kh7 58.Qc4 After 58.Qxc7 Qxb5 the drawing chances again seem quite high.

58...Kh8 59.Qc6 Kh7 60.g3 Qb3 61.Qe4+ Kh8 62.Qe8+ Kh7 63.Kg4 Qc3 64.Qc6 Qd2 65.Qc5 Kh8 66.Qf8+ Kh7 67.Qe7 Qc3 68.Qe4+ Kh8



69.f4? The best winning chance seems to be 69.Qc6! Qb4+ (or 69...Qe5 70.Qa8+ Kh7 71.Qe4+) 70.Kf5 Qe7 71.g4!, and White can eventually approach the c-pawn with his king.

69...Qb3 70.Qe8+ Kh7 71.Qd7 Kh8 But not 71...Qc3? in view of the trap 72.Qf5+ Kh8 73.Qc8+ Kh7 74.b6!.

72.Qc8+ Kh7 73.Qf5+ Kh8 74.Qd7 Kh7 75.f5 Qe3 76.Kh3 Qe4 77.Qxc7 Qxf5+ 78.Kg2 Qxb5 ½-½

Flear, G – Renet, O
Clichy 1993



Here I decided to sacrifice the exchange to have a simpler life.

34.Rxg5!? Qxg5 35.Qe4! The centralized queen and strong passed pawn ensure that White should be fine here, despite his material disadvantage.

35...Kh6 Black could have settled for a draw with **35...Qg1+ 36.Kd2 Qf2+ 37.Kd1=.**

36.d7 Qf6 It's the last chance for **36...Qg1+ 37.Kd2 Qf2+ 38.Qe2 Qd4+ 39.Qd3 Qb2+ 40.Ke1 Qe5+ (40...Qa1+?? 41.Qd1+→) 41.Kf2 Qb2+,** and Black has a draw by perpetual check.

37.Qd5! Now the strong queen is able to thwart Black's attempts at earning a draw.

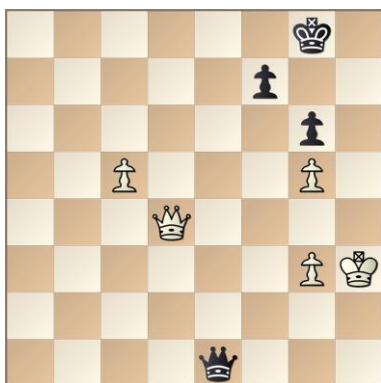
37...Qb2+ 37...Qd8 instead is too passive, and fails to **38.Qf7!** followed by **Qe8.**

38.Kd1 Qb1+ 39.Ke2 Qc2+ 40.Qd2 Qc4+ 41.Kf2 1-0

A word of warning! When embarking on a king walk, be aware that there can be some tactical problems along the way. Here is a classic example:

Borisenko - Simagin

Moscow 1955



1...Qf1+ 2.Kg4? White seeks to get his king over to the other wing. The less ambitious **2.Kh2 Qe2+ 3.Kh3 Qf1+** would be drawn. Black's next move must have come as a shock, to say the least!

2...f5+!! 3.gxf6 Qf5+ 4.Kh4 Qh5# So never underestimate the potential of the opponent's queen!

Here is one of my favourite queen endgames, which demonstrates that the stronger side sometimes has to be quite creative in finding shelter for his king!

Schlechter, C – Pillsbury, H

Vienna 1898



36.Qd1 The king and pawn endgame is lost, so White has to retreat.

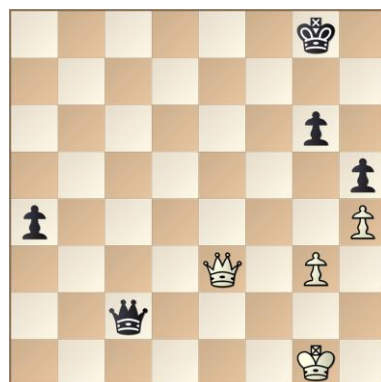
36...Qf2 37.Qa1 Qe3 38.Qa3 Kf6 39.c4 The startling **39.d4!!** would enable White to activate more easily.

39...bxc4 40.dxc4 Qc1+ 41.Kh2 Qxc4 42.Qf3+ Ke7 43.Qg4 Qf1 44.Qc8 Qf4+ 45.Kh1 Qxe4 46.Qxc5+ Kf6 47.Qf8+ Kg5 48.Qe7+ Kh6 49.Qf8+ Kg5 50.Qe7+ Kh6 51.Qf8+ Kg5 52.Qe7+ Kf4 The best chance to avoid a draw.

53.Qh4+ Ke3 54.Qe1+ Kd4 55.Qc3+ Kd5 56.Qa5+ Ke6 57.Qa6+ Kf7 58.Qa7+ Kg8 The checks are about to run out.

59.Qe7 Qf4 60.Qd7 h5 61.Qb7 Qd4 Pillsbury maintains his centralized queen, as from here it's influencing play on both fronts.

62.Kh2 e4 63.Qe7 e3 64.h4 Qxb2 65.Qxe3 Qb8+ 66.g3 Qb2+ 67.Kg1 Qb1+ 68.Kh2 Qc2+ 69.Kg1



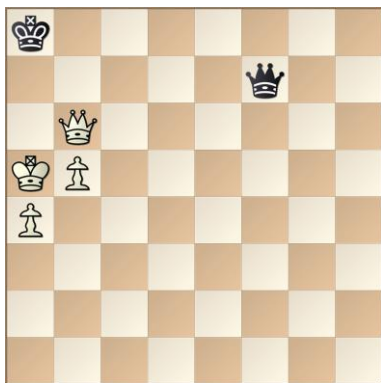
69...Kf7! The king walk that follows is surprisingly difficult to defend against.

70.Kh1 Kf6 71.Kg1 Kf5 72.Qg5+ The correct **72.Qd4!** would clip Black's wings!

72...Ke6 73.Qa5 Kd6 74.Kh1 Kc6 75.Qd8 Kb5 76.Qb8+ Kc4
 77.Qc7+ Kb3 78.Qb6+ Ka2 79.Qe6+ Ka1 80.Qe3 After
 80.Qf6+ Ka2 81.Qe6+ Qb3 82.Qe2+ Ka1 83.Qe5+ Qb2
 Black shields his king from checks.

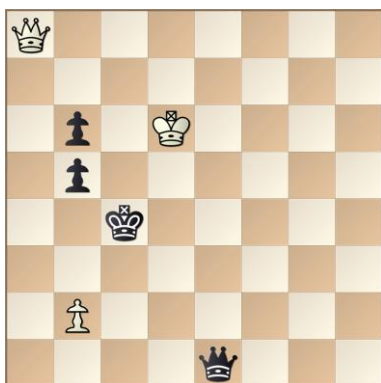
80...Qb2 81.Kg1 a3 82.Kh1 a2 83.Kg1 Kb1 84.Qe4+ Qc2
 85.Qb4+ Kc1 86.Qf4+ Qd2 87.Qc4+ Kd1 88.Qa4+ Ke2
 89.Qa6+ Ke3 90.Qe6+ Kd4 91.Qd6+ Kc3 92.Qa3+ Kc4
 93.Qa4+ Kc5 94.Qa7+ Kd6 95.Qb8+ Ke7 96.Qe5+ Kf7
 97.Qc7+ Kg8 98.Qc4+ Kg7 And the king returns to the safe
 square on h6. 0-1

Exercise 1



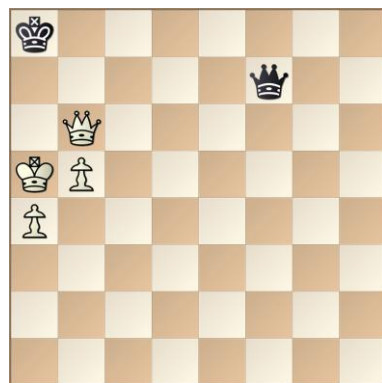
Black to play can still draw. Can you see how?

