

# ENGLISH CHESS FEDERATION



OFFICIAL CHESS YEARBOOK 2024



# English Chess Federation

## YEARBOOK 2024



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Compiled and laid out by Andrew Walker. AW would like to thank IM Richard Palliser for his invaluable assistance. Unless indicated otherwise, photographs in this book are by photographer Brendan O’Gorman - <https://brendanogorman.smugmug.com/Chess>  
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# Report of the Board to Council October 2023

Approved by the Board in September 2023



CEO Mike Truran

## INTRODUCTION

This report has, as in previous years, been prepared in accordance with the recommendation of the Independent Constitutional and Governance Review Commission that 'instead of individual Directors reporting to Council, there should be a single report of the Board, approved by it beforehand'. The report focuses on what has been achieved during 2022/2023. The Board has reviewed and updated the Strategy and Business Plan document and is happy that it sets out the Board's proposed direction of travel over the coming years and the objectives that the Board has set itself for 2023/2024 and beyond.

The report is a rather 'lighter touch' report than those of previous years. Most if not all of the detail supporting the report's high-level overview is contained in the ECF's monthly *ChessMoves* publication, and there seems little point in repeating that content here.

## REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The highlight of the year has undoubtedly been the Government's announcement of a combined package of measures worth almost £1 million to support chess. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's ('DCMS') grant of £500,000 over two years will go to inspiring the next generation of chess players, bringing chess to a wider audience, whilst supporting the development of elite players and our best juniors. Plans will see investment in the ECF that will ensure players receive world-leading training and development opportunities and help make England a chess heavyweight again. Separately, there will be grants (£200,000) from the Department for Education for schools in disadvantaged areas to get more primary school children playing chess, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will fund the installation of 100 new chess tables in public spaces (£250,000). At the moment we have little information about how the funding will be

allocated while discussions continue with DCMS, but we expect more detail to emerge once those discussions are complete. As part of the discussions, we will need to consider how much of the funding can be applied to the ECF's existing funding for international chess, and to what extent we can potentially extend support for grassroots chess and other activities.

As well as its engagement with HM Government over the last few years, the Board has continued to pursue sponsorship opportunities to replace sponsors such as Tradewise and Chessable. It would be premature to announce anything at this stage, but we are quietly hopeful of being in a position to announce some positive developments in this regard in the not too distant future. As with HM Government funding, however, we are determined that sponsorship should not be used to fund our ongoing core expenditure run rate – the loss of DCMS funding many years back and the resulting disruption that that caused remains a painful reminder of the resulting dangers.

The ECF's finances and operations continue to be in a healthy state. Membership numbers as at the end of August 2023 stood at record levels, with 18,491 members in total (14,134 paying members) compared with 14,146 members in total (11,411 paying members) as at the end of August last year. This 'installed base' of paying members gives us the confidence to plan securely for the future, and we believe that rolling membership, alongside our membership benefits package, has been and will continue to be instrumental in helping us to continue to grow our membership numbers.

While on the subject of membership, Council members will have seen that the Board has submitted a membership options paper for Council's consideration following the request made by Council members at April's annual general meeting. For the avoidance of doubt, the Board would like to make clear that although its preferred option is to adopt a single membership fee model for the longer term (on the basis that the cost of providing most ECF membership benefits is broadly the same per member regardless of the amount of chess that a member plays, and that therefore those membership benefits should be available equally to all members regardless of the amount of chess played), it is for Council and not the Board to decide on its preferred funding model for the ECF. The Board's opinion is just one among many.

Over the board chess has recovered well from the depredations of the Covid pandemic, and the ECF has played its part in organising a number of events. The Board is happy that the suite of events organised annually by the ECF on its own account or on behalf of



the British Isles federations overall is now pretty much in place and complete, comprising as it does the British Championships, the British Rapidplay, the English Championships, the English Women's Championships, the English Senior Championships, the UK Open Blitz, the Cambridge International, the Grand Prix and the National Club Championships. A few highlights: the UK Open Blitz had a very successful inaugural outing, the new Cambridge International event sold out a month beforehand in February, the English Championships were re-established as national championship tournaments in May, the National Club Championships will return in October after a lengthy over the board absence, and we had record entries at this year's British Championships in Leicester during July.

Online chess also goes from strength to strength. We have record online membership numbers, with over 10,000 players in the three ECF clubs on Chess.com and Lichess, and a total of eight ECF online rated club tournaments across Chess.com and Lichess. ECF/England teams also participate in the Live Chess World and European leagues on Chess.com and the online Bundesliga and Liga Ibera on Lichess. We also held another very successful online marathon in support of the Red Cross humanitarian appeal for Ukraine. Our growing online community is based on ECF club membership, which has been key to attracting new ECF members.

On the international stage we have many successes to report:

- On the junior front England won three out of four sections at the Glorney Cup. Samar Dayal won gold in the Commonwealth Under 8 Championship, Bodhana Sivanandan won silver in the World Under 8 Girls, Zoe Veselow won silver in the European Under 8 Girls, and Bodhana Sivanandan won gold at the World Under 8 Girls Rapid and World Under 8 Girls Blitz. The following juniors achieved titles: Aaravamudhan Balaji (FM); Kenneth Hobson (CM); Nina Pert (WCM); and Bodhana Sivanandan (WCM).
- Our golden run at European and world seniors level continues. Congratulations to John Nunn on winning the European Seniors 65+ title to add to his current World 65+ title; John secured the title with 7/9 on tiebreak, ahead of four others including Terry Chapman who also had an excellent tournament. Congratulations are also due to Keith Arkell who came joint first with six others in the European Seniors 50+ section with 6½/9 but lost out on tiebreak to a regular winner of this title, GM Zurab Sturua. English team success at senior level continued as the England 50+ team stormed to victory at the end of last year at the European Senior Team Championships in Dresden, with Mark Hebden, Keith Arkell and John Emms scooping

individual gold board medals and Glenn Flear securing the individual silver board medal. And at July's European Senior Team Championships English teams did even better, with gold medals for the 50+ and 50+ Women's teams, silver for the 65+ team, and a plethora of individual board medals too numerous to mention here but which can be found at [Roll of Honour – recent ECF medallists \(teams\) – English Chess Federation](#).

Women's chess saw a year of solid progress in the main, although disappointingly female membership numbers still remain at less than 10% of overall membership numbers. Highlights include: A gold medal for the 50+ Women's team at July's European Senior Team Championships (see above); Harriet Hunt winning the second English Women's Online Blitz Championship; Lan Yao getting her final WGM norm at the British Championships; Sheila Jackson sharing the title in the 65+ British Championship; the setting up of the Djuna Tree Chess Fund, which awards scholarships to low-income female chess players; and the continuing success of The Lichess England Women's team, led by WGM Jovanka Houska and Caroline Robson - this is a well-subscribed club for women and girls on [Lichess](#) with a regular schedule of club and international events which currently has around 350 members. On a very serious downside, public allegations were made recently by a female chess player regarding entirely unacceptable behaviour from several people within the game. The ECF takes all such allegations seriously, and encourages anyone who has been harassed, threatened or suffered abuse at a chess tournament to contact the ECF in complete confidence so that action may be taken where possible, and if requested, for the matters to be taken to the relevant authorities where appropriate.

Rolling membership is now in place (not without some technical glitches along the way). In the Board's view it has been a great success overall by getting rid of the previous unfair arrangements whereby new members would in many cases receive only part of a year's benefits in return for a full annual subscription. It cannot be denied that although it is a much fairer system than the previous one its workings are not always as easy to understand as the previous system, and the Board has worked hard to publish clarifications as and when these have been needed.

We have continued to work on improving our benefits package, with our monthly magazine *ChessMoves*, the ECF yearbook, JustGo Rewards, and Chess & Bridge discounts worthy of particular mention. *ChessMoves* is now well established as our main vehicle for communicating with members, supported by our social

media presence, our website and periodic all-member emails.

As regards the day-to-day services that the ECF provides, the Board and Officers of the ECF, ably assisted by our Office staff, continue to work hard to maintain and develop the ECF's support services. The following (non-exhaustive) list gives an idea of the extent of these services:

- Maintaining and developing rating services;
- Maintaining and developing the league management system;
- Dealing with new and renewing members;
- Organising ECF tournaments and congresses;
- Producing the ECF's monthly magazine *ChessMoves* and annual yearbook;
- Keeping the ECF website up to date;
- Ensuring that facilities such as the events calendar, the registered coaches' scheme, the junior clubs development pathway, the clubs home page, the club finder facility etc are regularly reviewed and updated;
- Maintaining and developing our complaints/safeguarding/safe space policies;
- Working closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust;
- Working closely with Chess in Schools and the Community on prison outreach work;
- Supporting international team trips;
- Running three ECF online clubs;
- Providing training and refresher course for arbiters.

The annual ECF awards recognise the achievements of many of our volunteers during the year. This year awards were made to Bob Jones, Rupert Jones, Alex McFarlane, Peter Purland and Kevin Staveley (President's Award for Services to Chess), Chris Lewis (Contribution to Junior Chess), Caroline Robson (Contribution to Women's Chess), Leeds Junior Chess Club (Club of the Year), Ringwood Chess Club (Small Club of the Year), University of Warwick (Congress of the Year), and Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club (Contribution to Chess in the Community). Our thanks go to them and as always to all our other volunteers who work so hard in the cause of our great game. We would also like to pay tribute to volunteer Carl Portman's outreach work with prisons; Carl has visited several prisons this year including HMP Littlehey, Hewell, Gartree and Dartmoor, and reminds us that the latter even made him a special chess cake for his visit, as seen in *ChessMoves*. Carl even managed to get permission for the BBC and the Justice Department to film at HMP Hewell, and the ECF were mentioned on BBC Breakfast, Radio 5 Live and many other stations, with people across

the world seeing the BBC's video. Carl tells us that he continues to receive many letters from prisoners, telling him how chess is changing lives, and imploring him on behalf of the ECF to continue this work.

Finally, a quick word on the accompanying Strategy Statement. This has been reviewed and updated, but no fundamental changes have been made. The Board has come to the view that a number of the objectives contained in the document are either not achievable or not measurable in any realistic way, and that in any event it does not guide the behaviour of the Board and other ECF officials in any particularly meaningful way. We will accordingly regroup next year and reflect on whether a shorter and altogether more focussed and measurable strategy document can be developed.

## Strategy Statement and Business Plan

### STRATEGY

#### Furthering the Cause of English Chess

The ECF will lead the development and organisation of chess for all players in England and our international teams. This will encompass:

- Extending the number of active competitive and social chess players in England, building on the wave of interest in chess on both nationally and internationally.
- Increasing the number of juniors playing competitive chess and transitioning to becoming adult competitive players.
- Providing a clear pathway for junior chess players to learn and develop their chess playing from beginners through to national squad level, and to achieve titles in due course.
- Encouraging the development of women's, student and social chess as part of a wider commitment to increasing the diversity of participation in chess.
- Embedding the development of online chess.
- Increasing the awareness of chess and its wider social benefits outside the ECF membership.
- Working with HM Government and other organisations to improve funding, support, and ideally recognition of chess as a sport.
- Supporting the promotion of chess as a national game/ sport with much increased levels of chess content available and shared via the ECF's web site, magazine, social media and broadcast/ streaming platforms.



- Supporting other chess organisations including leagues, clubs and congresses.
- Keeping our rating system under regular review.
- Developing the number of elite players and individual players of exceptional talent.

### **Priority areas**

Our ambition is to increase participation in chess among women of all standards, with a stretch target of 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within four years, and to facilitate the transition from junior to adult to senior.

We will develop and refine programmes to encourage participation among female players, students and junior players and to help them achieve their potential.

We will establish a clear pathway for chess learning and development, including a national curriculum for chess, working closely with junior coaches across England and in collaboration with schools.

We will build on the recently announced financial package from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to maintain and improve our support to English players taking part in international competitions, with the aspiration of re-establishing England as a force in the chess world.

We welcome the growth in online chess and the increasing level of participation amongst English players. We will continue to organise online events, providing a rating service and supporting online leagues and congresses.

Our biggest asset is our membership. We will improve the attractiveness of membership through good communication and enhanced membership services and offerings for all forms of chess that make joining the ECF an attractive proposition independently of playing rated games. We recognise that the ECF needs to grow its membership and improve the attractiveness of the game in order to sustain a viable future. The Board will continue to focus on these targets.

We will work with member and other organisations to grow chess activity at all levels across England, focussing in particular on women's, student, junior and social chess.

We will keep the operation of the membership system under review, ensuring the system is well maintained and remains fit for purpose.

We will continue to provide support to chess organisers, and we will organise and run a programme of national competitions, including the British Championships, the

UK Open Blitz Championships, the County Championships, the Women's English Championships and our various ECF online club events and National Championships.

We will increase the profile of chess in England via the ECF's website, social media platforms, monthly magazine and broadcast channels covering major over the board and online events and other forms of chess content.

We will continue to work with HM Government and other organisations to improve funding, support, and ideally recognition of chess as a sport.

Commercial sponsorship generates additional income that can help us to make extra investment in areas such as junior, women's and international chess. We will seek out new sponsorship opportunities and build on our relationship with existing sponsors and support them to build their brands.

We will actively engage with other chess organisations in England and elsewhere to improve coordination, efficiency and knowledge-sharing across English chess.

### **Business Planning**

The Board will produce an annual business plan that will set out how we propose to deliver the priorities set out in this statement. As part of the business planning process we will refine our strategic intentions and financial planning in consultation with Council and in accordance with prevailing circumstances.

### **The Board**

Directors will work collegially both within the Board and with other chess organisations. We will encourage a culture where we actively invite comment and feedback. We will ensure our governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose and will continue work on achieving more effective Board operation.

### **Funding**

Our core activities will continue to be funded through membership fees. We will use sponsorship and donations/bequests to support strategic and developmental projects and initiatives, ensuring that sponsors' own objectives are addressed. We will avoid the use of external funding as a substitute for core activity funding. We will work closely with the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in particular regarding funding for strategic and developmental projects and initiatives.

## Office

We are committed to maintaining the central functions of an ECF Office. The Office endeavours to provide a high quality and efficient service to ECF members and other chess organisations and gives support to ECF directors and officials as required. Staff will be offered opportunities for professional development on an individual basis.

## Communications

Initiatives such as introducing our monthly *ChessMoves* magazine, developing our social media presence, overhauling the website, and direct emailing of members and Council have helped to improve communication to members and need to be improved further. We want stronger partnerships with chess players and chess organisations and will continue to develop communications across a range of platforms and seek greater engagement with members to help shape our policies and plans.

## BUSINESS PLAN

### Finance

Objective: Support the overall objectives of the English Chess Federation and the agreed plans of the Executive Directors.

- Ensure that the ECF's finances are sufficient to enable the ECF's infrastructure to be maintained and developed.
- Grow income in such a way as to enable the Board's plans to be achieved, taking into account funds received from donations, sponsorship and other sources.
- Use membership income to fund ongoing operational expenditure, using sponsorship, bequests and donations for new initiatives and developments.
- Maintain a reserve of £50,000 over the five year planning cycle.
- Seek to achieve an annual break-even financial position over the five year planning cycle.
- Ensure that all finance activities are performed transparently, efficiently and effectively.
- Ensure an appropriate division of financial processes between the Office and our external bookkeepers.
- Continue to develop our use of Xero functionality.
- Ensure that accounting records and accounts are maintained in an accurate and timely manner.
- Now that the process of transferring the Permanent Invested Fund to the Chess Trust is complete,

simplify the overall financial structure of the ECF, the BCF, Chess Centre Ltd and the Permanent Invested Fund.

- Promote our direct debit facility for the membership scheme.
- Continue to improve the presentation of financial information to directors and to members.

### Governance

Objective: Ensure that the ECF's governance processes and constitutional structure are effective and fit for purpose.

- Maintain compliance with most appropriate governance practice.
- Keep constitutional documentation under regular review.

### Junior

Objective: Improve participation levels in and the profile of junior chess in England and reduce the current rate of attrition in the transition to adulthood.

- Implement the Junior Development Pathway to create a structured and formal progression plan for junior chess players which incorporates existing coaches, junior clubs, associations and programmes.
- Support the Chess Trust as it continues to develop its Accelerator Programme for our elite junior players and the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust in its support for the British Championships and a range of other junior initiatives.
- Develop and embed the National Curriculum as a basis for a clear learning and development pathway.
- Put in place the processes whereby junior organisations can apply for Academy status on an 'open market' basis.
- Encourage junior chess organisations' activities in England and promote the development of collaborative working.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve the quality of support to junior players.
- Develop competitive chess in schools with a particular emphasis on those pupils aged over 11.
- Develop chess playing opportunities that encourage girls to continue playing chess in adulthood.
- Encourage adult chess clubs and leagues to integrate, support and develop junior players.
- Identify and work with top junior players to increase participation in non-ECF events, in particular FIDE-rated tournaments.



## Women

Objective: Work towards delivering our ambition to increase participation in chess among women of all standards to 15% of ECF membership (including ECF Supporters) within four years.

- Increase participation in the English Women's Championships.
- Work with independent organisers to increase female participation in non-ECF events and in particular FIDE-rated events.
- Increase the profile of women's chess so that girls/teenagers/women have something to aspire to.
- Reach out to non-chess women's organisations to encourage female take-up of and participation in chess.
- Extend take-up of the Supporter category among girls and women.
- Continue to implement the proposals in the paper 'Development of Women's Chess: Progress Plan' that was presented at the October 2020 Council meeting.

## Home

Objective: Support the Board in its goal of increasing the perceived added value that the ECF provides to its members.

- Continue to run a programme of ECF national competitions including the British Chess Championships, the County Championships, the English Women's Championships, the English Seniors Championships and the UK Open Blitz Championships, with additional competitions added where there is sufficient demand from players.
- Maintain and develop the National Coaches Register.
- Improve support to clubs (improve Club Finder functionality, continue to promote our website facility for clubs without their own websites, provide advice/guidance modules on specific topics etc).
- Continue the development of and support for the ECF's LMS (League Management System) as a core system for club and league organisers who run over the board or online events.
- Continue the development of official ECF online chess events at national and international level, widening participation among junior, female, student and social players in particular.
- Provide more effective support and advice to independent event organisers.

- Provide effective support, advice and training for new and existing arbiters.
- Maintain official anti-cheating procedures for ECF-organised events. Extend take-up of the Supporter category across the student/casual/social/online chess playing population.
- Increase use of social media.

## Events

Objective: Plan, manage and run the agreed programme of ECF national over the board events including British and English Championships, women's events and junior events to a consistent standard of delivery, building on best practice both nationally and internationally.

- Take overall responsibility for the operation of ECF events, working closely with event organisers.
- Ensure best practice approaches are deployed across all ECF-organised events.
- Monitor and review how events have run and identify and address improvement opportunities.
- Consider bidding for FIDE online events at youth level.

## Membership

Objective: Oversee the operation and effectiveness of the membership system and ensure that it is maintained and improved as necessary.

- Review whether JustGo is still the most appropriate membership system for the ECF.
- Extend special offers for ECF members with third party companies as a membership retention/acquisition initiative.
- Improve communication to and facilities for consultation with corporate and individual members.
- Improve the documentation of the requirements for the administration of membership and of the operation of the new system.
- Identify selling points which might make membership attractive to individuals who are not themselves competitive players.
- Continue to develop the monthly rating system's functionality.
- Review junior membership arrangements, including the effectiveness of our free first year membership offer, with a view to improving junior membership retention.
- Complete the move to a full membership organisation and review whether game fee and pay-to-play fees can be replaced with a flat fee per event approach.

- Promote our Supporter category.
- Promote the use of the ECF League Management System by affiliated leagues, and consider enhancements to the system, including those necessitated by its increasing use for online chess.

### **International**

Objective: Improve the performance of our international teams and encourage the development of our top players.

- Work with the Directors of Junior and Women's Chess to identify and nurture top talent.
- Identify and use sponsorship money to improve conditions, training etc for international players.
- Develop England's presence in online international events.
- Review how the ECF can better capture the views and insights of top players in England.
- Funding permitting, organise more norm events for our players who have potential to reach GM/WGM or IM/WIM level.
- Seek to foster an environment that supports our leading players to develop a career in chess while also supporting others to maximise their potential while developing a career outside chess.
- Continue our support for Ukrainian and other refugees to this country.

### **External Relations**

Objective: Increase public recognition of and funding for chess.

- Build on the engagement with HM Government and other organisations to further recognition of and funding for chess, including if possible recognition of chess as a sport, so that chess can be developed more effectively in England.

### **Online**

Objective: Continue to build on the strength of our online presence developed during the pandemic.

- Continue to develop and grow our ECF online members clubs with regular events on the major online platforms.
- Support and develop English online community clubs including junior and women's clubs and events.
- Continue to run online National Championships and competitions including the English Online Blitz, Rapid and Bullet Championships, the Online Counties Championships and related competitions, and the English Chess Marathons.

- Continue the development of the ECF's programme of online affiliated leagues and clubs to support non-ECF online events and allow these to be rated.
- Continue to develop the online rating system including integration of the rating process with the new monthly rating system and production of a combined listing showing OTB and online ratings along the lines of the USCF model.
- Organise and publicise participation of English teams in online international events.
- Promote daily chess at international level including participation in World and European online daily leagues.

### **Office**

Objective: Continue to provide a high quality service to stakeholders.

- Continue to develop the yearbook as an annual news digest.
- Continue the development of *ChessMoves* content to reinforce it as the ECF's main communication vehicle to members.
- Maintain and develop the ECF's website and our social media and broadcast channels.
- Develop office processes to cope with development initiatives, changing demand from members, and new staffing arrangements and work patterns.
- Continue to provide a responsive service for member and player enquiries via telephone, email and online forms.
- Fully document all important Office procedures.
- Complete the project to diarise all key Office internal and external deadlines.



## Home News 2023 - Courtesy of Chess Magazine

### January 2023

**HASTINGS** – Along the Masters, there were, as usual, a great many other tournaments held as part of the 96th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress (December 28 - January 8). IM Brandon Clarke clearly likes to challenge himself, a bit like Reuben Fine did. Not content with scoring 7/10 in the Masters, Clarke also amassed 15/15 in the two morning Opens (worth £300 each), as well as the closing weekender (first prize: £500), culminating in a win over Spanish GM Oleg Korneev.



IM Brandon Clarke

**Christmas AM Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 5/5, 2-4 Adam Ashton (Sowerby Bridge), Sam Jukes (Cardiff), Jürgen Brustkern (Germany) 3½.

**Christmas AM Under-1900:** 1-2 Supratit Banerjee (Coulsdon), Ted Filby (Hastings) 4, 3 Kit Blades (Brighton) 3½.

**Christmas AM Under-1700:** 1-5 Marc Bryant, Derek Cosens, Mason Woodhams (all Hastings), John Constable (Bude), James Fazzolari (Margate) 3½.

**Christmas PM Under-2125:** 1 Billy Fellowes (Coventry) 4, 2-3 Subhani Ashraf (India), Jeffrey Boardman (Haywards Heath) 3½.

**Christmas PM Under-1800:** 1 Louis Buckland (Lewes) 4½, 2 Leo Woning (Bexhill) 4, 3-4 Robert Wall (East Grinstead), Michelle Chan (St Albans) 3½.

**Christmas PM Under-1600:** 1 Kritan Boggarapu (Edinburgh) 4, 2-4 Douglas Forbes (Gerrards Cross), William Tracey (Bexhill), Louie Ellson (Kent) 3½.

**Blitz:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 8½/9, 2 Gabor Nagy (Hungary) 8, 3 Frederick Waldhausen Gordon (Edinburgh) 7.

**New Year AM Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 5/5, 2 Michael Green (Loughborough) 3½, 3 Helge Hjort (Hendon) 3.

**New Year AM Under-1900:** 1 Carl Gartside (Macclesfield) 4, 2-3 Henry Shaw (Crowborough), Paul Kelly (Hastings) 3½.

**New Year AM Under-1700:** 1-2 Marc Bryant (Hastings), Dale Westcott (Neath) 4, 3 Paul Mottram (Wigston) 3½.

**New Year PM Under-2125:** 1 Carl Gartside (Macclesfield) 4, 2-3 Alaa Gamal (Basildon), Jerry Anstead (Tunbridge Wells) 3½.

**New Year PM Under-1800:** 1 Paul Jackson 4½, 2-5 Brendan O’Gorman, Paul Bloom (all Coulsdon), Hambel Willow (West Nottingham), Adrian Cload (Hastings) 3½.

**New Year PM Under-1600:** 1-2 Robert Smart (Eastbourne), Jan Petter Opedal (Norway) 4, 3-4 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford), Jennifer Goldsmith (Harrow) 3½.

**Weekend Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 5/5, 2-4 Aron Saunders (Bristol), Marta Garcia Martin (Spain), Martin Altenhof (Germany) 4.

**Weekend Major:** 1-4 Brian Gosling (East Budleigh), Mark Abbott (Exmouth), Okwose Marc Obi (Bedford), Jack Virgin (Charlton) 4.

**Weekend Intermediate:** 1 Elizabeth Finn (Sussex) 4½, 2-3 David Rogers (Charlton), Alan Prince (Brentwood) 4.

**Weekend Minor:** 1-2 Beni Sisupalan (Barnet), William Tracey (Bexhill) 4, 3 Lars Schiefler (Kent) 4.

**HULL** – The Hull Rapidplay on January 15 clashed with the main divisions of the 4NCL, but not Division Three East in which the city’s team plays, and was a huge success, with 101 entries, 23 of which were juniors. Ukrainian teenagers certainly did well in the Open.

**Open:** 1 Artem Lutsko (Ukraine) 5/6, 2 Maksym Larchikov (Hull), Gavyn Cooper (Holme-on-Spalding-Moor) 4½.

**Major:** 1-2 Paul May (Alwoodley), Chris Matthews (East Hull) 5, 3-5 Kyle Pelling (Heywood), David Wells (York), Gerald Cuaresma (Huddersfield) 4½.

**Minor:** 1-4 Shriaansh Ganti (Wakefield), Benedikt Pitel, David Stothard, Hussam Al Haidar (all Hull) 5.

**TELFORD** – The Shropshire Congress made a welcome return to the headquarters of the Wrekin Housing Group (January 6-8) and saw FM Jonathan Blackburn triumph after defeating top seed IM John Cox.

**Open:** 1 Jonathan Blackburn (Holmes Chapel) 4½/5, 2 Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 4, 3-5 Charles Morris (Wrexham), Jonathan Underwood (Seaton), Peter Ackley (Chesterfield) 3½.

**Major:** 1-3 Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Joe Lees-Conway(Stourbridge), Oleg Cukovs (Poulton-le-Fylde) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Ewan Herd (Leeds) 5, 2-5 Paul Doherty (Olham), Joe Rastal (Worcester), Adithya Vaidyanathan (Birmingham), Carmel Barwick (Crewe) 5.

**Minor:** 1-2 Sam Hollands (Shrewsbury), Sean Tavenor (Staffordshire) 4½, 3-5 Sam Fowkes (Birmingham), Jeff Wilson (Oldham), Amitesh Purushothaman (Coventry) 4.

## February 2023

**BELFAST** – The Maynard Sinclair Pavilion again played host to the Williamson Shield (January 20-22), which went on tie-break to Mandar Tahmankar of hosts Civil Service Chess Club after he and Scott Crockett (Strand) had both finished on 4/5. Danny Mallaghan was back in third, a further half point adrift, while the Intermediate was won by Mikolaj Liszewski with 4½/5 by half a point from Adam Rushe.

**BLACKPOOL** – The popular Blackpool Congress was held a little earlier than usual at the Imperial Hotel, which resulted in an unfortunate clash with the 4NCL over the weekend of February 10-12, although only the Open was slightly weakened.

**Open:** 1 Ameet Ghazi (Sutton Coldfield) 5/5, 2-4 Martin Mitchell (Poulton-le-Fylde), Andrew Burnett (Newcastle), Aitor Garcia-Ruiz (Bristol University) 4.

**Major:** 1-2 Jonathan McKay (Glasgow), Paul Doherty (Bolton) 4½, 3-5 Bob Newton (Rochdale), James McDade (Inverness), Damien McCarthy (Culcheth) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Luke Maher (Liverpool) 4½, 2-7 Mohammed Khan (Ashton-under-Lyne), Randolph Donohue (Leeds), Qixiang Han (Coulsdon), Roy Lawrence (Sutton Coldfield), Kevin Winter (Ilkley), Robert Kane (West London) 4.

**Minor:** 1-4 Alexander Kairat (Battersea), Samuel Greig (Thornaby), Stephen Gaskell (Rushall), Lion Lebedev (Barnet) 4½.

**Standard:** 1 Paul Curran (Heywood) 5, 2-4 Simon Kerridge (Bearsden), Neil Hambly (Hull), Ben Plimley (Oxford) 4½.

**BRIDGEND** – FM Ioan Rees made a successful comeback at the Welsh New Year Congress (January 6-8).

**Open:** 1 Ioan Rees 5/5, 2 Alex Bullen 4, 3-7 Joe Fathallah (all Cardiff), Stephen Homer (Exeter), Conor Gay (Battersea), Jason Garcia (Llanelli), Chris Dixon (Gwent) 3.

**Major:** 1-2 Les Philpin (Swansea), Mohammed Binesmael (Cardiff) 4, 3-4 Yaroslav Sharhorodsky (Cardiff), Jack Hannigan (Wales) 3½.

**BRISTOL** – Leading Bristol player James Cobb defeated fellow IM James Sherwin in the final round of the Bristol

Blitz on February 5th to triumph with 7½/9, with Oscar Garcia (Downend) and Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) half a point behind.

**EDINBURGH** – Top seed FM Alan Tate (Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh) triumphed at the Lothians Allegro on January 15th, his 5/5 leaving him a whole point ahead of Isaac Browning (Wandering Dragons), with Lakudkar Shubham (Stirling), Pisut Prayoonthamrongthiti (St Andrews), Mark Orr (Wandering Dragons), Craig Thomson (Edinburgh) all sharing third a further half point back. Rithvik Deepak Ambattu (Edinburgh) then triumphed with 5/5 at the Edinburgh Park Allegro, a Scottish Chess Tour event on February 4th. Mike Chisholm (Bank of Scotland, Edinburgh) and Rishi Vijayakumar (Dundee) shared second a point behind, while the Under-1600 section went to Vikram Vedanth (Edinburgh) and Bernard Cassidy (Hamilton) with 4½/5. The Scottish Chess Tour were also responsible for the Renfrew Allegro the next day, which saw IM Angus Dunnington (Glasgow) rack up 5/5 in the Open to finish a point ahead of Rob Colston (Bearsden) and Nicolas Skettos (Glasgow), while top honours in the Under-1600 went to Alan Sharp (Bearsden), Peter Knak-Watt (Glasgow), Tavish Railwani (Kirkintilloch), all also with 4/5.

**FAREHAM** – David Pye triumphed with 5/6 at the Castle Chess Fareham Congress (January 20-22).

**Open:** 1 David Pye (Cosham) 5/6, 2 Theo Khoury (Maidenhead) 4½, 3 Roman Mitra (Southampton) 4. Alan Tate likes to shock grandmasters but had to make do with 100% at the Lothians Allegro. **Major:** 1-2 Simon Arnold (York), Thomas Anderson 4½, 3-5 Patrik Baron, Niclas Hordnes (all Southampton), Philip Maul (Reading) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Fraidon Shabgard 5, 2 Pietro Silke Balerna (both Southampton) 4½, 3-4 Kevin Flux (Isle of Wight), Keven Lamb (Chandler's Ford) 4.

**HARROGATE** – The 4NCL Congress in Harrogate (January 20-22) was sold out well in advance. Hull and Warwick University's Joe Varley belied his FIDE rating of 1864 as he completed a fine comeback from losing to Tim Wall in the opening round by defeating FM Andrew Burnett to join a five-way tie for first, which also included the in-form Paul Townsend.

**Open:** 1-5 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Nigel Davies (Southport), Steven Jones (Basingstoke), Paul Townsend (York), Joe Varley (Hull) 4/5.

**Under-2200:** 1 Jack Pilley (Syston) 5, 2 Andrew Mata (Ilkley) 4½, 3-5 Luke Gostelow (Leeds), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough), Vivien Webster (Halifax) 4.

**Under-1700:** 1 Jordan Lee (Liverpool) 5, 2-7 Daniel Meredith, Norman Andrews (both York), Bernie Tedd



(Birmingham), Shriaansh Ganti (Ilkley), Geoff Ainsley (Calderdale), Sergiu Railean (Moldova) 4.

### M. P. Townsend - T. Wall

Harrogate 2023

Benko Gambit

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 ♖c2 bxc4 5 ♘c3 g6 6 e4 d6 7 ♜xc4 ♜g7 8 ♘f3 ♘fd7 9 0-0 0-0 10 b3 ♘b6 11 ♜e2 a5 12 ♜b2 ♜d7 13 a4!

Giving up control of b4, but largely keeping Black's pieces on the queenside under control as White emerges from the opening with a pleasant edge.

13... ♘a6 14 ♘b5 ♘b4 15 ♖d2 ♜xb2 16 ♖xb2 ♜g4



17 ♘fd4?

17 ♖c3 was one way to maintain control, since 17...f5? would run into 18 ♘g5!.

17... ♜xe2?!

A little meek and a player as dynamic as Wall would normally have preferred 17...cxd4! 18 ♜xg4 d3 when Black should be OK with ... ♘d7 up next.

18 ♘xe2 ♘d7?!

Another overly routine decision after which White is quick to take full control of the centre.

19 ♜ad1 ♘f6 20 ♘ec3



This is very much a Benko gone wrong for Black as both ♘a3-c4 and f2-f4 followed by e4-e5 loom. Townsend prosecutes his advantage mercilessly.

20... ♜c8 21 ♖e2 ♖b6?! 22 ♘a3! ♜fe8 23 ♘c4 ♖a6 24 ♘b5 ♘d7 25 f4 ♘b6 26 f5!

Route one stuff and, well, why not with the black king rather short of defenders?

26... ♘d7 27 ♖f2 ♜f8 28 ♖h4 ♜ce8

Desperation in view of 28... ♘f6 29 ♘bxd6! exd6 30 ♖xf6 and 28...f6 29 fxg6 hxg6 30 ♖g4.

29 ♘c7 ♖a7 30 ♘xe8 ♜xe8 31 fxg6 fxg6 32 ♖g4 ♘f8 33 ♖f3 1-0

**KIDLINGTON** – Top seed Marcus Harvey won the £250 first prize at the Kidlington Congress (February 4-5).



IM Marcus Harvey

**Open:** 1 Marcus Harvey (Witney) 4½/5, 2-4 Yichen Han (Oxford), Peter Large (Epsom), Kim Yew Chan (Muswell Hill) 4.

**Major:** 1 Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 5, 2-6 Roger de Coverly (Bourne End), Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Adam Sieczkowski (Witney), Robert Dean (Saltaire), Santiago German (Warwick University) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1-4 Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), Mal Waddell (Banbury), Chris Carpenter (Herne Bay), Gareth Stevens (Cumnor) 4.

**Minor:** 1-3 Senith Gunarathne (Nottingham), Krish Keshari (Reading), Graham Fletcher (Swindon) 4½.

**LEICESTER** – 12-year-old Leicestershire junior Kajus Mikalajunas stunned Mark Hebden in the final round of the H.E. Atkins Memorial Rapidplay at the Mountsorrel Memorial Centre on January 15th.

**Open:** 1 Bruce Baer (Birmingham) 5/6, 2-3 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Raju Sooraj (Leicestershire) 6, 2 Matthew Connor (Anstey) 4½, 3 Daniel Wilkinson (Braunstone) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Temitope Sanni 5, 2-4 Rhys Edwards (both Coventry), Stephen Gaskell (Rushall), Nick London (Radcliffe) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Simon White (Witham) 6, 2-3 UR Jyothika (Leicestershire), Sathsara Dissanayake (Wigston) 5.

**Junior:** 1 Yuvraj Sadhra (Anstey) 6, 2-3 Diah Patel (Coventry), Arav Ajaykumar (Leicestershire) 5.

**LONDON** – The London Junior Championships took place at Northwick Park over December 17-18 and 28-30.

**FIDE-rated Open:** 1 Alex Browning (Hammersmith, Under-21 Champion) 5½/6, 2 Senthilnathan Yogit (Uxbridge) 5, 3-6 John Merriman, Aaravamudhan Balaji, James Merriman (all Orpington), Nishchal Thatte (Ealing, Under-18 Champion) 4½; Girls Under-18 and Under-21 Champion: Nina Pert (Brentwood) 4.

**Under-16:** 1 Max Pert (Brentwood) 5½, 2 Eoin Moore (Kent) 5, 3-4 Anirudh Shidlagatta (Richmond), Kabir Singh Ahuja (India) 4½.

**Under-14:** 1-3 Alexey Lapidus (Richmond), Josh Sharma (Maidenhead), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 5/6.

**Under-12:** 1 Alfred Soulier (Wimbledon) 7½/9, 2 Oleg Verbytski (Charlton) 7, 3-6 George Zhao, Lion Lebedev (both Barnet), Pengxiao Zhu (Exeter), Luk Danbe (Croydon) 6½.

**Under-10:** 1-2 Advait Keerthi Kumar (Watford), George Zhao (Barnet) 6½/7, 3 Alexander Horwood (Harrow) 5½.

**Under-8:** 1 Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (Surrey) 6½, 2-3 Ayan Pradhan (Coulsdon), Ethan Bogerd (Richmond) 6.

**Northwick Park Open:** 1-3 Remy Rushbrooke (Pimlico), Oscar Pollack (Hendon), Jamie Horton (3Cs) 4/5.

**Northwick Park Major:** 1 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill) 4, 2-4 Salvatore Pepe (Hendon), Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon), Egor Latypov (Chelmsford) 3½.

**Northwick Park Minor:** 1 Sebastian Merchant (Sussex) 4½, 2 Taylor Duke 4, 3-4 Joshua Davis (both Southend), Nigel Collins (Aylesbury) 3½.

**Christmas Major:** 1 Rida Ruqayyah 6/6, 2 Mae Catabay (both Colchester) 4½, 3-6 Greg Billeness (Hammersmith), Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow), Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Mohammed Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 4.

**Christmas Minor:** 1-2 Sebastian Mokhber-Garcia (Surrey), Teo Saunders (Kent) 5, 3 Yixuan Dong (Middlesex) 4½. Peter Finn top-scored at the Golders Green Rapidplay on February 11th.

**Open:** 1 Peter Finn (High Wycombe) 5½/6, 2-3 Peter Large (Epsom), Connor Clarke (Middlesex) 5.

**Major:** 1-3 Yash Mahajan (Barnet), Alexander Funk (Hendon), Kilian Teschke-Panah (Brighton) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Ethan Bogerd (Richmond) 6, 2-3 Antoine Clark (Hendon), BR Gagan (India) 5.

There was also another Adam Raoof, Jo Wildman, Lance Leslie-Smith and Satish Gaekwad run Golders Green Rapidplay on January 7th.

**Open:** 1-2 Jovica Radovanovic (Sandhurst), Abhinav Bathula (LSE) 5/6, 3 Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Shrihan Koppuravuri (Aylesbury) 5, 2-4 Salvatore Pepe (Hendon), Prabodha Ariyaratne (Surrey), Arnav Kumar (Coulsdon) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Daniel Dupuis (Battersea) 5½, 2-3 Christopher Adams (Golders Green), Arjun Bharadwaj (north-west London) 5.

Arbiter Lance Leslie-Smith also helped Adam Raoof to run the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on February 14th, where Ben Keohane (London) sprang a small shock to win with 5½/6, with Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) and Ilya Iyengar (Hendon) back on 5. Cherniaev had done better though in the January 24th edition of Muswell Hill where he tied for first with fellow grandmaster Bogdan Lalic on 5½/6. There was also an Ealing FIDE-rated congress over the weekend of January 28<sup>th</sup> and 29th.

**Under-2300:** 1-2 Stephen Prior (Grantham), Manmay Chopra (Harrow) 4/5, 3 Ilya Iyengar (Hendon) 3½.

**Under-1900:** 1-2 Okwose Obi (Bedford), Marek Simon (Swansea) 4, 3 Alireza Manuchehri (London) 3½.

**Under-1600:** 1 Aram Swiatkowski (Meaday) 5, 2 Ruairi Isaacs (Streatham) 4½, 3-5 Finbar McLoughlin (Liverpool), Daniel Shek (Crowthorne), Rohan Campion (Hammersmith) 4.

The MindSports Centre played host to the London League Congress (February 3-5).

**Open:** 1 Itgelt Khuyagtsogt (Mongolia) 5/5, 2-3 Theo Khoury (Maidenhead), Jacob Yoon (Barnet) 4.

**Major:** 1 Ivan Omelchenko (Ukraine) 5, 2-3 Djuna Tree (Battersea), Javier Ramos Cabrera (Hendon) 4.

**Rapid:** 1 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 6/6, 2-3 Ayman Hammam (Kings Head), Ilya Iyengar (Hendon) 4½.

**NEWMARKET** – Top seed Alan Merry won the EACU Closed Championship in Newmarket (January 21-22).

**Open:** 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2-3 Agoston Mihalik (Cambridge), Simon Roe (St Albans) 4.

**Under-1950:** 1 David Payne (Norwich) 4, 2-6 Ruben Evans (Linton), Samuel Gaffney (Lowestoft), Piotr Wasilak (Newmarket), James Pack (Bury St Edmunds), Francis Bowers (Peterborough) 3½.

**Under-1650:** 1 Peter Stone (Norwich) 4, 2-3 John Weston (Lewes), Buster Husband (Medway) 3½.

**NOTTINGHAM** – A record 156 players took part in the Nottingham Rapidplay on January 29th, including many new to over-the-board play. Our congratulations to John Swain and his fellow organisers. The titled players by no means had everything their way, David Coates defeating Jonah Willow and Shabir Okhai overcoming Mark

Hebden, while Ameet Ghasi drew with Sooraj Raju, but won his remaining games to scoop the £250 top prize.

**Open:** 1 Ameet Ghasi (Sutton Coldfield) 5½/6, 2 Dong Bao Nghia (Battersea) 5, 3-5 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Mohammed Ismail (Coulsdon), Hugh Murphy (Rushden) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Tom Wills (Sheffield) 5, 2-5 Christopher Lewis (Newport), Adman Tolon (Nottinghamshire), Benjamin Humphries (West Bridgford), Max Dooley (Beeston) 4½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Andrea Passariello (Abingdon) 6, 2-3 Tom Dabner (Nottingham University), Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds) 5.

**Minor:** 1-4 Jeffrey Bryant (Cumnor), Gavin Dow (Radcliffe), Sean Tavener (Staffordshire), Jyothika Reghu (Leicestershire) 5.

**Improvers:** 1-3 Aashita Roychowdhury (Leeds), Mick Frings (Nottingham Central), Matthew Stokes (Nottingham) 5.

**SLIGO** – English raider Jonathan Pein drew with GM Alex Baburin in the final round as he scooped the €600 top prize at the Sligo Spring Chess Tournament (February 3-5).

**Master:** 1 Jonathan Pein (Wood Green) 4½/5, 2-5 Evgeniya Doluhanova, Oleg Gubanov (both Ukraine), Alexander Baburin (Dublin), Rustem Abdullayev (Dun Laoghaire) 3½.

**Championship:** 1-2 Lukian Hushpit (Donegal), Dean Gorman (Lisburn) 4½, 3-5 Ross Beatty (Dublin), Gavin Sheahan (Dublin), Denis O'Connell (Cork) 4.

## March 2023

**BIRMINGHAM** – Ameet Ghasi put a shock early defeat to young Coventry star Jude Shearsby behind him as he triumphed at the Birmingham Rapidplay on March 12th, which was again hosted by the Quinborne Community Centre and played with a 15+10 time control.

**Open:** 1 Ameet Ghasi (Sutton Coldfield) 6/7, 2 Tomasz Sygnowski (Wolverhampton) 5½, 3 Jude Shearsby (Kenilworth) 5.

**Major:** 1 Francis Sagyaman (Coventry) 6½, 2 Piotr Swiech (Wrexham) 5½, 3 Ovidiu Angheluta (Romania) 5.

**Intermediate:** 1 Vinuda Gunathilake (Birmingham) 7, 2 Will Taylor (Solihull) 5½, 3-7 Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds), Richard Stokes (Stamford), James Luong (Sheffield), Toby Bates (Aberystwyth), Michael Connor (Bolton) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Yaseen Rajjoub 6, 2-5 Henry Wood (both Coventry), Akshath Shivakumar (Solihull), Kanvansh Dhingra (Sutton Coldfield), Vassily Sagyaman (Rugby) 5½.

**CARDIFF** – The Mercure Cardiff North Hotel hosted the South Wales Spring Under-2400 Congress alongside the Welsh Junior Championships (March 3-5). Yuxuan Wu

became the Under-16 Champion, the Under-13 Championship saw Farouq Nasir and David Belochkin tie for first, and the Under-11 Champion is Lucas Zheng, while local player Alex Bullen won the top prize of £200 in the Under-2400 section.

**COVENTRY** – There was a four-way tie in the top section at the Coventry Open (February 18-19), including two swiftly improving teenagers, Jude Shearsby and Dimitrios Zakarian.

**Open:** 1-4 Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham), Martin Burrows (Wigston), Jude Shearsby (Kenilworth), Dimitrios Zakarian (Oxford) 4/5.

**Major:** 1 Santiago German (Warwick University) 4½, 2-5 Obi Okwose (Bedford), Ian Deswarte (Guildford), David Smith (Redditch), Tom He (Birmingham) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Dhairya Pandya (Coventry) 4½, 2-4 Chris Bernard (Crystal Palace), Neil Homer (Swindon), Nigel Morris (Leamington Spa) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Vassily Sagyaman (Rugby) 4½, 2-4 Henry Wood (Coventry), Chaniru Ranasinghe (Birmingham), Josh Leland (Derby) 4.

**DAVENTRY** – As we prepared to go to press, The Sharks had just scored a major 4½-3½ victory over Wood Green at the fourth weekend of the 4NCL (March 18-19). Defending champions Chess.com Manx Liberty were rather fortunate to prevail by that same score over Cheddleton before winning again the next day to head up the table with one weekend to play on 16/16 alongside Chessable White Rose, who edged out The Sharks in an extremely hard-fought and close match on the Sunday in Daventry.

**DONCASTER** – Virgil Szekely became NCCU Champion after a very closely-fought Open at the Doncaster Congress (February 24-28).

**Open:** 1 Virgil Szekely (Great Ayton) 4/5, 2-6 Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Jonathan Arnott, Tom Wills (both Sheffield), John Potter (Belper), Peter Shaw (Wakefield) 3½.

**Major:** 1 John Cawston (Selby) 5, 2 Nicholas Webb 4½, 3-6 John Garnett (both Stockton-on-Tees), Andrew Brocklehurst (Civil Service), Randolph Donahue (Leeds), George Turner (Heywood) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1-3 Paul Allison (Hull), Paul Wheatley (Sheffield), Michael Connor (Bolton) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Gary Clarke (Gosforth) 4½, 2-6 Chris Fraser (Nottingham), Robert Arthurton (Skegness), Liam Devlin (Andover), Barry Williams, Freddie Jackson (both Sheffield) 4.

**EDINBURGH** – The top section of the Edinburgh Park Congress (February 17-19) was an Under-2200 Major, won by Sanjith Madhavan (East Kilbride) with 5/5, Walter Burnett and Jorge Blanco (both Edinburgh) sharing second a point adrift. The Under-1600 Major

saw Karthikeya Vundi (Edinburgh) and Tavish Railwani (Kirkintilloch) both finish on 4/5, and there was also a blitz event on the Saturday evening, in which local FM Keith Ruxton top-scored with 8½/9.

**HEVINGHAM** – 46 played at the Norfolk Rapidplay held at Hevingham Village Hall on January 29th, where Alan Merry racked up a perfect score.

**Championship:** 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 6/6, 2 Roy Hughes 4½, 3-4 Stephen Orton (both Norwich), Jaden Jermy (Bury St Edmunds) 4.

**Challengers:** 1 Vivash Samarakoon 5½, 2 Biran Shah 4½, 3-4 Arthur Dannatt, David McLean (all Norwich) 4.

**KENILWORTH** – The Warwickshire town will again be the focus of the English chess world's attention next month as it hosts the English Seniors Championships (May 4-8), then the English and English Women's Championships (May 26-29). We expect all the Championships to once more be pretty competitive and do note that the ECF Women's Directorate have reduced the entry fee for the Women's Championship to just £30, which should encourage participation. Full details can be found on the ECF website at [www.englishchess.org.uk](http://www.englishchess.org.uk).

**LISBURN** – The Lisburn Rapid Championship on February 12th filled Lisburn Chess Club to capacity, with 42 players taking part. The six-round, 12+0 FIDE-rated event saw two Lisburn players tie for first, the title going on tie-break to Dean Gorman over Stephen Scannell, after both had finished on 5½/6, with Bangor's Adam Rushe a half-point back in third.

**LONDON** – Grandmasters Eldar Gasanov (West London) and Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) both finished on 5/6 to share first prize at the latest Golders Green Rapidplay on March 11th.



GM Alexander Cherniaev

The Major also saw a tie on the same score between Arnav Kumar (Coulsdon) and B.R. Gagan, while Dave

Bluestone won the Minor, with fellow Londoner John McNamara back in second. Alexander Cherniaev also triumphed at the Muswell Hill Rapid on March 14th, his 5/6 a point more than Peter Large (Epsom), Ben Keohane (London), Robert Stern (Pimlico) and Ilya Iyengar (Hendon) could manage.

There was also the small matter of the II Mindsports Masters at the MindSports Centre at Ravenscourt Park (February 15-19), an event which meant that the UK hosted three international events simultaneously (the others being the Cambridge International and She Plays To Win in Edinburgh), something which hasn't happened for a long time. Rajat Makkar made an IM norm with 6½/9 in London, despite finishing a point behind Jonah Willow, while German FM Alex Browning also made a norm in the IM B event, where he racked up an equally impressive 7/9.

**NORTHAMPTON** – 14-year-old Alex Royle sprang a small shock as he raced to 5/5 before drawing with top seed Hugh Murphy at the Northampton Rapidplay on February 12th.

**Open:** 1 Alex Royle (Louth) 5½/6, 2-3 Gary Kenworthy (Bletchley), Hugh Murphy (Rushden) 5.

**Major:** 1 Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 6, 2 Ruqayyah Rida (Colchester) 5, 3-4 Alexander Chmelev (Coulsdon), Daniel Storey (Chingford) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Arrow Morris (Northampton) 6, 2-3 B.R. Gagan (India), Aashita Roychowdhury (Leeds) 5.

## April 2023

**COVENTRY** – Yichen Han defeated fellow Chessable White Rose player Sam Chow in the penultimate round en route to winning the Chessable University of Warwick Rapidplay on February 25th.

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 6½/7, 2-4 Max Turner, Arya Cont (both Warwick University), Daniel Kozusek (Cardiff) 5½.

**Major:** 1 Ben Lewis 6, 2 James Parkinson 5½, 3-5 Alex Zhou, Manraj Singh, Oscar Butler (all Warwick University) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Sathya Vaidyanathan (South Birmingham) 6½, 2 Bhushita Ahuja 6, 3-11 Archie Lodge, James March, Luc Mekouar, Jamie Watkin-Rees, Vaishnavi Ravi, Matthew Baldwin (all Warwick University), Thomas Gerrard (Ashby), Samuel Halford-Maw (West Nottingham), Vassily Sagyaman (Rugby) 5.

**CROWBOROUGH** – Russell Granat proved too strong at the Crowborough Congress, a rapidplay event on February 25th.

**Championship:** 1 Russell Granat (Worthing) 5½/6, 2 Jeffrey Boardman (Haywards Heath) 5, 3-6 Mark Rich (Bexhill), Peter Farr, Jonathan Britnell (both Lewes), Peter Kemp (Crowborough) 4½.



**Challengers:** 1 Matthew Collins (Horsham) 5, 2-3 Samuel Merchant (Bexhill), Ryan Martin (Crowborough) 4½.

**DUNDEE** – FM Alan Tate triumphed at the Dundee Invercarse Allegro on March 5th.

**Open:** 1 Alan Tate (Edinburgh) 4½/5, 2-4 David Findlay, Alistair Dawson (both Dundee), James Montgomery (Hamilton) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1-3 Keith Rose, Josh Cargill (both Dundee), Kevin Lee (St Andrews) 4.

**EDINBURGH** – The day before their event in Dundee, the Scottish Chess Tour had also put on the Edinburgh Park Allegro, which saw two 100% scores.

**Open:** 1 Keith Ruxton (Edinburgh) 5, 2-4 Isaac Browning (Stirling), Edmond Andal (Coulsdon), Marvin Gera (Edinburgh) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Humam Al Dakl Alla 5, 2-3 Tavish Railwani (both Kirkintilloch), Srinivas Rath (Edinburgh) 4.

**FAREHAM** – IM Peter Large cleaned up at the 21st Castle Chess Fareham Congress (March 10-12).



*Peter Large*

**Open:** 1 Peter Large (Epsom) 5/6, 2-4 Iwan Cave (Chandler's Ford), Jane Richmond (Swindon), Tony Wells (Athenaeum) 4.

**Major:** 1 Adrian Lawrence (Billericay) 5, 2-3 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Ted Paul (Dorchester) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Alex Dore (Southampton) 5, 2-3 Peter Eales (Chandler's Ford), Luc Gordon (Weston-super-Mare) 4½.

**GROOMSPORT** – Bangor Chess Club hosted the Ulster Rapidplay Championships on April 15th, an event which saw IM Mark Orr pop over from Edinburgh. Now aged 67, Orr once joined Bangor Chess Club as a teenager and was presented with a silver plate to mark his being granted honorary lifetime membership. On the board though, he had to settle for second with 7/8, half a point behind the Civil Service's Mandar Tahmankar.

**LEYLAND** – Mike Surtees triumphed at the Under-2200 Leyland Rapidplay on February 26th.

**Major:** 1 Mike Surtees (Bolton) 5½/6, 2 Joakim Nilsson (Sweden) 5, 3-5 Isaac Craft (Marple), Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds), Tim Hilton (Rochdale) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Simon Lahye (Crewe), Becky Kerton (Preston) 5, 3-4 Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Ravi Mahapatra (London) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Andrew De Santos (Preston) 6, 2 Paul Ashton (Leyland) 5, 3-7 Nigel Gardner (Crewe), Juris Kirilenkovs (Latvia) Andeel Mohammed (Ashton-under-Lyne), Brian Butterworth (Liverpool), Rughani Mahin (Manchester) 4.

**LIVINGSTON** – There was a three-way tie for first in the top, Under-1900 section at the Livingston Allegro on April 2nd.

**Major:** 1-3 Siddharth Berera (Edinburgh), Prasad Ram (Kirkcaldy), Martin Kopernicky (Edinburgh University) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Nikolaos Xenakis (Edinburgh) 5, 2 Ana Seijas Otero 4½, 3-8 Tom Wardlaw (both Dundee), David Shenton, Barakat Youness, Drisith Palaniswamy (all Edinburgh), Alagu Karthick (Glasgow), Mark Khordi Moodi (Broxburn) 3½.

**LONDON** – The 141st Varsity match was again kindly hosted by the RAC Club on March 4th. A hard-fought contest saw just two draws and landed up 4-4, with Tom O'Gorman winning for Oxford on top board against Miroslav Macko.

There are now monthly FIDE-rated congresses in Ealing, rapidly improving junior Theo Khoury triumphing at the February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26th edition.

**Under-2300:** 1 Theo Khoury (Maidenhead) 4/5, 2-5 Peter Lalic (Kingston), Emmanuelle Hng (Epsom), Stefanus Phan (Muswell Hill), Thomas Bonn (Hammersmith) 3½.

**Under-1900:** 1 Ehtesham Ul Haq (Pakistan) 4½, 2-3 Maks Gajowniczek (Richmond), Ramin Tawab (Harrow) 4.

**Under-1600:** 1-2 Matthew Deacon (Fareham), Krish Keshari (Reading) 4, 3-4 Qixuan Han (Orpington), Sujana Nargund (Richmond) 3½.

The following month (March 25-26), Khoury had to settle for a share of first.

**Under-2300:** 1-3 Theo Khoury (Maidenhead), Peter Lalic (Kingston), Dylan Wastney (Reading) 4/5.

**Under-1600:** 1 B.R. Gagan (India) 5, 2-3 Matthew Masani (Lewes), Manraj Singh (Warwick University) 4.

**SHEFFIELD** – Local IM Andrew Ledger triumphed at the Darnall & Handsworth Rapidplay on March 25th.

**Open:** 1 Andrew Ledger (Sheffield) 5½/6, 2 Peter Large (Epsom) 5, 3-6 Miles Edwards-Wright, Jonathan Nelson (both Sheffield), Thomas Carroll (Hoylake), Steve Ledger (Bedford) 4.

**Major:** 1 Paul Butterworth (Ilkley) 6, 2 James Hall (Bradford) 5, 3 Paul Stanley (Skelmersdale) 4½.

**Intermediate:** 1-2 Barry Edgar (Consett), Michael Connor (Bolton) 5, 3-4 Robert Mitchell (Huddersfield), Nathaniel Holroyd-Doveton (Rotherham) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Sebastian Griffin-Young (West Nottingham) 6, 2-4 James Weldon, Luke Spaven (both west Yorkshire), Barry Williams (Sheffield) 4½.

**TORQUAY** – Local star Keith Arkell swept the floor at the Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress (March 3-5), which took place at the Victoria Hotel, just around the corner from the Riveria International Centre.

**Open:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 5/5, 2 Mike Waddington (Dorchester) 3½, 3-4 Graham Bolt (Exeter), Paul Aston (Torquay) 3.

**Major:** 1-2 Martin Cutmore (Folkestone), Simon Arnold (York) 4/5, 3-6 Jake Martin (Plymouth), Martin Goldschmidt (Totnes), Joseph Skielnik (Battersea), William Ingham (Teignmouth) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Robert Wilby (Plymouth) 4, 2-3 Russell Goodfellow (Tunbridge Wells), Mike Maher (Lichfield) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Richard Brenton 4½, 2-3 Suhayl Abdalla (both Newton Abbot), Piran Wills (Torquay) 4.

## May 2023

**4NCL** – It wasn't just the top division of the 4NCL which concluded over the first May Bank Holiday weekend (April 29 - May 1). Division Two also came to head in Milton Keynes, with champions Barnet Knights, as well as Oxford and Alba, gaining promotion to next season's top flight, and congratulations go too to Poisoned Pawns who won Division Three East. Over in Warwick, the champagne could be popped for both CSC/Kingston, who won Division Three West, and Average Wood Pushers, who topped the 35-team Division Four. The 4NCL Online League is very much still going too, season seven seeing Dundee City defeat Hackney Heffalumps 2½-1½ in the final of the first division, Richard Polaczek and Declan Shafi bringing home the bacon on the top two boards for the Scottish side, as they defeated Bob Eames and Dominic Mackle, respectively. Divisions Two, Three and Four also featured two eight-team all-play-all pools and saw top honours go to Hebden Bridge, Dundee City C and Heffalump Hunters, while Division Five was a 35-team Swiss won by Lenzie Basilisks.

**BELFAST** – Alex Goss (Lisburn) was presented with the Nemtsov Cup after winning the City of Belfast Championships (April 29 - May 1) with 5/6. Mandar Tahmankar (Civil Service) and Modestas Razbadauskas (Strand) shared second, a point behind. The Henderson Cup went to Ethan Cole (Strand), who racked up 5½/6 in the Under-1600 section to finish a point ahead of Mark Robinson (Belfast) and Cathal Murphy (Civil Service).

**BINGLEY** – The British Rapidplay is mentioned elsewhere in these pages and took place on the north side of Bradford, where Bingley and Saltaire run into each other. Having made a GM norm at Southend the weekend before, Ameet Ghasi must have been feeling confident come April 15th and 16th, and duly delivered, racking up a huge score to take home £600 and record his first outright victory at the event (run for the first time by the 4NCL, taking over from longtime supremo Brent Kitson), having earlier shared the title in both 2000, when just 13, and 2015.

Leading scores: 1 Ameet Ghasi (Teddington) 10/11, 2-4 Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Dong Bao Nghia (Battersea), Rajat Makkar (Reading) 8½, 5-7 Keith Arkell (Paignton), John Pitcher (Birmingham), Klauss Mosnegutu (Middlesbrough) 8; incorporated British Women's Rapid Championship: 1 Kamila Hryshchenko (Hull) 7½, 2-3 Lisa Kisteneva (Leeds), Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow) 6.

**BRISTOL** – Chris Beaumont remained unbeaten as he triumphed at the 89th Bristol Open Championship, where Daniel Gomez belied his rating of 1923 to defeat Keith Arkell.

**Open:** 1 Chris Beaumont (Bristol) 4½/5, 2-4 Roland Bezuidenhout (Fareham), Ben Ogunshola (Camberley), Kenneth Hobson (Cowley) 4.

**Under-1900:** 1 Mark Jones (Armed Forces) 4½, 2-4 Ben Carpenter-Friend (Herne Bay), Michelle Chan (St Albans), Timothy Jones (Bristol) 4.

**Under-1600:** 1 Tom Weale (Bristol) 4½, 2-5 David Buckell (Utley), Stephen Chadaway (Olton), Lana Boztas (Coulsdon), Brandon Russell (Newcastle) 4.

**CARDIFF** – The 2022 and 2023 Welsh Champions shared first place at the Frank Hatto Memorial Rapidplay, which incorporated the Welsh Rapidplay Championship in Cardiff on April 22nd. Jose Camacho Collados recovered from a shock opening round defeat to Rudy van Kemenade by overcoming Daniel Kozuszek in the final round.

Leading scores: 1-2 Jose Camacho Collados, Daniel Kozuszek 5/6, 3-6 Alex Bullen, Grzegorz Tomcek, Thomas Brown (all Cardiff), Ifan Rathbone-Jones (Mold) 4½.

The next day at the same venue, the Mercure Cardiff North Hotel, Kozuszek impressively won all eleven games in the Welsh Blitz Championship, finishing a point and a half ahead of Camacho Collados, with Machynlleth's van Kemenade third on 8½/11.

**DARLINGTON** – The County Durham Congress again took place in Darlington (May 12-14), boasted a £400 first prize in each section, and proved a popular event under the guidance of chief organiser Mick Riding.

**Open:** 1-5 David Walker (South Shields), Tim Wall, Andrew Burnett (both Forest Hall), Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield), Chris Izod (Jesmond) 4/5.

**Major:** 1 Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds University) 4½, 2-4 John Cawston (Selby), Royce Parker (Redcar), Dave Patterson (South Shields) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Joel Tofield-Brown (Tynemouth) 5, 2 Daniel Williams (Hetton-le-Hole) 4½, 3-5 Rob Jarvis (Ashfield), Ryan Duff (Forest Hall), Adin Breakley (Maryport) 4.

**EXETER** – 10-year-old Rami Talab wasn't fazed by his opponent's legendary speed of play and defeated IM Jack Rudd in round 3 of the East Devon Congress ahead of finishing on 3½/5 (April 14-16).

**Open:** 1-3 Jack Rudd (Barnstaple), Dominic Mackle (Hackney), Paul O'Neill (Exeter) 4/5.

**Major:** 1-2 Luke Honey, Reece Whittington (both Exeter) 4½, 3-4 Frederick Coleman (Exeter University), Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon) 4.

**Minor:** 1 John Stanier (Devon) 4½, 2-5 Solomon Hayes (Wells), Robin Morris-Weston (Coulsdon), Mike Hollyman (Treorchy), Florence Spirling (Purbeck) 4.



Rami Talab

**FALMOUTH** – The Cornwall Spring Congress again took place at The Falmouth Hotel (April 28-30), where, of course, Rami Talab became the youngest winner of the Emigrant Cup.

**Open:** 1 Rami Talab 4/5, 2-7 Jeremy Menadue (both Truro), Lloyd Retallick (Newquay), Graham Bolt (Exeter), John Curtis, David Collier (both Bristol), William Adaway (Wimborne) 3.

**Major:** 1-7 Bill Ingham (Teignmouth), Eldon Vallejo (London), Oliver Twentyman (Truro), Rob McClatchey (Salisbury), Dave Siddall (Carlisle), David Jenkins (Camborne & Redruth), Paul Jackson (Bournemouth) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Thomas Merchant (Bristol) 5, 2-3 Ian Blencowe (Gloucester), Jacob Cameron-Potter (Kent) 4.

**FROME** – Keith Arkell triumphed at the Frome Congress (May 12-14).

**Open:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 4½/5, 2-3 Oleksandr Matlak (Ukraine), Theo Khoury (Maidenhead) 4.

IM Chris Beaumont was in pretty good form at his local British Open Championship.

**Major:** 1 Richard Johnson (Bristol) 4½, 2-4 Okwose Marc Obi (Bedford), Ted Paul (Dorchester), Richard Edney (Isle of Wight) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Matthew Coldwell (Salisbury) 5, 2-3 Freddie Pick, David McGeeney (both Bristol) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Gabriel Keech (Frome) 4½, 2-5 James Thomas, Diana Krautsova (both Bristol), Jennifer Goldsmith (Harrow), Philip Owen (Chippenham) 4.

**GREAT YARMOUTH** – Suffolk-based IM Alan Merry proved too strong at Norfolk's Great Yarmouth Congress (April 1-2), the only half point he dropped being a Saturday evening bye.

**Open:** 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4½/5, 2 John Anderson (Lowestoft) 4, 3-5 Vivash Samarakoon (Norwich), Eugenia Karas (Hendon), Jaden Jermy (Bury St Edmunds) 3½.

**Major:** 1-4 Antony Hall (Streatham), Samuel Gaffney (Lowestoft), James Pack (Bury St Edmunds), Michael Dunkley (Peterborough) 4.

**Minor:** 1 John Weston (Fakenham) 4½, 2-6 Liam Chapman (Lowestoft), James Woodburn, Sharavi Saharkar (both Norwich), Kenneth Jardine (Wanstead), Peter Hughes (Birmingham) 3½.

**GUILDFORD** – The Guildford Congress (March 31 - April 2) was a welcome new event, organised in conjunction between Guildford Chess Club and the University of Surrey Chess Society. With a first prize of £500 in the Open, it was also a strong and fairly popular tournament.

**Open:** 1 Gediminas Sarakas (Guildford) 4½/5, 2-5 Steven Jones (Basingstoke), Graeme Buckley, Susan Lalic (both Epsom), John Merriman (Petts Wood) 4.

**Major:** 1-2 Chris Heath (Horsham), Aarudhra Ganesan (Reading) 4½, 3-5 Peter Tart (Crowthorne), Okwose Marc Obi (Bedford), Joseph Morrison (Surbiton) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Daniel Sinclair (Guildford) 4½, 2-4 Yixuan Dong (Maidenhead), Albert Hornsby (Oxfordshire), Christopher Steventon (Wantage) 4.

**LEAMINGTON SPA** – The English Senior Championships took place at Woodland Grange Hotel, just outside the Warwickshire town (May 4-8). We'll have more next time, but for now should reveal that old rivals Keith Arkell and Mark Hebden shared first in the Over-50 Championship with 5½/7, while Chris Baker won the Over-65 Championship with 6/7, finishing half a point ahead of fellow IM Paul Littlewood.

**LIVINGSTON** – The Livingston Allegro saw a three-way tie for first in the Open on May 14th between Isaac Browning (Stirling), Andrew Newton (Broxburn) and Marvin Gera (Edinburgh), while Tom Wardlaw (Dundee) won the Intermediate with 5/5, finishing half a point ahead of Aaron Gourlay (Glasgow University).

**LONDON** - Yichen Han and Graeme Buckley each won £150 at a typically competitive Kensington Rapid on March 19th.

**Open:** 1-2 Yichen Han (Oxford), Graeme Buckley 5½/6, 3-4 Peter Large (both Epsom), Alex Browning (Hammersmith) 5.

**Major:** 1-2 Dhairya Pandya (Coventry), Salvatore Pepe (Hendon) 5½, 3-4 Qixiang Han (Coulsdon), Jason Skelton (Cambridge) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Leandro Niels 6, 2-5 Gunnar Niels (both Oxford), Louis Bertagna, Ian Iceton (both London), Jai Bhatia (Wallington) 5.

The next Adam Raoof event was the Muswell Hill Rapid of March 21st, where Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) top-scored to net £100, Rory O’Kelly (Mushrooms) winning £50 for sole second and Aharon Landman (Hendon) also £50 for the rating prize. There are often two weekday Muswell Hill Rapidplays each month and at the next one, on April 4th, Cherniaev had to settle for a share of first with Phil Makepeace (Ealing) on 5/6. The GM could then only come second with 5/6 on April 18th, as Peter Large racked up an impressive 6/6, before Alex Browning (Hammersmith), Large and Cherniaev shared first with 5/6 on May 9th.

The coronation prevented a Golders Green Rapidplay being held last month, but there was one on April 15th, where you may not be surprised to discover that Alexander Cherniaev and Peter Large shared first in the Open, each taking home £75.

**Open:** 1-2 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Peter Large (Epsom) 5/6, 3-5 Connor Clarke (Sandhutton), Nishchal Thatte (Ealing), Vikas Sajjanani (Warwick University) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Ayhan Anil 5½, 2-3 Salvatore Pepe (both Hendon), Aditya Mittal (Barnet) 5.

**Minor:** 1-3 Aahan Sinalkar, Polina Popovtseva (both Coulsdon), Vishal Khetan (Athenaeum) 5.

There are also monthly London FIDE Rapidplays at Actonians Sports Club. B.R. Gagan (India) scored 4½/5 to finish half a point ahead of Mohammed Mozaffari (Coulsdon) in the top, Under-2000 section on April 1st, where the Under-1500 saw Jonathan Pires (Battersea) rack up 5/5 to finish a point clear of Leandro Niels (Oxford) and Matthew Trimble (south-east London). On May 6th in Acton, teenager Denis Dupuis won the Open.

**Open:** 1 Denis Dupuis (Battersea) 4½/5, 2-5 Peter Large (Epsom), Abhyuday Santhosh (Petts Wood), Qixiang Han, Mohammed Ismail (both Coulsdon) 3½.

**Under-2000:** 1 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill) 4½, 2-4 Raghu Kamath (West London), Koichi Nicholas (Sunbury-on-Thames), James Wang (Crowborough) 4.

**Under-1500:** 1 Shivank Mitra (India) 5, 2-4 Lance Leslie-Smith (Greenwich), Tomas Garau (East Ham), Yacine El Bachir (Surbiton) 4.

There was also an Ealing Congress at the same venue (April 22-23).

**Under-1900:** 1 Ganguly Anshuman (India) 4/5, 2-3 Maks Gajowniczek (Richmond), Raghu Kamath (West London) 3½.

**Under-1600:** 1 Ruairi Isaacs (Streatham) 5, 2-3 David Thompson (London), Jim Cutter (Sandhurst) 3½.

Last but by no means least, a welcome new event on the chess calendar was the Mike Basman Memorial Rapidplay, organised by Anuurai Sainbayar and Antranig Basman in Hampton on April 23rd.

**Open:** 1 Danny Gormally (Alnwick) 4½/5, 2 Peter Roberson (St Albans) 4, 3-4 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Peter Large (Epsom) 3½.

**Under-2000:** 1 Denis Dupuis (Battersea) 5, 2-3 George Zhao (Barnet), Matthew Dishman (Luxembourg) 4.

**Under-1500:** 1 Kabir Jeirath (Richmond) 4½, 2-3 Maksym Kryshafor (Harrogate), Siddarth Ramaraju (Staines) 4.

**Under-12:** 1-2 Erik Plamadeala (Hammersmith), Samuel Leakey 4½, 3-4 Oliver Dorey (both Wey Valley), Jaden Mistry (Kingston) 4.

**Under-10:** 1 Lisirui Shieh (Oxfordshire) 5, 2-4 Parisa Patel, Nicolas Arrojo-Garcia (both Richmond), Chun Chan (Surrey) 4.

**Under-8:** 1 Djan Sennaroglu (Wimbledon) 5, 2-3 William Lin (Richmond), Shreeyansh Kommula (Sutton) 4.

We must also sadly mention the recent death of FM Michael Franklin (ii.ii.1931-xxv.iv.2023), who learnt chess on Clapham Common in 1944 and quickly became a strong player, honing his skills at the Gambit Chess Rooms, just across the road from Cannon Street Station. Franklin played for Richmond Chess Club for almost sixty years up until 2010, represented England at the 1964 Tel Aviv Olympiad and twice took part in the then world-class Hastings Premier, as well as countless times in the Challengers, which he might well have won in 1981/82, but for withdrawing before the final round after learning of the death of his father-in-law. Franklin finished third behind Jonathan Penrose and Norman Littlewood at the 1963 British Championship in Bath, but his best result occurred relatively late in his chess career when he shared first place with Aldo Haik at the 1978 Aaronson Masters. He finished unbeaten on 7½/10 and ahead of the likes of Hartston, Mestel and Nunn. Ever a gentleman, in typically modest fashion, Franklin commented that it was “just one of those occasions when everything went right”.

Franklin worked in the accounts department of a patent office, but both then and especially when he retired was pretty active on the weekend circuit, not least at the Frome Congress, which he enjoyed playing in ever since the inaugural edition in 1990, having been evacuated to the Somerset town during the war. His opening choices



were usually formed by reasons of practicality, the Nimzo, Bogo-Indian and O'Kelly Sicilian as Black, the Colle, King's Indian Attack

### M. Franklin - D. Pritchard

Southend Premier 1962

King's Indian Attack

1 ♖f3 ♜f6 2 g3 g6 3 ♘g2 ♙g7 4 0-0 0-0 5 d3 d5 6 ♜bd2 ♜c6 7 e4 e5 8 c3 h6 9 ♖c2 dxe4 10 dxe4 ♘e6 11 ♜d1 ♖e7 12 b4!

Seizing the initiative against Black's slightly passive set-up in this reversed Pirc.

12... ♜d7 13 a4 f5?

Too loosening, although even 13... ♜fd8 14 ♘a3 ♖e8 15 ♜f1 is a pleasant edge for White.

14 b5 ♜d8 15 ♘a3 ♜c5?!

Already Black would have been advised to give up the exchange, ideally here, if also on the next move.

16 ♜h4! ♜h7?! 17 exf5 gxf5 18 ♜e4!!



Crashing through in style in view of 18...fxe4 19 ♘xe4+ ♖g8 20 ♘h7+ followed by 20...♜f7 21 ♖g6# or 20...♜h8 21 ♜g6+ ♜xh7 22 ♜xe7+.

18... ♘b3 19 ♖xb3 ♜xb3 20 ♘xe7 ♜e8 21 ♜ab1 1-0 21...fxe4 (or 21... ♜xe7 22 ♜xf5) 22 ♘xe4+ ♖g8 23 ♜d7 is rather devastating.

**NORTHAMPTON** – Mykhailo Podolskyi netted £150 as he won the Northampton Rapidplay on May 7th.

**Open:** 1 Mykhailo Podolskyi (Ukraine) 5½/6, 2-3 Yichen Han (Oxford), Gary Kenworthy (Bletchley) 5.

**Major:** 1-2 Daniel Storey (Chingford), Paul Walton (Royston) 5, 3-4 Nicholas Lees (Stamford), Nigel Young (Northampton) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Levi Weston (London) 5½, 2-3 Tarun Lilley (Brighton), Ioan-Euzeb Strugar (Berkshire) 5.

**Improvers:** 1-3 Tara Tamilselvan (Leicester), Jeon Palmer (London), James Burgess (Hammersmith) 5.

**NOTTINGHAM** – Kudos to the Nottingham Congress, which had a decent first prize (far too many congresses

have long only seemed to raise entry fees in line with inflation, not prize money), and also raised £281 for the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal. IM Adam Hunt made a welcome return to the tournament scene, but was defeated by Mark Hebden, who only dropped a draw to Jonah Willow and duly took home £750.



GM Mark Hebden

**Open:** 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 4½/5, 2-3 Adam Hunt (Woodbridge), John Potter (Belper) 4.

**Major:** 1 Sammy Benzaira (Nottingham University) 4½, 2-3 Simon Arnold (York), Vasileios Papoutsis (Derbyshire) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 George Burdell (Derby) 4½, 2-4 Frank Richmond (West Bridgford), Paul Mottram, Phil Watkinson (both Wigston) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Dylan Whitney (Fenton) 4½, 2-4 Cennydd Bowles (Chingford), Seb Walker (Leicestershire), Alistair Davidson (Radcliffe) 4.

**Improvers:** 1 Artemijs Gulijevs 4½, 2-3 Jonah Tomsett (both West Nottingham), Douglas Bramley (Spondon) 4.

**PERTH** – FM Andrew Burnett triumphed at the Scottish Chess Tour's Perth Congress, which was held at the city's Salutation Hotel.

**Open:** 1 Andrew Burnett (Forest Hall) 4½/5, 2-5 George Neave, Kritan Boggarapu, Tom Leah (all Edinburgh), Nicolas Skettos (Glasgow) 3½.

**Major:** 1 P.M. Ram Prasad (Kirkcaldy) 5, 2 Steven Harvey (Oban) 4½, 3-4 Chris Sykes, Robert Kane (both Edinburgh) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Benjamin Saunders (Lanark) 4½, 2-3 Donald McGregor (Cathcart), Kam-Sang Wan (Kirkcaldy) 4.

**SEVENOAKS** – 13-year-old Max Pert won what we believe was his first Open at the Kentish Rapidplay on April 2nd.

**Open:** 1-2 Max Pert (Brentwood), Oleg Verbytski (Charlton) 5/6, 3-5 Ian Snape (Beckenham), Kyle Bennett (Basildon), Rupert Brindley (Sevenoaks; first in the incorporated Under-1800 tournament) 4.

