

Menchik Memorial 2024 Round 1

It was a cloudy day for the start of the Menchik memorial. The chief arbiter up bright and early which makes a nice change for him wheeling the heavy chess equipment down from the hotel to the venue, trying desperately not to let any of it fall off or his trousers to fall down. Not sure which would have been worse at this point.

We get in the playing room at 7:30am and have to turn a bridge room into a room fit for the Menchik memorial and get all the admin done ready for 10am. It wasn't easy but we managed it with a little time to spare. Trouble is all this effort would be for naught if the players didn't turn up. With railway delays being posted this morning it looked bad but we kept hope. Even when we got to half an hour before start time and we had a grand total of one player present at least between the two arbiters and a player we had a crowd.

Thankfully with about 5 minutes to go a lot more had started to come in and get themselves settled. During our opening announcements three more trickled in so we were down to just one player missing and she told us that due to the delays she was going to be ten minutes late.

We decided to be kind and either start the clocks at 10:15am or when the player turned up, whichever of those happened first. Fate it seems has a sense of humour as both of those things happened simultaneously. Our last player, Bodhana, walked in right on 10:15am so all present and correct, we have a tournament.

For the purpose of these reports im only doing two games per round. Ill try to push for three but believe me I don't have that much time as chief arbiter, livegames techy, and social media monitor. Don't worry, I plan to cover everyone at least once.

Game 1

Let's go with the last game to start. Bodhana vs Ketevan. Two legends in their own right. Bodhana making waves as England's new wonder player, taking the world by storm. Ketevan a strong and well-respected player from Scotland, winner of many tournaments, and our only strongest player here. Youth vs experience who will come out on top?

The game started out as a Sicilian Defense: French Variation. This one looks weird, it seems to combine the opening moves of the open Sicilian and the closed Sicilian. Some sort of hybrid in my mind from Bodhana and Ketevan has opted to keep things nice and solid, waiting to see how best to develop the game.



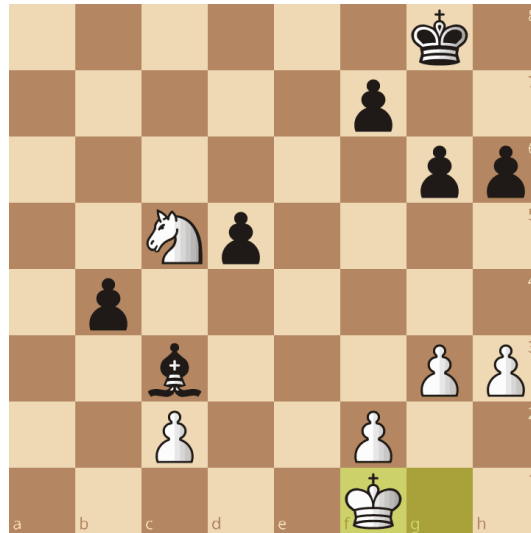
From here things developed into what I would think of as an open sicilian. The pawn came up to d4, black took it and now the white knights are in the centre with black adopting a typical pawn formation. So where will the first strike come from and from whom?

Well Ketevan started the slow grind and pawn push towards Bodhana's queenside. Just slowly improving her position with each move, opening the A file and forcing the white knight to move around while Ketevan organised her pieces getting both rooks in the centre ready to attack but Bodhana was not going to take this lying down. She got her pieces ready to strike and by move 27 had setup the Alekhines Gun.



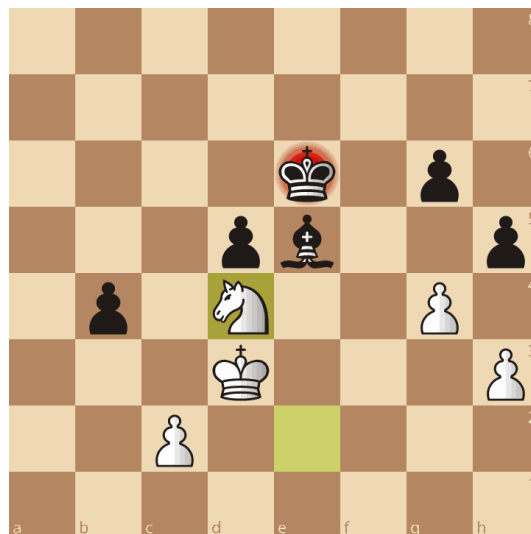
Time was now definitely against both players. Bodhana working with 14 minutes on her clock and Ketevan working with just 3. This was going to come down to the wire.