Exercise 2



Although it may seem unlikely, White to play can eke out a win!

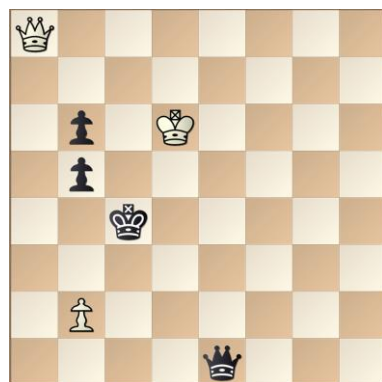
Exercise 1 (answer)



1...Qc7! Stalemate occurs if White captures, whereas after:

2.Ka6 Qc8+ 3.Ka5 Qc7 Black repeats.

Exercise 2 (answer)



In Kubbel's study White has a dramatic way forwards:

1.Qd5+! Kb4 2.Qd3! Black is in Zugzwang. There are no satisfactory checks, and his king is amazingly in a mating net!

2...Qc1 Or if 2...Qa1 then 3.Qc3+ Ka4 4.b3+ etc.

3.Qa3+ Kc4 4.b3+ Black's queen is lost.

Great British Chess Players

by John Nunn



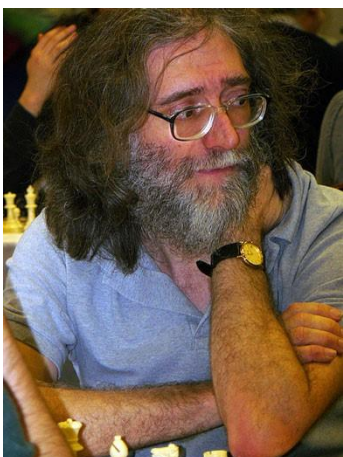
Jonathan Mestel (1957-)

Andrew Jonathan Mestel was born on 13th March 1957 into an academic family, his father being a professor of astrophysics. He showed chess talent from an early age and in 1974

won the World Cadet Championship (under 18) by a margin of 1½ points, although the title was unofficial in those days. His ascent to higher levels was rapid, and in 1976 he won the British Championship, starting the tournament with nine consecutive victories.

Jonathan became a grandmaster in 1982, and further British Championship titles followed in 1983 and 1988.

He was a member of the English Olympiad team from 1976 to 1988, only missing 1986 when the event was held in Dubai and Israel was excluded. Jonathan's best result was in 1984, when he gained the gold medal for the best performance on first reserve board. In recent years he has not been very active, although he has often played in the 4NCL.



Jonathan Mestel – picture by Meri Grigoryan

In parallel to his over the board career, he has been one of Britain's top chess problem solvers for several decades, winning the British Championship a record 18 times. He was world problem-solving champion in 1997, gaining the solving GM title, and was a member of the successful British solving team which won the World Team Championship three years consecutively from 2005 to 2007.

In addition to his chess activities, Jonathan is also a grandmaster at bridge, and I suspect his triple grandmaster title is unique. He has also had a successful academic career and is a professor of applied mathematics at Imperial College, London, with a speciality of magnetohydrodynamics. When he told me this was his research area, I said 'Oh, like the Earth's magnetic field', but he replied 'Oh no, those are **weak** magnetic fields. I deal in **strong** magnetic fields.'

He has always had a fondness for developing his bishop at g7 with Black, and along with Tony Miles helped advance the theory of the Dragon Sicilian in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In line with this, he has also regularly played the King's Indian Defence with Black, as in the following game against the then US champion. It was one of the most exciting and unpredictable games I have ever witnessed at a chess Olympiad.

Lev Alburt - Jonathan Mestel

Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984

King's Indian Defence

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.e4 d6 5.Be2 0-0 6.Bg5

The Averbakh Variation, still a dangerous line against the King's Indian.

6...Nbd7 7.Qd2 e5 8.d5 Nc5 9.Bf3

This continuation was briefly popular in the 1980s, but today 9.f3 is practically the only move employed.

9...a5 10.0-0 Bd7 11.h4

The idea of Bf3 is to use the bishop to support an h4-h5 push, but Mestel's simple reply crosses this plan.

11...h5

Now White must perform an extensive reorganisation of his forces to prepare g4, the only effective way to make further progress on the kingside.

12.Nge2 a4

Black edges forward with his queenside counterplay.

13.Ng3

Black must take care, as White is threatening the dangerous piece sacrifice 14.Bxh5 gxh5 15.f3!.

13...Kh7 14.Be2

Now 14.Bxh5 gxh5 15.f3 (15.Nxh5 Nxh5 16.Bxd8 Raxd8 followed by ...Bh6 gives Black a clear advantage, as here the three active pieces are worth more than a queen and two pawns) fails to 15...Qe8 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Nxh5 Be7, and White lacks Qh6.

14...Qe8



Black cannot make more progress on the queenside directly, so he prepares ...f5, which is also useful against White's kingside activity.

15.f3 Ng8 16.Nf1?

Too casual; White wants to play g4, but Black is well prepared to meet this. 16.Nb5, targeting the c7-pawn, would have maintained the balance.

16...f5 17.g4 f4?!

Even this favours Black, but the strongest continuation was 17...fxg4 18.fxg4 Nf6! 19.gxh5 (19.Bxf6 Rxf6 20.gxh5 Bh6 21.Ne3 gxh5 leaves White horribly pinned) 19...Nfxe4 20.Nxe4 Nxe4 21.Bd3 Nxd2 22.Bxg6+ Kg8 23.Bxe8 Nb3+ 24.axb3 Bxe8, and Black's active pieces give him a substantial advantage.

18.Nh2 Nh6 19.Kb1 Nf7

The elimination of White's dark-squared bishop usually favours Black in the King's Indian.

20.Rdg1 Rh8!

To support the h5-pawn after a possible ...Nxg5 and ...Kg8.

21.Bf1 Nxg5?!

There was no need to rush with this, as the bishop wasn't going anywhere. 21...Kg8 was better.

22.gxh5 gxh5 23.hxg5

23.Rxg5 Bf6 24.Rgg1 Rg8 gives Black a huge advantage, as White's kingside minor pieces have no active prospects.

23...Kg6



The position is again roughly equal. White has few active ideas, but it's also very difficult for Black to make progress.

24.Bg2?

The bishop isn't doing anything here. White should have transferred his queen to h4, with the aim of exchanging his bad bishop by Bh3.

24...Qc8

For the moment neither side seems able to hit on a good plan. Black could have stepped up his dark-squared pressure by ...Qb8-a7-b6.

25.Qf2 Ra6 26.Bf1 Rb6 27.Nb5 Qd8 28.Be2 Bc8 29.Rd1 Rh7 30.Qh4 Bf8 31.Rdg1 Qe7 32.Kc2 c6 33.Nc3 Qf7 34.Bf1 Bd7 35.Be2 Be7

Black finally starts to make progress. The idea is the eventual transfer of the bishop to d8 and then b6 or a5.

36.Nf1 Qg8 37.Nd2 Qa8 38.Bf1 Qc8 39.Kb1?!

Once again White's leisurely manoeuvres fail to consider the time element. Now was the moment for 39.Bh3, which would have led to a roughly equal position. It's possible Albur was worried about losing the g-pawn, but this is never a worry; for example, after 39...Bxh3 40.Rxh3 Qd8 41.Rgh1 Bxg5?? 42.Rg1 White is winning, as Black is in an unbreakable pin.

39...Bd8 40.Be2?

