

Menchik Memorial 2024 Round 7

What a ride this tournament has been so far. Weve had two rounds without draws, two rounds with a majority of draws but all of the games have been extremely fun to watch.

Thankfully its not just me that can see them you can also watch them at the following links:

Lichess: <https://lichess.org/broadcast/8th-menchik-memorial/eF1qvzJw>

Chess.com: <https://www.chess.com/events/2024-menchik-memorial/games>

Chessbase: <https://live.chessbase.com/en/watch/8th-menchik-memorial-2024>

There is also live commentary taking place every day thanks to Mr Dodgy:

<https://www.twitch.tv/mrdodgychess>

I would like to that all the above for their effort in making the broadcast of this tournament possible.

Now for the tournament itself, here are the standings after six rounds of play.

Rank		Name	Rtg	FED	Pts.
1	IM	Garcia Martin Marta	2356	ESP	5
2	IM	Hunt Harriet V	2307	ENG	4½
	WFM	Cosman Andreea-Marioara	2115	ROU	4½
4	GM	Arakhamia-Grant Ketevan E	2290	SCO	4
5	WGM	Navrotescu Andreea-Cristiana	2200	FRA	3½
6	WCM	Subramanian Anusha	1997	ENG	2½
7	WCM	Sivanandan Bodhana	2088	ENG	2
		Hryshchenko Kamila	2186	ENG	2
9	WIM	Steil-Antoni Fiona	2154	LUX	1½
10	WFM	Smith Olivia	2054	WLS	½

Marta Garcia Martin is out in front leading the tournament. But Harriet Hunt is right on her heels and theyre playing this round. Think I know which game I want to watch. Also let's mention our joint second place Andreea-Marioara, who only needs one point for the WIM Norm. 2.5 gets her the WGM norm on top of that also. So, lets follow her game this round.

Before I move on, I would like to give special mention to Anusha after playing a hard game against Marta last night. She is still capable of getting a WIM Norm but it's a big ask for her to win her last games with 3/3! Hard but possible.

Game 1: Marta Garcia Martin vs Harriet Hunt

We have another Anti-Sicilian. There have been very few open ones this tournament if any that I can recall. This one is what's known as the Sicilian Defense: Delayed Alapin Variation,

with d6. Marta has developed the pawns on the queenside and centre to put pressure on Harriet who has pushed her own pawns to c5, e5, d6, a6, g6 and developed her pieces around them. No d5 break for black here.



Most of Marta's pieces look like they're on their starting squares. But watch out, the starting squares could be the best place for them. How does the game carry on from here?

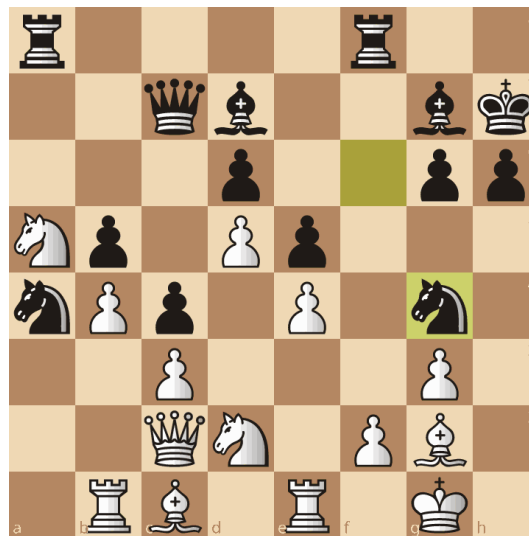
Well Marta pushed d5, locking down the centre and then proceeded to do the same with the queenside. Na3, Nc4 and b4 keeping the pressure up over there but those pawns weren't going anywhere. This leaves only one side for Harriet to start an attack, kingside. Its one of the rules of chess you don't push pawns defending your king unless you have to but remember in this case the centre is blocked. Only go for an attack on the wings if the centre is blocked.



Harriet pushed her pawn having first got her king safely up the corner defending itself with the pawns and that bishop. Marta retreated the knight to cover the f5 pawn push. Then when Marta pushed the bishop to hit the pawn, Harriet pushed it, gaining space but removing the potential for an attack on the kingside. Whats the plan?