Ketevan found the way to break through when Bodhana moved the queen back to e2 breaking Alekhines gun. Ketevan took the pawn in the centre, all the rooks came off, the bishops came off as well as several pawns. Now Ketevan is up a pawn and with an exchange of queens its starting to look bad for Bodhana.



It all depends what's better in this ending, is the bishop the stronger piece or the knight, can black get their king in or can Bodhana get the opposition and hold Ketevan at bay?

Looks like its possible. While Ketevan pushed hard Bodhana was able to counter in the centre and hold back all of Ketevan's pieces when they agreed to a draw. Bodhaha however was very lucky to get away with a draw. Just one more image from this game I promise, a challenge for you.



This is a position that occurred from the game. What is the best move here?

Game 2

Lets go with for the second Andreea-Marioara Cosman vs Fiona Steil-Antoni

Fiona has been playing for a number of years, captain of 4NCL Cheddleton and for this arbiter it's a pleasure to have her at any event.

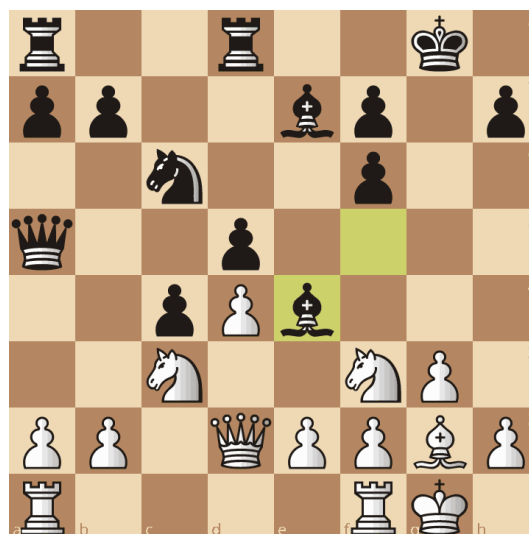
Andreea im afraid to say I have not met before this tournament. She is a very active player from Romania and played a number of big events before coming to play here. It will be good to see how she gets on in the tournament.

In round 1 against Fiona she opted for playing the English opening with it eventually being turned into a Tarrasch Defense: Swedish Variation apparently. With Fiona gaining space on the queenside with her advanced pawns but Andreea having more pieces in the centre and that troublesome knight right in the centre of the board. Both players have developed their pieces, both players castled, the battlelines have been drawn who is going to come out on top from here.



Well here Andreea decided to strike against Fiona playing Bg5, seeing there are only two defenders of the d5 pawn she wants to remove one of them and then take it to be a pawn up. Which is exactly how it happened. After Fiona played the Qa5, Andreea took the knight and started to put the pressure on Fiona who seeing the threats took the bishop back with the pawn in front of her king to try and apply her own bit of pressure on Andreea.

As they say, a good defence is a good offence so Fiona started to counterattack bring her bishop up into the centre to try and control the centre squares.



Andreea decided to offer the swap of bishops here and moved the knight to the side of the board. Fiona accepted the trade and got of the bishops and started re-route her queen to

double attack the pawn at d4 and b2. Then offered her opponent a draw, which was accepted. This was the first game to finish, our first result in the tournament is a draw.

Answer to the problem.

Bxd4 resulting in a big win -10 advantage for Ketevan.

Scores on the doors after round 1:

BNo.		White	Rtg	Res.		Black	Rtg
1	WCM	Sivanandan Bodhana	2088	½ - ½	GM	Arakhamia-Grant Ketevan E	2290
2	WCM	Subramanian Anusha	1997	1 - 0	WFM	Smith Olivia	2054
3	IM	Hunt Harriet V	2307	1 - 0		Hryshchenko Kamila	2186
4	WFM	Cosman Andreea-Marioara	2115	½ - ½	WIM	Steil-Antoni Fiona	2154
5	IM	Garcia Martin Marta	2356	1 - 0	WGM	Navrotescu Andreea-Cristiana	2200