After another slow move the balance starts to tip in Black's favour. 40.a3 Ra6 41.Ne2! was correct, when Black

must take care, since the obvious 41...Ba5?? loses to 42.Nxf4+! exf4 43.Qxf4 with a decisive attack.

40...Ra6 41.Bd1?

41.a3 Ba5 42.Rc1 would have been just slightly better for Black.



41...Ba5 42.Kc2 b5

Strong, but 42...a3! 43.b3 Bxc3 44.Kxc3 b5 would have been immediately decisive, as White's king is hopelessly exposed.

43.dxc6 Bxc6 44.Nd5

Alburt finds the only way to play on.

44...Bxd5 45.exd5 bxc4

Black must be careful; for example, 45...Qf5+ 46.Ne4 Nxe4?? 47.fxe4 Qxe4+ 48.Kc1 is fine for White due to the threat of Bc2, although in this line the rather complicated 46...bxc4 47.Kb1 Rb6 48.Bc2 a3 still wins for Black.

46.Nxc4 Qf5+ 47.Kc1 Nd3+

It looks all over, but there are some surprises to come!

48.Kb1 Nxb2+?

Going for a brilliant finish, but 48...Nb4+ 49.Ka1 a3! 50.Nxa3 Bb6 was the cleanest winning line, since after ...Bd4 and possibly ...Nd3 Black has an overwhelming attack.

49.Kxb2?

The sort of move you play without thinking, but the surprising 49.Bc2! Nd3 50.Rd1 e4 (50...Rb7+? only draws after 51.Nb2 Rxb2+ 52.Ka1 Rxa2+ 53.Kxa2 Nb4+ 54.Ka1 Nxc2+ 55.Ka2 Nb4+) 51.fxe4 Rb7+ 52.Bb3! Qg4 53.Rxd3 would have offered considerable resistance.



49...Rb6+! 50.Nxb6 a3+!

A beautiful finishing combination, or it should have been!

51.Kxa3

51.Kc1 Rc7+ mates.

51...Bxb6?

In time-trouble it's easy to make mistakes in such a complicated position. The winning line was 51...Qd3+! 52.Bb3 Bxb6 53.Rd1 (or 53.Qh2 Bd4) 53...Bc5+ 54.Kb2 Bd4+ 55.Ka3 Ra7+ 56.Kb4 Bc5#.

52.Qh2?

Now everything should be back on track. 52.Rg2! Qd3+ 53.Kb2 Bd4+ 54.Kc1 leaves Black with nothing more than perpetual check.

52...Qd3+ 53.Kb2 Bd4+ 54.Kc1

Now there's a win by 54...Qa3+ 55.Kb1 Rb7+ 56.Bb3 Rxb3+ 57.axb3 Qxb3+ 58.Kc1 Be3+ 59.Qd2 Qc3+, but Jonathan decided to gain time by repeating moves.

54...Be3+ 55.Kb2 Bd4+ 56.Kc1 Be3+

Both players had reached the move 56 time-control (in those days, time controls arose at moves 40, 56, 72 and so on at intervals of 16 moves).

57.Kb2



61...Rc7 0-1

It's mate in a few moves.

Book of the Month by Ben Graff



The Chess Heroes Series – Richard James

'Despite being a strong player who is professionally involved in chess, at one time I was clueless when it came to teaching chess to a young beginner, in this case my own son! It was only after getting insights from Richard James, an expert in the field, that the fog started to clear.'
Grandmaster Nigel Davies

Usually in this column we focus on one or perhaps two books each month. This time out we are going to set a never to be repeated record by exploring seven volumes of Richard James's *Chess for Heroes* series: *An introduction to Chess*, *Openings*, *Endings*, *Tactics*, *Games (book 1)*, *Puzzles (book 1)* and *Checkmates*.

Richard is a renowned chess author, with *The Complete Chess Addict* (co-authored with Mike Fox) undoubtedly ranking as one of the funniest chess books of all time. However, Richard has also been a chess coach in various guises for the last fifty years. The *Chess Heroes* books seek to consolidate what he has learnt so that others have the necessary tools to welcome the next generation to the game.

Aimed at parents, chess tutors and teachers who are running school clubs but might not have much experience of chess, as well as older children and adults who want to make the leap into competitive play, the series provides a guide suitable for novices through to approximately 1500 strength players.

An Introduction to Chess provides a very clear and simple guide to chess rules and notation, basic checkmates and

Panic over, and it seems that now is the time to play the win with ...Bd4+ followed by ...Qa3+, and Jonathan's hand was reaching for the bishop when he realised that ...Bd4+ would repeat the position for the third time. He sank into deep thought and the spectators who had not seen the prelude murmured uneasily to themselves. Surely the grandmaster couldn't overlook the simple winning line? With considerable courage, Jonathan decided to keep playing for a win despite being a rook down.

57...e4!

The only move to win, preventing the pin by Bc2. Curiously, the extra tempo presented to White doesn't help much, and adjournment analysis showed that there is no defence to Black's attack.

58.Re1

Alburt thought for 50 minutes over his sealed move, but the position is hopeless. The key line runs 58.Rg2 exf3! 59.Bc2 (59.Rf2 Bxf2 60.Qxf2 Rb7+ 61.Bb3 Qe2+) 59...Rb7+ 60.Bb3 Bd4+ (for the moment Black must operate with checks as h5 is under attack) 61.Kc1 Qc3+ 62.Kd1 (62.Rc2 Qa1+ 63.Kd2 Be3+ mates next move) 62...Qa1+ 63.Kd2 (63.Kc2 Rc7+) 63...Be3+ 64.Kd3 Qd4+ 65.Kc2 Qe4+ 66.Kb2 Bd4+ 67.Kc1 fxg2! (with the pieces on e4 and d4 covering squares on the kingside Black can afford to allow Qxh5+) 68.Qxh5+ Kg7 69.Qh8+ Kf7 70.Rh7+ Kg6 and wins.

58...Bd4+ 59.Kc1 Bc5

59...Qa3+ 60.Kb1 Qc3 is a simpler way to win.

60.Re2 h4!

The only winning move, freeing the rook to set up the lethal threat of 61...Rc7.

61.Kb2

61.Ba4 Rb7 62.Bb3 Ba3+ 63.Rb2 Rc7+ 64.Bc2 Qd4 wins, while 61.Bb3 Ba3+ 62.Rb2 Rc7+ comes to the same thing.

stalemates, before going on to set some key building blocks via three key modules: superior forces triumphing in the endgame, the middle game, and basic approaches to the opening. What makes this all so effective is that it is obvious that Richard is applying learning techniques that he has honed over the years. Hence this is a very good introductory aid for anyone who wants to coach a beginner, irrespective of their own level of skill as a chess player.



Openings steps through basic opening principles and associated tactics and strategies. Open games, semi-open games and other ideas are explored, and a good quiz follows in the closing chapter. A combination of plenty of diagrams, clear and logical explanations and sound advice makes this a very useful read. As Richard notes, 'Watching videos is good – but beware. There are a lot of good videos out there, but there are also a lot of bad videos advising you to play bad openings or to set pointless traps. The most popular openings are popular for a reason... Don't waste time studying unpopular openings.'

Tactics, *Checkmates* and *Puzzles* are three very well put together books, but perhaps this is where there is slightly more challenge in the context of the digital age in which we now live. The tactics puzzles are all good, and the grouping by themes (for example forks, pins and skewers, and discovered attacks) all makes perfect sense. I can well imagine that a pupil in a school without access to many

resources would find this very useful. The same goes for the checkmate puzzles, the groupings of which include common checkmates, rook and queen checkmates, and two and three move offerings (and the positions set out in the bespoke *Puzzles* book.) However, the reality is that such puzzles can now be practised so easily online (for example on Lichess) that it potentially diminishes the power of static books in this area a little.