**Under-1600:** 1 Petko Kunev (Maidstone) 5½, 2-3 Lee Brockwell (Sidcup), Mark McWilliams (Enfield) 5.

**SHEFFIELD** – We were very saddened to hear of the death of WIM Sue Maroroa Jones (iv.iii.1991 - xi.v.2023), who died from postnatal complications a fortnight after giving birth to her second child, Daniel. Hailing from a keen chess family in Auckland, Maroroa was talented from a young age, making her Women's Olympiad debut for New Zealand in Bled at the age of just 11. She married Gawain Jones in 2012, the couple living in Shepherd's Bush then Acton, as Maroroa worked briefly at Chess & Bridge then becoming a sought-after nanny, before relocating to Sheffield.

In recent years Maroroa had largely given up chess and her other great pursuit, rugby, which she played for Sheffield Ladies, to start a family and work for Sheffield Council, while still acting as Jones's manager. As recently as 2019 though she scored an impressive 6/9 at the Reykjavik Open to take her rating to an all-time high of 2168, having earlier represented England at the 2014 and 2018 Olympiads. A positive and generous person, as a player she was fiercely competitive, as well as something of a natural, especially dangerous with the initiative and in the endgame. Sue Maroroa Jones will be much missed and our thoughts are with Gawain Jones and the couple's young children, Samaria and Daniel.

#### S. Maroroa - M. Hebden

White Rose vs Guildford, 4NCL 2014

Two Knights Defence

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 f6 4 d4 exd4 5 e5 e4 6 e2 c5 7 g5 e6 8 xe6 dxe6 9 0-0 h4! 10 d2 d7 11 f3 h5 12 c3!

The engines aren't sold on this pawn sacrifice, but it certainly reminds Black that he isn't the only one allowed to be aggressive.

12...dxc3 13 bxc3 c5 14 d1 0-0-0?

Underestimating White's imminent initiative. 14...h6! would have been prudent and somewhat stronger.

15 g5!



15... e7

And not 15... e7? 16 a6!.

16 b5!

White has well and truly seized the initiative, increasing the pressure while leaving the black queen looking badly offside.

16...c6

Alternatively, 16...h6 17 e7 e5 18 xb5 e7 19 db1 b6 20 a6+ b8 21 d4 wins the exchange, as was pointed out in the June 2014 CHESS.

17 c4

Good, but 17 a6!! was still on, and if 17...bxa6 (or 17...c7 18 xb7! b7 19 ab1+ a8 20 c4, completely

overloading the defence, and if 20... a3 21 e7 e7 22 xd7!) 18 ab1 c7 19 e7 e7 20 xa6, forcing mate.

17...b6 18 e7 cxb5

Maroroa would almost certainly have flattened 18... e7? with 19 xd7!.

19 e4 b8 20 xd8 xd8 21 a4!?



Despite having given up the exchange, there's to be no respite for Black.

21...bxa4 22 xa4 f5 23 h4?

23 xf5! exf5 24 g5 would have seen White continuing to do very well.

23... c8 24 aa1 e6?

24... e8! would have been a tougher defence and left Black with decent compensation thanks to his bishop-pair.

25 d4! xe5 26 xc6+ xc6 27 xh7 f6 28 d7! Maroroa is relentless in her quest for piece activity and to go after the black king.

28... xf2+ 29 h1 xc3 30 ad1





record a superb result: sole first with 4½/5. Ruxton (Sandy Bells, Edinburgh), Frederick Waldhausen Gordon (Edinburgh) and Aryan Munshi (Phones, Glasgow) shared second half a point back, while the Intermediate was won with Ruairidh McKay (Musselburgh) on 4½/5, who finished half ahead of Advik Mittal, Tavish Railwani and Humam Al Dakl Alla (all Lenzie Chess Academy, Kirkintilloch). The next day saw the Dumfries Allegro, a somewhat smaller event in which Jonathan McKay (Glasgow Montrose) and Michael Green (Dumfries) top-scored with 3½/5.

**GLOUCESTER** – Yichen Han drew with Tim Kett in the final round to secure the £270 first prize at the Cotswold Congress (May 27-29).

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 5½/6, 2 Alex Bullen 5, 3 Tim Kett (both Cardiff) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Max Dooley (Beeston) 5½, 2 Justin Smith (Derby) 5, 3-8 Matthew Holmes (Witney), Rob Wilden (Stroud), Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon), Dave Williams (Malpas), Reya Li (Oxford), Callum Hayes (Beckenham) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Kenneth Jardine (Wanstead), Alexis Malibiran 5, 3-4 Elmira Walker (both Downend & Fishponds), Nigel Morris (Leamington) 4½.



Theo Khoury

**KENILWORTH** – Rapidly-improving junior Theo Khoury triumphed at a hard-fought Kenilworth Open (May 20-21).

**Open:** 1 Theo Khoury (Maidenhead) 4/5, 2-6 Steven Jones (Basingstoke), John Potter (Belper), Russell James (Soilhill), Bruce Baer, Matthew McLachlan (both Birmingham) 3½.

**Major:** 1-2 Geoffrey Brown (Folkestone), Bernard Charnley (Kenilworth) 4, 3-4 Tom Darling (Leamington), Okwose Marc Obi (Bedford) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Feargus Crisanto Roth (University of Warwick) 4½, 2-3 Oliver Harrison (Stratford-upon-Avon), Neil Homer (Northampton) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Steven Ashworth (Ely) 4½, 2-3 Matthew Baldwin (Coventry University), Stephanie Brown (Kenilworth) 4.

Less than a week later, the Warwickshire town also played host to the English Championships (May 26-29), where Michael Adams wasn’t at his very best, but still picked up the £1,500 first prize and the Tony Miles trophy. The top seed was close to being punished for overpressing by Mark Hebden, but held on to draw, just as he did after unusually and briefly losing control against Jonah Willow in the final round. In the adjacent Women’s Championship, top seed Katarzyna Toma bounced back from blundering into mate in one to hold her nerve the better and defeat Zoe Varney in a wild final-round encounter to take sole first and £750.

**English Championship:** 1 Michael Adams (Taunton) 6/7, 2-3 Marcus Harvey (Witney), Matthew Wadsworth (Maidenhead) 5½, 4-7 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Jonah Willow, Ankush Khandelwal (both Nottingham) 5.

**English Women’s Championship:**

1 Katarzyna Toma (Worcestershire) 5½, 2-4 Zoe Varney (Battersea), Audrey Kueh (Guildford), Kamila Hryshchenko (Hull) 5.

#### M. Adams - A. Ghasi

English Open Championship, Kenilworth 2023  
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♘f3 a6!? 7 h3!? g6

Allowing White to take control and 7...dxc4 8 ♘xc4 e6 would have been more consistent.

8 c5! ♘f5 9 ♘e2 ♘g7 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘f4 h6?!

The wrong plan. Black is also worse after 11...b6 12 cxb6 ♗xb6 13 ♘a4!, but should have tried 11... ♘e4!? 12 ♘a4 ♗e8!.

12 ♗e1 g5 13 ♘h2 e6 14 ♘d6 ♗e8 15 ♘e5!

Adams to continues to annex territory.

15... ♘d7 16 ♘h5! ♘cxe5?! 17 dxe5 ♗c8 18 b4 b6 19 ♘a4!

Continuing to turn the screw and now even the normally very tough Ghasi would crack.

19... ♗c6?! 20 ♗c1 bxc5 21 ♘xc5! ♘b6 22 ♘e2 ♗a8?

23 ♘xa6!

It’s just a free pawn as Ghasi finds himself forced into a rather desperate exchange sac.

23... ♗xc5 24 bxc5 ♗xa6 25 cxb6 ♗xb6 26 ♗a4 ♗d8 27 ♗c7 ♘f8 28 ♗ec1! ♘xd6 29 exd6 e5 30 d7 ♗f8 31 ♗c6 ♗e7 32 ♗xd5 ♘e6 33 ♗xe5 1-0



**LEAMINGTON SPA** – As we noted last month, Keith Arkell and Mark Hebden became joint English Over-50 Champions at the English Senior Championships (May 4-8), with the Over-65 title going to Chris Baker, who drew with top seed Paul Littlewood then won his final three games.

**British Over-50 Championship:** 1-2 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Mark Hebden (Leicester) 5½/7, 3-4 Nigel Davies (Southport), Andrew Lewis (Manningtree) 5; Women's Champion: Natasha Regan (Epsom) 3½.

**British Over-65 Championship:** 1 Chris Baker (Battersea) 6, 2 Paul Littlewood (St Albans) 5½, 3-4 Kevin Bowmer (Loughton), Paul Raynes (Reading) 5; Women's Champion: Susan Selley (Exmouth) 3.

### C. Baker - P. Raynes

English Over-65 Championship,  
Leamington Spa 2023



35 ♖xg7!

The simplest route to the full point.

35... ♜xg7 36 f6+! ♜g8

Now it's mate, but if 36... ♜xf6 37 ♜f4+ ♜g7 38 ♜xc4.

37 ♜h6 ♜f8 38 ♜e8! 1-0

**LONDON** – Top seeds Stuart Conquest, Eldar Gasanov and Harry Grieve finished outside the prizes at a strong Kensington Rapidplay on May 21st.

**Open:** 1-3 Peter Large (Epsom), Can Durak (London), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 5/6.

**Major:** 1 Aharon Landman (Hackney) 5½, 2-3 Lucy Buckley (Epsom), Ethan Dong (Harrow) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Jack Gallagher (Brighton) 6, 2-3 Tamal Matilal (Oxford), Tobias Gaglio (Argentina) 5.

Another Adam Raoof and Lance Leslie-Smith event is, of course, the Muswell Hill Rapidplay, where on May 23rd Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) triumphed with 5/6, FMs Can Durak (London) and Chukwunonso Oragwu (Uxbridge) finishing half a point behind. It was the turn of Peter Large to win the £100 first prize on June 6th, his 5½/6 half a point more than Wingki Kwong (UCL) could muster. Those sterling organisers were also

involved in the 1st London Chess League Congress, which was staged at the MindSports Centre (June 2-4).

**Open:** 1 Peter Lalic (Kingston) 4½/5, 2-3 Ruqayyah Rida (Colchester), Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham) 4.

**Under-1800:** 1 Mark Nagy-Miticzky (Canterbury) 5, 2-4 Aarav Katukuri (Petts Wood), Sohana Sengupta (Sussex), Sujan Nargund (Richmond) 4.

**Under-1000:** 1 Zach Callahan (north London) 5, 2 Mohamed Elmaghrbi (Nottinghamshire) 4, 3-5 Anvay Makarabbi (Maidenhead), Edward Mansi, Mark Osborn (Milton Keynes) 3.

**WARRINGTON** – Padgate Community Centre hosted the 1st Warrington Rapidplay on May 27th, which featured a £200 first prize in each section.

**Open:** 1-2 Gediminas Sarakas (Warrington), Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield) 5/6, 3-4 Mike Surtees (Bolton), Tom Quilter (Manchester) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Philip Seery (Morecombe) 5½, 2-3 Maksym Kryshtafor (Harrogate), Paul Stanley (Skelmersdale) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Tanmay Madhusudhan (Chester) 6, 2-4 J. Coupe (Bury), Dylan Prothero (Wilmslow), John Gillett (Ormskirk) 4.

## July 2023

**ABERYSTWYTH** – Aberystwyth University hosted a new event, the Aberystwyth Rapidplay on July 1st.

**Open:** 1-2 Rudy van Kemenade (Oswestry), Jane Richmond (Swindon) 5/6, 3-4 Murray Smith (Aberystwyth), Adam Robinson (Hackney) 3½.

**Under-1800:** 1 Matthew Francis (Aberystwyth) 5, 2-3 Jamie Friel (Hackney), Daniel Hardman (Ashfield) 4½.

**ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE** – The Ashton Rapidplay attracted a full field of 72 on July 9th.

**Major:** 1 Ben Fearnhead 6/6, 2-7 Paul Fearnhead (both Poulton-le-Fylde), Mick Connor (Bolton), Jeremi Ignasiak (Chorlton), Joel McBeath (Ashton-under-Lyne), Liam Loughheed (Northenden), Zachary Barton (Blackburn) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Mahin Rughani 6, 2-6 Edward Chu (both Swinton), Phil Shaughnessy, Steve Eddleston (both Ashton-under-Lyne), Eric Lesnik (Denton), Paul Ashton (Leyland) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Claire Kerton (3Cs) 5½, 2 Phil Treanor 5, 3-5 Jay Unadkat (both Ashton-under-Lyne), Danwei Liu (Urmston), Leo Cheung (Swinton) 4½.

**BRIDGEND** – With Keith Arkell away at the European Senior Teams, the South Wales International (July 7-12) appeared to be between regular GMs participants Boris Chatalbashev and Peter Wells, as well as Spanish GM Oleg Korneev. Despite being on the wrong end of a crazy encounter with Wells, top seed Chatalbashev did indeed fight his way to 7/9, a score on which he was joined by Cheddleton & Leek's Jacob Connor Boswell. The 2163-

rated eighth seed was outplayed by Chatalbashev and Wells, but won his remaining seven games, including taking his chances against Jonathan Blackburn and Korneev in the final two rounds to force a tie for first and take home £650 while performing at 2328.

Leading scores: 1-2 Boris Chatalbashev (Denmark), Jacob Connor Boswell (Cheddleton) 7/9, 3-6 Jack Rudd (Barnstaple), Oleg Korneev (Spain), Peter Wells (Swindon), Joakim Nilsson (Sweden) 6½.

### P. Wells - B. Chatalbashev

Bridgend 2023

Queen's Indian Defence

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♗f3 e6 3 c4 c5 4 e3 b6 5 ♗c3 g6?! 6...cxd4 6 exd4 ♙b7.**

The game has begun with a slightly unusual move order and here there's a good reason why Black usually goes 5...cxd4 6 exd4 ♙b7.

**6 e4!**

This seems even stronger than 6 d5 when, for example, 6...exd5 7 cxd5 d6 8 e4 ♙g7 9 ♙b5+ ♙d7 10 a4 leaves White with a fairly pleasant edge in a Modern Benoni position.

**6...cxd4 7 ♗xd4 d6**

Easy to criticise, but even after 7... ♗c6 8 ♗db5 ♙c5 9 ♗d6+ ♙e7 10 ♙g5! White is surely still doing pretty well.

**8 ♙g5! h6?!**

8... ♙e7 9 ♗d2 a6 10 0-0-0 ♙b7 11 f3 ♗bd7 12 ♙h6 looks like a good version of an Open Sicilian for White, but was also likely the lesser evil.

**9 ♙xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♗db5**



Black might have an unopposed darksquared bishop, but how to cover all his vulnerable squares?

**10... ♗e7**

In the earlier encounter Gausel-Lie, Norwegian Championship, Røros 2002, Black had also stumbled into this position and after 10... ♗d7!? 11 ♗a4 ♗c6 12 ♗d1 a6?! 13 ♗d4 ♙b7 would have been in some trouble had White found the thematic 14 ♗d5! ♗d8 15 e5!.

**11 c5! bxc5 12 e5!**

Wells is in his element with the initiative and now 12...dxe5? 13 ♗f3 ♗b7 (or 13... ♙b7 14 ♗d6+!) 14 ♗e4 would have been crushing.

**12...d5?!**

This also runs into a powerful sacrificial blow, so it seems that Black had to take his chances in the slightly desperate 12... ♗b7!? 13 exd6 ♙g7 14 ♗c7+ ♙f8.

**13 ♗d6+ ♙d8 14 ♗xd5! exd5 15 ♗xd5**



Both black rooks are clearly in some trouble.

**15... ♗d7 16 0-0-0?**

Overlooking a resource. Of course, White had to avoid 16 ♗xa8? ♗xe5+, but 16 ♗xf7+! was the way to go, and if 16... ♙c7 (16... ♙e8 17 ♗xh8 ♗xe5+ 18 ♗xe5+ ♗xe5 19 f4 wins) 17 ♗xa8 (17 ♗xh8? ♙b7 enables Black to fight on) 17... ♙b7 18 ♗xa7 ♗xf7 19 0-0-0 when White's initiative and material advantage should leave him doing pretty well.

**16... ♗g5+! 17 ♙b1?**

Now White is even worse, whereas 17 ♗d2! ♙xd6 18 ♗xa8 ♙xe5 19 ♙a6 would have maintained the balance. There is 19... ♙xb2+!, but then 20 ♙c2 ♗f5+ 21 ♙xb2 ♗f6+ 22 ♙b1 ♗b6+ 23 ♙c1 ♗xa6 24 ♗hd1 leaves Black with nothing more than perpetual check.

**17... ♙xd6 18 ♗xa8 ♙xe5 19 ♙b5 ♗f5+ 20 ♙a1 ♙d4** An only but rather effective move.

**21 ♗xa7 ♗xf2?!**

Threatening mate, but probably a better try was 21... ♙e7! when 22 ♗xd4! cxd4 23 ♗e1+ ♙f8 24 ♗xd4 gives White some play for the piece and after 24... ♗f6! 25 ♗e8+! ♙g7 26 ♗xf6+ ♗xf6 27 ♗xh8 ♙xh8 28 a4 the two connected passed pawns may yet save the day, better though Black likely is.

**22 ♗a3 ♗f6 23 ♗he1**





**LEYLAND** – The Under-2200 Ribble Rapidplay took place on June 18th.

**Major:** 1-2 Mike Surtees (Bolton), Ali Jaunooby (Eccles) 4/5, 3 Paul Evans (Lytham St Annes) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1-2 Sebastien Szydlowski (Preston), Bryony Eccleston 4, 3-8 Michael Connor (both Bolton), Paul Leonard (Atherton), Becky Kerton (Preston), Tim Bowler (Maryport), Josh Cameron (Manchester), Andeel Mohammed (Ashton-under-Lyne) 3.

**Minor:** 1 Julian Kitchen (Derbyshire) 5, 2 Peter Harthan (Culceth) 4½, 3-6 Richard Smith (Lytham St Annes), Neil Treadwell (Leyland), Arnav Rajinkanth (Staffordshire), Sacha Torregrosa (Ashton) 4.

**LONDON** – The latest Golders Green Rapidplay took place on July 15th, the day before ChessFest.

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 5½/6, 2-3 Ezra Kirk (London), Tim Wall (Forest Hall) 5.

**Major:** 1 Alexandr Pereslavltssev (Upminster) 5½, 2 Tim Valentine (Battersea) 5, 3-6 Leonardo Gupta (west London), Yashvardhan Veeturi (Hammersmith), Andrew Rogers (Hertfordshire), Ollie Main (Newton Abbot) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Sergey Pereslavltssev (Upminster) 6, 2-3 Yichen Xiong (south-west London), Mikael Belay (Romford) 5.

**Amateur:** 1 Furion Kapitanski (Orpington) 5½, 2-4 Theodore Tie (south-west London), Ashish Lakhani (London), Momchil Zhelev (Nottingham) 4½.

There was a fairly strong Open too at Golders Green on June 17th.

**Open:** 1-3 Jonathan Pein (Hackney), Peter Roberson (St Albans), Viktor Stoyanov (Battersea) 5/6.

**Major:** 1 Kumar Banerji (Hammersmith) 5½, 2 Platon Pushnya (west London) 5, 3-4 Tim Valentine (Battersea), Ben Barton (York University) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Lewis Musgrave (Essex) 5½, 2-4 Vanorلد Vanderpuye (Nottingham University), Arran Jabbari (Barnet), Gunnar Niels (Oxford) 5.

The latest Muswell Hill Rapidplay was on June 20th and saw Viktor Stoyanov (Battersea) rack up 6/6 to finish a point ahead of Alex Browning (Hammersmith). Meanwhile at the London Rapidplay over in Acton on June 3rd, Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) had triumphed with 100% in the Open, with Tumen Buyandalai (South Norwood) back on 4/5, while the Under-1500 section saw Leandro Niels Gervasio (Oxford) score 4½/5 to edge out Rayjeshwar Mathompat (Barking) and Rishi Ray (London) by half a point. There was also an Ealing Congress on June 17th and 18th.

**Open:** 1 Midhun Unnikrishnan (Battersea) 4½, 2-3 Peter Lalic (Kingston), Tim Rogers (Hackney) 4.

**Major:** 1-2 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Qixiang Han 4, 3-5 Qixuan Han (both Coulsdon), Andrey Pichugov (Battersea), Kaushik Ashwath (Singapore) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Denis Neczaj-Hruzewicz (Oxford) 5, 2-5 Diego Gregoire (north London), Manel Fernando (Swindon), Yuanxi Li (Beckenham), Quinton Daniels 4 (Gloucester).

London Chess Congresses were also responsible for the Mitcham Rapidplay on July 8th, in which Chris Ward suffered a first-round shock at the hands of Tharshan Kuhendiran.

**Open:** 1 Peter Large (Epsom) 4½/5, 2 Tharshan Kuhendiran (Nottingham University) 4, 3 Chris Ward (Beckenham) 3½.

**Under-1800:** 1 Babu Rahul (Surrey) 5, 2-3 Tim Rogers (Hackney), Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 4.

**NEWMARKET** – Brandon Clarke drew with fellow IM Alan Merry in the final round to win the EACU Congress (June 2-4).

**Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 4½/5, 2-3 Declan Shafi (Cambridge), Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 4.

**Major:** 1-2 James Pack (Bury St Edmunds), David Hall (Norwich) 4, 3-6 Andrew Waters (Rainham), Nasarullah Sheikh (Chingford), Samuel Gaffney (Lowestoft), Antony Hall (Streatham) 3½.

**Under-1650:** 1-2 Liam Chapman (Lowestoft), Charles Richmond (Newmarket) 4, 3-4 Diah Patel (Birmingham), Gert De Block (Cambridge) 3½.

**NOTTINGHAM** – The finals of the National School Chess Championships were hosted by the University of Nottingham (June 29-30) and featured 26 teams, three of whom averaged in excess of 2000, in a five-round Swiss. Led by Rajat Makkar, Hampton School edged home 3½-2½ in all of their first four matches before drawing with Westminster School. Hampton thus won the Championship, with Makkar and third board Jai Kothari both racking up 5/5, while Wilson's School came second to win the Richard Haddrell Plate after defeating Exeter Maths School in the final round.



*Hampton School*

**NUNEATON** – We were sad to hear of the passing of Peter Gibbs (xxviii.v.1934 - ii.vii.2023), a strong player, highly respected chess official and former chess correspondent of the Birmingham Post. Educated at Bradford Grammar School before qualifying as a solicitor, Gibbs represented England on four occasions in the World Student Team Championship and enjoyed a highest British Championship finish of joint sixth in the 1956 event at Blackpool. While working as the deputy town clerk of Sutton Coldfield, Gibbs would regularly turn out for Birmingham Chess Club, later moving to



Burbage to work for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council during which time he played principally for Nuneaton, Hinckley and Leicestershire. Also an arbiter and coach, Gibbs devoted much of his retirement to organising correspondence events and helping the Braille Chess Association. Extremely knowledgeable about the game and always happy to share that knowledge, Peter Gibbs was a true gentleman and it should come as no surprise that all of Warwickshire, Leicestershire and Yorkshire had made him a Life Vice President.

**RINGWOOD** – The first Ringwood Rapidplay took at the Greyfriars Community Centre on June 18th.

**Open:** 1-3 Michael Duggan, John Weatherlake (both Poole), Nwachukwu Okoli (Southampton) 4½/6.

**Intermediate:** 1 Lewis Jackson (Southampton University) 5½, 2 Finn Schell (Southbourne) 5, 3-5 Phil Pinto (Emsworth), Niclas Hordnes (Southampton), Alan Wykes (Ringwood) 4½.

**SOUTH SHIELDS** – South Shields's David Mooney defeated old rival FM David Walker en route to sharing first place with Thomas Eggleston (Durham) at the South Shields Blitz on July 2nd, where James McKay (Gosforth) was half a point behind on 7/9.

**STAINES** – Middlesex extended their record haul of County Championship titles to 30 on July 1st as they overcame Surrey after a dramatic final at Staines had ended 8-8. Despite a miraculous save by Graeme Buckley for Surrey on board 2 against Marco Gallana, Middlesex squeezed home 38-37 on board count after winning the final game to finish, Mateusz Dydak's bishop, knight and five pawns eventually getting the better of Robin Haldane's queen and two pawns. Middlesex's Richard Bates outplayed 1965 British Champion Peter Lee on top board, while for Surrey IM and WGM Susan Lalic gave a fine attacking display on board 4.

#### S. Lalic - R. McMichael

Surrey vs Middlesex  
French Defence

**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♘d7 4 ♗f3 a6**

A sideline, angling to exchange the bad bishop off via b5. Lalic responds in critical fashion.

**5 c4! dxc4 6 ♘xc4 ♘c6**

A decent enough spot for the bishop and, of course, 6... ♘b5 7 ♘b3 followed by ♗c3 would retain the bishops and leave White for choice.

**7 ♗c3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗d5?**

Natural enough, but this allows White to whip up a strong initiative. As such, 8...h6! was indicated when the silicon-approved 9 ♘e3 ♗d7 10 d5!? ♗xd5 11 ♘xd5

exd5 12 ♗d4 still favours White, and if 12... ♗xe5? 13 ♖e1.

**9 ♗g5! ♘e7**

Likewise, 9...h6 10 ♖h5 g6 11 ♖h3 ♖d7 12 ♗ge4 leaves Black's position creaking.

**10 ♖h5 ♘g5 11 ♘g5 ♖d7 12 ♖ad1**

White dominates the board and simply intends f2-f4-f5.

**12... ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♘b5?**

The decisive mistake. 13... ♘d5 was necessary when 14 ♘xd5 ♖xd5 15 f4 still looks pretty good for White.

**14 d5!**



Crashing through, although according to Stockfish, 14 ♘b3!? ♘xf1 15 d5! is even better.

**14... ♘xc4**

Preparing to give up the queen rather than face immediate annihilation after 14...exd5 15 ♘xd5 ♗c6 16 e6!.

**15 dxe6 ♘xe6**

And not, of course, 15... ♖xe6? 16 ♖d8#.

**16 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♖e1 0-0 18 f4!**

Correctly continuing in aggressive vein to deny Black any respite.

**18... ♘xa2 19 ♖e3**

The equally strong 19 ♘h6!? gxh6 20 ♖g4+ would have avoided the option in the next note for Black.

**19... ♖fe8**

Arguably the final mistake, although even after 19... ♘e6!? 20 ♘e7 ♖fe8 21 ♘h4 Black would surely have done well to survive.

**20 ♖g4! ♗f8 21 f5**



The attacking power is simply too strong.

**21... ♖b1 22 ♖f6 g6 23 ♖g3**

Threatening ♜h5-h6 as it fast becomes a massacre.

**23... ♜ad8 24 ♖xd8 ♜xd8 25 e6 fxe6**

**26 fxe6 ♜e8 27 e7!**

Lalic concludes a fine game in style, clearing lines for her unopposed queen to decide proceedings.

**27... ♜xe7 28 ♜b4 ♜e1+ 29 ♜f2 ♜c1 30 ♜c4+ ♜h8 31 ♜f7 1-0**

As well as the Open final, the Minor Counties saw Cambridgeshire triumph on board count against Norfolk in Thetford after another 8-8. Essex won the Under-2050 title, while the Under-1850, Under-1650 and Under-1450 finals were all held at Syston. The first of those saw Middlesex defeat Yorkshire 10-6, but the White Rose county did better in the Under-1650s, overcoming Warwickshire 9-7, with the Under-1450 title going to Greater Manchester who crushed Essex 8½-3½.

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS** – The Under-2350 Kent Congress took place at Tunbridge Wells Bridge Club (July 8-9).

**Under-2350:** 1-4 Steven Jones (Basingstoke), Callum Brewer (Bristol), Aditya Verma (Orpington), Saahil Bansal (Battersea) 4/5.

**Under-1950:** 1 Arran Airlie (Uckfield) 5, 2 Gavin Knott (Sussex) 4, 3-10 Robert McDonald, Robert Lanzer (both Horsham), Keith Nevols (Swale), Tobias Taylor (Coulsdon), Jerry Anstead (Tunbridge Wells), Ben Carpenter-Friend (Herne Bay), Hans Zhu (Germany), James Wheeler (Hastings) 3½.

**Under-1650:** 1-2 Andrejs Gorskovs (Maidstone), Luke Chapman (Bexhill) 4½, 3-5 Liam Ireland (Guildford), Samuel Merchant (Bexhill), Rick Hennessy 4.

## August 2023

**BATTLE** – IM Harriet Hunt triumphed in the English Women's Online Blitz Championship on August 12th, which was run by ECF Directors Shohreh Bayat and Aga Milewska. Hunt defeated WFM Olivia Smith and WCM Nina Pert 2-0 before requiring an Armageddon game to

get past WGM Elmira Mirzoeva. That set up a four-game final with WFM Liza Kisteneva which Hunt won 2½-½ to take the £200 first prize.

**BELFAST** – Citigroup kindly hosted a charity FIDE-rated rapid event at their Belfast offices on the evening of August 3rd to raise money for Marie Curie. This 58-player event saw the visiting head of the Pakistan Chess Federation, Muhammad Hanif Qureshi, take part and have to settle for a share of third as Belfast's Mikolaj Liszewski won all five games to finish half a point ahead of Danny Roberts (Civil Service).

**CHEDDLETON** – Our congratulations to Cheddleton and Leek Chess Club for recently celebrating its 50th anniversary. Club Secretary David Hallen takes up the story:

"On August 9th 1973 three young chess players met in a pub in the Staffordshire Moorlands. They were Robert Milner, Ashleigh Wood and Phil Birks. They decided to form a chess club, and to call it Cheddleton Chess Club. The club attracted members and began to flourish. A few years later the club merged with nearby Leek Chess club, and has since been known as Cheddleton and Leek Chess Club. The club has had a few different venues during its existence, in Leek and Cheddleton, and has always tried to be welcoming and friendly. 50 years later the club is going strong, and on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August held a celebration party at their current venue: St Andrew's Methodist Church, Ostler's Lane, Cheddleton.

There were over 40 people at the celebration, including the three founder members. Ashleigh Wood has retired from chess, but still keeps in touch. Robert Milner can no longer play chess because of poor eyesight, but he retains his love of the game and is chairman of the club and also of the local chess association. Phil Birks is still a regular chess player.

Past members came from far and wide for the celebration, including Brighton and Dundee. A buffet meal and short speeches were followed by a 'crazy' chess competition, in which there are several rule changes during the course of rapidplay games. A good time was had by all.

The club has been very successful over the years, and has won the top division in the North Staffs and District Chess League (known locally as the Stoke league) more times than any other club, and has had great success in the local cup competitions. The club also has teams in the 4NCL. Covid posed obvious problems, but the club held online meetings during the lockdowns at their usual Friday evening time, and has now emerged from the pandemic with several new members.

Cheddleton & Leek Chess Club caters for all ages and abilities. Anyone who wants to find out more should contact Robert Milner on [windycheddleton@gmail.com](mailto:windycheddleton@gmail.com) or just turn up at the club on Friday evening at 7.30pm."

**COLCHESTER** – The Colchester Rapidplay attracted 42 players on July 16th and possibly would have had more but for clashing with ChessFest.

**Open:** 1-4 Tom Shepherd (Bicester), Andrew Lewis (Manningtree), Russell White (Chelmsford), Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 4½/6.

**Under-1600:** 1-2 Henry Leven (Brentwood), Tomasz Krasowski 5, 3-8 Antoni Krasowski (both Suffolk), Simon White, Barry Mitchell (both Witham), Chris Flynn (Lowestoft), Oliver Ferris (Bury St Edmunds), Jason Ren (Colchester) 4.

**EDINBURGH** – The Dean Allegro took place on August 5th, resulting in victory with 5/5 for top seed FM Keith Ruxton (Sandy Bell's, Edinburgh) who finished a point ahead of Eswar Theagarajan (Edinburgh). Alagu Karthick (Glasgow) won the 46-strong Intermediate with 4½/5 as all of Colin Patterson (Glasgow), John Thompson, Devesh Sharma, Alex King, Peter Buchanan (all Edinburgh), Marc Gamble (Pentland Hills) and Srinivas Rath (Corstorphine) shared second just half a point behind. There was also a blitz tournament the evening before, won with 8/9 by Ukrainian Volodymyr Tushynskiy who finished a point in front of Rob Willmoth (Hendon). There was then the hardly insubstantial event that was the Edinburgh Park Chess Festival (August 10-13), held at the Novotel Edinburgh Park on the west side of the Scottish capital.

**Under-2400:** 1-3 Keith Ruxton (Edinburgh), Ieysaa Bin-Suhayl (Norwich), Leopold Adrian (France) 4.

**Under-1900:** 1 Marvin Gera (Corstorphine) 4½, 2 David Hall (Perth) 4, 3-7 Chris Sykes (Corstorphine), Keith Aitchison, Devin Grant, Harvey Stewart (all Edinburgh), Christopher Nield (Bearsden) 3½.

There was also a blitz tournament on the Saturday evening won with 8½/9 by Volodymyr Tushynskiy (Ukraine), who defeated and finished a point in front of Frederick Waldhausen Gordon (Edinburgh), while ahead of round one on the Friday there was an all-day rapid. In the Allegro Open, Leopold Adrian won all five games to finish a point ahead of Volodymyr Tushynskiy, while Edinburgh Chess Academy's Vedanth Vikram took the Intermediate with 4½/5, coming home a point clear of Alagu Karthick (Glasgow), Joao Reis (Civil Service), and Carrick Simpson (Hamilton).

**LANCASTER** – Connor Clarke triumphed at the Lancaster Congress (August 4-6) as top seed FM Bao Nghia Dong was defeated by both Peter Ackley and Robert Clark.

**Open:** 1 Connor Clarke (Middlesex) 4½/5, 2 John Potter (Belper) 4, 3-6 Peter Ackley (Chesterfield), Philip Thomas (Leighton Buzzard), Robert Clark (Penyffordd), Johnathan Bourne (Swindon) 3½.

**Major:** 1 James McKiernan 5, 2-5 Ewan Kershaw (both Lancaster), Robert Clegg (Huddersfield), Carmel Barwick (Crewe), Shriaansh Ganti (Wakefield) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Paul Doherty (Bolton) 4½, 2-4 Kevin Winter (Bradford), Laurence Tarbuck (Lichfield), Stephen Pride (Cambridge) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 David Kilmartin (Holmfirth), Andy Wise (Cheshire) 4, 3-7 Alan Kelly (Pensby), Peter Rose (Lichfield), Ken Lawson (Leyland), James Ovens (Carlisle), Elaine Johnson (Lancashire) 3½.

**LEICESTER** – The British Championship was just one of the many events staged as part of the feast of chess that was the British Chess Championships at De Montfort University (July 20-30).

**Over-65:** 1-3 Alan Punnett (Guildford), Sheila Jackson (Liverpool; also Women's Champion), David Fryer (Crowborough) 5½/7.

**Over-50:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 6, 2 Dave Ledger 5½, 3-5 Bob Eames (both Hackney), Chris Duncan (Watford), Andrew Smith (Bourne End) 5; Women's Champion: Rosemary Giulian (Giffnock) 3½.

**Under-16:** 1-5 Rohan Pal (Coventry), Sanjith Madhavan (East Kilbride), Manmay Chopra (Harrow), Ronit Sachdeva (Guildford), Ruben Evans (Linton) 5; Girls' Champion: Olga Latypova (Chelmsford), Michelle Chan (St Albans) 3½.

**Under-14:** 1 Livio Cancedda-Dupuis (Caterham) 6½, 2 Pengxiao Zhu (Exeter) 6, 3 Maksym Larchikov (Hull) 5½; Girls' Champion: Naavya Parikh (Harrow) 5.

**Under-12:** 1-2 Adithya Vaidyanathan (South Birmingham), Ramsey Dairi (Bedford) 6, 3-5 Alfred Soulier (Richmond), Emils Steiners (Battersea), Sithun De Silva (Ashton-under-Lyne) 5½; Girls' Champions: Shambavi Hariharan (West Nottingham), Alannah Ashton (Calderdale) 4½.

**Under-10:** 1 George Zhao (Barnet) 6, 2-3 Maksym Kryshtafor (Harrogate), Yashwardhan Shankar (Glasgow) 5½; Girls' Champion: Lam Vy Le Nguyen (Petts Wood) 5.

**Under-8:** 1 Ayan Pradhan (Coulsdon) 7, 2 Furion Kapitanski (Petts Wood) 5½, 3-6 Ayaansh Mulukutla (Ireland), Anvikashri Prabhakaran (Coventry; also Girls' Champion), Thomas Ewart (Hammersmith), Advik Saxena (south-west London) 5.

**Major Open:** 1-4 Brandon Clarke (Ely), Andrew Lewis (Manningtree), Aditya Verma (Petts Wood), Mikhail Sedykh (Lewisham) 7/9.

**AM Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 5½/6, 2-3 Aditya Verma (Petts Wood), Stefanus Phan (Muswell Hill) 4½.

**AM Under-1900:** 1 Luke Honey (Exeter) 5½, 2 Alisha Vyas (Barnet) 5, 3-6 Jyothika Reghu (Leicestershire), Cerefino Gonzales (Hounslow), Pranav Mathur (Birmingham), Peter Horlock (Godalming) 4½.

**AM Under-1600:** 1 Vihaan Mathur 5½, 2-3 Mehram Mehrgan (both Birmingham), Rayaansh Vyas (Barnet) 5.

**PM Under-2050:** 1 Sean Gordon (Watford) 5, 2-5 Maxim Dunn (Pimlico), Steve Hodge (York), Mohammed Khan (Ashton-under-Lyne), Kandara Acharya (Bristol) 4.

**PM Under-1750:** 1 Yashvardhan Veeturi (Hammersmith) 5½, 2 Graeme McCormick (Belfast) 5, 3 Ankita Belur (Barnet) 4½.

**PM Under-1450:** 1 Barry Miles (South Norwood) 5, 2 David Dunne (Nottingham) 4½, 3-5 Liam Finlay (Crowborough), Avyanna Singh, Rayaan Vyas (both Barnet) 4.

**Weekend Atkins (Open):** 1 Declan Shafi (Cambridge) 4½/5, 2-6 Joris Gerlagh (Oxford), Oliver Stubbs (Bristol), Arjun Kolani (Brighton), Oleksander Matlak (Wells), Vivash Samarakoon (Norwich) 4.

**Weekend Penrose (Under-2000):** 1-2 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Alex Royle (Louth) 4½, 3-6 Gurveen Kapoor (Maidenhead), Dylan Wastney (Reading), Matthew Masani (Lewes), Jainill Vadalia (Birmingham) 4.

**Weekend Soanes (Under-1750):** 1-2 Ruwan Dias (Elstree), Solomon Hayes (Wells) 4½, 3-7 Arnold Acibar (Taunton), Jack Howorth (York), Sai Vaddhireddy (Manchester), Aaron Welson (Forest Hall, Newcastle), Yashvardhan Veeturi (Hammersmith) 4.

**Weekend Yates (Under-1500):** 1-3 Roland Fraser (Paisley), Tim Jelfs (Gloucester), Samuel Morris (Belfast) 4½.

**1st Rapidplay Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 6½/7, 2 Andrew Ledger (Sheffield) 6, 3 Bao Nghia Dong (Battersea) 5½.

**1st Rapidplay Under-1750:** 1 Jainill Vadalia (Birmingham) 6, 2-3 Oliver Harrison (Stratford-upon-Avon), Dogukan Turkoz (Warwick University) 5½.

**1st Rapidplay Under-1450:** 1-4 Philip Clare (Stockport), Aron English (Syston), Diah Patel (Birmingham), George Boothman (Doncaster) 5.

**2nd Rapidplay Open:** 1 David Phillips (Coventry) 6, 2-4 Adithya Vaidyanathan (South Birmingham), Billy Fellowes (Kenilworth), Manmay Chopra (Harrow) 5½.

**2nd Rapidplay Under-1750:** 1-2 Lion Lebedev (Barnet), Fahim Nasiri (Birmingham University) 6, 3 Armaan Nilim (Barnet) 5½.

**2nd Rapidplay Under-1450:** 1 Edward Chu (Swinton) 6, 2-3 Florence Spirling (Bournemouth), Robin Yu (Redbridge) 5½.

**3rd Rapidplay Open:** 1 Harriet Hunt (Royston) 6½, 2 Adam Nawalaniec (Peterborough) 6, 3 Cory Hazlehurst (South Birmingham) 4½.

**3rd Rapidplay Under-1750:** 1 Bharath Jayakumar (Harrow) 6, 2-7 Andrew Wilson (Ashby de la Zouch), Jonathan Day (West Nottingham), Glyn Ward (Loughborough), Daniel Savin (Market Harborough), Yueyue Sui (Oxford), Laurence Norton (Wigston) 5.

**3rd Rapidplay Under-1450:** 1-2 Elliot O'Donnell (Barnet), Mihir Sharma (Northampton) 6, 3-6 Matthew Jiggins (Chelmsford), Sergey Pereslavltssev (Upminster), Freya Pinna-Chapman (Hastings), Ashwin Gopikrishna (Ilford) 5½.

**1st Blitz Open:** 1-2 Bao Nghia Dong (Battersea), Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 7½/9, 3 Pal Rohan (Coventry) 6½.

**1st Blitz Under-1600:** 1 Joshua Seet (Woking) 9, 2 Andrew Adams (Wolverhampton) 7½, 3 Lana Boztas (Coventry) 6½.

**2nd Blitz Open:** 1 Brandon Clarke (Ely) 8½, 2 Yichen Han (Oxford) 7½, 3-5 Supratit Banerjee (Coulsdon), Theo Khoury (Maidenhead), Livio Cancedda-Dupuis (Caterham) 7.

**2nd Blitz Under-1600:** 1 Beni Sisupalan (Barnet) 7½, 2 Ceferino Gonzales (Hounslow) 7, 3-5 Freddie Sugden (Hackney), Alistair Pettey (Dartford), Ashton Gadiot (East Grinstead) 6½.

**Junior Blitz Open:** 1-2 Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill), Samar Dayal (India) 7½, 3-6 Yichen Han (Oxford), Rahul Babu (Coulsdon), George Zhao (Barnet), Max Pert (Brentwood) 6½.

**Junior Blitz Under-1600:** 1 Finn Schell (Bournemouth) 9, 2 Maksym Kryshafor (Harrogate) 7½, 3 Yashvardhan Shankar (Glasgow) 7.

**LONDON** – The inaugural Psyon Chess Masters IM Invitational tournament took place at the London MindSports Centre (August 7-11). It resulted in a norm and victory for teenage FM Aaravamudhan Balaji with 7/9, who defeated IM Peter Large then Savas Stoica in the last two rounds as he finished a point clear of the field.



*Aaravamudhan Balaji receiving the winner's trophy from Satish Gaekwad*

Elsewhere in the capital rapid chess is more popular than ever. London's longest-running event, the Golders Green Rapidplay is very much alive and thriving, Max Turner racking up a perfect score at the latest event on August 5th as Alexander Cherniaev was held to draws by Stanley Badacsonyi and Peter Large.

**Open:** 1 Max Turner (Warwick University) 6/6, 2-3 Alex Cherniaev (Hackney), Oscar Pollack (Hendon) 5.

**Major:** 1 Sanne De Boer (north-west London) 5½, 2-3 Steve Madden (Athenaeum), Henry Shard (Richmond) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Aishwarya Kalaiyalahan (Kingston) 5½, 2 Hari Singh (Richmond) 5, 3 Sergey Pereslavltssev (Upminster) 4½.



**Amateur:** 1 Ian Whipp (Snodland) 5½, 2-3 Richard Kulibaev (Coulsdon), Ravi Singh (Richmond) 5.

Meanwhile Bury St Edmunds IM Alan Merry has taken to visiting the capital for the Muswell Hill Rapidplay, bagging the £100 first prize with 5½/6 on July 18th as he finished a point ahead of Samar Dayal (India). Merry was back the following week on the 25th, again finishing on '+5' and this time coming a full point ahead of Mohammad Mozaffari and Peter Hazell (both Coulsdon).

The thriving Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club hosted an Under-1800 Rapidplay on August 5th, in which Alexander Chmelev top-scored with 5½/6, chased home half a point adrift by Joaquin Inga Paiva and Michael McGuinness.

We must also note that 84-year-old Stewart Reuben, who has, of course, done so much for English chess, recently celebrated his platinum jubilee as a chess administrator. Stewart himself explains how it all began: "One of the main activities at William Ellis Grammar School, which I first attended in September 1950, was the lunchtime chess club. Apart from the library it was the only place you could stay in the school during bad weather. It was very popular. In September 1953, in the new school year, I turned up for the chess club, but no older boy, nor teacher appeared. I took it on myself to get out the sets and boards from the cupboard and put them away, aged 14 and did so for the rest of the school year. I also introduced some children to chess.

Also in 1953 Islington adult club had its AGM. I was much too sensible a child to attend that; it would be boring! How wrong I was. They decided to run a second team in the Middlesex League. But who would captain it? They decided to invite Alf Burt (a boy of very similar age and playing strength) and me to jointly captain the team. And so it was for the whole season. We lost to the first team in the first match. But, by the end of the season, we finished ahead of them. It took me 49 years to repeat that feat. This is the origin of my claim to have been a chess administrator from September 1953."

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME** – The Staffordshire town staged a FIDE-rated and very competitive FIDE-rated all-play-all (August 9-13). Welsh FMs Jonathan Blackburn (Alsager) and Tim Kett (Cardiff) tied for first on 5½/9, finishing half a point ahead of Richard Lee (Crewe) and Jacob Connor Boswell (Cheddleton).

**NOTTINGHAM** – The EJCOA National Youth Championships Finals were hosted by Nottingham High School (July 7-9), and ably run by Rob Willmoth, Tim Wall and Alan Atkinson, as well as Jake Hung and Hambel Willow.

**Under-20:** 1 Vinuda Shenal Gunathilake (Middlesex) 4½/5, 2-4 Kyle Pelling (3Cs, Oldham), Owen Crawford (Derby), Maksym Larchikov (Hull) 4.

**Under-14:** 1 Eldars Gulijevs (Nottingham) 4½, 2-7 Hao Ran Leung (Barnet), Jai Kothari (Surrey), Elis Dicen (Coventry), Daniel Pitts, Amanthika Anbalagan (both Grantham), Thisumi Jayawarna (Manchester) 4.

**Under-12:** 1 Frank Richmond (West Bridgford) 5, 2-6 Senith Gunarathne, Shambavi Hariharan (both West Nottingham), Yuk Hei Lee (Richmond), Danbe Luk (Cheam), Alannah Ashton (Calderdale) 4.

**Under-10:** 1 Junyi Zhang (Coulsdon) 5, 2 Sharvari Saharkar (Norwich) 4½, 3-8 Akshath Shivakumar (Solihull), Max Michener, Michael Paulins (both Barnet), Lam Vy Le Nguyen (Petts Wood), Callum Hill (northwest London), Ethan Ross (Gosforth) 4.

**Under-8:** 1 Ravi Singh (Richmond) 4½, 2-6 Amandeep Singh (Bradford), Yichen Xiong (south-west London), Varshyth Vinoth (Ilford), Adamjeet Singh (Leeds), Krish Gandhi (Coventry) 4.

**STAFFORD** – Lawrence Cooper organised the third Wood Green Invitational, which again took place in Stafford (July 14-18), supported by the John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, the Chess Trust and the Friends of Chess. It saw Ameet Ghasi break the magic 2600 performance rating and so secure his second GM norm, while his rating rose above 2500. Ghasi remained unbeaten and rather dominated the tournament in impressive fashion, although he was unable to make his norm with a round to spare after being fortunate, if anything, to draw with 12-year old Frederick Gordon, who up to that point was rather suffering on 0/7, but would also press against Ian Rees come the final round.



*Ameet Ghasi*

### M. Turner - A. Ghasi

Stafford 2023  
Veresov Opening

1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♙g5 g6

As recommended by Gawain Jones in his King's Indian repertoire, with one point being that 3 ♘xf6 exf6 4 e3 d5! followed by a switch of approach with ... ♘d6 is very solid for Black. Turner instead opts to transpose away from Trompowsky waters.

3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♚d2 ♙g7 5 ♙h6 0-0 6 ♙xg7 ♚xg7 7 0-0-0!?

Consistent, if also risky. Ghasi now counters in critical fashion.

**7...c5! 8 dxc5 ♖a5 9 ♜xd5!**

Brave, but also critical in view of White's multipurpose follow-up. Instead, something like 9 ♜b1?! ♗xc5 10 e3 ♜c6 would just have been extremely comfortable for Black, with ...e5 imminent or if 11 ♜xd5?? ♜d8.

**9...♗xa2 10 ♗c3! ♜d8 11 e4**



Another essential move, but Black is now able to discombobulate and retain full compensation for the pawn.

**11...♞e6 12 ♞c4 ♗a1+ 13 ♜d2 ♗a4 14 ♜e2 ♜bd7 15 b3 ♗c6**

Black didn't have to retreat and 15...♗a3 was also possible when 16 ♜e1 (16 b4?! ♗xc3+ 17 ♜exc3 a5 will regain the pawn with interest) 16...♞xd5!? (16...♗xc5 17 ♜xf6 exf6 18 ♞xe6 ♗xc3+ 19 ♜xc3 fxe6 20 ♜b5 is most likely to lead to a draw) 17 ♞xd5 ♜ab8 18 e5 ♜xd5 19 ♜xd5 ♜f8 20 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 21 f3 ♜e6 would have remained roughly balanced.

**16 ♜c1 ♞xd5 17 ♞xd5 ♗a6 18 ♜f4**

As well as 18 ♜b2, 18 ♞xb7!? ♗xb7 19 c6 was also possible when 19...♗a6 20 ♜xd7! ♗xe2 21 ♜hd1 gives White enough for a piece according to the engines who recommend that Black should now go 21...♜xd7 22 cxd7 ♜d8, and if 23 e5!? ♜g4 24 ♗c8 ♜xf2 25 ♗xd8 ♗xd1+ 26 ♜b2 ♗d4+ 27 ♜b1 ♗d1+ with perpetual check.

**18...♗a3+ 19 ♜b1 ♜xc5 20 e5?**

Far too ambitious. Instead, 20 f3 ♜ac8 21 ♗b2 ♗a5!? 22 h4 ♗c7 would just have remained rather unclear.

**20...♜fe4 21 ♞xe4 ♜xe4 22 ♗e3**

White can defend f2, but not also the c3-square and it's not impossible that Turner had initially overlooked Black's upcoming backwards queen move.

**22...♗b4! 23 ♜d3**

Likewise, 23 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 24 ♜e1 ♜d2+ 25 ♜a2 ♜c8 26 ♜c1 ♜c6 wins.

**23...♜ac8**



**24 ♜b2**

This won't keep Black out of c3, but 24 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 25 ♜d3 ♜xd3! 26 ♗xd3 (26 cxd3 ♗xb3+ 27 ♜a1 ♗c3+ 28 ♜a2 ♜d2 sees the classic queen and knight team hunting down the white king to its doom) 26...♜xf2 27 ♗f1 ♜xh1 28 ♗xh1 ♗e4 would have been a hopeless endgame for White.

**24...♜xd3 25 ♜xd3 ♗c3+ 26 ♜a3 ♜d2!**

**0-1**

And that was that in view of 27 ♜b2 (to cover c4) 27...♗a5+ 28 ♜a4 b5.

**WELLINGBOROUGH** – Cornish junior star Rami Talab finished just half a point behind the winners at Adam Raoof's latest Chess England venture staged in conjunction with Joshua Morris's Chess Events UK franchise, the East Midlands FIDE Congress at the historic Hind Hotel in Wellingborough (August 12-13).

**Under-2400:** 1-3 Oscar Pollack (Hendon), John Potter (Belper), Tashika Arora (Oxfordshire) 4/5.

**Under-1900:** 1-2 Kevin Williamson (Leighton Buzzard), Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon) 4, 3-5 Lynda Smith (Bristol), Kevin Chojnacki (Wycombe), Ioan Strugar (Rushden) 3.

**Under-1700:** 1 Freddie Sugden (Hackney) 4½, 2-6 Michael Owen (France), Neil Homer (Swindon), Mihir Sharma (Northamptonshire), Michael Walia (Edgware), Kanvansh Dhingra (Sutton Coldfield) 4.

**Under-1000:** 1 Zac Paintin (Northamptonshire) 5, 2-3 William Calvert (Oundle), Hannah Walker (Norfolk) 3.

## September 2023

**AXMOUTH** – Patryk Krzyzanowski of South Bristol Chess Club sprang a small surprise as he triumphed with 5½/6 at the 1st Jurassic Rapidplay on September 16th. Paul Hampton (Seaton) was half a point back in second, with Ian Thompson (Crowthorne) third on 4½/6.

**BATTLE** – Judges Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh have announced their shortlist for the ECF Book of the Year Award: Jacob Aagaard's *A Matter of*

*Endgame Technique* (Quality Chess), *Chess for Schools* by Richard James (Crown House), Jeroen Bosch's *How to Out-Prepare Your Opponent* (New in Chess), and *The Pawn Study Composer's Manual* by Mikhail Zinar (Elk and Ruby). It goes without saying that all four books are highly recommended, as well as available from Chess & Bridge. The ECF have also announced the 2023 ECF Awards and it was impossible not to approve of the five significant chess administrators, organisers and arbiters who were awarded a President's Award for Services to Chess: Bob Jones, Rupert Jones, Alex McFarlane, Peter Purland and Kevin Staveley. Elsewhere, Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club scooped the Contribution to Chess in the Community, the Contribution to Junior Chess went to Chris Lewis, and Caroline Robson was awarded the Contribution to Women's Chess. Leeds Junior Chess Club are Club of the Year, with Ringwood the Small Club of the Year and the Congress of the Year award went to the University of Warwick.

**BELFAST** – The Ulster Championships took place in the fine setting of Elmwood Hall, Queen's University Belfast (August 26-28). Scott Crockart (Strand) became Ulster Champion after finishing on 5/6, half a point ahead of Mandar Tahmankar (Civil Service). There were also Intermediate and Junior sections, the former going to Jade Sandrey (QUB) with 6/6, while the latter saw Anayraj Tripathi (Lisburn) prevail on tiebreak after finishing alongside James Huang (Methodist College) and Odrhan Doody (Belfast) on 4½/6.

**BRENTWOOD** – 11-year-old Ruqayyah Rida had a notable achievement as she triumphed at the Brentwood Rapidplay on August 26th.

**Open:** 1 Ruqayyah Rida (Colchester) 5½/6, 2-3 Ivan Myall (Writtle), Max Pert (Brentwood) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Maadesh Manikandan (Brentwood) 5½, 2-5 Aarav Gujarathi (Cambridgeshire), Reyansh Saxena (south-west London), Milan Saujani (Uxbridge), Nickolay Starodubcevs-Snaiders (Bury St Edmunds) 5.

**COVENTRY** – Yichen Han proved far too strong at the Warwickshire Blitz Championship on September 2nd.

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 13/14, 2-4 Javier Valdepenas Octavio (Kenilworth), Tomasz Sygnowski (Wolverhampton), Jude Shearsby (Coventry) 9.

**Major:** 1 Nathanael Paul (Newport) 11½, 2 Karan Kukreja (Birmingham) 11, 3 Joshua Pink (Kenilworth) 9.

**Intermediate:** 1 Pranav Mathur (Birmingham) 13½, 2 Dhairya Pandya (Coventry) 10, 3-4 Alex Holowczak (Warley Quinborne), Jesse Campbell (Stratford) 8½.

**Minor:** 1 Vihaan Mathur (Birmingham) 13½, 2 Eskander Dean (north-west London) 9½, 3 Tara Tamilselvan (Leicester) 9.

Dutch-affiliated IM Han doubled up the next day in the Warwickshire Rapid Championship.

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 6/7, 2-3 John Pitcher (South B'ham), Athar Ansari (Telford) 5.

**Major:** 1 Callum Davies (Cardiff University) 6½, 2 Adrian Kaszuba (Peterborough) 6, 3 Shahab Quraishi (West Bromwich) 5½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Yassen Rajjoub 6, 2 Rhys Edwards (both Coventry) 5½, 3-4 George Topping (Kenilworth), Krishnaswaroop Thimmegowda (Newport) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Vassily Sagyaman (Coventry) 6½, 2 Abhinandan Babu (Coventry University) 6, 3 Muhammed Mehmood (Solihull) 5.

**CROWBOROUGH** – Calum Salmons (Brighton) triumphed on tiebreak to win the Joe Berberich Cup at the Crowborough Congress on September 16th. Rasa Norinkeviute (Eastbourne) and Callum Brewer (Bristol) also finished on 5/6, as the three winners all earned £100 for their efforts, with 13 other prizes awarded, largely for the best rating performances, in this 58-player rapid event.

**GLASGOW** – IM Andrew Greet triumphed at the Cathcart Chess Club 70th Anniversary Allegro on August 26th. Leading scores: 1 Andrew Greet 5½/6, 2-4 Rob Colston (both Bearsden), Derek McCormack (Paisley), Marcos Reza Salgado (Spain) 5.

**HORWICH** – Keith Arkell and Bogdan Lalic avoided playing each other, but still tied for first in the Harry Lamb Memorial, the top section of the Manchester Summer Chess Congress, which took place at the University of Bolton Arena (August 18-20).



GM Keith Arkell

**Open:** 1-2 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Bogdan Lalic (Lewisham) 4½/5, 3-4 Ethan Norris (Atherton), Edward Jackson (3Cs, Oldham) 4.



**Major:** 1-4 Joel McBeath (Ashton), Alfie Melia (Atticus), Rob Letton (Leeds), Kevin Winter (Bradford) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Neil Jackson (3Cs), Toby Quaite (Leeds) 4½, 3-4 Calvin Smith (Maryport), Mikhail Shkuro (Manchester) 4.

**Junior:** 1-2 Alexander Burke (Swinton), Amanthika Anbalagan (Grantham) 4½, 3-7 Thomas Chapman (Stafford), Shulin Walia (Eccles), David Agyemang (Bolton), Mikhail Shkuro, Mahin Rughani (both Manchester) 4.

**HULL** – The 4NCL Hull Congress (September 8-10) had the misfortune of suffering from a power cut which halted play in the Open and Major some 75 minutes into round 2. The decision was eventually made to annul that round, meaning that those tournaments became four-round swisses and play was, thankfully, able to get back under way by the time of round 3. When the dust had settled, local player Joe Varley had played the perfect Swiss Gambit, winning three on the bounce after a 124-move draw with Dylan Mize. Varley thus caught up Max Turner, who had notably defeated Mark Hebden and drawn with Danny Gormally, as the co-winners each took home £350.

**Open:** 1-2 Max Turner (Berwick-upon-Tweed), Joe Varley (Hull) 3½/4, 3-8 Mark Hebden (Leicester), Danny Gormally (Alnwick), Peter Wells (Swindon), Aditya Verma (Orpington), Richard Britton (Hackney), David Phillips (Coventry) 3.

**Under-2000:** 1-3 Shriannsh Ganti (Ilkley), Kristian Usifoh (Hull), Bruno Dos Santos Silva (South Birmingham) 3½.

**Under-1700:** 1 Rojas Lukauskas (Leeds) 4½, 2-3 Neal Fisher (Peterborough), Devesh Sharma (Edinburgh) 4.

**Under-1450:** 1 Mark Robinson 5, 2-3 Stuart Sharp, David Atkin (all Hull) 3½.

## B. Chan - J. Varley

Hull 2023



Is it safe for White to devour the e5-pawn? No! After 25 ♖xe5?? ♜c4 Black wins material, and the game was no better:

25 ♜c4??

25 ♜xc5! ♜b7 26 ♜xe7 ♜xd1+ 27 ♜e1 ♜xa1 28 g4! ♜xe1+ 29 ♜g2 should actually be OK for White as Black can't save his knight.

25... ♜xe5 26 ♜xe5 ♜c4

Threatening the queen and back-rank mate.

27 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 28 ♜b8 ♜xb8 29 ♜xb8 ♜xb2 30 ♜e5 ♜a4 0-1

**LEYLAND** – Scottish 11-year-old Rishi Vijayakumar had a landmark result as he triumphed at the Leyland Congress (August 26-28).

**Open:** 1 Rishi Vijayakumar (Dundee) 5½/6, 2 Mike Surtees (Great Lever) 5, 3 Ethan Norris (Atherton) 4.

**Major:** 1 Danny McMenemy (Lancaster) 5/6, 2 Graham Ashcroft (Preston) 4½, 3-5 Freddie Sugden (Hackney), Mark Cheetham (Little Heath), Richard Swajkun (Telford) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Torrin Anderson (Lytham St Annes) 5, 2-4 Paul Leonard (Atherton), David Ashton (Chester), David Buckell (Clitheroe) 4½.

**LONDON** – The London Montague Congress took place at the plush setting of the The Montague on the Gardens hotel by Russell Square (August 19-20). The under-2300 section saw Abhinav Bathula (LSE) and Hendrik Brackmann (Streatham) tie for first on 4½/5, with that same score made by Jimmy Tan (Singapore) in the under-1900 section where it was only enough for second as Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) racked up 100%. Not exactly far away, the Greater London Chess Club staged their Summer Rapidplay at Upper Vestry House, St George's Bloomsbury on August 19th.

**Open:** 1 Eldar Alizada (Cumnor) 4½/5, 2-3 Gary Senior (Hendon), Ruairi Isaacs (Streatham) 3½.

**Major:** 1 Tim Davis (Farnham) 5, 2-3 James Wagstaff-Hall (Charlton), Leonardo Boerci (Italy) 4.

**Minor:** 1-3 Matthew Jiggins (Chelmsford), Arjun Patnaik (Wimbledon), Toby Barton (Kent) 4.

As well as the Montague Congress, London Chess Congresses were also responsible for the Wimbledon Congress (September 1-2), in which FM Jovica Radovanovic triumphed in the top section.

**Under-2300:** 1 Jovica Radovanovic (Spitalfields) 4½/5, 2-4 Balahari Kumar Bharat (Coulsdon), Jack Liu (Street), Oleg Verbytski (Charlton) 4.

**Under-1700:** 1 Godwish Nyambuya (Camberley) 4½, 2-3 Aram Swiatkowski (Medway), Joseph Hankinson (Wycombe) 4.

The same organisers, Tserendorj Sainbayar and daughter Anurui, were also responsible for the Ealing Rapidplay on September 3rd, where Peter Large (Epsom), Peter Lalic (Kingston) and Jovica Radovanovic (Spitalfields) shared first on 4/5 in the Open, while Gagan Bablu (India) and Samuel Cheung (east London) went half a point better in the Under-1700 section. Adam Raoof's regular events are also very much still



going strong, IM John Pigott (Little Heath) and GM Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) sharing first on 5½/6 at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on September 12th.

Some three days earlier at the Golders Green Rapidplay there had been a three-way tie for first in the Open.

**Open:** 1-3 Yichen Han (Oxford), Peter Sowray (Barbican), Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 5/6.

**Major:** 1 Gagan Bablu (India) 5½, 2-4 Francesco Sciaudone (Hammersmith), Alexander Funk (Hendon), Leandro Niels Gervasio (Oxford) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Vikram Suresh (London) 6, 2 Gunnar Niels (Oxford) 5, 3 Saaheb Basi (Berkshire) 4½.

**Beginners:** 1 Richard Kulibaev (Hampstead) 5½, 2 Cheuk Kiu Leung 5, 3 Jack Lucas (both London) 4½.

There was also the Kensington Rapidplay on September 17th, where Yichen Han continued his good form as he tied for first with Livio Cancedda-Dupuis in the Open, both winning £150. 13-year-old Cancedda-Dupuis well and truly belied his rating of 1722, as he performed at 2399, defeating FM Peter Sowray and IM Gavin Wall, while drawing with Han.

**Open:** 1-2 Yichen Han (Oxford), Livio Cancedda-Dupuis (Caterham) 5½/6, 3-4 Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill), Roman Kovalskyi (Ukraine) 5.

**Major:** 1 Gregory Konyakhin-Borrelly (Battersea) 6, 2 Orest Stus (Barnet) 5, 3-4 Geoffrey Bishop (Chislehurst), Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Aurelio Milani-Foglia (Kensington) 5½, 2-3 Caitano Demelo (India), Rishi Chotai (Harrow) 5.

**LONDONDERRY** – 95 players competed at the Brendan Jamison organised City of Derry Rapid Championships on September 9th, held at the Maldron Hotel and sponsored by The Donegal/Derry Vipers, an American Football team. Kamil Marchlewicz (Belfast) impressed as he racked up a huge 7/7 to finish a point clear of Gerard McIlroy (Fisherwick), with Danny Roberts (Civil Service) third a further point behind.

**NEWPORT** – Keith Arkell scored 100% at the Newport Congress, which also featured the Welsh Senior Championship (September 8-10).

**Welsh Senior Championship:** 1-2 Rudy van Kemenade (Aberystwyth), Mark Thomas (Morrison) 4/5, 3 Walter Saunders (Abergavenny) 3½.

**Open:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 5, 2-6 Alex Bullen (Cardiff), Andy Hill, Peter Varley (Newport), Sean Gordon (Witney), James Lavender (Malpas) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Yaroslav Sharhorodsky (Wales) 5, 2 Andrew Di-Vetta (Bridgend) 4½, 3-11 Duncan MacArthur (Keynsham), David McGhee (Cardiff), Paul Mills (Abergavenny), Ron Williams (Malpas), Steve Jones (Barry), Lalit Sharma (Leamington Spa), Vince Teisar (Bridgend), Malcolm Probert (Llanelli), Darson Beeston (Morrison) 4.

**SANDWICH** – Top seed Conor Murphy defeated fellow IM Alan Merry en route to a perfect score and the £300 first prize at the Thanet Congress in Sandwich (August 18-20).

**Open:** 1 Conor Murphy (Charlton) 5/5, 2-4 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds), Martin Taylor (Rainham), Robert Starley (Sandwich) 3½.

**Challengers:** 1 Trefor Owens (Swale) 4, 2-6 David Clear (Gravesend), John Atherton (Folkestone), Richard George (Cirencester), Chris Bernard (Crystal Palace), Rezin Catabay (Colchester) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Aram Swiatkowski (Medway) 4½, 2-3 Gavin Josephs (Dartford), Rob Woolacott (Swale) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Aravind Kuchibhatla (Gravesend), Freddie White (Kent) 4½, 3-4 Rob Coles (Wiltshire), Omkar Ranadive (Canterbury) 4.



Conor Murphy

**SHEFFIELD** – There was another three-way tie for first in the small but fairly strong Open at the Darnall & Handsworth Rapidplay on September 2nd.

**Open:** 1-3 Andrew Ledger (Woodseats), Thomas Carroll (Hoylake), Mike Surtees (Great Lever) 4½/6.

**Major:** 1 Sean McDonald (Doncaster) 5, 2 Edouardos Ter Gevorkian (Darnall & Handsworth) 4½, 3-5 Peter Jaszkiwskyj (Kettering), Joe Hirst (Newcastle-under-Lyme), Michael Hamilton (Brighton) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Michael Hughes 5 (Sheffield Nomads), 2-4 Bien Cuaresma, Holi Sief Al Din (both Wakefield), Al Haidar Hussam (Hull) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Ben Taylor (Leicester University) 5½, 2 Mark Watson (Rotherham) 5, 3 Stuart Sharp (Hull) 4½.

**STIRLING** – This year’s Glorney Cup saw fairly late changes to both the planned dates and venue, but it did take place in an impressive setting, Stirling University (August 18-20). The host nation won their first Glorney Cup since 1965, finishing on 23/30, with England back

on 19½, Ireland 14 and Wales 3. Scotland do, of course, have plenty of talented juniors these days and their Glorney-winning side of Sanjith Madhavan, Supratit Banerjee, Aryan Munshi, Ross Blackford and Marvin Gera impressively only lost three individual games, with Banerjee piling up 5½/6 and Blackford 5/6.

England's team of Emily Maton, Niamh Bridgeman and Michelle Chan did somewhat better in the Gilbert Cup (girls; also Under-18), amassing a huge 16½/18. England also won both the Robinson (Under-14) and Stokes (Under-12) Cups, finishing on 22½/36 to edge out Scotland by a point in the former and then racking up a whopping 33½/36 in the latter as Pengxiao Zhu, Rock Yu, Adam Sefton and Senith Gunarathne all made perfect scores.

**TORQUAY** – The Paignton Congress may sadly be no longer, but it has helpfully been replaced by the Riviera Congress in Torquay (September 3-8). Our contributor Brian Gosling enjoyed playing when it was cooler in the mornings and did pretty well too, while the in-form, local GM Keith Arkell won not one but two Open tournaments to pocket £500 in total.

**AM Open:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 5/5, 2-3 Peter Kirby (Bristol), Cameron Davis (Exeter) 3.

**PM Open:** 1 Keith Arkell (Paignton) 4½, 2 Oliver Jackson (Cheshire) 4, 3-5 Tim Kett (Cardiff), Alan Brown (Milton Keynes), Alan Brusey (Teignmouth) 3½.

**AM Under-1900:** 1 Megan O'Brien (Plymouth) 4, 2-4 Yasser Tello (Wimbledon), Brian Gosling (East Budleigh), Hugh Fenwick (Mushrooms) 3½.

**PM Under-1800:** 1 Ben Cooper (Wellington) 4½, 2-3 Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), Megan O'Brien (Plymouth) 3½.

**AM Under-1700:** 1 David McGeeney (Bristol) 4½, 2-3 Malcolm Roberts (Holmes Chapel), Elmira Walker (Downend) 4.

**PM Under-1600:** 1-2 Chris Fraser (West Bridgford), Lloyd Russell (Bude) 4, 3 David Smith (Wanstead) 3½.

## October 2023

**BANGOR** – The Brendan Jamison-organised FIDE-Rated City of Bangor Congress took place on September 23rd. Local star Adam Rushe triumphed with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Tom Grey whose Queen's University Belfast team-mate Jade Sandrey was third, a further point back.

**BATTLE** – Judges Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska and Sean Marsh have announced the winner of the ECF Book of the Year Award: Jacob Aagaard's *A Matter of Endgame Technique*. They found that "Aagaard writes fluently and well" with his 896-page tome "valuable for an ambitious player who wants to learn how to play endgames against capable opponents during competitive games."

**CAMBERLEY** – The Keith Richardson Memorial Tournament was once again a rapidplay event organised by the correspondence GM's former club, Camberley, on September 30th. Leading scores: 1-2 Richard Webb (Crowthorne), Clive Frostick (Farnham) 4½/5, 3-6 Adam Sefton (Guildford), Tom Farrand (Wood Green), Theo Khoury (Maidenhead), Paul Northcott (Emsworth) 4.

**DUNDEE** – IM Andrew Greet rather dominated the Dundee Congress (October 13-15), as he racked up 100%.

**Open:** 1 Andrew Greet (Bearsden) 5/5, 2-3 Ed Spencer (Dundee Victoria), Aryan Munshi (Phones, Glasgow) 4.

**Major:** 1 Divyesh Salvaraj (Edinburgh University) 5, 2 Vlad Drabych 4½, 3-4 Euan Murray (both Castlehill, Dundee), Charles Gunn-Russell (Edinburgh Civil Service) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Douglas Cairns (Newport-on-Tay), Angus Ruthven (Galashiels) 4½, 3-5 Ana Sejas Otero, Daniel Coleman (both Castlehill, Dundee), Josh Stewart (Inverness) 4.

**EDINBURGH** – The latest Scottish Chess Tour event was the Edinburgh Park Allegro on October 2nd, where Isaac Browning (Wandering Dragons, Edinburgh) top-scored with 4½/5 in the Open, finishing a point ahead of club-mate Tom Leah, as well as Andrew McCusker (Hamilton), Alistair Macnaughton, Marvin Gera (both Corstorphine), Kritan Boggarapu (Edinburgh) and Jorge Blanco (Bank of Scotland). There was also an Intermediate section, where Laurens Stegink (Edinburgh University) and Alagu Karthick (Edinburgh Chess Academy) each scored 4½, with Jacint Sitkei (Renfrewshire) and Tristan Del Mar (Edinburgh) half a point adrift back in third.

**HASTINGS** – The famous setting of Hastings Chess Club played host to an under-1850 weekend (September 23-24), in which Anthony Giles, Tadeusz Tompsett (both Eastbourne) and Leon Szakissyan (Hastings) shared first place on 4/5.

**LONDON** – The Mindsports Grandmasters Open (September 13-17) was advertised as a Super Swiss Open tournament, an idea borrowed from the 1000GM Las Vegas Super Swiss tournaments. The result in west London was a pretty strong 32-player event, won by the Norwegian GM Frode Urkedal with 7/9, as IMs Matthew Wadsworth and Jonah Willow shared second on '+3', alongside Danish GM Boris Chatalbashev and Ukrainian GM Alexander Kovchan.

Elsewhere in the capital, Tharshan Kuhendiran (Nottingham University) triumphed with 4½/5 in the Under-1900 section at the Southall Congress (September 23-24), a half-point more than Okwose Marc Obi (Sutton Coldfield) and Rajasekhar Pentakota (Southampton) could manage, while Moksha Suriarachchi (Maidenhead) won the Under-1500 with

4½ points, finishing half a point ahead of Yuanxi Li (Beckenham) and Medhir Mehta (Greenwich).

London Chess Congresses were also responsible for the Ealing Rapidplay on October 1st, where Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) amassed 5/5 to finish a point clear of Sebastien Chua (Malaysia) in the Open, Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) and Cerefino Gonzales (Hounslow) sharing first on 4½/5 in the Under-1700 section. Cherniaev also enjoyed success at the Golders Green Rapidplay on October 14th.

**Open:** 1 Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) 5½/6, 2 Peter Lalic 5 (Kingston), 3 Peter Large (Epsom) 4½.

**Major:** 1-3 Leandro Niels Gervasio (Oxford), Platon Pushnya (west London), Mohammad Mozaffari (Hounslow) 5.

**Minor:** 1-3 Alexey Kureev (NW London), Yasin Merali (Harrow), Gunnar Niels (Oxford) 5.

**Amateur:** 1-2 Rodolfo Niels Gervasio (Oxford), Maya Tudor (Milton Keynes) 5, 3-5 Ivo Nikolov (west London), Jason Williams (London), Yihua Ding (Kent) 4. In another Adam Raoof event, Alan Merry made the journey from Bury St Edmunds pay off as he defeated Alexander Cherniaev to triumph with 5½/6 at the Muswell Hill Rapidplay on September 19th, where fellow IM Peter Large finished second, half a point adrift.

**LONG EATON** – Mark Hebden enjoyed a perfect score at the Derbyshire Congress in Long Eaton (September 23-24).

**Open:** 1 Mark Hebden (Leicester) 5/5, 2 John Potter (Belper) 4, 3-5 Shabir Okhai (Syston), Martin Burrows (Wigston), Peter Ackley (Sheffield) 3½.

**Major:** 1 Dragoljub Sudar (Nottingham) 4½, 2-3 Nigel Towers (Redditch), Sai Vaddhiredy (Altrincham) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Matthew Bubis (Belper) 4½, 2-3 David Turner (Bourne End), Leon Skeldon (Marple) 4.

**Minor:** 1 David Dunne (Nottingham) 4½, 2-4 Gavin Dow (Radcliffe), Granville Hill (Latimer), David Kilmartin (Oldham) 3½.

**Foundation:** 1 Jonah Tomsett (West Notts) 4½, 2-5 Muhammed Mehmood (Dudley), Rene Butler (Market Harborough), Dominic Pugaciauskas (Coventry), Ian Morrell (Belper) 4.

**NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE** – 11 years after hosting the British Championships, The Parks Leisure Centre in North Shields once again staged the Northumberland Congress (September 29 - October 1).

**Open:** 1-4 Gustavo Leon Cazares (Gosforth), Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Roger Coathup (Morpeth), Rafe Martyn (Cambridge) 4/5.

**Major:** 1-3 Mark McKay, John Liddle (both Gosforth), Raj Mohindra (Forest Hall) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Noel Boustred (Gosforth), Ethan Tatters (Forest Hall) 4, 3-10 Daniel Williams (Hetton-le-Hole), Robert Mitcheson (Morpeth), Joe Chan, David Pritchard (both Gosforth), Alfie McMonagle (Middlesbrough),

Calvin Smith (Maryport), Tim Sewart (Durham), Stephen Lefevre (Cosham) 3½.

**Foundation:** 1 Alan Johnson (South Shields) 9/10, 2 Campbell Tang (Cambridge University) 7½, 3-4 Alex Piercy, Lev Drobiazko (both Gosforth) 7.

Newcastle also played host on October 7th to the last of the eight qualifiers for the UK Open Blitz Championships 2023. Gediminas Sarakauskas (Warrington) and Keith Arkell (Paignton) finished top with 12½/15, edging out an unlucky Danny Gormally (Alnwick) on tiebreak, while Anuurai Sainbayar (Ealing) and Irina Briggs (South Shields) qualified for the Women's Final.

The first qualifying events had been held back on September 23rd in Birmingham and London. The former saw Ameet Ghazi (Teddington) with 14/15 finish a point and a half ahead of Jonah Willow (Nottingham) as both qualified, Ankush Khandelwal (Nottingham University) narrowly missing out on tiebreak, while Kamila Hryshchenko (Hull) and Shambavi Hariharan (West Nottingham) went through to the Women's Blitz final. Over at a very strong event at Golders Green (four GMs, three IMs, four FMs, one WGM), Eldar Gasanov (West London) triumphed with 12½/15, finishing half a point ahead of Jonathan Speelman (West Hampstead), with the women's qualifiers Singaporean WFM Mei-En Emmanuelle Hng (King's College) and WGM Elmira Mirzoeva (West London).