It's a swing back. Queenside isn't as locked down as Marta would like so b5 comes in and after the recaptures Marta's knight is on the rim, Harriet is gaining space in Marta's position. When Marta shifts pieces over to cover what's happening there, Harriet hits the kingside, these attacks are coming in left and right. Marta countering each one of them as they come, but that knight on the rim is holding off the black rook in the corner.

But now Harriet brings hers onto the rim to pressure Marta's backwards c-pawn and now the kingside is under attack again.



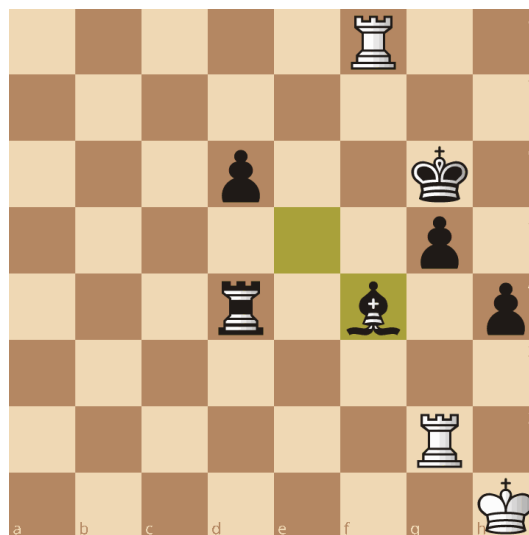
Marta moves the bishop to f3 and Harriet pushes her rook up presumably to double them up but Marta doesn't give Harriet the chance. She strikes with Nxc4, a tactical sacrifice to soften up the queenside and if the pawn recaptures off comes the a4 knight. Brilliant.

Which is what happened but also thrown in there the bishop of f3 removed that knight on g4, Harriet replaced it with a bishop but its got nothing to attack down that diagonal. But it does allow the rook to come into f3 now nothings stopping it and Harriet uses it to grab the backwards c3 pawn. Now in one fell move with Be3 the rooks locked in whites' position, won't take much to bring something in to try and take it off. But Harriet doesn't give her time to think on that, just takes the bishop on e3 with the rook! After the captures now the queens in the position and Harriet may have lost a rook but she got the bishop and two pawns as compensation and poised to capture the backwards e-pawn.



The queen comes back to cover it but now in comes the bishop to e2. Marta tries to remove some of the pressure by exchanging on c4 with the knight but after all the captures that Rook an a8 that was being held back by the knight comes thrusting into the game to a3. Now there's a very real threat to g3 and checks by a queen and rook. How is Marta going to get out of this with just 6 minutes left on her clock?

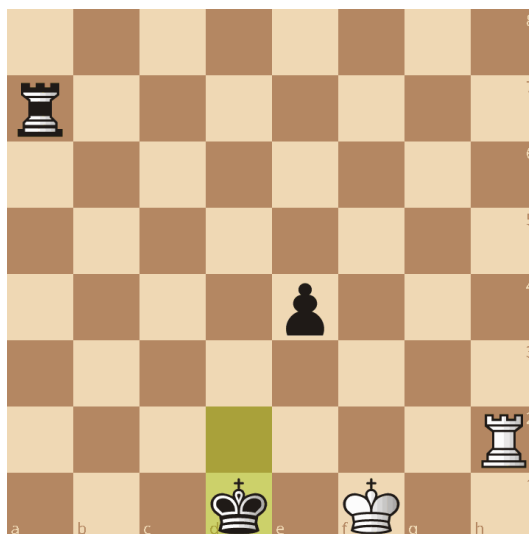
With one minute left she settled on Kh1, giving her an extra move to defend herself and going with Rb2. Then constructing a fortress around her king with the rooks and queen covering it in all directions. Harriet started to bring in her bishop and removed the rest of the pawns. Harriet has got Marta's queen and rook but the pawns left are far to many. Marta's two rooks can't cover everything coming down at her sadly.



and its here Marta resigned.

That was an amazing game to watch, for me the best game of the tournament so far. Thank you both players for a lot of fun in that one. Commiserations Marta, well done Harriet.