Endings is a work that remains as relevant today as in any era, and shows Richard's prowess as a teacher to the fore. The themes are all logical enough, and the basic queen and rook checkmates will be helpful to those coaching beginners. Yet it is Richard's work on pawn and pawn and rook endings which really stood out for me. It is not so much that all the key ideas are elucidated, from the opposition through to passed pawns, the trebuchet, breakthroughs and races, to name but a few. It is more that the explanations and associated tests are all so clear that they will give a newcomer to the game an exceptional understanding of these building blocks which will stand them in good stead for a lifetime of chess. I also think that many club players could do worse than work through Richard's exercises by way of a brush up, and that this would likely be time well spent for many of us.

Finally, *Games* consists of 39 contests, in a 'How Good is Your Chess?' style, with the reader invited to guess the next move and score points on their choices. Interestingly, the games are grouped by themes, including but not limited to open games, gambits, and the French and Sicilian Defences. This book struck me as a great way for someone to apply their learning from the rest of Richard's series, and to start to think through the transition to practical play. The games are simpler than the sort of examples you would find in *CHESS* magazine, but as with Richard's *Endings* I would expect many more experienced players to get a lot from working through them. My two minor quibbles would be the lack of a proper index, and the fact that the players and the associated event are usually named at the end of the game, as my personal preference would be to show this information at the start.

Richard has described these books to me as constituting his life's work. Given how much Richard has given to the game in so many ways, this is a serious claim to make, and these books are absolutely a tremendous achievement. Grandmaster Jonathan Rowson has written that 'The celebrated chess teacher Richard James introduced me to the pivotal idea that chess can be studied. Chess thereby became not just a game to play but a world I could visit alone and make sense of on my own terms.' It cannot be guaranteed that studying Richard's teaching via these books will set a beginner up for a career that is as illustrious as Jonathan Rowson's. However, they are the

perfect way for someone to start their own chess 'journey', and for those who seek to teach beginners the ideal map to navigate the sixty-four squares.

It's a Puzzlement!



'Chess is 99% Tactics' - Richard Teichmann

Tactics are the most important aspect of the game for chess players of all levels, from beginner to grandmaster. On ChessPuzzle.net you can learn, train, and improve your tactical skills based on positions that happened in real tournament games.

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

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

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

Puzzle 1

White S. – Railwani, Tavish

British Rapidplay 224, Peterborough, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2

Samarakoom, Vivash Ransara – Payne, Matthew J.

2nd Cambridge Int. Open, Cambridge, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3

Harvey, Alan – Burrows, M.

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough ENG



Black to checkmate - [Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4

IM Royal, Shreyas – GM Gormally, D.

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5

Lim, M. – Brett, A.

British Rapidplay, Peterborough, ENG

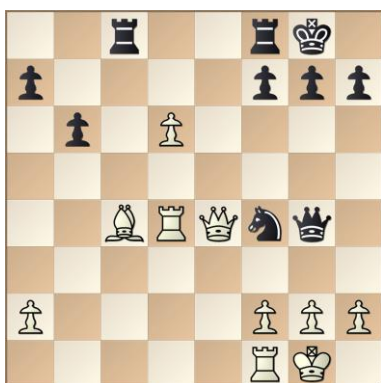


Black to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6

Alizada, Eldar – Williams, Ana

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7

GM Fernandez, Dan – IM Roberson, P.

2nd Cambridge Int. Open, Cambridge, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8

Caraway, Sam - Kulibaev, Richard

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9

FM Menzies, Colin – Bowcott-Terry, Finlay

4NCL Div 2 2023-24, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10

IM Pert, R. – GM Adams, Michael

2nd Cambridge Int. Open, Cambridge, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11

Hanache, Kai – Mikalajunas, Kajus

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough, INT



Black to win - [Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12

Iyengar, I. – Nezis, Anastasios

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit

https://chesspuzzle.net/List/9763?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=marchnews

by clicking the link or via the QR code.



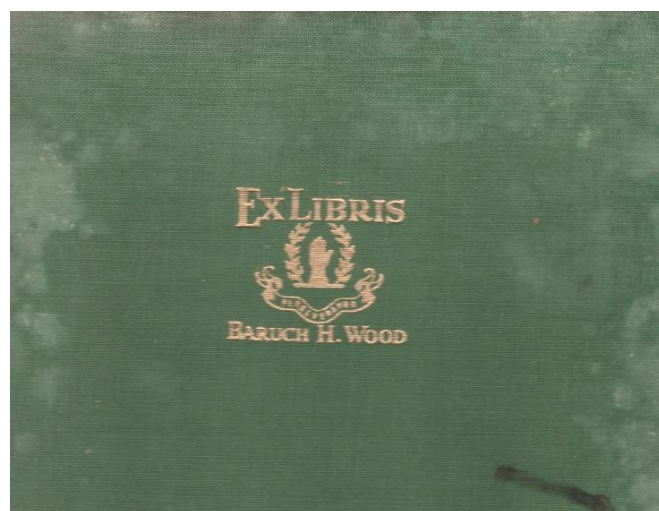
From the Archives

'A hobby is a healthy uncoupling from a hot and nervous daily job...' From *The International Correspondence Chess Association Monthly Résumé 1946-47*)

Discussions of correspondence chess frequently indicate that the 'hobby' potentially has a very long history, but it undoubtedly became popular at an international competitive level during the nineteenth century, when clubs and magazines began to organise tournaments and promote postal chess. Originally played by marking a card which was then posted to an opponent, correspondence chess games could last months or years and be played by clubs, towns, teams or individuals.

The first successful official organisation, the Internationaler Fernschachbund (IFSB: International Correspondence Chess Federation) was established in Berlin in 1928, but was disbanded at the outbreak of World War II. While correspondence chess continued throughout wartime, in some countries there was concern that international correspondents could be sending coded messages.

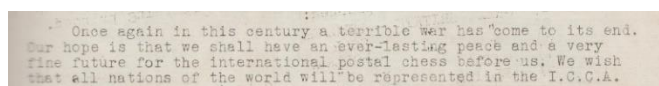
Following the war the International Correspondence Chess Association (ICCA) was formed with British Chess player and founder of *CHESS* magazine, Baruch H. Wood OBE as President. As part of its activities the Association produced a *Monthly Résumé* edited by Erik Larsson, and in Special Collections we are fortunate to hold a bound volume containing *Résumés* for the Association's first 21 months. The volume itself clearly comes from the library of Wood, as indicated by the debossed stamp on the cover.



Volume cover

The volume provides remarkable insight into the early efforts and activities made to once again establish an

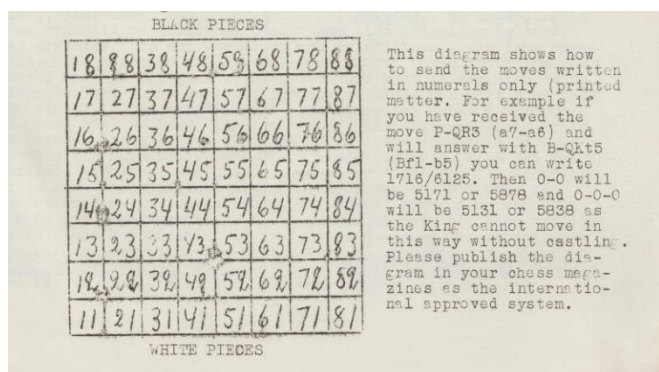
international correspondence chess community that would eventually lead to the creation of the existing International Correspondence Chess Federation. The first issue in particular indicates the leading sentiment and purpose of the Association forming in the wake of World War II:



Monthly Résumé number 1, January 1946 page 1

Describing the organisation as ‘a union of chess associations from all over the world...’ (No 1 page 1), the general rules state that all countries can join, and that the Association intends to primarily promote team tournaments, including an Olympic tournament, international matches, and The World Championship for correspondence chess. For the latter it says that this will be organised ‘as soon as the nations joined can be said to represent most part of the world.’ (No 1 page 2).