WFM Mei-En Emmanuelle Hng (Brandon Clarke in the background)

In Belfast on September 30th, Tom O'Gorman (Oxford) and Iraqi IM Araz Al-Saffar (Lisburn) both racked up a huge 18/19 to qualify for the Open event, O'Gorman winning their individual game, but losing to Hammersmith's Harry Bryant who would finish third, with Jade Sandrey (Queen's University Belfast) qualifying for the Women's Championship. That same day also saw qualifiers in Bridgend, Edinburgh and Horwich, with Sunday 1st October featuring action at Bristol. At the Bolton Arena, Jacob Boswell (Cheddleton) finished first with 12/15, half a point ahead of Allan Beardsworth (Stockport), with the women's qualifiers Madara Orlovska (Lewisham) and Carmel Barwick (Crewe). Bridgend saw FMs Bao Nghia Dong (Battersea)

and Daniel Kozusek (Cardiff) both rack up a massive 14½/15, Bodhana Sivanandan (Harrow) and Emma Kong (Cardiff) also qualifying, while at Edinburgh Keith Ruxton's 12/15 left him half a point ahead of Freddie Waldhausen Gordon, as Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant (all Edinburgh) and Kanishka Bhatia (Kirkintilloch) qualified for the Women's Championship. Then at a strong event in Bristol (two GMs, three IMs and two FMs), IMs Andrew Horton (Gloucester) and Jose Camacho Collados (Cardiff) tied for first with 11½/15, as Elmira Walker (Downend) and Siyao Ou (Birmingham) also progressed to the finals on December 2nd.

**PENZANCE** – Cory Hazlehurst triumphed at the Cornwall Autumn Congress held at the Queen's Hotel, Penzance (September 22-24).

**Open:** 1 Cory Hazlehurst (South Birmingham) 4/5, 2-3 Stephen Homer (Swindon), David Phillips (Coventry) 3½.

**Major:** 1 Andrew Waters (Rainham) 4½, 2 Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon) 4, 3-5 Mark Abbott (Exmouth), John Morrison (Exeter), George Georgiou (Swindon) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Adam Lowrie (Truro) 4½, 2-3 Aaron Hands (Liskeard), Ben Jago (Penwith) 4.

**RHYL** – Mike Surtees was held to a last round draw by Chessable editor and chess artist Dylan Mize, but still prevailed at the Rhyl Congress (September 22-24).

**Open:** 1 Mike Surtees (Great Lever) 4/5, 2 Chris Doran (Chester) 3½, 3-5 Oliver Jackson (Cheshire), Mark Bastow (Colwyn Bay), Dylan Mize (Liverpool) 3.

**Major:** 1-3 Ben Fearnhead (Poulton-le-Fylde), Alfie Melia (Liverpool), Deio Parri (Caernarfon) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Geoff Graham 5, 2-4 Dave Meador (both Cheshire), Steve Richards (Wrexham), Michael Harper (Nottingham) 4.

While on the subject of Welsh chess, we must give our congratulations to the Welsh correspondence team who have won the 11th European Correspondence Team Championship. They were even the bottom seeds, but became the first British side to win the tournament and without losing an individual game as Tony Balshaw, Helen Sherwood, John Claridge and Ian Jones all did very well.

**SHEFFIELD** – The Sheffield Congress made a welcome return to the tournament calendar and to King Edward VII School (October 7-8).

**Open:** 1-4 Tom Wills (Sheffield), Tim Wall (Forest Hall), Thomas Carroll (Hoylake), Jacob Boswell (Cheddleton) 4.

**Major:** 1 Tim Elgar (Ashton-under-Lyne) 4½, 2-7 Joseph Bradey (Hillsborough), Oliver Graham (Worksop), Will Taylor, Ivan Dunnachie (both Sheffield University), Senith Gunarathne (West Nottingham), John Huthwaite (Nottingham) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1 Ethan Sallis 4½, 2-6 Rohan Rawat (both Sheffield University), Joshua Pimm (Nottingham University), Colin Weller (Scarborough), Michael Harper

(Nottingham), Alex Porritt (Sheffield) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Shlok Maheshwari (Warrington), Raayaan Khan (Altrincham) 4½, 3 Benjamin Layton (Sheffield) 4.

**WITNEY** – Richard Webb (Crowthorne) and Adam Sieczkowski (Witney) tied for first on 5½/6 at the Witney Rapidplay on September 24th, finishing a point in front of Dave Hackett (Hackney). There were also two junior tournaments, the Major won by Man Chiu Hsin (Cumnor) and the Minor by Kingsley Driver (Oxfordshire).

## November 2023

**BURY ST EDMUNDS** – Three IMs tied for first in the Open at the popular Bury St Edmunds Congress (October 7-8), finishing half a point ahead of rising talents Max Pert and Supratit Banerjee.

**Open:** 1-3 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds), Richard Pert (Brentwood), Neil Bradbury (Welwyn Garden City) 4/5.

**Major:** 1-2 Brendan O'Gorman (Coulsdon), Paul Kenning (Braintree) 4, 3-6 Francois Swiegers (Stevenage), Stephen Ruthen (Bury St Edmunds), Francis Bowers (Peterborough), Chris Willoughby (Brentwood) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1-2 Alonso Paez (Ipswich), Peter Newton (Bury St Edmunds) 4, 3-6 Ander Movilla (Norwich), Craig Bradshaw, Rowan Kent, Oliver Ferris (all Bury St Edmunds) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Gerald Gregory (Hertford) 4½, 2 Chris Shepherd-Rose (Bury St Edmunds) 4, 3-7 Bernard Ross (Woodbridge), Sam Kerruish (Sudbury), Mark Webb, George Robinson (both Bury St Edmunds), David Avery (Sidcup) 3½.

**CARDIFF** – Top seed IM Jose Camacho Collados drew with fellow Cardiff resident Joe Fatallah in the last round of the South Wales Autumn Open in Cardiff (October 7-8). Both thus finished on 4½/5 in this 55-player tournament, in which Duncan MacDonald, Tim Kett (both Cardiff) and James Lavender (Malpas) shared third, half a point behind.

**GLASGOW** – Andrew Greet triumphed at the Glasgow Congress, which took place at the Campanile Glasgow SECC-Hydro Hotel (November 3-5).

**Open:** 1 Andrew Greet (Bearsden) 4½/5, 2-4 Pavlos Bozinakis (Phones, Glasgow), Graeme Nolan (Stepps, Glasgow), Yevgeni Sprenger de la Iglesia (Glasgow) 4.

**Major:** 1 Shea McPherson (Bellshill) 4½, 2-4 Rhys McCrossan, Jordan McNaught (both Queens Park, Glasgow), Chris Sykes (Corstophine, Edinburgh) 4.

**Minor:** 1 Michael Reda (Egypt) 5, 2-5 Andy McCallum (Cathcart, Glasgow), Kanish Dholakia, Alagu Karthick (both Phones), Josh Stewart (Inverness) 4.



**HARROW** – 8-year-old Harrow Chess Club star Bodhana Sivanandan added to her World Girls' Under-8 Rapid and Blitz titles by triumphing at the World Cadet Under-8 Girls' Championship in Sharm El Sheikh (October 16-26). In this classical event, Bodhana impressively once again racked up a mighty 11/11. To have scored 33/33 across the events in Egypt and earlier in Georgia certainly speaks volumes for her talent. Thanks to support from e-therapeutics and its CEO Ali Mortazavi, Bodhana is regularly coached by Jonathan Speelman and becomes England's first junior world champion at a classical time control since both Nick Pert and Ruth Sheldon won gold back in 1998.



Bodhana Sivanandan

#### B. Sivanandan - M. Ahmadli

Sharm El Sheikh 2023

#### 35 ♖xg7+!

Spotting the loose piece on c4 and also cleaning Black up in the event of 35... ♖f8 36 ♜e5!, and if 36 .. ♖xg7 37 ♜g3+ ♜h7 38 ♜xf6 ♜g8 39 ♜xf7+ ♜h8 40 ♜f6+ ♜h7 41 ♜xe6.

#### 35... ♜xg7 36 ♜g3+ 1-0

Elsewhere at the World Cadets, Scotland and Surrey's Supratit Banerjee also impressed, taking the bronze medal in the Under-10 Championship after finishing on 8½/11, just half a point behind the Kazakh winner, Danis Kuandykuly. Other fairly high scores saw Barnet's Ethan Pang finish on 7/11 in the Under-8s, the same score as made by Amaya Agarwal from Hertfordshire in the Under-8 Girls and by Charlton's Oleg Verbytski in the Under-10s.

**HORSTEAD**—FM Martin Walker (Norwich Dons) won the Norfolk Championship, finishing on 4½/5 at Horstead

Tithe Barn (September 30 - October 1). That left him a point clear of Roy Hughes (Broadland), Stephen Orton and Vivash Samarakoon (both Norfolk & Norwich), while in the Challengers event, Stephen Livermore (Norwich Dons), Peter Stone (Norwich Juniors) and Ben Yelverton (St John's Norwich) shared first on 4/5.

**HULL** – 3Cs triumphed by the narrowest of margins as they pipped Heffalump Hunters on tiebreak at the ECF National Club Championships in Hull (October 20-22). Hull Chess Club II took the Under-2000 section and Victoria Dock, also of Hull, won the Under-1700. Many local players, as well as the 3Cs team of Adam Ashton, Alex Longson, John Bentley and Alan Walton, enjoyed the weekend, but if the event is repeated we dare say that the ECF will be doing all they can to have more than 17 entries.

**SOUTH KENSINGTON** – The Central London Congress took place at the Imperial College Union in South Kensington (November 3-5).

**Open:** 1-2 Thomas Bonn (Hammersmith), Oscar Pollack (Hendon) 4½/5, 3 Peter Lalic (Kingston) 4.

**Under-2000:** 1-4 Julian Llewellyn (Muswell Hill), Lance Leslie-Smith (Golders Green), Antony Hall (Streatham), Oliver Finnegan (Loughton) 4.

**Under-1650:** 1 David Ye (Imperial College) 4, 2 Christopher Soltysiak (Metropolitan) 3½, 3-7 James McKenna (Crystal Palace), Simon Denney (Colchester), Karina Kowalczyk, Michael Gilyatt (both Battersea), Inga Jirgenson (Athenaeum) 3.

**WHITTLESFORD** – IM Alan Merry swept the board at the Cambridgeshire Rapidplay on September 24th at Whittlesford.

**Open:** 1 Alan Merry (Bury St Edmunds) 5/5, 2 Chris Davison 4, 3-5 James Cole (both Linton) Agoston Mihalik, Tristian See (both Cambridge City) 3½.

**Major:** 1 James Briginshaw (Linton) 5, 2-3 Peter Stone (Norwich), Alexandr Pereslavitsev (Upminster) 4.

**Challengers:** 1 George Calvert (Oundle) 4½, 2-3 Thomas Stanley (Cambourne), Nathan Weersing (Linton) 4.

**Minor:** 1-2 Sergey Pereslavitsev (Upminster), Amarishika Anbalagan (Grantham) 4½, 3-5 Clara Ma (Cambridgeshire), Muiz Mohamed Nasrudeen Meeran (Bath), Minh Tran (London) 4.

We'll have much more news from the weekend circuit and beyond next month, including details of the Nottinghamshire Centenary GM Invitational, which was won by Ukrainian Eldar Gasanov with 6½/9, finishing half a point ahead of fellow GM Thomas Beersden and Nottingham's Jonah Willow. News too from the first 4NCL weekend of the season in Milton Keynes, where the big result was The Sharks defeating champions Manx Liberty 5-3.

## December 2023

**BIRMINGHAM** – Ameet Ghasi defeated FM David Zakarian en route to winning a fairly strong Birmingham Rapidplay on October 22nd.

**Open:** 1 Ameet Ghasi (Teddington) 6/7, 2 David Zakarian 5½, 3-5 Dimitrios Zakarian (both Oxford), Katarzyna Toma (Worcestershire), Kajus Mikalajunas (Loughborough) 5.

**Major:** 1 Furkan Ancar 6, 2 Karan Kukreja (both Birmingham) 5½, 3-4 Joseph Friar (Kidderminster), Srivathsan Sasikumar (Leeds) 5.

**Intermediate:** 1 Steve Edwards (South Birmingham) 6½, 2 Steve Whatmore (Rushall) 6, 3-4 Oliver Harrison (Olton), Luke Chapman (Bexhill) 5½.

**Minor:** 1-2 Omar Khemoudj (Leamington), Tara Tamilselvan (Leicester) 6, 3 Nigel Foster (Shirley) 5½.

**BOLTON** – A highly competitive Bolton Rapidplay attracted 98 players to the Bolton Ukrainian Club on December 3rd, despite some rather wintry weather.

**Open:** 1-3 Nigel Davies (Swinton), Artur Davtayan (Manchester), Gediminas Sarakas (Warrington) 4½/6.

**Major:** 1 Tim Elgar 6, 2-3 Joel McBeath (both Ashton), Nick Barnaby (Bolton) 4½.

**Knights:** 1 Mohammad Bakhsh (Bury) 6, 2 Alannah Ashton (3Cs) 5½, 3-5 Sam Wyatt (Lancaster), Chris Lysons (Eccles), Daniel Broomfield (Preston) 5.

**FAREHAM** – Tom Bird (Portsmouth) triumphed with 5/6 in the Open at Castle Chess's Fareham Congress (October 13-15), finishing a point ahead of Iwan Cave (Chandler's Ford) and Jaimie Wilson (Chichester). Also with +4 Hooman Honarvarmahalati (Brighton) won the Major, to finish half a point ahead of Adrian Lawrence (Billericay) and Jacob Liu (Enfield), while the Minor saw Stephen Payne (Staines) and Liam Rowe (Portsmouth) tie for first on 5/6 too.

**GUERNSEY** – The 47th Guernsey Chess Festival took place at St James Concert & Assembly Hall in Saint Peter Port (October 15-21). Top seeds Harry Grieve, Danny Gormally and Keith Arkell drew with each other as they finished on 6/7 to finish a point and a half ahead of Bristol's David Collier and Stephen Dilleigh.

**HALWILL JUNCTION** – Bude resident John Nunn warmed up for retaining his world over-65 title by winning the Peter & Peggy Clarke Memorial Rapidplay in north-west Devon on October 7th. Nunn only conceded a draw to FM William Claridge-Hansen in the last round as his 5½/6 left him half a point ahead of wife Petra, with Exeter's Claridge-Hansen a further half-point back in third.

**LEAMINGTON SPA** – Just outside the Warwickshire town, Woodland Grange hosted the finals of the UK Open Blitz Championships on December 2nd. Both the Open and Women's Championships comprised 16 qualifiers, two from each of the qualifying events which we reported on in November's Home News.

Youth shone in the Women's Championship as 12-year-old Elis Dicen tied for first with 8-year-old Bodhana Sivanandan on 11/15, the older Coventry Chess Academy star taking the title on tie-break, although the English Women's Blitz Championship was shared, Sivanandan doing so for a second year in a row. Just half a point behind were defending champion WGM Elmira Mirzoeva, as well as WFM Hng Mei-Xian and Kamila Hryshchenko, whose former Ukrainian compatriot Eldar Gasanov went a point better as he won the UK Open Blitz Championship with 11½/15, to finish a point ahead of IMs Ameet Ghasi and Andrew Horton, who notably only lost once.

### T. O'Gorman - A. Horton

UK Open Blitz Ch., Leamington Spa 2023



This was actually a Deferred Steinitz Ruy Lopez, as recommended on the Chessable course Lifetime Repertoires: Jones' 1.e4 e5, not a King's Indian, but Black now struck in true KID fashion.

23... ♗g3+! 24 hxg3 ♖h5+ 25 ♔h2 fxg3 0-1

**LONDON** – Irish FM Tom O'Gorman enjoyed better fortune when he triumphed at the Golders Green Rapidplay on November 11th.

**Open:** 1 Tom O'Gorman (Oxford) 5½/6, 2 Tom Eckersley-Waites (London) 5, 3-4 Raman Vashisht-Pigem (Hammersmith), Supratit Banerjee (Coulsdon) 4½.

**Major:** 1 Ayhan Anil (Hendon) 6, 2 Mohammed Mozaffari (Coulsdon) 5, 3-8 Roberto Rodriguez (north London), Arseniy Gushchin (London), Alexander Funk (Hendon), Francesco Sciaudone (Hammersmith), Alexandr Pereslavl'tsev (Upminster), Gengadharan Selvarattinam (South Norwood) 4½.

**Minor:** 1 Sam Jackson (Cambridgeshire) 5½, 2-3 Samuel Ebbutt (St Albans), Joe Eagle (Kent) 4½.

**Amateur:** 1 Richard Kulibaev (Coulsdon) 5, 2-3 Ruslan Shekhmamatov (Battersea), Vladislav Kazantsev (Haringey) 4½.

At the latest Muswell Hill Rapidplay on November 21st, Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney) triumphed with 6/6 to pocket the £100 first prize, with Peter Large (Epsom) a point and a half adrift in second. Exactly a week earlier, IM Large had also finished on 4½/6, this time just a point behind Cherniaev. The now English-affiliated GM had scored 5½/6 too on October 24th, when finishing a point ahead of Large, Graeme Buckley (Epsom), Peter Lalic (Kingston) and Oscar Pollack (Hendon), whereas October 17th had been Large's day as he racked up 5½/6 to finish a point ahead of Cherniaev and IM John Pigott (Little Heath).

Another Adam Raoof-organised event was the Kensington Rapidplay, won on November 19th by the soon-to-be UK Blitz Champion.

**Open:** 1 Eldar Gasanov (West London) 5½/6, 2-5 Han Rao Leung (Barnet), Peter Sowray (Mushrooms), Alexander Cherniaev (Hackney), Peter Large (Epsom) 5.

**Major:** 1 David Ye (Imperial College) 6, 2 Yashwardhan Shankar (Beckenham) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Jake Greenland (Reigate) 5½, 2-3 James Ratcliffe (Coulsdon), Raphael Neville (Somerset) 5.

There had been a further highly competitive Kensington Rapidplay on October 8th.

**Open:** 1-4 Yichen Han (Oxford), Ameet Ghazi (Teddington), Graeme Buckley (Epsom), Stanley Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 5/6.

**Major:** 1 Yiwen Ding (Kent) 6, 2 Arseniy Gushchin (London) 5.

**Minor:** 1 Alessandro Sergi (Italy) 5½, 2 Rochak Kumar (India) 5.

IM Richard Bates triumphed as the London Chess League Weekender took place at the MindSports Centre (October 27-29).

**Open:** 1 Richard Bates (Hackney) 4½/5, 2-4 Kai Hanache (Hammersmith), John Merriman (Petts Wood), Stefanus Phan (Epsom) 4.

**Under-1800:** 1 Lance Leslie-Smith (Albany) 5, 2-4 Jan Gorgol (London), Dhriti Anand (Edgware), Francesco Sciaudone (Hammersmith) 4.

**Under-1500:** 1-3 Keerthi Manavalan (Watford), Inga Jirgensone (Athenaeum), Michael Reda (Egypt) 3½.

**OMAGH** – 42 players took part in the Omagh Rapidplay on December 2nd at Christian Brothers Grammar School. Gatis Barbals (Fruithill) triumphed with 5½/6, finishing half a point ahead of Stephen Scannell (Lisburn), while Calum Glendinning (Bangor) won the Intermediate section with 4½/6.

**PLYMOUTH** – Local player Neil Crickmore triumphed with 5½/6 at the Plymouth Rapidplay on December 3rd, coming home half a point ahead of Paul Hampton (Seaton) and Cameron Davis (Exeter University).

**ROCHE** – The Victoria Inn, Roche hosted the Cornwall Rapidplay on November 18th. Leading scores: 1 Trefor Thynne (Newton Abbot) 4/5, 2-6 Percy Gill, David Jenkins (both Camborne), Nigel Kirkman, David Pemberton (both Calstock), Clive Rothery (Newquay) 3½.

**SCARBOROUGH** – The Scarborough Congress remains a popular one, with 335 playing at the Scarborough Spa over the weekend of October 27-29.

**Open:** 1-2 Daniel Gormally (Alnwick), Sooraj Raju (Leicestershire) 4½/5, 3-5 Peter Large (Epsom), Edward Jackson (3Cs), Frankie Badacsonyi (Muswell Hill) 4.

**Major:** 1-2 Golam Ali (Sutton Coldfield), James Hall (Bradford) 4½, 3-8 Philip Seery (Bare Village), George Turner (Chester), David Shapland (Hebden Bridge), Daniel Broughton (West Bridgford), Robert Newton (Rochdale), Stephen Berkley (Barking) 4.

**Intermediate:** 1-7 Paul May (Leeds), Paul Jackson (Coulsdon), Paul Butterworth (Ilkley), Gary White (Telford), Keith Aitchison (Edinburgh), Peter Meadows (Wanstead), George Horne (Barrow) 4.

**Minor:** 1-3 Martin Beardsley (Gosforth), Angel Monterde (Leeds), Marc Bryant (Hastings) 4½.

**Foundation:** 1 Vladyslav Drabych (Dundee) 4½, 2-7 Brendan Stoneham (Worksop), Ana Williams (Nottingham), Michael Springett (Epsom), David Kilmartin, Jeff Wilson (both Oldham), Jesse Baggett-Lahav (Leeds) 4.

**SWANSEA** – FM Alexis Harakis of Drunken Knights Chess Club made the trip west from London pay off as he triumphed at the West Wales Congress in Swansea (Novr 10-12).

**Open:** 1 Alexis Harakis (London) 4½/5, 2-4 Daniel Wells (Lincolnshire), Allan Pleasants (Weymouth), Tim Kett (Cardiff) 3½.

**Major:** 1 Scott Hammett (Haverfordwest) 4½, 2 Lef Zografos 4, 3-7 Yaroslav Sharhorodsky, Emma Zihan Kong, Joshua McKenna (all Cardiff), Graham Ashcroft (Preston), Mark Thomas (Buckley) 3½.

**Minor:** 1 Govind Anandkumar 4½, 2-3 David Belochkin (both Cardiff), Kedar Walke (India) 4.

**SWINDON** – Peter Large triumphed at the Swindon Rapidplay on October 7th.

**Open:** 1 Peter Large (Epsom) 5½/6, 2 Kenneth Hobson (Cowley) 5, 3 Jenith Wiratunga (Maidenhead; winner of the £100 under-1900 prize) 4½.

**Under-1700:** 1-2 James Thomas, Alexis Malibiran (both Downend & Fishponds) 5, 3 Danny O'Byrne (Swindon) 4½.

**Under-1500:** 1 Srishwan Pasula (Milton Keynes) 5, 2-4 Calvin Chris Biju (Maidenhead), Rayyan Mussa (Bristol), Tamal Matilal (Oxford) 4½.

**WEYMOUTH** – Cornwall Chess organised the Weymouth Under-2200 Congress (October 14-15), which appeared a fairly successful event bar the lack of an Open.

**Major:** 1 Sean Gordon (Watford) 5/5, 2-3 Allan Pleasants (Weymouth), Rolf Hansen (Germany) 3½.

**Intermediate:** 1 Paul Doherty (Bolton) 4½/5, 2 Mark Potter (Dorchester) 4, 3-7 Brendan O’Gorman (Coulsdon), James Schumacher (Bournemouth), Paul Carlucci (DHSS), Freddie Pick (South Bristol), Freddie Sugden (Hackney) 3½.

**Minor:** 1-2 Joe Crossley (Brentwood), Lana Boztas (Coulsdon) 4½, 3-5 Paul Foster (Medway), Michael Pope (Salisbury), Phil Stevens (Isle of Wight) 3½.

**WITNEY** – IM Yichen Han drew with fellow teenager Kenneth Hobson and won his remaining games at the Witney Congress (November 4-5).



*Yichen Han*

**Open:** 1 Yichen Han (Oxford) 4½/5, 2-3 Indy Southcott-Moyers (Stroud), Lewis Turner (Wigston) 4.

**Under-2000:** 1 Okwose Obi (Sutton Coldfield) 4½, 2 Adam Sieczkowski (Witney) 4, 3-4 Mark Murrell (Wanstead), Conor Beattie (Buckinghamshire) 3½.

**Under-1800:** 1 Peter Meadows (Wanstead) 4½, 2-4 Laurence Tarbuck, Bowie Carter (both Lichfield), Martin Lambert (Watlington) 4.

**Under-1600:** 1 Adam Ware (Oxford) 4½, 2-4 Stellio Jerome (Rushden), Albert Hornsby (Oxon), Russell Fletcher-Bott (Newbury) 4.

## British Chess Championships 2023

by Nigel Towers, Peter Wells, Steven Jones, Harry Grieve and Oleksandr Matlak



*First Rapidplay Open Section – photo by Chris Johnston DMU*

This year’s British Championships made a welcome return to Leicester, which last hosted the Championships in 1960 with Jonathan Penrose taking the title as part of his record ten wins during the 1950s and 1960s.

Tournament Director Kevin Staveley was supported by Chief Arbiter Adrian Elwin and an outstanding team of supporting arbiters. The team arrived in Leicester during the course of Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> July with a day to setup the three playing halls including 115 live boards and over 200 standard boards across the playing halls, ready for the first event on the evening of Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July.

We were very well supported by Ben Vaughan, Paul Mottram, and Andy Morley from the Leicestershire and Rutland Association, who helped to organise local radio and TV coverage on BBC Radio Leicester and East Midlands Today and played a central role in the various festival events at The Venue and around the city.

We were expecting a big turnout given the central location and were really pleased to see record numbers with over 1,000 players taking part in the tournaments and more than 1,400 individual entries across the 11 days. We also had a well subscribed festival including two drop-in chess events on campus and in the centre of Leicester.





*British Champions! Photo by Tao Bhokanandh*

The main Championship ran over nine rounds from Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> July to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July with a game a day starting at 2.30 pm in the afternoon, aside from round 9 starting at 10 am on the final Sunday.

Mickey Adams won the event with 7½ points out of 9 followed by Steven Jones in 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Lan Yao retained her title as British Women's Champion with 5½ out of 9. Yichen Han won the U21 and U18 Championship, and Harry Grieve won the Alexander Best Game Prize.

Top places and prizes were as below:

#### **BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIP**

CHAMPION	Michael Adams 7½/9
WOMEN'S CHAMPION	Lan Yao 5½/9
2nd	Steven A Jones 6½/9
3rd =	Daniel H Fernandez 6/9
3rd =	Harry Grieve 6/9
3rd =	Matthew J Wadsworth 6/9
3rd =	Yichen Han 6/9
2nd Women's	Trisha Kanyamarala 4½/9
U21 & U18 CHAMPION	Yichen Han 6/9
U21 2nd =	Jonah Willow 5½/9
U21 2nd =	Tarun Kanyamarala 5½/9
U21 2nd =	Borna Derakhshani 5½/9
U21 2nd =	Aaravamudhan Balaji 5½/9
U18 GIRLS CHAMPION	Trisha Kanyamarala 4½/9
Alexander Best Game	Harry Grieve
Performance 2201-2350	Andrew J Ledger
Performance 2051-2200	Thomas Villiers
Performance U2051	Edward Jackson

## Championship Perspective by Peter Wells



Last year, as the 2022 British Championships were coming to a close, I took to Twitter to express my admiration for the new champion Harry Grieve's sensational performance, but at the same time admitted that my own

awful result had given me a more distant view of the critical top board action than I had originally intended. However, at least I was there in Torquay, however well hidden. This time, I was disappointed not to be able to make my intended trip to de Montfort University in Leicester and had to make do with following the event (albeit with unusual attentiveness) more remotely. So, when asked to pen my thoughts on the Championships, I initially hesitated - wondering whether I was really best placed to do that. On reflection, I decided that it would make for a slightly different style of report which was worthwhile trying. So I will have little to say concerning the conditions and the atmosphere. I read (courtesy of Danny Gormally who commentated on the entire event, ably accompanied by Adam Hunt) that the playing conditions were near perfect. Admittedly Danny then deployed his special ability to render the positive distinctly edgy with the follow up with 'if you can't play well here, you probably aren't very good at chess', and honestly, anything I would be inclined to add to that might be kinder, but rather anti-climactic.

What I do hope I can provide is a reasonably detached view of some of the notable moments and trends. As a writer it is customary to look for hooks – ways to frame the action according to themes which hold out hope of drawing in the reader. Yet it occurred to me that I was already doing something like this as a spectator. From the start I had several questions which served to determine the focus of my attention.

Firstly, while there were fewer GMs than usual, there was a good turnout from the upcoming generation of strong IMs – including Harry Grieve, the defending champion – and with the most consistently successful of all British players also in attendance, the obvious question had to be 'which of these guys can really threaten Michael Adams'?

With my 'Accelerator Selector' hat on, I also tend to be tuned in to the performances of our most promising juniors, and was delighted to see that a number of these

had made it into the Championship itself, with several others in the various Junior Championships, the Major Open and elsewhere. I was particularly pleased to see that some of our strongest young female players had broken into the Championship and, together with (amongst others) Katarzyna Toma and Ireland's young star Trisha Kanyamarala, it seemed as if the defending champion Lan Yao would have no easy task in defending her title.

Two other questions seem to be ever-present in chess these days. After years of hearing about 'rating inflation' the narrative – especially post-Covid – has switched the other way, as Swiss tournaments in particular represent something of a mine-field full of underrated but highly competent players and thus a catalyst to 'deflation'. I raise this not to explain my own rating loss – no single theory could account for that – but merely to point out that these are treacherous times for higher-rated players and the expectation is now to see numerous results go 'against rating'. Suffice to say that after two rounds there were only five players on full points – following a fascinating round which showcased the kind of toughness and determination which so many players bring to an event of this significance. Of course, no amount of belief in the chances of some of the 'outsiders' prepared me for the astonishing achievement of Steven Jones in eventually landing clear 2<sup>nd</sup> place, but this I shall return to later.

The other question which I find hard to escape when I watch any chess tournament these days is how the players will respond to the ongoing explosion in opening theory. In short, will we witness highly theoretical battles in which by delving ever deeper into critical positions, the engine will be a star of the show, or are we more likely to see creative effort devoted to the challenge of reaching relatively unexplored terrain, no matter how implausible some of these ideas may appear at first glance?

I guess this question is not entirely new. Previous generations (albeit competing in a much more naive era in terms of opening preparation) could also boast representatives of both of these schools. Players such as Matthew Sadler and Michael Adams were often on the cutting edge of much exciting opening work, constantly searching for new ideas in relatively mainstream settings. By contrast, there were some, such as Julian Hodgson and David Norwood, who preferred where possible to go their own way. It feels, though, like a sharper dichotomy in an era in which we know so much about the opening. I am always interested to see what players such as Jonah Willow and Harry Grieve will produce in theoretical terms, although I would also caution against them being stereotyped – playing as they do a fascinating mix of theoretically demanding

openings alongside some tricky sidelines. However, the standout for me in terms of this discussion must be Daniel Fernandez. Having watched him survive a series of very shaky openings to reach a very good result in the European Individual Championship, it looked as if the same was going to happen here. He appears to me to be part of that tradition that just wants to get the opening out of the way and 'get on with the game' and the extent to which he often thrives on this approach is a tribute to his tenacity in the later phases. As always with such players, it is a moot point whether, or by how much, their results would benefit from more mainstream opening work. In some cases I guess it might just be a recipe for demotivation. However, it did feel to me as if he eventually pushed his theory-aversion a bit too far here, and the story of how Steven Jones defeated him in the final round after obtaining a superb position from the opening is told elsewhere in this magazine – a victory which enabled Steven to overtake him for a runner-up spot for which Daniel had looked almost secure a couple of days before.

Time to discuss the winner! The British Championship was actually the third significant domestic event in 2023 in which Michael Adams has been the highest rated player by a significant margin, and – just as in the 1st Cambridge International in February and the English Championship in May – he ultimately prevailed and thus became British Champion for an extraordinary 8<sup>th</sup> time. In a sense I think this kind of consistency can create an illusion of inevitability, and thus present challenges when describing the scale of his achievement. Of course, in each individual event this year he started as the favourite, and yet to win all three of them so convincingly deserves the highest praise.

For sure he faced a few minor hiccups along the way – notably the much discussed first round in Cambridge and the less documented difficulties he faced with the black pieces against Jonah Willow in the final round of the English Championship back in May. Taking the full point from the first round here in Leicester was also far from straightforward, although anyone who understands the pairing systems at these events will appreciate quite how extraordinary it was that Michael achieved this victory against the player who would eventually finish as runner-up!

I also marvel at his longevity playing at such a high level. Of course, in his heyday Michael was one of the best players in the world – ranked as high as number 4 – and I was pleased to work with him over sufficient time to gain an insight into the kind of diligence and intensity of focus which helped to secure that success. Still, by no means all of the great players remain very strong into their fifties. Right now the legendary Vishy Anand has opened some gap as the top over 50 player in the World,

but Michael is right up there with Vasyl Ivanchuk and Alexei Shirov vying for the second place. When a player wins his first British Championship at the age of 17 (as Mickey did in 1989) it doesn't require extraordinary clairvoyance to predict that he will enjoy a notable career. Yet for him to be still winning the national championship so convincingly 34 years later undeniably adds an extra layer of accomplishment. I also liked the reminder he gave us that he can handle a range of varying positions with aplomb. When Barry Hymer interviewed Michael for *Chess Improvement: It's All in the Mindset*, it became clear that he wasn't too impressed by the focus which so many writers put on the claim that he enjoys some kind of 'sixth sense' for where the pieces should go. He was clear both that this was facility was acquired by a lot of hard work rather than something innate and that such claims often signal little more than his preference for positional solutions. Tactical players also have a 'feel' – just for quite different types of positions. Yet modern chess requires the best to deploy a range of skills. Whilst we were treated to a piece of vintage technique in the final round against Jonah Willow (covered elsewhere in this issue) I particularly liked the new Champion's crisp and dynamic use of the initiative in the following vital encounter.

#### Michael Adams – Daniel Fernandez

British Championship, Leicester 2023 Round 4



Adams v Fernandez – top boards

**1.e4 d5 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qd8**

Opinions will always differ on whether very strong opponents are best tackled using main lines or off-beat openings. As already discussed, this choice is consistent with Daniel's general approach. Still, I think it is worth mentioning that Adams has been quite candid on occasions both about how difficult it is to generate an advantage with White against a well-prepared opponent in main lines these days and how pleased he often is to see side-lines which cede some edge without much battle. Interestingly, his target in such comments often seems to have been the Pirc/Modern, but I would

be surprised if broadly the same feelings were not evoked here too.

**4.d4 Nf6 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.h3 Bxf3 7.Qxf3 c6 8.Be3 e6 9.Bd3!?**

My first thoughts here would be either the immediate 9 0-0-0, or prevention of ...Bb4 ideas with a3. However, White makes a good case for this flexible developing move, the first point of which is that 9...Bb4 will be met with short castling, when it is doubtful that Black will want to give up his second bishop too.

**9...Nbd7 10.0-0-0 a5 11.g4 Nb6 12.Kb1 a4?!**



I don't like this aggressive gesture too much. After White halts the a-pawn's further advance, Daniel would like to exchange knights on d5 and then cement the replacement knight there by means of ...b5, when the entire idea would look much more coherent. However, given that he doesn't have time for this, the further advance of the a-pawn looks inflexible and - since a safe destination for his own king is far from a given - liable to just create a weakness in the event that he ends up having to castle queenside.

**13.a3 Be7 14.h4 Nbd5 15.Nxd5 Nxd5**

Neither 15...Qxd5 16.Qe2 nor 15...cxd5 16.g5 Nd7 17.Rdg1, with a serious pawn storm, brewing are an improvement, but it is here that Adams denies Black the time to enjoy d5 as an outpost.



Adams v Fernandez – after 16 c4

**16.c4! Nxe3 17.Qxe3**

Personally, I think I would have tried to make 17 fxe3!? work here, both for the half-open f-file and the extra support afforded to the d4 pawn. However, I would be the first to admit that the venom in variations such as 17...Bxh4 18 d5! is easier to feel confident about when sitting at home with an engine alongside me.

**17...Qb6 18.c5 Qc7 19.f4 b6?!**



Daniel's loss of tempo with his queen made some sense if aimed at making a d5 break more difficult to execute, and perhaps even generate some counterplay against d4 in the presence of opposite-coloured bishops. However, I think it was incumbent on Black to seek some relative king safety, and given how advanced White's pawn storm is on the king-side and the shortage of minor pieces to defend h7 he must look to the queenside (the reason I didn't like 12...a4), precisely because the opposite coloured bishops are very likely to amplify White's attacking initiative in any position where Black's king is shaky. Of course, lines such as 19...0-0-0 20.g5 Kb8 21.Bc2 still leave him cramped and about to shed a pawn, so it is already a matter of damage limitation.

It is instructive to watch how Michael now breaks through in the centre, secure in the knowledge that the light squares (d7 in particular) will be very hard to defend.

**20.f5! exf5 21.d5! f4 22.Qe4 cxd5 23.Bb5+ Kf8 24.Rxd5 Rd8 25.Rhd1 Rxd5 26.Rxd5 g6**

There are already many routes to victory, but as usual Adams picks one which is relatively simple, clear-cut and with very little danger of error complicating the picture.

**27.c6 Bf6 28.g5! Qe7 29.Qxe7+ Bxe7 30.c7 Kg7 31.Rd7**

**1-0**

It is a measure of Daniel's strength of character that he recovered from this defeat to be neck and neck with Michael going into round 8, and a testament to his uncompromising style that he did not draw a game in the entire event. I have already alluded to his opening disaster in the final round which finally took him back to a share of third place and propelled Steven Jones to a remarkable second place and a richly deserved IM norm. Steven is a hard worker with excellent theoretical knowledge and good understanding, and is someone whom I have long regarded as clearly 'under-rated'. Yet somehow he hasn't convincingly confirmed this impression until now. For me this is very inspiring - a player, already having hit 30, who has maintained motivation despite (I suspect) some frustration that he was underperforming a bit in terms of his potential. Of course, a success of this magnitude will often need one or two breaks – as occurred when David Eggleston failed to spot that an apparently 'innocent' development of his opponent's rook was also eyeing up some loose pieces on the d-file, resulting in a quick win for Steven. Yet overall this was a great performance, and from my perspective very much a good news story.

To return to Daniel's challenge for a moment, it is worth adding that this had already hit a bit of an obstacle in round 8 when the defending champion Harry Grieve produced his finest effort of the event (which he annotates elsewhere in the magazine). This recalled the quality which Harry produced so often last year, but overall his performance typified that of the group of hungry young IMs in this event: lots of good chess, but not quite the consistency required to really bother Adams. Returning to my reference about the importance of 'getting some breaks' in these kinds of events, it is also worth bearing in mind that while we tend to be proud of the dominant role played by skill in chess, Swiss tournaments also involve a degree of luck. Sometimes this is just about which opponents we get to play. Sometimes it is about the day on which we get to play them. Here, as so often, I was left with the



impression that one of the greatest elements of luck in British chess is which day you get to play Jack Rudd 😊. There are few players who exhibit such a range of performance from their best to their worst, and Harry was quite fortunate to survive the experience of a generally in-form Jack firing strong and dynamic moves at (as always) an incredible pace.

### Jack Rudd – Harry Grieve

British Championship Leicester 2023 Round 2

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 c5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nf3 Nf6 6.g3 Nc6 7.Bg2 Be7 8.0–0 0–0 9.Bg5 c4 10.b3 Qa5 11.Qc2 Bg4 12.e3 Bb4?!**

Strangely, Jack's very direct approach has not been played very often. I rather like it. The engine prefers 12...Rac8 here, putting faith in the bishop pair and the passed c-pawn after 12 bxc4 dxc4. I think that is probably right, although playing against a 2-0 advantage in centre pawns will not be to everyone's taste. Still, the structural damage which Harry sustains after the move chosen seems to make for long-lasting discomfort.

### 13.Bxf6 Bxf3

Necessary, since 13...Bxc3 ? 14 Ng5 would be very dangerous.

### 14.Bxf3 Bxc3 15.Rac1 Bd2

Looking to meet 16 Rcd1 with 16...c3, when the powerful c-pawn would turn the tables. However, Jack now reveals that White will get excellent compensation for a piece.



### 16.bxc4! gxf6

Again, the engine is not impressed and prefers 16...Bxc1 17.cxd5 gxf6 18.dxc6 Ba3 19.cxb7 Rab8. Black is a whole rook for three pawns up here, and it is a measure of Jack's idea that Black still seems to be on the hunt for equality. The best 'human' option might have been

16...dxc4!? although it must have been very easy to misassess the game continuation.

### 17.Rcd1 Bb4 18.Bxd5! Rac8 19.c5!

As usual, when looking at Jack's games, you need to appreciate the speed with which these moves were arriving on the board to fully empathise with Black's task. White has two pawns for the piece, as well as attacking chances arising both from the opposite-coloured bishops and the ugly structure around Black's king. Moreover, the text move reminds Black that in order to free up an easy retreat for his dark-squared bishop he will need to weaken his white squares even more.

### 19...b6 20.Qe4 Rfe8 21.Qg4+ Kf8 22.Qh5 Nd8



### 23.Qf5 Rc7 24.Qxf6 bxc5 25.dxc5?! Bc3 26.Qh6+ Bg7 27.Qxh7 Rxc5 28.Bb3

Black's coordination has improved discernibly over the last few moves, and the engine's view seems reasonable that reactivating the knight with 28...Nc6 - now that the f-pawn is shielded and the rook controls the most obvious squares to access f7 - would have been reasonable for Harry. However, he drifts a bit in the next few moves and Jack manages to conjure up a further round of danger.

### 28...Rh5 29.Qd3 Ne6 30.Qd6+ Kg8 31.Qd7 Kf8 32.Rc1 Qf5?

32...Bf6 was safer, both to free up g7 for the king and to ensure that after 33.Rc8 Rxc8 34.Qxc8+ this check could be blocked with 34...Nd8!

### 33.Rc8! Rxc8 34.Qxc8+ Ke7 35.Rd1 Kf6 36.h4 Qc5

### 37.Bxe6?!

This looks a bit impatient. It is easy to see how the knight can feel like the lynchpin of Black's defence, but White should continue to focus on the light squares even if the

breakthrough is not so simple. For example, after 37 Qb7 (threatening Rd7) 37...Qb6 38 Qf3+ Rf5 39 Qg4, with Rd7 and e4 in the air, Black would have faced enduringly unpleasant pressure.

**37...fxe6 38.Qb7 Qb6 39.Qe4**

39.Qd7!? still looks more threatening.

**39...Re5 40.Qh7?!**

White's initiative is not what it was, but there was still no reason to afford Black a clear and speedy route to a draw. Not for the first time I find myself conflicted by the thought of what Jack might achieve by slowing down at the right moments, while appreciating that I am not the obvious port of call for advice on time management. Needless to say, Harry doesn't hesitate to take his chance.

**40...Rxe3! 41.fxe3 Qxe3+ 42.Kf1 Qf3+ 43.Ke1 Qe3+ 44.Kf1 Qf3+ 45.Ke1 Qe3+**

½–½

Moving onto the juniors, it would be useful to look beyond just the Championship itself for a moment.

Clearly here, much of the action takes place in the various junior sections from U16 down to U8. Perhaps the most noticeable trend in these was that the more well-established names did not have everything their own way and that (perhaps counter-intuitively) this tendency was more pronounced in the older age-groups, where it might be expected that the leading players would have had more time to establish their ascendancy. I suspect this may still have something to do with Covid and the fact that some young players seemed to use the opportunity for study that this presented very profitably, in a way which is slowly revealing itself in over the board play. From a selector's point of view this entails more work, of course, but in a very welcome manner. The more players capable of vying for the top positions, the better and the more positive the outlook in future.

There were also very notable junior performances in both the Major Open and the Championship itself.

Shlok Verma bursting to an early 5/5 in the Major Open was particularly striking, although he unfortunately lost momentum after this. Indeed the most notable success there was probably from FM Andrew Lewis who joined Brandon Clarke in winning the event, thereby (I hope he won't mind me saying) striking something of a blow for the more experienced campaigners. There were several fine results in the Championship too, and a welcome

sight to see so many juniors being given this opportunity. Jude Shearsby, Theo Khoury and Savas Marin Stoica amongst others all acquitted themselves well, and Edward Jackson deserves a special mention for amassing a fantastic 140 rating points – an incredible gain regardless of 'K factors'.

Some of the performances which impressed me most provided further evidence of the increasing strength of our young female players. Again, I can't hope to include everyone, but Anusha Subramanian's performances in the Major Open and the Rapidplay were very encouraging.

Abigail Weersing and Julia Volovich also made great use of the opportunity to play in the Championship. Abigail had many complex struggles against much higher rated opposition in the later rounds in which she always had a fair share of the chances, and also scored this impressively thematic first round win against Max Turner.

#### Abigail Weersing – Max Turner

British Championship Leicester 2023, Round 1



**22.Nd2!**

This is absolutely the right plan from Abigail, and offers a clear advantage after Black's rather passive early play. The plan of f3 and e4 to blunt a fianchettoed bishop on b7 is familiar enough (although I sometimes have the feeling that it is less well grasped than some other comparable strategic ideas). What is interesting here is that whereas the exchange of dark-squared bishops might be expected to offer Black some compensation, it soon becomes clear that his weak dark squares (d6 in particular) matter more than his opponent's d4 square.

**22...Qc6 23.f3 Qb7 24.e4! Bc6 25.Nc4 Rb4 26.Qa3 Qb8 27.Qb2!**

There is no doubt about White's advantage, but what I really liked here was the way Abigail refocussed her pieces towards the key central squares – first with this

queen move, but even more the realisation that her rooks would achieve more on the d-file than lined up against the weak c-pawn.

**27...Rc8 28.Rd1 Rd8 29.Rcd2 f6? 30.Rd6 Bb5 31.a3 Bxc4 32.axb4 Bd5 33.bxc5 Qb4 34.Qd4 1–0**

Julia Volovich had an extraordinary run almost off the starting blocks, registering four draws in a row against highly respected 2300+ opposition. I was particularly impressed by her understanding during the following game, in which Black's compensation proved to be far more substantial than I initially realised.

#### David Eggleston – Julia Volovich

British Championship Leicester, 2023



**15.Bc4?!**

White should rather avoid exchanges and keep this bishop pointed at the king with 15 Bc2! when he would have kept chances of an initiative. However, I suspect that David (like me) was surprised at the value which Black is going to get for her pawn.

**15...exd5 16.Nxd5 Nxd5 17.Qxd5?!**

I suspect that White rejected 17.Bxd5 on the basis of 17...Bf5, when Black looks very active. However, the engine then points out the fascinating exchange sac 18.Nd4 Bd3 19.Qf3 Bxf1 20.Rxf1, when White's minor pieces come to life and Black should probably look to a further tactical blow 20...Nd3! in order to secure a full share of the play.

**17...Be6! 18.Qxd8 Rfxd8 19.Bxe6 Nxe6**

Around about here it fully dawned on me that Julia has entry squares on the d-file, a weak b5 pawn to attack, the safer back rank and a monster knight on e6, and that she is not the player trying to equalise here!

**20.Bc3 Rd5 21.Rfd1 Rad8 22.Rxd5 Rxd5 23.Bb4 h6 24.h4 Nd4**

Possibly a sign that Julia was content to share the point, but it feels a shame to exchange off this great piece. 24...Nf4 with the intention of mounting an attack on f2 was well worth considering.

**25.Nxd4 Bxd4 26.Rc1 Rxe5 27.Rc8+ Kh7 28.Rc7? Rxb5 29.Rc4**

Realising that 29 Rxf7 fails dramatically to 29...Rxb4 and the march of the a-pawn. Black clearly has winning chances, but since she shares some of my problems with clock management, I suspect that this played a role in Julia sadly limiting her ambitions here.

**29...Bb6 30.g3 Rf5 31.Rc2 Rf3 ½–½**

Finally, to Lan Yao, who - despite strong challenges from Katarzyna Toma amongst others, who registered an excellent win against Ukrainian GM Eldar Gasanov – retained her British Women's Championship title in some style. I know - both from having had the pleasure of commentating alongside her and observing her intensity of concentration at the board - that she is a formidable competitor and a huge asset to English women's chess, but I was still impressed to see her score 5½ against a very strong field and net an WGM norm into the bargain. I liked her swift punishment of the experienced player and well-loved coach Chris Beaumont, who many will probably not realise himself peaked at around 2460 in 1989.

#### Chris Beaumont – Lan Yao

British Championship Leicester 2023, Round 8



**22.c3?**

I feel as if White should be OK here, and perhaps 22 e5!? would be a better way to play to the strengths of his minor pieces. Still, the plan of building a pawn centre might have borne fruit were it not for the serious weakness on the a7-g1 diagonal.

**22...Nc6 23.d4 cxd4 24.cxd4 b5! 25.axb5 axb5 26.Ne3 Qb6!**

The key point. The d4-pawn immediately comes under fire, and any advance will meet dark square retribution.

### 27.Qd3?

This doesn't help at all, but 27.d5 Bc5 28.Rf3 exd5 29.exd5 Rxd5 would also be disastrous. The best way to damage limit would have been 27.Nc2!? e5 28.d5 Bc5 29.Kg2 Bxf2 30.Qxf2 Qxf2+ 31.Kxf2 Na5, when White's bishop pair and passed d-pawn offer some compensation for the exchange. However, this also looks some way from what Chris was aiming for when embarking on this plan.

**27...Nxd4! 28.Bxd4 Rxd4 29.Qxd4 Bc5 30.Qb2 Bxe3 31.Kg2 Bxf2 32.Qxf2 Qc6**

With an extra pawn and much the safer king.

**33.Qe3 Bg6 34.Rd4 e5 35.Rd5 Qc2+ 36.Kf3 Bh5+ 37.Bg4 Qxh2 38.Bxh5 Qxh5+ 39.Kg2 Ra8 40.Qd2 Qe8 41.b4 h6 42.Rd7 Kh7 43.Qd5 Ra2+ 0-1**

This finally concludes my thoughts on a fascinating and hard-fought British Championships – I just hope that my decision to offer 'impressions from afar' was a justified one.

## Championship Perspective by Steven Jones



*Mike Truran congratulates Steven Jones on 2<sup>nd</sup> place*

The 2023 British Chess Championships certainly isn't an event I will be forgetting about any time soon! Before we even get talking about any of the moves made, we have to talk about the set-up of the event. I think this was easily my favourite inner city British Chess Championships, having played at the event since 2008. Leicester worked as a great backdrop, with a variety of eating and social options that more remote locations struggle to match, balanced against reasonably priced accommodation that make a player's life so much

easier. De Montfort University itself, and the playing area it supplied, was everything you could hope for when you sit at the board and, as always, the tireless effort of the organisation committee, arbiting team and others meant that we as players had the perfect chance to play our best chess. I don't know when we will be next back in Leicester, but whenever we are I certainly intend to be amongst the participants.

I wouldn't be telling the whole truth though if I denied that having a rather special event on the board did not help gloss the mental picture. I generally don't have confidence issues with my chess and had some good warm-up events in early July, but I unquestionably exceeded my personal expectations for what could happen. Not to forget that just twelve months earlier I had suffered at the 2022 Championships with a score of 2½/9 - enough to claim equal last place. The tournament can be brutal, and this year was no exception, with some tremendously talented players occupying lower boards and enduring that chastening feeling of being kicked whilst you are down.

Then there is the other end of the spectrum though - generating some forward momentum from a game or two and finding yourself rushing up the leader board. A spot of fortune against dangerous lower rated players in rounds two and three, a strong opponent missing an early tactic in round 6, and by the time I found myself in joint fifth position with two rounds to go you become aware that the conditions are in play to do something a little out of the ordinary.

My final two wins against an opponent who crushed me in 2021, and a grandmaster whose games I have had the pleasure of seeing at close quarters from a young age, were something personally special. Here is the latter of the two wins that sealed both my first IM norm and what turned out to be second place in the Championships. I hope that you enjoy playing through it as much as I enjoyed playing it.



## Fernandez, Daniel - Jones, Steven

British Chess Championships Leicester (9), 30.07.2023



Round 9 – Fernandez v Jones (middle board). Photo by Nigel Towers

### 1.e4 c5 2.b3

Move 2 might seem a little early to stop and annotate, but this was already quite the surprise! Daniel's range with the white pieces is astounding, with e4, d4, c4 and Nf3 all being in his repertoire, but this system was not on my radar for the game. I had only one game in my life from this position, from a British Championships in Torquay over ten years ago. I could remember the first few moves, and decided it was the best way to play.

### 2...Nc6 3.Bb2 Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.g3

I knew this wasn't the main move. Normally White plays 5.Nf3 and then plays either Bb5 or Bc4. I could remember Black's main ideas were to capture back on d6 soon with Bxd6, leaving the g-pawn en prise but with strong counter-threats on Rg8 and Nf4 if taken.

### 5...d6 6.exd6 Qxd6 7.Bg2 e5

No other development option appealed to me. I looked vaguely at a concept such as 7...Bf5 8.d3 e6 9.Nf3 Be7 10.Bxg7 Rg8 11.Bb2 Nf4 12.Bf1, but even then it isn't clearly good for Black, and White certainly doesn't have to play like this. With the black pawn on e6, natural play with Nf3/Ne2 and d4 looked good for White to me.

### 8.Na3 Be6

It's good to see the little tactical patterns in play early. An equally memorable, but far less pleasant, final round experience can be found in a line such as 8...f6? 9.Nb5 Qd8 10.Bxd5.

### 9.Nc4 Qc7



I think this is the last position we have before things start taking a downturn for White, but even so I can be very happy with how things look. Let's take stock:

White has gone for a hypermodern strategy of allowing Black to occupy the centre to undermine it later. Nothing wrong with that, and the tempo for being White will help bring pressure quickly.

But compare things with let's say the Pirc or Modern. In those openings, there is a pawn on d6 and sometimes c6 too. These are in place to hold that centre back from pressing onwards too easily. The Grunfeld doesn't do this, but in that case the centre is exclusively occupied by opposing pawns rather than pieces.

The combination of having no central pawns for White on the third rank, plus the presence of the knights on c6 and d5 that can press forward, is tremendously dangerous. And White cannot play a move like d3 without weakening dark squares already loosened by b3. The position is sound, but White has to tread very carefully.

### 10.Qh5?!

10.Qe2 was my mainline, and 10...f6 11.f4 Ndb4 (11...Nd4!? and there will always be compensation once that dark squared bishop is missing: 12.Bxd4 cxd4 13.fxe5 0-0-0 12.d3 b5! (12...Nd4? 13.Bxd4 cxd4 14.fxe5 fxe5 15. Nf3) 13.a3 bxc4 14.dxc4 Nxc2+ 15.Qxc2 Bd6 16.Qe4 Rc8 17.Nf3 0-0 shows the kind of measures White must take to stay afloat.

**10...g6** Arguably not best as the tactical positions are already supported by the engine, as seen by 10...Ndb4 11.0-0-0 Bxc4 12.bxc4 Nxa2+ 13.Kb1 Nab4, but if I can play this move then it is so desirable. White is giving me development tempi for nothing, and the positions assessed as better by the engine still seem unclear to me.

### 11.Qe2 Bg7 12.f4?



I felt that this move, trying to exploit the pins, was coming, and was not a believer. It is a classic case of a player not being fond of their position and so trying to find tactical operations to justify it, but the position simply cannot do what is being demanded of it. All that happens is a transformation of the position from unpleasant to losing.

12.Nf3 is clearly best but at a human level is hard to play, as it admits that Qh5 was a poor decision in a game with enormous stakes: 12...f6 13.0-0 0-0 14.d4 cxd4 15.Nxd4 Nxd4 16.Bxd4 Rfe8 and Black is for choice, but the game is very much live.

**12...Ndb4!** Not the only good move, but best and logical  
**13.0-0-0** (13.Bxc6+ Qxc6 14.Bxe5 Nxc2+ 15.Kf2)  
**13...Nd4 14.Bxd4 cxd4!**

14...exd4 This also turns out well, but is not as strong and far less obvious. One potential line is 15.Bxb7 d3 16.Qe4 Nxa2+ 17.Kb1 dxc2+ 18.Qxc2 Nb4 19.Qe4 Rd8.

**15.a3** This is really a sign that White is in danger. The tactics are all flowing for Black, while it is White who needs to justify his exchange of the dark squared bishop, lack of a centre and sluggish development. These are lots of signals that Black should be looking to do critical damage.

**15...d3!?** Strong and more than good enough, but the alternative is well worth a look too.



15...Nxc2! was something I really wanted to make work, and I was quite disappointed afterwards when the engine said it was good. 16.Kxc2 b5 17.Bxa8 bxc4. There are multiple options here and they all looked like they won for me, apart from the obstinate 18.Kb1, which I just couldn't find the breakthrough against. It transpires that the direct 18...0-0! 19.Be4 Rb8 20.b4 Qa5 is enough, but I couldn't convince myself to part with an entire rook based on what was at the time speculation. **16.cxd3 Nc6** Black does not need an immediate tactical sequence; the white position is ruined and the king will never feel safe.

## 17.Nf3

17.Bxc6+ Qxc6 18.Nf3 b5.

17.Kb1 Nd4 18.Qe4 was I felt White's best chance of resistance at the time, but allowing the queen exchange is very nice: 18...Nxb3 19.Qxb7 Qxb7! 20.Nd6+ Ke7 21.Nxb7 Rab8.

**17...b5** Everything is working out. **18.Nfxe5 Nxe5 19.Bxa8 bxc4 20.dxc4 0-0?!**



I confessed in my post-game interview afterwards that this move was affected by the nerves of the situation! A bit more composure and I really should find the simple 20...Nxc4 21.bxc4 0-0 but alas, I castled too quickly. Now White has a pawn mass to try to swindle with.

## 21.fxe5 Rxa8 22.d4 Rb8

White may have improved the computer evaluation from around -6 to -2½ but, as Danny Gormally pointed out in the commentary, the position is still a practical minefield for White to navigate. From the opponent's side of the board it is not important to see everything; it is clear I am playing for checkmate and the ideas of giving checks down the h7-b1 and h6-c1 diagonals are powerful.

## 23.d5

23.Qe3 was the line I was grappling with while my opponent was thinking. I was close to finding the refutation, but it isn't trivial and might be a decent practical try to shut down checks down on the c1-h6 diagonal while defending b3. Objectively though

23...Bxc4! 24.bxc4 Qxc4+ 25.Kd2 Rb2+ 26.Ke1 Bh6! 27.Qd3 is best. I had seen this far in my calculation and was still working on it. The winning move is 27...Qd5! when a sample line could be 28.Rg1 Rb3 29.Qc2 Re3+ 30.Kf1 Qf3+. Whether I would have found the 27<sup>th</sup> move over the board is a question we will never know!

### 23...Bf5

23...Rxb3! 24.dxe6 Qa5 is a winning attack, but from a practical level I am not even slightly upset to not have considered this. A key feature of the position is that I have tremendous latitude, as long as the pawns don't get out of control my bishops stay incredible, and the white king stays vulnerable. Just focus on not missing tactics and play natural good moves that keep the advantages stable; the win will come when the position is this good.

23...Bg4?? 24. Qxg4 Qe5, 25. Qd4! is exactly what not to do, and a good example of trying to force the win too quickly backfiring.

### 24.b4

24.d6 Rxb3! 25.dxc7 Bh6+ 26.Rd2 Rb1# was a cute detail I was aware of during the game.

### 24...Bxe5 25.g4? Re8!



With this little tactic I break any resistance White can muster. The e-pawn is gone, so both bishops are in full flow now and they cannot be contained. The nerves had now evaporated, and I got to just enjoy the final phase of the game - a good old-fashioned king hunt.

### 26.Qf1 Bxg4

26...Bf4+ 27.Kb2 Qe5+ 28.Ka2 Qc3.

### 27.c5 Bf4+ 28.Kb2 Re2+

There are lots of winning lines, but this felt natural to me, bringing all the pieces into play to catch the king.

### 29.Kb3 Qe5 30.Ka4 a6

30...Bf5 immediately is also good, but creating nets for the king again felt sensible. It goes back to that matter of latitude. I don't need to find only moves at all, there are lots of routes to where I want to go, so picking simple clean ones is pragmatic.

### 31.c6

31.Rg1 Bd7+ 32.c6 Bxc6+ 33.dxc6 Qb5+ 34.Kb3 Re3+ 35.Ka2 Qa4. 31.d6 Bd7+

### 31...Bf5 32.Ka5

32.Rc1 Bxc1 33.Qxc1, and either 33...Qxd5 or 33...Bc2+

### 32...Qc7+ 33.Kxa6 (33.Ka4 Bc2#)

### 33...Be3

33...Qb8! with the lovely mating pattern of bishops on c7 and c8 was the fastest way to do things, but I had seen this winning line and I wasn't going to muddy and waters by trying to find 'better wins'.

### 34.Kb5 Qb6+ 35.Kc4 Qa6+ 36.Kc3

36.Kb3 Bc2+ 37.Kb2 Bxd1+ was enough to find when playing 32...Qc7+

### 36...Qxa3+ 37.Kc4 Qa6+ 38.Kc3 Rc2+ 39.Kb3 Qa2#



Definitely a memorable final position to close the Championships and a nice touch from Daniel that he allowed me mate on the board.

I think Daniel played some stellar chess over the week and just had one of those days in the last round; it happens to us all and he will back playing excellent chess in the future. For me it was a crazy week and now the challenge is to prove that I can produce more games and tournaments like this one.

I hope that you enjoyed the analysis and the 2023 British Championships as a whole; it is going to be a fun twelve months of chess until the next one.

## Championship Perspective by Harry Grieve

The field for the British Championships this year was an exciting one - topped by seven-time champion Mickey Adams with a healthy rating advantage over the rest, but followed up by Nick Pert, an in-form Daniel Fernandez and Ukrainian GM Eldar Gasanov playing for the first time. I was seeded 5<sup>th</sup> this year, with Mark Hebden the remaining grandmaster 6<sup>th</sup>, with the usual dangerous English IMs including Matthew Wadsworth and Jonah Willow. Mickey had successfully justified his status as favourite at the Cambridge Open and English Championships already this year, but would anyone be able to challenge him over the longer nine-day format? The answer was 'no' in the end, as he kept hold of board 1 throughout the event, but not without some challenges along the way.

The first three rounds saw few major surprises, with Daniel Fernandez the only player reaching 3/3 and a group behind on 2½/3 including myself and Adams, who had been held to a well-played draw by Eldar Gasanov in round 3. The following board 1 clash saw Fernandez take too many risks with the 3...Qd8 Scandinavian as he was outplayed convincingly by Adams, whilst I ground out a long endgame against the talented young Irish IM Tarun Kanyamarala to join Adams as the only players on 3½/4. Experience told in my round 5 encounter against him though - despite having the white pieces, I made a couple of decisions I simply couldn't explain after the game, and eventually lost in the endgame.

The following two rounds saw Adams move to 6/7, only conceding one draw with Mark Hebden where he had chances for more, and impressively taking down the solid Nick Pert with White. I made two hard-fought draws to be adrift on 4½/7 with any title aspirations largely gone, but incredibly Adams was not in the sole lead - Fernandez had scored 3/3 against tough opposition since losing to Adams to join him on 6/7. Thus the next day's pairings saw big upfloats, with Dutch IM-elect Yichen Han playing Adams on board 1 and me having White against Fernandez on board 2. Mickey

made a fairly quick draw against Yichen, which surprised onlookers, but which he explained afterwards as being due to a lack of energy for two more long fights. This left my board 2 game against Fernandez as being crucial in potentially deciding the Championship.



Grieve vs Fernandez - photo by Tao Bhokanadh

### Grieve, Harry (2459) - Fernandez, Daniel H (2518)

British Championships Round 8, 29.07.2023

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6** The notoriously solid Petroff Defence is not one that has appeared in Fernandez' repertoire recently - I was maybe expecting a Berlin Defence, so did at least correctly predict that he would be looking for a quieter game against me.

**3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.d4 d5 6.Bd3 Nd6!?**



Not at all a common move, but the solid nature of the Petroff gives Black the chance to go his own way in the opening without drastically changing the evaluation. If followed up with ...Be7 and ...Bf5 then we will more or less reach normal territory.

**7.0-0 Be7 8.Nc3!?** Gaining a tempo on the d5 pawn whilst starting a typical rerouting of the knight to the kingside. The more normal route in similar Petroff lines would be Nd2-f1-g3 with Re1 included, but Black's unusual move order gives us this extra option.



8...c6 9.Ne2



9...0-0 9...Bf5 is the principled approach, trading the light-squared bishops before this is prevented altogether with Ng3: 10.Ng3 Bxd3 11.Qxd3 0-0 12.Bf4 Nd7 13.h4. This gives similar play to the game, with White getting an edge after gaining space on the kingside, but there will be far fewer attacking chances without the strong bishop on d3.

10.Ng3 Re8 11.Bf4 Nd7 12.h4



Combined with Bf4, a typical idea now that Black cannot capture on h4 due to the hanging knight on d6. Usually, however, the light-squared bishops are already traded, so here it is more double-edged due to potentially giving Black ...Bg4 ideas in the future.

12...Nf8 13.Qd2 Ng6 13...Nc4!? exploits my last two moves, forcing the capture on c4 now that the threat to the h4 pawn is real. 14.Bxc4 dxc4 15.h5 h6 16.Rae1 Be6 with unclear play - Black has weakened his structure, but solved the problem of his light-squared bishop by gaining a square on d5, while also taking the bishop pair. I wasn't sure how to assess this during the game, but didn't expect him to unbalance the position like this, which seems out of character with his game plan.

14.h5 Nxf4 15.Qxf4 h6 16.Rae1 Bf8



17.c3 I felt very happy with my position around here, with attacking chances due to the space advantage on the kingside, but it wasn't clear to me how to make progress on that side of the board. With the bishop pair as a long-term asset, Black would be very happy to trade queens - for example 17.Rxe8 Nxe8 18.Re1 Qf6 takes the e-file but helps Black to prepare the queen trade; 17.Ne5 Qg5 would also make Black feel more comfortable. I wasn't clear what Black's next move was if I avoided these options, so decided on a slow 'route one' plan of c3, Bb1 and Qd2-d3 to prepare a battery on the long diagonal.

17...a5 18.Bb1 Rxe1 19.Rxe1 Ne8



Dan prepares ...Nf6 to cover the h7 square, preventing any immediate mating ideas, but I can now play natural forward moves on the kingside without allowing too many trades.

20.Nf5 Nf6 21.Ne5 Bxf5 22.Qxf5 Qc8 23.Qd3 Bd6



**24.Re3** White is clearly better with the extra kingside space, even in an endgame, but of course I want to use the Bb1–Qd3 battery to start an immediate attack.

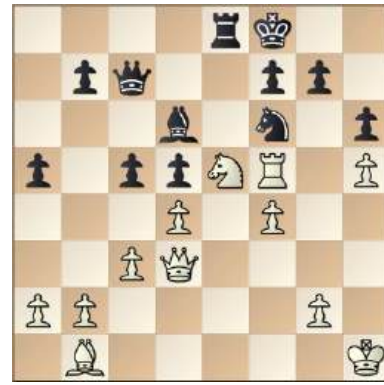
24.f3! preparing Ng4 is the best way to challenge the knight on f6 - if 24...Kf8 (24...Qe6 25.Re3!+- is the simple move I had missed, solving the pin down the e-file, and Ng4 next will be crushing) 25.Ng4 Bg3 26.Re2 and apparently Black is forced to find 26...Ne4! to even stay in the game. Instead, my choice of Re3–f3 prepares an exchange sacrifice on f6, but Black is in time to counter this.

**24...Kf8! 25.Rf3 Qc7**



**26.Rf5** 26.Rxf6!? was tempting, but I found it very difficult to evaluate these lines during the game: 26...gxf6 27.Qh7! (27.Nf3 Bf4) 27...fxe5 28.Qxh6+ Ke8 29.Qh8+ Bf8 30.h6 when the strong h-pawn apparently gives White enough play for equality, but no more.

**26...Re8 27.f4 c5! 28.Kh1**



Necessary in order to recapture Qxd4 and keep the c-file closed - Black is getting serious counterplay on the queenside now and I have to go all-in on the idea of g4–g5 to try and create a mating attack.

**28...b5 29.g4 cxd4 30.Qxd4 b4 31.g5**



**31...hgx5?!** Played quickly by Dan, but it seemed from his body language that he possibly just missed the h6 idea coming next.

31...Bxe5! 32.Rxe5 Rxe5 33.fxe5 Nxh5 34.gxh6 gxh6 and White will have to work to make a draw with the attacking chances largely gone.

**32.h6! gxf4?** There are still drawing lines suggested by the engine, but nothing simple anymore. For example, 32...Bxe5 33.fxe5 gxh6 34.Rxf6 Qxe5 gives Black three pawns for the piece and a likely draw will follow after a queen trade. With both of us getting low on time, the complications after 32.h6 are nearly impossible to calculate accurately.

**33.hxg7+**



Here I had calculated until the end.

**33...Kg8** Black is not helped by 33...Ke7 34.Ng6+ fxg6 35.Qxf6+--, nor 33...Kxg7 34.Rg5+ Kf8 35.Ng6+! fxg6 36.Qxf6+--

**34.Qxf4 Re6** 34...Rxe5 35.Rxe5 Bxe5 36.Qh6 is mate in one; 34...Bxe5 35.Qh6 Nh7 36.Rf6! was the nice idea similar to the game (36.Rxe5 also works in this case.)

**35.Qh6 Nh7**



There are other winning moves by now, but the one to force resignation is:

**36.Rf6!**

**1-0**

Results few would have predicted on the top boards, but there were more surprises to come in the last round! The final pairings were Adams (6½) - Willow (5½), Fernandez (6) - Jones (5½) and Han (5½) - Grieve (5½) at the top - with only Adams and Fernandez in with a realistic chance of the title. I made a quick draw with Yichen to secure a share of third and retired to watch the action - which didn't take long to appear on board 2. Fernandez had the white pieces against Steven Jones, rated 2175, who had steadily climbed up the rankings after losing to Adams in round 1. Mickey would surely have been expecting to be forced to win to avoid a play-

off given the rating gap on board 2, but this idea was blown out the water by a very risky opening by Fernandez being met with convincing play by Jones, who was completely winning by move 15 with Black. He made no mistake in the conversion, pulling off a great upset and completing a run to 6½/9.

It says something about Mickey's relentlessness that despite now only needing a draw for the title, he kept grinding a slight edge against Jonah for 94 moves to finally win and take his eighth British title, a full point ahead of the field. Untitled Steven Jones took clear 2<sup>nd</sup> place and his first IM norm with a great 6½/9, with Yichen, Fernandez, Wadsworth and me sharing 3<sup>rd</sup>= on 6/9 followed by a big group on 5½. In this group was Lan Yao, who took her second consecutive British Women's Champion title whilst also completing the requirements for the WGM title with a last round draw against IM Richard Pert - a great achievement.

Overall, the playing conditions in Leicester were excellent, with the congress being efficiently organised by the brilliant organising and arbiting team. Entertaining commentary was provided throughout by GM Danny Gormally and IM Adam Hunt, which helps make the event what it is and keeps it accessible to those following online. Overall, despite not defending the title from last year, I was happy with my performance for 3<sup>rd</sup>= - I had a lot of long games decided in the fifth hour of play, but ultimately a dip in my level of play from rounds 5-7 cost me a shot at the title. Massive congratulations are due to Steven Jones for his amazing run to 2<sup>nd</sup> place and to the British Champions of 2023, GM Mickey Adams and WGM-elect Lan Yao. Wherever next year's event takes place, hopefully there will be just as many exciting moments!

## British Senior Championships

The Senior Championships ran over seven days with a round a day from Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> July.

### Over 65 Championship

There was a three-way tie for first place in the Over 65 section, with winners as below.





*Over 65 Champions Alan Punnett (left), Sheila Jackson (centre) and David Fryer (right) - photo by Tao Bhokhanadh*

JOINT CHAMPIONS - Alan K Punnett, Sheila Jackson, David W Fryer 5½

WOMENS CHAMPION - Sheila Jackson 5½

### **Over 50 Championship**

GM Keith Arkell was the outright winner of the Over 50 Championship on 6 out of 7.



*Over 50 Champion GM Keith Arkell*



*3<sup>rd</sup> = FM Andrew Smith (left) with Chris Duncan and Mike Truran - photos by Tao Bhokhanadh*

CHAMPION - Keith C Arkell 6

2<sup>nd</sup> Dave J Ledger 5½

3<sup>rd</sup> = Chris R Duncan 5

3<sup>rd</sup> = Robert S Eames 5

3<sup>rd</sup> = Andrew P Smith 5

WOMENS CHAMPION - Rosemary A Giulian 3½

## **British Junior Championships**

The Junior Championships ran over seven rounds from Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> July, with the awards presented on Saturday afternoon.



*Junior Championship presentation ceremony – all photography by Adrian Elwin*

Winners of the various sections are shown below.

### **Under 16 Championship**

JOINT CHAMPION - Rohan Pal 5

JOINT CHAMPION - Sanjith Madhavan 5

JOINT CHAMPION - Manmay Chopra 5

JOINT CHAMPION - Ronit Sachdeva 5

JOINT CHAMPION - Ruben Nangalia Evans 5

GIRLS CHAMPION - Olga L Latypova 3½

GIRLS CHAMPION - Michelle Ngo Yu Chan 3½

### **Under 14 Championship**

CHAMPION - Livio Cancedda-Dupuis 6½

2<sup>nd</sup> Pengxiao Zhu 6

3<sup>rd</sup> Maksym Larchikov 5½

GIRLS CHAMPION - Naavya Parikh 5

### **Under 12 Championship**

JOINT CHAMPION - Adithya Vaidyanathan 6

JOINT CHAMPION - Ramsey Dairi 6

3<sup>rd</sup> = Alfred Soulier 5½

3<sup>rd</sup> = Emils Steiners 5½

3<sup>rd</sup> = Sithun De Silva 5½

GIRLS CHAMPION - Shambavi Hariharan 4½

GIRLS CHAMPION - Alannah Ashton 4½

### **Under 10 Championship**

CHAMPION - George Zhao 6

2<sup>nd</sup> = Maksym Kryshafor 5½



2<sup>nd</sup> = Yashwardhan Shankar 5½  
GIRLS CHAMPION - Lam Vy Le Nguyen 5

### Under 8 Championship

CHAMPION - Ayan Pradhan 7  
2<sup>nd</sup> Furion Kapitanski 5½  
3<sup>rd</sup> = Ayaansh Mulukutla 5  
3<sup>rd</sup> = Anvikkashri Prabhakaran 5  
3<sup>rd</sup> = Thomas Ewart 5  
3<sup>rd</sup> = Advik Saxena 5



## The Chess Trust



The Chess Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation established under the auspices of the Charity Commission (Registered Charity Number 1160881).

The Chess Trust was established in 2015. It was initially supported by a significant bequest from the estate of Kent junior organiser Richard Haddrell, and this bequest formed the basis for building plans to support chess. Since 2015 additional funds have been received through donations and bequests, and in 2022 the Chess Trust received the assets of the Permanent Invested Fund from the British Chess Federation (the English Chess Federation's predecessor). The Trust intends to utilise any funds received to meet its objects in the immediate future and for the long term.

The Trust has two objectives:

- 1) The advancement of amateur sport by promoting the study and practice of chess in all its forms, principally, but not exclusively, for the benefit of residents of England;
- 2) The advancement of education by promoting the development of young people through the teaching and practice of chess.

What does this mean in practice? It means that the Chess Trust can support a very wide range of activities for the advancement of the playing and teaching of chess. The only real limitation is that it cannot directly support professional players or pay their expenses.

Since 2018, the Chess Trust has established and supported the Accelerator Programme, a chess development scheme available to England's top junior chess talents on a selection-only basis. Places on the programme are strictly limited, and participants have had the benefit of regular contact with an allocated mentor, who has helped to establish a personal development plan and to develop good working practices. Training camps at physical locations with support from elite international players have been held, and assistance has been provided before and during various international events. Mentoring has been provided by GMs John Emms and Glenn Flear and IM Adam Hunt. Our top talents have made great progress and have achieved some exceptional results during the year, about which doubtless you will already have read.

During 2023 the Chess Trust has continued the expansion of its activities. It has provided financial support to enable organisers of norm tournaments to bridge some of the gap between expected income and budgeted costs and has given those organisers the comfort that the financial risk of putting on a norm tournament can be mitigated, at least in part. It provided support for the successful English teams in the World and European Seniors Championships, as well as support for local organisers who had great ideas to increase the profile of chess in their area.

During 2022, The Chess Trust established a fund to enable Ukrainian refugees now living in England to continue to play chess. 20 grants were made to senior and junior, male and female players, and these grants have helped participation in events all over the country, from Northumbria to Kent to Torquay. In conjunction with CSC, we provided a number of sets and boards to a school which had an influx of Ukrainian children, and a school chess club has now been established.

The Chess Trust has made all its grants for 2023, but applications are welcome for 2024. The Trustees meet at least twice a year to consider grant applications. If you are considering applying for a grant, you may do so through the website. The Trustees can only make grants which are in accordance with our objects above, but as these are quite broad, we will consider just about anything! All we ask in return is that recipients of grants make it known that support has been provided by the Chess Trust, be that via entry forms, social media or even banners at the event, which we can provide. We also ask for a brief report on the use of the grant and the benefits obtained, which we may publish on our website.

The Chess Trust was established with the help and support of the ECF, but importantly the Chess Trust is independent of the ECF, as it must be for Charity Commission purposes. The CEO and Finance Director of the ECF are ex officio Trustees, but others were selected and invited to become Trustees when the Chess Trust was established, being replaced by new Trustees when necessary. As well as the ECF Trustees (Mike Truran and Alex Longson), the current Trustees are David Eustace, Sarah Longson, Stephen Greep, Malcolm Pein, Adam Ashton and Simon Brown (Chair). You may think that a number of the trustees have links with the ECF, but potential conflicts of interest are monitored constantly and individuals are encouraged to recuse themselves when appropriate so that independence can be maintained and demonstrated.