Puzzle



From another game into the tournament. White to play and draw

Game 2: Andreea-Marioara Cosman vs Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant

This game, well the computer couldn't make up its mind what the opening was. Started out as d4 then as the players replied to one another it kept updating. We went through Queens pawn game, Indian Defense: Normal Variation, Benoni, English Opening: Symmetrical Variation, Anti-Benoni Variation until it finally settled on a Sicilian Defense: Accelerated Dragon, Maróczy Bind, Gurgendidze Variation. How can you go through five different openings in one game! Not to mention were at move 17 and apparently still in book.



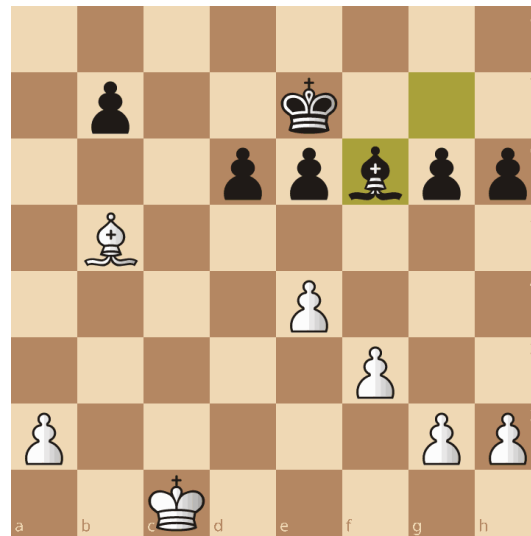
All this has already been played before on at least two occasions.

The last twice this was played it was a white win on both occasions, so that bodes well at least for Andreea-Marioara but underestimate Ketevan at your own risk. So far though I can tell you that both these players have a good memory as the game carried on in book for another move before Andreea-Marioara played b4, the top stockfish move for this position.

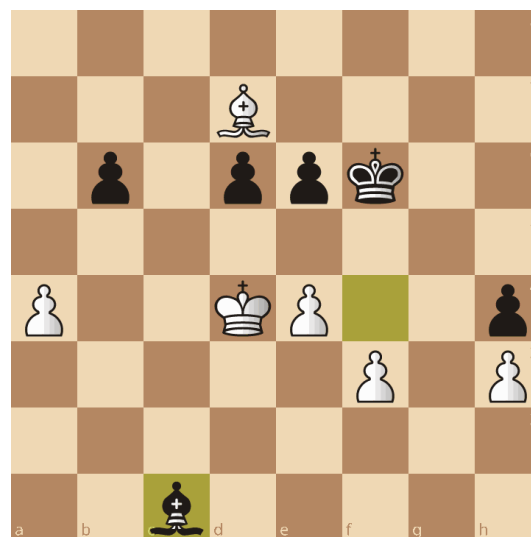
Yes, I know im cheating using stockfish, but my job is arbiter, liveboarder, and reporter. I can only do so much without a little help.

So b4 was played and Ketevan decided to push the e6 pawn to breakdown the centre pawn formation. Andreea-Marioara took it and after the recapture pushed b5 and now the bishop is developed but very little to attack over on the queenside. Ketevan brought the king into the centre to e7 but this allows the knight to be pinned!

Ketevan unphased pushed h6 asking what Andreea-Marioara wanted to do with the bishop, so she took the knight off and we reach an opposite-coloured bishop ending.



The pawns are equal, the bishops are of opposite colours and the kings, well one is centralised behind the pawns, the other has no cover but needs to get into the centre. But not yet, g4 is the order here, get the pawns on the opposite colour to the bishop then bring the king in, which is exactly what happened. The kings came into opposition, the pawns all on the same colour as their respective bishops and nobody was breaking through and even if the enemy king got in. It just takes a bishop move and everything is covered. Draw agreed.



This draw takes Andreea-Marioara to half a point away from a norm but the strongest seed in the competition Marta to play in the next round. Keeping us on our toes for when that first norm comes.

Results:

That's it for round 7, results for all games are as follows:

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

Looks like Anusha's norm chances are done im afraid but she's given it a good fight. Half a point for a norm in round 8, lets see how the rest of the tournament goes.

Answer to the Puzzle:

Rb2 to keep the king locked in and the pawn covered.

OR

Rh4 to threaten the pawn and repeat the position.