As well as information on each tournament, such as calls for players/teams and results, the resumes include an editorial featuring news and developments within the Association; a monthly slogan (the title of this piece was taken from the slogan for March, 1946); an update from the ‘Esperanto Department’ (attempts to translate this section of the magazine indicate that this was a feature of pre-war correspondence chess that the Association wanted to try to continue); and, rather helpfully, some instructions on how to play correspondence chess:



Monthly Résumé number 2, February 1946 page 4

By May 1946 it is clear that the Association has been successful in establishing itself as the successor to the IFSB. The editorial section of issue number 5 excitedly relays how the first Olympic Tournament began in March, with most European countries represented. It goes on to say how pleased it is to have new members from national federations in Brazil, Canada and the US, and how it hopes that more will join as ‘soon as their internal politic situation will allow...’ (number 5 page 1).

This same section also discusses for the first time the possibility of the *Résumé* becoming a printed postal magazine that will one day be distributed to all its members. While this does not seem to have been accomplished by the last issue in the volume (number 19, September 1947), it is a clue perhaps as to why we only hold this one fascinating volume of the *International Correspondence Chess Association Monthly Résumé*.

NEWS and VIEWS

County Championships 2024

Championships Schedule

- 24th March: Close of nominations
- 27th April: U1850 preliminary round
- 11th May: Open, Minor Counties, U1850 and U1450 quarter-finals
- 18th May: U2050 and U1650 quarter-finals
- 8th June: Semi-finals of all championships
- 6th July: Finals of all championships

A decision as to the finals being held at one or more central/regional venues has not yet been taken.

Championships Results (in the [ECF LMS](#)) will appear at:

- [Open](#) | [Minor Counties](#) | [U2050](#) | [U1850](#) | [U1650](#)
- [U1450](#) | [Draws](#)

Qualifying Competitions

These were contested by all five Unions in at least one section. The results can be viewed here:

- [East](#) | [Midlands](#) | [North](#) | [South](#) | [West](#)

The Championships

Open

FIDE and ECF rated (no rating limit). [Gold ECF membership is required](#) for more than one game and FIDE registration that is not Russian or Belarusian.

Minor Counties

For County teams with a maximum team average ECF rating of 2050. Bronze ECF membership is required.

ECF Rating Limited Sections

For County teams with players rated U2050, U1850, U1650 and U1450. Bronze ECF membership is required.

The 1st September monthly standard official original list (blue September 2023) categories A and K determine

eligibility for the purposes of the rating limited sections and team average in the Minor Counties. Players without such a rating will be assigned a competition rating according to their first published category A or K rating in subsequent official original standard lists (blue), or otherwise by the allocation of a competition estimate by the National Controller.

Rules 2023/24

The new rules are pending. In the meantime, you can see the rules for 2022/23 at:

[County Championship Rules 2022-23](#)

DGT Clocks

The English Chess Federation is inviting expressions of interest from clubs and organisers interested in purchasing chess clocks at discounted rates (indicative prices - DGT 2010 clocks: £22.00; DGT 2500 clocks: £25.00). If interested, please complete the expression of interest form here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/chess-clocks-expression-of-interest/>

Minimum number five clocks, maximum number twenty-five clocks for any one expression of interest subject to availability. **PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS A STRICT CONDITION THAT CLOCKS WILL ONLY BE OFFERED TO ECF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS (E.G. ASSOCIATIONS, LEAGUES, CONGRESSES) OR LEAGUE CLUBS, AND MAY NOT BE RESOLD.**

You can find more information about the 2010 and 2500 clocks here:

<https://digitalgametechnology.com/products/chess-clocks/dgt2010-official-fide-chess-clock> and here:

<https://digitalgametechnology.com/products/chess-clocks/dgt2500>

British Chess Educational Trust (BCET) Awards 2024



The Chess Trust is inviting nominations for the BCET Awards 2024. These are for schools (including colleges and other education establishments) and junior clubs in the United Kingdom. The awards

are for those junior schools and clubs which have shown outstanding achievements or enthusiasm in chess. We are looking for a citation giving details of the school's/club's achievements, activities, and actions taken to develop and improve the standards of the junior members of the school/club.

The award is an engraved board, a set of wooden pieces, and a digital clock. This is a valuable award and it acts as encouragement and incentive to the schools or junior clubs. The ECF website

<https://www.ecfresource.co.uk/ecf-awards/#bcet> lists the schools/clubs that have received the award in the past, with some citations. Please note that a school/club can apply again for an award if the last award was not recent, and where a further award is considered to be justified.

Recommendations for awards should be forwarded directly to John Wickham, 55 Shakespeare Way, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6SL Email: j.r.wickham@btinternet.com or via the relevant UK national federation (England: English Chess Federation; Scotland: Chess Scotland; Wales: Welsh Chess Union; and Northern Ireland: Ulster Chess Union) by 31st May 2024.

ECF Finance Council Meeting 27th April 2024

This notice is a reminder of the arrangements for the next Finance Council meeting that will be held on 27th April 2024. The meeting will be a video-conference meeting only. At the time of writing, I anticipate that the meeting, among the usual administrative items, will cover the following:

1. The annual accounts for the year ended 31st August 2023 for the ECF.
2. The Finance Director's report.
3. Budget for future years.
4. Proposed membership fees for 2024-25.
5. Report of the Chair of the Finance Committee.
6. Explanation of the proposed use of the government grant from the DCMS.
7. Proposals to enable clubs to become members of the ECF Council.
8. Changes to procedural bye-laws, including arrangements for nominations relating to elections.
9. Changes to the status of the British Chess Federation following the transfer of assets to the Chess Trust.

I remind members that any motions (which should be finance-related) that you may wish to be considered at the meeting need to be received by the [Chair of Council](#) by 21st March 2024. The agenda and supporting papers will be issued by 3rd April 2024.

David Eustace, Chair of the Council

Organisations' Representatives at Council Meetings

Please note that we have had unfortunate incidents where organisations have changed their representatives to Council meetings but have failed to notify the ECF. This results in the wrong person being recorded as the representative.

Would all organisations please check that the representative listed for their organisation is the correct person. If a different representative has been selected as the representative please advise the ECF at vro@englishchess.org.uk

David Eustace, Chair of the Council

FIDE Centenary

In 2024 the International Chess Federation (FIDE) celebrates its centenary anniversary. Full details of planned events can be seen here: <https://www.fide.com/news/2640>

Seniors Events and Dates for 2024

Here are the latest details and dates for the main seniors events in 2024. Please note that qualification for most seniors events entails your having to reach the age requirement within the calendar year of the event: for example, to play in a 50+ event you must be aged 50 by the end of that calendar year, and similarly for the 65+ age group. In date order, the main seniors events are as follows:

European Senior Team Chess Championships (ESTCC)

6th to 16th May, Terme Catez, Slovenia. You can view the official invitation here:

https://www.europechess.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Regulations_ESTCC24_FIN.pdf

The registration deadline is 6th April 2024, so anyone interested in playing in one of the England teams should register their interest with Nigel Povah at nigel.povah52@gmail.com

English Seniors Chess Championships

The English Seniors Championships take place between Friday 24th May and Tuesday 28th May 2024 at the Holiday Inn Kenilworth-Warwick, 212 Abbey End, Kenilworth CV8 1ED. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships-2024/>

British Seniors Chess Championships

The British Chess Championships are scheduled to take place in Hull from 24th July to 4th August, with the two seven-round seniors events (50+ and 65+) running from 29th July to 4th August – please see the following link for further details:

<https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>

European Senior Chess Championships (ESCC)

The European Senior Chess Championships 2024 will be held from 24th October (arrival day) to 3rd November (departure day) in Lignano Sabbiadoro, Italy, a resort in north-east Italy about 30km from Trieste and 65km from Venice airports. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.europechess.org/european-senior-chess-championship-2024-official-regulations/>

Please note that the deadline for registration is 30th September. The official invitation can be found here:

<https://www.europechess.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ECU-Senior-2024-invitation-letter.pdf>

World Senior Chess Championships (WSCC)

No details are available at this stage, although it is likely to be held in late autumn 2024.