The Chess Trust is always happy to accept donations and bequests, and, as it is a registered charity, any donations from a UK taxpayer will be eligible for the Gift Aid

scheme which will benefit the Chess Trust and any higher rate taxpayer. The Trustees intend to continue to demonstrate that the funds available to us will be spent wisely and responsibly and can make a real difference to chess in the UK, so that the donors of the future will know that the Chess Trust will find the best use for their funds.

If you wish to enquire about the work of the Chess Trust, please contact the Secretary, David Eustace, by email at [david.eustace01@btinternet.com](mailto:david.eustace01@btinternet.com)

## The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust



The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, an independent grant-making charitable trust, was founded in 2006. The Trust was created following the death of Mr. John Robinson on 1 February 2006. Our charity registration number is 1116982.

The charitable objects of the Trust are to advance education by providing or assisting in the provision of facilities for the teaching development and supervision of the playing of chess amongst persons under the age of twenty-one, resident in England or eligible to represent England at chess.

In practice the Trust makes grants to support junior chess events, junior chess organisations and individual ENG junior players (under the age of 21). The Trustees consider applications for grant funding on merit in accordance with their strategy and policies which are reviewed from time to time.

Applications for financial support are invited. They should be emailed to the Trust (see email address below). Each year the Trust awards a total of approximately £25,000 in grants.

Recent grants include support to: UK Chess Challenge (an ongoing bursary award scheme for Megafinal entries); Hastings Chess Congress (bursary awards for Masters entries); National Youth Chess Association; British Chess Championship (coaching for juniors and event subsidy); Northumbria Chess Masters 2023; She Plays to Win; Mike Basman memorial event and awards to individual junior players.

If you wish to enquire about the work of The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, please contact the Trust

by email at [admin@johnrobinsonchess.org](mailto:admin@johnrobinsonchess.org) or visit our website <https://johnrobinsonchess.org>

## Chess in Prisons by Carl Portman



*Giving a simul at HMP Hewell, which was shown on the BBC*

### Overview

I have been doing this fantastically rewarding work since March 2014 and I now refer to it as the longest UK tour in history! In essence, I visit prisons when they ask me to and I will do one or all of the following: I coach, give simultaneous matches, or simply talk about chess and the benefits it has, including in my own life. I also hold chess Q&A sessions which are always well attended with eager participation. The most common questions involve en-passant, the touch move rule, how draws are made, chess clocks and the fifty-move rule, which is woefully misunderstood.

The aim of my visits is simple – to foster interest in chess and to try to get prisons to hold regular chess clubs. Chess is a purposeful activity that should be acknowledged on any Chief Inspector of Prisons visit. I know from the many letters I receive that chess changes lives both in and out of prison. Specifically, the top three themes that stand out for me are that chess builds friendships and is a social bridge, it improves thinking and decision making and it is a hugely productive use of time. Overall, it is an awesome tool for mental health improvement and my sole objective continues to be to work to get chess on the agenda across the prison estate. Chess behind bars is not a bar to chess.

### Prisons visited

31 May 2023 - HMP Dartmoor  
8 June 2023 - HMP Hewell (with the BBC for filming)  
26 June 2023 – HMP Gartree  
10 August 2023 – HMP Littlehey  
20 September – HMP Hewell  
14 November – HMP Springhill and Grendon Underwood

### Additional activities

18th March Visited the London Chess Conference – where I took the opportunity to meet Dana Reizniece-Ozola, the Managing Director of FIDE, and Mikhail Korenman, co-organiser of the Intercontinental Online Prison Championships.

11th October – Interviewed on the World Prison Chess Championships WGM Almira Skripchenko

### Radio and television

A real highlight - not to say achievement - of the year was to get the BBC to film in a prison. I waited many years for this to occur and finally it happened at HMP Hewell. The point was to highlight the benefits of chess in prisons and a short piece was issued worldwide and used by FIDE.

I appeared on BBC TV, the Breakfast Show and BBC South and I was interviewed on the following radio stations:

BBC Radio 5 Live

BBC Radio Hereford and Worcester

BBC Radio West Midlands

BBC Radio Gloucester

BBC Radio Oxford

### Work with Chess in Schools and Communities

The ECF does not work alone. Together with Chess in Schools and Communities we visit prisons across England, prepare teams for the annual world prisons championships and provide equipment, including chess sets, clocks, books and magazines. I also know that some individuals and chess clubs around England also work with prisons. This initiative is really developing in England and indeed around the globe and every year sees new milestones. As an aside (and separate to my ECF work) I am the chess correspondent for *Inside Time*, the prison newspaper. This gives me the opportunity to reach out across the prison estate and spread the chess gospel.

### Final comments

To conclude, the best thing about chess in prisons is that it is all good news. In a world where there is so much depressing news this is a win-win and sees only happiness, personal and group development and actually, a significant move towards trying to reduce re-offending, which is a cost saving for the tax-payer as well as being a positive, life-changing development for the individual.

There are poets, artists, musicians, writers and more behind bars and in some way chess helps to channel this creativity, especially in art. Here is an example of a painting done when I was giving a simultaneous at HMP Littlehey, where as I walked in one prisoner was playing the piano to welcome me, and the art class were in attendance, ready to paint.





I want to personally thank the ECF for all the support I have been given. Mike Truran and Nigel Towers in particular are always 'on message' about chess in prisons. Nigel goes the extra mile in addition to his Director of Home Chess duties to support HMP Hewell, his 'local' prison and I have seen how his chess expertise and calm character have helped develop chess activities there. Malcolm Pein and Peter Sullivan at CSC are likewise very supportive and we all work together as much as we can for the common good.

Finally, a request. If ever anyone has any chess books (algebraic only please) that they no longer want, and wish to donate them to prisons, they will definitely be well received. The same can be said for sets, boards and clocks.

There is a saying in the prison system – that behind every cell door is a dream. I want to add my own quote that I hope will come true one day. Behind every cell door is a chess set!

## ECF Awards 2023

This year saw strong entries in several categories and members of the Awards committee had a particularly difficult job in agreeing the winners of some categories. As Chairman of the Awards committee, I would like to thank all the committee members - Julie Denning, Sarah Longson, Natasha Regan, Jack Rudd, Nigel Towers and Peter Wells - for their hard work, and the Chess Trust for its generous sponsorship of the awards scheme.

*Stephen Greep, ECF Awards Committee*

### President's Award for Services to Chess

Bob Jones; Rupert Jones; Alex McFarlane; Peter Purland; Kevin Staveley

**Contribution to Chess in the Community**  
Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club

**Contribution to Junior Chess**  
Chris Lewis

**Contribution to Women's Chess**  
Caroline Robson

**Club of the Year**  
Leeds Junior Chess Club

**Small Club of the Year**  
Ringwood Chess Club

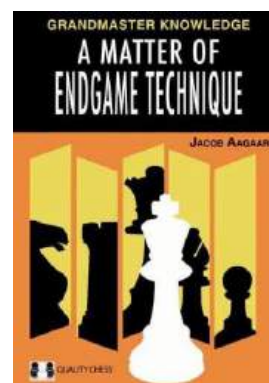
**Congress of the Year**  
University of Warwick

No awards were made in two categories (Contribution to Online Chess and Contribution to Accessible Chess). A full listing, including the citations received, can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ECF-Awards-2023.pdf>

## ECF Book of the Year 2023

The four books on this year's short list illustrated the wide range of current chess publishing which made the final choice difficult. The book chosen showed the amount of hard work that an author can put in to produce a volume that will richly reward the reader if they put in a similar effort.

**A Matter of Endgame Technique**  
by Jacob Aagaard  
Quality Chess pp896 £39.99



The first thing that strikes the reader is the mammoth size of the book – 896 pages in all. Why so large? Let the author explain – 'There is an unquestionable need and desire for books that can teach even grandmasters something ... endgame topics covered in depth with unapologetic attention to detail'.



The quality of the book is in the explanations and analysis given of the endgame chosen. The positions chosen are from contemporary play (Aagaard believes he is short-changing the reader by repeating published classics). The result is an insight into current tournament play with a focus on a player's practical problems at the board with the chess clock ticking away. Many of the examples included are long and complex and the reader is drawn into the narrative waiting to find out whether the superior side can win or resilient defence can hold out. Aagaard writes fluently and well. As an experienced trainer he brings out the learning points clearly. Of course, Aagaard has used a powerful computer to help with the analysis, but he is very good at drawing out when a player, should or could not, reasonably have reached the same conclusions.

This book is not suitable for beginners, and a knowledge of basic end game theory is assumed. However, it is valuable for an ambitious player who wants to learn how to play endgames against capable opponents during competitive games. It can also be used as a reference book for specific subjects, for example two bishops versus two knight endgames, or just enjoyed for the quality of the writing and analysis.

Aagaard writes, 'I am of the firm conviction that chess is a difficult game to play, but not too difficult to explain once you have analysed the games thoroughly'. In respect of end games, Aagaard has fully achieved this aim.

*Ray Edwards, Jovanka Houska & Sean Marsh, September 2023*

## Game of the Month by GM Michael Adams



### January 2023

John Nunn rounded off a great year for England in Senior's chess by winning the World Senior 65+ event. The Doc won some typically attractive attacking games in the early rounds but showed his all-round game with some more technical victories in the key concluding rounds. This one shows the strength of a powerful central knight against a dark-squared bishop and looks very smooth, but it is surprising how much complexity was concealed in the concluding phase.

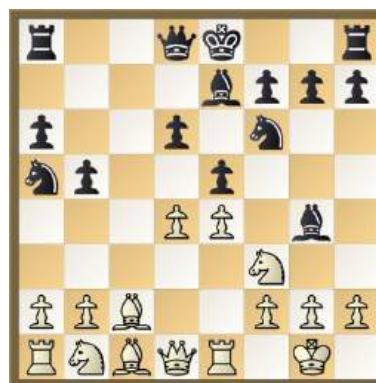
#### J. Nunn – J. Fernandez

World Senior Championship 65+ 2022

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Re1 b5 7.Bb3 d6 8.c3 Na5** A rare side-line: 8...0-0 is normal.

**9.Bc2 c5 10.d4 cxd4 10...Qc7** was possible, with good chances to transpose to more familiar territory.

**11.cxd4 Bg4** Black's idea, but it does not solve all his problems.



**12.dxe5 12.d5** was also playable, but against a rare continuation it makes sense to keep it simple and secure a safe edge.

**12...Bxf3** Necessary due to 12...dxe5 13.Qxd8+ Bxd8 14.Nxe5.

**13.Qxf3 dxe5 14.Nc3** 14.Qg3! 0-0 15.Bh6 Ne8 16.Rd1 was a bit more precise.

**14...0-0 15.Rd1** If 15.Bg5, both 15...Nc6 and 15...Rc8 are interesting.

**15...Qc7** 15...Qc8 is also met by 16.Bd3.



**16.Bd3** The speculative 16.Bg5 b4 17.Bxf6 Bxf6 18.Nd5 Qxc2 19.Rac1 Qxb2 20.Nxf6+ gxf6 21.Qxf6 Rfc8 22.Rxc8+ Rxc8 23.Rd8+ Rxd8 24.Qxd8+ Kg7 25.Qg5+ secures perpetual check; but White has no chances for more, so the bishop is nudged to a safe square instead.

**16...Rfd8** Recycling the knight with 16...Nc6 17.Be3 Nd4 18.Bxd4 exd4 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5 also gives White a significant advantage despite the opposite-coloured bishops. White will be able to plant a rook on c6 as 20...Rac8 21.Bf5! dislodges Black's rook, 21...Rcd8 22.Rac1. The alternative 16...b4 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.exd5 Nb7 19.Be3 followed by Rac1 isn't tempting.

**17.Be3** 17.Nd5 Nxd5 18.exd5 Nc4 19.h4 keeps the initiative but allows Black's knight to settle on d6.

**17...Nc4 18.Bxc4 Qxc4**



**19.Bg5** The computer prefers 19.Nd5 Nxd5 20.exd5, but this is not at all intuitive. 20...e4 (20...Bd6 21.Rac1 Qxa2 22.Bb6 Rdc8 23.Rc6!) 21.Qf5 Bd6 (21...g6 22.Qe5!) 22.Rac1 Qxa2 23.Bb6 Re8 24.Rc6 Qb3 25.Qg4 and the White d-pawn is a big asset. John's choice is much more practical - White keeps control.

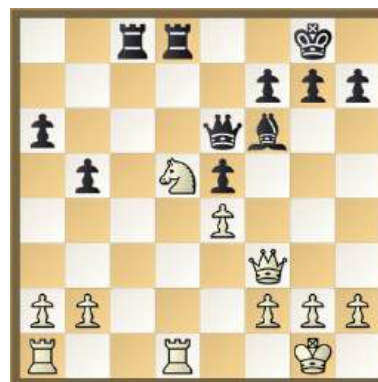
**19...Qe6** There was a chance to escape with 19...Rxd1+! 20.Rxd1 b4 21.Bxf6 Bxf6 22.Nd5 Qxa2 23.Nxf6+ gxf6 24.Qxf6 Qxb2 25.h4; this looks dangerous, but there is too little material left to win, and the passed b-pawn must be taken seriously. After 25...Qc2 26.Re1 Rc8 27.Qg5+ (27.Re3 Qd1+ 28.Kh2 Rc3, an important defensive idea, 27.h5 Qd2 28.Re3 Rc3 29.h6 Kf8 30.Qh8+ Ke7 31.Qxe5+ Kd7 also survives) 27...Kf8 28.Qxe5 b3.

It was clearly hard to make such a committal decision, but the position in the game is a rather thankless task so perhaps it was more practical to try this and hope for the best.

**20.Nd5!** A tactical finesse; this is a bit stronger than 20.Bxf6 Qxf6 21.Qxf6 Bxf6 22.Nd5 Kf8.

**20...Rac8** 20...Nxd5 21.exd5 Qd6 22.Bxe7 Qxe7 23.d6! Qe6 24.Rac1 is very tough for Black. 24...Qxa2? loses immediately: 25.Qxa8! Rxa8 26.d7.

**21.Bxf6 Bxf6**



The Doc has achieved his aim. The knight on d5 dominates proceedings from a perfect central outpost while Black's bishop can't find a good role. Surviving this kind of passive defence is rare.

**22.g3** 22.a4, levering open the queenside, is also logical, but this multi-purpose move makes space so that White's king can find a comfortable light square, and gets ready to control g5.

**22...Be7** 22...Bg5 23.h4 Bh6 24.a4! would now be a real problem, with the bishop on h6 side-lined.

**23.Rac1 Bg5** The bishop returns, but there was nothing better: 23...Bc5 24.Rc2 Bd4 25.Rdc1 Rxc2 26.Rxc2 and now the bishop on d4 looks pretty but doesn't do much: 26...h6 27.Kg2. Or 23...g6 24.h4 h5 25.Qe3 Kg7 26.Kg2 keeps on squeezing.

**24.Rxc8 Rxc8**



**25.h4 Bd8** The bishop is passive here, but remains out of harm's way, and it does prevent White's knight from moving forward.

**26.Kg2 h6** I would have preferred 26...g6, and if 27.h5 Bg5.

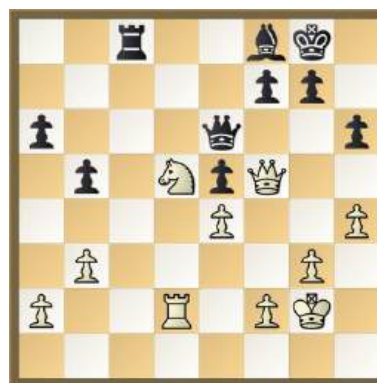
**27.b3 Be7** 27...Rc2? 28.Ne3! is already winning: 28...Rc8 29.Nf5, planning Rd6, 29...Be7 30.Qg4 Bf8 31.Nxh6+.



**28.Rd2** 28.a4 was possible, but White does not need to hurry.

**28...Bf8** 28...Rc1 was worth a try.

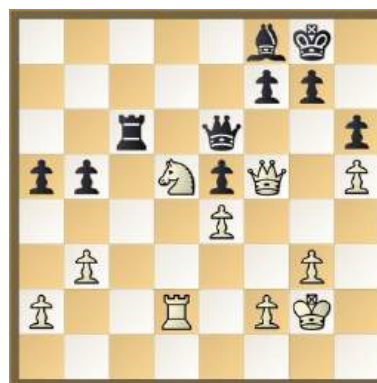
**29.Qf5** Swapping queens allows White's king a route into the game, a winning plan that works like a charm in the game, but the more patient 29.Qd1, or 29.h5 maintaining the pressure, were good alternatives. Judging the merits of the queen trade is clearly not easy over the board; both players seem to underestimate Black's defensive resources in that scenario.



**29...Rc6** Fernandez has resisted well so far, but over the next few moves had to try to seek relief through exchanges. It's tempting to avoid irreversible decisions by maintaining the tension instead, but this isn't sustainable in the long term. Here 29...Qxf5! 30.exf5 h5 is not that bad for Black; there aren't many targets to aim at, and it is not so simple for the white monarch to penetrate: 31.Ne3 (31.Kf3 f6) 31...f6 32.Kf3 a5 33.Rd5 Bc5.

**30.h5** 30.Qxe6 fxe6 31.Ne3 Bb4 32.Rd8+ Kf7 is OK; the bishop will head to c3, and maybe d4 later.

**30...a5** The ugly-looking 30...Qxf5! is not so bad: 31.exf5 f6 32.Ne3 Bd6 33.Kf3 Kf7 34.Ke4 Ke7 is still not simple to crack (35.Rc2 Rxc2 36.Nxc2 Bc5 37.f3 Kd6).



**31.Ne3** 31.Qf3 was a good alternative, heading to d3 or e2; now the pawn on b5 is a bit more vulnerable due to Black's last move. John's move is also on point; the rook will land on d5, eyeing a lot of undefended pawns on the fifth rank.

**31...a4** 31...Qxf5 was still a better idea.

**32.Rd5** Swapping queens was also good: 32.Qxe6 fxe6 (32...Rxe6 33.Rd5! axb3 34.axb3 b4 35.Nc4 f6 36.Kf3 leaves the light squares too weak). However, the doubled e-pawns are a long-term liability: 33.Rd8 axb3 34.axb3 Kf7 (34...Rc3 35.Ng4!) 35.Rd7+ Kg8 36.Ng4 Bd6

37.Rb7 b4 38.Rb5 Rc3 (38...Kf8 39.Nxe5 Bxe5 40.Rxe5 Rc3 41.Rxe6 Rxb3 42.Rb6) 39.Rb6.

**32...axb3** Black had one last resource: 32...Qxf5! 33.exf5 (33.Nxf5 Rc2!) 33...Bc5 34.Rxe5 Bxe3 35.Rxe3 b4! 36.Re4 (36.bxa4 Ra6!) 36...a3! 37.Re8+ (37.Rxb4 Rc2) 37...Kh7 38.Re2 g6 gives Black hopes to survive.

**33.axb3 Rc5** 33...Qxf5 34.Nxf5! b4 35.Rxe5 Rc3 36.Rb5! converts cleanly: 36...Rxb3 (36...Bc5 37.f4 Kh7 38.e5) 37.Rb8! f6 38.Nd4! Rc3 39.Ne6, winning the bishop.



**34.Kf3** 34.Rd8! is the most conclusive: 34...Rc3 (34...Qxf5 35.Nxf5 Rc7 36.Rb8 b4 37.Ne3 Rc3 38.Nd5 Rxb3 39.Ne7+, 34...Qxb3 35.Nd5!) 35.Qxe6 fxe6 36.Ng4!; the alternative 34.Qxe6 fxe6 35.Rd7 Rc3 36.Ng4 is also good enough.

**34...Qxf5+** 34...Rxd5 35.Qxe6 fxe6 36.exd5 exd5 37.Nxd5 Bc5 38.Nc3 Kf7 39.Nxb5 e4+, and 34...Qe8 give chances to fight.

**35.exf5 Rxd5** Once the rooks are swapped White plays with two pieces against one as Black's king is too remote: 35...b4 36.Rxc5 Bxc5 37.Ke4 f6 38.Kd5 Ba7 39.Kc4. The rook can't move as 35...Rc3 36.Rxb5 Bc5 37.Rb8+ Kh7 38.Rc8 is easy with the extra pawn.

**36.Nxd5 Bc5 37.Nc7 b4** Or 37...e4+ 38.Ke2 b4 39.Na6 Bd6 40.Ke3.



**38.Na6! Bd6** 38...e4+ 39.Ke2 Bd6 40.Ke3 collects one pawn before moving over to the one on b4.

**39.Ke4 Kf8 40.Kd5 Ke7 41.Nc5!** Not 41.Kc4 Kf6, although 41.g4 is also good.

**41...Bb8 42.Ne4!** Total domination; the knight and the pawn on f5 control the black king, allowing no counterplay, so the b4 pawn can be picked off at White's leisure.



**42...Bc7** After 42...Ba7 both 43.Kc4 or 43.Kxe5 are good.

#### 43.Kc5

Black resigned. If 43...Ba5 44.Kb5 chases the bishop away; otherwise White wins slowly but inevitably: 43...Kd7 44.Kxb4 Kc6 45.Kc4 f6 46.b4 Bb6 47.b5+ Kd7 48.Kd5 Bd4 49.f3 Bb6 50.Nc5+ forces the king to concede something: 50...Ke7 51.Kc6 or 50...Kc7 51.Ne6+ Kd7 52.Nxg7.



## Arkell's Endings by GM Keith Arkell



### The Hierarchy of Pawns (1)

*Even in the heat of a middlegame battle the master still has to bear in mind the outlines of a possible future ending - David Bronstein*

Burdened with the marginally worse pawn structure, the following game demonstrates how easy it is for White to drift into difficulties against the Caro-Kann when seemingly not much is happening.

#### D. Tan - K Arkell [B15]

Hastings Challengers 1997

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 g6 4.h3 Bg7 5.Nf3 dxe4 6.Nxe4 Nd7 7.Bd3 Ngf6 8.Nxf6+ Nxf6 9.0-0 0-0 10.c3 Qc7 11.Re1 c5 12.dxc5 Qxc5**



According to my 'Hierarchy of Pawns', in positions where both players have castled on the kingside the pawns increase in value from the a- across to the f-file. Therefore, if Black can exchange the d-pawn for an e-pawn and then the c-pawn for a d-pawn, a small gain has been made. Sicilian players also understand this principle very well. In that case the exchanges occur the other way round; first Black swaps the c-pawn for White's d-pawn - an exchange which, incidentally, put

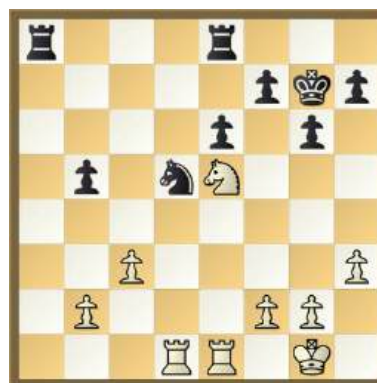
Bent Larsen off playing 1.e4 - and then it is considered a great success if they can break with ...d5!, exchanging the d-pawn for White's e-pawn. All this is known in bits, but I'm not aware of anyone laying it out as a general principle and extending the rule all the way across from the a- to the f-pawn. Regarding the difference in value between the e- and f-pawns, I only need draw attention to White's objective against the Dutch Defence of aiming for the push e4 without allowing the reply ...f4. And as for the b- and c-pawns, take a look at the line 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 when Black is prepared to lose a few tempi with the move 5...b5!? so as to swap the b-pawn for White's more valuable c-pawn.

**13.Be3 Qc7 14.Bd4 Be6 15.Qc2 Bd5 16.Qe2 e6 17.Be5 Qb6 18.Bd4 Qc7 19.Be5 Qe7 20.Nd4 b6 21.a4 Nd7 22.Bxg7 Kxg7 23.Be4 Bxe4 24.Qxe4 Nf6 25.Qe2 a6 26.Rad1 Qc5 27.Nb3 Qc6 28.Nd4 Qc5 29.Nb3 Qc7 30.Nd4 Rfe8 31.Nf3 Nd5**



When you have an e-pawn you can use it to anchor a piece on d5, and support it with a pawn on b5, preventing c4.

**32.Qe5+ Qxe5 33.Nxe5 b5 34.axb5 axb5**



There can be no doubt that with best play this position would result in a draw. However, engines are teaching us that many apparently difficult positions are holdable in principle, but when you listen to the World Champion

Magnus Carlsen analysing his games he is not concerned about winning by force but rather creating an environment where his opponent might go wrong. In this position White lacks a plan, whereas Black can play against the weaknesses on b2 and even sometimes f2. You might ask why White can't play against the equivalent weaknesses on f7 and b5, but the b5 pawn is more of an aggressor than a liability, being used to isolate White's remaining queenside pawn. By then Black will have the more active pieces because White will simply be on the defensive trying to guard that remaining pawn. He will then be at liberty to advance the kingside pawns carefully while eyeing the isolated b- or c-pawn and the slightly rigid White kingside structure. It is worth noting here that while R+4 vs R+3 on the kingside can often be held with patient and careful defence, R+N+4 vs R+N+3 is often winning and certainly is extremely difficult to hold in practice. And when you're playing the game rather than philosophising about it, the 'in practice' bit is all that really matters!

**35.Ra1 Rec8 36.Nf3 Rxa1 37.Rxa1 b4 38.cxb4 Nxb4**

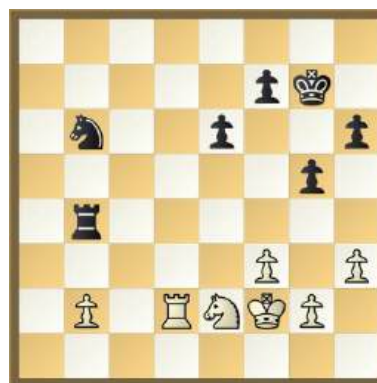
Now I am ready to focus on the targets at b2 and f2. Meanwhile f7 is immune from pressure. If, for example, 39.Ra7 Kf6 40.g4 g5, and White will have to go scurrying back to defend his more significant weaknesses.

**39.Rd1 Rc2 40.Rd2 Rc1+ 41.Kh2 Nd5 42.Kg3 h6 43.Nd4 Rc4 44.f3**



I mentioned earlier that White's kingside is more rigid than Black's. Even this one simple move exposes further weaknesses, as a pawn on g5 and a Knight on f4 now beckons.

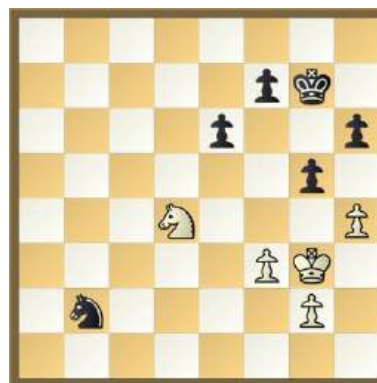
**44...g5 45.Kf2 Rb4 46.Ne2 Nb6**



**47.Kg3**

Jettisoning the b-pawn in the hope of finding salvation in a Knight ending a pawn down. I have just switched on the engine evaluations and it is curious to see how over the last 11 moves White has drifted from almost equal to minus 1.5 by simply playing natural moves. My opponent should have played 49.Nc1 Nc4 50.Nd3 Rb3 51.Rc2! when I must choose between R+4 v R+3 or retreating my knight in order to keep all four pieces on the board.

**47...Na4 48.Rd4 Rxd4 49.Nxd4 Nxb2 50.h4**



Is this ending winning by force? I have no idea! Paradoxically I must allow exchanges in order to make progress, but I can't allow too many as N+P v N would be no use.

**50...Nd3 51.hxg5 hxg5 52.Kh2 Kf6 53.Kg1 Ke5**



The first bit is easy: I just have to go as far as I can with my King.

**54.Ne2 f5 55.g3**

He should not be weakening f3 unnecessarily. Better to wait with 55.Kf1, when I intended 55...Nf4 (probably the move he wanted to prevent by playing f3) 56.Nc3 Kd4 57.Nb5+ Ke3 when one plan is to try to organise a winning push with my e-pawn.

**55...Kd5 56.Kf1 e5 57.Ng1 g4**

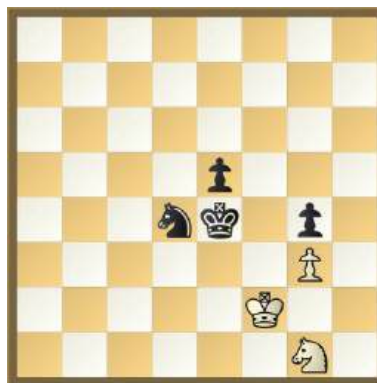


Black's initiative and passed e-pawn should be enough to get the win.

**58.fxg4 fxg4 59.Ne2 Kc4**



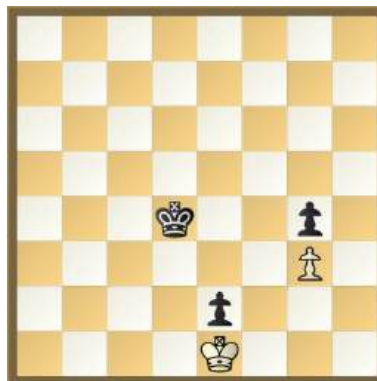
**60.Ng1 Kd4 61.Ke2 Ke4 62.Kd2 Nc5 63.Ke2 Ne6 64.Kf2 Nd4**



**65.Ne2**

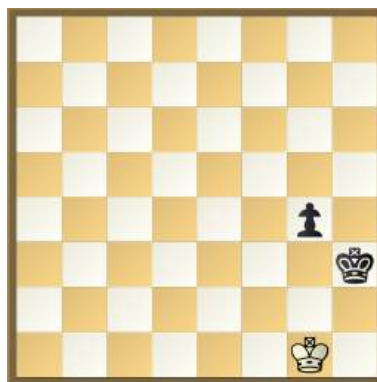
Or I march into his position through a series of Zugzwangs after 65.Kf1 Ke3 66.Kg2 e4 67.Kf1 Kd2 68.Kg2 e3.

**65...Nxe2 66.Kxe2 Kd4 67.Kd2 e4 68.Ke2 e3 69.Ke1 e2**



It's worth knowing that when the two remaining pawns are on g3 and g4 there can be no draw through the opposition after Black captures the g-pawn.

**70.Kxe2 Ke4 71.Kf2 Kd3 72.Kf1 Ke3 73.Kg2 Ke2 74.Kh2 Kf2 75.Kh1 Kxg3 76.Kg1 Kh3**



**0-1**

## The Hierarchy of Pawns (2)

*What is a weak pawn? A pawn that is exposed to attack and also difficult to defend... – Samuel Reshevsky*

The result of weak pawns is passive pieces. Here is my last-round game from the 4NCL's 29<sup>th</sup> Congress in Harrogate. I had been off form all weekend but was hoping to be at my best in the last round where a win would bring me into a share of 1st place. I will use my favourite annotating style, which is to faithfully reproduce my thoughts at the board. I've no doubt that avid readers wishing to check with an engine will find plenty of flaws in my analysis, and I certainly wouldn't wish to discourage them from doing this.

### Martin Burrows (2183) - Keith Arkell (2509)

29th 4NCL Congress Harrogate (5), 22.01.2023

#### 1.e4 d5

I had it in my head that Martin had been exceptionally well prepared for some of our earlier encounters, so I wanted to reduce the chances of falling into any more deep preparation.

#### 2.exd5 Qxd5 3.Nc3 Qd8 4.d4 Nf6 5.Nf3



#### 5...g6

Given that my general philosophy is to save energy by not preparing before games, it is imperative to negate any work my opponent may have done. In this regard the Centre Counter is ideal, as Black has a number of options on each move. For example, at move 3 I have also played ...Qd6 and ...Qa5, and here I usually play 5...Bg4.

#### 6.Bc4 Bg7 7.Ne5 0-0 8.Be3 Nbd7 9.Qe2 Nb6 10.Bb3 a5

Played not so much to gain space as to discourage my opponent from castling on the queenside. Not that I minded his doing so, but it was rather to thwart what

appeared to have been his intentions over the last few moves.

#### 11.a3 a4 12.Ba2 c6 13.0-0 Nbd5 14.Bd2 Bf5 15.Rac1 Qb6



By making straightforward moves I have even gained a slight initiative, so I think it's fair to say that the opening was a success.

#### 16.Nxd5 Nxd5

Of course I would normally recapture with the pawn here as it strengthens my general structure: according to my 'hierarchy of pawns' an e-pawn is better than a d-pawn and a d-pawn is better than a c-pawn. However, I didn't see any way in which White could avoid following up with a second capture.

#### 17.Bxd5 cxd5 18.Bc3



Not where he would like to put his bishop, but there is no choice. My next short sequence was designed to push back White's only active piece.

#### 18...Bh6 19.Rcd1 Qa6





The point is that if the knight doesn't retreat White must either accept a lifeless endgame facing my two bishops or sacrifice his c-pawn.

**20.Nd3 Rfe8 21.Rfe1 Bg7 22.h3 Rac8 23.Qe3**



**23...Bxd3**

It may seem strange to surrender the bishop pair so casually, but in truth the light-squared Caro-Kann bishop (the structure is the same as in an Exchange Caro) is an awkward piece to maintain in the long run, with pawns of the same colour on d5 and g6.

**24.Rxd3 e6 25.Qf4 Qb5 26.Rf3 Qd7 27.h4 Rc4**



Threatening 28...e5. Given enough time I will double, or even triple, on the c-file and then play ...Bf8, menacing the a-pawn and eyeing up the ...b5, ...b4 plan.

**28.Qd2 h5 29.b3**

To wait or not to wait, that is the question! With or without this break White will have to endure pawn weaknesses on the queenside, just as with more typical minority attack positions.

**29...Rc6 30.Bb4 Rec8 31.c3 axb3 32.Qb2 Rc4 33.Qxb3 Qc7 34.g3 Bf8**

Next on the agenda is to remove the bishops in order to further expose the targets.

**35.Ree3 Ra8 36.Re1 Rc6 37.Rb1**



**37...Bxb4 38.axb4**

38 Qxb4 would be worse still, as after 38...Ra7 an assault on his a-pawn would signal the beginning of the end.

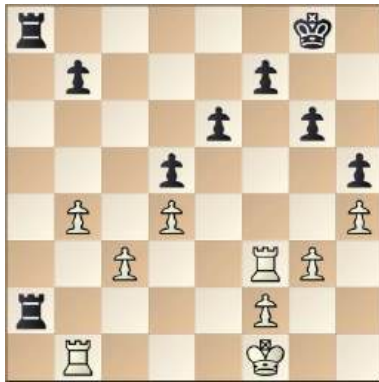
**38...Rca6 39.Qd1**

...Ra3 would anyway have forced the queen back. It is very easy for White to drift into a passive position once a permanent pawn weakness such as that on c3 emerges.

**39...Qc4 40.Qf1**

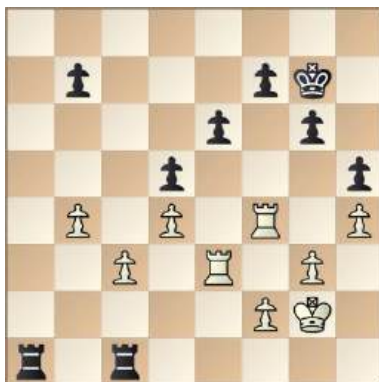
I thought that this was too compliant. It would be better to retain some dynamism in the position by keeping the queens on. Either way Black is now clearly on top.

**40...Qxf1+ 41.Kxf1 Ra2**



I have written quite a lot about these kinds of positions, and to convert them you need to combine pressure against c3, f2 and the white king. With White completely passive, you can then usually break the camel's back with a kingside pawn advance, leading to a mating attack.

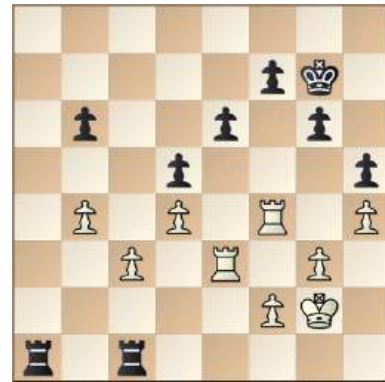
**42.Re1 Rc2 43.Kg2 Kg7 44.Ree3 Ra1 45.Rf4 Rcc1**



**46.Kh2**

The position was close to Zugzwang. If 46 Rd3 then f6 will lead to the strangulation of either a rook or White's king. I would encourage you to check this for yourself. Trying to rock the boat with 46 g4 would also not help. A typical line might go 46.g4 Rg1+ 47.Kf3 Ra3 48.gxh5 gxh5 49.Ke2 Ra2+ 50.Kf3 Rc3, with ...Rgc1 to follow.

**46...b6 47.Kg2**



**47...Ra7**

There is no trivial way to push White over the edge. Why not? Because I need to play...f6, followed by ...g5 and ...g4 to put the king in a mating net (rooks on g1 and h1), but I can't play ...f6 without losing the e-pawn. And if I try to support the e-pawn with my king then ...Kf8 runs into Rxe6. Therefore, I need to support e6 with a rook to usher my king round to e7, then pop the rook back into the attack and finally finish off the game with ...f6 and g5, etc.

**48.Kh2 Rc7 49.Rff3 Rc6 50.Kg2 Kf8 51.Kh2 Ke7 52.Kg2 Rc7 53.Kh2 Kd6**

This move is a bit pointless, but it doesn't do any actual damage.

**54.Rf4 Ra7 55.Kg2 Ke7 56.Kh2 Raa1 57.Kg2**



**57...f6**

At last the scene is set for the winning march of my g-pawn.

**58.g4**

Continuing to fiddle while Rome burns with 58.Kh2 would allow 58...g5 59.hxg5 fxg5 60.Rf3 f4 61.Rf4 Rh1+ 62.Kg2 Rag1#, while 58.Kf3 fares little better after 58...Ra3.

**58...hxg4?**

I was immediately irritated that I hadn't finished off the game with 58...g5!, my favourite chess move.

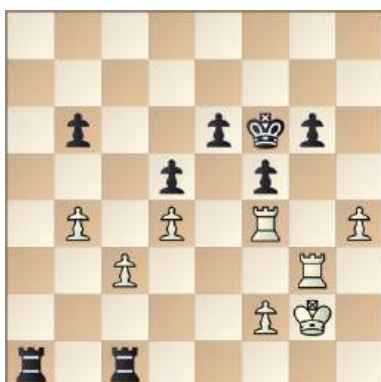
**59.Rxg4 f5**



**60.Rf4?**

Had he played 60.Rg5 I would have had to settle for 'only' winning his h-pawn with 60...Rg1+ 61.Kf3 Kf6 62.Rxg1 Rxg1 followed by ...Rg4. Now I am winning the more important c-pawn.

**60...Kf6 61.Rg3**



**61...Rg1+**

Rearranging the pieces. I need the a1-rook to be attacking the c-pawn while the other rook removes its defender.

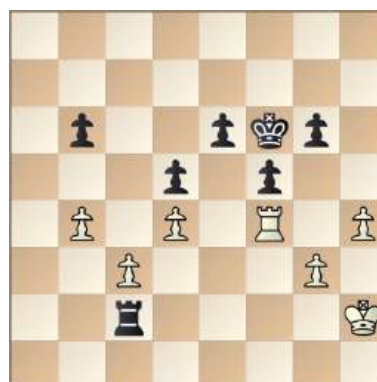
**62.Kf3 Rge1 63.Kg2 Rac1**



**64.Kh2**

White can't hold onto his c-pawn as 64.Rff3 allows mate in three, and 64.Rd3 drops the rook on f4 after 54...g5 65.hxg5+ Kxg5 66.Kg3 (66.Kf3 Re4!) Rh1 67.Re3 b5! Zugzwang! I have to confess to having a cheeky look at the engine to find this last pretty line, but anyway it's clear that by this stage there are many ways to skin the cat.

**64...Rh1+ 65.Kg2 Rhg1+ 66.Kh2 Rxg3 67.fxg3 Rc2+**



**0-1**

### A Momentary Lapse

*After a bad opening, there is hope for the middlegame. After a bad middlegame, there is hope for the endgame. But once you are in the endgame, the moment of truth has arrived - Edmar Mednis*

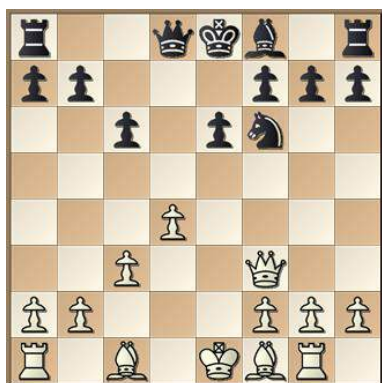
The Cambridge International Open was a superb addition to the English chess calendar, for which thanks go to Shohreh Bayat, the force behind the event, and to the English Chess Federation as a whole. Going into the penultimate round, I knew that a win would propel me to the top boards for the last game. Everything was going swimmingly until a senior moment meant that I had to win all over again.

**Thomas Villiers (2295) – Keith Arkell (2506) B17**

Cambridge International Open (8), 18.02.2023

**1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Qe2**

This wasn't the first time I had played Tom, so I was aware of his playful practice of pretending to put a piece on a square only to slide it somewhere else. After he nudged his queen back from f3 to e2 I was in no mood to allow mate on move 6!

**5...Ndf6 6.Nf3 Bg4 7.c3 Nxe4 8.Qxe4 Nf6 9.Qf4 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 e6**

After a slightly unusual sequence we are back in a position I am all too familiar with - one which is not to everyone's taste in a must-win game. My first objective is to exchange the dark squared bishops and the queens. Only then will I be able to use my slightly more flexible pawn structure to good effect.

**11.Bd3 Be7 12.0-0 0-0 13.Re1 Re8 14.Bf4 Nd5 15.Qh3 g6 16.Be5 Bd6 17.Qg3 Bxe5 18.Rxe5 Qf6 19.Rae1 Qf4 20.Qh3****20...b5**

It is important to secure the Knight on d5, as from there it will hamper my opponent from using his rooks against my king. Furthermore, it may later be useful to undermine White's fragile pawn structure with ...b4!

**21.R5e4 Qd2 22.R4e2 Qg5 23.Re5 Qf6 24.Qh6 Qf4 25.Qxf4 Nxf4**

After a bit of cat and mouse I have succeeded in reducing the pieces down to those most favourable for Black. With my rooks and knight I can now set about undermining White's queenside structure with a view to creating pawn weaknesses.

**26.Bc2 Nd5 27.a4 a6**

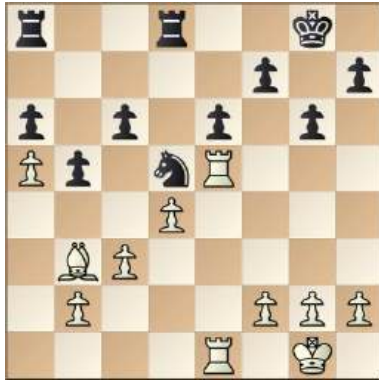
I didn't want to play 27...b4 yet, as after 28.c4 Ne7 29.Rd1 it is hard to improve my position. The rook on e5 is too strong, with access to a5, and the queenside is too blocked for me to increase the pressure on d4 in any meaningful way.

**28.a5**

It is hard to say whether this is any better than staying put, but understandably Tom wants to fix my a-pawn as a possible target for his bishop.

**28...Red8 29.Bb3**





**29...b4**

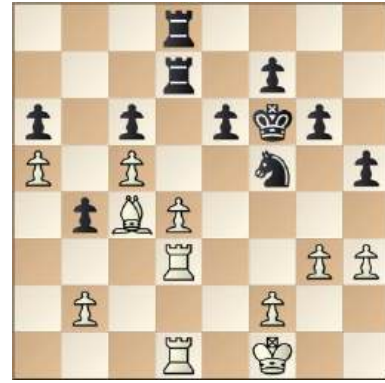
At this early stage the endgame would almost certainly be a draw with best play, but in practice Black is now the one probing to create weaknesses. I could perhaps have first doubled my rooks on the d-file, but my move also contains some venom. For those of you who are new to such positions I should point out that Bxd5? is almost always a mistake as the recapture with the c-pawn followed by a quick ...b4 will leave White's queenside structure in a terrible mess.

**30.c4 Ne7 31.Rd1 Rd6**



I wasn't sure whether to provoke c5, and was therefore in two minds about starting with 31...Rd7. In the end I decided that I liked the idea of fixing all White's queenside pawns. However, give me this position again and I would probably simply double the rooks the other way. In any case Black has a slight pull.

**32.c5 Rdd8 33.Re3 Ra7 34.Bc4 Nf5 35.Red3 Rad7 36.Kf1 h5 37.g3 Kg7 38.h3 Kf6**



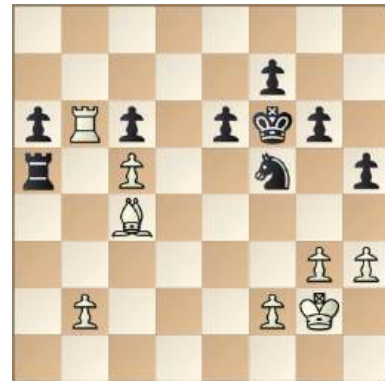
**39.Rb3**

My opponent decides that he would be the first to run out of useful moves if we both continued to improve matters on the kingside, so he changes tack.

**39...Rxd4 40.Rxd4 Rxd4**

With little choice for either side we now switch to a position where I am trying to create targets on both flanks.

**41.Rxb4 Rd1+ 42.Kg2 Ra1 43.Rb6 Rxa5**



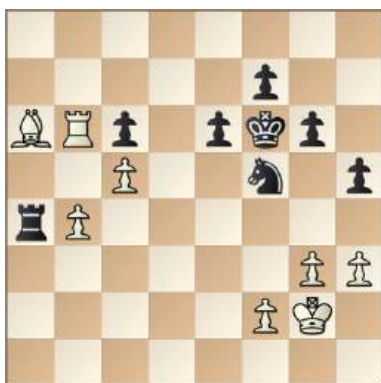
**44.b4**

This natural move is actually a very small error. After 44.Rxc6 h4 45.g4 Nd4 46.Rc8 g5 my winning chances would have been slim, and I would have regretted not playing 31...Rd7 earlier.

**44...Ra4**

Now we will end up by force in the kind of position which I like - one in which my opponent has weaknesses on both sides of the board.

**45.Bxa6**



Not waiting for ...Nd4 followed by ...a5.

#### 45...h4!

This intermezzo aims to break up White's kingside or gain access to f4 for my knight. It also contains a threat to capture on g3 followed by some rook checks.

#### 46.g4

46.gxh4 does actually hang on with best defence, but it would not be much fun for White.

#### 46...Ne7

Better than 46...Nd4, as it enables me to keep both sets of pieces on the board after 47.Bb7 Nd5. This is important for exerting pressure against the resulting weak c-pawn, f2, h3 and even the white monarch.

#### 47.b5 cxb5 48.Bxb5 Ra3



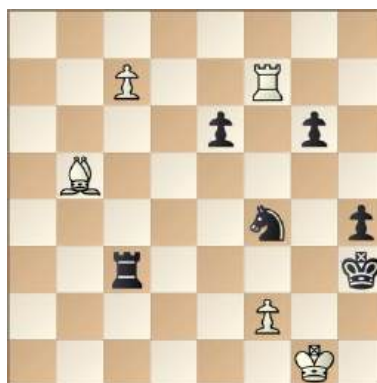
There is no longer a satisfactory defence to the threat of ...Nd5 to f4. If 49.Bc6 Rc3, when I have a large positional advantage and an extra pawn.

#### 49.Rb7 Nd5 50.Be8 Nf4+ 51.Kh2 Rxh3+ 52.Kg1 Rc3 53.Rxf7+ Kg5 54.c6 Kxg4 55.c7



Tragedy of tragedies - I now go and throw away all the good work of the previous three hours by blundering in a completely winning position. I had what can only be described as a 'senior moment', missing that 55...Kh3?? 56.Bb5 ( 56.Rxf4 Rc1#, and 56.f3 Kg3 don't help) 56...Rc1+ 57.Bf1 Ne2+ 58.Kh1 Rxf1# is not possible because 57.Bf1 is check! At first I thought it shouldn't matter as surely I am winning in any case, but the more I analysed the more I realised that I had pretty much thrown away the win.

#### 55...Kh3?? 56.Bb5

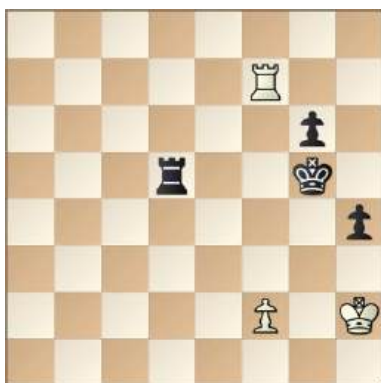


With the alarm bells now ringing at full volume I even wondered whether I might be completely lost, strange as that may sound. Take a look at the following lines, for example: 56...e5?? 57.Bd7+ and mate in 2; or 56...Nd5?? 57.Rf3+. Meanwhile White threatens Bf1+ followed by Ba6, when again he wins. Finally I found a line where I can at least play on with a nominal extra pawn.

#### 56...Rc1+ 57.Bf1+ Kg4 58.Kh2 Nd5 59.Bh3+ Kg5 60.c8Q

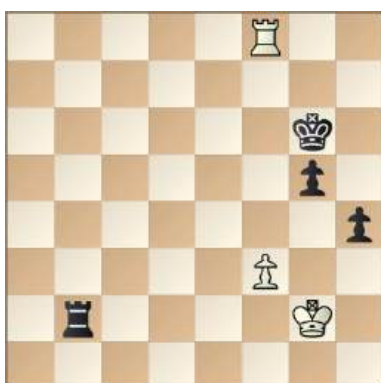
Adding further to my frustration, as now I can't even keep the minor pieces on.

#### 60...Rxc8 61.Bxe6 Rc5 62.Bxd5 Rxd5



Of course this ending is a theoretical draw, but I would advise everyone to play such positions out. Led by the long-time world number 1, most of the top players are prepared to have a go at grinding down all endings in which they have even the remotest chance of extracting the full point. And I, for one, have been doing this with more than my fair share of success for decades. I would almost say that a lack of interest in the endgame, and the patience to grind away, is a weakness in the English chess psyche. It didn't go unnoticed that the GM commentating on this game simply made some disparaging remark about boring my opponent to death before terminating the show, as it was the only game left. Most of the time this endgame would indeed end up as a draw, but my task was to create an environment where my FM strength opponent was most likely to go wrong, and in that I succeeded.

**63.Ra7 Rd3 64.Ra4 Kh5 65.Ra5+ Kh6 66.Ra6 Rf3 67.Kg2 Rf4 68.Ra5 g5 69.Ra8 Kh5 70.f3 Rb4 71.Rh8+ Kg6 72.Rg8+ Kf6 73.Rf8+ Kg7 74.Rf5 Kg6 75.Rf8 Rb2+**



An important psychological moment. At this stage both 76.Kh3 and 76.K to the back rank draw, so here was the moment to 'train' my opponent to respond to the check with king to the back rank later on, without having to think. The point is that this time he did have a think and decided that 76.Kh3 was a little bit awkward after 76...Rf2. At the end of a long, tiring game you don't want to have to think too much, especially with time running out.

**76.Kg1 Rb6 77.Kg2 Rf6 78.Ra8 Re6 79.Rf8 Rd6 80.Ra8 Rd2+**



**81.Kg1**

And there we have it. He played Kg1 automatically because he remembered that the alternative was uncomfortable last time.

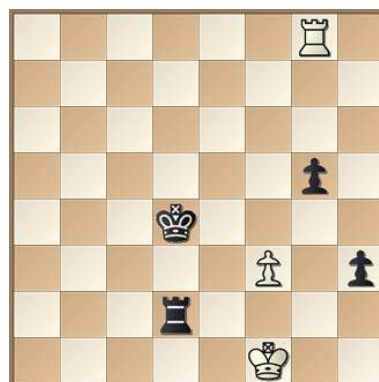
**81...Kf5 82.Rf8+ Ke5 83.Kf1**

White is still drawing, but from a practical viewpoint this is another small error.

**83...Kd4 84.Rg8**

At last I have managed to create the environment I referred to earlier where there is a real chance my opponent might go wrong. This natural move is fine theoretically, BUT it means that he will have to defend accurately for the first time since we arrived at the R+2 vs R+1 endgame.

**84...h3**

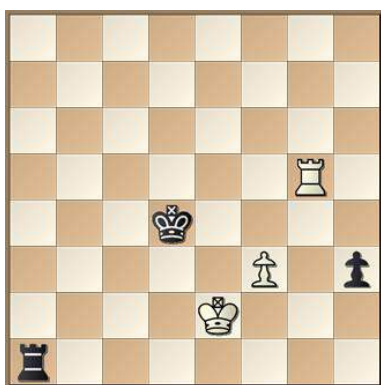


His position has gone downhill so much by this stage that only one of White's natural three moves holds the draw. Have a look at the diagram for 60 seconds and decide which move you would play out of 85.Kg1, 85.Rxg5 and 85.Rh8...

## 85.Rxg5

Wrong choice! Also wrong would have been 85.Rh8 h2 86.Rh7 Ke3 87.Rh3 Rf2+ 88.Ke1 Rg2, with ...Rg1+ and h1=Q to follow. The only move to draw was 85.Kg1! Rg2+ 86.Kh1! ( Not 86.Kf1 Ke3 87.Rh8 Rf2+ followed by 88...Rxf3) 86...Ke3 87.Re8+ utilising stalemate, e.g. 87...Kf4 88.Re4+! Kg3 89.Rg4+!. Short of time, and probably exhausted, there was a reasonable chance that Tom would falter here, in the midst of all these complications, and he did.

## 85...Rd1+ 86.Ke2 Ra1



Better than having to mess around with Q vs R after 86..h2 87.Kxd1.

**87.Rg4+ Kd5 88.Rg5+ Ke6 89.Ke3** If 89.Rh5 h2 90.Rxh2 Ra2+ wins his rook.

**89...h2 90.Re5+ Kxe5** Tom Villiers had a little joke in mind at the end by playing the illegal 91.Kd4 so that the kings ended up on the correct squares for indicating a black win on a live board.

1-0

## Better Pieces Trump Better Pawn Structure!

*The most important feature of the chess position is the activity of the pieces. This is absolutely fundamental in all phases of the game: opening, middlegame and especially endgame - Michael Stean*

I've put a lot of weight on the merits of a good pawn structure in my writings on the endgame, but this month I'm going to show how piece coordination, initiative and the small matter of a dangerous passed pawn can all relegate such finely-drawn considerations to the sidelines.

## GM Alexander Khalifman (2640) - IM Keith Arkell (2450)

London WFW (12), 1991

**1.Nf3 Nf6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 b6 5.a3 Bxd2+ 6.Bxd2 Bb7 7.Bf4 d6 8.e3**



My opponent, world-ranked number 11 at the time and destined to be FIDE World Champion a few years later, only needed to finish with two draws to win the tournament. However, I declined his peace offer around here, as I was looking for a strong finish after languishing in last place for much of the event.

**8...Nbd7 9.Be2 Qe7 10.h3 Ne4 11.Bh2 f5 12.Rc1 a5 13.b3 0-0 14.0-0 e5**



**15.c5!**

In principle this is a nice idea, highlighting the exposed nature of my pawn structure.

**15...bxc5 16.dxe5 dxe5 17.Bb5 c6**





My position is just about OK here. It feels unpleasant because of the exposed pawns, but if I can coordinate my pieces there is actually quite a lot of central energy.

**18.Bc4+ Kh8 19.Qe2 Nd6 20.Rfd1 Nxc4 21.Qxc4 Ba6**



**22.Qh4?!**

This move is not great. Khalifman wants to remove the defender of my sensitive points at e5, c5 and d7, but he also loses some control over his own weaknesses. Better would have been 22.Qc2 with a small edge.

**22...Qxh4 23.Nxh4 Ra7**



**24.Rd6**

With the knight sitting a little uneasily on h4, Alexander could have considered withdrawing it at once. However,

after 24.Nf3 I was ready with 24...Be2 25.Rd6 Bxf3 to remove the pressure from e5. I could then continue 26...Kg8 with a view to over-protecting the knight, which is doing such a good job covering e5 and c5, and eventually put pressure on b3. Essentially my position is fine, however White plays.

**24...e4**

Some calculation will now be required as ...g5 is in the air, trapping the knight.

**25.Rcd1 Bd3**

This is both forced and a good move. My illustrious opponent has to tread a little carefully now, as the weak b-pawn is all there is to prevent my obtaining a strong passed pawn.

**26.Nf3?**



It seems natural to bring this awkward piece back into the fray, but White had to take the sting out of my next sequence with either 26.a4 or 26.Rxc6. For example, after 26.Rxc6 a4 27.b4! cxb4 he can rescue the situation with 28.Bd6!.

**26...a4! 27.bxa4 Rf6! 28.Rxf6 gxf6!**



My structure doesn't look too pretty with two pairs of doubled isolated pawns, but this is entirely conceptual,

and has no relevance to the assessment. White will have a terrible job coordinating his pieces to deal with my passed pawn, whereas mine are in perfect harmony.

**29.Nd2 Rxa4 30.Bd6**

My opponent's rook and knight can play some kind of a blocking role, but his bishop is struggling to participate.

**30...Rxa3 31.Rc1 Ra2 32.Nb3 c4 33.Nd4 c5**



**34.Nxf5?**

34.Nb5 was the last chance to hold up my c-pawn. After 34...Ra5 35.Nc3 I can use my king and rook to keep his bishop out of the game and eventually my knight should decide matters by manoeuvring to d5 and lifting the blockade.

**34...Ra3 35.Nd4**



**35...Rb3!**

Cutting off the knight's retreat to c3 via b5.

**36.Ne6 Rb6 37.Ra1 Kg8 38.Ra8+ Kf7 39.Nd8+ Kg6 40.Bc7 Rb1+ 41.Kh2**



**41...c3**

With White's pieces tumbling over each other to find squares my initially weak pawn now can't believe its luck!

**42.f4 exf3**



**0-1**

Closing out with a hat-trick of victories against GMs Hector, Khalifman and Suba, I managed to haul myself off the foot of the cross-table just in time!

### The Use of Long-Term Planning to Improve your Position in the Absence of Anything More Concrete

**Keith Arkell - IM Janez Barle**

World Senior 50+ Ch 2016 Marianske Lazne CZE

*There must be some insidious plan – some overall scheme - Adam West, Batman*

*It is not a move, even the best move, that you must seek, but a realisable plan. – Eugene Znosko-Borovsky*

IM Janez Barle was a hard man to beat. He won the Slovenian Championship five times and had plenty of Olympiad experience. I first encountered Janez in the last round of the 2014 European Senior Championship, when a draw was sufficient to earn me the title. Six months later, however, a win in the last round of the

World Senior Championship would not have left me on tenterhooks awaiting the results of other games which might affect the tie-break. On that occasion it was not to be, but in 2016 we again met in the World Senior Championship and a win would propel me to 4½/5.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 Bb4 6.Qa4+ Nc6 7.Bg5 h6 8.Bxf6 Qxf6 9.e3 0-0 10.Be2 Be6 11.a3 Bxc3+ 12.bxc3**



I like White's pawn structures from these Ragozin defence set-ups. I should be able to maintain a nice chain from the kingside across to the centre, while being able to probe down the b- and c-files. Of course, I realise that theoretically Black will be fine if they know the theory and understand the positions, but sometimes we rely on personal taste in our decision-making.

**12...Qg6 13.0-0 a6 14.Rfb1 Rab8 15.Qd1 Rfd8 16.Rb2**



**16...f6?**

I was pleased to see this move. There are all sorts of potential positions in which Barle would prefer to see the pawn back on f7; also, it loses a pawn!

**17.Rab1 Na5 18.Bxa6 b6 19.Bd3**

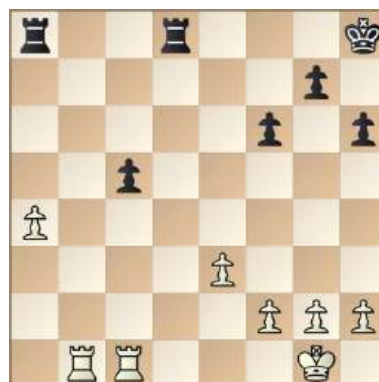
It's hard to imagine the extra a-pawn deciding matters in itself, but it ought to gain in significance when the position opens up.

**19...Qf7 20.Nd2 Qe7 21.a4 Qd6 22.Qc2 Qc6 23.Rb4**



I think I have three reasonable plans at my disposal: play for e4; play for a kingside attack with Nf3 to h4; or play for c4. I chose the last for no particular reason except that it fits my style.

**23...Ra8 24.c4 Kh8 25.Rc1 dxc4 26.Nxc4 Nxc4 27.Bxc4 Qd6 28.Rbb1 Bxc4 29.Qxc4 c5! 30.dxc5 Qxc5 31.Qxc5 bxc5**



**32.Rc4**

I should be able to do better than 32.Rxc5 Rxa4 33.Rf5 Rb4! 34.Rf1 Rd2 35.h3 Raa2 36.g4, when as soon as I try to bring my f1 rook into the game he will challenge it with one of his rooks.

**32...Ra5 33.Kf1 Rda8 34.Ra1**

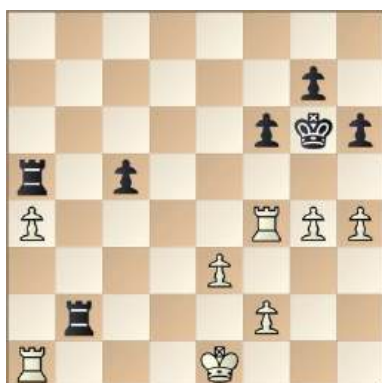


I believe I have very good winning chances here. Not so much because my a-pawn is better than Black's c-pawn but because my c4-rook is the most active piece on the board, both defending a4 and probing the kingside. However, as it is unlikely that this position is a forced win, I had to content myself with forming a long-term plan. The best I could come up with was to weaken Black's kingside pawns, and ultimately expose the king itself - a far bigger issue with all four rooks on the board. To achieve this, I need to exchange off some kingside pawns. There is no rush!

**34...Rb8 35.Ke1**

It's very important to pay attention to details when going about long-term ideas. For example, 35.Ke1 is necessary to contain Black's b-pawn in case he plays ...Rb4.

**35...Rb2 36.g4 Kh7 37.Rf4 Kg6 38.h4**



**38...h5**

If he lets me play h5 myself there is always the risk of a mating attack by swinging both rooks to the seventh or eighth rank via the e- and d-files.

**39.gxh5+ Kxh5 40.Rc1**

One thing leads to another; luring the king to h5 has presented me with a tactic to improve my rook - if now 40...Rb4 41.Rxc5!+.

**40...Kg6 41.Rcc4 Ra2 42.Kf1 Kf7 43.h5 Rb2 44.Kg2**

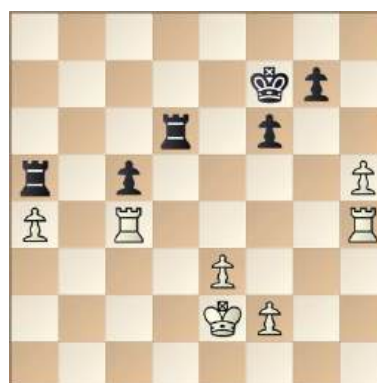


All my pieces and pawns are now very happy. My rooks are immovable, and the king is safe and even prepared to join in the attack in some scenarios. My pawns are all secure and I can use the h-pawn to expose the enemy king. It seemed unlikely that I was winning by force, but it was nice to know I had many ways to improve my position.

**44...Rb8 45.Kf3 Rh8 46.Kg4 Rb8 47.Kf3 Rh8 48.Rh4 Rb8 49.Kg3**

Patience is a virtue in such positions. I can gently probe from a distance while my opponent must continually remain vigilant. Taking action straightaway can often squander an important practical and psychological advantage.

**49...Rb2 50.Rhf4 Ra2 51.Kg4 Rb2 52.Kf3 Ra2 53.Rh4 Rb2 54.Rcf4 Rb8 55.Ke2 Rd8 56.Rc4 Rd6**

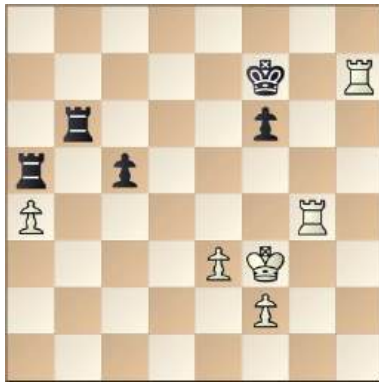


**57.h6**

And here it is! I've been teeing up h6 for the last dozen or so moves, and now my opponent will have to switch to calculating mode to have any chance of survival.

**57...gxh6 58.Rxh6 Rda6 59.Rhh4 Rd6 60.Kf3 Re6 61.Kf4 Kg6 62.Kg4 Rea6 63.Kf3 Rb6 64.Rcg4+ Kf7 65.Rh7+**



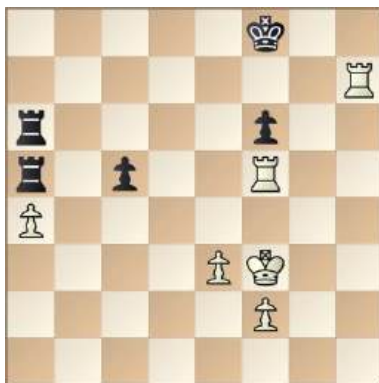


The black king suddenly feels very naked. Which way to go?

## 65...Kf8?

In principle the wrong decision! Explicable though, when you see how hard it is to analyse the alternatives. For example he has to decide whether he can hang on after 65...Ke6 66.Re4+ Kd6 67.Rf7 Kd5 68.Rf4 Ke6 69.Rf8, when there are many ways to lose. Here is one of them: 69...Rc6 70.Re8+ Kd5 71.Rd8+ Ke5 72.Re4+ Kf5 73.Re7! and the mating net begins to close in - 73..Rxa4 74.e4+ Kg6 75.Rg8+ Kh6 76.Kf4! Ra2 77.Rh8+ Kg6 78.Rhh7 f5 79.exf5+ Kf6 80.Rhf7#.

**66.Rf4 Rba6 67.Rf5**



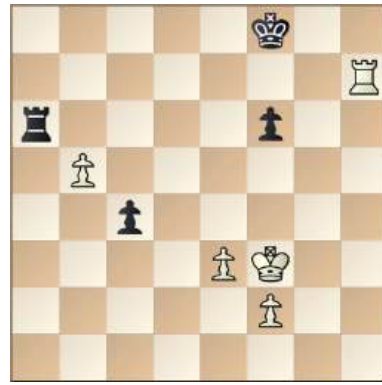
**67...c4**

I was ready for this, of course, as I was for 67...Rc6 68.Rd5 Kg8 ( 68...Ke8 69.Rb7, threatening Rh5, must be losing as he has to give me connected passed pawns with 69...f5 70.Rxf5) 69.Rb7 Rc8 70.Rd6 c4 71.Rxf6 c3 72.Rff7 c2 73.Rg7+ Kh8 74.Rh7+ Kg8 75.Rbg7+ Kf8 76.Rh8+.

**68.Rb5! Rxb5**

68...Ra8 69.Rbb7 must be winning.

**69.axb5**



## 69...Ra2

Black's last try was 69...Rb6, but it's hard to imagine that I am not winning after 70.Rh5, e.g. 70...c3 71.Ke2 Rd6 72.e4 (late as usual!) 72...c2 73.Rc5 Re6 74.Kd3 with a theoretically won game.

**70.b6 Rb2 71.b7**



**1-0**

## Articles by GM Peter Wells



### Modern Coaching Dilemmas or 'What to Tell the Kids'?

There was an instructive and rather lovely moment during the recent Tata Steel Masters in Wijk aan Zee which initially prompted me to tweet, but which on reflection seems to me to raise questions which are worthy of a more considered response. In the midst of a not untypical Nimzo-Indian position, the ever-creative Richard Rapport chose to stake his claim to the central white squares by placing his bishop on the key square e4 and taking a series of steps to try and secure it there. I have never before included a game so early in one of these articles, but I think this really merits it.

#### Arjun Erigaisi - Richard Rapport

85th Tata Steel Masters Wijk aan Zee, 2023 Round 9

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 b6 5.Nge2 Ne4 6.Qc2 Bb7 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 Nxc3 9.Qxc3 d6 10.b3 Qh4 11.Bb2 Be4**



The first stage of the process: 10...Qh4 was the engine's top choice and could have passed relatively unnoticed since pinning the f-pawn makes good sense anyway and is easy enough to understand as a preparation for 11...Be4, reaching the diagram.

**12.Qd2 g5!**

This, however, was more difficult to ignore, particularly as Peter Svidler (commentating) initially appeared to deem it the product of a player who struggles to keep his natural flamboyance under control, responding with the impassioned plea 'Richie my man, what are you doing?'

Although the structure looks familiar enough after ...g5, it is one that usually arises as the result of Black chasing a pinning bishop from g5 back to g3, and, whatever space-gaining claims can be made, the pawn advances are a matter of perceived necessity, with the suspicion that giving White a target for the move h4 is likely to be a definite drawback. In fact, the move 12...g5! here is not only the engine's top choice once again, but, on closer examination, the only way really to justify the occupation of e4. Black's plan is to push the pawn to g4 and show that evicting the bishop is going to be no easy matter. A really elegant idea, which Peter Svidler came on reflection to admire and appreciate although I suspect that neither he, nor indeed Richard Rapport himself, could have imagined quite how smoothly the full point would be hauled in after securing this key minor piece. For the record, Rapport's immensely talented young Indian opponent responded with unrecognisable confusion and lost quickly after **13.h3 g4 14.0-0-0 Rg8 15.Qe2?! (Threatening f3 again, but after Black's simple reply this only reinforces the impression that White's forces are getting badly tangled up.) 15...Qh5 16.Rg1 Nd7 17.Qe1 (If 17.hxg4? then 17...Qh2 is embarrassing.) 17...gxh3 18.Be2 Qh6 19.gxh3 0-0-0 20.Rg4?! (This definitely doesn't help, but it is hard not to empathise with White's frustration at how easily all his intended 'freeing moves' can be thwarted.) 20...f5 21.Rxg8 Rxg8 22.h4 Rg2 23.h5 f4 24.f3?! Qxh5 25.Bf1? Rc2+ and 0-1**

So far, so good. More jarring still, though, was the engine's suggestion that the correct approach from the diagram would have been for White to play 12 Ke2!, evading the pin on the f-pawn and thereby guaranteeing the eviction of the bishop. This seemed wild enough, but we are getting accustomed to slightly outlandish suggestions from the engine and are often grateful for those which (however radical they appear) at least make some sense in human terms. The plot thickened when, in his post-game interview, Richard Rapport chastised himself for overlooking this king move and indicated that if he had thought of it he would have been put off the entire venture!

This set me thinking about a more general problem. As chess coaches, how should we handle examples like this? For sure there is potentially a beautiful lesson to be learned here relating to 'minor piece security' – incidentally a topic upon which Jan Markos, one of my favourite chess authors, places a good deal of emphasis.

I suspect that we are quite used to thinking a lot about outposts and stable squares for knights, but much less so for bishops, and a case like this can serve as a useful corrective.

Nonetheless, this still feels fraught with danger as a coaching example. What message can be taken from a case like this without the risk of giving rise to unintended consequences such as excessive weakening wing-pawn advances or reckless king moves? Of course, part of this might be covered by taking extra care to select examples appropriate to the strength of the student. Perhaps Erigaisi – Rapport should simply be filed in the ‘advanced material’ section and best left out of discussions with those who would be more prone to error when balancing the goal of ‘evicting pieces’ against considerations of ‘king safety’ for example. Indeed, I am more often coming to question my previous assumption that the majority of positions can be adapted for different levels so long as the explanation and narrative are sufficiently broken down into manageable chunks. For some time I was convinced that cogent and appropriately simplified verbal explanation could guide weaker students through relatively complex material and I believe I could point to some good learning outcomes to support this view. However, partly inspired by a wealth of examples such as this - in which it is extremely difficult to give correct weight to conflicting priorities, never mind to take away the right lesson to apply more generally - I am increasingly cautious of complex positions which may simply serve to confuse or mislead.

This ties in with an even more fundamental question, to which I have given a lot of thought lately as I have been working hard on refreshing and updating my coaching material. Am I right anyway to be constantly on the lookout for positions that serve to support some more generalisable principles or advice which as a coach I can more or less neatly set out in verbal form? This is a tough one since I am well aware of all the potential dangers and objections to this and yet can’t help feeling that, without this goal, the whole process of coaching is somehow diminished.

I am confident that I was never a slave to general principles in chess. I was naturally drawn to exceptions and paradoxes, and deeply aware that such principles as we can expound tend frequently to clash with one another, placing constant demands on both judgement and calculation. Moreover, once we attempt to explain games primarily in terms of general principles, we can very easily cross the line from the kind of abstraction necessary to establish any of these in the first place, to a tendency to dismiss or ignore any awkward details that don’t fit the narrative. Even such a firm advocate of verbal descriptions in chess as Comas Fabrego in his

book *True Lies in Chess*, caustically refers to games analysed ‘using grandiloquent aphorisms and few variations to prove what has been said, just in case what is stated doesn’t fit what is happening on the board!’

Of course, it is actually not easy to find games in which not only is some general principle well illustrated, but the outcome does not also hinge on tactical details which are unlikely to be exactly replicated in further practice. The worst thing, I think, is to try to cover this up. For a critic of the use of general principles and what he sees as unhelpful and excessive verbalisation in chess coaching such as Willy Hendriks, this would just be further evidence that ‘positions and moves are not examples demonstrating some more general principles, they are the actual lesson.’ Yet still, for all that he might be right that finding strong moves and recognising patterns has little to do with verbalisation, I struggle to see how we can do without it at the point where we conclude our calculations with an assessment. Here, at the very least, I am convinced that the quest for coaching positions that contain a generalisable message must be on the mark.

Yet it is becoming more and more common for engine analysis to challenge our basic beliefs and complicate the message of so much that we thought that we knew well. Perhaps this experience is not so different from previous occasions when orthodoxies came under pressure from new ideas, just with engines now playing the role of the ‘hypermoderns’? Possibly, but I didn’t have myself down as a classicist and certainly not as a dogmatist! For example, many years ago I wrote a well-received article about doubled pawns for *ChessBase Magazine* which tried to separate out typical ‘compensation’ for the doubled pawns (open lines, etc) from positive qualities *intrinsic* to the pawns themselves (their control of squares and the ability of the front pawn to move forward without permanently ceding the squares behind). My feeling overall was that these guys got a bad press and I think some developments since - such as the rehabilitation of 4...Nf6 5 Nxf6 exf6 in the Main Line Caro-Kann – may tend to support this view. My supposedly broad-minded approach to the subject also made me very open to the message that it is generally the squares these pawns occupy or fail to cover which are the key weaknesses, rather than the pawns themselves and that consequently liquidating the pawn weaknesses will, not infrequently, be the best way to get at these squares. However, I tended to draw the line at doubled *isolated* pawns and none of this thinking fully prepared me for the engine’s insights into the following position which I stumbled across a couple of weeks ago while preparing a session on hanging pawns.

**Nikola Ostojic – Goran Todorovic**  
Vrnjacka Banja, 1999



In this position, White has managed to use the threat of a knight fork on c7 to force Black to recapture on f6 with a pawn, which feels like a major concession. He now sought to take control of the d4 square with the thematic enough 17.b4 break, which worked well after Black took the pawn since the white knight can then not only blockade the isolated d-pawn as theory recommends, but also aspire to supporting attacking chances via further blockading on the far more threatening f5-square. However, as Andrew Martin (our editor of *ChessMoves*) rightly pointed out at the time, Black could have improved by meeting 17.b4 with 17...a6 18.Nc3 d4!, when it turns out that Black's activity fully compensates for his weaknesses after 19.exd4 20.Nxd4 Qxd4 21.bxc5 Bxc5, and to be honest the slight weakness of the a3-pawn is probably as likely to play a practical role as the ugly, but not easily accessed, doubled isolated f-pawns.

More surprising, though, was that Andrew's plausible claim that 'there was a risk-free advantage to be had after the simple 17.Qc2' does not meet with engine approval either. Black has a choice of ways to show that his piece activity (and I suppose the loss of time involved in Nb5) compensates for his unpalatable structure. 17...Ne5 is interesting, but perhaps 17...d4 is again the simplest, when 18.exd4 a6 19.Nc3 Nxd4 already leaves White in some trouble, while 18.Rfd1 Qb6 seems fine, as does the intriguing 18.Qf5 Ne7!? 19.Qxf6 Bg7 20.Qf4 Ng6 21.Qg3 Be5!?, although I would defy any trainer to find a convincing narrative for the latter.

Again, on one level this can be woven into existing narratives. Black's main idea – enhancing the activity of his pieces by advancing the d-pawn when in possession of the hanging pawns – certainly featured in my session and, though the assessment may be surprising, the essential basis for it fits in with what computers are teaching us more generally: the bishop pair matters perhaps more than we thought, as do piece activity and

piece coordination in particular, whereas pawn and square weaknesses may not be a big deal if the opponent's pieces are not also active enough to exploit them. In short, engines are making chess more dynamic. Yet here, too, I felt that I could make these points using examples that were less open to misinterpretation. I ended up shelving this one. If I could just about make sense of all this myself, I felt that 'telling the kids' could wait for another day!

