

Menchik Memorial 2024 Round 2

It was a tough first round for all the players. There were very few draws and a lot of wins for white. Now the colours switch, the opponents switch and we see how the strategies play out now.

The players all finished their games with no need for an extra break. All players are guaranteed at least half an hour between games and none of them needed it... this time.

With one round down, I know it won't mean much but here is where we stand at the moment:

Rank		Name	Rtg	FED	Pts.
1	WCM	Subramanian Anusha	1997	ENG	1
	IM	Hunt Harriet V	2307	ENG	1
	IM	Garcia Martin Marta	2356	ESP	1
4	WCM	Sivanandan Bodhana	2088	ENG	½
	WFM	Cosman Andreea-Marioara	2115	ROU	½
	WIM	Steil-Antoni Fiona	2154	LUX	½
	GM	Arakhamia-Grant Ketevan E	2290	SCO	½
8	WGM	Navrotescu Andreea-Cristiana	2200	FRA	0
		Hryshchenko Kamila	2186	ENG	0
	WFM	Smith Olivia	2054	WLS	0

For those of you interested in such things, it's 5½ points for an WIM norm and 7 points for a WGM norm. Which puts Anusha right on target for it with Bodhana, Andreea-Marioara and Fiona right behind. Title norm chances are still available for Kamila and Olivia, one loss won't hurt that. Just fingers crossed (as the writer of this, not their arbiter) they can make it.

So, with that in mind, let's take for our two games to look at in this round the battle between Anusha and Bodhana, the youngest in the group here at the tournament and the battle between Olivia Smith and Harriet Hunt.

Game 1

Bodhana vs Anusha

What can I say about these two players. Bodhana is one of the strongest players in the England Juniors. At just 9 years old she's also one of the strongest in the world for her age group. I am expecting that her rating will just keep going higher and higher as time passes.

Anusha is the second youngest player in the room behind Bodhana. At just 15 she is also a strong player in her own right. That 1997 rating of hers is likely highly undervalued given she managed to earn over 100 rating points a few months ago from the British Championship: Major Open and it's just been going up and up since then. What her actual strength is, this tournament is about to find out and in this round's case Bodhana first hand.

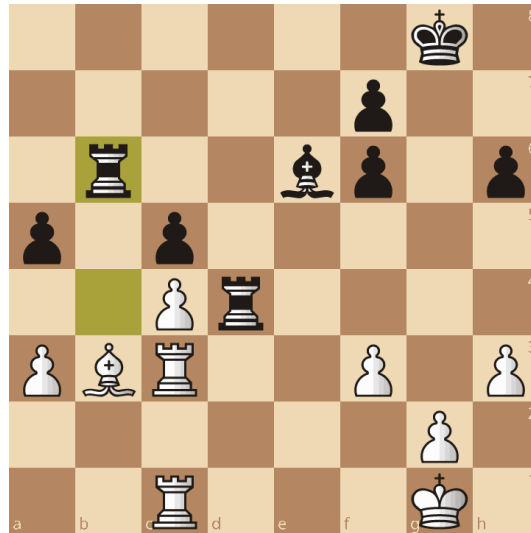
So how did the game start. Well surprisingly it opened with what is considered a very drawish opening, the four knights. But both players flexing their chess muscles with a quick burst of exchanges in the opening and Bodhana getting her pieces out and into the game much faster but at the expense of the queenside pawns getting busted up.

Anusha on the other hand while several pieces haven't moved from their starting squares, they are doing a perfectly good job controlling play right where they are and the pawns putting pressure on the centre to try and make life awkward for Bodhana. If she can hold on to them, she may be able to take advantage of Bodhana's doubled pawns and start causing a little havoc of her own once the pieces start moving. We shall see. What do you think?



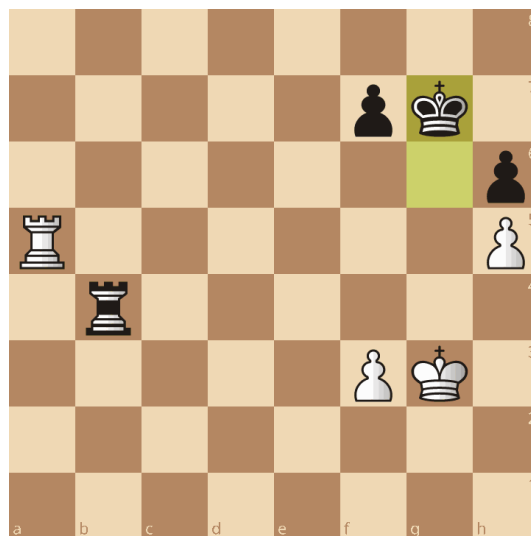
Anusha started to solidify her position, bringing the bishop into play to look after those central pawns. Bodhana decided to try and undermine them by first forcing one of the rooks back to its castled start square with Bb5, then bringing the queens rook in to hit the d pawn.