World Senior Team Chess Championships (WSTCC) 2024

1st -12th July, Krakow, Poland. Please see the following link for the official invitation:

https://doc.fide.com/docs/CALENDAR/2024/World_Senior_Team_Championship_2024_Invitation.pdf

The registration deadline is 10th May 2024, so anyone interested in playing in one of the England teams should register their interest. To date over 50 players have already indicated an interest in playing in Krakow, so if you wish to add your name to the list, please contact Nigel Povah as soon as possible at nigel.povah52@gmail.com

There will be an official website for the event at <http://worldseniorteam2024.fide.com/>, but it hasn't gone live yet.

North Staffordshire Knights in World Chess League by Peter Hornsby

Congratulations to North Staffordshire Knights, captained by Andrew Crosby, who have qualified for the knock-out stages of the World Chess League for the very first time!

They won 6½-1½ against their nearest rivals in the latest round.



Almost 100 teams from around the world entered the tournament at the start of the 2023-2024 season, and North Staffordshire Knights are the first team out of all of them to qualify, which is a tremendous achievement.

Fed	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	MP
1	North Staffs Knights	1	1	1	1	1	1	*	6
2	Aberdeen Alumni	1	1	1	1	1	0	*	5
3	Kauai Island	1	1	1	1	0	*	*	4
4	Kraaifontein	0	0	0	1	1	1	*	3
5	Stockholm	1	0	0	0	1	*	1	3
6	Dragon's Fire	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
7	Z House	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Oxford University B	0	*	0	0	0	0	0	0

You can follow their progress here:

<https://worldchessleague.live/WCL2024> - and if your team would like to join next season please email Peter Hornsby at [@director@worldchessleague.live.@](mailto:director@worldchessleague.live)

JUNIOR MOVES Littlewood's Choice



I recently played in an Open congress for the first time for some years, and two things struck me:

1. The standard of play is much higher than it used to be.
2. The average age of the players is much lower.

I played three consecutive rounds against youngsters, and their combined age was several years lower than mine!

Recently everyone has been talking about our amazing eight year old, Bodhana Sivanandan, but I also noticed that Ashwath Kaushik, an Indian based in Singapore, has become the youngest player in the world to beat a grandmaster. He is just eight and a half years old!

Here is the interesting game:

A. Kaushik vs J. Stopa

Burgdorfer Stadthaus Open – Round 4

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3

4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Nf3 leads to a slightly better ending for White, but it would be difficult to beat a grandmaster adopting that line!

4...Nbd7 5.Bc4 Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.h3 c6 8.a4

Essential to prevent queenside expansion by 8...b5, which Alekhine has shown leads to reasonable play for Black.

8...a5 9.Re1 h6 10.Ba2 Re8 11.Be3 Bf8?!



Keeping the tension in the centre, but the bishop is not well placed here. Better was 11...exd4 12.Qxd4 (12.Nxd4 Nc5 is equal) 12...Nf8 13.Rad1 Be6, when White stands only slightly better.

12.Qd2 Qc7 13.Nh4! Nh7 14.Ng6

An alternative is 14.Rad1, keeping options open for the knight on h4.

14.....exd4?!

Better was 14...Ndf6 15.Rad1, with a small advantage to White.

15.Bxd4 Nc5 16. f4?!



This attacking move is tempting, but is premature. Simply 16.Qe3 Ne6 17.Bb6 Qb8 18.Nxf8 Nxf8 19.Qg3 leaves White with a significant plus.

16....Be6 17.Nxf8 Nxf8 18.f5?

Much better was the strange looking 18.b3, when White maintains the tension in the centre and threatens f5.

18...Bxa2 19.Rxa2 f6 20.Qf4

The position is now equal, but White's rook on a2 is out of the game, so he must be careful not to drift into a

worse position. With this in mind I would have preferred 20.Raa1, intending 21.Rad1 next.

20...Nfd7 21.Nd1 Ne5 22.Ra3?!

Hoping to reposition the rook along the third rank, but he doesn't have time for this. Again, 22.Raa1 was best.

22....Kh7 23.Nf2 Qf7 24.g4?



This is now a serious mistake. Better was 24.b3 and then later Raa1, admitting his previous error.

24...Qc4! Suddenly Black stands better.

25.Qd2 b6?

However, this lets White off the hook. Black has two decent moves here: (a) 25...Nxa4 26.Bxe5 dxe5 27.b3 Qc3!; and (b) 25...Qb4 26.Qd1 Ned3! 27.cxd3 Qxd4, both of which would leave him with a significant advantage.

26.Kg2 Ra7 27.h4 d5 28.b3 Qb4?



Having missed his chance, Black now makes a serious error. 28...Qa6 would have left the position reasonably balanced.

29.Qxb4 axb4 30.Raa1 dxe4

30...Nxe4 31.Nxe4 dxe4 32.Rxe4 also leaves White standing better in the ending.

31.Bxc5 bxc5 32.Nxe4 Nxe4?

The final error, which loses material. Better was 32...c4 33.g5 fxg5 34.hxg5 Rf8 35.g6+ Kg8, but White still stands better after 36.Rad1 as Black cannot play 36...Rxf5 because of 27.Ng3, winning.

33.Ng5+ fxg5 34.Rxe8 Nf6 35.Rc8 g4 36.Rxc6 Rd7 37.a5 Rd2+ 38.Kg3 Rd4 39.Rxf6!

This is the simplest, as it prevents any counterplay based on Nh5+.

39...gxf6 40.a6 Rd8 41.a7 Ra8 42.Kxg4 Kg7 43.Kf4 Kf7 44.Ke4 Ke7 45.Kd5 1-0



White wins the queenside pawns, and the position is then hopeless for Black.

Clearly a game with several mistakes, but I was impressed at how Ashwath kept fighting and then took the chance which was offered to him. It will be interesting to see how he progresses over the next few years.

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.

Glorney Cup 2024

The 2024 Glorney Cup will take place between 23rd and 25th July at the University of Hull.

There will be six teams: England; England A; Ireland; International; Scotland; Wales.

There will be five rounds, with two games on 23rd July and 24th July, and one game on 25th July in the morning.

If you wish your child to be considered either for England or England A please complete this form: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/glorney-cup-expressions-of-interest-england/>

The International team will be composed of players resident in the British Isles who are registered to other Federations apart from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. If you wish to express an interest in your child playing in this team, please complete this form: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/glorney-cup-expression-of-interest-international/>

The tournament will be followed by the British Chess Championships, also held in Hull: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>

ISF Gymnasiade 2024, Bahrain

The International School Sport Federation Gymnasiade is taking place in Bahrain in October this year. Players will need to travel on Tuesday 22nd October and return on Friday 1st November. Each child must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The Gymnasiade is the school equivalent of the Olympic Games. It is a multi-sport event with a total of 25 sports, including athletics, tennis, badminton, martial arts, and more. This tournament is a unique opportunity to represent England in a multi-sport games event rather than just a chess tournament.

The chess tournament is a rapidplay tournament, and there is a separate competition for boys and girls. The Gymnasiade is open only to children born in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Once the applications have arrived, the ECF Selection Committee will choose a number of participants to represent England in each tournament. If your child is unrated and has not played any ECF-rated games, then you should not complete this expression of interest.