### The Chess Boom and Chess Elitism

The extent to which the current chess boom will translate into a significant and durable increase in participation in over the board (OTB) events probably remains an open question, but there is no denying the extent of the explosion of interest in chess online. The figures for membership now boasted by Chess.com continues to grow beyond 130 million, with a staggering 10 million users on one day in January 2022, obviously far exceeding anything most of us could have imagined for a potential chess audience even a decade ago, whilst the early success of Chessable has indicated that many people are also willing to pay more for quality content than had customarily been assumed. The role of the Covid lockdown and the popularity of Netflix's *The Queen's Gambit* are routinely cited as the main causes, whilst the scene was clearly set by the consummate ease with which chess translates to the internet, for broadcast and content creation certainly and – whilst not to everyone's taste – clearly for playing too.

In general this is incredibly positive and represents an immense opportunity for the chess world. At the same time, both the major influx of new people into the chess world and the heightened interest in chess within the mainstream media necessarily mean greater scrutiny of how we behave as a community. This brings with it an opportunity to see how the rest of the world views us. It also makes it more important that the chess world avoids responding to any criticisms in a way that magnifies our flaws or ignores the many positives we see in the chess community. One area in which we seem prone to do this is in relation to chess and gender. Another, which I wish to consider here, is in responding to (not necessarily unrelated) charges that the chess world tends to be 'elitist'.

There is nothing new, of course, about chess being perceived as either elitist or unduly hierarchical. Bill Hartston used to like to say (and I maybe paraphrase a little) that if a group of chess players pass through a revolving door they will tend to emerge in rating order, whilst the obsession of too many players with their ratings can reasonably be assumed to have more than a little to do with perceptions of status. Which all



doubtless has an impact. Danny Rensch, the CEO of Chess.com, made an eloquent contribution to the first of Howard Burton's four films *Through the Mirror of Chess* in which he discussed the need to combat the widely-held perception that chess players are some kind of born geniuses and that any substantial degree of mastery of the game can only ever be available to a few. It will come as no surprise to anyone who has read *Chess Improvement: It's all in the Mindset* that I would have little time for such a view, nor indeed for any account of the road to mastery which downplays the role of unadulterated hard work - with a preference that we acknowledge that the capacity for hard work is, in fact, a key component of any plausible definition of 'talent'. It is surely right for the chess community to try to rebut the strange notion that chess requires some kind of innate genius to which most can never aspire, although we might be careful about how we do this. The current fashion for instead lambasting the intelligence of top chess players - by suggesting in particular that chess is in some kind of a league of its own for the lack of transferable skills associated with it - is definitely unhelpful too. A world in which often highly educated chess players are told to 'stick to chess', whilst various celebrities with genuinely little knowledge beyond their domains enjoy a large audience hanging on their every pronouncement (I will leave the readers to grapple for possible examples), is clearly one which is not getting the balance right.

Yet criticisms of perceived elitism go much further and seem to have acquired several more dimensions than this, not least as we increasingly live in a society in which burgeoning economic inequality sits together (presumably very uncomfortably) with apparently unprecedented reverence for equality as a value. I found myself somewhere between amusement and bemusement earlier this week as I read a story on the BBC website of an enterprising young Bristol University student who had invented an app to detect the use of Chat GPT to cheat in exams - see 'Bristol University student creates app to stop cheats using essay bot - BBC News' here - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-65200549>. All very fine of course, impressive work and a reminder that the challenges facing the chess world in this regard are not so distant from those faced elsewhere. What really jarred was the young man's declared motivation. His concern seemed to be less an aversion to cheating itself than a concern that the expense of the latest GPT version (which enables the cheating) would limit access to it, thus privileging better-off students and further entrenching inequality. Of course, I can see what he means and I have some sympathy, but the thought of cheating being condemned not as an intrinsically bad thing, but primarily instrumentally - in terms of its likely impact on

another value - struck me as something of a sign of the times.

What I see under construction in chess - and it is worth inserting a caveat here that much of my access to these debates comes via Twitter, with its concomitant tendency to polarise all disagreements into two intensely warring factions - is a broad narrative which deprecates many of the long-standing, supposedly elitist institutions of the chess world and instead promotes the newer, more inclusive institutions associated with the current boom. So we get an opposition between OTB and online chess, between 'classical' chess and the supposedly more entertaining and accessible rapid and blitz formats and (perhaps most perversely) a desire to pit the light-hearted, entertainment-focussed world of online streamers against the more serious approach of those who have worked very hard on their chess and seek to produce content suitable for others who aspire to do the same.

As usual with such criticisms of the status quo, there are some elements that raise genuinely interesting questions. I would defend OTB chess to the hilt - and whenever the result of a major online event comes to hang significantly upon a mouse-slip I may feel that the job is partly being done for me 😊. Still, criticism of OTB chess, and specifically concerns that classical chess may be in its last throes at the highest levels, usually begin with castigation of a World Championship match format, which is indeed open to the charge of being somewhat dated. I have hitherto felt that these matches had enough of an aura and (critically) sufficient audience to retain their place as vital showpieces for the chess world. However, just as I could relate to Magnus Carlsen's professed desire to return to the fundamental business of the game free from the burden which preparation for another title match would have entailed, so I can share concerns that the focus on just two players, slogging it out for weeks exclusively at slow time controls and with an automatic rite of passage for the current champion, may not be a format set in stone for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I can appreciate all of this, whilst still enjoying the irony that it is frequently those who rail against elitism - often with FIDE as their primary target - who are amongst the first to claim that without the participation of the current champion, the whole thing is almost entirely meaningless anyway!

Yet by far the most interesting (and I think misguided) narrative to emerge from all this is the one which basically asserts that chess should be just about having fun and that almost anything which smacks of hard work, aspiration, or (God forbid) 'improvement', is necessarily suspect. This taps into concerns both ancient and modern. That 'play' should be just that and that any attempts to professionalise it or take it too seriously will

detract from the enjoyment and purity of the pursuit are clearly arguments with a long pedigree, not least in the UK. As an extra tier of disapproval, I think specifically the nature of opening preparation, particularly deep preparation dominated by strong engines (in which there is now perceived to be limited wiggle-room for original play in many openings), is helping to give a particular type of hard work a bad name. Here too there are genuine issues to be addressed, although when a World Championship match features the opening moves 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.h3!? as occurred in the second game of Ding – Nepomniachtchi, it serves as a timely reminder that reliance on increasingly theory-heavy variations is only one of the directions in which top professionals are taking the game. Personally, I see no crisis and no pressing need for more significance to be afforded to Chess 360, for example, or for any fundamental reforms of the game, but I appreciate that there may be a debate to be had about the extent to which the opening phase dominates, particularly at classical time controls. What interests me in the context of the current discussion is that whereas I would see the enormous amounts of time which so many players have invested in opening research as an argument for caution with regard to any substantial reform of the rules, for those who argue that chess is ‘played out’ I sense that it is a positive encouragement. It is as if the idea of opening work is so pernicious that the interests of those who have indulged in it should not count for much. It needs to be scrubbed out so that we can return to some kind of battle in which just natural talent and understanding can prevail. I hardly need to emphasise that I do not believe that this is remotely a fair picture of how chess works.

Perhaps my greatest objection to all this lies in the idea that there is some kind of implicit contradiction between working hard at chess and enjoying it. For, quite honestly, over and above the fact that the demeanour of chess players at tournaments (myself included) makes it abundantly clear that winning is fun and losing is mostly not, I would argue that chess is simply more interesting and more fun the more we come to understand it. OK, I suspect there may be a very high level at which this becomes a more complex relationship, but that really isn’t a pressing concern for the majority of people. Moreover, there really are not so many short-cuts to that understanding.

What the popular purveyors of tricky, trappy gambits designed to bamboozle the opponent in entertaining ways don’t tell their fans is that when these meet with some kind of rational response – often consisting of not much more than the avoidance of egregious greed - the outcome is very often not a bunch of explosive tactics in which one side or the other prevails, but rather the gambiteer being condemned to a long and gruelling defence. This may, in fact, be great for improving their

chess, but will classify as fun for only the most masochistic. Worse still are the reactions I see to those absurd moments in which some top player decides to essay the Bongcloud. This seems to be widely regarded as fun, accessible, the ideal material for memes, and sometimes even as some kind of a challenge to stuffy conventional wisdom! It strikes me as anything but. It looks to me on occasions like an unattractive form of psychological warfare – an ultimate declaration of superiority, the aim of which is to do little more than humiliate the opponent – or on occasions just an ‘in-joke’. Whenever I see comments along the lines of ‘well, if Magnus and Hikaru have played it then there must be *some* point to it’ I am reminded that there is nothing anti-elitist about such a joke.

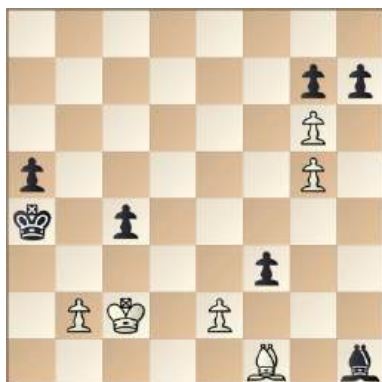
Let’s be honest. In most relatively affluent western nations, working hard on chess is unlikely to be motivated primarily by the game’s glittering financial rewards. There may be considerations of status, rivalry or similar involved, but most of us who have worked hard on the game have done so primarily because we found it enjoyable and rewarding. From time to time, I read stories of the hardships, lengthy travel and difficult conditions which, for example, ambitious young Indian players put up with in pursuit of the dream of becoming a top chess player, a dream which for some of them may indeed involve financial motivation and opportunities which might be otherwise hard to come by. One thing which they really seem to understand is the tremendous importance of hard work in fulfilling these ambitions. Of course, this is the very opposite of elitism – this is how taking the game seriously and working accordingly can genuinely prove inclusive.

I was reminded of this recently when reading the fascinating new book *Improve Your Chess Calculation* from the celebrated Indian coach R. B. Ramesh. There are references dotted throughout the book to coaching regimes which even advocates of hard graft might find daunting, but the quality of the material and its organisation is testament to the work ethic of a coach whose record nurturing several of India’s finest young talents speaks for itself. It is also clear that Ramesh shares with me the conviction that there is no real tension between hard work and enjoyment of the game, and consequently he too places a high value on material which is both beautiful and instructive. I was especially drawn, as I increasingly am these days, to the chapter on endgame studies. Like me, Ramesh admits to having been sceptical during his playing days about the practical value of solving endgame studies, assuming that their main value lay in their artistry and beauty. However, he came to discover that most of the top players avidly devoured endgame studies, and as a coach has been a great advocate of their benefit as a learning tool.

To finish, two positions from this chapter which pack a fair pedagogic punch. Throughout the book, each position is helpfully graded according to the rating range for which Ramesh believes it would be appropriate. The first is from Leonid Kubbel and is graded at level 2 (1600-2000).

**Kubbel**

**White to play**



The solution begins with some clearly forcing moves (often a critical component of solving studies) **1.gxh7 fxe2 2.Bxe2** (2.h8Q exf1Q 3.Qe8+ Kb4 clearly offers no hope of victory) **2...Be4+ 3.Kc3 Bxh7**. So far, so forced, but now comes the key idea. The advance of White's king to c3 has helped to construct a potential mating net around Black's king. There is no forced mate, but the threats of mate will gain time to cause problems for the real target – the poorly placed bishop on h7. I love the fact that after **4.Bh5!** Black has a choice of fates for the bishop – it can be trapped or merely blocked in. It is lost after **4...Kb5 5.Be8+! Kc5 6.g6 Bg8 7.Bf7!**, but while it stays on the board after the alternative **4...g6 5.Bg4! Kb5 6.Be6 Kc5 7.Bxc4**, it has no value at all and White will penetrate with his king using zugzwang. There is an unusually positional element to this study, and it is all the more instructive for it.

The second position from the extraordinary Tigran Gorgiev is tougher (Level 3 – 2000-2400) and seems to me just the type that I would have once assumed to be about beauty first and utility later. It now seems obvious to me that so many vital skills are involved in solving this: choosing between plausible lines, gaining time by taking action on a second front, and spotting creative possibilities to interfere with the freedom of movement of the opponent's pieces.

**Gorgiev, T 1929**

**White to play**



White wins with the beautiful **1.Bc6!** (It is important to note that **1.Bxf7 Kxf7 2.Nh4 Ke6 3.g6 Bxg6+ 4.Nxg6** wins a piece, but Black has strong counterplay starting with **4...c5**) **1...bxc6** (forced, since **1...Bxf3 2.Bxb7 Be2 3.a6 Bxa6 4.Bxa6 Ke7 5.Bc4!** wins easily).

**2.a6 Bg6+ 3.Kh8!** Vitally important to win a key tempo. It is critical that the coming diversion cannot be ignored. **3...Bxe4 4.g6!** A beautiful clearance of the g5-square for the white knight. **4...fxg6 5.Ng5 Bd5 6.Ne6!+ Ke7 7.Nc5!!** The delightful final point. The knight blocks the diagonal to the queening square. **7...dxc5 8.a7** queening.

## Endgames All Club Players Should Know by GM Glenn Flear



Over the coming months I'll be discussing a number of endgame techniques that are worth getting to know. As you may have noticed, the title of the series even goes further i.e. *Should Know!* So if you are feeling guilty about your lack of endgame knowledge, or just want to polish up your technique, then I suggest that you look out for my articles over the coming months in *ChessMoves*.

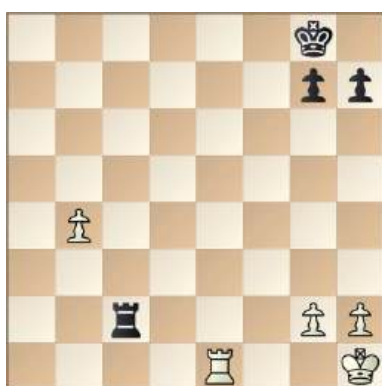
## Lucena and More

Anyone who has ever opened an endgame book and turned to the chapter on rook endgames will have come across the term 'Lucena'. It doesn't always mean exactly the same thing to everyone, but I consider it to be a set of positions (usually in the case of rook and pawn vs rook) where the weaker side has the king cut off. The stronger side exploits this fact by 'building a bridge for his king' to enable the promotion of the pawn in peace.

Many of you will already know the basic technique, but in my experience it's often the play leading up to Lucena that confuses the student. So it's worth looking at the thinking behind the moves in this stage. Let's start with a classic game.

### Botvinnik, Mikhail Moiseevich - Boleslavsky, Isaak

URS-ch Absolute Leningrad/Moscow (11), 11.04.1941



**34.Rb1!** It's important to place the rook behind the passed pawn.

Instead 34.h3?! is insufficient, as after 34...Rb2! (now it's Black who can place his rook behind the passer, and this boosts his chances of saving himself) 35.Re4 Kf7 36.Kh2 Kf6 37.Kg3 h5 38.Kf3 g6 it will be difficult for White to make progress without taking risks.

**34...Kf7 35.b5** With the support of the rook 'urging on' the pawn, White seizes the initiative. In consequence, Black will be obliged to go passive with his rook.

**35...Ke6 36.b6 Rc8 37.h3!** Now it's time to bring the king into the fray.

Some care (and calculation!) is required, as 37.b7? turns out to be an error: 37...Rb8 38.h3 Kd6 39.Kh2 Kc6 40.Kg3 Rxb7 41.Rxb7 Kxb7 42.Kf4 Kc6 43.Ke5 Kd7 and White is unable to penetrate.

**37...Rb8 38.Kh2 Kd5 39.Kg3 Kc6 40.Kg4 Kb7** The king blocks the pawn, and now the rook is ready to be freed for other duties.

If 40...Rxb6 then the pawn endgame is lost: 41.Rxb6+ Kxb6 42.Kf5 Kc7 43.Ke6 and then Kf7 etc.

**41.Re1!** Time to switch tasks, with the threat of Re7+ again forcing Black's rook to take up a passive pose. It's often the case that once a rook has done its job (here, tying the opposing rook down, which was the case, but not any more!), then the role needs to be changed.

**41...Rg8** Naturally, the pawn endgame resulting from 41...Kxb6 42.Rb1+ leads to the same issue as in the earlier note.

**42.Re6** Here the rook defends the b-pawn from the side and handily ties down both of Black's pieces.

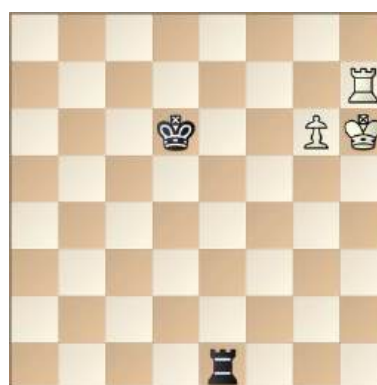
**42...Ka6 43.Kg5** Black can only wait while White makes slow but sure progress.

**43...Kb7 44.h4 Ka6 45.h5 Kb7 46.g4 Ka6 47.Kh4!** The idea is to 'soften up' the kingside defences with h5-h6, but not allowing Black to capture on h6 with check.

**47...Kb7 48.h6 gxh6 49.Rxh6 Rg7 50.Kh5 Ka6 51.Rc6!** Now the threat is Rc7.

**51...Re7 52.Rc7 Re5+ 53.g5 Kxb6 54.Rxh7** Finally, we arrive at 'rook and pawn versus rook' with Black's king woefully distant. Lucena is now inevitable.

**54...Kc6 55.Kh6 Kd6 56.g6 Re1**



**57.Rf7!** Ensuring that Black's king is definitively cut off.

**57...Ke6 58.Rf2** With Black's king out of the frame, White can make progress without any serious hassle.

**58...Ra1 59.g7 Rh1+ 60.Kg6 Rg1+ 61.Kh7 Rh1+ 62.Kg8 Ke7** We have arrived at the classic Lucena scenario.

**63.Re2+ Kd7** In the case of 63...Kf6, simply 64.Kf8 and the king is sheltered by the opposing monarch.



**64.Re4!** A key move. The rook is 'improved' with an important idea in mind: White's king will soon require shelter from Black's checks and this prepares a shield.

**64...Rh2 65.Kf7 Rf2+ 66.Kg6 Rg2+ 67.Kf6 Rf2+** the checks soon run out, and if instead:

a) **67...Rg1** just temporising, then the rook can be used to interpose on the g-file with **68.Re5 Rg2 69.Rg5**;

b) **67...Kd6 68.Rd4+ Kc7** (or **68...Kc5 69.Rd8 Rf2+ 70.Ke6 69.Rd5 Rg1 70.Rg5** etc.;

**68.Kg5 Rg2+ 69.Rg4** the shield is in place and the pawn will be able to promote. This is sometimes referred to as 'building a bridge'.

**1-0**

Here is an example of one of my games that I hope you will find instructive.

**Flear, Glenn C (2460) - Bruk, Otto**

Oakham YM Oakham (2), 29.03.1988

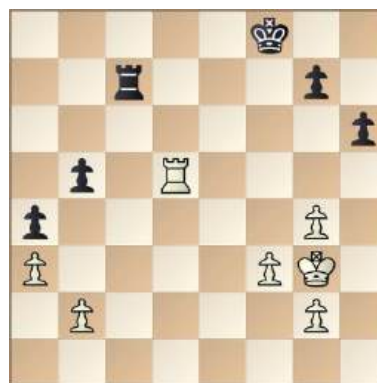


White has emerged from the middlegame with an extra pawn, but with Black's pieces quite well placed the result remains in doubt.

**45...Ke6 46.Bf8 Rc7 47.Re2+ Kf7 48.Re5** Such jostling involves activating one's own pieces and limiting the effectiveness of the opponent's.

**48...Kxf8** If **48...Rd7** then **49.Bc5** and the bishop can be brought to d4, where it has influence in all directions. So my opponent decided to try the rook endgame.

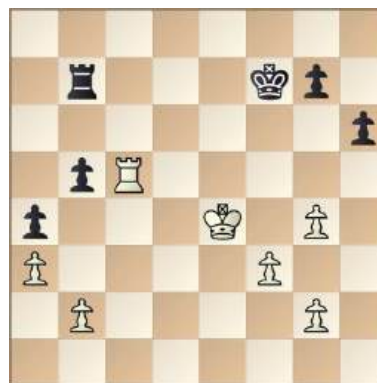
**49.Rxd5**



Rook endgames have a reputation of being drawish, but here I consider White to have good winning chances. My reasoning is that White's rook is more active than its black counterpart, which is often a key element in assessing the chances of success. You may have already noticed that Black has little choice but to stay passive and defend the b-pawn.

**49...Rb7 50.Kf4** The king is brought into the action, which is easier to do when the opponent doesn't have any threats.

**50...Ke7 51.Kf5 Rb6 52.Re5+ Kf7 53.Rc5 Rb7 54.Ke4**



In those cases where one side can only 'wait and see', the opponent can take his time before committing himself. So after a few probing moves the plan finally takes shape: The white king threatens to make the journey to b4 to help pick off the opposing queenside, so my opponent decides that he has 'to do something' after all.

**54...b4 55.Ra5** The a4-pawn is going to drop, but now Black is able to generate some counterplay against the kingside.

**55...bxa3 56.bxa3 Rb2 57.g3 Re2+ 58.Kd3** Sometimes the choice between two or more good lines comes down to a question of which 'feels the most comfortable'. **58.Kf4** should also be decisive, but at the time I no doubt decided that **58...g5+ 59.Kf5 Re3** looked messy.

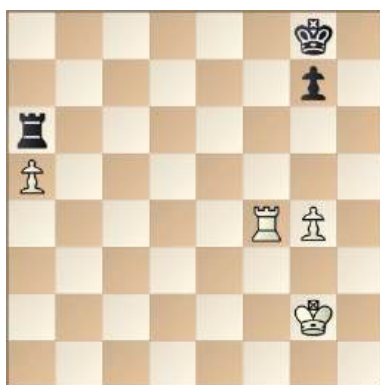
However, if one goes further: 60.Ra7+! Kf8 61.Rxa4 Rxf3+ 62.Kg6 and White will win a second pawn.

**58...Rg2 59.Ke3 Rxc3 60.Kf2 Rh3 61.Kg2 Rh4** Chasing the opposing rook to a sidelined square gives White the time not just to win the a-pawn, but prepare its advance.

**62.Rxa4 h5** Some freedom is required.

**63.Rf4+ Kg8 64.a4!** The most natural is to get the a-pawn going.

**64...hxc4 65.fxg4 Rh6 66.a5 Ra6**



The black rook has been 'freed' from its cage, but (alas, for my opponent!) only for a defensive task.

**67.Ra4!** The rook goes behind the passed pawn, which denies the opposing rook any freedom of movement.

**67...Kf7 68.Kf3 Ke6 69.Ke4 g6 70.Kf4 Kf6 71.Ra1** White temporises and Black finds himself in Zugzwang.

**71...Ke6 71...g5+ 72.Ke4 Ke6 73.Ra2** would also leave Black with no good moves. Whichever way the black king goes, the white king heads in the opposite direction. 73...Kf6 (73...Kd6 74.Kf5) 74.Kd5.

**72.Kg5 Kf7 73.Kh6** Penetrating into the opposing camp and making the g6-pawn into a target.

**73...Kg8 74.g5 Kf7 75.Kh7** Maximising progress before calling on the assistance of the rook.

**75...Kf8 76.Rf1+** Switching flanks in order to eliminate the g6-pawn. The timing of this manoeuvre can require a little calculation, but here, with the preparations on the kingside well under way, it soon becomes clear that victory is close.

**76...Ke7 77.Rf6 Rxa5 78.Kxg6** We have a fledgling Lucena with Black's king cut off and no prospect of annoying checks against the white king.

**78...Rb5 79.Rf1** In general, I like to move my rook well away from the opponent's king, just to avoid any unfortunate tricks.

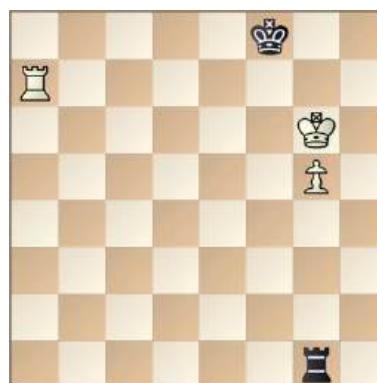
**79...Rb2 80.Kg7** The white king and pawn shuffle down the board towards the promotion square.

**80...Rg2 81.g6 Rh2 82.Kg8 Rg2 83.g7 Rh2** Now for the standard technique.

**84.Re1+ Kd7 85.Re4! Rh3 86.Kf7 Rf3+ 87.Kg6 Rg3+ 88.Kf6** Feeling at ease with this manner of converting an advantage will bring any club player a number of points in their future chess games. It will also enable them to be confident about steering many an advantageous rook endgame towards this scenario.

**1–0**

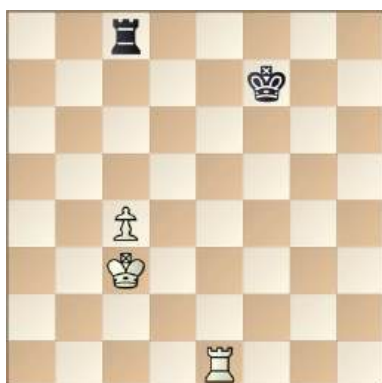
### Exercise 1



Would you know how to win this position? It's not that easy if you've not seen the idea before or don't suddenly get inspired! When I show this exercise to students who are of club player strength some of them take a long time to work out the win, and often do so by eliminating all reasonable alternative winning tries. Clearly in a practical game, with limited time available, there is a fair chance that they wouldn't convert their advantage. How long have you taken so far? Imagine that the clock is ticking away... Here's the reasoning that leads to the solution: White clearly needs to protect the pawn while it's on g5 and would like to advance it further, but after

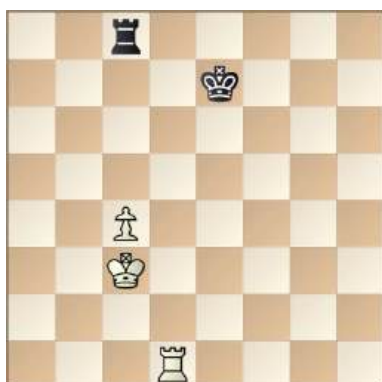
**1.Ra8+ Ke7 2.Kh6 Kf7!** there isn't enough control of the g6-square. So, in order to make progress from the initial position, a firm control of both g5 and g6 is required. Does this help? The answer follows at the end of the article.

## Exercise 2



With the black king cut off by so much there is little he can do to stop the opponent making progress. White doesn't even need to be that precise here, but he still needs a coherent plan; see the next example.

## Exercise 3



White to play wins, but this time he needs to find the right idea straightaway.

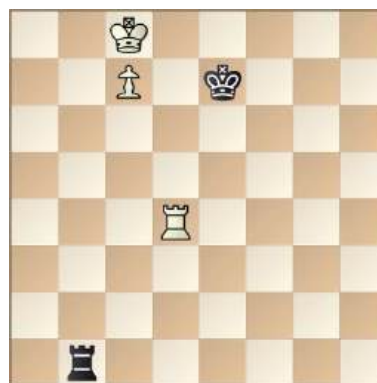
**1.Kb4!** The first mini-plan is for the king to make as much progress up the board as possible (noting that c4-c5 is now threatened).

**1...Rb8+ 2.Ka5 Rc8 3.Kb5 Rb8+ 4.Ka6 Rc8** Now the white king cannot go any further (as yet) due to the threat against the c-pawn. So the rook is required to help out.

**5.Rd4 Ke6 6.Kb7 Rc5 7.Kb6 Rc8** and finally the pawn can advance.

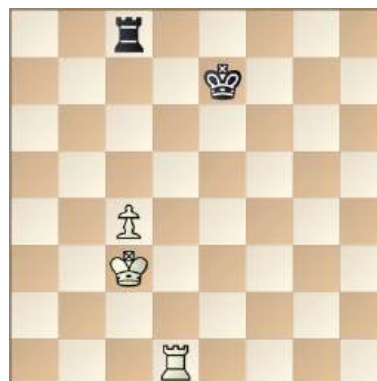
**8.c5** and Black's rook is helpless to stop White's pawn advancing further. You may already recognise that Lucena is not far away.

**8...Rb8+ 9.Kc7 Rb1 10.c6 Ke7 11.Kc8 Rb2 12.c7 Rb1**



Finally, we arrive at Lucena, when **13.Re4+ Kf7 14.Kd7** wins straightaway as the rook is already conveniently placed on the fourth rank. So many advantageous rook endgames involve the stronger side preparing the ground for Lucena and, if circumstances allow, the defender trying to avoid it.

## Exercise 4



Black to play draws in more than one manner, but he can employ a nice idea that I first saw in a Bobby Fischer game. Here he could opt for **1...Rb8** to stop the opposing king advancing, as in the previous example (where White had the move). However, a handy technique to know is that **1...Rd8!** is good. OK, as a general rule, it's a little dangerous to exchange into a pure king and pawn endgame when a pawn down, that is unless you are confident about your calculations, or you really know what you are doing! However, if such an idea does indeed work, then it simplifies the defence a great deal. Here the key point is that

**2.Rxd8 2.Rh1 Kd7 3.Rh7+ Kc8 4.Kb4 Rd6** leads to a straightforward draw. More on such positions soon!

**2...Kxd8 3.Kd4** might seem to give White the opposition, but after the resource **3...Kc8!** it's actually Black who seizes the opposition when it matters (i.e. when White's king is in front of the pawn and not yet on the sixth rank). So **4.Kd5 Kd7 5.Kc5 Kc7 6.Kb5 Kb7 7.c5 Kc7 8.c6 Kc8** is a standard draw.

**Gozzoli, Y. (2564) - Edouard, R. (2514)**

96th ch-FRA 2023 L'Alpe d'Huez FRA (4.2), 26.08.2023

Here's a more recent example of Lucena occurring. I was recently following what proved to be the decisive game from this summer's French Mixed Championships, which it might surprise UK readers to know has a knock-out format.



Romain Edouard had recently seen his advantage slip away, and he now has to be very careful not to find himself in difficulties, as Gozzoli's kingside play is beginning to become dangerous.

**35.g5! fxg5 36.hxg5 b4 37.Kg4 a5 38.f4 b3?! Not the best way to create a passed pawn.**

With 38...a4 39.f5 Rc3 (activating the rook) 40.Re6+ Kd5! 41.Rb6 b3 it seems that Black has enough counter chances.

**39.axb3 Rxb3 40.Re5 Rb7? The wrong way to give up the pawn.**

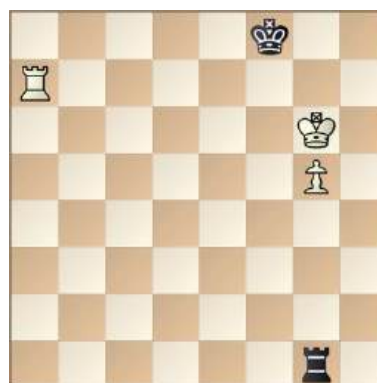
Going behind seems to be better: 40...Rb1! 41.Rxa5 Ke6 42.Ra7 Rg1+ with plenty of harassment in view. Instead, defending the passed pawn might seem natural, but it's too slow: 40...Ra3 41.Kf5 a4 42.Ra5 Ra1 43.Ra6+ Kc5 44.Rh6 a3 45.Rxh7 a2 46.Ra7 and Black is helpless while White calmly advances his majority.

**41.Rxa5 Ke6 42.Kh5!** The king can't be stopped from getting to h6, whereas Black's monarch is unable to contribute to the defensive effort.

**42...Rb4 43.Kh6** Simplest, as the remaining pawn is sufficient for White to be victorious.

**43...Rxf4 44.Kxh7 Rh4+ 45.Kg7 Rb4 46.g6** Clearly, with Black's king cut off from the g-pawn, White will soon be able to win using the Lucena technique.

**1-0**

**Exercise 1 answer**

The only way to bolster control of both the g5 and g6 squares is with

**1.Ra8+ Ke7 2.Rg8!** White intends either Kh7 or Kg7 depending on the position of Black's rook.

And not 2.Kh6?! Kf7! when White will have to try again.

**2...Rh1 2...Rg2 3.Kh7 Rh2+ 4.Kg7 Rg2 5.g6** comes to the same thing.

**3.Kg7 Rg1 4.g6 Rg2** Now that the pawn has been successfully advanced from the fifth rank to the sixth, White needs to redeploy his rook, which has done its job on g8 but is now getting in the way.

**5.Ra8 Rg1 6.Kh7 Rh1+ 7.Kg8 Rh2 8.g7 Rh1** You might recognise something familiar already.

**9.Ra2 Rh3 10.Re2+ Kd7 11.Re4!** and the victorious king walk follows.

Each month I will be finishing off my articles with some general thoughts. Hopefully, you might find these pointers useful in similar situations in your own games. Here are a few that seem relevant to this particular article.

1. The relative activity of the rooks is important for assessing the likely outcome.
2. More often than not, the rook's optimal position is behind a passed pawn (for the attack or defence).
3. The attacking king needs some sort of shelter from harassing checks.
4. In endgames in general, there are periods where 'keeping control' and 'restricting the opponent's options' is the best approach. However, there will be moments where precise calculation is required,



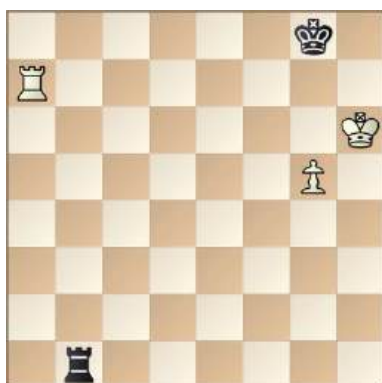
especially if a radical change (such as an exchange or a race) is in mind.

5. Formulating plans is an important task in all phases of the game and, just as in the middlegame, often a series of mini-plans (each of which has a certain aim in mind) can be more relevant than a long-term plan. The penultimate mini-plan that we have observed this time is 'setting up Lucena' with the final mini-plan being to convert the advantage using the Lucena technique.

### Defending Rook Endgames

As rook endgames crop up quite frequently there is a fair chance that you will be facing an uphill battle in one of these from time to time! If one has a tendency to drift along with no idea what to do (be honest with yourself!) then the defensive task can be very tough indeed, so having some knowledge of what to avoid and what to head for is a good idea. So let's start with some basic drawing positions and techniques that are worth knowing. Later there will be a few exercises to enable you to test yourself on some of the main themes.

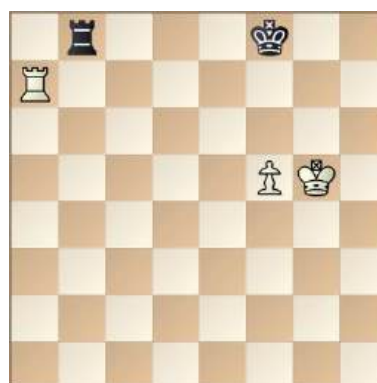
#### The easiest draw



Black to play doesn't have to do anything special, he just needs to defend the eighth rank with

**1...Rb8** and despite White's far more active pieces he can't get anywhere. This holds true with a g-pawn, but not with more central pawns as you'll see below.

#### Sixth rank defence



With an f-pawn Black (to play) needs to be more cunning.

**1...Rb6!** Sometimes attributed to Philidor, it's worth calling this the 'sixth rank defence' as it's then easier to remember.

If Black just bides his time, then things rapidly go wrong: 1...Rc8? 2.Kg6 Rb8 3.f6 Rc8 4.Rh7 and White wins by using space on the right hand flank (in the previous example, this wasn't possible because the edge of the board rather got in the way!)... 4...Kg8 5.f7+ Kf8 6.Rh8+ and so on.

**2.f6** Preparing a shield for his king, but Black has time to thwart White's plans.

**2...Rb1!** Again going passive to the back rank is bad.

**3.Kg6 Rg1+** and, as the white king can't hide from the checks in a convenient way, it's drawn!

#### Rook behind - king on the short side



Again, Black's clock is ticking, and he has to make a choice. Settling for a passive retreat to the eighth rank or the seemingly more active sixth rank defence both fail. So, he needs to go behind the passed pawn, which as you will see, makes the advance of the passed pawn a difficult task.

**1...Rf1!** I like this method of defence very much as it illustrates the general principle of going behind a passed pawn, which is often the right approach in rook endgames.

**2.Kf6** Now one has to decide how to avoid the mate.

By the way, we've already seen that 2.f6 doesn't get very far in view of 2...Rg1+ etc.

**2...Kg8!** We call this the 'short side' as there is less room to the right of the f-pawn. The king heads to the short side leaving plenty of room on the 'long side' for the defensive rook.

For those who read my article last month they'll perhaps remember that 2...Ke8? loses to 3.Ra8+ Kd7 4.Rf8! after which White will soon be able to advance the pawn to f6 in peace and steer the game towards Lucena. Note that there isn't much room on the right-hand side of the board for Black's rook to put up any meaningful resistance.

**3.Ra8+ Kh7 4.Rf8**

4.Ke6 is met by 4...Kg7! when the king and rook combine (by eyeing f6) to stop the pawn advancing any further.

**4...Ra1!**

Now threatening annoying checks from the side. The black king being on h7 (rather than d7) means that it isn't 'getting in the way' of checks. So now if...

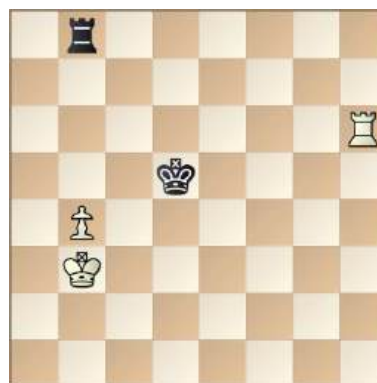
**5.Re8**

...preparing a shield, Black then switches back with....

(note that with the ranks clear of obstacles 5.Ke7 Ra7+ forces White to go back)

**5...Rf1!** ...again going behind the pawn. White can try a while longer but if you have understood all these themes, you'll save yourself many a half point. So go through this once again to make sure you haven't missed a key element.

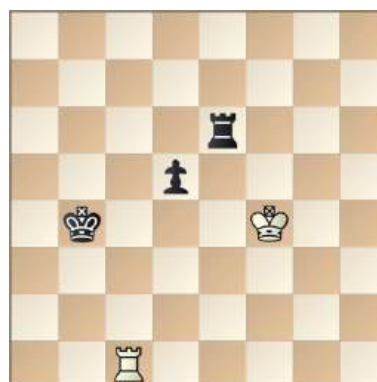
## Anticipate and prevent



At first you may not be sure what to do in such a situation, but if you can ascertain what the opponent is threatening then you have a fair chance to find the right move. Here's an example of this process. Some people who I've asked to find the solution (for Black) find it easier if I ask them what White is threatening. They then work out that there is a possible winning plan starting with either Ka4 or Ra6. So a counter comes to mind that prevents both of these moves...

**1...Ra8!** and a draw is the logical result.

## The checking distance



This is a term that is used when the defensive side has three or more files (or ranks) between the defending rook and the passed pawn. However, the rook needs to use this space carefully and not squander it. So

**1.Rd1!** It's a mistake to simply check the opposing king where it wants to go! 1.Rb1+? Kc3 2.Rc1+ Kd2 3.Rc8 d4 and Black is well on the way to victory using the Lucena technique (see the September Chess moves column).

**1...Kc4 2.Rc1+ Kb3 3.Rd1 Kc4 4.Rc1+ Kd4 5.Rd1+ Kc5 6.Rc1+ Kd6 7.Rd1** Basically the plan was to force the opponent to seek cover and try again. The correct first move in this sequence perhaps indicates that the term 'checking distance' isn't necessarily as precise as the

'harassing distance'! The defending rook is not just giving checks, but also threatening the pawn in order to stop the attacking side make any meaningful progress.

### The checking distance again



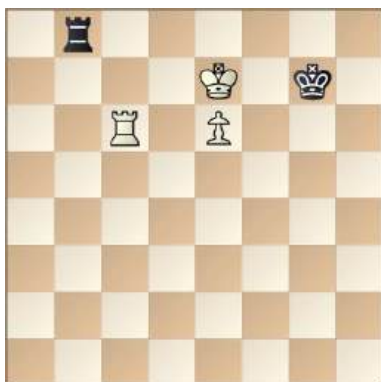
Here Black to play should get himself organized in the face of White's threat to make progress with Kh4.

**1...Rc8!** and of course, if

**2.Kh4** then

**2...Rh8+** disrupts any advance by White.

### The checking distance is often crucial



Black is wise to seize the checking distance, but patrolling the eighth rank is also a good idea in many similar positions. So the first move isn't that tough to find

**1...Ra8!**. However, the question arises, how then to meet a White waiting move.

**2.Rd6!** ? In fact, calculation suggests that the black rook is not only on the ideal square - it's actually on the only good square, so one needs to look elsewhere for a move. So it soon becomes apparent that 'temporizing' with the king with

**2...Kg6!** is the only acceptable move in this position. By the way, Carlsen once got this wrong, so don't be too disappointed if you haven't understood this advanced position yet. The following variations will explain that Black is playing this 'neutral move' after eliminating all the alternatives.

**2...Ra7+?** (ceding the key eighth rank) **3.Ke8 Kf6 4.e7+** (with check!) **4...Kg7 5.Rd1 Ra8+ 6.Kd7 Ra7+ 7.Ke6 Ra6+ 8.Rd6 Ra8 9.Rd8 Ra6+ 10.Kd5** etc.; **2...Rb8?** (ceding the checking distance) **3.Rd8 Rb7+ 4.Kd6 Rb6+ 5.Kd7 Rb7+** (**5...Kf6 6.Rf8+ Ke5 7.e7**) **6.Kc6** and the king gains a key tempo against the defending rook and the win is assured e.g. **6...Ra7 7.Rd7+**

**3.Rd8** After **3.Rd1** the fact that Black has the checking distance (three ranks spaced between the rook and the pawn) comes into play: **3...Ra7+ 4.Kd8 Ra8+ 5.Kd7 Ra7+** and White is not getting anywhere, and then if **6.Ke8** there is even **6...Kf6**.

**3...Ra7+ 4.Rd7 4.Ke8 Kf6** is a draw when White's rook is on d8, but careful, not if the rook were still on d6 (as there would then be **e6-e7** - with check)!

**4...Ra8** Not the only move but, if one isn't sure, the eighth rank is often a wise choice.

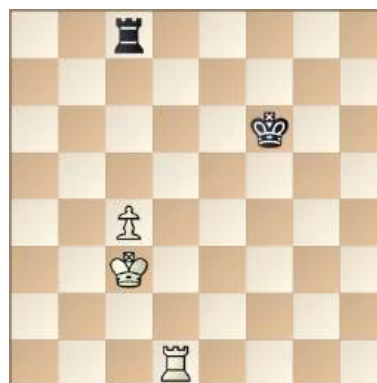
**5.Kd6 Kf6 6.Rf7+ Kg6 7.Rf1** So White has managed to cut off Black's king, but here's where the checking distance crops up again...

**7...Ra6+ 8.Kd7 Ra7+ 9.Kd8 Ra8+ 10.Kc7 Ra7+** and if White dares approach the rook with

**11.Kb6** then

**11...Re7** draws.

### The proactive king



The role of the defensive king isn't always just 'getting back in front of the pawn'. Sometimes it needs to help the rook out, even when it has the checking distance.

**1...Ke6!** Also possible is 1...Ke5!; However, the natural 'neutral' move 1...Ke7? loses because White can make progress relatively unhindered: 2.Kb4 (threat c4–c5) 2...Rb8+ 3.Ka5 Rc8 4.Kb5 (threat c4–c5) 4...Rb8+ 5.Ka6 Rc8 Black's rook has done what it can, but after 6.Rd4! there is the problem that White is heading towards Lucena and Black is too late to stop this: 6...Ke6 7.Kb7 Rc5 (7...Ke5 8.Rd5+ Ke6 9.Kxc8; 7...Rh8 8.c5) 8.Kb6 Rc8 9.c5 and with Black's king cut-off and the pawn rolling it's already hopeless.

**2.Kb4 Rb8+ 3.Ka5 Rc8 4.Kb5 Rb8+ 5.Ka6 Rc8 6.Rd4** Now the key move

**6...Ke5!** and White is unable to perform both tasks required of the rook simultaneously (defending the pawn whilst cutting off the opposing king).

**7.Rh4 Kd6 8.Kb7 Rc7+ 9.Kb8 Rg7** with a draw in the offing.

**Active or passive?**

### Vaganian – Hellers

New York 1990



Here White has a plan of advancing the b-pawn part of the way and then transferring his king over to the queenside, thus freeing the rook and ultimately enabling the pawn to go all the way. In return, Black will grab a pawn or two on the kingside and aim to create a passed pawn and a race will follow.

**1...Kf6** Here Black tries a 'wait for now' strategy which may be just about OK but loses time.

The most straightforward defence is to prepare counterplay with 1...f6! e.g. 2.Rb5 Kf7 3.Rb6 (3.b4 Ke6) 3...g5 and if a race does occur in due course, the black pawns are more threatening than in the actual game.

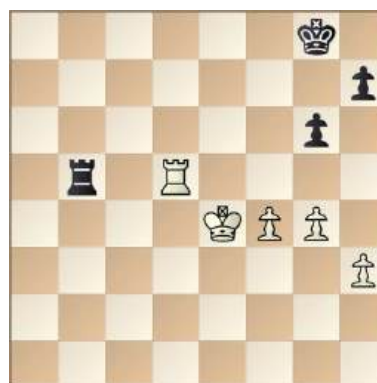
**2.f3 Rg2 3.Kf4 Rb2 4.Rb6+ Kg7 5.b4 Rb3 6.Ke4 Rb1?** It's better to leave the rook where it is, and wriggle with the king: 6...Kf8 7.Rb7 Kg7.

**7.b5 f6** This turns out to be too late to be effective.

The rook is better on b3, but it might already be impossible to save the game: 7...Rb3! 8.f4! Rxd3 9.Rd6 Rb3 10.b6 (Black's majority will be difficult to get going) 10...Kf8 11.Kd5 Ke7 12.Rc6 Rb5+ 13.Kc4 Rb2 14.Kc5 f6 15.Rc7+ Ke6 16.Ra7 Kf5 17.Ra4 (slowing Black down) 17...Kg4 18.Rb4 Rc2+ 19.Kd6 Rc8 20.b7 Rb8 21.Kc7 and White seems to be winning.

**8.Rb7+ Kh6 9.Rb8 Rb3 10.b6 Kg7 11.Kd5! Rxf3 12.Kc4 Rf1 13.Rb7+ Kh6 14.Rd7 Rb1 15.Kc5 Rc1+ 16.Kd6 Rd1+ 17.Kc7 Rc1+ 18.Kd8 Rb1 19.Rd6** and Black is far too slow to have any hope of salvation. In this common scenario, (extra pawn for one player, but an active defensive rook behind the passed pawn) at some point there is a need to get the king and kingside pawns going. The longer one waits the more delicate the task becomes.

### A defensive set-up



Here the decision revolves around finding the right sort of piece disposition to reduce the chances of White making any progress. Sometimes the fact that you 'know that it's drawn' can diminish your concentration and one can find oneself just making moves without thinking. Generally a recipe for disaster!

**1...Rb7!** Even without calculation, it's a good rule of thumb not to trade into an inferior 'king and pawn endgame' if one can avoid it. I've noticed that many juniors chop pieces on autopilot and only start 'thinking seriously' once it's too late! For the record, there are a couple of ways for White to win the simplified endgame: 1...Rxd5 2.Kxd5 Kf7 3.Ke5 (or 3.Kd6 Kf6 4.g5+ Kf5 5.Ke7 Kxf4 6.Kf6 Kg3 7.Kg7 Kh4 8.Kh6) 3...Ke7 4.h4 Kf7 5.g5 Ke7 6.h5 Kf7 7.hxg6+ hxg6 8.Kd6 etc.

**2.Ke5 Kf7!** and now, with the seventh rank well secured, the chances of White finding a way through are slim. Black can (from now on) temporize with his rook, perhaps giving an occasional check. If White moves his king too far from the kingside his pawns could come under attack.



## Activate or not?



It's a good idea to ask oneself what happens if one just temporizes: if the opponent can evidently make serious progress, then it's a good idea to think about activating. In this case, Black to play can seek a more activate role for his rook and amazingly steer the game towards a draw even with it involving giving up his remaining pawn.

**1...Rf8!!** The only chance. A tough move to find if you don't realise that it's necessary to get 'a move on'.

Waiting isn't satisfactory: 1...Kh5 2.Kc4 Kg6 3.Rc5 Kh5 4.Kb5 Kg6 5.Kb6 and the a-pawn is doomed with no compensating features that present 'technical problems' for White.

**2.Rxa5 Rf4+** White's king has difficulty in helping out on the queenside because there is no shelter on the other side of the pawn. A perennial problem with a- and h-pawns.

**3.Kc3 Rf3+ 4.Kb4 Rf4+ 5.Kb5** Otherwise progress isn't evident.

**5...Kxg5** and Black has excellent drawing chances. Analysis suggest he can indeed hold by pushing the opposing king towards a less optimal square and then undertaking a remarkable walk with his own monarch:

**6.Ra8 Rf5+! 7.Kc6 Rf6+! 8.Kd5 Rf5+! 9.Ke6 Rf6+! 10.Ke7 Rg6 11.a5 Kf5 12.a6 Ke5 13.Kd7 Kd5 14.Kc7 Kc5** and White isn't able to use his a-pawn, for example

**15.Rc8 Rxa6 16.Kb7+ Kb5=**

## Active is usually best

### Kashdan – Alekhine

Folkstone Olympiad 1933



Here's a position that illustrates the common theme that going 'active', even if it involves a pawn sacrifice, is often a more effective defence than staying totally 'passive'.

**1...h5 2.Rh7 e4 3.Ke2 f5!** A fine move, sacrificing the h-pawn in order to activate both his rook and king.

Just holding onto everything isn't very promising: 3...Re5 4.Ke3 Kd5 5.h4 Ke6 6.Ra7 Kd5 7.Kf4 Ke6 8.Ra6+ Ke7 9.Ra4 and Black loses a pawn under inferior circumstances.; 3...Rf5 4.Ke3 Rf3+ 5.Kxe4 Rxf2 6.Rxh5 Kf7 is a book draw, but such 2 vs 1 scenarios can be unpleasant to defend, especially with modern rather speedy time limits.

**4.Rh6+ 4.Rxh5 Ra2+ 5.Kf1 Ra1+ 6.Kg2 Ra2** (threatening ...e4–e3) 7.Kf1 Ra1+ and Black's active rook ensures the draw.

**4...Ke5 5.Rxh5 Ra2+ 6.Kf1 e3!** After 6...Ra1+ 7.Kg2 Ra2 the threat of ...e3 can be met by 8.Rh8 with Re8+ in mind.

**7.fxe3 Ke4** Two pawns down(!), but with so much activity it soon becomes evident that White can't win.

**8.Kg1 8.h4 f4 9.exf4 Kf3** (White has all the pawns, but Black has all the fun!) 10.Ke1 Kxg3 11.f5 Kg4=

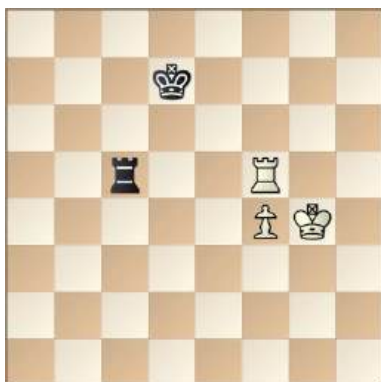
**8...Re2 9.Rh4+ Ke5 9...Kxe3 10.Rf4 Re1+ 11.Kg2 Re2+ 12.Kh3 Rf2** also draws it seems.

**10.Rh8 Kf6 11.Rf8+ Kg6 12.Re8 Kf7 13.Rc8 Rxe3** Another way (that illustrates the difference in activity of the two monarchs) is 13...Kf6 14.Rc3 Ke5 15.h4 Ke4 16.h5 Kf3 17.e4+ Kg4 18.exf5, and now either capture leads to a draw, the white king remaining out of the action.

14.Kf2 Ra3 15.h4 Kf6 16.Rc6+ Kf7 17.Rc2 Rb3 18.Re2 Kf6 19.Re3 Rb4 Black just places his rook where it limits any white king activity.

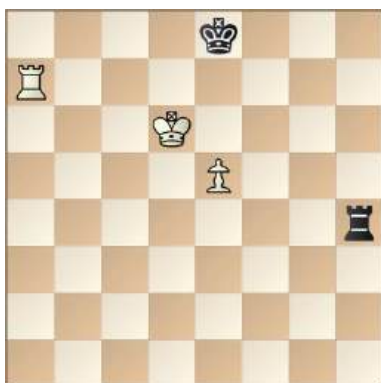
20.Kf3 Ra4 21.Rb3 Rc4 22.Rb6+ Kf7 23.Rd6 Ra4 ½-½

### Exercise 1



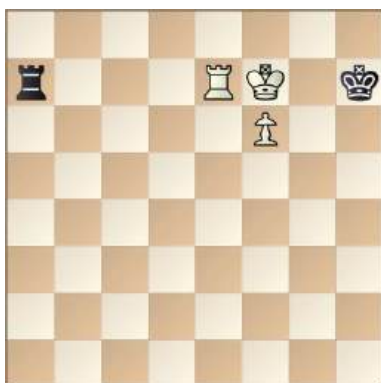
Black to play. What to do?

### Exercise 2



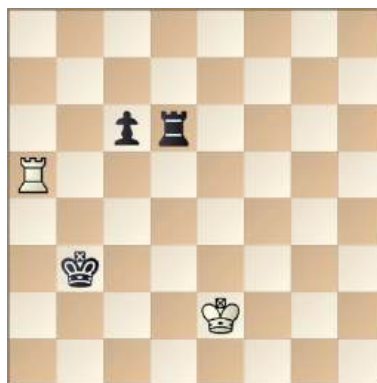
Black to play, can you draw this one?

### Exercise 3



Black to play and save himself.

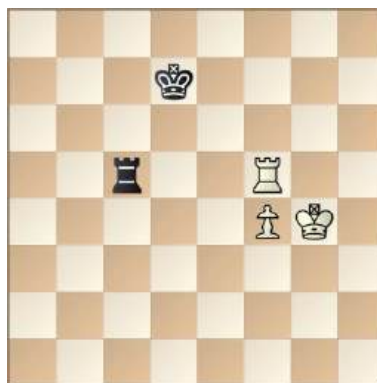
### Exercise 4



White to play and find the way to draw.

Now it's time to check how you did!

### Exercise 1 answer



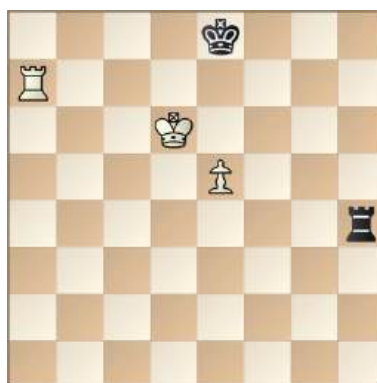
**1...Rc8!** The rook seizes the 'checking distance'.

1...Rc6 2.Re5! Rc8 3.Re4 Kd6 (3...Rg8+ 4.Kh5 Rf8 5.Kg5 Rg8+ 6.Kh6 Rf8 7.Kg7) 4.f5 Kd5 5.Re2.

**2.Re5 Kd6 3.Kg5** 3.Re4 Kd5! 4.Re7 Rg8+ 5.Kf5 Rf8+ 6.Kg5 Rg8+ 7.Kh5 Rf8.

**3...Rg8+ 4.Kf5 Rf8+ 5.Ke4 Ra8**

### Exercise 2 answer

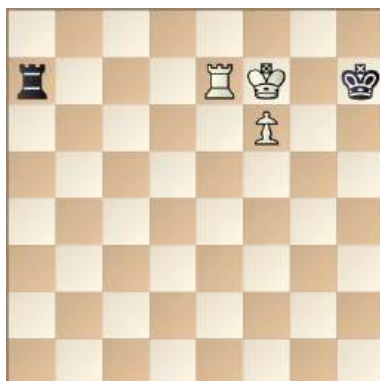


**1...Re4!** The rook posts itself behind the passed pawn.  
 1...Rb4 2.Ra8+ Kf7 3.e6+ Kf6 4.Rf8+ Kg7 5.e7; 1...Rd4+  
 2.Ke6 Kf8 3.Ra8+ Kg7 4.Ke7 Rb4 5.e6 Rb1 6.Ke8 Rb2 7.e7  
 Rb1 8.Kd7.

**2.Ra8+ Kf7** and e5–e6+ isn't dangerous, as the square is adequately controlled by Black's pieces.

**3.Ra7+ Ke8 4.Ke6 Kf8! 5.Ra8+ Kg7 6.Re8 Ra4! 7.Rd8 Re4**

### Exercise 3 answer



**1...Ra8** The eighth rank is often a good choice when pinned onto the defensive.

**2.Rb7 Kh6** Temporizing with the king.

**3.Ke6 Kg6 4.Rg7+ Kh6 5.Rg1 Ra6+** Using the checking distance to frustrate the opponent.

### Exercise 4 answer



**1.Ke3!!** The king finds a more useful role rather than observing from afar. The significance of this move will become clear soon enough.

**1...Kb4 2.Ra1 c5 3.Rb1+ Ka3 4.Rc1 Rd5 4...Kb4 5.Rb1+** and the checking distance comes in handy.

**5.Ke4!** Black can't settle, so doesn't have time to chase the white rook away with...Kb2 etc.

**5...Rd4+ 6.Ke3 Kb4 7.Rb1+ Kc4 8.Rc1+ Kd5 9.Rh1=**

### Finally, some thoughts when defending

As we've seen, activating the rook is perhaps the most important principle and is usually the right approach. The idea is that this will create problems, perhaps insurmountable ones, for the side who is trying to profit from an advantage.

The role of the king also needs thinking about. Should the king play the role of a blocker, or can it be used in a counter-attacking role?

It's worth formulating a general plan of action (even when worse), which should naturally take into account the opponent's likely winning attempts.

### Same Coloured Bishop Endgames

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

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

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

### Spassky, B – Fischer, R

World Championship Match, Reykjavik 1972



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

### 29...Bxh2?! 30.g3

The bishop is clearly in some danger. Apparently Black can still draw with very precise play, but it's sufficient for our purposes to note that White has the easier game and it's not a surprise that Spassky went on to win.

**30...h5 31.Ke2 h4 32.Kf3 Ke7 33.Kg2 hxg3 34.fxg3 Bxg3 35.Kxg3 Kd6 36.a4 Kd5 37.Ba3 Ke4 38.Bc5 a6 39.b6 f5 40.Kh4 f4 41.exf4 Kxf4 42.Kh5 Kf5 43.Be3 Ke4 44.Bf2 Kf5 45.Bh4 e5 46.Bg5 e4 47.Be3 Kf6 48.Kg4 Ke5 49.Kg5 Kd5 50.Kf5 a5 51.Bf2 g5 52.Kxg5 Kc4 53.Kf5 Kb4 54.Kxe4 Kxa4 55.Kd5 Kb5 56.Kd6 1-0**

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

### Averbakh, Y – Matanovic, A

Belgrade 1961



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

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

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

### 39.f4! f5

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

After the alternative 39...h6 White should be patient: 40.Kc3! (I believe that I saw 40.e4!? analysed somewhere, but I don't think that it quite works. Such a

committal move has to be calculated exactly, and it's not advisable to force matters unless manoeuvring isn't going to get anywhere: 40...dxe4 41.Bxe4+ Kd6 42.Kc4 Bg4 43.Kd4 Be2 44.Bc2 and Black seems to be able to hold the fort with 44...Bb5! 45.Bb3 f6 46.Bf7 g5, noting that he is able to position most of his pawns on dark squares because they weren't fixed in place. Hence the preference for a slower approach where White angles to fix the black kingside pawns on light squares.) 40...Kc5 41.h4! (stopping ...g5) 41...Bb7 42.g4 Bc8 43.g5 hxg5 44.fxg5! Bb7 45.Bf1 Bc8 46.Be2 Bb7 47.h5! with a decisive advantage.

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

### 40.h4

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

### 40...Kd6

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

### 41.h5! gxh5

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

### 42.Kc3! 1-0

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

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

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



**Filipowicz, A – Flear, G**

Manchester 1982



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

**45...Qb3**

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

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

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

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

**Meynard, T – Flear, G**

French League 2006



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

**32.Bd4 g6 33.g3**

Not necessary.

**33...Bd8 34.f4?!**

This just feels like the wrong approach.

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

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

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

**37.h3?**

A fatal mistake.

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

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

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

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

**Cooley, C – Flear, G**

Borehamwood 1982

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

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

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

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

**40...cxb4 41.axb4 Bxf5**

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

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

This leads to the creation of a passed pawn.

**48.hxg5 hxg5 49.Be2**

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

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

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

**58...Bd5 0-1**

White resigned, as ...Bc4 is coming.

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

**Meyer, N – Flear, G**

Vaujany 2021

**48.Qxc6**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Arnaud, J-C – Flear, G**

Narbonne-plage 2011



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

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

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

**38...Kf4 39.cxd5 Kg3**

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

**40.Ba3 Kxh3 41.d6**

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

**41...Bd8** etc. wins.

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

**Flear, G – Prakken, G**

Creon 1998



Here White's advantage comes about because his pieces are operating more effectively, which in turns ensures that he has the better majority.

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

Exchanging rooks feels like the simplest way.

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

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

**34...f5 35.Bd5**

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

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

**Carlsen, M – Kramnik, V**

Moscow 2013

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



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

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

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

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

**57...Kf6 58.Kf4 Be6 59.Be4 Kg7 60.Kg5 Bd7 61.h6+ Kh8 62.Kf4 Be6 63.Bf5 Bf7 64.g4 Bh5 65.g5**

No thanks!

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

**Thomas, G – Maroczy, G**

Weston-super-Mare 1922



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

**1.Bd6+**

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

**1...Kd4**

Or 1...Ke4 2.Bc7.

**2.Bc5+!**

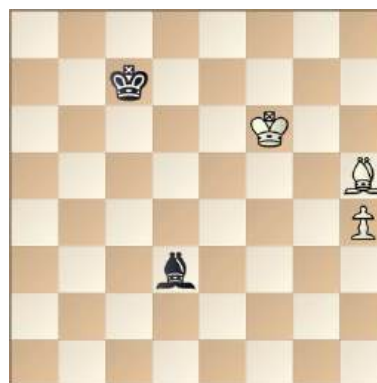
A second check does the trick.  
Not however 2.Bc7? Bxc7 3.Kxc7 Kc5=.

**2...Kc4 3.Bb6 Kb4 4.a5 1-0**

The pawn can't be stopped.

**Eliskases, E – Bogoljubov, E**

Germany (Match) 1939



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

**1...Bb5!**

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

**2.Ke7**

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

**2...Bd3! 3.Kf7**

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

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

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

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

and draws.

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



**Paunovic, D – Flear, G**

Geneva 1986



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

**1...Bd1**

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

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

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

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

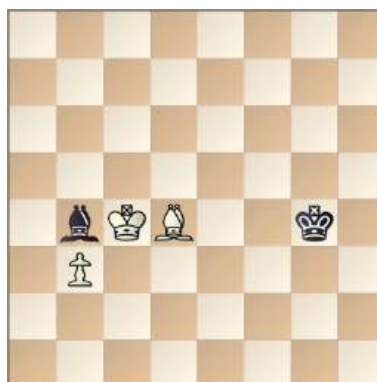
**6.Bf5 Bf3 7.Bd7 Be4 8.Bg4 Bg2 9.Be6 Bb7! 10.Kc5 Bf3 11.Bd5 Bg4!**

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

**12.Bb7 Be2 13.Kb4 Bf1 14.Ka5 ½–½****Taimanov, M – Fischer, R**

Buenos Aires 1960

In same-coloured bishop endgames, there is a slightly surprising way to defend (that sometimes works) which involves coming round the back of the pawn.



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

**1...Ba5!**

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

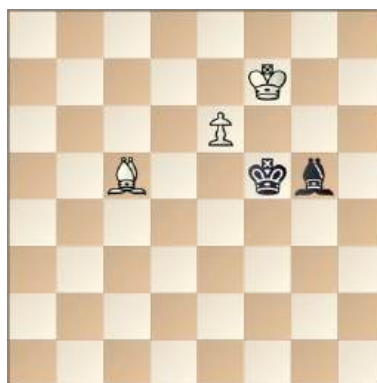
**2.Bc3 Bd8 3.b4 Kf4 4.b5 Ke4 5.Bd4 Bc7 6.Kc5 Kd3!**

The right direction.

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

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

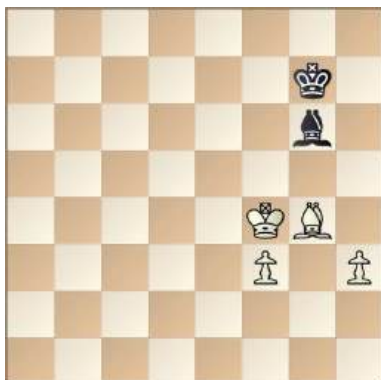
Here's another example of this theme.

**Centurini (1856)**

This is drawn. Both defensive diagonals are four or more squares long, and the fact that Black has decent control

of the f6-square stops White bullying the black bishop off both diagonals.

### Exercise 1



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

### Solution

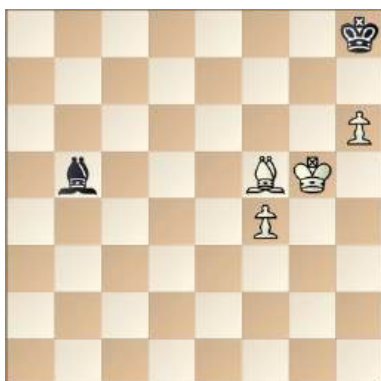
**1.Kg5!**

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

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

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

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



So far, so good.

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

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

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

**10...Ba4**

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

**11.f5**

The pawn is finally able to advance safely.

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

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

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

### Exercise 2



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

### Solution

**1...Be3!**

Zugzwang!

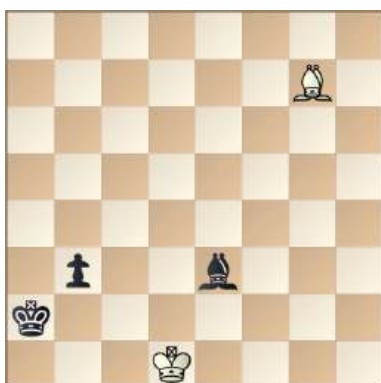
**2.Ba3**

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

### 2...Kc3 3.Bf8

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

### 3...Kb2! 4.Bg7+ Ka2



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

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

9...Bf4 also works.

### 10.Ke2 Ba3

...and all becomes clear.

## Great British Chess Players by GM John Nunn



### Jonathan Penrose (1933-2021)

Jonathan Penrose was born in Colchester on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1933 and, after learning the game at the age of four, he showed early chess promise and won the British Under

18 Championship while only 14. At Southsea 1950 he beat both Efim Bogoljubow and Savielly Tartakower, but despite these early successes he remained an amateur throughout his life. The Penrose family was academically gifted; his father Lionel was a geneticist and his sister Shirley had a distinguished medical career, while brothers Oliver and Roger went into physics, the latter winning the Nobel prize in 2020. There was also a strong chess thread in the family; for example, Lionel was a strong player and composed both problems and endgame studies. Jonathan himself gained a doctorate and lectured in psychology.



Photo by Dguendel - Own work, CC BY 3.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=45237756>

His career meant that his chess appearances were fewer than they might have been, but he was able to compete frequently at Hastings and especially in the British Championship, while he turned out for England in nine Olympiads from 1952 to 1974. His results in the British Championship were outstanding, and he won the title a record ten times, while his scores in Olympiads were also generally very good. He appeared less motivated in other events, and his Hastings results were rather mediocre. He also took part in a few high-level international tournaments, his best result here being 11½/16 in the Enschede Zonal 1963, where he made a clean sweep of the bottom eight players. He was less successful at Mar del Plata 1959 (5½/15) and Palma de Mallorca 1969 (6½/17), although both these events were very strong. His most famous game is his spectacular win against Mikhail Tal at the Leipzig Olympiad 1960, at a time when Tal held the World Championship. This was the first win by a British player against a reigning world champion since 1899.

In later years the stress of playing chess caused Penrose health issues, and he collapsed during a game at the

1970 Siegen Olympiad. He continued to play intermittently and according to Mega Database the 1979 British Championship, where I had the privilege of playing him, was his last over the board tournament. Like Alexander before him, Penrose turned to correspondence chess in later years, and here he was extremely successful, topping the correspondence rating list in the period 1977-79. He gained the correspondence grandmaster title in 1983 and FIDE gave him the over the board grandmaster title in 1993.

There's often a debate about how strong Penrose and other British players from the 1950s and 1960s really were. These days it's hard to imagine how poor the standard of British chess was in the 1950s. Ignoring events such as the British Championship, in which they played against each other, the main test of the top players in individual events was at Hastings. But here, for example, in the three events 1954/5, 1955/6 and 1956/7, out of a total of 69 games between the British and foreign players, the Brits only managed to win two (Clarke against Toran and Persitz against Diez del Corral). The rise of Penrose was a step forward, and he was the first post-war British player to really challenge high-class European opponents.

The following game is less well-known than his win against Tal, but features an attractive king hunt.

#### Jonathan Penrose - Luben Popov

Enschede Zonal 1963

Sicilian Defence, Kan Variation

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Be3**

A rather unusual move which poses Black fewer problems than 5.Nc3 or 5.Bd3, although transpositions are possible.

**5...Nf6 6.Bd3 d5?!**

A dubious move, given that Black cannot meet e5 by ...Nd7. Black can prepare the advance of the d-pawn by 6...Qc7 7.0-0 d5, but perhaps the simplest solution is 6...e5 7.Nb3 (7.Nf3 d5 is fine for Black) 7...d5 8.exd5 Nxd5 and White will struggle to prove any advantage.

**7.e5 Ng8**

7...Nfd7 is strongly met by 8.Nxe6 Bb4+ (8...fxe6 9.Qh5+ Ke7 10.Bg5+ Nf6 11.0-0 is very good for White) 9.c3 fxe6 10.Qh5+ g6 11.Bxg6+ hxg6 12.Qxh8+ Bf8 13.h4! followed by some combination of f4 and h5, and White has a clear advantage. The alternative 7...Ne4 8.0-0 followed by Nd2 is also unpleasant for Black.

**8.Nd2 Nc6 9.f4**

White has achieved a favourable type of French structure in which Black has lost considerable time.

**9...Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Qc7**



**11.0-0**

This natural move is not bad, but by opening the position immediately with 11.c4! White could have exploited Black's poor development. The justification for this move lies in the line 11...Bc5 12.cxd5 Bxd4 13.Qa4+ Qd7 14.Qxd4 Qxd5 15.Qc3 Ne7 16.Be4 Qd8 17.Nc4, and the outpost on d6 gives White a large advantage.

**11...Bc5 12.Bxc5 Qxc5+ 13.Kh1**

Even in this line White retains an advantage due to his superior bishop and kingside attacking chances.

**13...Ne7 14.c4**

This comes too late to be effective, since Black is already about to castle. At this point White should have preferred a purely positional approach such as 14.c3 Bd7 15.a4 0-0 16.Nf3, with some advantage.

**14...0-0 15.Qh5 h6 16.Rf3**

Black must take care, since White has some threats on the kingside, but against accurate defence these shouldn't amount to much.

**16...dxc4**

16...Bd7 17.Rg3 Kh8 was perhaps even simpler.

**17.Nxc4 Nf5**





White must exchange this knight if he wants to play Rg3.

#### 18.Bxf5 Qxc4?

A serious error. Black probably didn't like the idea of White's knight settling on d6, but 18...exf5 19.Nd6 Qc2 20.Raf1 Be6 21.R3f2 Qd3 is not dangerous for Black. His queen and bishop are active, and it's hard for White to do anything constructive without exchanging queens, but then Black can free himself with ...f6.

#### 19.Bd3 Qb4 20.Rg3 Kh8 21.Qe2?

Missing an attractive forced win by 21.Rxg7! Kxg7 22.Qg4+ Kh8 23.Qh4 Kg8 24.Qxh6 f5 25.exf6 Rf7 26.Bh7+! Rxh7 27.Qg6+ Kf8 28.Qxh7 followed by Qg7+.

#### 21...Bd7?

21...Rd8! prevents the sacrifice since the d3-bishop is now hanging, while after quieter replies Black can complete his development by ...Bd7.

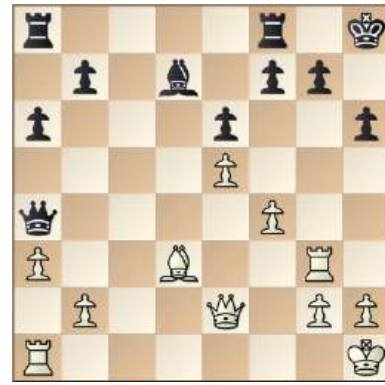
#### 22.a3?

Black has the extra tempo ...Bd7, so the sacrifice is less clear-cut than on the previous move. However, it should still win: 22.Rxg7! Kxg7 23.Qg4+ Kh8 24.Qh4 Kg8 25.Qxh6 f5 26.exf6 Rf7 27.Bg6 and now:

- 1) 27...Rxf6 28.Qh7+ Kf8 29.Qh8+ Ke7 30.Qg7+ wins.
- 2) 27...Qf8 28.Bxf7+ Kxf7 (or 28...Qxf7 29.Re1) 29.Qh7+ Ke8 30.Rd1 Bc6 31.f5! e5 32.Qg6+ Qf7 33.h4, and Black is powerless against the advance of the h-pawn.
- 3) 27...Raf8 28.Rd1! Qxb2 29.Qg5 Kh8 30.Qh5+ Kg8 31.Qg4 Kh8 32.Bxf7 Rxf7 33.Rxd7! Rxd7 34.Qh5+ Kg8 35.Qe8+ Kh7 36.Qxd7+ with a winning queen endgame.

#### 22...Qa4?

22...Qe7 stops the sacrifice, but sheds a pawn after 23.Qe4 g6 24.Qxb7, so 22...Qc5! is best, when 23.Rxg7 Kxg7 24.Qg4+ Kh8 25.Qh4 f5 26.exf6 h5 is unclear.



#### 23.Rxg7!

Third time lucky. Penrose spots the winning idea, which is even more effective than the move before, since Black's queen is less active on a4 than on b4.

#### 23...Kxg7 24.Qg4+ Kh8 25.Qh4 f5

25...Kg8 26.Qxh6 f5 27.exf6 Rf7 transposes.

#### 26.exf6 Rf7 27.Qxh6+ Kg8 28.Qg6+ Kf8 29.Qh6+ Kg8 30.Qg5+ Kf8

30...Kh8 31.Re1 Bc6 32.Bg6 Raf8 33.Qh5+ Kg8 34.Re5 is also decisive.

#### 31.Bg6! e5

Now White wins with an old-style king hunt.

#### 32.Qh6+ Kg8 33.Bxf7+ Kxf7 34.Qg7+ Ke6



#### 35.Qe7+ Kd5

35...Kf5 36.Qxe5+ Kg6 37.Qg5+ Kf7 38.Re1 also leads to mate.

#### 36.Qxe5+ Kc4 37.Rc1+ Kb3 38.Qc3+ Ka2 39.b4 1-0

## Tony Miles (1955-2001)

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

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

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

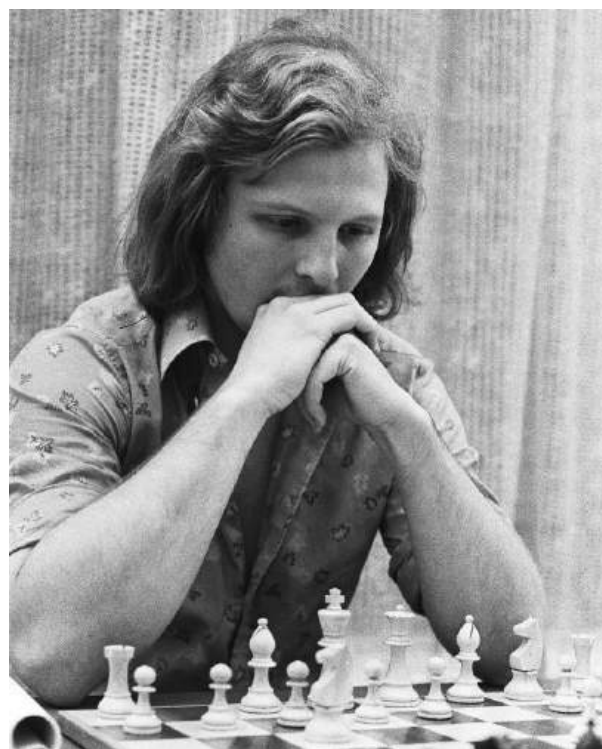


Photo by Bogaerts, Rob / Anefo

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=22772629>

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

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

### Tony Miles - Jan Timman

Tilburg 1984

English Opening, Reversed Dragon

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

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

**6...Nb6**

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

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

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

#### 10...f6?!

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

#### 11.Ne4

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

#### 11...Qd7

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

#### 12.Bb2 a6



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

#### 13.Qc2 Bh3 14.Nc5

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

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

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

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

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

#### 18...Rab8

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

#### 19.dxe5

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

#### 19...Ndx5?

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

#### 20.Nxe5 fxe5

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

#### 21.Rad1 Rf6

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

#### 22.f4

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

#### 22...Rxf4?

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

#### 23.Rxf4 exf4 24.Qf7



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

#### 24...Rg8 25.Rf1

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

#### 25...Qg4

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

#### 26.Rxf4 Qg5 27.Kg2?!

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

#### 27...Qxc5?

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

#### 28.Re4



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

#### 28...Qf8

28...h6 29.Qg6 Qg5 fails to 30.Bxg7+ Rxd7 31.Re8+ and mate next move.

#### 29.Qh5

Now the threat is 30.Rh4.