After a series of exchanges, we find ourselves in the position that Bodhana has adopted a very defensive structure. Holding onto her last remaining c-pawn with everything she had. Meaning the rooks and bishop are tied up defending it against Anusha's rooks and bishop. Thing is that while the number of defenders is equal to the number of attackers, it's the position on the board that counts and Anusha has one of those rooks sitting on an open d-file. If she gets a chance that could limit Bodhana's king coming over to try and relieve some of the pressure, but also allows Anusha's king to come in and try to give her own backup.



Who has more control of the board here?

Well Bodhana made it quite clear she wasn't going to be passive or remain passive for long. The kingside pawns started to march up the board, backed up by rooks so Anusha had to do something to so brought up her king and pawn to try to keep them at bay, but in so doing had to take her eye off the queenside allowing Bodhana to start swapping off pieces to relieve the pressure over there until both players cancelled each other's attack out. Now all that stands on the queenside are two rooks (one from each player) where the remnants of pawns once were, the kingside pawns are blocking each other and the kings stand in long opposition.



Eventually this ground out into a draw when Anusha's Rook was bouncing between threatening the pawn on h5 and the king. The position repeated twice and before it needed to be done again Bodhana agreed a draw.

1½ for the lowest seeded player after two rounds cant be bad and Bodhana well on her way to 5½ for the WIM Norm. Good game ladies.

Game 2

Harriet Hunt vs Olivia Smith

Who are they for a start?

Well lets start with Harriet, shes been on the chess scene for quite a while now. Along with her brother she has been a force to be reckoned with on the chess board. Having taken a break from playing chess for a short time, she is now back and ready to make her presence felt at the chess board.

Olivia Smith is a strong player from Wales. Ive had the chance to arbit her at a number of tournaments over the years, the most common one being the South Wales international. Where I have seen her come close to a norm on several occasions but through bad luck at the end or the lack of titled players has been unable to secure the norm. Now here's her chance and its Harriet Hunt she must go through.

This is one of those games that could go either way.

So how did the game start. It opened with a closed Sicilian. No doubt in my mind on this one for the opening sequence not after the round 1 report. Olivia taking a similar line to Bodhana with fianchettoing the bishop early on, trying to get the long diagonal.

Harriet like Ketevan adopting a solid setup along with also fianchettoing her kingside bishop and by the looks of it both players ready to start attacking. Olivia starting the standard grand prix move to go for the king with f4. A playstyle I personally like. Go on the attack, keep your opponent worried and if you're the one applying the pressure, maybe the opponent will crack?



Both players started to take an aggressive stance with one another. Harriet is not going to let Olivia do all the attacking and left in with one of her own. The f5 pawn came forward, the knight came rushing into the centre, exchanging off the knight on e2 and leaving a nice hole on b2 for that bishop to exploit long range. While Harriet may be a pawn up, Olivia has compensation in that one of her rooks is now staring down a semi-open file.

If that thing gets into the game, it won't be long before its possible for a doubling of the rooks and how will Harriet deal with that then.



Well Harriet held her ground, holding forces back and not taking Olivia's, just encouraged her to push the pawns as far forward as she possibly could. Unfortunately for Olivia when she pushed in the centre it became the pawns that went to far. Harriet struck ripping the c and d pawns off the board with pieces when they couldn't defend one another. Then it became who can control the centre better with their pieces. Olivia can get hers in quite quickly but she's three pawns down, Harriet just needs to hold her ground and bring her rooks and into the game from their squares and this could soon unfold.



The problem from tis point is that Olivia is down to 1 minute left on the clock and pretty much playing the increment, Harriet has 13 minutes left, time has become a factor Olivia needs to deal with, too and Harriet is not letting up the pressure with more and more of her pieces winging their way into Olivia's side of the board. The passed pawn coming down the lines will be especially dangerous if Harriet can get it down to the second rank, even more so if it turns into a queen.

Looks like sadly for Olivia that's what's happening. There sits a pawn on d2, and several pieces coming to aid it in its push to the end of the line.



Here's another puzzle for you. Harriet and Olivia reached this position. Whats the best move?

It wasn't long before it was over. The pressure just got to much and Olivia resigned a few moves after that position. Hard game there between two strong players. Hopefully better luck tomorrow, Olivia, and well-done Harriett, 2 points.

Final scores after that round:

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

Answer to Round 2 problem:

Im not going to tell you so soon and on the same page, you'll have to come back tomorrow and read round 3.