If you wish to express an interest in your child's playing in the event, please complete this form:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/rf80ztw0hlvzz8/>

Alex Holowczak, ECF Director of Junior Chess

European Youth Chess Championship

The ECF is accepting registrations for the European Youth Chess Championship in Prague (Czech Republic). The rapid and blitz tournaments run from 16th August to 21st August 2024, and the standard play event runs from 21st August to 1st September 2024.

The entry forms for these events are below:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/european-youth-rapid-blitz-championship/> – closing date 24th May.

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/european-youth-chess-championships-2024/> – closing date 10th June.

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

The greatest thrill when playing chess is to sacrifice one's queen to win the game.

Here is an example from one of my own games which still gives me joy when I look at it:

P. E. Littlewood – G. J. Willetts

Correspondence 1976



White wins by **1.Qxf5 exf5 2.Ng6**, and mate on h8 cannot be prevented.

Sometimes the queen sacrifice is not immediately decisive, but leads to a tremendous initiative. Consider the following position:

J. Rudd - D. Eggleston

Coulsdon International 31/03/2007 – Round 2



White played the remarkable **1.Ng4 Bxc3 2.Bxc3** and suddenly Black's position looks desperate because of White's powerful black-squared bishop.

The game continued **2...f6 3.e5 f5 4.Nf6+ Rxf6 5.exf6 Qd7**. Better was **5...Qf7**, but White still has much the better ending after **6.Re7 Re8 7.d6! exd6 8.Rxf7 Kxf7 9.Bd5+ Ne6 10.Rd1** etc.

6.Re7 Qd6 7.Be5 Qxe7 8.fxe7 Re8 9.d6! h5 10.Bd5+ Kh7 11.Bf7 1-0

The classic queen sacrifice that we all remember was in the following position:

S. Levitsky - F. Marshall

18th DSB Congress, Breslau 1912



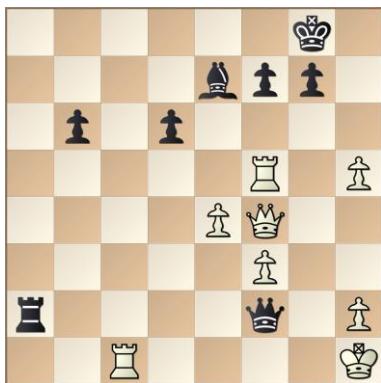
Marshall played the brilliant **1...Qg3!** and White resigned, because if **2.fxg3** then **2...Ne2+ 3.Kh1 Rxf1#** or **2.hxg3 Ne2#**. Therefore he must play **2.Qxg3**, but after **2....Ne2+ 3.Kh1 Nxf3+ 4.Kg1 Ne2+ 5.Kh1 Rc3** Black is a piece up and easily winning.

It is rumoured that after this game the board was showered with gold coins, so impressed were the spectators by the brilliance of Marshall's sacrifice.

What a thrill it must have given him to play such a beautiful move!

Here are now a couple of examples for you to solve, with the answers given at the end of the article:

M. Carlsen - S. Karjakin
World Championship Match 2016



How does White win with a sequence which involves a queen sacrifice in one variation?

D. Byrne - R. Fischer
Third Rosenwald Trophy, New York 1956



Black seems to be in some difficulties because his queen and knight are attacked, but how did he cope with this and obtain a winning advantage?

Answers:

M. Carlsen - S. Karjakin

1.Rc8+ Kh7 (1...Bf8 2.Rxf8+ Kxf8 3.Rxf7+ leads to mate in a few moves) **2.Qh6+!** Resigns. If 2...Kxh6 3.Rh8# or 2...gxh6 3.Rxf7#

D. Byrne - R. Fischer

1...Be6! 2.Bxb6 (2...Bxe6 Qb5+) **2...Bxc4+ 3.Kg1 Ne2+ 4.Kf1 Nxd4+ 5.Kg1 Ne2+ 6.Kf1 Nc3+ 7.Kg1 axb6** with a winning position for Black as he is winning the rook on d1, when he will have more than enough material for the queen.

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

How to Solve a Study

by Ian Watson

Jailing Yourself

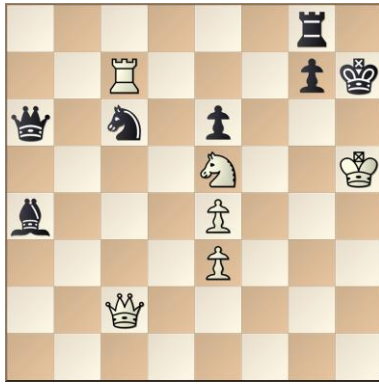
Building a prison for your own pieces can be the only way to get a draw. Here's a simple example:



White to play and draw.

That b-pawn is too close to queening for White to have time to attack; for example, 1.Nxe4? b2 2.Nd6 b1Q and the White rook is en prise with check. This study is easy to solve, however, provided that you have the 'Jailing Yourself' theme in your mental armoury. Knowing about that theme, you can immediately find **1.Nh1 b2 2.Kg3 b1Q 3.Rh8 Rxb8** stalemate. That was a very early example of the theme; it was composed by Johannes Ohqvist and published in *Tidskrift för Schack* in 1890. The theme has been developed considerably since then.

Here's a more modern example, and therefore a tougher task:



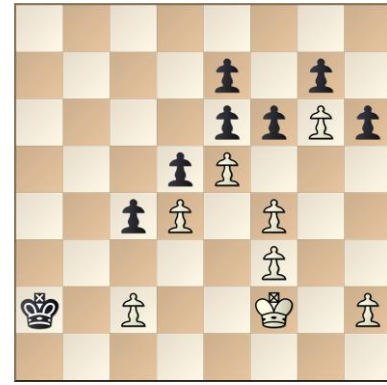
White to play and draw.

This is by Amatzia Avni and was published in *Shahmat* in 1999.

1.Qh2 is obvious, and 1...Rh8 is the only defence to the mating threats. 2.Nf7 isn't quite so obvious, but if 2.Ng6 Qa5+ 3.e5 Kg8+, and White's rook is hanging after 4.Nxh8. So, 2.Nf7, and Black must reply 2...Kg8+. Now what? Everything was forced so far. This is one of those studies where you just have to go with the flow and see what arises. Play 3.Nxh8, and hope that there's some trick that prevents Black's mating attack. There is (of course). 3...Qa5+ 4.Kg6 Ne5+, and having got to this position it's clear that White again only has one option: 5.Qxe5. So we get 5.Qxe5 Be8+ 6.Rf7 Qxe5, and you realise it's a stalemate, but you probably have to double-check because it's hard to believe. Where was the self-jailing that I promised? Look at that knight on h8 - its penitentiary has walls on two sides and warders on f7 and g6. It moved to h8, and then White completed the prison for it. White also caged his own king: self-incarceration.

The full solution is **1.Qh2 Rh8 2.Nf7 Kg8+ 3.Nxh8 Qa5+ 4.Kg6 Ne5+ 5.Qxe5 Be8+ 6.Rf7 Qxe5** stalemate. Avni's study uses a pin to complete the jailing. It's also possible to assemble a complete cage without using pins, relying on the inability of pawns to move backwards.

Your study to solve is a new composition by the ever-creative Paul Michelet. It's a pawn ending, so no need to tie up any knights:



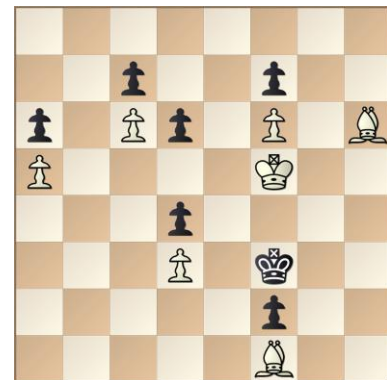
White to play and draw.