#### 29...Ne7 30.Qg5!

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

#### 30...Ng6

Allows a neat finish, but even the best defence 30...Nf5 loses after 31.Rf4 Ne3+ 32.Kf3 Qe8 33.Qc5! Nd1 34.Bxg7+ Kxg7 (34...Rxd7 35.Rf8+) 35.Qd4+ Kh6 36.Qf6+ and mate next move.



#### 31.Qxg6! 1-0



## Littlewood's Choice and Littlewood on Tactics by IM Paul Littlewood



### May 2023 Littlewood's Choice

Most of the great players of today were very talented as juniors. However, this was also true of the champions of the past.

One of the greatest World Champions was the legendary Jose Raul Capablanca. He had an invincible streak for eight years from 1916 until 1924 during which he played 63 games, winning 40 and drawing 23.

At the age of 13 he played a match against the Cuban Champion Juan Corzo, and beat him 6½-5½ - a remarkable achievement!

Here is game 8, which shows the brilliance of the young player.

### J. Corzo – J. R. Capablanca

Match Game 8 – 1901

**1.e4 e5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 exf4 4.Nf3 g5 5.h4 g4 6.Ng5**

This is the romantic Allgaier Gambit, which can be very dangerous. However, the young Capablanca defends very energetically. 6.Ng5 has been tried recently, but it is all rather artificial.

**6...h6 7.Nxf7 Kxf7 8.d4 d5 9.exd5 Qe7+ 10.Kf2 g3+ 11.Kg1**



Not 11.Kf3? Nf6, threatening Bg4+ and leaving White with a dreadful position. However, there now follows a clever tactic which returns the piece for the initiative.

**11...Nxd4! 12.Qxd4 Qc5 13.Ne2 Qb6!**



A subtle finesse, opening the a-file for the black rook. White might have tried 14.b4!? to try to resist this, but then 14...Bxb4 15.Be3 fxe3 16.Qxh8 Bf8 17.Qe5 Nf6, when Black has more than enough compensation for the loss of the exchange.

**14.Qxb6 axb6 15.Nd4 Bc5 16.c3 Ra4**

Winning a pawn with much the better game.

**17.Be2 Bxd4+ 18.cxd4 Rxd4 19.b3?!**



Slightly better was 19.Bh5+, but after 19...Kg7 20.b3 Nf6 21.Bb2 Rd2 retains the initiative.

**19....Nf6 20.Bb2?** This is now a mistake which shortens the battle. However, 20.Ba3 can be answered by 20...Re8 21.Bc4 Nxd5 22.Bb2 Rxc4! 23.bxc4 Nb4 24.Rf1 Nd3 25.Bc1 Re4 when Black is virtually a piece up because of the pitiful white rook on h1.

**20...Rd2 21.Bh5+ Nxh5! 22.Bxh8 f3!**

Also good was 22...Bf5, with Be4 to follow.

**23.gxf3 Nf4 24.Be5 Rg2+ 25.Kf1 Rf2+ 26.Ke1 Nd3+ 0-1**



After 27.Kd1 Nxe5 - Black is now ahead on material and is easily winning.

A brilliant game by the youngster, foreshadowing his future achievements.

I remember seeing this game in *Capablanca's Best Games* by Golombek and it made a deep impression on me. Whenever someone played the King's Gambit as White I always tried to defend energetically so as to not allow the initiative to be in my opponent's hands.

#### May 2023 – Littlewood on Tactics

As we have seen in the past months, tactics are very important. It is imperative to keep a look-out for them at all stages, as if they are missed it can be fatal.

Consider the following game of mine:

#### P. E. Littlewood – W. Watson

London League 2001

**1.d4 d6 2.e4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Be3 Bg7 5.Qd2 0-0 6.Bh6 e5 7.d5?**

White makes a mistake in the opening, as he misses the tactic 7...Nxe4! when if 8.Nxe4 then 8...Qh4 recovers the

piece and so nets a pawn. The game might continue 9.Bxg7 Qxe4+ 10.Ne2 Kxg7 11.h4, when White has some compensation but Black is clearly better.

**7....Bxh6? 8.Qxh6 c6 9.dxc6 bxc6 10.0-0 d5 11.exd5 cxd5 12.Nf3 d4**

The position is now critical, but it becomes clear that Black has underestimated White's attack.

**13.Ng5 Bb7 14.h4! Qe7 15.h5!**

White doesn't worry about sacrificing material as he realizes that he will get a strong attack on the h-file.

**15....dxc3?**

This looks natural, but in fact the last chance was 15...Rc8 to stop the white bishop reaching c4. However, White can still continue energetically with 16.hxg6 fxg6 17.Bd3! and now if 17...dxc3 18.Bxg6 is a killer. Therefore Black must try 17...Qg7 but after 18.Qh3 White still has a very strong attack because if 18...dxc3 then 19.Qe6+ Kf8 20.Qd6+ Qe7 21.Ne6+ Kf7 22.Bxg6+! hxg6 23.Ng5+ Kf8 24.Rh8+ winning. Black could also try 17...Qg7 18.Qh3 Qd7 but then 19.Qg3 dxc3 20.Nxh7! is winning for White. It is amazing how many tactics there are!

**16. hxg6 fxg6 17.Bc4+ Kh8 18.Qxg6 Nbd7**

Black finally completes his development, but it is too late!

**19.Bf7 Be4 20.Qxe4! 1-0**

The final tactical blow, without which White would not be winning. After 20...Nxe4 then 21.Rxh7 mate or 20...Rxf7 21.Nxf7+ Qxf7 22.Qxa8+ and White ends up two exchanges ahead.

A real swashbuckling game, which gave me great pleasure at the time!

Here are two more of my positions for you to solve, with the answers at the end of the article:



### T. Cruze – P. E. Littlewood

Hitchin Premier 1988

How did I make a decisive material gain?



### P. E. Littlewood – M. Adams

St Albans Open 1989

How did I win a piece?

#### Answers

#### T. Cruze – P. E. Littlewood

Black wins by 1...Bxf2+ 2.Kxf2 Rxd2! 3.Rxd2 Nxe4+ with decisive material gain, e.g. if 4.Kf3, g4+ 5.Nxg4 Ng5+ wins. In the game White played 4.Qxe4 Bxe4 5.bxa6, but this was insufficient and he resigned 11 moves later.

#### P. E. Littlewood – M. Adams

The crushing tactic is 1.Qxe7+! - then if 1..Rxe7 2.Nd8+ Ka6 3.Nxc6 wins. The game continued 3...Rf7 4.f3 and Black resigned.

#### August 2023 – Littlewood's Choice

My father came from a large family, and four of the brothers enjoyed playing chess, with Norman and John eventually representing England at the international level.

Therefore I was very interested to note that the brothers Frankie and Stanley Badacsonyi were competing in the World Blitz and Rapid Championships in Batumi, Georgia a couple of months ago.



In fact, my attention was drawn to this when their mum, Allison, posted information on Twitter about their progress, and I am grateful to her for the information which allowed me to write this article.



Both boys had their ups and downs in the competitions, but this was a decent game played by Frankie in the Rapid section:

#### George Marwan Vayanos - Frankie Badacsonyi

World U18 Rapid 06/06/2023

Round 2

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nf6 5.Nxf6+ exf6 6.c3 Bd6**

Black has made a solid opening choice which I saw recommended by Larsen many years ago. White now decides on an aggressive action involving queenside castling, but this can be a two-edged sword, as the game shows.

**7.Bd3 0-0 8.Qc2 Re8+ 9.Ne2 h5?!**



This is an interesting choice which I have never seen played before. The solid alternative is 9...g6 10.h4 f5 11.h5 Be6 with equal chances, although this does of course allow White to open the h-file for his rook.

**10.Be3 Nd7 11.0-0 Nf8 12.Kb1 Be6 13.h3 b5 14.Be4 Rc8?!**



Better is 14...Qd7, and then if 15.g4 Black can take the pawn, as after 15.....hxg4 16.hxg4 Bxg4 17.Bh7+ Nxh7 18.Qxh7+ Kf8 his king is quite safe, whereas White's position is crumbling. For example, the game could continue 19.Qh8+ Ke7 20.Qxg7 Bxe2 21.Rde1 Qf5+ 22.Ka1 Rg8 23.Qh6 Bf3 with a winning position for Black, as the discovered check is not dangerous.

**15.g4 h4 16.Rdg1?!**

Instead 16.d5 cxd5 17.Bxd5 Qe7 is slightly better for White.

**16....Bc4 17.Bf3 g5?!**

17...Ne6 18.Re1 Qa5 19.b3 Bd5 20.Bxd5 cxd5 was slightly better for Black. Now 18.Rd1 would lead to equality.

**18. b3?! Bd5 19.Qf5 Be6**

19...Qd7 was also quite good, but Frankie fancies his attacking chances!

**20.Qd3 a5 21.Be4?**





The last chance to defend successfully was 21.d5! cxd5 22.Qxb5 Rb8 23.Qa4 Ng6 24.Rd1 Ne7 25.Rhe1 Be5, when the position is dynamically equal. Note here how play in the centre is used to counter an attack on the wing.

**21....a4! 22.Bf5 axb3 23.axb3?**

Better was 23.Bxe6 Nxe6 24.axb3, but Black still has a strong attack after 24...Qa5 25.Qc2 Ra8 etc.

**23....Bxb3!**

An excellent exchange sacrifice, which leaves White helpless in a few more moves.

**24.Bxc8 Qxc8 25.Qf5?**

A better defence was 25.Kb2, but after 25....Bd5 26.Ra1 Nd7! (the white-squared bishop is much stronger than the rook) 27.Rhe1 Nb6 28.Ng1 Nc4+ 29.Kc1 Be4 30.Qe2 Ba3+ 31.Rxa3 Nxa3 Black is easily winning.

**25...Qa6 26.Kc1 Qa2 0-1**



Mate will follow shortly.

Under rapidplay time control conditions this was an extremely well-played game by Frankie. He made no silly errors, and exploited his opponent's mistakes to the full.

## August 2023 – Littlewood on Tactics

I am going to dedicate this article to those tactics that seem to come out of nowhere... usually as a complete shock to the opponent. They are difficult to categorise, but are so important to keep an eye out for.

Consider the following position:



## P.E. Littlewood - G. J. Willetts

Correspondence 1976

My opponent thought he was beating off the attack, but I played **1.Qxf5!** and Black resigned because he saw that if **1...exf5** then **2.Ng6** with mate to follow on h8.

These 'bolts from the blue' occur more often than you might think. In the next position White thought he was safe, but he missed a devastating tactic:



## D. Rumens - P. E. Littlewood

MaxElo 1976

The brilliant move **1...Qf6!** left White without resource. If **2.Rxf6** then **2...Re1** mate, so the game continued **2.Rg1 Qf2 3.Rxe2 Qxg1+ 4.Kd2 Rxe2+ 5.Kxe2 Qxh2+ 6.Kd1 Qh1+** and White resigned, as he is completely lost.

There are lots more examples from my own games, and the only way to defend against them is to keep a

constant watch out for surprising tactics. For example, consider the following position:



**J. Kinlay - P. E. Littlewood**

London Invitation 1973

Black is losing here, but White has a lot of tactics to consider. The best move is 1.Bxf7+ Kh8 2.Bxe8, when 2..Bh6 fails to 3.Ne4. However, believing that just about any sensible move would win White played 1.Rf1, but this was an enormous blunder because I then played 1....Qxf1+, and after 2.Bxf1 Re1+ 3.Nd1 Bh6 4.Be3 Rxd1+ White resigned. In fact, if you look closely you will realise that I also missed a win with 1...Qxd2+!

The important message here is that there are tactics in chess in virtually every position, so keep a sharp look-out for them!

Here are two more of my positions to solve, with the answers at the end of the article:



**P. E. Littlewood - B. S. Thipsay**

British Championship 2002

How did White finish off his opponent?



**P. E. Littlewood - W. Watson**

London League 2001

Black thought he had found a clever defence, but how did White surprise him and win?

### Answers

**P. E. Littlewood - B. S. Thipsay**

White won by 1.Rxh6! and Black resigned, as if 1....gxh6 then 2.Re3 Kg8 3.Rg3+ Kf8 4.Qh8+ Ke7 5.Re3 mate.

**P. E. Littlewood - W. Watson**

White won by 1.Qxe4! and Black resigned, because if 1...Nxe4 then 2.Rxh7 mate, or if 1....Rxf7 then 2.Nxf7+ Qxf7 3.Qxa8+ with a winning material advantage.

## Gormally's Coaching Corner by GM Danny Gormally



**March 2023**

I have started to do more coaching. This has forced me to rein in social media posts along the lines of 'online coaching is the most soul-destroying thing ever' and 'coaching is pointless - you either have it or you don't.' In truth, I still prefer face-to-face coaching, but online coaching has its positives as well. You don't have to

worry about travel costs, for starters, so it eats up far less of your day. Is coaching useful? I believe it is.

Although I didn't have any 'official' coaching when I was younger, I did get help from people at my local club who would give me opening and general advice on how to improve. As you become older it is natural to transition to becoming a coach or mentor yourself. Somehow, the playing side of the game for me now feels like trying to swim through quicksand. I'm losing points every tournament. So now I am helping those under-rated juniors who are making life tough for myself and my fellow fossils. There are a few issues that inexperienced and amateur players seem to struggle with that I can quickly identify, which I list below:

1. Moving a piece more than once in the opening.
2. Trying to do too much too soon - rather than improving their position or building their attack, they try to force the issue too quickly.
3. No analysis of their own games. I always urge students to get into the habit of analysing their own games and it is surprising how often this comes as a novel approach for amateur players.
4. Over-dependence on engines. This was also a trap that I fell into. If every time you analyse a game you turn on an engine, you are not using your brain. This last point is perhaps the most important one of all and so in my lessons now I emphasise the importance of doing your own analysis. Let's look at a game where I recently helped one of my students, Zain Patel, to analyse one of his recent games.

**Pang, F. - Patel, Z. B12**

London Chess League, 25.02.2023

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.dxc5 e6**



I have looked at this line a lot with Zain of late, as it is a very popular way for White to tackle the Caro-Kann. The advantage of this approach is that White is already

relying on very speedy development and moves like Bd3 and Nf3 can be made automatically, and then the opposing king will be in the cross-hairs as well, as in most cases Black will look to castle kingside.

**5.a3 Bxc5 6.b4 Bb6 7.Nf3 Ne7 8.Bb2 Ng6 9.g3** I said something to Zain during our Skype session about how if this was my game I would welcome this move if I was Black in this situation. That's because 9.g3 slightly weakens the white kingside and the light-squared bishop belongs on d3 in this variation, not on g2. However, White is concerned about the possibility of ... Nf4 if he places the bishop on d3 immediately, so firstly he prevents this possibility.

**9...Nc6 10.Nbd2 Bc7 11.Qe2 0-0 12.Bg2**



**12...f6?** A fault in judgement and experience. Black weakens his position when there was really no need.

Often improvement is about identifying candidate moves, and seeing that you have options. After we had finished analysing the game I turned the engine on and it came up with the move 12...b5! which apparently didn't appear on Zain's radar at all, and certainly didn't feature on mine. This is a good move for a number of reasons:

1. It prevents any b5 prod by White which would destabilise the knight on c6.
2. By 'freezing' the pawn on b4, Black opens up the possibility of playing ... a5, attacking the white pawn chain on the queenside.
3. It prevents the idea of c4 by White, which is very thematic and frees the position for him. It is worth pointing out that, like a lot of engine ideas, this is also tactically justified as if White plays Qxb5 then this will hang the e-pawn. 13.0-0 (13.Qxb5 Ncxe5 is more than ok for Black, and ... a5 followed by ... Ba6 might soon become an active threat) 13...a5 14.Rfd1 Bd7= when the game is balanced.



You may well say 'aren't you contradicting what you were saying earlier - that you shouldn't turn on the engine when analysing?' Well, yes, you'd be right. In my defence, we did analyse the game before we turned the engine on to check our own analysis. Zain, like a lot of juniors, has a keen interest in what computers have to say, so it is difficult to disregard the engine altogether. In an ideal world, I might argue that it could indeed be best not to turn on the engine at all; that the whole process of getting better and analysing your game is about the excitement and interest of going back and forth in your analysis until you find the right ideas. Increasingly, it would seem, this type of view is relegating me to the chess dinosaurs.

**13.exf6 gxf6 14.0-0 14.c4!** is the right idea, of course. 14...e5 (14...d4 15.b5 d3 16.Qe3 was a line that Zain and I considered; however, Black seems to be in trouble here wherever he moves the knight. The pawn on d3 is just weak and likely to be picked off. 16...Nce5 17.Nxe5 Nxe5 18.0-0+-) 15.cxd5 Qxd5 16.0-0 and Black is just in trouble, as the kingside is rickety and the queen is exposed to attacks on d5. (16.0-0-0? was suggested by Zain, but I thought this was a typical error that an inexperienced player would make. As White is doing well and will have an automatic attack without having to do anything special, there is no need to create counter-chances for the opponent by putting your king in the firing line as well. 16...Qa2 17.Ne4 Bg4 and Black will quickly look to bring a rook to the c-file and gain some attacking chances himself.)

**14...Qe7 15.Rfe1 e5**



**16.Qb5?** Zain's talented opponent is even younger than he is, and this also looks like the move of an inexperienced player. 16.Qb5 is anti-positional, and all it does is create a one-move threat which is easily met when the queen will just be misplaced. How can you get juniors to get out of these bad habits? I guess by showing them games where somebody built the attack, rather than going for one-move ideas. Part of the issue in my view, and why chess players often play with a lack of patience, is because of the coaching we received when we were younger. There is an obsession with teaching the four-move checkmate, which is all about bringing your queen out early in the game.

16.c4!, attacking the black centre and gaining space, was once again the right idea. 16...e4 17.Nd4 Be5 18.Qe3+-.

**16...Rd8 17.Rad1 a6 18.Qe2 Bg4 19.h3 Bh5 20.Qf1** In our analysis we considered the possibility of 20.g4 Nf4 21.Qe3 now Black has a choice - take on g2 or move the bishop. I suggested to Zain that it was better to move the bishop. 21...Nxg2 - simplicity above all! (21...Bg6? 22.Qxf4 exf4 23.Rxe7 Nxe7 24.Bxf6



looked like a very good turn of events for White. Later, when we confirmed with the computer that White is indeed doing quite well here, Zain asked me how I was so sure that this was the case. I said that a lot of it comes down to experience. I've just seen similar situations where opponents have sacrificed the exchange or I've



sacrificed the exchange and got plenty of play.) 22.Kxg2 Bg6.

20...Nf8 21.Nb1 e4 22.Rd2 Black is better here. After further mistakes, Zain went on to win.

22...Bb6 23.Nh4 Ne5 24.Bxe5 Qxe5 25.Kh2 Rac8 26.a4 Bc7 27.f4 Qe7 28.c4 Qxb4 29.cxd5 Re8 30.Nf5 Bg6 31.Rd4 Qb6 32.Nh6+ Kg7 33.Red1 e3 34.Qe2 Bd6 35.f5 Kxh6 36.fxg6 Nxc6 37.Be4 Bxc3+ 38.Kh1 Bf2 39.d6 Re5 40.d7 Rd8 41.Bxc6 Qc6+ 42.Be4 Rxe4 43.Rd6 Qxa4 44.Nc3 Qc4 45.Qf3 Re6 46.R6d4 Qc6 47.Rh4+ Bxh4 48.Rd5 Bg5 49.h4 Qxc3 50.hxc3+ Kg7 51.gxf6+ Qxf6 52.Qg4+ Kh8 53.Rf5 Qh6+ 54.Kg2 Rg6

0-1

johnman1 (2138) - mrkim417 (2229) B14

Rated blitz game lichess.org, 01.03.2023

If you want to be featured in this column, then please contact me via email at [danielgormally@msn.com](mailto:danielgormally@msn.com) and I will try to analyse your game for you and make you famous. A player who recently contacted me was Cameron Davis, who is a young player who is studying at university. Cameron seems to have quite a dynamic style judging by the game I watched him play on Lichess.

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.cxd5 Nxd5 8.Bd3 Bb4 9.Bd2 0-0 I asked Cameron when we analysed the game what he would have done in the line after 9...Qf6? 10.0-0 (... Qf6 is a shocker of course, and White can win on the spot with 10.Bg5!) 10...Nxd4? Cameron hit on the right reply: 11.Nxd5! Nxf3+ 12.gxf3 exd5 13.Bxb4 This line is simple but is a good example of how you have to get the basics right as a coach. Emphasise the importance of concrete calculation, and how it is crucial to look for checks and captures first.

10.0-0 Nxc3? This was a mistake, and I was impressed to see that Cameron identified it as such. Understanding the flow of the game and when key mistakes happen, and when the important moments happen, is crucial to your progress as a player. Black strengthens the white centre and removes the one strategic asset that counter-balanced the potential white attack on the kingside: the isolated d-pawn.

11.bxc3 Be7 12.Bf4?! I was also impressed that Cameron saw this as sub-optimal.

12.Re1



was good and now I went into one of my long speeches that I often bore my students to death with, in explaining the 'theory of only moves'. I learned about this theory from a Garry Kasparov annotation in *New In Chess* once. The theory is that there are some moves in the position that you will inevitably play and some moves that you may or not play. It feels a bit like the advantage that players have when they are playing on the button in poker. The concept is that you should play only moves first and then see what happens. Re1 is a move that White will inevitably play so why not get it on the board as soon as possible? By contrast, it is not clear if White needs Bf4 or not. I also asked Cameron how to assess the position. He said White was clearly better, which was also correct. In fact, the game is already borderline winning for White. 12...b6 13.h4.

12...Bf6 12...Bd6! was the reason why Cameron wasn't sure about Bf4. White still maintains the advantage after this, but exchanging the pieces for Black could relieve the pressure somewhat. 13.Bxd6 Qxd6 14.Re1 b6 15.Bxh7+ Kxh7 16.Ng5+ was a fantasy line I mentioned in analysis although it doesn't seem to be enough: 16...Kg6 17.Qg4 f5! 18.Qh4 Bd7 19.Qh7+ Kf6 20.Qh4 Kg6=.

13.Re1 b6 14.Bc2 Bb7 15.Qd3 g6 16.Rad1 Na5 17.Ne5 Qd5? 17...Rc8.



Black wouldn't have anything to complain about. There are reasonable sources of counterplay available to him

over the next few moves, for example ...Bd5 followed by ...Nc4.

**18.Qg3 Qxa2 19.Bb1 Qb3** Cameron correctly said this was winning for White as Black is devoid of defenders on the kingside (the bishop on f6 looks very lonely), while White is lining up the heavy forces in that sector.

**20.h4 Nc4 21.Nd7** This simple move is good enough to win the game. However, Cameron was already very short of time, and unfortunately went on to lose the game.

I suggested the line 21.Nxg6, although this runs into a strong response. 21...fxg6! (21...hxg6 was the first line I looked at - which probably drew me to Nxg6 in the first place. 22.h5 gives some attacking chances) 22.h5.



This was where we turned on the engine. Perhaps we should have left it off. In any case, I want the reader to think about this position, and find the best response for Black.

**0-1**



**22...Qb5!**



is the beautiful resource that the computer finds, although as I suggested to Cameron: wouldn't it be a far more rewarding experience to find this in analysis yourself without the help of the engine? That's the problem with machines - they do it all for you.

#### June 2023 - Open Your Mind with ChessBase India

India has recently overtaken China as the most populous country in the world and has a staggering population of over 1.4 billion. That is a huge pool to choose from and might help to explain why they are becoming such a powerful force in the world of chess. ChessBase India on YouTube has almost 1.2 million subscribers, and a great deal of their content seems to be put together by the industrious Sagar Shah, himself an international master but one who seems keener to help others than promote or advance his own playing career.

After round 1 of the Norway masters, Sagar unscrambled the game between Alireza Firouzja and Dommaraju Gukesh, which was won by Gukesh. India is getting very excited about its young players, and with good reason. Players like Gukesh himself, Nihal Sarin, Pragg, and Erigaisi seem well primed to follow in the footsteps of the great Viswanathan Anand and bring the world title back to India, and Gukesh in particular has a look about him that suggests an inner confidence and belief that will take him all the way. The way that Sagar Shah dissected the game was interesting, even though it leant heavily on computer analysis. Working with machines can be a double-edged sword, as it can make you lazy and dependent on computers for your own thinking, but it can also open you up to possibilities that you might not have seen, to 'free your mind' as Morpheus said to Neo in 'The Matrix'.

#### Firouzja, Alireza (2785) - Gukesh D (2732) C54

Norway Chess - (1.2), 30.05.2023

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5** The Italian Game has become an increasingly popular choice at the highest level for a number of years now. That's at least partly

because the Ruy Lopez has declined in popularity due to the Berlin Defence proving an extremely difficult opening to break down.

**4.d3 Nf6 5.0-0 d6 6.c3 h6** According to Sagar, this is generally played to prevent ideas of Bg5, pinning the knight. To be honest, my own knowledge of this opening is extremely limited, and I'm sad to say I'd already be out of theory by this point of the game.

6...0-0 is still more popular, and over 3,000 games have been played from this position. 7.Bb3 a6 8.Nbd2 Ba7 9.h3 h6 10.Re1 is a balanced position, where both sides have many plans available to them.

**7.Nbd2 a5** Before castling, Gukesh takes the time out to prevent b4, while also gaining space on the queenside. One of the things I have noticed from looking at the games of strong players is how reluctant they are to just make moves automatically. A lot of players would just castle without thinking here, but then you have to ask yourself 'What is White threatening?' Is there any immediate danger to the black king? Well, no, so this move is a useful one to throw in before getting your king away.

**8.Re1 0-0 9.Nf1 a4** 9...Be6 is a lot more popular according to Sagar, but part of the skill of playing at the highest level is presumably about avoiding your opponent's preparation.

**10.Bb5 a3 11.b4 Bb6 12.Bc4** I wonder if Firouzja considered the immediate greed here with 12.Qb3, intending to snaffle the pawn. 12...Be6 13.Bc4 (13.c4? Bg4 14.Bxa3 Bxf3 15.gxf3 Nd4 obviously backfires on White) 13...d5 14.exd5 Bxd5 15.Bxd5 Qxd5 16.Qxd5 Nxd5 17.b5 Na7 18.c4 Nb4 doesn't seem convincing for White.

**12...Ne7!** A typical manoeuvre in such positions. The knight is brought around to the kingside where it can do a more useful job, while at the same time this frees up Black to expand in the centre with ... c6 and ...d5.

**13.Ng3 Ng6 14.h3 c6 15.Bb3 d5 16.exd5 Nxd5** 16...cxd5? 17.Nxe5 Nxe5 18.Rxe5 Qc7 19.Qe1!

**17.Bd2** 17.Nxe5 Nxe5 18.Rxe5 is something of a mistake as it runs into 18...Bxf2+!, winning back the pawn with a great game, as pointed out by Sagar on the video.

**17...Be6 18.Nh5** The game is now starting to become very sharp, as Firouzja starts to instigate some tactical play. There is also a concrete threat of taking on e5, as the same idea of taking on f2 and then playing ... Qf6+ would no longer be possible.

**18...Bc7?** Sagar said this was a mistake, and it turns out to be so, for tactical reasons. In a few moves the board will be aflame.

Sagar said that 18...Qd6 was a superior choice. After 19.Qc1 Kh7 Black seems to be holding the fort.

**19.d4 exd4 20.Nxd4?** Missing the brilliant tactical shot 20.Bxh6!!.



As soon as you see this move you think: Wow! Isn't chess a complex and interesting game! Black seems super -solid; there doesn't seem to be much going on, yet he is getting dismantled! 20...gxh6 (20...Nxc3 should also fail to save Black: 21.Qd2 Bxb3 22.Bxg7 Nf4 23.Bxf8 (23.Nxf4 Kxg7 24.axb3 also seems good as the black king is wide open - 24...Bxf4 25.Qxf4 Qf6 26.Qg4++-) 23...Qxf8 24.Nxf4 Qh6 25.axb3 Qxf4 26.Qxd4 Qxd4 27.Nxd4+-) 21.Qxd4 and Black seems done for. The computer makes chess look like an easy game! Here I might question, why did Firouzja not play Bxh6? After all these players are very capable of seeing complex and chaotic ideas; this is what their strength is based on. It is possible he vaguely saw this in passing but underestimated how strong it was.

**20...Qd6!** Praised by Sagar on the video.

**21.Ng3** The computer solves all issues with ease, and indicates that 21.g3! is best. 21...Bxh3 might have been the reason why Alireza rejected this. 22.Bxh6! gxh6 23.Bxd5 cxd5 24.Nb5 Qb6 25.Nxc7 Qxc7 26.Nf6+ (26.Qd4 f6 27.Nxf6+ Rxf6 28.Qxf6 Qf7 seems much less convincing) 26...Kg7 27.Qd4 with a big attack. For an engine this is all very simple; for a human, even one as strong as Alireza, it is much less so. You don't really consider going through all these complex tactical operations just to show compensation for one pawn.

**21...Rad8** Sagar said this was a very interesting decision that he learned a lot from. Gukesh willingly gives up the bishop pair and allows his structure to be ruined. You see the influence of the engine here as well, because the engine always plays for activity, and it seems as if

Gukesh is doing the same, because when White takes on e6 the f-file becomes open - a significant point.

**22.Nxe6 fxe6 23.Qg4 Ne5 24.Qe2 Nxb4! 25.Bg5!**  
25.Bxb6 Nbd3 26.Be3 Nxe1 27.Rxe1.



Objectively Black must be fine, but I'd be quite concerned if I had this position as the compensation for White seems equally obvious: two bishops, wide open black king.

**25...hgx5 26.cxb4 g6 27.Rad1 Qxb4 28.Bxe6+?** It is tempting to win a pawn, but White should have resisted. This loses valuable time without gaining enough to show for it.

28.Ne4! was the way to maintain the balance. 28...Nd3 (28...Qe7 looks like a safe move, if a bit passive) 29.Nxg5 Nxe1 30.Rxd8 Bxd8 31.Nxe6 with a bit of a mess. (31.Qxe6+ Kg7 32.Qd7+ Qe7 is defending for Black)

**28...Kh8 29.Rb1 Qf4 30.Rxb7 Nd3 31.Rd1**



**31...Nc1!** 31...Nxf2 32.Rxd8 Bxd8 also seems good for Black.

**32.Rxc1** 32.Qe1 Rxd1 33.Qxd1 Qxf2+—.

**32...Qxc1+ 33.Kh2** 33.Nf1 Qf4 34.g3 Qe5 Black will eventually win the game.

**33...Rd2** Sagar mentioned on the video that Alireza was getting very short of time here because in this tournament there is a very fast time control, presumably designed to produce exciting finishes like this one.

33...Bxg3+? 34.fgx3 Rd1? would be very embarrassing after the simple reply 35.Qe5++—.

**34.Qe4 Rxf2 35.Rxc7 Rxc7+ 36.Qxg2 Rxc7+ 37.Kxg2 Qd2+**

0-1

## September 2023 - Northumbria Masters Report

**Gormally, D. - Sowray, P.**

Northumbria Masters 2023, London 28.08.2023

The round 8 game of the Northumbria Masters proved to be a pivotal game in my event, as it helped me to go clear in the tournament standings and ultimately led to my tying for first. In this article I want to go through the game and pick out some important moments. For the annotations, with a few exceptions, I have mainly done my own analysis and then gone back and picked it apart later with the engine. Did I make any obvious bloopers? The reason I have taken this approach is obvious - I think people have become too dependent on engines in their analysis. The typical approach now is, once the round has finished, to feed your games into the engine immediately, to find out what mistakes you made, if any. This removes the process of trial and error that used to be a part of analysis, and for that reason I think a lot of people just can't analyse anymore. They are lost without their engines. But fine - most junior players are obsessed with working with engines, and I think engine analysis is helpful in isolation, so that's why I have done a separate analysis where I include suggestions from the computers.

**1.d4 d6** The first mild surprise. I was expecting Peter to either play a King's Indian, which he had done earlier in the tournament, or possibly to go for something solid like a Slav. This invites White to play e4 and go for a Pirc, and who am I to back down from a challenge?

**2.e4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.h3 0-0 6.Be3 c6 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.0-0 e5 9.Re1 Re8 10.Qd2 b5** I must admit that I was quite relieved to see this at the board, even though it as a typical approach by Black.

I was quite concerned by 10...d5!?, as this seemed quite a concrete way to try to Hoover pieces off the board and make a draw. 11.dxe5 (11.Nxe5 Nxe5 12.dxe5 Nxe4 13.Bxe4 dxe4 14.Qxd8 Rxd8 15.Nxe4 Bxe5 16.Bg5 is a



line that might be a bit annoying for Black, as White will manage to get Nf6+ and then emerge with a very powerful bishop on f6 in the ending. But is this enough to win? After 16...Rf8 17.Nf6+ Bxf6 18.Bxf6 Be6 Black will quickly play a rook to e8, and I don't think that White has many chances to win. (11.Bg5?! exd4 12.Nxd4 dxe4 13.Bxe4 Nc5 14.Bf3 Rxe1+ 15.Rxe1 Ne6 16.Be3 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Be6 also feels like nothing for White, as Black has no weaknesses.) 11...Nxe4 12.Bxe4 (12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Bxe4 Nxe5=) 12...dxe4 13.Nxe4 (This was one of the few occasions that I turned on the engine because I was interested in the theory here. 13.Bg5!±



creates a problem for Black.) 13...Nxe5 14.Qxd8 Nxf3+!=. 10...exd4!? was the most forcing way to play, and this is also a quite popular choice for Black. This is of course rather committal, as Black loses some influence in the centre. 11.Nxd4 Ne5 by Black forces tactical play. (after 11...Nc5 12.Bh6± White is exchanging bishops and seems to be clearly better (12.f3 d5?! 13.Nxc6!) 12...Bxh6 13.Qxh6 Qb6) 12.Bf1 Bxh3 13.f4 Neg4 14.gxh3 Nxe3 15.Rxe3 Qb6 16.Na4 Qc7 17.Rae1 Bh6 18.Qf2 Qa5 19.Nc3 Nh5 20.Rf3 d5 is one zany line that might have occurred on the board if I was playing a complete maniac. But Peter Sowray is not the type of player to go for such adventures, and objectively the sacrifice is not a good one for Black.

**11.dxe5 Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Rxe5 12...dxe5 13.a4 b4 14.Ne2 a5** was also something to consider, and then do you prod at the structure or not? (14...Qe7 15.c3 Rd8 16.cxb4 Nxe4 17.Qc2 Nf6 18.Bc5 Qe6 feels a lot better for White; for example, the knight could simply move to g3) 15.Ng3 (15.c3!? Ba6 16.Bxa6 Qxd2 17.Bxd2 Rxa6 18.f3 c5 19.Be3 c4 20.Red1±; fortunately White has 15.Nc1!± and is clearly better - I saw this move during the game. The knight will go to b3, when the pawn on a5 is rather sickly and any further expansion by Black with ... c5-c4 is contained. Then White can prepare c3 at leisure, which will break open the queenside.) 15...h5!?

**13.a3 Bb7 13...d5 14.Bd4** and I thought White was clearly better, as the black structure in the centre feels rickety and uncomfortable.

**14.f3** This decision took me a lot of time. I felt uncomfortable - a bit panicky. I was nervous because I really wanted to do well and win the tournament, but realized this was becoming a difficult game. Sowray is really tough - I've played him on a number of occasions and I always got the feeling that he's easily IM strength, even though work commitments meant he never quite achieved that title. The reason I played 14.f3 is very sensible and follows the same logic of why I played a3 earlier. Black wants to attack e4, so I am taking prophylactic measures against this.

14.f4 Re8 15.Bd4 is more aggressive, although it is not clear then if Black can play ...c5 straightaway or prepare this first by playing ...a6. 15...a6 (15...c5 16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Bxb5 Bxc3! 18.Qxc3 Rxe4) 16.e5 Nd7! when e5 is weak.

**14...Qc7 14...Nh5**, provoking White into winning the exchange, was one idea. Unfortunately for Black this runs into 15.g4, gaining even more space. (15.Bd4 c5 16.Bxe5 Bxe5 17.Nxb5 Qh4



with really fantastic compensation is what Black was hoping for!)

**15.Bf1 Ree8 16.Rad1 Red8 17.Qf2 Nd7 18.Bd4 18.Bxa7 Bxc3 19.bxc3 c5** would be clearly wrong, of course.

**18...Bf8**



Again Peter plays the move that irritated me the most. I was hoping he would exchange on d4. And so another difficult positional problem faces White. I feel like I need Mark Dvoretsky sitting beside me!

**19.Ne2?!** As soon as I played this I regretted it, as he then played the move I was most concerned about!

19.f4 is the move I really wanted to play, as ...Bf8 is surely a red rag to a bull and White should go into attack mode! 19...Re8 holds up the e5 break, when it doesn't seem that clear what White should do next. Maybe I should play the queen to g3, and the engine would say that I'm winning. We'll have to check this later... (19...a6 is also possible, when Black intends to push the bishop back with ... c5. 20.f5 (20.e5 dxe5 21.fxe5 c5 22.e6 is a line that I saw during the game. But I have a feeling that I saw this earlier and then forgot about this variation and decided to play it 'safe' with Ne2.) 20...c5 21.Be3 Ne5 and the attack is gunked up for now, but perhaps we'll come back and analyse it with an engine later - I get the sense that Black is horribly short of space already, and that the computer would say that White has a big plus.) 19.Qh4 Re8∞; 19.Rd2 was the safe move that I regretted not playing. 19...a6 20.Red1 c5 21.Be3 Nf6 22.Bg5 Be7 23.Qh4 Kg7, and even here it is not easy to break through.

**19...c5! 20.Be3** I think against a weaker player than Sowray I would have gambled with 20.Bc3 because the best reply 20...a5! is not that obvious - the problem was that Sowray was likely to see this, when Black is fundamentally back in the game. 21.Nf4 b4 22.Bd2 Bg7∞.

**20...Bg7 21.c3 Re8 22.Nf4 a6 23.Qd2! Be5 24.Nd3** 24.Nd5 Bxd5 25.Qxd5 Nf6 just felt like a line that was too easy for Black to navigate. If 26.Qd2 Bg3 27.Re2 Re6 the game could easily go downhill for White from here.

**24...Bg7** 24...Bg3 25.Bf2 Bxf2+ 26.Qxf2 Ne5 27.Nf4 Re7 28.Nd5 Bxd5 29.Rxd5 Nd7 30.Red1 Re6 31.Qg3 Ne5 32.f4! and White is doing well - but this whole variation

is hardly forced, so playing ...Bg3 was a legitimate alternative.

**25.Nf2 Re6** 25...Be5 26.Ng4 Bg3 27.Bf2 Bxf2+ 28.Qxf2 felt a lot better for White, as the dark squares around the black king are quite tender.

**26.Bf4 Ne5 27.Bxe5?** Giving Black the bishop pair surely lets him off the hook.

It was only when analysing the game later that I realised that the position after 27.Ng4 Nxg4 28.hxg4 wasn't so straightforward for Black to hold. The main issue that Black has here is liquidating the pressure on d6 with the pawn break ...d5 isn't that easy to carry out. If 28...Rd8 29.g5!±.



Later I was quite happy to find this, and found some lines where Black was beginning to feel uncomfortable. One of the ideas of course is to attack down the h-file later. But the main idea is to play g3 and Bh3 quickly. How boring it would have been, I thought, to just find this with an engine instead, and it is blandly pumping out g5 and saying that White is +1.3 ahead. It's so much more fun when you find ideas by yourself in the analysis. 29...Qe7 (29...Be5 30.g3 d5 31.Bh3 Ree8 and the more I see this I am doubting my evaluation that White is clearly better after g5. Why is White better here? 29...Qb6 30.g3 d5 31.Bh3 does look better for White.) 30.g3 d5 31.Bh3+-; 27.Bg3 Rae8 28.f4 Nc4 29.Bxc4 bxc4 30.f5 gxf5 31.exf5 Rxe1+ 32.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 33.Qxe1 seemed promising until I saw the direct 33...Qc6!.

**27...Bxe5?!** I was really hoping that Peter wouldn't play 27...dxe5! as this certainly didn't look better for White. 28.c4 does threaten to dismantle the queenside, but also introduces the possibility of Black's bringing a rook to d4 later, so it's a rather double-edged sword. 28...Qb6 29.Ng4 Bf8 30.Qg5 Be7 (If 30...f6? 31.Qh4 when White is threatening Rd7.)

**28.f4 Bg7**



**29.f5!** This was my idea - to attack directly on the kingside.

**29...Re7** 29...gxf5 30.exf5 Rxe1 31.Rxe1 Qd7 32.Bd3 seemed more promising for White, as there is an obvious chance to attack on the kingside. (32.Qf4 Be5 (32...Qd8 33.Ng4 h5 34.f6 hxg4 35.fxg7+-) 33.Qg5+ Kh8 34.Rxe5! dxe5 35.Qf6+ Kg8 36.Ng4+-) 29...Re5 seemed too provocative, when White should probably go for the simple 30.fxg6 (30.Ng4 Rxe4 31.Rxe4 Bxe4 32.f6 Bf8 and I saw nothing for White) 30...hxg6 31.Qxd6 Qxd6 32.Rxd6 Rae8 33.Rb6 Bc8 34.a4+-.

**30.Qf4 d5** Now 30...Be5 felt critical, so as to counter-attack on the dark squares. If 31.Qh4 d5! 32.exd5 Bh2+.

a) 32...Rae8 33.Ng4 Bg3 (33...gxf5? 34.Rxe5! when Black is dismantled on the dark squares. 34...Rxe5 (34...fxg4 35.Qg5+ Kh8 36.Qf6+-) 35.Nf6+ Kf8 36.Qh6+-) 34.Rxe7 Rxe7 35.Nf6+ Kg7 36.Nh5+! gxh5 37.f6+-.

b) 32...Bxd5!? simply recapturing is also possible; this is based on a tactical trick. 33.Rxd5? (but there is 33.Ng4, and the mess continues) 33...Bh2+ 34.Kh1 Rxe1+-.

33.Kh1 Rxe1 34.Rxe1 Bg3



was a line that I reached in my calculations, and seemed very critical to the entire assessment of the position. If 35.Qf6 Qf4! 36.Nd3 Qxf5 (36...Qd2? 37.Re7 Rf8

38.Rxb7+-) 37.Qxf5 gxf5 38.Nxc5 Bxd5 when Black is at least equal.

**31.Qh4!?** Playing sharply for the attack.

31.Qxc7 Rxc7 32.exd5± was objectively what I should have done, but it was tempting to play on my opponent's time trouble a little. If 32...gxf5 (32...Rd7 33.fxg6 hxg6 34.Ne4; 32...Rd8) 33.d6 Rd7 34.Nd3 Rc8 35.Ne5, when Black seems in trouble.

**31...Re5** 31...Be5 32.exd5 (32.Ng4 dxe4 33.Nf6+ (33.Qh6 gxf5 is less than nothing for White; 33.f6 Re6 also leads nowhere) 33...Bxf6 34.Qxf6 Qe5!) 32...Bh2+ 33.Kh1 Rxe1 34.Rxe1 Bg3 35.Qf6 transposes to the line given above.

**32.exd5** 32.f6? Rh5 33.Qg4 Bxf6+-.

**32...Rxf5?** In the cold light of the day 32...Rxd5! seemed stronger. Perhaps Sowray was concerned about allowing the white pawn to f6. 33.Rxd5 (If 33.Re7 Qc6 34.Rxd5 Qxd5 35.c4 Qc6 36.cxb5 axb5 37.fxg6 hxg6, when Black seems to be holding, although admittedly it's a bit brittle) 33...Bxd5 34.f6 Bf8∞.

**33.d6 Qd8 34.Qe7!** 34.Qxd8+ Rxd8 35.d7 Kf8 leads nowhere; 34.Re7? Bf6!+-.

**34...Bc6** 34...Qxe7 35.Rxe7 Bc6 36.Rc7 looks like problems for Black.

**35.Bd3!**



I was quite happy to find this. The bishop is heading for e4 to break the blockade. For the first time in the game I felt confident of winning. There was only one problem which quickly becomes relevant; I was now short of time myself, and as a consequence unable to calculate well enough to find the killer blow.

**35...Rf6 36.Be4 Bxe4 37.Nxe4 Re6 38.Qb7 Rb8** If 38...Be5? 39.Rf1 f5, 40.Qd5 would have ended the game at once.

**39.Qa7** Perhaps trying to be too precise.

39.Qxa6. There was no reason not to just collect the pawn. 39...Qh4 was what worried me, although it is hardly enough. (39...b4 40.axb4 cxb4 41.c4, and White will trundle the pawn forward and win. 41...Qe8 42.c5 Rxe4 43.Rxe4 Qxe4 44.c6



... and at first I thought this was winning easily, but White has gone wrong over the last few moves, as now 44...Qc2! doesn't look so easy.) 40.Qc6! f5 (40...Rbe8 41.d7 Rd8 42.Qc7+-) 41.Qd5.

**39...Ra8** 39...f5 40.d7!; 39...Be5 40.Ng5 (40.d7! - White should always push if he can.) 40...Qxg5 41.Qxb8+ Kg7 and White is presumably still winning here, but it isn't so easy to kill the game off and Black has some serious counterplay coming with ... Qf4; 39...b4 40.axb4 cxb4 41.c4+-.

**40.Qxc5 Qh4 41.Nf2?** This was another moment where I briefly 'cheated' and checked the engine, which said that White could have won briskly with the straightforward 41.d7 Rd8 42.Qc8! f5 (42...Bf8 43.Nf2) 43.Nf2+-.

**41...Rxe1+ 42.Rxe1 Bf8 43.Qc6 Rd8 44.d7 Qc4 45.Qxc4 bxc4 46.Ng4 Kg7 47.Rd1 f6 48.Kf2 Kf7 49.Ke2 Ke6 50.Ne3 Rxd7 51.Rxd7 Kxd7 52.Nxc4 Kc6 53.Kd3 f5 54.b4 Bg7 55.a4 h5 56.Nd2 Bf6 56...g5 57.Nf3 g4 58.Nd4+ Bxd4 59.Kxd4+-.**

**57.Nf3 Kd5 58.c4+ Kd6 59.a5 Kc6 60.Nd4+ Kd6 61.b5 axb5**



**62.cxb5** I went down to my last 13 seconds before deciding to capture with the pawn. I felt that taking with the knight was also winning, but in my panicky calculations I started seeing ghosts. I was really unused to being so short of time, so nearly froze completely with fear and lost on time.

62.Nxb5+ Kc6 63.a6 Be7 64.a7 Kb7 worried me as the advance c5 is held up, but there is 65.Kd4!

**62...Kc5 63.b6 Be5 64.Nf3 Bg3 64...Bf4 65.b7 Kc6.**

**65.b7 Kc6 66.Nh4!** So Black manages to win the queenside, but the issue is that his kingside collapses at the same time.

**66...Kxb7 67.Nxg6 Bc7 68.Ne7 f4 69.Ke4 Bxa5 70.Ng6 Kc6 71.Nxf4 h4 72.Kf5 Be1 73.Kg4 Kd6 74.Ng6 Kd5 75.Nxh4 Ke4 76.Nf5**

**1-0**

### Gormally vs Sowray - the engine verdict

**Gormally, D. - Sowray, P.**

Northumbria Masters 2023 London, 28.08.2023

It is very hard to annotate as accurately as a machine can. I did the best I could. Now let's see what mistakes the machine finds in my analysis.

**1.d4 d6 2.e4 Nf6 3.Nc3 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.h3 0-0 6.Be3 c6 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.0-0 e5 9.Re1 Re8 10.Qd2 b5 11.dxe5 Nxe5 12.Nxe5 Rxe5 13.a3 Bb7 14.f3 Qc7 15.Bf1 Ree8 16.Rad1 Red8 17.Qf2 Nd7 18.Bd4 Bf8 19.Ne2?!** I guess my evaluation in this case was more or less correct. The advantage dips for White after this move.

However, I didn't really consider here the computer's suggestion of 19.h4!





The more you think about this the more logical it becomes. White has the pieces in an ideal position - so it's time to attack with pawns! I think this fits into the old saying that 'if you don't know what piece to move, make a pawn move instead'. So now h5 and hxg6 will come, and if Black takes back with the f-pawn he has weakened e6, and if he takes back with the h-pawn I can then play Qh4 and more or less force the move ... Bg7, after which White should exchange bishops and take over the game. If 19...h5, 20.f4!± and now f5 will come with a lot more force.

**19...c5 20.Be3 Bg7 21.c3 Re8 22.Nf4 a6 23.Qd2 23.h4!** is again indicated by the computer as the way forward. Maybe I have a problem with moving my h-pawns!

**23...Be5 24.Nd3 Bg7 25.Nf2 Re6 26.Bf4** During the game I was reluctant to consider the option of 26.c4, which is one of the machine's recommendations - perhaps because I was wary of giving his bishop on g7 more scope, which now has more room to breathe. If 26...Bc6 27.b4!.



This way of playing, where you are placing maximum pressure on Black's queenside, just didn't occur to me at all. I guess the machine just likes to play as concretely as possible. However, after thinking for a while its evaluation drops a bit and it feels that Black is still surviving after 27...Ne5 28.cxb5 axb5 29.bxc5 dxc5 30.Bxc5 Nc4.

**26...Ne5 27.Bxe5?!** This was indeed something of a mistake, although not that big a one.

The engine agreed with my analysis that 27.Ng4 was probably the way forward. If 27...Nxg4 28.hxg4 Rd8 29.c4± (but not 29.g5 as I indicated, as then 29...Be5 30.g3 d5 should be fine for Black)

**27...Bxe5** I should definitely not have given this as dubious (?!) either, as it's perfectly fine, although I think practically speaking, with Black becoming short of time, it was safer to take back with the pawn.

**28.f4 Bg7 29.f5 Re7 30.Qf4 d5 31.Qh4 Re5 32.exd5 Rxf5** In my notes I gave this as a mistake; however, the machine shows that chess games are full of resources and in fact Black is perfectly OK after this, although it does put him under pressure to play extremely accurately.

32...Rxe1 33.Rxe1 Bxd5 was already slightly better for Black. 32...Rxd5, as indicated in my notes, was also completely equal.

**33.d6 Qd8?** It is only this that is the decisive mistake.

33...Qc6!



and Black is more than fighting. 34.d7 Bf6! is the main point where Black is more than fighting. Tough to see!

**34.Qe7!** Now the interesting moments finished at least from the machine's perspective - at no point later did the evaluation dip below 'hopelessly lost for Black'.

**34...Bc6 35.Bd3 Rf6 36.Be4 Bxe4 37.Nxe4 Re6 38.Qb7 Rb8 39.Qa7 Ra8 40.Qxc5 Qh4 41.Nf2 Rxe1+ 42.Rxe1 Bf8 43.Qc6 Rd8 44.d7 Qc4 45.Qxc4 bxc4 46.Ng4 Kg7 47.Rd1 f6 48.Kf2 Kf7 49.Ke2 Ke6 50.Ne3 Rxd7 51.Rxd7 Kxd7 52.Nxc4 Kc6 53.Kd3 f5 54.b4 Bg7 55.a4 h5 56.Nd2 Bf6 57.Nf3 Kd5 58.c4+ Kd6 59.a5 Kc6 60.Nd4+ Kd6 61.b5 axb5 62.cxb5 Kc5 63.b6 Be5 64.Nf3 Bg3 65.b7 Kc6 66.Nh4 Kxb7 67.Nxg6 Bc7 68.Ne7 f4 69.Ke4 Bxa5**

70.Ng6 Kc6 71.Nxf4 h4 72.Kf5 Be1 73.Kg4 Kd6 74.Ng6 Kd5 75.Nxh4 Ke4 76.Nf5

1-0

I now have a YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeukDDPLI7-bba-M0Ogdzg>

The link below is to the video where I discuss the game:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PmSubTNacc&t=928s>

### December 2023 – Gormally's Endgames in Guernsey

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

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

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

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

Guernsey Chess Festival lichess.org (3), 16.10.2023



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



This ending is probably holdable for Black, but has echoes of the famous Fischer-Taimanov ending from their 1970 match, where Fischer used the extra mobility of the rook and bishop to extract an unlikely win.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Perhaps from a practical perspective it was a good idea to play a move like 38...Re1, as with the queens still on the board it is very hard to see how White could make any realistic winning attempt. Pushing the f-pawn will just hang g5 with check, for example. White would have probably been forced to repeat with some queen checks.

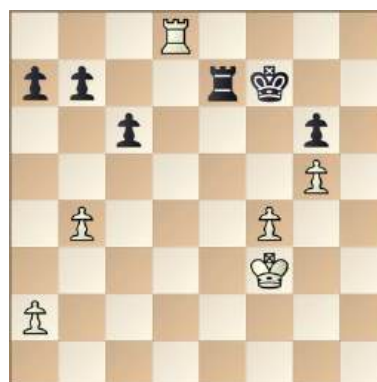
**39.Qxe4 Rxe4 40.Rd3**



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

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

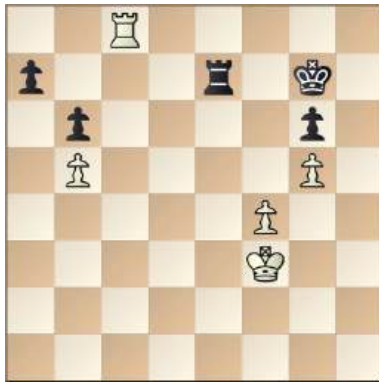
**45...Re7 46.b4!**



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

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

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



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

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



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

**48.Rg8 Re6 49.Rg7!**



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

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

1-0

### Fixing the Pawn

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

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

Guernsey Chess Festival lichess.org (7), 21.10.2023

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



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

Fixing pawns is a crucial factor in endgames and therefore 25.a4! was the right way. This is somewhat counter-intuitive, as White is handing the black knight the b4-square, but it turns out it is more important to fix the weakness on a5. 25...Rd7 26.Ba3 Rfd8 27.g4, and my



position would have been very unpleasant, remaining without counterplay; 25.Rb5!? Rd7 26.Bc3 d5 27.Bxa5 Ra8 28.b4 was less convincing, as the bishop is somewhat awkward on a5. 28...e4!.

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

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

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



**32...Rxe4+--.**

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

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

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

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

**39.exd5+ Nxd5+ 40.Ke2**



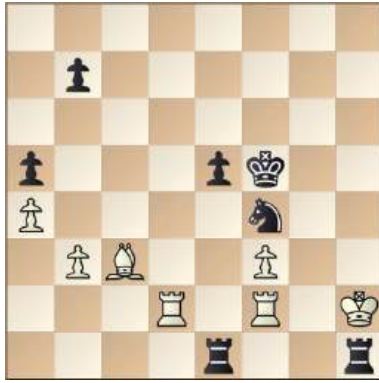
**40...Nf4+** It was very tempting to try to force my way to a win with direct play, beginning with 40...e4 41.Bd4 exf3+ 42.Rxf3 Rxf3 43.Kxf3 Rh3+ 44.Ke2 (44.Ke4? Rh4+--+) 44...Rxb3 45.Rb2.



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

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

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



0-1

## The Interviews by Mark Rivlin



### Tallulah Roberts

Tallulah Roberts (@lularobs) has taken the chess world by storm since starting to play during the pandemic in 2020. Prolific on social media and Board 1 of the Jersey women's team at the 2022 Olympiad in Chennai, Lula is an influencer and ambassador for women and beginners in chess. In this interview she speaks candidly about misogyny in chess, how we all have a role to play in making chess a safe environment for all players, and how the 'cool' tag is slowly having an influence. Lula's social media links are here: <https://linktr.ee/lularobs>



**When you took up chess in 2020, could you imagine that three years later you'd have 21k followers on Twitter, 7k on Instagram, a streaming channel on Twitch (which includes an excellent instructional video on the Smith-Morra Gambit), as well as captaining the inaugural Jersey women's team in the 2022 Olympiad in Chennai? And let's not forget IM Lawrence Cooper endorsing you as Breakthrough of the Year, 2022.**

I had absolutely no idea! When I started playing chess, it was never with the design to make it a job or something I took even remotely seriously. It's funny how things work out sometimes, but I had graduated from my undergraduate degree in the summer of 2020 and was in the process of figuring out what I was going to do after university when suddenly I fell in love with both chess and streaming in such quick succession. I feel so grateful that people became interested in what I was doing, because that's what inspired me to keep going and trying to improve.

To be honest with you, I had never heard of the Chess Olympiad before around December 2021. I joined my local chess club and found that they were quite keen to have more women involved, so I put a lot of time and energy into helping with that and we got a team together. I managed to get the team sponsored by both Chess.com and Chessable, which was kind of unprecedented. In the end, I played on board 1 for the women's team. IM Lawrence Cooper actually helped to commentate on some of my Olympiad games last summer. He has been very supportive of me since quite early on in my chess journey, and I see he's a great advocate for women in chess in the UK.

**Was it the pandemic and Queen's Gambit combo that brought you into chess in 2020?**

The short answer is: 'Yes, that is the reason I started playing.' The long answer is that I was in lockdown with my then-boyfriend (now best friend, and we play tournaments together); he had been very involved with our university chess club but had never been able to

convince me to start playing. After *The Queen's Gambit* came out, I binge-watched it twice before picking up a chess piece. It really did spark my interest, though, and I downloaded the Chess.com app. I was terrible at first, of course, but my boyfriend taught me everything from how to set up a board, how to castle, how en passant worked, even basic openings. He was incredibly patient, and we spent a week or two just doing chess stuff all day. I don't think I would have gotten into chess in any meaningful way without having somebody hold my hand through the beginning stages.

**In Chennai, the Jersey women's team finished a creditable fourth in their category and achieved plus-10 places from the initial seeding. Dr Rachel Ruddy, Daisy Carpenter and you achieved individual conditional WCM titles. How did the team manage such impressive results? And how much of an influence was coach GM Alfonso Zapata?**

Yes, sadly we missed out on a medal on tiebreak, but I think our team did very well. We had a few coaching sessions with GM Alonso Zapata prior to the Olympiad, as well as a lot of support elsewhere. Chessable provided us with a coach, Mr Dodgy, who gave us weekly lessons as well as a ton of Chessable courses so that we could study independently. Chess.com also set up a series of lessons with GM Irina Krush that I had live on stream (they're now uploaded in full on my YouTube channel) and the team also played over the board against one another and ran our own prep sessions. Zapata and Dodgy also came to Chennai with us to help prepare in the mornings and analyse in the evenings.

**When you started out on your chess journey, did you have any personal aims in mind?**

I am an incredibly competitive person, but when it came to chess I realised very early on how much I had underestimated the complexity of the game. There were a lot of tears in my first weeks of playing, and a lot of 'I'm just going to quit'. I don't think I really saw beyond that, because all of a sudden a board game was making me question everything I thought I knew about my intelligence and my capacity for logic and strategy.

**Is chess the new cool?**

So actually, there's a video of me in my second year of university telling my then-boyfriend that chess isn't cool, it never has been, and it never will be. As someone who hates admitting they're wrong, it's funny to think about now, but I think chess is totally under-rated. It's still not mainstream, but I guess when I tell people who don't play chess that I play chess, they think 'That's kind of cool', rather than 'That's so uncool'.

When I was growing up chess was portrayed in the media and pop culture as something that was deeply uncool and nerdy (but nerdy things are cool now), and ONLY for boys. Chess has definitely had a 'glow-up' of how the general population perceives it, but I think there's still a way to go.

**What are your chess goals for 2023?**

I tweeted the other day that 2023 will be the year we don't make rating-based chess goals, because I did that both of my first two years of chess and was, of course, dissatisfied when I didn't reach them. I feel like I was really spoiled last year with my chess and chess progress. I played my first ever over the board tournament (Reykjavik Open), I got a FIDE rating, I played the Olympiad, and now I feel, 'What does that leave for this year?'

I definitely want to keep playing OTB. I'll be playing at the Festival International des Jeux in Cannes next month. It will actually be the only time I've played a Minor category (Under 1600). I've only played Opens before. They can be scary, but there's less pressure, so this is going to be weird for me. Other goals are to work more on my chess content this year, especially on YouTube. I spent a lot of time last year playing real-life chess, so content creation needs to get a bit more of my attention this year.

**What is your preference: standardplay, rapidplay or blitz?**

When I fell in love with chess, I fell in love with slow chess. I love classical chess, and the love-hate relationship we all have with it. It's such an intense, focused experience that I think is so unique. Everyone's attention spans are getting shorter these days – especially in my generation, with TikTok and microtrends and social media. There's something special about just sitting at a table playing a board game for five hours, even though it's gut-wrenching to lose.

**Over the board or online?**

Over the board. I only really play online when I'm streaming.

**Who are your chess influencers?**

When I was a beginner, I only watched chess on YouTube and it was only Agadmator and GothamChess. I think they're both great content creators when it comes to making chess accessible for beginners. Now I love seeing other women thriving in chess content creation. I think what WFM Anna Cramling and the Botez sisters are doing is great.

## Take us through one of your favourite games

This game is against [Sigurdur Pall Gudnyjarson](#) from Round 2 of my first ever rated tournament, the Reykjavik Open (2022).

### Roberts Tallulah v Gudnyjarson, Sigurdur Pall

**1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c5 3.g3 g6 4.Bg2 d6 5.Nf3 Bg7 6.d3 O-O 7.O-O Nc6 8.Rb1 a6 9.a3 Nd7 10.Bd2 Rb8 11.b4 cxb4 12.axb4 b5 13.cxb5 axb5 14.Qc1 Qc7** (I actually missed 15.Nd5 here, which wins a pawn) It looks like I am winning the c6 knight, but after 15...Qd8 16.Qxc6 Bb7 17.Qxb5 e6 Black regains the piece.

**15.Bh6 Bxh6 16.Qxh6 Nxb4** (my opponent thinks he is winning a pawn after Rxb4 Qxc3, but he has left his king undefended) **17.Ng5** (threatening mate)

**17... Nf6 18.Rxb4** (18.Nce4 immediately is also possible, but this allows Black the extra resource of Nbd5) **18...Qxc3 19.Rh4 e6** (there are no good moves for Black) **20. Ne4** (20.Nh7 is also winning; however, this felt simpler, as it is either the queen or checkmate) Black resigned here. This was my first ever win in rated over the board chess. Here is a link to the game:

<https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=2267035>

**You are clearly a great ambassador for women's chess, and last year you posted on Twitter about harassment at the Reykjavik Open. 'Feels safe to talk more about this stuff now I'm home. Myself + other female players were consistently disrespected by a minority of men at the tournament. One even pinched me on the waist when I walked past him in the tournament hall (games were going on, incl my own)'. How can chess deal with misogyny?**

Yes, misogyny in chess is undeniably a problem. As someone who has comparatively little experience in over the board tournaments, I was shocked to have been disrespected by men at a number of chess events in 2022. Regarding that Tweet, I did end up speaking with the organisers at Reykjavik who were very good and took things seriously.

Chess, though, is also in a weird formative stage of becoming an e-sport. E-sports and gaming are, like chess, male-dominated and have problems with misogyny and sexism. The Internet is an even trickier terrain for moderating this kind of behaviour, and I can see how dealing with sexism in an ever-changing landscape can feel overwhelming. It's also especially scary given the rise of extreme misogynists like Andrew Tate, who are influencing young boys for the worse.

I think one thing to be mindful of is that each of us is equally responsible for creating a safe environment for one another, both in chess and the wider world, in real life and online. It's hard not to be critical of FIDE when it

feels like they could be doing so much more to safeguard female players and minorities, and they aren't setting the best example for national federations. On the other hand, it's great to see so many female chess content creators thriving online, even though we seem to receive a disproportionate amount of gender-based hate. Personally, I was attacked online throughout 2022 by many male chess players, several of whom were titled and had been established in chess for decades longer than I had, which felt totally unfair. I think some people are afraid of what chess is becoming (accessible, diverse and cool), but in order to grow the game and encourage new generations of players chess has to change to some degree. There are always people who will want to gatekeep chess, but they are the past and not the future.

### You have a FIDE rating of 1493; what are your over the board plans this year?

After France next month I have no concrete plans. I lost about 50 rating points at the Olympiad because I'm still on k40 and playing board 1 was pretty brutal. I then lost another 30 points at the Guernsey Chess Festival which was a tough tournament for me. I'm a bit nervous to get back to over the board because the Olympiad really knocked my confidence. I've spoken about this a bit online, but in a lot of ways I feel that playing such a tough tournament so early on into my chess career damaged my relationship with the game. I don't want to sound ungrateful, and I know I'm so lucky to have had the opportunity to play the Olympiad, but I wasn't psychologically prepared for the pressure of playing top board for my country. There were a lot of times when it felt like I was playing a completely different tournament to my team-mates, and I really felt my impostor syndrome creep back in and take hold as the event went on.

I want to heal my relationship with over the board chess this year, so I'm going to be playing some more accessible tournaments.

I will almost certainly return to Guernsey in October to play the Guernsey Chess Festival again. I think this time around, I'll be more ready. It's probably the friendliest tournament I've played, and it's so close to me that it's silly not to go. On the other hand, the average rating last year was something like 1850, and I got really unlucky with my pairings, so I'm a bit scared to return! But after a year, I want to go back and do better than last time.

### Who are your favourite chess commentators?

It depends on the type of chess. I think GM Irina Krush is great – she did some commentary for women's chess on Chess.com in 2022. I'd love to see more female chess commentators in 2023, and it'll be interesting to see what happens to commentary now that Chess.com has



acquired Play Magnus Group. Hopefully we'll see new combinations of commentators!

#### GM Nigel Davies



Nigel Davies became a GM in 1993 and has enjoyed success as a chess author with 22 books published, and as a FIDE trainer through his tigerchess.com website. In 2022 he came back to the ECF after seven years with the Welsh Chess Union.

**Few players in their early sixties have decided to get back into high-level tournaments after a few years' absence. What made you throw your hat into the ring and how is OTB chess going?**

I've barely played for the last two decades: it's difficult to be playing lots of chess with parenthood, especially when I was a chess parent. My return was prompted largely by my son going to university. I was curious as to whether it was possible to make a successful comeback. Thus far the best that can be said is that it's a 'work in progress', but things are gradually improving!

**Tell us about the recent January 4NCL Harrogate Congress in which you shared first place with five players in a strong Open field.**

This was my best result in a standard time limit tournament since my return, and I also played a couple of decent games. People were surprised that I agreed to an early draw as White against Paul Townsend, but he's a tough opponent and I just wanted to finish first.

**After seven years of being with the Welsh Chess Union, you rejoined the ECF last year. Why did you come back to the ECF?**

I had hoped that the Welsh Chess Union would place more value on my presence, but I didn't hear from them much. Meanwhile the ECF has gone through quite a

renaissance since I left, with new events having been organised and opportunities for English players.

**You are a prolific chess writer (22 books) and a Senior FIDE Trainer (tigerchess.com) with excellent reviews in both those fields. What are the key qualities that make a good chess coach?**

I would say a love of the game, an understanding of the needs of those you're coaching, and good communication skills.

**Which people have had the most positive influence on your chess career, playing, writing and coaching?**

As far as playing is concerned, I'd say Bob Wade and Lev Psakhis were two major influences. I was also helped a lot by people whose books I've read, particularly Emanuel Lasker, Mikhail Botvinnik, Paul Keres, Richard Réti, Ray Keene and Mikhail Shereshevsky. Richard James influenced me a lot with coaching, especially when it came to teaching my son.

**It's 30 years since you became a GM. How has the game changed over those years?**

The effect of computers has been massive, not just with engines and databases but in how they've aided learning. In particular, the standard of opening play has risen massively, and this is something I've been struggling with.

**In 2020 you got a first-class honours BSc degree in computing from Edge Hill University. Tell us about the academic paper you wrote 'Predicting Success in Competitive Chess' and whether you intend to take your computing degree further?**

It was a study of FIDE rating data to see if having a high rating at particular ages was a predictor of future progress. Essentially it wasn't, largely due to the very high dropout rate of young players who are believed to be 'talented'. On the other hand, I did find statistical significance in players who reached the cusp of adolescence as strong and established players, with ratings around 2200.

**Please show us an annotated version of one of your favourite games.**

#### Marcin Kaminski – Nigel R Davies

Liechtenstein Open, Liechtenstein (7), 1993

This game was played in the year that I scored two GM norms and got the title. It was also a watershed from a stylistic point of view in that I was prepared to meet 1.e4

with 1...e5 rather than use my habitual Modern Defence.

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Be7 6.Qe2 b5 7.Bb3 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.Rd1 Na5 10.Bc2 c5 11.d4 Qc7 12.dxe5** This is not dangerous for Black, as White will not be able to establish a piece on d5. On the other hand, Black may gain space with ...c5-c4.



**12...dxe5 13.Nbd2 Rd8 14.Nf1 Rxd1 15.Bxd1 Bb7 16.Bc2 c4 17.Ng3 g6 18.Bg5 Nc6 19.Nd2** This meets with a strong reply. White should play 19.a4, with approximate equality.



**19...Nh5 20.Bxe7 Nf4 21.Qf3 Nxe7 22.Ne2** (White doesn't sense the danger to his position) (22.Ndf1 would have been better)



**22...Rd8 23.Qe3** This loses because of Black's unexpected reply.

23.Nf1 was the best, though Black is better after 23...Nd3.



**23...Nxg2! 24.Kxg2 Nf5** (it turns out that the queen cannot protect the knight on d2, so Black wins material)



**25.Qg5 h6 26.Qf6 Rxd2**



**0-1**

You also play table tennis at club level. Is there a connection between bullet chess and table tennis, in that in both games you have to make decisive shots and moves with no time to think?

Well, I don't play bullet chess so I wouldn't know, but it does seem that there's quite a crossover between the two games. I should also point out that my table tennis is very weak, and I've now taken a break through sheer embarrassment and the time it consumes!

**Tell us about some of your chess coaching achievements.**

I worked with some young players who went on to achieve great things, a bit with Matthew Sadler and Darshan Kumaran and then more extensively with Ronen Har-Zvi. However, I'm more satisfied with my work with older club players, who usually make progress with me because of my structured teaching program. I should also mention my favourite student is my son Sam, who I taught from zero to his reaching over 2000 strength. He has taken a break from chess during the last couple of years, but I'm hopeful that he will return.

**Do you play online rapidplay and/or blitz?**

Not very much, and when I do it's under an anonymous account. Having said that, I use Lichess a lot because of its 'study' feature; it's essentially an online database and works beautifully.

**How can 1700 players get better? (I'm asking on behalf of a friend).**

Make sure you do regular endgame and tactics practice and play normal openings. If you want to learn positional play, then join tigerchess.com and take lessons with me!

## GM Nigel Short

Nigel Short was the stand-out player among a large cohort of English GMs who enjoyed success in the 1980s and 1990s. Having left school at the age of 17 and attaining the GM title at the age of 19, Nigel enjoyed a great career, playing at the highest level into his 50s. His pinnacle came in 1993 when he challenged Garry Kasparov for the 1993 World Championship, which was then under the auspices of the newly formed Professional Chess Association. A three-time winner of the British Championship, Nigel has been a prolific writer and commentator on chess, and in 2022 he became FIDE Director for Chess Development. His 2021 book *Winning* was Chess.com's Book of the Year and was Highly Commended by the ECF. In 1999 Nigel was awarded an MBE for services to chess.



**Following a superb career over the board, you are now FIDE Director for Chess Development. What does this role entail, and how much do you enjoy it?**

My job entails assisting what I call the 'smaller' federations – that is, in the sense of their level of chess development, rather than population. It is a fascinating job, as federations tend to vary quite a lot, and have very different challenges. Some are inexperienced, and benefit from simple advice. For example, I was recently in Belize, where quite a lot of people play chess, thanks to an extensive chess in schools programme that ran for some years. However, when I contacted the federation, their executive was in total disarray, and their acting President seemed unsure as to whether they were members of FIDE (they are), or had statutes (they do), or anything.

I considered my main task was to bring people together. I usually give a simul, which is partly to engage with the chess community, but mainly to obtain publicity. I asked the British High Commissioner, Nicole Davison, whether she could offer the Residence in the capital, Belmopan, as a venue, and she kindly agreed. As a consequence, we obtained good television coverage, and the event was attended by the Sports Minister.

To cut a long story short, there is now a functioning executive team, and a Grand Prix (five events in different regions) where none had existed before. The official website has been improved. There is also a new club in the scuba diving paradise of Caye Caulker – which was my first stop on the trip. Of course, I cannot claim full credit for all these positive moves, but my visits are frequently a catalyst for change.

**Your book *Winning* (Quality Chess) was well received by chess writers and enthusiasts. The premise is a study of your overall performance in eight selected tournaments that you won. Your publisher wrote: 'GM Nigel Short realised that every tournament win has a unique narrative and challenge'. How did the concept and writing of this book evolve?**

The concept was suggested to me by Allard Hoogland, the owner of *New in Chess*, over dinner some years ago.

It seemed very appealing. First of all, it satisfied my vanity in that I could include some interesting and important tournaments that I won. But at the same time, it would be far more realistic, and indeed instructive, than a typical 'best games' collection, because it gave context and also showed the hard struggle involved in finishing on top. The format had another distinct advantage: despite having written many hundreds of articles for newspapers and magazines, I had never really written a book. But each chapter is like a separate story, and so I could write it like eight different (lengthy) articles, which made completing it easier. They can be read in any order.

It still took far too long to complete. I felt a lot of self-revulsion while writing it. But when I saw the finished product I realised it was actually pretty good. I am quite proud of it. The comments and reviews have been overwhelmingly positive. It won the 2021 Chess.com Book of the Year award. It did not win the ECF book of the year - although it did receive a glowing endorsement.

**Younger ECF players were not around when you played for the World Championship with Garry Kasparov in 1993. What are your memories of that match?**

Those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) do not generally enjoy reliving their experiences.

**As a former world top 10 player, what are your thoughts on the current state of elite chess, particularly Magnus Carlsen relinquishing his World Champion crown?**

I thought the recent match between Ding Liren and Ian Nepomniachtchi was tremendously exciting. I have absolutely nothing against Nepo - indeed he is a nice chap - but I wanted Ding to win because he is very sweet and modest, and his victory may help us crack open the massive Chinese market.

As to Magnus, he can do whatever he wants to do. He seems exhausted by the grind of World Chess Championships. But the game is much bigger than any one individual. I would have preferred to see him defend his title, but so be it. Life goes on.

**What is your favourite chess game, and why?**

I don't have a favourite game, just as I don't have a favourite song. It depends on one's mood. Right now it is subdued, so I won't suggest anything too flashy or ostentatious. However, I quietly enjoyed my victory over Vasily Smyslov in the 1987 Subotica Interzonal. It was very satisfying to defeat the former World

Champion and renowned endgame expert in the endgame. The game can be viewed at <https://www.chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1124291>

**Outside chess, what are your interests?**

I thoroughly enjoy travel, by which I mean on arrival, not the getting there. Each passing year takes a greater toll on my body. Luckily, my job has enabled me to travel extensively - although I have consciously worked on that over the years. Right now, the tally is 143 countries and counting. I have a soft spot for Africa. I play the guitar every day when at home. Believe it or not, I think I am improving after years of stagnation, mainly due to instructional videos which one finds on YouTube.

I enjoy swimming in the sea during the warm summer months. I usually begin my days that way. My taste in literature is largely confined to histories and biographies, but I occasionally dabble in novels. I love a glass or two of good wine.

**You are a prolific writer and commentator on chess, and you have also had success in coaching. What are your plans over the next few years?**

I hope to make a real difference to the smaller federations through my work in FIDE. This is my top priority. It is a full-time job which doesn't leave me with much space for other things. I don't really do coaching these days, other than the occasional lecture - which is not quite the same thing. Commentating is great fun though. I hope to complete the second volume of my trilogy (on matches) 'slowly, slowly', as the Greeks say.

I also hope to continue playing a little – perhaps twice a year.

**What should be the top priorities of the ECF?**

The number one priority of the ECF must be to obtain recognition as a sport. All efforts must be directed this way. Even the most miserable, unimpressive minority sport in the UK receives a baseline £750,000 per annum in Sport England funding. This is an amount that would be totally transformative for the game in the UK.

The All India Chess Federation generates a lot of money internally, as it doesn't allow anyone to play over the board chess unless they are registered. Membership fees should be set low, but they must be collected. They also receive about \$1m directly from the government. By establishing a sound financial footing some years ago, the AICF laid the groundwork to making India a chess superpower. Incidentally, their chess strength is increasing all the time.



India of course has a vast population, which gives it a great advantage, so perhaps you may feel there are no lessons to be learned from them. In that case, let's examine a different country, Uzbekistan (population 36 million) for comparison. They receive about \$4m per annum from the Government. Uzbekistan, as you recall, won the gold medal at the last Olympiad. I thus offer the daring hypothesis that funding makes a big difference.

Of course, it would help the cause of government recognition if the UK had one federation, rather than four. I am wryly smiling at the thought of this happening. Petty privilege almost invariably trumps greater good.

**What advice can you give to young ECF players finding the 1700 to 2000 rating a tough assignment?**

Ask a proper coach.

**What are the positive highlights of your career, and your regrets?**

The greatest highlight of my career was defeating Anatoly Karpov in 1992 6-4 in the Candidates semi-final in Linares. I am happy to be the only person in chess history to have won tournaments in six continents. In retrospect, my three Commonwealth Championship titles gave me great satisfaction. I have won stronger events, of course, but there are a lot of countries in the Commonwealth. Incidentally, I have visited more Commonwealth countries than King Charles III.

Regrets? I've had a few, but then again too few to mention.

#### Ali Shahruckhi

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



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

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

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

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

**Why did you give up playing as a junior?**

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are your standout games since your comeback?**

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

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

The opening transposes into what is basically the Exchange Variation of the Slav, which is notoriously drawish. With 11. Nd2 I decide to let myself be saddled with a weak, backward c-pawn for the sake of playing for a quick e4 pawn-break and a kingside attack. I think it's a mistake for Black to allow the pawn advance e5, as he does, as this pawn wedge in the middle of the board means Black's light-squared bishop remains forever cut off on the queenside. This means, if White can mobilise all his pieces, he will, in effect, be material up. I took a very direct approach in this game, playing a quick f4 and transferring all my pieces to the kingside as quickly as

possible. 18...Qb6 is an error, leaving the black queen on the wrong side of the board too. In time trouble, I missed 28.Bxg6 hxc6, 29.Qh4, which gives White a decisive advantage and played the far too 'clever' 28.Rxh7, seeing that 28...Kxh7 runs into 29.Bxg6+ Kg8 30.Qxe6. In the game 30...Qg8 is a further error in time-trouble. I should have played 31.Qxg8+ Kxg8 32.Bxh7+, transitioning into what should be a winning endgame. The end position is an aesthetically pleasing perpetual check: Black can never block with Rg7 as then Qh4+ wins. I missed some possibilities in this game, but the game is a good illustration that tactical possibilities always flow from a correctly-judged and clearly-executed strategy.

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

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

### **Who are your favourites from chess history to the present?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## The 96<sup>th</sup> Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress



*Horntye Park Sports Centre, Hastings*

Hastings has a long association with English chess going back to the days of William the Conqueror (below), who was a chess player, and by all accounts a sore loser, having apparently thrown the board at his nephew Louis of France, whom he suspected of cheating in one of their games.



The Hastings chess community established an annual festival in the 1880s which led to the first great Hastings tournament in 1895, won by Harry Pillsbury and including the famous Steinitz - Von Bardeleben game where Steinitz established a 'magic rook' on the seventh rank which could not be taken. After studying the position Von Bardeleben allegedly walked out of the tournament without resigning and allowed his clock to run down.

The Hastings Congress proper started in 1920 with the first event won by British Champion Frederick Yates, followed by an almost unbroken series of 96 events with many famous winners over the years including a number of World Champions.



Max Euwe (1923/1924), Alexander Alekhine (1925/1926), Jose Raul Capablanca (1929/1930), Vasily Smyslov (1954/ 55 and 1968/69), Mikhail Botvinnik (1966/67), and Mikhail Tal (1973/74). There have also been a number of English winners - Frederick Yates (1920),

Harry Golombek and Jonathan Penrose (1952/53), John Nunn (1979/ 80 and 1996/97), Jon Speelman (1983/84), Nigel Short (1987/88 and 1988/89), Mark Hebden (1996/97, 2009/10 and 2013/14), Matthew Sadler

(1997/ 98), David Howell (2009/10), Gawain Jones (2012/13), Danny Gormally (2018/19), and David Howell (2020/21).

Hastings is the most prestigious and long-running of the English chess congresses and has recently benefitted from generous sponsorship by Caplin Systems.

This year's Caplin Hastings International Congress took place from Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January at the Horntye Park Sports Centre in Hastings, and included the main Caplin Hastings Masters tournament running as a 10-round Swiss event from Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> January. Other events in the festival included the five-round Christmas tournament with morning and afternoon events from Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> December to Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January, the New Year morning and afternoon tournaments from Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> January to Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January and the Hastings Weekender from Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January.

The Hastings Masters for 2022/23 was won by GM Sarunas Sulskis on 8 points out of 10, with a pack of English players following closely, including GM Mark Hebden on 7½ points, and IM Brandon Clarke and GM Danny Gormally on 7.

#### Hastings 2022- 23 (top 10 in the field of 95 players)

1	GM	Sarunas Sulskis	LTU	2492	8
2	GM	Bence Korpa	HUN	2516	7½
	GM	Oleg Korneev	ESP	2481	7½
	GM	Mark L Hebden	ENG	2448	7½
5	GM	Edouard Romain	FRA	2537	7
	GM	Petrov Martin	BUL	2535	7
	IM	Brandon Clarke	ENG	2484	7
	GM	Daniel Gormally	ENG	2450	7
	IM	Conor E Murphy	IRL	2422	7
	FM	Timo Kueppers	GER	2249	7



*First place – GM Sarunas Sulskis on 8 points*



*Second equal - Mark L Hebden on 7½ points*



*Fifth equal - IM Brandon Clarke on 7 points*

IM Brandon Clarke provides his perspective on the event in the report below, including his game against the winner, GM Sarunas Sulskis.



## Hastings Perspective by IM Brandon Clarke

The 96th Caplin Hastings International Congress came to an end last week after 12 days of various events. The Masters was won by Lithuanian GM Sarunas Sulskis, which wasn't too surprising given his remarkable start of 6/6. I kindly contributed to that score, but not without my chances to land a fatal blow in our six-hour thriller!

**Clarke, Brandon (2484) - Sulskis, Sarunas (2492)**

Hastings Masters (6), 02.01.2023



Clarke v Sulskis

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 Nxe4**

Sulskis goes for the Open Spanish, a reliable variation that gives Black good attacking chances.

**6.d4 b5 7.Bb3 d5 8.dxe5 Be6 9.Nbd2**

White has a few playable options, but I always had a preference for this move since it prevents the dangerous Dilworth Variation, which occurs after 9.c3 Bc5 10.Nbd2 0-0 11.Bc2 Nxf2!?. This has been known for a long time but is still holding up with the modern engines.



**9...Nc5 10.c3 d4!?**

Not the main line (10...Be7), but a decent alternative. My first memory of it was from the famous Kasparov – Anand World Championship game in 1995, where Garry won a very fine game after some impressive preparation

with 11.Ng5. Unfortunately, Black has found improvements since then and, as a result, what I played stands as the main line.

**11.Bxe6 fxe6?!**

I was only familiar with the main move 11...Nxe6. After a long think, Sulskis decided to give it a go. He mentioned after the game that he was aware it wasn't the best move, but couldn't see what was wrong with it, and wanted to get me out of book. It worked; unfortunately for him, I did manage to find the best moves, at least to start with!

**12.cxd4 Nxd4 13.b4!**

My knight wants the e4 square, so this is necessary.

**13...Nd3 14.Ne4 Nxf3+ 15.Qxf3 Nxe5 16.Qh5+ Nf7 17.Ng5 Qf6 18.Re1**



I must confess I thought he was busted here and presumed to walk around, rather confident that resignation was nigh, and his reign of winning terror would finally be put to an end! However, it wouldn't be that easy...

**18...0-0-0!**

Sulskis digs deep and senses his best chance of survival lies in the murky waters ahead. A well-known strategy when players find themselves in a bad situation.

**19.Nxf7 Qxa1 20.Qf3 Rd5 21.Qe4?!**

Probably trying to be a bit too clever, I would later regret not taking the material on offer sooner...

**21...Bxb4! 22.Qxe6+ Kb8 23.Rf1**

I thought I was heading for a no-risk position with very good winning chances, but I had missed my opponent's reply from a distance.

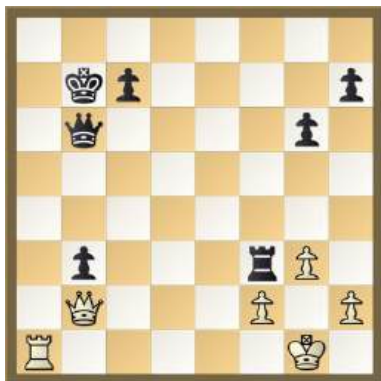
**23...Rd6!**

I assumed 23...Rhd8 was forced, which gives White a winning position with the simple 24.Nxd8 Rxd8 25.Qxa6 Qe5 26.Be3 +-.

**24.Qb3 Re8 25.Nxd6?! Bxd6**

It was only now I realised my original intention of 26.Bb2 doesn't trap the queen for long on account of 26...Bxh2+! But unfortunately, I realised too late and now I must find solace a pawn down in an endgame. A rather difficult prospect to face, given how promising my position was a few moves earlier...

26.g3 Qe5 27.Be3 g6 28.Rc1 Qe6 29.Qc3 Qe4 30.Bc5 Bxc5 31.Qxc5 Qe5 32.Qc6 Re6 33.Qd7 Re7 34.Qc6 Qe6 35.Qc5 Rf7 36.a4 Qb6 37.axb5 axb5 38.Qc2 b4 39.Ra1 b3 40.Qd2 Rf8 41.Rb1 Rf5 42.Qb2! Rf3 43.Ra1 Kb7



**White to play**

**44.Qa3!**

I didn't believe I could survive for long by just sitting, nor did I want to. I was eager not to let my opponent have everything his own way! Sulskis thought for 18 minutes, contemplating whether to take the bait with 44...Qxf2+ and hope his king will survive the coming storm or to bail out with 44...c6, which leads to an immediate draw after 45.Qe7+.

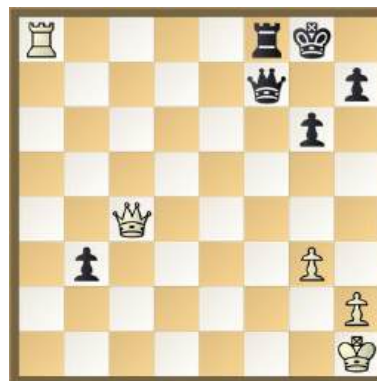
**44...Qxf2+!**

Sulskis goes all in! There's no turning back now...

**45.Kh1 Kc8 46.Qa8+ Kd7 47.Qd5+?**

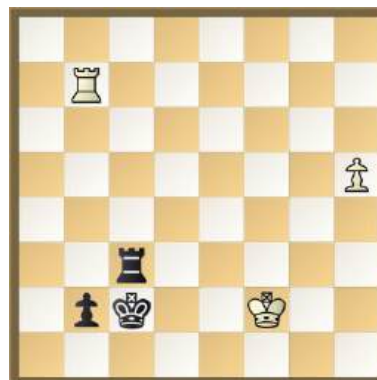
I missed my chance with this natural move. I had overlooked that his king will eventually hide on g8. The draw was not surprisingly very computer-like with 47.Rd1+ Ke6 48.Qe8+ Kf6 49.Qh8+! (I missed this) Kg5 50.Qxh7 as calm as a cucumber, 0.00!

**47...Ke7 48.Qe5+ Kf7 49.Qxc7+ Kg8 50.Ra8+ Rf8 51.Qc4+ Qf7**



I spent a while deciding whether to try to hold the queen or rook endgame; it turns out they are both lost! The game concludes with some instructive endgame play from the tournament winner.

**52.Qxf7+ Kxf7 53.Ra7+ Ke6! 54.Rb7 Rf3 55.Kg2 Rd3! 56.Kf2 Rc3 57.Rxh7 Kd5 58.Rb7 Kc4 59.h4 Kd3 60.g4 Kc2 61.h5 gxh5 62.gxh5 b2 0-1**



A disappointing result, given the chances I had in the game. But impressive resilience from my opponent; there's a reason GMs are hard to beat! It was my first time in Hastings. I decided to play in all the events I could, meaning I clocked up 25 games in four different events in 12 days...

I managed to win the Christmas Morning Open, New Year Morning Open and Weekend Open with 5/5 in each, and finished on a respectable 7/10 in the Masters, earning me =5th with many others!

After his perfect start, Sulskis seemed to stumble across the finish and avoided defeat at the hands of Mark Hebden, who missed a win against him in the penultimate round.

To win events as strong as these, you often need a bit of luck! Congratulations to him; I think on the whole it was very well deserved. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those involved in making the tournament

possible, from the Sponsors to the control team who made the event(s) run very smoothly.

The best game prize for the event went to a round 10 scrap between the reigning English and British Champions – GM Mark Hebden and IM Harry Grieve.

**(11226) Hebden, Mark L (2448) - Grieve, Harry (2438)**

Caplin Hastings Masters chess24.com (10.5),  
06.01.2023

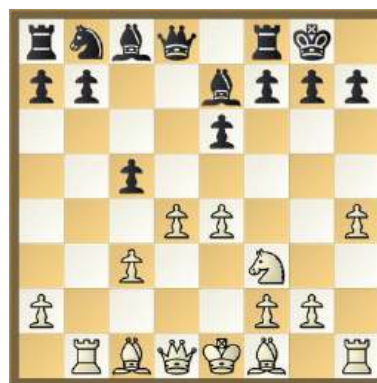


IM Harry Grieve

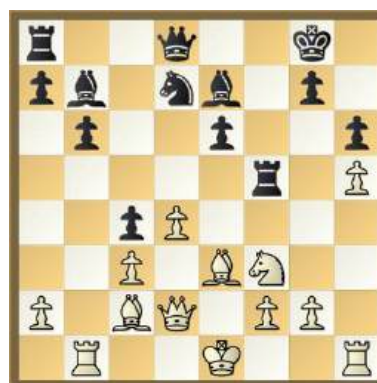
1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3



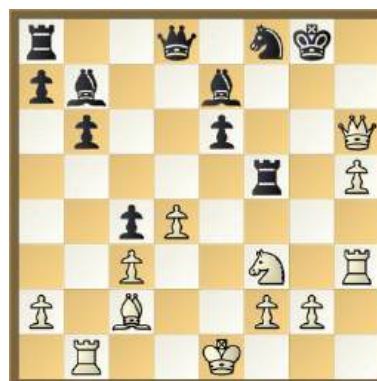
6...c5 7.Rb1 Be7 8.Nf3 O-O 9.h4



9...b6 10.h5 h6 11.Be3 Nd7 12.Bd3 Bb7 13.Qd2 c4  
14.Bc2 f5 15.exf5 Rxf5?!



16.Bxh6!? gxh6 17.Qxh6 Nf8 18.Rh3

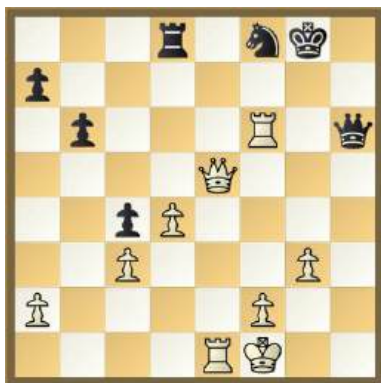


18...Bxf3 19.Bxf5 exf5 20.Rxf3





20...Bh4 21.Kf1 Qc7 22.Re1 Qh7 23.Qf4 Qxh5 24.Qe5 Rd8 25.Rxf5 Qh6 26.g3 Bf6 27.Rxf6



1-0

Read Leonard Barden's article in the Financial Times here: <https://www.ft.com/content/1d5f8a59-a082-43ae-b2c0-6fc7c38f244d>

## Cambridge International Open



The first Cambridge International Open took place from Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> February at the historic University Arms Hotel in Cambridge. The event was organised by ECF Events Director Shohreh Bayat with generous support from the University Arms, and an experienced arbiters team consisting of IA Shohreh, IA Matthew Carr and FA Satish Gaekwad.



*The University Arms Ballroom ready for round 1*

The event was staged in the hotel ballroom and has proven itself to be one of the most sought-after events in England, with entries reaching capacity a full month before the event and with a waiting list of over 50 players looking for a place.

The tournament was played over nine rounds with 121 players from 19 different federations taking part, and players coming from as far away as the USA and Vietnam.

The majority of players were English, with 93 out of the 121 from the host nation. Leading the charge and top seed for England was Michael Adams, the England number 1 for many years. Games were streamed from live boards at the event and can be found at the links here:

**Chess24** - <https://chess24.com/en/watch/live-tournaments/cambridge-international-open-2023/9/1/1>

**Chess.com** - <https://www.chess.com/events/2023-cambridge-international-open>

**Lichess** - <https://lichess.org/broadcast/cambridge-international-open/round-9/hWSz2ax0>

**Chessbase** - <https://live.chessbase.com/en/watch/The-Cambridge-Open-2023/>





WIM Natasha Regan (above) provided commentary on the event including round 6 on Friday with GM John Emms, round 8 on Saturday and the final round 9 on Sunday morning with WIM Lan Yao.

You can follow the commentary replay on the ECF Twitch commentary channel:

[https://www.twitch.tv/ecf\\_commentary](https://www.twitch.tv/ecf_commentary) and also the

ECF's YouTube Channel:

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

Round 1 saw a big upset, with Michael Adams drawing against his namesake Henry Adams, rated almost 800 points below him. After that, however, Adams proceeded to win his next seven games against all opponents with a champion's performance to power his way through into first place. Adams completed the event with a draw in round 9 to finish top with 8 out of from 9.

<div>  <div> <div><span>+</span></div> <div>Adams, Michael</div> </div> <div> <div>GM</div> <div>2688</div> <div>2</div> </div> </div> <div>points</div> <div>8/9</div>			
VS			
1	<span>+</span> Adams, Henry	1738	● ½
2	<span>+</span> Sefton, Adam	1529	○ 1
3	<span>+</span> Palucha, Szymon	1980	● 1
4	<span>+</span> Ismail, Mohammed Aayan	2211	○ 1
5	<span>+</span> GM Gormally, Daniel W	2448	● 1
6	<span>+</span> GM Fernandez, Daniel Howard	2481	○ 1
7	<span>+</span> IM Roberson, Peter T	2426	● 1
8	<span>+</span> Shafi, Declan	2201	○ 1
9	<span>+</span> IM Golubovic, Boris	2349	● ½

Here is Mickey's critical 6th round win against early leader GM Daniel Fernandez after which Mickey took the lead for the first time. The opening was a Sicilian Najdorf with a sharp middlegame where Adams shows the power of the two bishops in an open position.

#### Adams, Michael (2688) - Fernandez, Daniel H (2481) [B90]

Cambridge International Open University Arms Hotel, Cambridge (6.1), 17.02.2023

[\[https://lichess.org/@/broadcaster\]](https://lichess.org/@/broadcaster)

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bd3 g6 7.f3 b5 8.Be3 Bb7 9.0-0 Bg7 10.a4 b4 11.Na2 a5 12.Bb5+ Nbd7 13.c3 bxc3 14.Nxc3 0-0 15.Nc6 Bxc6 16.Bxc6 Rb8 17.Qe2 Rb4 18.Rac1 Ne8 19.Rc2 Nc7 20.Na2 Rb8 21.Qd2 Ne6 22.b4 axb4 23.Nxb4 Ndc5 24.Bb5 Nb3 25.Qf2 Ned4 26.Rb2 Qc8 27.Nc6 Nxc6 28.Rxb3 Na5 29.Rbb1 Qe6 30.Rfc1 Rfc8 31.h3 Bc3 32.Kh1 d5 33.exd5 Qxd5 34.Rd1 Qe5 35.Rbc1 h5 36.Rd3 Bb4 37.Rcd1 Nc4



38.Bd4 Qe6 39.Ba7 Nd6 40.Bxb8 Bc5 41.Qe1 Rxb8 42.Qxe6 fxe6 43.Rc3 Bf2 44.g4 hxg4 45.hxg4 g5 46.Kg2 Bb6 47.Bd7 Ra8 48.Rc6 Be3 49.Bxe6+ Kg7 50.Bb3 Rb8 51.Rd3 Bf4 52.a5 Rb5 53.a6 Ra5 54.Rdc3 Ra1 55.Rc2



1-0

Final standings for the top 20 places are as below, with Adams finishing in top place on 8 points, just clear of GM Fernandez in second place on 7½ and a group of four players including the reigning British Champion IM Harry Grieve on 7 points alongside GM Oleg Korneev, IM Boris Golubovic and FM Nghia Bao Dong. Harriet Hunt was the highest placed female player with 5½, followed by Julia Volovich on 5 and WCM Nina Pert also on 5.

Rk		Name	FED	Rtg	TB1
1	GM	Adams, Michael	ENG	2757	8
2	GM	Fernandez, Daniel H	ENG	2519	7½
3	GM	Korneev, Oleg	ESP	2589	7
4	IM	Grieve, Harry	ENG	2514	7
5	IM	Golubovic, Boris	CRO	2349	7
6	FM	Dong, Bao Nghia	VIE	2414	7
7	IM	Clarke, Brandon G I	ENG	2588	6½
8	GM	Dardha, Daniel	BEL	2612	6½
9		Itgelt, Khuyagtsogt	MGL	2158	6½
10	GM	Gormally, Daniel W	ENG	2493	6½
11	GM	Bosicic, Marin	CRO	2564	6
12		Payne, Matthew J	ENG	2182	6
13	FM	Czopor, Maciej	POL	2519	6

14		Ismail, Mohammed Aayan	ENG	2353	6
15	FM	Bazakutsa, Svyatoslav	UKR	2330	6
16	GM	Arkell, Keith C	ENG	2506	6
17	GM	Turner, Matthew J	SCO	2487	6
18		Shafi, Declan	SCO	2265	6
19	FM	Wall, Tim P	ENG	2305	6
20	IM	Roberson, Peter T	ENG	2510	5½
21	FM	Anand, Batsukh	MGL	2239	5½
22		Waller, Dan	ENG	2163	5½
23	IM	Hunt, Harriet V	ENG	2349	5½
24		Fava, Lorenzo	ITA	2172	5½
25		Saunders, Aron	ENG	2260	5½



*Top placed female player IM Harriet Hunt*



*Cambridge International winner GM Michael Adams with Chief Arbiter and Organiser Shohreh Bayat*



*Second-placed female player Julia Volovich*

## Varsity Match by Stephen Meyler



*Second placed GM Danny Fernandez with Shohreh Bayat*



The 141<sup>st</sup> Varsity Match between Oxford and Cambridge was held at the Royal Automobile Club, Pall Mall on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March and resulted in a 4-4 draw. This

result leaves Cambridge in the lead by 60-58 with 23 matches drawn.

The idea of a regular chess match between Oxford and Cambridge Universities was first suggested in 1853 by Howard Staunton. In 1871 the Oxford University Chess Club challenged Cambridge to a match but, at that time, the Cambridge Club was only for dons, who refused the challenge from the undergraduates. Not until 28<sup>th</sup> March 1873 did the first official over the board Varsity Match take place at the City of London Chess Club. Since then it has become the oldest continuous fixture in the chess calendar, interrupted only by the war years. The winning team is awarded, to hold for a year, a handsome gold cup presented in 1953 by Miss Margaret Pugh.

A women's board was introduced in 1978 to determine the result in the event of a drawn match. However, since 1982 the matches have comprised eight boards with at least one woman player in each team, the board ranking being determined solely by playing strength.

To emphasise the undergraduate nature of the competition, all players must be resident bona fide students of the universities, with at least three members of each team studying for a first degree.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century it is remarkable how many British champions had played in the Varsity Match. In addition to those named below, Henry Atkins, William Winter, Alan Phillips and Hugh Alexander played for Cambridge and Leonard Barden and Peter Lee played for Oxford. A feature of recent years has been the increasingly international nature of the teams.

Looking at the history of the match, Cambridge retained the lead in the series until 1956 when Oxford won 4–3, with Henry Mutkin winning on board two for Oxford. Then Oxford went ahead until 1970 when Cambridge, inspired by the presence of Raymond Keene and Bill Hartston, began a remarkable run of 11 straight victories. In their wake came a procession of first-class Cambridge players including Welsh champions Howard Williams and John Cooper, GMs Michael Stean and Jonathan Mestel, and IMs Paul Littlewood and Shaun Taulbut. Although Oxford had its stars, GMs Jon Speelman, John Nunn and Peter Markland together with IMs Andrew Whiteley and George Botterill, Cambridge had greater strength in the lower boards.

However, in 1981 the tide turned and Oxford, with GMs William Watson, Jonathan Levitt, Colin McNab, David Norwood, Peter Wells, James Howell, and Dharshan Kumaran and IMs David Goodman, David Cummings, Ken Regan, Geoff Lawton and Stuart Rachels achieved a run of eight consecutive victories and eventually regained the lead.

In 1995, Cambridge squared the series again and subsequently moved ahead, despite Oxford fielding GM Luke McShane on board 1 in 2004 and 2005. Going into today's match, Cambridge are in the lead by 60 to 58 with 22 draws.

In the 2019 match the Chinese grandmaster and four-times women's world chess champion Hou Yifan played for Oxford on board 1. She is a chess prodigy: the youngest female player ever to qualify for the title of grandmaster and the youngest ever to win the Women's World Chess Championship.

In 2022 Harry Grieve pipped Matthew Wadsworth, who both played in the 140th Cambridge Varsity team, to become the current British Champion.

In 1973 the event was held for the first time at the clubhouse of the Royal Automobile Club in Pall Mall, London for the centenary match. By invitation of the Royal Automobile Club Chess Circle Committee, the match has been played each year at this ideal venue since 1978.

The match has a history of close encounters, and this year was no different, with extremely tight games – the last one finishing after six hours of play in a win for Oxford, thus securing a drawn match - leaving Cambridge in the lead by 60-58 with 23 draws. The brilliancy prize was awarded to Daniel Gallagher, Cambridge, for the following game (notes provided by GM Matthew Sadler who led the commentary team whilst being kibitzed by GMs Jon Speelman, Ray Keene and Michael Stean). Matthew had also provided a preview of the match and the respective opening repertoires.

#### **Board 4 Gallagher, Daniel GH (2218) - French, Max (2226) [C11]**

Oxford vs. Cambridge Varsity Match chess24.com (1), 04.03.2023

In my preview I'd predicted fireworks in this game, and we weren't disappointed though, as a neutral, I would maybe have hoped for fireworks in both directions! Once again, clever opening preparation was the key, as Daniel surprised inveterate Caro-Kann player Max with the Fantasy variation (3.f3) which Daniel had never played before.





Max's last experience against this line was back in 2016 (!) so his preparation was likely to be a little hazy in his head! Max reacted with a very sensible line (3...e6) but with one big drawback: it allows a transposition into the Steinitz French, a very complicated and theory-rich main line which Daniel knew fairly well but Max did not. This proved too much to handle; Daniel attacked with purpose and power and finished the game off in fine style.



**18.Bxg6 Bxd4 19.Bxf7+ Rxf7 20.Rh8+**



A very neat shimmy that finishes Black off with continued checks.

**20...Rf8 21.Qg6+ Ke7 22.Qg7+ Rf7 23.Qg5+**



**1-0**

This game won Daniel the brilliancy prize – well done! The best game prize was adjudged to be the draw on board 2; again, Matthew's notes accompany the game.

#### **Board 2 Petr, Jan (2282) - Powierski, Emil (2306) [D00]**

Oxford vs. Cambridge Varsity Match chess24.com (1), 04.03.2023

This game was absolutely gripping all the way through and was a deserved winner of the best game prize! Jan Petr, Cambridge, had scored two good wins in previous Varsity Matches and clearly has an excellent temperament for the tension of this event. I'd also been impressed with his opponent's games when preparing my preview of the match; Emil is a pretty complete player, well-prepared and with no obvious weaknesses. Jan also prepared a surprise; instead of his main choice 1.e4, he moved to 1.d4 and the Jobava London System (1.d4 Nf6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Bf4) which, as far as I can tell, he had never played before. I also didn't have any games of Emil against it! Jan set up an aggressive structure with queenside castling and an early kingside pawn storm.



The engines are not particularly wowed by White's set-up but it's quite unpleasant to face unprepared in a practical game, so the feeling in the commentary room was that Jan would be reasonably happy with the outcome of the opening, a murky position where both players were on their own. In fact, Emil played the early



middlegame phase in excellent concrete fashion and built up an excellent position.



We thought in the commentary room that Black had excellent chances, but we hadn't got as far as the engines' assessment that Black was virtually winning! White's problem is that his knight is doomed to remain offside to cover the pawn on f6 (which also gets in the way of White's kingside counterplay) while Black can start a pawn storm on the queenside. However, the unusual nature of the position makes it hard to handle for both sides and Jan managed to exchange a pair of rooks (thus reducing the power of Black's play on the queenside) and invade along the h-file, and at this stage a quiet draw looked odds-on.



We felt in the commentary room that both sides were holding each other in balance and that there was nothing more to be done. However, the players had other ideas! I had the feeling that both players were simply playing full out for the win, went for their plans and rolled the dice to see who would come out on top! At first, Emil clearly got the upper hand and had multiple (difficult) opportunities to win of which this fine idea – pointed out by a gentleman in the audience – was the finest:

**41. Rxc2**



41...Bxc2+ wins! 42.Kxc2 Rxc4+ 43.Kb2 a4 and three passed pawns are way too much! White's extra knight is marooned on h5 and can't provide any help. 44.Rg8 b3 45.Ra8 Rc2+ 46.Kb1 d3 47.Rd8+ Kc5 48.Rxd3 Kb4 49.Ng3 a3.

In the commentary, we kept on talking about how bad the knight on h5 was. but Jan confounded us all by bringing the knight into play via g7!

**46. Nxc7**



All of a sudden the game turned, and Jan was completely winning! In the commentary Jon Speelman was motoring, and found this delicious idea in one of the variations (not at all forced unfortunately!).



I was analysing 51.Nc3, with a likely draw after giving up the knight for the a-pawn, but Jon pointed out 51.Nb6+ Kd6 52.Rc3:



53.e5+ Ke6 54.Rc6 mate is the calamitous threat! Mate out of nowhere!

Jan lost his way and the slightly better of a draw seemed most likely until Jan began to think. In the commentary room, I had a horrible feeling of what was going to happen and indeed in this position...



... Jan played 56.f5, which should have allowed 56...Bxf5 57.gxf5 a3 when the pawns are unstoppable!



In the commentary, in the frantic minutes while Emil was thinking, we thought that White still had a draw with 58.Nxf7 a3 59.Ng5, when Black cannot stop White

queening after 59...a2 60.f7. However, the calm engine points out the fun-killing 59...Kd7!.



Emil missed this last chance, however, and the game ended in a well-deserved draw. Fantastic entertainment from start to finish and congratulations to both players for relentlessly striving for a win in every situation!

Live commentary was provided by Grandmaster Matthew Sadler and the match was broadcast live on the internet. The Margaret Pugh trophy was presented to both captains by the guest of honour Daniel Johnson, renowned journalist, at the gala dinner that was enjoyed by students and members alike.

## The London Chess Conference - Chess and STEM by John Foley



John Foley - photo by John Upham

There was a welcome resumption of this popular annual event, which was first run in 2013. We have had nine editions and by common consent each has been better than the previous one. The theme this year was Chess and STEM – how chess relates to the teaching of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. 120 people registered, with the majority coming from the UK, Europe and the USA.

There have been several articles extolling the conference, which will give you an impression of the triumphal reception for the event:

[ChessBase](#)

Back to the classroom - London Chess Conference.

[FIDE](#)

The London Chess Conference established how chess enhances 21st century skills, interest in STEM subjects and even pre-school education.

[ECU](#)

The amazing success of the London Chess Conference.

[Alexander Horváth](#)

Why the London Chess Conference was very important and what conclusions were reached.

### **What is the purpose of the conference?**

The conference holds up a beacon for the use of chess in education. We bring together a group of people with a common interest in using chess to transform young people in terms of building their social confidence and helping them to think analytically. Most of those attending believe that chess also has academic benefits but readily acknowledge that the scientific evidence, although generally positive, is stronger on correlation than on causation. The gathering of experts illustrates the diverse pedagogy for chess in the classroom. Most attendees find it inspiring to learn how diverse are the methods used to engage children. Every attendee learnt something new and significant, whether from the formal presentations or from interacting with the others.

### **What was different this year?**

We always push ourselves to break new boundaries. This does not always work but we learn each time – like learning from mistakes in chess. There were several innovations. The University of Roehampton was chosen because of its excellent conference facilities and being reasonably accessible from London and the main airports. This was the first time we livestreamed the proceedings. We offered the stream to the [FIDE YouTube](#) channel. This means that people could follow the presentations live and also can still watch the recordings. During Covid we ran the ChessTech2020 conference as a Zoom-only event; this time we ran a hybrid – a physical and a digital presence. To facilitate this, we decided to run only one stream throughout, unlike in previous conferences when we have had up to four sessions running simultaneously. You might have thought that people wanted to have as much choice as possible, but the feedback was that people dislike missing talks. We resolved this by designing the programme to be of general interest to everyone, with side topics discussed in one of the meeting spaces.

We paid great attention to social interaction. About half the people had been previously, so there was a sense of community. One floor was devoted to the conference, whereas another floor was for catering, demonstrations and networking. The use of large circular tables meant that several people could have a serious ad hoc meeting. Although we provided board rooms, we found that, apart from formal international FIDE meetings, almost everybody preferred to meet around the large tables in the communal open space. It was as if everybody wanted to feel part of a common experience. The social interactions were magnified by organising a drinks reception on the Friday evening which was very well attended. This was an opportunity to play on the chessboards which were distributed around the venue. Dinner was held at the local pub, a traditional venue appreciated by overseas visitors. We held a pub chess quiz which required in-depth knowledge of chess history and personalities. On another evening, one of the attendees performed mathemagic tricks to a bemused audience. The practitioners' gathering had a party vibe.

### **Who should go?**

The conference is targeted at people who have a professional interest in teaching chess. It is held at a weekend so that there is no clash with the school timetable. The great practitioners from around the world are there ready to share. From the UK, we had tutors from Chess in Schools and Communities, conference partners, as well as from some junior chess clubs.

### **Could more people attend?**

Most chess tutors do not attend. The ticket price is not that high for professional development. So, what is holding them back? Maybe seasoned chess tutors have no incentive to develop their skills - they are earning a living and, from their perspective, there is nothing more to learn. If so, then chess teaching has not yet reached a professional level carrying an obligation to be constantly learning and improving. We cannot blame tutors when schools in the UK rarely require any form of certification regarding chess teaching skills. If the tutor can play chess, and passes a safeguarding check, then the job is theirs. Chess is strangely cut off from the rest of the school curriculum, and fails to engage with school subjects where it could make an impact.

### **What is the difference between competitive chess and educational chess?**

Educational chess is about getting all children to love chess, its culture and its intricacies. The aim is to reach all children. The pedagogic consensus is that you don't start with chess but with simpler, more comfortable

games. Teachers should find the game accessible if they are to supervise children. There are plenty of other games that can be played on an 8x8 board, not least chess minigames. By contrast, competitive chess is about finding and nurturing talented kids; chess is treated as a sport rather than as an educational activity. Whilst commendable on its own terms, and bringing satisfaction to some children, there is a loss to the school and to the country by excluding most children at an early age. Instead of exploring the rich domain of chess activities, they quit in the belief that they are not clever enough, with incalculable consequences for their future intellectual development. From the perspective of the English Chess Federation, a sponsor of the conference, the motivation for supporting the educational approach to chess is numerical – the greater the number of children that start out in chess, the more likely that they will become competitive players. However, it is vital that the way chess is taught is appropriate for the age of the children and in line with best teaching practice. Otherwise, we prove the insight that the earlier you start teaching children, the earlier they give up.

#### Will you run the conference next year?

Given the success of the conference and the increasing focus on educational chess around the world, we have grounds for hoping that our supporters will continue to show faith in the London Chess Conference. We have become established as the leading chess in education conference in the world. Enlightened organisations with an eye on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills want to see chess in schools succeed. We are grateful to FIDE, ECU and CSC for their major support this year and to the ECF, ChessKid and Chessable and others for their sponsorship. We have a great team including Brigitta Peszleg, Leila Raivio, Kate Cooke, Alexis Harakis and Etienne Mensch who want to keep up the momentum.

## British Rapidplay Championship



*Photograph by Mariana Mosnegutu*

Thank you to the players, arbiters, organisers and helpers for a great event, and many congratulations to **Ameet Ghasi** (British Rapidplay Champion) and **Kamila Hryshchenko** (British Women's Rapidplay Champion)!



*Photo by Mariana Mosnegutu*

Prize-winners:

<https://www.4ncl.co.uk/rp/2023/prizewinners.htm>

Results, cross-table etc:

<https://chess-results.com/Tnr752774.aspx>

#### **Ghasi, Ameet K (2482) - Gormally, Daniel W (2468)**

British Rapidplay Championship 2023, 15/4/2023

Ameet felt his standout game was against Danny Gormally, commenting that 'there some strange tactical points including a piece sacrifice from me that he had missed - this was however followed by a counter (temporary) queen sacrifice from Danny that I had not even slightly considered and probably made me doubt myself for the rest of the game.

'There were some swings in fortune (while I should have probably converted my middle-game advantage,



towards the end I think the momentum was with him before I forced the perpetual)'.  
 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 g6 3.Bg2 Bg7 4.0-0 0-0 5.d3 d6 6.e4 e5  
 7.Nbd2 Nbd7 8.a4 a5 9.Nc4 b6 10.Re1 Nc5 11.b3 Ba6  
 12.Ne3 c6 13.Bb2 Qc7 14.Qd2 Rfe8 15.Rad1 Rad8  
 16.Qc1 Ne6 17.Qa1 c5



18.Nxe5 dxe5 19.Bxe5 Qxe5 20.Qxe5 Nh5 21.Qd5 Rxd5  
 22.Nxd5 Rb8 23.e5 Kf8 24.f4 Bh6 25.c3 Kg7 26.Ne7 Re8  
 27.Nc6 Nxf4 28.gxf4 Nxf4 29.Be4 Rc8 30.Na7 Re8  
 31.Nc6 Rc8 32.Kf2 Bxd3 33.Bxd3 Rxc6 34.Bb5 Re6  
 35.Rd7 Kf8 36.Bc4 Re7 37.Rd6 Kg7 38.Kf3 Nh3 39.Kg3  
 Nf4 40.Rxb6 Nh5+ 41.Kf3 Bd2 42.Rd1 Bxc3 43.e6 fxe6  
 44.Rxe6 Rf7+ 45.Ke4 Nf6+ 46.Kd3 Bb4 47.Kc2 Ng4  
 48.Re2 Rf4 49.Rd7+ Kh6 50.Be6 Nf6 51.Rf7 Kg5 52.Rg2+  
 Kh4 53.Bc4 g5 54.Re2 h5 55.Re6 Ng4 56.Re2 Nf6 57.Re6  
 Ng4 58.Re2 Nf6 59.Re6 Ng4 60.Re2 Kh3



½-½

## British Rapidplay Championship by Keith Arkell



Let me begin by heartily congratulating the 4NCL, in this case supported by the ECF and endorsed by the British Isles Coordinating Committee, on their diverse selection of playing venues - all of which double up as hotels for the convenience of the participants. The Mercure Bradford, Bankfield Hotel is a Gothic-style mansion in the heart of Brontë country, on the banks of the River Aire, with glorious countryside views in all directions. With the usual assemblage of highly competent officials in charge we could all look forward to an enjoyable two days of rapid chess.

A few weeks earlier I had wrecked a long run of weekend tournament 1st places by defaulting round 1 when I boarded the wrong train and ended up at Reading instead of Bristol, but here it was my young opponents who ensured as early as round 2 that I was unlikely to come 1<sup>st</sup>.

After drawing in round 1 against Sebastian Mokhber-Garcia (born 2010) I got wiped out by Advait Keerthi Kumar (born 2013) in round 2!

To be fair to myself I had just returned from one of the toughest simul8 I have ever given where an enjoyable and invigorating display versus the best of the British armed forces took me all day to complete.

Throughout the Championship I continued to play against the country's youngest talents, drawing with Kajus Mikalajunas (born 2010), just about scraping through a tough encounter with the already celebrated rising star Bodhana Sivanandan (born 2015), and finishing with a draw against the already very strong Rajat Makhar (born 2008).

By comparison I had very little trouble against my adult opponents, just dropping a draw against the youngest of these - Luke Lau. So, a respectable 8/11 in the end, but no more than that.

The Championship was dominated by Ameet Ghasi, who racked up an impressive 10 points - 1½ clear of the field. Recently Ameet scored his first GM norm at the age of 35, and I hope he soon makes two more, as it would be

absurd if someone so talented didn't get there in the end.



Ameet Ghasi [picture with the permission of British Chess News/John Upham Photography]

Now on to the games.

### Ameet Ghasi - Peter Wells

2023 British Rapidplay Ch (10)

The vast majority of Ameet's nine wins were, quite frankly, annihilations, but the penultimate round saw a clash which, in the event of three-time Champion Peter Wells winning, would have left all to play for in the last round.

**1.Nf3 c5 2.g3 Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.0-0 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.c4 e6 7.Nc3 Nge7 8.Bd2 0-0 9.a3 b6 10.Rb1 Bb7 11.b4 Qd7 12.e3 Rab8 13.Na4 e5 14.Nc3 f5 15.Qa4 h6 16.Nd5 Qe8 17.Qc2 Nxd5 18.cxd5 Ne7 19.bxc5 bxc5 20.e4 Qd7 21.Qc4 Ba8**



There is nothing much wrong with this, but I would expect a King's Indian player to get things moving here with 21...g5!.

**22.Bc3 Kh7 23.Nd2 Rb7 24.Rxb7 Bxb7 25.Rb1 Qc8 26.Qa4 Ba6 27.Nc4 Bxc4 28.dxc4 fxe4**



**29.Qxa7?**

Often when a move doesn't look right it is with good reason. Here the straightforward 29 Bxe4 maintains White's positional edge.

**29...Qf5 30.Rf1**



**30...Ng8?** This was Peter's chance to keep the game in the balance: 30...e3! to meet 31 Qxe7? (31 fxe3 Qd3 is fine) with 31...e2 when there is no good square for the rook. For example, 32 Ra1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Rf3! 34 Ba5 Rd3, or 32 Rc1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Qe3 or 32 Re1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Qxe1+! 34 Bxe1 Rf1+ 35 Bxf1 exf1#.

**31.Bd2** Ghasi now maintains a firm grip until the end.

**31...h5**



32.Qc7 e3 33.Bxe3 Qf6 34.a4 Rf7 35.Qb6 Bh6 36.a5 Ne7  
37.Bxh6 Kxh6 38.a6 Nc8 39.Qb3 h4 40.Bh3 Na7 41.Be6  
Re7 42.Rb1 Kg7 43.Qe3 g5 44.Rb7 Kf8 45.Qe4 Kg7  
46.Kg2 hxg3 47.hxg3 Kh6 48.Qg4 Rxb7 49.axb7 Qd8  
50.Qf5



1–0

Surprisingly this was Ameet Ghasi's first outright British Rapidplay title, though he has shared it a couple of times. Meanwhile Kamila Hryshchenko took the Women's title with 7½/11. This flawed but fighting encounter with GM Danny Gormally shows what Kamila is capable of:

#### Kamila Hryshchenko - Danny Gormally

2023 British Rapidplay Championship (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.Be3 a6 5.Qd2 Nd7 6.h4 h6  
7.0–0–0 b5 8.f3 c6 9.Kb1 Qc7 10.Nge2 Nb6 11.Ng3 b4  
12.Nce2 Nc4 13.Qd3 Nxe3 14.Qxe3 Qa5 15.Nc1 Nf6  
16.Be2 h5 17.f4 Ng4 18.Bxg4 Bxg4 19.Rd2 0–0 20.e5  
Rac8 21.Ne4 c5 22.dxc5 dxe5 23.fxe5 Bxe5 24.Nf2 Bf6  
25.Nxg4 hxg4 26.Nd3 Kg7 27.h5 Rh8 28.h6+ Kh7 29.Rf2  
Rhd8 30.Rf4 Rxd3 31.Qxd3 Rxc5 32.Qb3 Rd5 33.Rxb4  
Qd8 34.a3 e6 35.Rb7 Rd1+ 36.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 37.Ka2 Kxh6  
38.Rxf7 Qd4 39.c3 Qe5 40.Qc4 g3 41.Rd7 a5 42.Rc7 Qf5  
43.Rc5 Qf2 44.Qxe6 Qxc5 45.Qxf6 Qd5+ 46.Ka1 Qd1+  
47.Ka2 Qd5+ 48.Ka1

½–½

## 2023 English Seniors Championships



View from the top boards at the start of round 7 in the Over 50s - photo by Chief Arbiter Adrian Elwin

The annual English Seniors Championships took place between Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May and Bank Holiday Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at Woodland Grange, Old Milverton Lane, Leamington Spa CV32.

#### Schedule

This year's Seniors Championships were played with a total of seven rounds over five days, with the playing schedule as follows for each of the Championships:

**Thursday Round 1** - 17.30 – 21.30

**Friday Round 2** - 10.00 – 14.00; **Round 3** - 16.00 – 20.00

**Saturday Round 4** - 15.00 – 20.00

**Sunday Round 5** - 10.00 – 14.00; **Round 6** - 16.00 – 20.00

**Monday Round 7** - 11.00 – 15.00

#### Time Control and Rating

The time control for the event was 90 minutes per player with 30 second increments from move 1. Both sections were FIDE-rated and ECF-rated. Further details can be found at the link here:

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

#### Championships Report

This was the eighth edition of the English Seniors Championships, with previous events and champions as follows:

- 2008 - Andrew Whiteley
- 2009 - Richard Beach
- 2010 - Oliver Jackson and Norman Hutchinson
- 2011 - Four-way tie between Oliver Jackson, Ken Norman, Michael Yeo and George Dickson.
- 2014 (e2e4 English Seniors) - Stephen Berry
- 2019 50+ - Paul Littlewood, 65+ Kevin Bowmer



- 2022 (Chessable English Seniors) - 50+ Mark Hebden, 65+ Cliff Chandler

### 2023 50+ Championship

This year's 50+ tournament was the strongest championship to date, with top seeds including GMs Keith Arkell, Mark Hebden, Nigel Davies and Peter Wells, and a total of 38 players taking part.

Mark Hebden took an early lead after rounds 1 and 2, but was overtaken by Keith Arkell who finished round 6 on 5 points just ahead of Mark, Nigel Davies and Andrew Lewis all on 4½ points. Mark won his final round game, with Keith, Nigel and Andrew all drawing, which meant that Keith Arkell and Mark Hebden finished as joint champions followed by 3rd equal Nigel Davies and Andrew Lewis.

None of the top four players lost any of their games apart from Nigel Davies, who lost a critical round 5 game against Keith Arkell.

The Women's title was won by WIM Natasha Regan, who finished on 3½ points.

50+ Championship Results	Player	Score
1st = and Joint English 50+ Champions	<b>GM Keith Arkell and GM Mark Hebden</b>	5½ points
3rd =	GM Nigel Davies and Andrew Lewis	5 points
Women's 50+ Champion	<b>WIM Natasha Regan</b>	3½ points
U2000 Performance	Barry J Hymer	
U1800 Performance	Saket Singhal	

### 2023 65+ Championship

The 65+ tournament was also the strongest yet, with top seeds including IMs Paul Littlewood and Chris Baker and once again a total of 38 players taking part. Paul Littlewood took an early lead with wins in the first three rounds before drawing in a critical round 4 game against Chris Baker. Chris and Paul were joint leaders on 5 points after round 6, followed by Roger de Coverley and Kevin Bowmer on 4½ points. Chris then won his final round game against Roger, with Paul drawing with Ian Snape.

This meant that Chris Baker was outright winner with 6 out of 7, with five wins, two draws (against Norman Hutchinson and Paul Littlewood) and no losses. Paul Littlewood was second on 5½ and Kevin Bowmer and Paul Raynes finished third equal on 5 points.

The Women's title was won by Susan Selley, who finished on 3 points.

1st and English 65+ Champion	<b>IM Chris Baker</b>	6 points
2nd	IM Paul Littlewood	5½ points
3rd =	Kevin Bowmer and Paul Raynes	5 points
Women's 65+ Champion	<b>Susan Selley</b>	3 points
U2000 Performance	Roger de Coverly	
U1800 Performance	Nigel Collins	

### Prize Giving



English Women's Champions Susan Selley (65+) and Natasha Regan (50+)



ECF Home Director Nigel Towers with 65+ Champion IM Chris Baker

### Results

A full set of results and cross-tables can be found on Chess-Results.com here:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr760158.aspx?lan=1&art=0&fed=ENG>

Commentary was provided on the last two rounds by FM Jonathan Blackburn and WIM Lan Yao. Recordings are available on YouTube at the links below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fpea7ALna1A>

and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbb8\\_0kMg5o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbb8_0kMg5o)

Prize-winners:

<https://www.4ncl.co.uk/rp/2023/prizewinners.htm>

Results, cross-table etc:

<https://chess-results.com/Tnr752774.aspx>



**Ghasi, Ameet K (2482) - Gormally, Daniel W (2468)**

British Rapidplay Championship 2023, 15/4/2023

Ameet felt his standout game was against Danny Gormally, commenting that 'there some strange tactical points including a piece sacrifice from me that he had missed - this was however followed by a (temporary) queen sacrifice from Danny that I had not even slightly considered and probably made me doubt myself for the rest of the game.

'There were some swings in fortune (while I should have probably converted my middle-game advantage, towards the end I think the momentum was with him before I forced the perpetual)'.  
1.Nf3 Nf6 2.g3 g6 3.Bg2 Bg7 4.0-0 0-0 5.d3 d6 6.e4 e5 7.Nbd2 Nbd7 8.a4 a5 9.Nc4 b6 10.Re1 Nc5 11.b3 Ba6 12.Ne3 c6 13.Bb2 Qc7 14.Qd2 Rfe8 15.Rad1 Rad8 16.Qc1 Ne6 17.Qa1 c5



18.Nxe5 dxe5 19.Bxe5 Qxe5 20.Qxe5 Nh5 21.Qd5 Rxd5 22.Nxd5 Rb8 23.e5 Kf8 24.f4 Bh6 25.c3 Kg7 26.Ne7 Re8 27.Nc6 Nxf4 28.gxf4 Nxf4 29.Be4 Rc8 30.Na7 Re8 31.Nc6 Rc8 32.Kf2 Bxd3 33.Bxd3 Rxc6 34.Bb5 Re6 35.Rd7 Kf8 36.Bc4 Re7 37.Rd6 Kg7 38.Kf3 Nh3 39.Kg3 Nf4 40.Rxb6 Nh5+ 41.Kf3 Bd2 42.Rd1 Bxc3 43.e6 fxe6 44.Rxe6 Rf7+ 45.Ke4 Nf6+ 46.Kd3 Bb4 47.Kc2 Ng4 48.Re2 Rf4 49.Rd7+ Kh6 50.Be6 Nf6 51.Rf7 Kg5 52.Rg2+ Kh4 53.Bc4 g5 54.Re2 h5 55.Re6 Ng4 56.Re2 Nf6 57.Re6 Ng4 58.Re2 Nf6 59.Re6 Ng4 60.Re2 Kh3



½-½

## Games from the English Seniors Championships I

### by Keith Arkell



Currently seniors chess is our most successful category on the international stage, and this was reflected in the strength of the 2023 English Senior Championships.

In the Over 65s there were two IMs battling it out at the top - namely the 1981 British

Champion Paul Littlewood and a leading Midlands player from that period, Chris Baker. Last year both were members of World Championship winning teams - in Paul's case the Over 65s, while Chris was in the successful England 50+ team.

Meanwhile the English Senior (50+) Championship boasted more GMs than some full British Championships! And the top two seeds had both won individual gold and team gold medals in last year's World Championships.

The Woodland Grange Hotel in Leamington Spa nicely accommodated about 80 of us in its spacious and well-ventilated playing venue.

Onto the chess then, and the dogfight between Littlewood and Baker was resolved in the final round, when Chris overcame Roger De Coverley while Paul was held to a draw by Ian Snape.

I was torn between annotating Chris's excellent use of the initiative against Paul Raynes - a friend of mine from the Midlands who has made a welcome return to chess recently - and a smooth positional game. I settled on the latter to reward Chris for playing an opening which is named after me in most sources!

**Geoffrey Moore – IM Chris Baker**

2023 English Senior ( 65+) Round 6

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.Nf3 Nc6 5.dxc5 Bg4 6.c3 e6 7.Be3 Nge7 8.Bb5 Qc7 9.Nbd2 a6 10.Qa4 Bxf3 11.Nxf3 Rc8 12.Bd3 Ng6 13.Bxg6 hxg6



It is often difficult to regain the Pawn in the Arkell-Khenkin line against the Advance Caro-Kann, but you can usually rely on some positional compensation. Here it can be a little awkward for White both to defend e5 and prevent counter-play either on the h-file or by pushing the g-pawn.

**14.O-O Be7 15.Rfe1 Kf8 16.Bd4 Qd7 17.Qd1 g5**



**18.Nd2**

I think it would be better to wait for Black to expose his g-pawn on g4 before making this retreat. Something sensible like 18.Qe2 should keep him on top.

**18...f5 19. exf6 gxf6 20. f3 Kf7**



By now compensation for the material is very real. The pawns are wonderfully flexible, and Chris can start to apply pressure on the kingside.

**21.Bf2**

Allowing the black knight to enter his position with some impact. 21.Nb3 would still have left the game in the balance.

**21...Ne5 22.b4 Nd3 23.Re2 b6**



This breaks up White's position and leaves Black in command.

**24.Nb3**

If 24.cxb6 25.Nxf2 26.Rxf2 Rxc3, when White has too many weaknesses to survive.

**24...Nxf2 25.Rxf2 bxc5 26.Nxc5 Rxc5 27.bxc5 Bxc5 28.Qe2 Qc7 29.g3 Bxf2+ 30.Qxf2 Qxc3**



There is still plenty of work to be done, but Baker should be able to go on and convert this position.

**31.Rb1 Rc8 32.Rb2 Qc5 33.Rb7+ Kg6 34.Qxc5 Rxc5 35.Rb6 Rc1+ 36.Kf2 Rc2+ 37.Ke3 Kf5 38.Rxa6 Rxh2 39.g4+ Ke5 40.Kd3 f5 41.gxf5 exf5 42.Ra5 Kf4 43.a4 Ra2 44.Kc3 Ra3+ 45.Kb4 Rxf3 46.Rxd5 Re3 47.a5 g4 48.a6**

Re8 49.a7 Ra8 50.Rd7 g3 51.Kc3 g2 52.Rg7 Kf3 53.Kd2  
Rxa7



Impeccable technique in the R+P ending.

**0-1**

On to the Over 50s now, and this important round 5 game against a solid GM who has been making a comeback over much of the last year enabled me to take the outright lead on 4½/5:

**GM Keith Arkell – GM Nigel Davies**

2023 English Senior (50+) Championship

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 exd5 5.d4 h6



Though theoretically only equal it is no secret that I love to play these positions in which I have an e-pawn for my opponent's c-pawn. Given how much it restricts White's options I'm surprised how little we see of 5...h6!?

6.Bf4 Bd6 7.Bxd6 Qxd6 8.e3 O-O 9.Be2 Bg4 10.Qb3 Nbd7 11.O-O Rab8 12.Rfe1 c6 13.Rac1 Rfe8 14.a3 Qe7 15.Qb4



15...Qxb4

I can't really fault this move, and it is certainly the top engine choice, but I felt that Nigel was being a little too compliant in letting me steer the game towards a position I was bound to enjoy. If instead he just moves his queen to somewhere like e6 I'm not really sure what mine can achieve over on the queenside.

16.axb4 a6 17.Na4 Ne4 18.Nc5 Ndxc5 19.bxc5



So why would most GMs agree that White is a little better here? The only real difference is that I have an e-pawn in exchange for Black's a-pawn, but this is significant! It means White can call all the shots. I can spend a great deal of time deciding when and how to break with e4. Do I back the move with f3 first or do I simply bring the king to the centre and retake with pieces? According to 'Arkell's Hierarchy of Pawns' the e-pawn is four files stronger than the a-pawn! I would like to show you a model game which made a big impression on me as a 17 year old watching the World Championship match between Karpov and Korchnoi.

It matters not one iota that the engine considers Karpov to be equal for about 58 of the 71 moves. It was Korchnoi pulling all the strings and that can never be easy for the long term defender:

## Korchnoi v Karpov

Baguio 1978

1.c4 e6 2.Nc3 d5 3.d4 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 Be7 6.e3 0–0 7.Bd3 Nbd7 8.Nf3 Re8 9.Qc2 c6 10.0–0 Nf8 11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.b4 Bg4 13.Nd2 Rc8 14.Bf5 Bxf5 15.Qxf5 Qd7 16.Qxd7 Nxd7 17.a4 Be7 18.Rfb1 Nf6 19.a5 a6 20.Na4 Bf8 21.Nc5 Re7 22.Kf1 Ne8 23.Ke2 Nd6 24.Kd3 Rce8 25.Re1 g6 26.Re2 f6 27.Rae1 Bh6 28.Ndb3 Bf8 29.Nd2 Bh6 30.h3 Kf7 31.g4 Bf8 32.f3 Rd8 33.Ndb3 Nb5 34.Rf1 Bh6 35.f4 Bf8 36.Nd2 Nd6 37.Rfe1 h6 38.Rf1 Rb8 39.Ra1 Rbe8 40.Rae1 Rb8

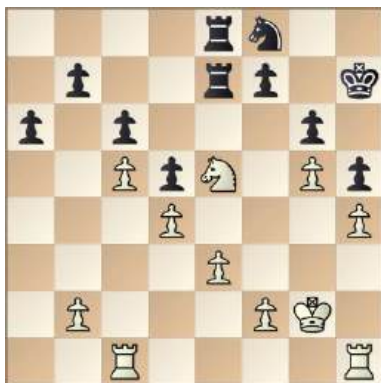


41.e4 dxe4+ 42.Ndxe4 Nb5 43.Nc3 Rxe2 44.Rxe2 Bxc5 45.bxc5 Rd8 46.Nxb5 axb5 47.f5 gxf5 48.gxf5 Rg8 49.Kc3 Re8 50.Rd2 Re4 51.Kb4 Ke8 52.a6 bxa6 53.Ka5 Kd7 54.Kb6 b4 55.d5 cxd5 56.Rxd5+ Kc8 57.Rd3 a5 58.Rg3 b3 59.Kc6 Kb8 60.Rxb3+ Ka7 61.Rb7+ Ka6 62.Rb6+ Ka7 63.Kb5 a4 64.Rxf6 Rf4 65.Rxh6 a3 66.Ra6+ Kb8 67.Rxa3 Rxf5 68.Rg3 Rf6 69.Rg8+ Kc7 70.Rg7+ Kc8 71.Rh7 1–0

**19...Re7 20.Ne5 Bxe2 21.Rxe2 Rd8 22.g4 Nf6 23.h3 Nd7 24.Nd3**

The defence would be much easier without knights.

**24...Nf8 25.Kg2 Ne6 26.Ree1 Rde8 27.h4 g6 28.Rh1 Kh7 29.g5 h5 30.Ne5 Nf8**



**31.f4?**

Too rigid. I should keep all options open, but I was seduced by the idea that Nigel might be planning to exchange Knights when the recapture fxe5 must be close to winning by force. Had I kept the pawn on f2 I would have been more free to go after b7 with both rooks and the knight. That plan is far more difficult with an undefended pawn on e3.

**31...Ne6 32.Rc3 Ng7 33.Rb3 Nf5 34.Kh3 Kg7 35.Ra1 Rc7 36.Ra4 Kf8 37.Rab4 Ree7 38.Rb6**

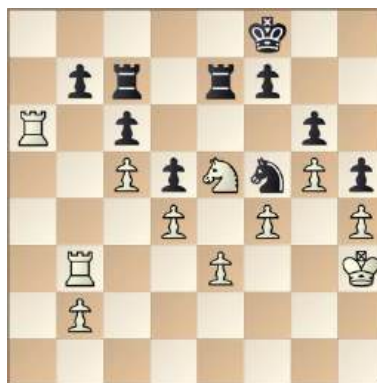


**38...Ke8?** I felt curiously sure that Nigel Davies was going to make this blunder, but had he moved his king back to the kingside I would have probed for hours, though probably without success. And all because 31.f4? was far too committal.

**39.Rxa6**

Winning on the spot.

**39... Kf8**



**40.Ra7** Due to Zugzwang this is more accurate than 40.Ra8+ Re8.

**40...Kg7 41.Ra8 Kh7 42.Rb8**





1-0

In the final round, believing my tiebreak to be very good, I agreed a draw fairly early against FM Andrew Lewis after he had done a good preparation job and already had a very comfortable position.

In the end Nigel Davies drew and Mark Hebden won, with Mark and me finishing on 5½ points each. Due to some ambiguity over the tie-breaks, the ECF awarded us the 50+ title jointly.

To complete the article, congratulations to Susan Selley, 65+ Women's Champion, and to WIM Natasha Regan, who won the Women's 50+ title for the second year in a row.

## Games from the English Seniors Championships II by Chris Baker



I was asked to annotate one of my games from the recent English Seniors Over 65s event, so I chose one of the games I didn't win! I felt this was a critical game as Black in round 4 against Paul Littlewood (I was hoping to play him in round 5 as White!). Before the event

started, I thought Paul was the firm favourite due to his strength and experience at a high level. As I was a half point behind him a win for me would mean that I would leapfrog him, a draw would be satisfactory, but a loss would open up a 1½ point gap.

I should mention there was also other strong opposition in Mark Page (who I last played 44 years before! and is my 4NCL team captain), Ian Snape (a member of the Over 65s team that won the World Championship the previous year), and Paul Raynes, whose sharp and

original play gave his opponents a headache on more than one occasion.

**Paul E Littlewood - Chris W Baker B11**

English Seniors 65+ Round 4 06.05.2023

**1.e4 c6 2.Nc3 d5 3.Nf3 Bg4 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3**



**5...e6**

After the game Paul said Petrosian recommended 5...Nf6, as 6. e5 Nfd7 e6 leads to nothing for White.

**6.d4 Qb6 7.exd5 cxd5 8.Bb5+ Nc6 9.0-0 Bd6!**



I like this move, as I had anticipated White's response and my reply.

**10.Qg4 Kf8**



### 11.Bxc6 Nf6

Just a tempo-gaining move by putting the knight on its most natural square and so I can see where the queen goes to before deciding how to recapture on c6.

### 12.Qf3 bxc6

Paul thought, and no doubt he is correct, that 12...Qc6 is a viable alternative.

### 13.Bf4 Bxf4 14.Qxf4 Qb8!



A good move and necessary, as 14...Qxb2?? 15.Qd6+ wins outright.

### 15.Qd2 h5!?

15...Qxb2 is now possible, but White once again would gain quite an initiative and I didn't want to have to find accurate defensive moves when I was already getting way behind on the clock.

### 16.Na4 Ne4 17.Qe3 g6 18.Rfe1 Kg7 19.c3 a5

Weakens the b6 square, but I can't allow White to play b4 getting a bind on c5.

### 20.b3 h4

Gaining space, discouraging g4 ideas and giving me the h5 square to use should I wish.

### 21.Rac1 Rh5 22.c4



### 22...Nd6?!

I think this is wrong; maybe a rook lift to f5 was better.

### 23.cxd5 Rxd5!

This is a better move than it might appear due to a surprising resource Black has later. 23...cxd5 gives White all the play.

### 24.Rxc6 Nf5 25.Qc3 Rxd4

Not the sort of move I would normally want to play as it self-pins the rook, but in fact it's difficult for White to exploit this.

### 26.Rc4 Qd6 27.Nc5!



Strong, as it recentralises the knight and creates new problems for Black to face.

### 27...e5

I'm not sure about this move; it does unpin the rook but creates a potential weakness as well. 27...Kg8 was an alternative method.

### 28.Ne4 Rxc4 29.Qxc4 Qb4

I want White to exchange, as a2 becomes a target and the pawn on b4 restricts any chance for White to utilise his queenside majority.

**30.Rc1**

Paul's having none of it!

**30...Nd4 31.Kf1**

A good waiting move and bringing the king closer to the centre for the ensuing endgame, whilst also stopping a potential future check on e2.

**31...Rd8 32.Qc5 Re8 33.Rc4!**

Annoyingly forcing me to exchange queens on his terms. I know from this point I was playing on increment, sometimes getting to just a few seconds, while at this stage Paul had over 12 minutes on his clock.

**33...Qxc5 34.Rxc5 f5 35.Nc3 e4**

I need activity, and while the connected passed pawns are strong White has to concede some ground.

**36.Rxa5 Rc8**



**37.Ne2**

37. Nd1 was possible, but no better.

**37...Nxe2 38.Kxe2 Rc2+ 39.Ke3 Kf6 40.b4 g5 41.a4 Rb2 42.Rb5**



**42...g4?!**

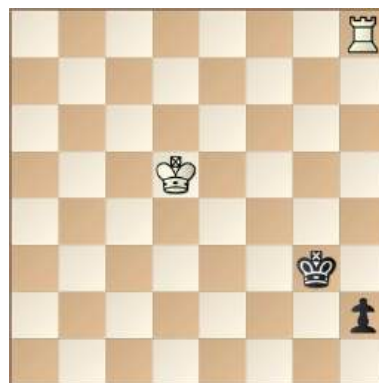
This could well be wrong and 42...Rb3+ could be better, but with little time I had to go with my gut.

**43.hxg4 fxg4 44.Rb8 h3**



I wanted to create my own passer, but remembered at the time also wanting to play 44...g3.

**45.gxh3 gxh3 46.b5 Kf5 47.Rf8+ Kg4 48.Kxe4 Rb4+ 49.Kd5 Rxa4 50.Rh8 Rf4 51.b6 Rxf2 52.b7 Rb2 53.b8Q Rxb8 54.Rxb8 h2 55.Rh8 Kg3**



½-½

## English and English Women's Championships 2023

The English Championships and English Women's Championships took place between Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May and Bank Holiday Monday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at the Holiday Inn Kenilworth-Warwick, 212 Abbey End, Kenilworth CV8. The venue was excellent as always, with local facilities nearby in the historic town and Kenilworth Castle and Elizabethan Gardens a short work away.





As with the Seniors we had an extremely strong field for this year's Championships, with GM Michael Adams as top seed in the Open English Championship with a total of 66 players, and Kamila Hryshenko as top seed in the English Women's Championship with a total of 22 players taking part. You can find a full list of entrants at the links here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-2023-entrants/>

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-womens-2023-entrants/>

### Schedule

Both of the finals – English Championship and English Women's Championship - were played as FIDE and ECF rated Swiss tournaments, with a total of seven rounds over five days. The playing schedule was as follows for the two tournaments:

**Friday Round 1** - 10:00 - 14:00; **Round 2** - 16:00 – 20:00;  
**Saturday Round 3** - 10.00 – 14:00; **Round 4** - 16:00 – 20:00;

**Sunday Round 5** - 10:00 – 14:00; **Round 6** - 16:00 – 20:00; **Monday Round 7** - 10:00 – 14:00

The organising and control team comprised Organiser Nigel Towers and Chief Arbiter IA Adrian Elwin, supported by IA Matthew Carr and FA Jo Wildman. Photography was provided by Carl Portman and Denis Dicen.



The top games from each competition were played on live boards and broadcast on Chess.com, Lichess and Chess24 with commentary on the ECF's Twitch streaming channel: [https://m.twitch.tv/ecf\\_streaming](https://m.twitch.tv/ecf_streaming)

Commentary was provided for the final rounds by FM Jonathan Blackburn, supported by fellow Welsh FM loan Rees for round 6 and WIM Natasha Regan for round 7. You can find a recording of the commentary streams on the ECF's YouTube channel at the link here:

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

### English Championship



*English Championships – Warwick and Kenilworth Room, Holiday Inn*

Mickey Adams was the top seed for the Championship and the favourite to win the Tony Miles trophy, with over 100 points between Mickey and second seed Ameet Ghasi. There were 66 players taking part, with the top 10 seeds as below with ratings based on the higher of ECF and FIDE.

1	GM	Michael Adams	2757	4NCL Guildford
2	IM	Ameet Ghasi	2619	Richmond
3	IM	Marcus Harvey	2539	4NCL Wood Green
4	GM	Mark Hebden	2504	Syston



5	GM	John Emms	2503	Tunbridge Wells
6	IM	Jonah Willow	2490	West Nottingham
7	GM	Danny Gormally	2470	4NCL Blackthorne
8	IM	Matthew Wadsworth	2469	Maidenhead
9	IM	Pert, Richard G	2461	Brentwood
10	IM	Jackson, James P	2441	Banbury

The first round games went mostly on seeding, but with some challenging games for the top players.

Mickey Adams was paired against fast-improving junior Stanley Badacsonyi. Stanley had the white pieces and played a Trompowsky opening to reach an equal middlegame with two pairs of knights exchanged in the centre and Black's queenside play producing an open h-file with an exchange of all four rooks.



Stanley Badacsonyi - photo by Carl Portman

#### Badacsonyi, Stanley (2002) - Adams, Michael (2666)

English Chess Championship 2023 (1), 26.05.2023  
Trompowsky Attack

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bg5 d5 3.Nd2 Nbd7 4.Ngf3 h6 5.Bf4 e6 6.h3 c5 7.c3 Qb6 8.Qb3 Qc6 9.e3 c4 10.Qc2 b5 11.Be2 Bb7 12.Ne5 Nxe5 13.Bxe5



13...Nd7 14.Bh2 Be7 15.Bf3 Nf6 16.0-0 0-0 17.Rfe1 Ne4 18.Nxe4 dxe4 19.Be2 Rfc8 20.Rec1 Qe8 21.a4 a6 22.axb5 axb5 23.b3 Bd5 24.b4 Qc6 25.Qb2 Qb7 26.Rxa8 Rxa8 27.Ra1 Ra6 28.Rxa6 Qxa6



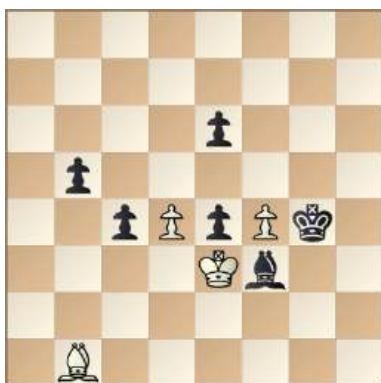
29.Bd1 Bd8 30.Bc2 h5 31.Bd1 h4 32.Bc2 Bc6 33.Kf1 Qa7 34.Kg1 f6 35.Bd1 Kf7 36.Bf4 Ke7 37.Bc2 Bb6 38.Qb1 g5 39.Bh2 Qa3 40.Bb8 Qa8 41.Bh2 Qa3 42.Bb8 f5 43.Qe1 Qb2 44.Qd2 Kd7 45.Be5 Bc7 46.Bf6 Bd8 47.Be5 Be7



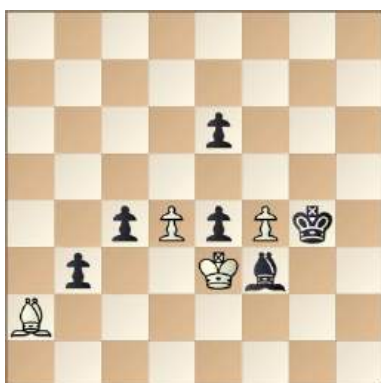
48.g4?! hxc3 49.fxc3 Bd6 50.Bxd6 Kxd6



51.h4?! Be8 Rerouting to the d1 to h5 diagonal 52.hxc3 Qa1+ 53.Kh2 Bh5 54.g4 Bxc3 55.Qf2 Bf3 56.Qg3+ Kd7 57.Qg1 Qxc3 58.Qf2 Qxb4 59.g6 Qd6+ 60.Kg1 Qe7 61.Qg3 Qg7 62.Qg5 Qh8 63.Qg3 f4 64.Qh2 Qxh2+ 65.Kxh2 Ke7 66.exf4 Kf6 67.Kg3 Kxg6 68.Kf2 Kf5 69.Ke3 Kg4 70.Bb1



70...b4 71.Ba2 b3



0-1

Mickey continued with a further win in round 2 against Adam Ashton, a draw in round 3 against defending champion Mark Hebden, and wins in round 4, 5 and 6 against Borna Derakhshani, Marcus Harvey and second seed Ameet Ghasi. This meant that Mickey went into the last round on 5½ out of 6 and a full point clear of the chasing pack of Marcus Harvey, Matthew Wadsworth, Peter Finn, Jonah Willow and Peter Wells – all on 4½ points.

Michael's final round pairing was against IM Jonah Willow. Jonah played a Scotch opening, with a highly tactical battle leading to an exciting finish to the tournament.

**Willow, Jonah B (2447) - Adams, Michael (2666)**

English Chess Championship 2023 Chess.com (7),  
29.05.2023



*Jonah Willow vs Michael Adams – photo by Denis Dicen*

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bb5 Nd4 5.O-O Nxb5  
6.Nxb5 c6 7.Nc3 d6 8.d4 Qc7



9.a4 Be7 10.a5 0-0 11.Bg5 Bg4 12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.d5 c5  
14.a6 Rfb8 15.Nb5 Qd8 16.b3 bxa6 17.Na3 Bd7 18.Nc4  
Bb5



19.Na5 Qc8 20.Nd2 Bd8 21.Nac4 Bc7



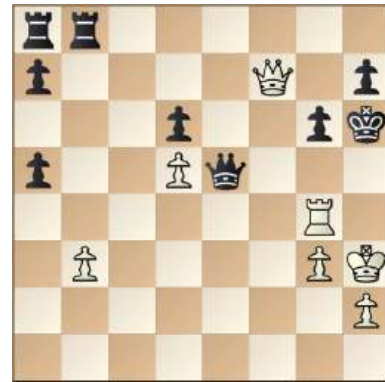
22.Ne3?! Bxf1 23.Qxf1 a5 24.g3 g6 25.f4



25...c4 26.Ndxc4 Bb6 27.fxe5 Bxe3+ 28.Nxe3 Qc3  
29.Ng4 Qd4+?! 30.Kg2 Qxe4+ 31.Kh3 Qxc2 32.Nh6+ Kg7  
33.Rc1 Qe4



34.Rc4? 34...Qxe5 35.Qxf7+ Kxh6 36.Rh4+ Kg5 37.Rg4+  
Kh6 38.Rh4+ Kg5 39.Rg4+ Kh6



½–½

The final-round draw was enough for Mickey Adams to become the English Champion for 2023 with 6 points out of 7, a clear half-point ahead of second placed IMs Marcus Harvey and Matthew Wadsworth, who both won their final round games to finish on 5½ points.

One of the features of the championship was the number of juniors and younger players challenging for the top positions.

#### English Championship by Peter Finn



Peter Finn

#### (1) Derakhshani, Borna (2359) - Finn, Peter (2127) A06

English Open Championships 2023 Holiday Inn Kenilworth-Warwick, 28.05.2023

Coming into this game I had won my first game then drawn my next three games against strong opposition. However, that doesn't tell the full story, as I was completely winning against IM Jonah Willow in round 2 and completely lost against IM James Jackson in round 3!

1.Nf3 d5 2.e3



I had expected 1.Nf3 but not 2.e3, so I took a bit of a think here deciding what set-up to go for, and eventually settled for a semi-Slav set-up.

**2...Nf6 3.c4 c6 4.Nc3 e6 5.b3 Bd6 6.Bb2 e5?!**

I knew it was important to play Bd6 instead of Nbd7, as in some positions Black plays an early e5; however, I misremembered the correct position.

6...0-0 is how I should have continued, only playing e5 after castling and if my opponent plays slowly with Qc2. 7.Qc2 e5! 8.cxd5 cxd5 9.Nb5 Nc6 10.Nxd6 Qxd6 and Black is better here.

**7.cxd5 cxd5 8.Nb5 Nc6 9.Nxd6+ Qxd6 10.Bb5 e4 11.Nd4 0-0**



Here my opponent has so far correctly exploited my opening mistake and has a clear advantage with superior minor pieces.

**12.Nxc6?!**

Changing the structure in my favour. I have ideas of pushing my a-pawn and taking on b3 to create a weakness now. Additionally, my c6-pawn is surprisingly difficult to attack. Either 12.Rc1 or 12.Be2 would leave White with a clear edge. However, not 12.0-0? Nxd4 13.Bxd4 Ng4 14.g3 Nh6 when Black has successfully weakened White's light squares and will always have ideas to exploit them.

**12...bxc6 13.Be2 a5 14.d3 exd3 15.Bxd3 Ba6 16.0-0 Bxd3 17.Qxd3 Ng4**



I thought it was important to activate my knight before White was in time to play Qd4 or Qc3, leaving the knight passive.

**18.g3 Ne5?! 19.Qc3**

19.Bxe5! Not a move either my opponent or I strongly considered, assuming the bishop must be better than the knight. 19...Qxe5 20.Rac1 Qd6 defending the pawn and keeping the rook off c5. After 21.Qc2 Ra6 22.Rfd1 Black's position is under a lot of pressure, and he must play very accurately to survive.

**19...f6 20.Rac1 Qe6 21.Kg2 Qf5**



**22.Qc2**

I missed this move completely when I played Qf5; I thought White had to play the very ugly f3.

**22...Qf3+**

Here I offered a draw; I didn't really think my opponent would take it and I thought he might be provoked into playing too ambitiously and losing.

**23.Kg1 Rac8 24.Rfd1 Qg4 25.f4?!**

25.Bxe5: White should try to bail out here. This is what I was expecting during the game. However, White still has



to be precise not to be worse. An example line: 25...fxe5 26.Rd2 h5 27.Qd1 Qg6 28.h4.

**25...Nf7 26.Bd4 Rfe8 27.Qd2 Nd6 28.Qxa5**



**28...Nf5**

28...Ne4! is even stronger and was my first instinct. However, I saw some lines with Nxd4, so decided on the game move instead. 29.Qe1 h5 30.Kg2 c5 31.Bb2 h4 32.h3 Qg6 33.g4 Ng3: I didn't properly appreciate after h5, h4 how strong the knight would be on g3 supporting a rook on e2. White is in massive trouble.

**29.Qd2 h5 30.Qf2 c5! 31.h3**

The only try, else e3 falls.

31.Bxc5 Rxc5 32.Rxc5 Qxd1+

**31...Qxh3 32.Rxc5 Nxg3?**

It was much stronger to play Qg4 before taking on g3. I missed his reply in the game, only calculating Qg2 and Qh2.

**33.Qf3! Rcd8 34.Rd2 Qg4 35.Qxg4 h4 36.Rg2**

A key decision in the game. I can play either Nf5 or Ne4. My first instinct was Nf5, hoping desperately to liquidate into a drawn ending, but it's not so simple and if Black isn't precise he will lose. Ne4 leads to a very complicated race where White tries to push his connected passers before Black activates his pieces to support his g-pawn advance. Practically, I definitely make the right decision.