The solution is given at the end of the magazine

Ian Watson Email: ian@irwatson.uk

Monthly Conundrum by Christopher Jones

First, let's look at the problem with which I left you last time:



Mate in 7
Paul Michelet
Correspondence Chess, 2013 (version)

I said last time that the composer had in mind some highly eye-catching strategic play, in which the proximity of the white king to its black counterpart is a significant feature. That might have suggested that White would set up a 'royal battery' by playing 1.Kg5, so that if 1...Ke3 2.Kg4 is mate. However, Black can play 1...d5, and White then has no waiting move, and so must release his grip on the position. Instead, a long and attractive manoeuvre is called for. White plays 1.Bc1!, and after 1...d5 2.Ba3, intending to set up the royal battery in more propitious circumstances. We have now allowed the black king a measure of mobility, so play proceeds 2...Ke3 3.Bb4! (an essential waiting move if we are to set up the royal battery on the right move) Kf3 4.Bf8 Ke3 5.Bh6+ Kf3 and now

6.Kg5 does the trick – 6...Ke3 7.Kg4#.

At the Winton British Solving Championships, held at Harrow School on 17th February, there were three sections: the British Championship (won again by David Hodge); the Open Championship (attracting a strong overseas field, and also won by a previous champion, Eddy van Beers of Belgium); and the Minor Championship, won by Gautam Jain. This third section attracts less experienced solvers, but still presents a significant solving challenge. I found both the problems set in the 3-mover round very attractive, but also challenging to solve. You may like to look at them and to see how you would have done in the 40 minutes allowed at solving them. Gautam Jain fully solved both, but only one other solver solved either of them! So don't be disheartened if you find them difficult. In this column I'll give you the solution to the first one and then leave you to solve the other.



Mate in 3
Vladimir Sychov
64, 1969



Mate in 3
Damien Grossi
3rd Prize, *Storsti un Romani* 1938

In the Sychov problem we clearly need to make a threat. You might anticipate that the threat itself would be neat,

and this is in fact the case: 1.Rc2! threatens 2.Rd2+ (2...exd2 3.e3#). You get a quarter of the marks for getting this far. Now you look around for black defences. There are three, all of them occupying c7, so as to provide flights on the c-file after 2.Rd2. Let us take them in turn. First there is 1...Rc7. What is the fatal flaw of this move? It's 2.Nd6!. Now that 2...Bxd6 is no longer available there is no way to meet the threats of 3.Nb5 and 3.Nf5. You now have another quarter of the marks. But what about 1...Nc7? Now 2.Nd6 would only threaten 3.Nf5, and as a solitary threat that can be parried by ...Be6 or ...Bh7. So we look for another killer move, and this time it's 2.Rd8!. The pin of the d5-pawn means that 3.Rc4# is threatened, and now Black doesn't have the defence 2...Nb6. Another quarter of the marks for getting this far. Finally, what about 1...Bc7? Now we can't play 2.Nd6 (2...Bxd6) or 2.Rd8 (2...Bxd8 or 2...Nb6); but we *can* play 2.Ng7! (completing the full set of marks for the solution) – now that 2...Rxc7 is unavailable, and (as compared with the position after 1...Nc7) we don't have a guard on e6, the g8-bishop is powerless to prevent mate by either 3.Nf5 or (after 2...Bh7 or ...Be6) 3.N[x]e6.

I like the logic in this solution. Problems selected for solving tournaments should be ones that not only boast a certain level of difficulty but that also are *satisfying* to solve (or just to read through the solution!). The same comment applies to the Grossi problem, which I leave with you to see if you can solve it in about the 20 minutes you'd have in a solving contest. If not, your computer will make short work of it – or you can wait till I give the solution next month.

There are a number of ways to access problems of this ilk online. In previous columns I've mentioned the website of the British Chess Problem Society (www.theproblemist.org/) and the regular solving challenges at www.netchex.club (or email boosm21@btinternet.com for tourney details). And the cycle for the 2024-25 Winton British Solving Championships will start soon – look out for the publication of the starter problem, a 'mate in 2' problem which, successfully solved, will enable you to receive a more challenging set of problems to solve (not against the clock), a taster for the challenges awaiting you in the finals in February 2025.

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 1 April 2024	
2 April 2024	London Chess League FIDE Blitz Evening
4 April 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
5-8 April 2024	UK Armed Forces Chess Championship 2024, RAF Wittering
6-7 April 2024	The Great Yarmouth Chess Congress 2024
6 April 2024	Wimbledon EJVOA Zonal Rapidplay
6 April 2024	Golders Green FIDE Rapid 2024
6 April 2024	Wimbledon FIDE Rapidplay
7 April 2024	Hampshire Open Junior FIDE Blitz 2024
7 April 2024	Ealing Broadway FIDE Rapid 2024
Week Beginning 8 April 2024	
9 April 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
10-14 April 2024	Sheffield Chess International
12 April 2024	47th Maidenhead Junior Congress
12 April 2024	UKCC Harrow Megafinal 2024
12-14 April 2024	Guildford FIDE Congress 2024
12-14 April 2024	London Chess League Weekend Congress
13 April 2024	1st Staffordshire EJCOA Zonal Qualifier
13-14 April 2024	47th East Devon Congress at Easter
13-14 April 2024	40th St Albans Chess Congress
14 April 2024	EJCOA Oxford Zonal 2024
Week Beginning 15 April 2024	
16 April 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
19-21 April 2024	Wightlink Isle of Wight Chess Congress, Ryde
19 April 2024	Dorset Centenary Chess Congress, Bournemouth
20-21 April 2024	47th Nottingham Congress
20 April 2024	Cannock League 25th Anniversary Rapid Play Tournament, Walsall
20 April 2024	2nd Orpington FIDE RapidPlay
20 April 2024	Poplar Rapid Tournament
20 April 2024	South Yorkshire Zonal - EJCOA National Youth Championships, Sheffield
20 April 2024	Southall FIDE Congress
21 April 2024	UKCC 1st North London Megafinal 2024
Week Beginning 22 April 2024	
25 April 2024	Uxbridge Blitz Competition & Biryani
26-28 April 2024	Bristol Centenary Congress Including West of England Championship
27 April 2024	ECF Counties Championship 2024 Preliminary Round
27 April 2024	BBCA ECF Rated Rapid Chess Tournament
27-28 April 2024	3rd East Midlands FIDE Congress
27 April 2024	David Dunn Memorial Rapid Play 2024
27 April 2024	Maidenhead Junior Tournament
28 April 2024	SPTW Warwickshire Women's Rapidplay
28 April 2024	2nd Oxford FIDE Rapidplay
28 April 2024	Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club Rapid 2024
28 April 2024	Elstree Children's Chess Tournament

How to Solve a Study – solution

(Michelet)

1.exf6 exf6 2.f5 exf5 3.f4 Kb2 4.c3 Kxc3 5.Kg3 Kxd4 6.Kh4, with 7.Kh5 and 8.h4; Black can't prevent White's self-stalemate.

Studies that construct this type of pawn cage for the king have been composed before, but Paul's position disguises the possibility well, and does so in a natural-looking position. Even knowing the existence of the 'Jailing Yourself' theme, it wouldn't be easy to realise its relevance here - if this weren't a column about the theme. Paul has also built in a wicked trap for solvers - 4.c3 is necessary, because without it Black would have 4...Kc3 5...Kxd4 6...Ke4 7...d4 preventing the stalemate. As is usual in studies, White's move sequence is forced; for example, White has to play f4 on move 3, as otherwise Black could move his own f-pawn to that square, dismantling the prison cage before it is constructed. All that, and Paul has achieved it using only kings and pawns.



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*



Available in the UK from Chess & Bridge and on Amazon



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