**36...Ne4!?**

36...Nf5 37.Rxg4 Nxd4 38.exd4 Re4 39.Rc7 g5! - a key move I would have needed to see in advance. 40.Kf2 Rxd4 41.Ke3 Rb4 42.Kf3 d4 43.fxg5 d3! 44.Rg1 f5: Black just about makes a draw from here.

**37.Rc7 g3**



**38.Rgc2?**

The rest of the ending was played with little time left, so at times the moves were far from optimal.

38.b4: White must be fast. 38...Kh7 39.b5 Kg6 40.b6 Kf5 41.b7 Kg4 42.Rb2 Rh8 43.Ba7 Nf2 44.Rxf2 gxf2+ 45.Kxf2 Rh2+ 46.Ke1 Rb2. Black has been just fast enough and should make a draw.

**38...Kh7!**



Starting the plan of putting the king on g4 before activating the rooks.

**39.b4 Rb8?!**

39...Kg6! Just continuing the king advance is strong.

**40.a3 Kg6 41.Ba7 Rb5? 42.Rc8**

42.f5+ forces a good liquidation for White. If 42...Kxf5 43.Rxg7.

**42...Re6? 43.R2c6? Rxc6**



Finally making a good trade for Black when forced to do so. At first glance it's easy to think White is doing well with the connected passed pawns, but he's actually lost as shown in the game.

**44.Rxc6 Rb7**

An important inclusion as otherwise White will go Rc7 himself, slowing Black's progress.

**45.Bd4 Kf5 46.Kg2 Kg4 47.Bb6 Rb8! 48.Rc7**

Desperation.

**48...Rxb6 49.Rxg7+ Kf5 50.Rd7 Ke6 51.Ra7 Rc6 52.b5 Rc2+ 53.Kg1 Rb2 54.a4 Kf5 55.Rg7 Rb4**



55...d4 would have been a much nicer finish, forcing an infiltration with the king.

**0-1**

Here is a further report from IM Matthew Wadsworth, including his perspective on the event and a number of his games.

## English Championship by Matthew Wadsworth



*Matthew Wadsworth*

The English Chess Championships were held from 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> May in Kenilworth. The Open section was won by Mickey Adams, while the Women's section was won by Katarzyna Toma.

Firstly, I want to say a big thank you to the ECF for making the event run so smoothly. It is only the second time the English Championships in its current form has been held, and hopefully it will remain a fixture on the English chess circuit. 66 players competed in the Open section, including five GMs and eight IMs. Going into the event, the Championship favourite was fairly obvious; Mickey Adams outrated the second seed by almost 200 points and came into the tournament with an incredible record in national championships. On the other hand, seeds 2 to 9 were within 100 points of each other, which meant that, even if Adams ran away with the victory, the battle for second would be very tight.

Given this, the tournament progressed almost exactly as expected. After hanging on for a draw in round 3 against Mark Hebden, Mickey won three games straight, to go a full point clear of the field with a round to go. Five players, including myself, were on 4½/6, with another seven a half-point further back. Mickey therefore only needed a draw in the final round, which he eventually made in a back-and-forth game against Jonah Willow. In the chasing group, both Marcus Harvey and I won our final games to share second place, while a group of four (Hebden, Willow, Danny Gormally and Ankush Khandelwal) shared 4<sup>th</sup> place. Jude Shearsby won the under-18 prize with 4½/7, including an impressive win in the final round against David Haydon.

Overall, I was very happy with how I played over the weekend to finish equal second. After starting with two wins, I lost a tight game to Marcus in round 3 before recovering with a couple of nice wins, including against Gormally in round 5.

**Wadsworth, Matthew (2428) - Gormally, Danny (2434)**

English Championship, 28.05.2023

**1.c4 Nf6 2.g3 g6 3.Bg2 Bg7 4.Nc3 0-0 5.d4**

Having started as an English, I decided to transpose back into the well-trodden paths of the Fianchetto King's Indian.

**5...d6 6.h3 c6 7.Nf3 Qa5!?**

One of the major development systems Black can choose. The idea is to create counterplay against my centre with Nd7-b6 and Qb4.

**8.0-0 Nbd7 9.e4 e5 10.Qe2!?**



An unusual idea I came across during preparation. White prophylactically defends c4 and can bolster it further with Rd1 and Bf1.

10.Re1 is by far the main line and has produced good results for White.

**10...exd4 11.Nxd4**

The knight is temporarily undefended, but Black has no way of exploiting it.

**11...Nb6**

From b6 the knight puts unpleasant pressure on the c4 pawn, given that I can't play b3 without hanging the c3 knight. Black also has Na4 ideas to exchange off a pair of pieces.

**12.Rd1 Nfd7**

12...Qb4 13.Bf1 keeps everything under control. Now, if 13...Na4 14.Nxa4 Qxa4, 15.Qe1! is a nice idea, after which Black's queen runs dangerously short on squares.

**13.Be3**

Black was threatening a double attack on c4 and d4 with Qc5, so it made sense to overprotect the knight in preparation.



*Matthew playing against Danny in their round 5 game*

**13...Qb4**

13...Ne5 loses to 14.c5! (14.Nb3 was what I planned during the game, but Black stays alive after 14...Qa6) 14...Qxc5 (14...dxc5 15.Nb3 Qa6 16.Qxa6 bxa6 17.Bxc5+ is also hopeless for Black) 15.Ne6 and Black loses material; 13...Re8 is probably best but after 14.Rac1 Na4 15.Nxa4 Qxa4 16.b3 White has a dream position from this line.

**14.Bf1 Ne5**

Having spent so many tempi going after my c4 pawn, Black really has to play this to stay consistent. Unfortunately, it fails tactically. I had to calculate all of this when I played 13.Be3, but as far as I can tell I saw everything I needed to see.

**15.a3 Qxc4 16.Qc2**

Obviously, I avoid the queen exchange since Black's queen is almost out of squares.



16.Qd2? Qxd4! and Black wins the queen back after Nf3+.

**16...Qxd4!?** Danny's best try is to hope he can get enough for the queen, but it never quite happens.

16...Qc5 17.Nf5! is the only winning move for White. A sample line that I had to see at the board was 17...Qa5 18.b4 Nf3+ 19.Kg2 Qe5 20.Nxg7 Qf6 21.Nf5! gxf5 22.Kxf3 fxe4+ 23.Kg2+- and Black has nowhere near enough for the piece.

**17.Bxd4 Nf3+ 18.Kg2 Nxd4 19.Rxd4!** This felt like a very easy practical decision. After giving up the exchange, Black has a rook, bishop and pawn for the queen but is not coordinated enough to cause me serious problems.

19.Qb1 is supposedly also winning but feels very awkward for White.

**19...Bxd4 20.Rd1 Bg7** Incredibly, the game only enters new territory with this move!

20...Bxc3 was played in a blitz game between Aronian (then 'only' rated 2610) and Ivanisevic in 2003! White also won that game after 21.bxc3 d5 22.exd5 Nxd5 23.c4 Nc7 24.Qb2+-.

**21.a4** Capturing on d6 was also possible, but I wanted to force Black's minor pieces back first.

**21...Be6 22.Ne2 22.Rxd6:** now was the right time to take on d6.

**22...a5 22...Rad8 23.Nf4 Bc8 24.a5 Na8** looks appallingly passive for Black, and I can see why Danny didn't play it. However, he does keep the d6 pawn for the time being, and may be able to cause me some conversion problems later on.

**23.Nf4 Bc8 24.Rxd6**



Black is not only at a material disadvantage, but his position is pretty desperate too. The light-squared

bishop has no good squares, which leaves the rook on a8 a spectator.

**24...Nd7 25.Bc4 Ne5 26.Ba2** Simple chess, retaining my bishop and putting some unpleasant pressure on f7.

**26...Ra6** Black's only real chance at counterplay, hoping to activate the rook via b6.

**27.Nd3 Nxd3 28.Rxd3 Rb6 29.Rb3 Ra6 29...Rxb3 30.Bxb3 Rd8 31.Qc5+-.**  
**30.Rf3**



Danny resigned. I don't think he did too much wrong, to be honest; unfortunately, this line has probably been rendered unplayable by the latest generation of engines.

30.Rf3 Be6 31.Bxe6 fxe6 32.Rxf8+ Bxf8 33.Qb3 was one possible continuation. The queen dominates the rook and bishop in all of these endings.

**1-0**

In round 6 I drew with Richard Pert after reaching a threefold repetition in a crazy time scramble. This put me on 4½/6 going into the last round, where I had White against my former Cambridge teammate Peter Finn. Peter was having a fantastic tournament going into the game – he was undefeated and had beaten John Emms in the previous round – so I knew it would not be an easy game.

**(2) Wadsworth, Matthew (2428) - Finn, Peter (2127) A14**

English Championship (7.3), 29.05.2023

**1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 e6**

Peter chooses one of the most solid responses to the Réti and invites a transposition to the Catalan if I decide to play with d4.

**4.0-0 Be7 5.c4 0-0 6.b3**

I decide to keep the game firmly in Réti territory.



**6...d4**

Black's most ambitious move here, gaining space and punishing me for delaying d4. The position will start to resemble a reversed Benoni.

**7.e3 c5 8.exd4 cxd4 9.Ne5!?**



A relatively new idea, but a very logical one. In the regular Benoni, Black's life is a lot easier after exchanging a couple of minor pieces. Therefore, it makes sense for White to do the same in the reversed structure. Additionally, I had seen Ameet Ghasi win a nice game a couple of rounds before in this line, so I decided it was worth a closer look.

9.d3 is the standard move.



Peter Finn (shown here playing John Emms, with Matthew in the background)

**9...Qc7**

9...Nfd7 was played in the aforementioned Ghasi game, and White was doing very well after 10.Nxd7 Qxd7 11.Ba3 Re8 12.d3 Nc6 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.a3 a5 15.Nd2 Ghasi-Eggleston, English Championship 2023 (5.2).

**10.Re1 Nc6 11.Nxc6**

I get my piece exchange, although Black can argue that his pawn structure has been slightly improved after bxc6.

**11...bxc6 12.d3 Re8 13.Ba3?!**

A very typical idea in these positions, getting another pair of pieces off the board. In this concrete position, however, I had a stronger alternative.

13.Bf4! Qb6 14.Nd2 and Black will struggle ever to play e5, which keeps the d4 pawn vulnerable and the light-squared bishop inactive. During the game I was concerned about 14...Bb4 but White is doing very well after 15.a3 Bc3 16.Rb1 a5 17.b4.

**13...e5**

13...Rb8: as we will see in the next couple of moves, my position hinges on a queenside expansion with b3–b4. Therefore, it makes sense for Black to try to delay this as much as possible.

**14.Bxe7 Rxe7 15.Nd2**

15.b4! I should play this immediately before Black has a chance to cut it out.

**15...Bg4 16.Qc2 Rae8?!**

16...Rb8 17.a3 a5 should have been played. Now I have an interesting pawn sacrifice: 18.b4 axb4 19.axb4 Rxb4 20.Ra8+ Re8 21.Rxe8+ Nxe8 22.Nf3 Bxf3 23.Bxf3 where I have good compensation for the pawn, but cannot realistically claim to be better.

**17.b4!**



Here I was quite happy as White. Benoni positions are usually decided by who can execute their pawn breaks first and I am much quicker on the queenside than Black is in the centre.

**17...c5!?**

A very committal decision by Black, but one that was perhaps necessary.

17...h6: if Black passes time, then 18.a4 a6 19.c5! is strong, with ideas of Nd2–c4–b6 or Nd2–c4–d6.

## 18.b5

With this unusual pawn structure I have all of the long-term trumps. In any ending my ability to create a distant passed pawn with a2–a4–a5 and b5–b6 will surely be decisive, while the c5-pawn will be a weakness for the rest of the game. On the other hand, Black has decent attacking chances in the centre and on the kingside.

## 18...Bc8 19.Nb3

From b3 the knight ties Black down to c5, supports a4–a5 and even plans Na5–c6 if Black allows it.

## 19...Qd6

This is a really nice multipurpose move by Peter. From d6 the queen protects c5 and supports Black's two most dangerous plans. Firstly, Black is hinting at breaking with e4 and d3 after dxe4. Secondly, Black can create a surprisingly quick attack with h5–h4, Ng4 and Qh6.

## 20.a4 h5

20...e4 21.dxe4 d3 loses to 22.Rad1! using the pin on the d-pawn. Black loses material due to the back rank mate after 22...dxc2 23.Rxd6 Nxe4 24.Rxe4 Rxe4 25.Bxe4 Rxe4 26.Rd8+ Re8 27.Rxe8#.

## 21.Rad1?

I was too concerned about Black's central plans and underestimated the strength of his kingside attack.

21.Na5 it was important to get on with my play as quickly as possible. 21...e4: I did not want to allow this as Black looks to be breaking through in the centre. However, after the calm 22.Nc6 Re6 23.Nxa7 Black has no immediate breakthrough and I am up an important pawn.

## 21...h4 22.Na5 hxc3 23.hxc3 Ng4



Suddenly the white position is filled with danger, and I have to play accurately to survive.

## 24.Nc6 Rc7

24...Qh6! is a curious but incredibly strong exchange sacrifice that White must refuse to stay in the game. 25.Re4! a critical defensive idea that saves my position in a couple of lines. (25.Nxe7+? Rxe7: at first glance, it seems that Black gets a check on h2 in return for the exchange and very little else. However, White has absolutely no play here, so Black can attack the white king slowly and methodically. A sample line is 26.Qe2 Qh2+ 27.Kf1 e4! 28.dxe4 Be6, and despite my material advantage I am helpless against Black's attacking ideas, for example Ne5 followed by Bh3.) 25...Rc7 26.Qe2 f5 27.Rxg4 fxg4: I give up the exchange to stop Black's attack, after which the position is roughly balanced.

## 25.Qd2!

An important defensive move, stopping Qh6 ideas for now.

## 25...f5?

Ultimately the game-losing mistake. Black's centre is overextended and will soon crumble.

25...Qg6 felt like the most natural move, intending Qh5 with kingside pressure. 26.f4!? (26.Qa5? after the game, Peter said that this move dissuaded him from playing Qg6. White does win material but leaves his king far too exposed. 26...Rd7 27.Nxa7 Bb7 28.Nc6 Qh5 and Black has a wealth of attacking ideas, for example Rd6–f6 or f5 followed by f4 or e4.) 26...Ne3 27.Rxe3 dxe3 28.Qxe3: once again, I can sacrifice the exchange to neutralise Black's attack. The engine claims equality here, but it appears much easier for White to play.

## 26.Qg5!



Outposts can be used for queens as well as knights! Black now loses any attacking chances on the kingside and his centre starts to collapse.

### 26...Bd7

26...Qf6: during the game I thought that this was Peter's best chance; however, the ending after 27.Qxf6 gxf6 28.a5 Rg7 29.a6 looks incredibly unpleasant.

### 27.Bd5+

An important finesse to prevent Bxc6.

### 27...Be6 28.Bf3

Black will lose the e5-pawn and the game after Bxg4. Peter puts up some resistance, but there was not much he could do from here.

**28...Bc8 29.Bxg4 f4 30.Rxe5 Rxe5 31.Qxe5 Qxe5 32.Nxe5 Bb7 33.Re1 Re7 34.Kf1 Bh1 35.f4 gxf3 36.Kf2**



The contrast between minor pieces paints a sorry picture for Black.

**36...g5 37.Nc6 Rxe1 38.Kxe1 f2+ 39.Kxf2 Kf8 40.Nxa7 Ke7 41.Nc8+**

The knight will come to b6 next, followed by d5, so Peter resigned. A tense, balanced game that ultimately was decided by a single mistake.

### 1-0

Overall, congratulations to Mickey. Thank you to all of the participants and the ECF, and I hope to return to the tournament next year!

This year's Championship saw a number of younger IMs pushing to take the top places, with the result in question right up to the final round. The Championship was also notable for exceptional performances from juniors Kushal Jakhria and local player Jude Shearsby.

## Final Standings and Prizes

		Player	Club	Points	
1st	GM	Michael Adams		6 pts	£1,500
2nd=	IM	Marcus Harvey	Wood Green	5½ pts	£750
2nd=	IM	Matthew Wadsworth	Maidenhead	5½ pts	£750
4th=	GM	Mark Hebden	Syston	5 pts	£50
4th=	IM	Jonah Willow	Wood Green	5 pts	£50
4th=	GM	Danny Gormally	Blackthorne	5 pts	£50
4th=	CM	Ankush Khandelwal	Nottingham University	5 pts	£50
Performance Prizes					
2200 plus		Peter Finn	Wycombe and Hazlemere		£50
2000 – 2199		Kushal Jakhria	Charlton		£50
U2000		Roger de Coverly	Bourne End		£50
Best U18 player		Jude Shearsby	Kenilworth		

## English Championship by Michael Adams

My success in the English Championship was aided by the momentum I gained with a desperate, highly fortuitous save against the reigning champion Mark Hebden in round 3. After this great escape I won three games in a row; this, the third of the sequence, was a very interesting strategic battle which was not easy to navigate. In some ways it was a pity it came to an anticlimactic finish after an uncharacteristic slip by Ameet, but the win was very welcome from my point of view!

### Adams, Michael - Ghasi, Ameet

English Championship 2023

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 Nf6 5.Nc3 Nc6 6.Nf3 a6** Black makes a useful move, retaining the option to choose between the main development schemes 6...Bg4, 6...g6, or 6...e6, which are also viable immediately.

**7.h3** I also play a waiting game, maintaining the central tension and removing an option from the bishop on c8.

**7...g6 8.c5** 8.cxd5 Nxd5 9.Qb3? Be6! 10.Qxb7? Na5, winning, shows how the inclusion of a6 can be very handy. Instead, I take some queenside space, which is a definite asset, but the unstable pawn chain means that the key pawn on d4 can become a liability later.

**8...Bf5** Grabbing the diagonal, which I could control after 8...Bg7 9.Bd3.

**9.Be2** There was a case for mirroring Black's last with 9.Bf4!.

**9...Bg7** 9...Qc7! would have been disruptive. The same comments apply to the next two moves.

**10.0-0** 10.Bf4!

**10...0-0** 10...Qc7!

**11.Bf4**



**11...h6** Ameet had a think here, but couldn't find a move he liked. The natural 11...Ne4 12.Na4! seems problematic, as the rook on a8 is in trouble. The machine proposes a sublime solution here, however: 12...Qe8! 13.Nb6 Rd8 14.Bc7 h5! 15.Bxd8 Qxd8, a spectacular and brilliant sacrificial solution - all Black's pieces are well placed and co-ordinated and d4 is very vulnerable. This line is hardly possible to find at the board, though. Ameet mentioned 11...Be4 12.Ne5 Nd7 afterwards, which I hadn't considered much; 13.Nxc6 bxc6 14.Nxe4 dxe4 15.Qa4! keeps an edge.

**12.Re1** I thought this rook move was the most useful based on the line 12.Rc1 Ne4 13.Na4 g5 14.Bh2 g4 (14...e6! 15.Nb6 Ra7 is best) 15.hxg4 Bxg4, but here 16.Nb6! Ra7 17.Ne5! Bxe2 18.Qxe2 Nxd4 19.Qd3 is good for White.

**12...g5** Creating some room for his pieces, but at the cost of loosening the kingside.

**13.Bh2 e6** 13...Ne4 is still met by 14.Na4, but this was a more consistent follow-up.

**14.Bd6! Re8**



**15.Ne5!** My pieces jump into the centre.

**15...Nd7**



**16.Bh5!**

The bishop is not badly placed here, preventing the freeing 16.Bf1 Ndx5 17.dxe5 f6!.

**16...Ncxe5** A difficult choice. 16...Ndx5 17.dxe5 b6 18.cxb6 Qxb6 19.Rc1 is also not pleasant.

**17.dxe5 Rc8 18.b4 b6**



**19.Na4 Rc6** During the game I couldn't understand the situation arising after the variation 19...bxc5 20.Nxc5



Nxc5 21.bxc5 Qa5 very well, but eventually realised that 22.Qb3!, planning Qb7, is very strong.

**20.Rc1 bxc5 21.Nxc5!** Much better than 21.bxc5 Qa5.

**21...Nb6** After 21...Nxc5 22.bxc5 Qa5, either 23.Qb3 or 23.Re3 Rec8 24.Rb3 are strong. Crucially, White is the first to get a major piece to the open file.



**22.Be2** A key moment; the position seems ripe for a combination, but calculating correctly is not easy. 22.Nxe6 Rxc1 23.Bxf7+ Kh8 24.Qxc1 Bxe6 25.Bxe8 Qxe8 with Nc4 coming isn't sufficient.

Reversing the move order is equally enticing: 22.Bxf7+! Kxf7 23.Nxe6! Qc8 (23...Bxe6 24.Rxc6, 23...Rxc1 24.Nxd8+) 24.Rxc6 Qxc6 25.Nd4 Qd7 looked right to me, but I couldn't find the rather deep follow-up here.



26.Bc5! (26.Qh5+ Bg6 27.e6+ Rxe6 28.Qf3+ Rf6 doesn't work) 26...Nc4 27.Qh5+! Bg6 (27...Kg8 28.Nxf5) 28.e6+! Rxe6 29.Qf3+ Rf6 30.Re7+ Qxe7 31.Qxd5+ - the point; 26.Bc5 drove the knight away from the defence of d5.

There were also less direct approaches that have their merits: 22.Qf3! Qc8! ( 22...Nc4 23.Rxc4!, 22...Bg6 23.Bxg6 fxe6 24.Qd3 Nc4 25.Qxg6 Rxd6 (25...Nxd6 26.exd6 Rxd6 27.Nb7) 26.exd6) 23.Bxf7+ Kxf7 24.g4 Kg8 25.gxf5 exf5 26.a4 Nxa4 27.Qxd5+ Kh8, although this is much less clear to me than my machine.

I took a totally different approach, swinging the bishop from coast to coast to focus on Black's disintegrating queenside.



**22...Qa8?** My opponent missed that 22...Nc8 23.Qa4 Rxd6 24.Nb7? can be met by Qd7!, and I also initially overlooked this. Instead 24.exd6 Nxd6 25.Qxa6 Bb2 should be good for White; 26.b5!, returning the exchange seems very practical, but the position is far from simple despite the computer assessment, even if that precise move is discovered. The immediate 22...Rxd6 isn't possible due to 23.Nb7!.

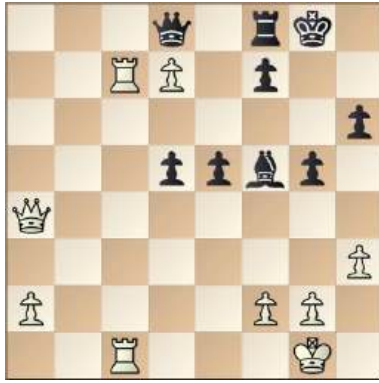
**23.Bxa6 Rxc5 24.bxc5 Qxa6 25.cxb6 Qxb6** White has won the exchange and maintained a better position; my next move removes any doubt about the result.



**26.Qa4!** The rook on e8 can't be conveniently defended.

**26...Qd8 27.Rc7 Bf8** 27...Qa8 was a little better.

**28.Rec1 Bxd6 29.exd6 e5 30.d7 Rf8**



**31.Qc6! Qe7 31...d4 32.Qd6!**, threatening Rc8, decides.

**32.Qxd5 Be6 33.Qxe5**

Black resigned in this prospectless position.

1-0

## English Women's Championship

As the English Championship was taking place in the Warwick and Kenilworth Room, the English Women's Championship took place in the newly refurbished Leamington Room at the Holiday Inn.

Kamila Hryshenko was the top seed on rating, with a top-level field including WGM Katarzyna Toma, WFM Audrey Kueh, and WCMs Zoe Varney and Nina Pert. As with the main championship there were a number of fast-improving juniors challenging for the top places.

CM Nina Pert took an early lead in the event with four straight wins, with top-seeded players Kamila Hryshenko and WIM Kata Toma both losing in round 2 to Sarah Longson and Abigail Weersing respectively. Nina was followed by a trailing pack on 3 points but then faltered in round 5 when she lost out to WFM Audrey Kueh. At this point Nina was equal first with WCM Zoe Varney and WFM Audrey Kueh, with all three players on 4 points. Zoe then won her 6<sup>th</sup> round game against Nina, to take the lead with 5 points ahead of Kata Toma and junior Ruqayyah Rida on 4½ points. Kata went on to win her deciding final-round game against Zoe to win the Championship.

Kata provides a report on the event and her critical round 7 game below.



*English Women's Championship – Leamington Room*

## English Women's Chess Championship by Katarzyna Toma

The English Women's Championship was organised by the ECF at the Holiday Inn in Kenilworth from 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> of May alongside the Open Championship. There was a separate playing venue for ladies, and it was spacious and cosy. I must admit it smelled good too. 😊

We had 22 participants in our section, not a record number but enough to make a decent Swiss tournament. I really liked the idea of anti-cheating scans in every round to put all minds at ease. This way, if one loses a game to a talented junior player, one can be humbled without any excuses or doubts.

We played a seven-round tournament over four days with double rounds and time control of 90 min + 30 sec increment per move, so it was a bit of a marathon for my generation. Every player over a certain age had some kind of caffeine reinforcement by her side. It was a typical women's tournament with turbulence, plot twists and a lot of drama over the board. It's good that aspiring youngsters have the chance to play against more experienced players as it brings progress. That said, it was an experience that will keep me on my toes for a while! The younger generation has no shame, and they just want to beat us all! 😊

Outside the venue we were spoiled by lovely weather and the proximity of nice restaurants and shops, which gave opportunities to catch up with chess friends over coffee, get a delightful dinner, or simply have a chat over outfit-hunting. The social part of tournaments is very important for female players, and we often feel abandoned amongst men only. It is important to organise events specifically for women or make sure there is a certain percentage of females in larger events to keep women participating going into adulthood.

Generally, I'm happy that I decided to play, but there are also a few improvements to make. The national championships should be the most prestigious event of the year with all top players attending, adequate prizes and a nine-round tournament as a minimum. It should be the ECF's priority to try to make it happen in upcoming years.

Finally, I would like to thank Aga, Nigel, Jo and Matt for taking care of us during the event. Well done, you guys!



Zoe Varney vs Kata Toma at the start of round 7 – photo by Denis Dicen

#### Varney, Zoe (1974) - Toma, Katarzyna (2254) A30

English Women's Championships 2023, Holiday Inn Kenilworth-Warwick, 29.05.2023

This was the last game of the tournament. Due to quite a dramatic mess-up in round 2 when I blundered into a mate in one (I can only explain it by brain error...), I was trying to catch up the top of the table. Zoe had had a good tournament, winning against Kamila, Audrey and Sarah, and she was in first place with 5 points. I was sharing second place with 4½, so it was a life-or-death situation for me, and I needed to win.

**1.Nf3 c5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 e6 3...g6 4.Bb2 Bg7:** another way of reacting to White's fianchetto.

**4.Bb2 b6 5.g3 Bb7 6.Bg2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Qe2 d6 9.c4 Nbd7 10.Rd1 Qc7 11.Nc3 a6 12.d4 Rfe8 13.Rac1 Rac8 14.e4 cxd4 15.Nxd4** After a calm opening we ended up having a hedgehog structure which to a certain degree we were both familiar with as we're both e4 players (most of the time).

**15...Qb8 16.h4** Not ideal, as White gives up the g4-square; usually White aims to play f4.

**16.h3 Bf8 17.Re1** would be more accurate plan for White.

**16...Bf8 16...h5** would be the best answer to stop any dreams of attack: **16...d5?** Premature and doesn't work here: **17.cxd5 exd5 18.Nxd5 Nxd5 19.exd5 Bxh4 (19...Ba3 20.Qd2 Bxb2 21.Qxb2 Qe5; 22.Rxc8 Rxc8 23.Qe2 Qxe2 24.Nxe2 Rc2 25.Nd4 Rxa2 26.Rc1) 20.Qg4.**

**17.Re1 Qa8 17...h5:** another chance to take control of g4.

**18.g4 h5?** I had decided to make a bit of a mess on the board, but ultimately this move leads to a worse position. In my defence, some of the consequences were tough to calculate over the board.

**18...g6** was a perfectly normal response, with White having a slight edge: **19.Rcd1 Ne5 (19...Rcd8 20.h5) 20.g5 (20.Na4 Ned7 21.g5) 20...Nh5 21.Bc1:**

a) **21.Qe3 Qb8 22.f4 Nd7 23.Bf3 Nxf4 (23...e5 24.Nde2 d5) 24.Qxf4 e5**, with a complicated position;

b) **21.Bc1 b5**, a typical hedgehog breakthrough.

**19.g5 Ng4 20.Bh3 d5 20...Nge5!?** was an interesting alternative, but I saw the line with **21... Nd3** and that's why I declined it: **21.Qxh5 (21.f4 Ng4 22.Bxg4 hxg4 23.Qxg4 b5!?) 21...b5 (21...Nd3? 22.g6 fxg6 23.Qxg6 Nf4 24.Qg4 Nxh3+ 25.Qxh3±) 22.Re3 g6 23.Qe2 bxc4 24.h5 Bg7 25.Rd1 Qa7.**

**21.cxd5 21.f3 Nge5 (21...b5 22.fxg4 Bc5 23.Nd1 dxe4 24.Nf2 hxg4 25.Bxg4 bxc4 26.Rxc4 Ne5 27.Rxc5 Rxc5:** the engine showed this interesting line) **22.cxd5 (22.f4 Ng4 23.Bxg4 hxg4 24.Qxg4 dxe4 25.g6 f5 is OK for Black) 22...exd5 23.f4 Ng4**



**24.e5!±.**

**21...exd5 22.f3 Nge5?** **22...dxe4!?** the only way to keep the fight going: **23.fxg4 Bc5 24.Na4 Ne5!?** It's much easier for the attacking side to play such positions, especially in the 90 min+30 sec format we used:



a) 25.Nxc5 bxc5 26.Nf5 Nf3+ 27.Kf1 (27.Kf2 Qb8; 27.Kg2 Qb8 28.Rh1 Rcd8 29.Bc3 hxc4 30.Bxc4 Qf4 31.Bh3 Rd3) 27...a5;

b) 25.Bg2 Nf3+!? (25...Nxc4? 26.Nxc5 bxc5 27.Nf5 Qb8 28.Bh3 e3 29.Bxc4 hxc4 30.Qxc4 Re4 31.Qg3; 25...Nd3) 26.Bxf3 exf3 27.Qf2 Bb4 28.Rxe8+ Rxe8 29.gxh5 Qb8 30.Nxb6 Qf4 31.Nc4 Qg4+ 32.Kh2 Be1!.

**23.f4 Ng4 24.Bxc4** 24.e5!± White is strategically controlling the whole board, has space and great attacking opportunities and keeps all the threats; the poor black queen is very miserable and Nc5–e4 doesn't give enough counterplay:

a) 24...b5 25.Bxc4 hxc4 26.Qxc4 Bc5 (26...Nc5) 27.Nce2+–;

b) 24...Nc5 25.Bxc4 hxc4 26.Rcd1 g3 27.Kg2 Ne4 28.Nxe4 dxe4 29.Kxc3 Bb4 30.Rf1 Red8 (30...Bc3 31.Nf5) 31.h5 (31.Nf5?! Rd3+ 32.Rxd3 exd3 33.Qxd3 Be4) 31...Bc3 (31...a5 32.g6 Bd5 33.gxf7+ Bxf7 34.e6+–; 31...Bc5 32.g6) 32.Nf5+–;

c) 24...Ndxe5 25. Fxe5 Rxe5 26.Qd3.

**24...hxc4 25.Qxc4?** 25.e5!

**25...dxe4** The knight on d7 is not hanging, as after Qxd7 Black has Rcd8 and takes back the knight on d4.

**26.Nf5** 26.Qxd7 Rcd8; 26.h5!? Another imaginative line given by the engine: 26...Rc5 (26...Bc5 27.Nce2) 27.b4 Rc4 28.g6 Rxd4 29.Nb5 axb5 30.gxf7+ Kxf7 31.Bxd4+– and even after giving up two pieces White has so many threats that Black can't hold this position.

**26...Re6** 26...g6 27.Nh6+ (27.Ne3 Nc5) 27...Bxb6 28.gxh6 Nf6±

**27.Ne2** 27.Rcd1 it was much better to keep all the pieces on the board as it's tough for Black to activate the queen and bring pieces closer to the king: 27...Nc5 28.Nxc4! The engine gives 28...Bxc4 29.f5 Ree8 30.f6 Bf8 31.g6+–.

**27...Rxc1 28.Rxc1 g6?** 28...e3!? 29.Ned4 Qe8 30.Nxe6 Qxe6 31.g6 e2 32.Re1 (32.gxf7+ Kxf7 33.Kf2 Nc5 34.Ne3 Nd3+) 32...Be4 33.Ne3 Qxc4+ 34.Nxc4 Bf3 35.Ne5 Bc5+ 36.Kh2 Nxe5 37.Bxe5 Bb4 38.gxf7+ Kxf7 39.Kg3 Bh5 40.Kf2=

**29.Nfd4** 29.Ned4! gxf5 (29...Bd5 30.Nh6+ Bxb6 31.gxh6+; 29...Bc5 30.Rxc5 Nxc5 31.Nxe6 Nxe6 32.Nh6+ Kf8 33. f5+– ) 30.Qh5+–

**29...Rd6 30.h5 Nc5 31.Ba1** Too passive! White should use the opportunity given by the fact that the black

queen is still too far away from the action and act fast to win the game.

31.hxc6 fxc6 32.b4 Nd3 33.Rc7 Qb8 34.Ne6! Nxb2 35.Qh3 Qxc7 36.Nxc7+–

**31...Qd8 32.Qh4?** 32.hxc6 fxc6 33.Rf1∞

**32...Bg7** Taking over the initiative and gaining a better position.

**33.h6 Bxd4+ 34.Nxd4 Kh7 35.Rc4 e3** 35...b5 was the best move: 36.Rxc5 (36.Rb4 Nd3) 36...Rxd4 37.Bxd4 Qxd4+ 38.Qf2 e3+–.

**36.f5 gxf5 37.Qf4 Be4 38.Bc3 Rg6** 38...Rxb6 39.gxh6 Qg8+ 40.Kf1 Qg2+ 41.Ke1 Nd3+–+

**39.Kf1 Rxc5 40.Qe5 Bd3+ 41.Ne2 Bxc4 42.Bd4 Bxe2+ 43.Kxe2 Ne6 44.Bxe3 Rh5 45.Bf2 Qg5 46.Qb8 Qg4+** It was A very exciting, dynamic and stressful game and somehow I'm feeling lucky I managed to win!

**0–1**



Group photograph taken before the final round – ECF Women's Director Aga Milewska (centre, seated) with the Championship players and organisers/arbiters

### Final Standing and Prizes

		Player	Club	Points	
1st	WGM	Katarzyna Toma	Wood Green	5½ pts	£750
2nd=	WCM	Zoe Varney	Blackthorne	5 pts	£270
2nd=	WFM	Audrey Kueh	Guildford	5 pts	£270
2nd=	GM	Kamila Hryshenko	Hull	5 pts	£270
<b>Performance Prizes</b>					
2000 plus		Elis Denele Dicen	CCA		£50
1800 – 1999		Emily Maton	Herts Juniors		£50



U1800		Thisumi Jayawarna	Tameside Juniors		£50
Best U18 player (shared)	WCM	Nina Pert	Brentwood	4½ pts	£20
		Ruqayyah Rida	Essex Juniors	4½ pts	£20
	AIM	Anusha Subramanian		4½ pts	£20



The new Champions are shown above with their trophies. Mickey is pictured with the Tony Miles Trophy which is awarded annually to the English Champion. Kata is pictured with the English Women's Trophy which is also awarded annually.

## European 65+ Championship by John Nunn



European 65+ Champion John Nunn - photo by Marco Maffiotto

This year's European Individual Senior Championships were held in Acqui Terme, Italy, from 26th May to 3rd June. This was a familiar setting for many of the players

as several senior events have been held there in the past years. I myself had pleasant memories from last year's Senior World Team Championships, which took place in the same venue and proved a great success with three English teams (Women's 50+, Men's 50+ and Men's 65+) gaining world titles.



Terry Chapman finished in a tie for first place - photo by Marco Maffiotto

Each year new players become eligible for the two age categories (50+ and 65+) and in 2023 the Slovakian grandmaster Lubomir Ftacnik was a new contender in the 65+ event, facing more established players such as Fernandez Garcia, Renman and myself. A close struggle ensued with the lead changing hands a number of times, but before the last round Ftacnik was sharing the lead on 6½ points with Terry Chapman, who had played very well throughout, while Fernandez Garcia and I were tied for third place with the Germans Kierzek and Polster. The final round pairings were Ftacnik-Chapman, Kierzek-Fernandez Garcia and Nunn-Gaprinidashvili. Terry played solidly to hold Ftacnik to a draw, I won against the former women's World Champion, while Fernandez Garcia and Polster also took the full point to produce a five-way tie for first place. This was broken by tie-break with the following scores: Nunn (50½), Fernandez Garcia (50), Ftacnik (49), Chapman (48) and Polster (45½). The result was that I added the European 65+ title to the British and World 65+ titles I already held, while Terry can certainly be happy with his result despite being a bit unlucky to miss out on the medals. He took home a massive rating gain of 44 points.

The other English players, with scores and rating changes, were as follows: Michael Stokes 5½ (-8 rating points), Hassan Erdogan 5 (+24), Paul Raynes 4½ (-65), Ivan Myall 4 (-17), Peter Rawcliffe 2½ (+10).

First, here is my best game.

### John Nunn - Matthias Kierzek

ECU Senior Chess Championship, Acqui Terme 2023  
Caro-Kann

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 c5 6.Be3 Qb6 7.Nc3**

This sharp line gives Black the choice between the double-edged capture on b2 and the more solid move played in the game.

**7...Nc6 8.dxc5**

A relatively tame option which, however, does contain a drop of poison. The critical line is 8.0-0 Qxb2 9.Qe1 cxd4 10.Bxd4 Nxd4 11.Nxd4 Bb4 12.Ndb5 (12.Rb1 Bxc3 13.Rxb2 Bxe1 14.Rxe1 b6 15.Nxf5 exf5 16.Bb5+ Kf8 is equal) 12...Ba5 13.Rb1 Qxc2 with tremendous complications. Black's king is trapped in the centre, but he is two pawns up and has retained his important dark-squared bishop. I felt the risk of running into some excellent German preparation was too great to enter this line, so I settled for a more modest possibility.

**8...Bxc5 9.Bxc5 Qxc5 10.Nb5**

This all looks good for White as Black is now forced to move his king, but White's lack of development makes it hard for him to achieve anything concrete.

**10...Kf8**



**11.0-0!?**

This was the result of my (not necessarily excellent) morning preparation. Almost the only moves played here have been 11.c3 and 11.Nbd4 and although

castling isn't objectively any better, it does introduce a couple of new elements and that's sometimes enough to induce an inaccuracy.

**11...Nge7?!**

Although this is a natural developing move, I think it is already wrong. The most obvious possibility is to accept the sacrifice by 11...Qxc2 12.Qxc2 Bxc2, but after 13.Rac1 Black must play very accurately to avoid a serious disadvantage. The best line is probably 13...Be4! 14.Ng5 Bg6 15.f4 h6 16.Nf3 Nge7 17.Nd6 a5! 18.Bb5 Rb8 and White has enough for the pawn but no more. However, the simplest response is 11...Bg4 12.Nbd4 Nxd4 13.Nxd4 Bxe2 14.Nxe2 Qc7! and White's poor development makes it impossible to exploit the black king's position.

**12.Nbd4 Bg4**

Now this is less effective, as White can arrange to take back on e2 with his rook, thereby maintaining his knight on the more active square d4.

**13.Re1 Nxd4 14.Nxd4 Bxe2 15.Rxe2 Nc6**

Black decides to extract his king via e7. It was also possible to play 15...g6 16.Qd2 h6 17.c3 Kg7, but after 18.Re3 White retains an advantage as Black's king is still not especially safe.

**16.c3 Ke7**

16...Nxd4? 17.cxd4 followed by doubling on the c-file is very good for White, as he has control of the only open file to add to his threats against the king.

**17.Re3!**



The most accurate move. White clears the way for his queen to move to g4, attacking g7, while also preparing to use the rook along the third rank.

**17...Rac8**

17...Nxd4? 18.cxd4 Qb5 19.Rb3 Qd7 20.Rg3 is very unpleasant for Black as he must either tie a rook down to the defence of g7 or further weaken his dark squares by ...g6.

#### 18.Nxc6+

Practically forced, as now Black was genuinely threatening to take on d4.

#### 18...bxc6

18...Rxc6 19.Qg4 Kf8 20.Rg3 g6 21.Qf4 also retains kingside pressure.

#### 19.Qg4 Rcg8?

It's hard to retract a move that you played just a few moves ago, but 19...Kf8 would have been tougher. Then 20.Rg3 g6 21.Rf3 favours White, but there is no knockout blow. Of course, 19...Rhg8 loses a pawn to 20.Qh4+.

#### 20.b4

Good, but the immediate 20.c4! was even better; for example, 20...Qxc4 21.Qg5+ f6 22.Qg3! f5 23.Ra3 Qc5 24.Rb3 and White penetrates with his rook.

#### 20...Qb6?!

20...Qc4 was the last chance, although after 21.Qxc4 dxc4 22.Re4 Rc8 23.Rxc4 Rhd8 24.h4 the ending a pawn down should be lost.



#### 21.c4!

White opens the c-file and penetrates with his rooks.

#### 21...g5

21...dxc4 22.Qg5+ Ke8 23.Rd1 and 21...Qxb4 22.Rb3 are hopeless.

#### 22.cxd5 cxd5 23.Rc1 h5 24.Qf3

Taking aim at the weak square f6.

#### 24...Rg6 25.Rec3 Rh7 26.Rc8 1-0

It will be mate in a few moves.

Here is the most interesting ending from the tournament. I apologise in advance to Terry for giving his only loss from the event, but some of the lines are truly remarkable.



#### Jose Fernandez Garcia - Terry Chapman

ECU Senior Chess Championship, Acqui Terme 2023

This double-edged position slightly favours White. Black will take the pawn on h5 and create a passed h-pawn, while White's active king position will enable him to make a passed pawn on the queenside. The difference is that White's king is able to support his passed pawn, but Black's cannot. However, with accurate play it should be a draw.

#### 37.Nf2

Before playing a5 White must defend the d3-pawn.

#### 37...Kf7

Black must leave his knight defending d5, since after 37...Nxb5? 38.Kd5 Nf4+ 39.Kc6 White will take at least two queenside pawns.

#### 38.a5 bxa5 39.Kxc5 Nxb5 40.Kb6 a4!

This forces the king to go all the way back to a4 to make a passed pawn. 40...Nf4? 41.Kxa5! h5 42.Kxa6 h4 43.b4 is worse, as the king is well placed on a6.

#### 41.Kxa6 Nf4 42.Kb5 h5 43.Kxa4 Ke7 44.Kb5

44.b4 h4 45.b5 h3 46.b6 Kd6 47.Kb5 h2 48.Ka6 Nxd3 49.b7 Nc5+ 50.Ka7 Nxb7 51.Kxb7 Kc5 52.Kc7 Kd4 53.Kd6 Ke3 54.Ng4+ also leads to a draw. Instead of the

immediate pawn push, White plays to first activate his king.

**44...Kd6 45.Kb6**



**45...Ne2?**

Black intends to use his king and knight in combination to hold up the b-pawn, but this is the wrong plan. The right idea is to push the pawn to h2 and then play ...Nxd3, with the same basic idea but with White having a pawn less. One line is 45...h4 46.b4 h3 47.b5 h2 48.Ka7 Nxd3 49.b6 Nxf2 50.b7 h1Q and White is quite lucky to be able to draw using the well-known 'star' perpetual check: 51.b8Q+ Kc5 52.Qb6+ Kc4 53.Qxf2 Qxe4 54.Qa2+ Kd4 55.Qa1+ Ke3 56.Qe1+ Kf4 57.Qh4+ Kxf5 58.Qh7+ Kf4 59.Qh4+ etc.

**46.b4 Nc3 47.b5 h4 48.Ka5?**

An understandable mistake since it's hard to see the idea 48.Ka6! Na4 49.Kb7! Kc5 50.Kc7, moving the king round to attack the f6-pawn. Then White wins after 50...Kxb5 51.Kd6 Nc5 52.Ke7 Kc6 53.Kxf6 Kd6 54.Kg5 or 50...Kd4 51.b6 Ke3 52.b7 Nc5 53.Ng4+! Kf4 54.Nxf6 h3 55.Nd7 Nxb7 56.f6 h2 57.f7 h1Q 58.f8Q+ Ke3 59.Kxb7.

**48...Kc5?**

Black has a surprising draw by 48...Kc7! 49.Kb4 Ne2 50.Kc5 Nf4, which looks odd as the knight came from this square earlier. The key point is that from here the knight both prevents Kd5 and supports ...h3. Then 51.b6+ Kb7 52.Kd6 h3 53.Ke7 h2 54.Kxf6 Nxd3 55.Nh1 Kxb6 56.Ke7 Kc7 57.f6 Nf4 58.f7 Ng6+ 59.Ke8 Kd6 is safe for Black.

**49.d4+!**

Fernandez Garcia hits on the winning plan, sacrificing a pawn to break through in the centre and create a passed f-pawn. 49.b6? Kc6 50.Nh3 Kb7 51.Kb4 Ne2 52.Kc5 Nf4 is only a draw.

**49...exd4 50.Nd3+**



**50...Kd6?!**

Black goes down without too much of a fight. The toughest defence is 50...Kc4 51.b6 Kxd3 52.b7 Kc2 53.b8Q d3 and this position is like an endgame study. The decisive line runs 54.Qh2+ d2 55.e5! Kc1 56.Qh3! (not 56.Qxd2+? Kxd2 57.exf6 h3 with a draw) and now: 1) In practice Black should try 56...d1Q 57.Qxc3+ Kb1 58.e6 (58.exf6 also wins but is again very difficult) 58...Qd8+ 59.Ka4 Qe8+ 60.Kb3 Qb5+ 61.Qb4 Qxb4+ 62.Kxb4 and after both sides promote again White will be able to reach a won Q+P vs Q ending. However, the difficulty of this line shows that 50...Kc4 would have made life tough for White. 2) 56...Kc2 57.Qg2!. Now 57...Kc1 loses to 58.Qf3 Kc2 59.exf6, since d1 is covered, so Black must try 57...h3. Then comes the surprising twist 58.Qh2!, completing a kind of queen triangulation designed to lure Black's h-pawn forward to the vulnerable square h3. After 58...Kc1 59.Qxh3 Kc2 60.Qg2 Kc1 61.Qf3 the win is clear.

**51.b6 h3 52.b7 Kc7 53.Ka6 h2 54.Ka7 h1Q**

Or 54...Nb5+ 55.Ka8 h1Q 56.b8Q+ Kc6 57.Qb7+ Kd6 58.e5+ winning the queen.

**55.b8Q+ Kd7 56.Qb7+**

White misses a forced mate by 56.Nc5+ Ke7 57.Qc7+ Ke8 58.Qd7+, but it makes no difference to the result.

**56...Ke8 57.Qc8+ Kf7 58.Qe6+ Kg7 59.Qe7+ Kg8 60.Qe8+ Kg7 61.Qg6+ Kh8 62.Qxf6+ Kg8 63.Qg6+ Kh8**

Or 63...Kf8 64.f6 Qa1+ 65.Kb7 Qb1+ 66.Kc8.

**64.Qe8+ Kg7 65.Qe7+ Kh8 66.f6 Nb5+ 67.Kb6 Qg2 68.Qg7+ Qxg7 69.fxg7+ 1-0**



## European 50+ Championship by Keith Arkell

This was my third seniors event in the Italian city of Acqui Terme, the most recent being last year when England won the triple World Senior Team Championship.

The 50+ section (or 'Junior Seniors', as we like to call ourselves) boasted strength in depth with 5 GMs, 7 IMs and a total of 33 titled players out of a field of 80.

While I managed to race off to 3/3, a few rounds later FM Steve Dishman went soaring past me when he dispatched GM Martin Mrva with surprising ease in round 5 and then joined the leaders with the following effort.

### FM Steve Dishman - IM Daniel Contin

European Senior (50+) Championship

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.Bf4 Bb7 4.e3 c5 5.Be2 g6 6.c4 cxd4  
7.exd4 Bg7 8.Nc3 d5 9.Ne5 0-0 10.Bf3 e6 11.Bg5 h6  
12.Bxf6 Bxf6 13.cxd5 exd5 14.0-0



White has achieved a slight pull with straightforward chess, and it stays that way during the next phase of the game.

14...Na6 15.Re1 Re8 16.g3 Kg7 17.Bg2 Qd6 18.f4 Nc7  
19.Rc1 b5 20.h4 h5 21.Kh2 a6 22.Rc2 Rad8



**23.Ne2!** I like this move. The knight was doing very little on c3, but Steve plans to bring it to a more active station via g1.

**23...Re7 24.Ng1 Qb6 25.Ngf3 Ne8** Meanwhile Black similarly improves his own knight's position.

**26.Ng5 Nd6 27.Qd3 Ne4 28.Bh3**



**28...Bxe5?** Black has everything under control on the kingside and should be looking to expand on the other flank, but this impatient capture allows White attacking chances down the f-file.

**29.fxe5 f6 30.exf6+ Qxf6 31.Rf1 Qd6 32.Qf3 Nf6?**



With White's pieces already the more active, this retreat should lose on the spot.

**33.Qf4?** Better was 33.Ne6+ Rxe6 34.Bxe6 Qxe6 35.Qxf6+ Rxf6 Rc7+ etc.

**33...Bc6?**



In an already very unpleasant situation this careless move enables a quick knockout:

**34.Qxf6+ Qxf6 35.Rxf6 Kxf6 36.Rxc6+ Kg7 37.Ne6+ Rxe6 38.Bxe6**

**1-0**

Meanwhile I played the following quirky game to hang in there:

**FM Lasinskas Povilas – GM Keith Arkell**

European Senior (50+) Championship

**1. d4 Nf6 2. Nc3 d5 3. Bg5 Nbd7 4. e3 c6 5. f4 Nb6 6. Nf3 g6 7. Bd3 Bg7 8. O-O Bf5 9. Bxf5 gxf5 10. Bxf6 Bxf6 11. Ne5**



**11...h5** I wanted to keep my opponent's queen out of h5. I think Black is doing quite well here; my position is solid, and I can bring some pressure to bear down the g-file later.

**12.b3 e6 13. Ne2 Nc8 14. Rc1 Nd6 15. c4 Ne4 16. c5 Bxe5 17. fxe5 a5 18. a3 Qg5 19.Nf4 h4 20. b4 axb4 21. axb4**



**21...Ke7** There was no point in playing 21...Ra2 or 21...Ra3 as both are met by 22.Ra1. However, I now intend to invade down the a-file if given the chance.

**22. Qe2 Qg4 23. Qd3** Exchanging queens would help me, as the option of ...g3 at some moment would hang over White's head.

**23... h3**

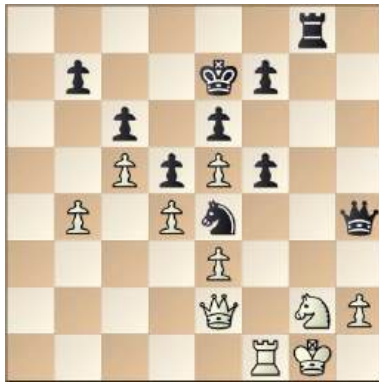


**24. Rc2** The natural 24.g3 Ra2 25.Rc2 Rha8 would leave White unable to defend against the many points of invasion.

**24...hxc2 25. Rxc2 Qh4** I should now be close to winning, as all my pieces are better than his and h2 is weak.

**26. Qe2 Rag8** Threatening mate in one.

**27. Rxc8 Rxc8+ 28. Ng2**



**28...Qh6** 28...Qh3 was stronger, as 29.Qf3 will lose after 29...Rxc2+! 30.Qxc2 Qxe3+ 31.Kh1 Qxd4 with an overwhelming position as well as four(!) connected passed pawns.

**29. Rf4 Ng5 30.Kh1 Nh3 31. Rf1 Rh8 32. Nf4 Ng5 33. Rg1 Ne4 34. h3 Qh4 35. Kh2 Ra8**



After a bit of cat and mouse I have provoked my opponent into taking his first opportunity to go active, as I knew that doing so would cost him a rook.

**36. Rg7 Kf8 37. Qg2 Qh8**



**38. Rxf7+** The problem is that after 38.Nh5 all his pieces are stuck, and I can just sail in with 38...Ra3; so this rook sacrifice is forced.

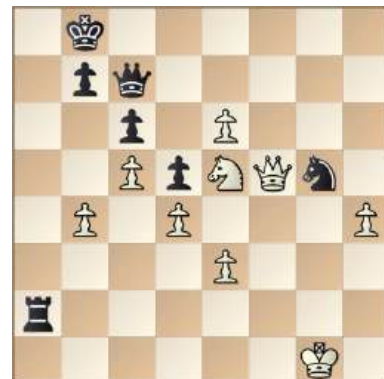
**38...Kxf7 39. Qg6+** Lasinskas plays the next 17 moves extremely well, keeping me on my toes with his threats to advance his e-pawn and even his h-pawn.

**39...Ke7 40. Qxe6+ Kd8 41. Qf7 Ra2+ 42. Kg1 Kc8 43. Ng6 Qd8 44. h4 Kb8 45.e6**



**45...Ng5** The only way to keep on top!

**46. Qxf5 Qc7 47. Ne5**



**47...Nh7** I have to admit that I planned to play 47...Qh7 here until I saw 48 Nd7+ Ka7 (what else?) 49 Qxh7 Nxh7 50 e7!.

**48. Qf4 Qg7+ 49. Ng6+ Ka7 50. h5**



I was now starting to feel very frustrated, as I had thought that once I got my king to safety it would be

quite easy to get at his. After all, I am a rook up! The problem is that I lack entry points and my rook is actually cut off from the action.

**50...Nf6 51. Qg5 Qc7 52. Nf4 Ne4 53. Qe5 Qe7 54. Ng6 Qe8** With my clock running down to less than a minute (plus 30 seconds increment per move) I had a brain wave...

**55. Nf4**



**55...Ka6** ...and this was it. Move my king away from the a-file in order to clear it for my queen to get at his king. And it worked like a treat!

**56. Qg7 Kb5 57. Qxb7+ Kc4 58. Qf7 Qa8 59. e7 Qa4**



**60. Ng2 Ra1+ 61. Kh2 Qd1**



**0-1**

Steve Dishman stayed amongst the leaders with draws against IM Fabrizio Belia and GM Zurab Sturua, and would have earned the IM title outright as well as the small matter of being European Champion had he won in the last round. It wasn't to be, though, and in the end he finished half a point behind the winning group, but after fine performances both here and at last year's World Senior Championship it is clear that he is on the up.

Here is a curious moment from Steve's round 7 game as Black against IM Belia:



As Steve himself demonstrated to a group of us later, Belia could actually have won the game with the unlikely-looking 34.Qd2! The main line runs 34...Re2 35.Ng5+ Kh6 36.Rf8! Qxg3+:



(36...Rxd2 37.Nf7+ mates) 37.hxg3 Rxd2 38.Ne4! (threatening the rook and mate on h8) Rd1+ 39.Kf2 g5 40.Nc3





... decisively forking the rook and bishop!

I was able to reach a tie for 1<sup>st</sup> place with a win in the last round to bring my score with Black to 4/4.

### FM Sigurdur Sigfusson – GM Keith Arkell

European Senior (50+) Championship

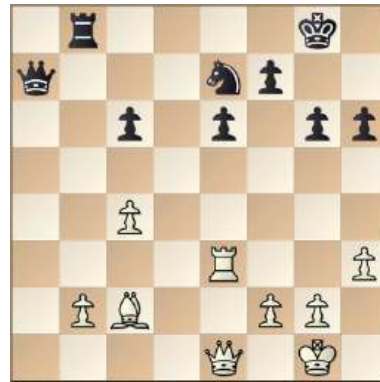
1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Ng5 Ngf6 6. Bd3 Nb6 7. N1f3 h6 8. Ne4 Nxe4 9. Bxe4 Bg4 10. O-O g6 11. h3 Bxf3 12. Bxf3 Bg7 13. c3 O-O 14. Re1 e6 15. a4 Nd5 16. a5 b5 17. axb6 axb6 18. Rxa8 Qxa8 19. Be4 b5 20. Bc2 Rd8 21. Qf3 b4



22. c4 White's position would be very fragile were he to allow 22...bxc3 23.bxc3 Qa5.

22...Ne7 23. Qb3 Qa7 I want to take on d4 with my bishop without allowing Bxh6 in reply.

24. Qxb4 Bxd4 25. Be3 Bxe3 26. Rxe3 Rb8 27. Qe1



27...Qd4 I didn't want to give up my valuable e6 pawn after 27...Rxb2 28.Rxe6! - even though I am still a bit better after 28...Rxc2 29.Rxe7 Qd4.

28. b3



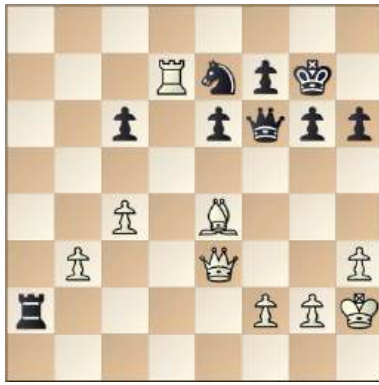
28...Ra8 I have said many times that with this kind of pawn structure Black's ideal minor pieces are knight vs light-squared bishop.

29. Rd3 Qb2 30. Qd2 Kg7 31.Rd7



31...Qf6 It would be very careless to move my knight, allowing 32.Rxf7+. To make progress in such visually attractive positions it is necessary to make many medium-range calculations – two, three, four move sequences.

32. Qe3 Ra1+ 33. Kh2 Ra2 34.Be4

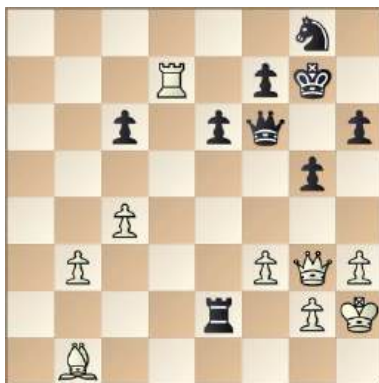


With my hero from the 1980s Ulf Andersson looking on, I agonised over how to improve my position. In the end I decided between 34...h5 and...

**34...g5** My favourite chess move! I decided I needed to tighten my grip on the dark squares around my opponent's king. Should I have time to play...h5 and ...h4 I may even ensnare him in a mating net.

**35. Qg3 Re2** I toyed for a while with 35...Rxf2 36.Rxe7 Rf4, but wasn't sure how big my advantage was after 37.Rc7.

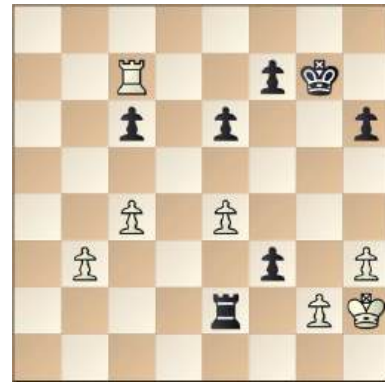
**36.Bb1 Ng8 37. f3**



**37...Qf4** Probably there were better moves, but I couldn't resist the potential mating patterns with my knight entering the fray.

**38. Qxf4 gxf4 39. Be4** Now it is an easy win, but I must be doing very well anyway with ...Rb2 in the air, as well as ...Nf6-h5-g3 if he doesn't watch out.

**39...Nf6 40. Rc7 Nxe4 41. fxe4 f3**



**42. Kg1 Rxg2+ 43. Kf1 Kf6**



Aiming for either e3 or g3.

**44. b4 Rb2 45. Rxc6 Ke5**



**0-1**

Next the long wait to see whether I had finished 1<sup>st</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> - yes, there were seven of us tied! In the end, just like Terry Chapman who tied for 1<sup>st</sup> in the 65+ Championship, I finished a frustrating 4<sup>th</sup> on tiebreak. 3<sup>rd</sup> would have been a medal and full board for the 2024 World Senior Championship. In Terry's case 3<sup>rd</sup> would also have been his IM title outright - see the separate report on the 65+ section.

Congratulations to Zurab Sturua who came out top on tie-break. My consolations were that the prize money

was shared equally, and that I managed to win outright both the Senior Blitz (7/7) and the Open Blitz (6½/7).

## World Cadets and Youth Rapid and Blitz 2023



Eight English juniors competed in the World Cadets and Youth Rapid and Blitz in Batumi, Georgia from 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023. Located on the east coast of the Black Sea, Batumi is known as a resort city, the second in Georgia and capital of the Adjara region. The chess took place at 'Euphoria Hotel', a contemporary hotel which boasts fantastic views of the Black Sea.

The tournament was split into two sections, the rapid section with a time control of 15 minutes plus 5 seconds lasting three days and a two-day blitz tournament with a time control of 5 minutes plus 3 seconds. Kicking off with an opening ceremony on 6<sup>th</sup> June, one of our England players Frankie, was lucky (or unlucky!) enough to start the competition off with the ceremonial opening move against top seed GM Volodar Murzin (the perhaps unsurprising winner of the Open Under 18 section for both rapid and blitz)

After three intense days of chess all England players performed admirably as players finished in the top half in the rapid. In particular, Bodhana gave another outstanding performance, winning the gold medal in the Girls Under 8 section with a perfect score of 11/11! In addition, there were two other top 10 finishes – Stanley in the Under 14 Open section, finishing among titled players, and Advait in the U10 Open section narrowly missing out on a medal with a strong performance.

A rest day followed, with England players relaxing and undertaking various activities and excursions, including a chess composition competition and a trip to the Batumi Botanical Gardens arranged by the

organisers. Some of the players took a day trip around the old part of the city, with the visits to some well-known landmarks such as Europe Square and Batumi's 'Statue of Love' or catching a panoramic glimpse of the city via ascending the Argo Cable Car. Later in the evening, a few of the England players gathered for some blitz practice as well as to catch up with their experience of their stay so far.

The blitz tournament followed in the next two days, where once again Bodhana dominated the field in the Girls Under 8 section, completing a perfect clean sweep of the rapid and blitz without even dropping half a point. Elsewhere, there were some exceptional performances, notably Stanley's excellent victory over an IM, with the moment caught on video! Stanley (Under 14 Open) and Sharvari (Under 10 Girls) finished strongly in their sections, both narrowly missing out on a top 10 finish.

The event concluded in the evening with the prize giving, where Bodhana (below) remained as double world champion, collecting yet another two gold medals!



*Bodhana Sivanandan*

The England team comprised:

### Boys

Open Under 18: Frankie Badacsonyi  
Open Under 14: Stanley Badacsonyi  
Open Under 12: Lion Lebedev  
Open Under 10: Advait Keerthi Kumar  
Open Under 10: George Zhao  
Open Under 8: William Jin Zhongming Sutton

### Girls

Under 10 Girls: Sharvari Saharkar  
Under 8 Girls: Bodhana Sivanandan

## English Counties Chess Championships 2022 - 2023 by Nigel Towers and Mark Murrell



*The Lowenthal Trophy*

May and June saw the quarter- and semi-finals of the English Counties Championships, with defending champions Northumberland looking to protect their 2022 title in the Open competition.

As last year there were six sections in the competition including Open, Minor, U2050, U1850, U1650 and U1450.

The playing schedule for the competition was as below:

**22<sup>nd</sup> April** – Preliminary round where required

**13<sup>th</sup> May** – Open, Minor Counties, U1850 and U1450 quarter-finals

**20<sup>th</sup> May** – U2050 and U1650 quarter-finals

**10<sup>th</sup> June** – Semi-finals of all Championships

**1<sup>st</sup> July** – Finals of all Championships

Six counties fielding 35 teams between them participated in the knockout stages across the six sections of the Championship. Five of these counties, Essex, Greater Manchester, Middlesex, Surrey and Yorkshire had teams in four of the Championships.

### Open

Quarter-Final 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 1 <sup>st</sup> July
*	Northumberland - 8	Surrey
*		
*	Surrey - 8	
*		
*	Middlesex - 8½	Middx
*		
*	Greater Manchester – 7½	
*		

The Open section was remarkable for the absence of Yorkshire, with Greater Manchester and Northumberland qualifying instead from the NCCU. We miss Lancashire, too. Greater Manchester looked well placed to reach the final, with a significant average rating points advantage. However, four wins in the top half against higher-rated opposition won the day for Middlesex. This was one of ten matches being played in Syston that day.

In the other semi-final, reigning national champions Northumberland had their second encounter with a Surrey team at Newark, having earlier lost a close quarter-final affair in the U2050. Again, Surrey had an insignificant rating advantage. The match went down to the wire, with Northumberland a point ahead with one to play. In the resulting time scramble Surrey stole the win needed to win the match on tie-break.

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## Minor Counties

Quarter-Final 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 1 <sup>st</sup> July
Lincolnshire - 16	Lincs - 6	Norfolk
Somerset - 0		
Sussex – 7½	Norfolk - 10	
Norfolk – 8½		
Cambridgeshire – 9½	Cambridgeshire - 8	Cambs
Worcestershire – 6½		
	Devon - 8	



Minor Counties quarter-final – Sussex v Norfolk, Sawbridgeworth

The Minor Counties was the best supported section, notwithstanding the loss of the Somerset team to a late clash with the Frome Congress. Opponents had come from far and wide. Cambridgeshire defeated Worcestershire at South Kilworth in Leicestershire, and then went on to defeat reigning champions Devon at Overton in Hampshire.

Norfolk meanwhile had travelled to Sawbridgeworth on the Hertfordshire/Essex border where they only just prevailed in a very close match against Sussex. Peterborough was the venue for their semi-final against neighbours Lincolnshire, where a four-point winning margin set up an intriguing all EACU final against Cambridgeshire, having shared the honours in the union qualifying competition.

### U2050

The draw threw up a quadruple bill between Yorkshire and Essex, one as a quarter-final in the U1850s, and three as semi-finals in the U2050, U1650 and U1450.

Quarter-Final 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 2 <sup>nd</sup> July
*	Yorkshire – 6½	Essex
*		
*	Essex – 9½	
*		
*	Warwickshire – 9	Surrey
*		
Northumberland – 7	Surrey - 7	
Surrey - 9		



U2050 semi-final – Warwickshire v Surrey, courtesy Rob Hammond

In the U2050s, Surrey beat Northumberland in the only quarter-final and were then defeated by a strong Warwickshire team in the semi-final. Essex won the other semi-final against Yorkshire to set up an Essex vs Surrey final.

### U1850

Quarter-Final 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 1 <sup>st</sup> July
*	Norfolk – 7	Yorkshire
*		
Yorkshire - 9	Yorkshire - 9	
Essex - 7		
*	Middlesex – 8	Middlesex
*		
*	Greater Manchester - 8	
*		



*Yorkshire celebrate their win in the U1850 quarter-final*

The U1850 Yorkshire vs Essex quarter-final was played at Syston, where Yorkshire retained the John Philpott and Peter Brahams memorial trophy, each a county stalwart.

Skippers Peter Nickals and Rupert Jones considered the frequency and passion of the ECF stage encounters between the two counties to be worthy of such an almost annual contest. Across the four championships honours were shared.

#### U1650

Quarter-Final 14th May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 1 <sup>st</sup> July
Yorkshire – 12	Yorkshire – 9	Yorkshire
Surrey – 3		
Essex – 16	Essex - 7	
Staffordshire – 0		
Worcestershire – 5½	Warks – 9	Warks
Warwickshire – 10½		
Gtr Manchester – 8	Gtr Manchester - 7	
Middlesex - 2		

#### U1450

Quarter-Final 14 <sup>th</sup> May	Semi-Final 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Final 2 <sup>nd</sup> July
Surrey - 5½	Surrey - 3½	Greater Manchester
Middlesex - 2½		
Notts – 2	Gtr Manchester - 8½	
Gtr Manchester - 10		
*	Yorkshire - 4½	Essex
*		
Staffordshire – 5	Essex - 7½	
Essex - 7		

Greater Manchester, this year as a NCCU nominee, began proceedings in the U1450 section with one of the few comprehensive wins in the quarter- and semi-finals, eliminating Nottinghamshire's only team this year by 10-2. Their other three teams all encountered Middlesex teams.



*U1450 Staffordshire vs Essex, Syston*

#### Tie-Breaks

Many of the matches in the knockout stage were really close with three tied matches and were decided by the first tiebreak of lower board count. This rewards success on higher boards over lower boards, with the count determined by the sum of the numbers of the boards that were won. If the semi-finals are anything to go by, all bodes well for the finals on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

#### Finals Day

The finals were held on 1<sup>st</sup> July as follows:

#### Hythe Centre, Staines, Surrey – Open and U2050

Open – Surrey vs Essex

U2050 – Essex vs Surrey

#### Guildhall, Thetford, Norfolk – Minor Counties

Norfolk v Cambridgeshire

#### Syston Community Centre, Leicester

U1850 - Yorkshire vs Middlesex

U1650 - Yorkshire vs Warwickshire

U1450 - Greater Manchester vs Essex

#### Final Stages

#### Open Championship

Middlesex (also SCCU Champions) beat Surrey on 1<sup>st</sup> tie-break in the final which took place in the Hythe Centre, Staines, extending the county's record of most wins to 30.

<a href="#">Northumberland</a>	8	<a href="#">Surrey</a>	8
<a href="#">Surrey</a>	8		
<a href="#">Middlesex</a>	8½	<a href="#">Middlesex</a>	8
<a href="#">Greater Manchester</a>	7½		

### Minor Counties

Cambridgeshire (also EACU Champions) beat Norfolk on 1<sup>st</sup> tie-break in the finals at The Guildhall, Thetford, last won by Cambridgeshire in 1988.

<a href="#">Lincolnshire</a>	16	<a href="#">Lincs</a>	6	<a href="#">Norfolk</a>	8
<a href="#">Somerset</a>	0				
<a href="#">Sussex</a>	7½	<a href="#">Norfolk</a>	10		
<a href="#">Norfolk</a>	8½				
<a href="#">Cambs</a>	9½	<a href="#">Cambs</a>	8	<a href="#">Cambs</a>	8
<a href="#">Worcestershire</a>	6½				
*		<a href="#">Devon</a>	8		
*					

### U2050

Essex (also SCCU Champions) beat Warwickshire 16-0 by default to retain their title (a hat-trick interrupted by Covid-19).

### U1850

Middlesex (also SCCU Champions) retained their title (a hat-trick interrupted by Covid-19 if the former U160 event counts) by beating Yorkshire by 10-6 in the final at the Syston Community Centre in Leicestershire.

### U1650

Yorkshire (also NCCU Champions), beat Warwickshire by 9 – 7 at the final in the Syston Community Centre.

**U1450** – Greater beat Essex by 8.5 – 3.5 at the final in the Syston Community Centre.

## ECF Open National Final - Middlesex win 30th title! A report by Anthony Fulton

'We are the champions! We are the champions! No time for losers for we are the champions of the ECF!'

OK, not as dramatic as Queen's '...of the world!' but you never know what's next on the cards!

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023 Middlesex played Surrey in the 102<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Open National County Championship Final at The Hythe Centre, Staines. The final venue was

appropriate as, just as with the tussle for the Löwenthal Trophy, so too the disagreement over whether Staines should be considered as being in Middlesex or Surrey. Both counties have a reasonable claim to the area, Middlesex's of course being the greater, but the real tussle on the day was about who would be crowned national champions. Both teams were itching to become champion, as it had been over a decade since either could make the claim.



Counties Controller Mark Murrell (centre) and ECF Events Director Shohreh Bayat (left) present the Open trophy to Middlesex Captain Anthony Fulton – photograph by Philip Staniland

By defeating Greater Manchester in a dramatic and, as my deputy on the day said, 'nerve-wracking' semi-final, Middlesex progressed to our first final since 2016 where we met a familiar foe, Surrey. The match was the third time the two counties had met at this stage, all under my tenure as captain (2006 to date – am I the longest-serving current county match captain?) The teams had shared the previous two spoils: 2012 (Middlesex) and 2013 (Surrey) in two close encounters, with the final score of both being 8½-7½. The match was also the eighteenth time that the Open final was contested by two SCCU counties, and was the one that broke the hegemony established by the NCCU in recent years. Prior to this final Surrey had form, as they were the last SCCU representative in 2019 which saw the crowning of the 100<sup>th</sup> champion. For the record, there have been nine finals where both contestants were from the NCCU, the only other Union to have two representatives in Open National Finals.

The vagaries of the National Stage mean that board order is based on strict FIDE rating and consequently you get odd board orders. For example, is Surrey's Peter Lee really stronger than Graeme Buckley? Should Stanley and Frankie Badacsonyi be playing as low as boards 12 and 14 for Middlesex? Clearly, plenty of anomalies. In the past there was some wriggle room (80 points), but not now. The randomness of board order therefore added to the uncertainty of the day. FIDE rating indicated a 9-7 win to Surrey, as Middlesex after



all were outrated on average by 100+ points. However, if we acknowledge the fact that FIDE rating is not a true reflection of Middlesex's playing strength, the teams were evenly matched on ECF rating (Middlesex 2166; Surrey 2202) and so a close match was on the cards, replicating the previous two encounters. This proved to be the case.

The opening hour or so's play saw the teams struggle for dominance, with Colin Mackenzie's result coming in first with a respectable draw on board 11 against an opponent who outrated him by a significant margin on both rating lists. Surrey may have been looking to this board and a few others in middle order as a 'gimme', but by Surrey ceding the draw, it could be argued Middlesex gained a psychological edge. Would this be the board that made the difference to the final score? The real action though happened soon after, and effectively set the scene for the remainder of the match.

#### Match: Open – Surrey vs Middlesex

**Board 3: Venkat Tiruchirapalli (Middlesex) - Silverio Abasolo (Surrey)**

1.d4 g6 2.c4 Bg7 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Qxd5 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Bg2 Nc6 7.Nc3 Qa5 8.d5 Bxf3 9.Bxf3 Bxc3+ 10.bxc3 Ne5 11.Bg2 Qxc3+ 12.Bd2 Qd4 13.Qc1 Ng4 14.0-0 N4f6 15.Be3 Qa4 16.Rb1 0-0-0 17.Bf4 Ne8 18.Qb2



18.. Ngf6 19.Bh3+ e6 20.dxe6 fxe6 21.Bxe6+ Rd7 22.Rfd1 Rf8 23.Qxb7+ Kd8 24.Bxc7+ Ke7 25.Bxd7 Nxd7 26.Bf4 Rf5 27.Rb3 Nef6 28.Re3+ Kf7 29.Red3 Ke7 30.e4 g5 31.Bd6+ 1-0

I have been a long-term county captain, so in my time have seen many matches accrue many draws, but the early wins for Steve Coles (board 13) and Venkat Tiruchirapalli (board 3) meant that victories had to be sought by both sides as board count already favoured Middlesex, so Surrey couldn't afford to tie. Richard Bates' victory on board 1 put even more pressure on Surrey, as in the event of a tie board count most certainly favoured Middlesex. Surrey really had to play

to win the match outright, but this would be no mean feat as Middlesex already led 3½-1½.

This season Middlesex have been good front-runners and have generally held on to their lead. However, with this being a final and Surrey being stronger on paper (based on FIDE rating) and determined to avoid a hat-trick of defeats to us this season, it never does well to count chickens or tempt fortune or even the gods. The next seven games bore this out as Surrey levelled the match, but worse was to follow as, having trailed by two, Surrey opened a two-point lead, and the match had yo-yoed! The match seemed to be going back to FIDE form.

However, if anyone paid attention to the Greater Manchester match Middlesex had trailed by three at the halfway stage and nicked an 8½ -7½ win, so although trailing by two there was no need to panic – yet – as we knew how to dig deep! At this point Middlesex trailed 5-7.

#### Match: Open – Surrey vs Middlesex

**Board 5: Bob Eames (Middlesex) - Chris Baker (Surrey)**

*With annotations by Bob Eames*

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Nf3 Transposing to the Philidor Defence, and avoiding the dull and equal exchange of queens with 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ 4...Nbd7 5.Bc4 Avoiding the hacky lines like 5.g4, a favourite of Alexei Shirov. 5...Be7 6.0-0 0-0 7.a4 c6 8.Re1 Preventing the tactic ...Nxe4 and ...d5. 8...b6



9.h3 A popular alternative for White here amongst grandmasters seems to be 9.b3, Bb2, Bd3, Ne2 and Ng3.

9...a6 10.Ba2 Rb8 11.b4 Bb7 12.Rb1 Qc7

Chris thought after the game that this had been a mistake, giving White chances to plonk a knight on the attacking square f5.

13.Nh4 Rfe8 14.Nf5 Bf8 15.dxe5 Nxe5 After 15...dxe5 I was planning 16.Qf3 with a good attacking position.



16.Bg5 Qd8 17.Re3 h6 18.Bh4 Ng6 19.Bg3 Ne5 20.f4 Ng6 21.Qe2 21.Rd3 may well have been better in hindsight!  
21...d5



Black tries to break out and gain some counterplay.

22.e5 d4 23.Qc4 winning the d4 pawn, as taking the rook on e3 leads to mate after Qxf7+ and exf6.

23...Nd5 24.Nxd5 cxd5 25.Qxd4 Qc8 26.Qd3 Qd7 27.c3 Qxa4 28.Bb3 Qd7 29.Nd4 Rbc8 30.Bc2 Qd8 31.f5 Nh8 32.f6 g6 33.Rf1



defending the f6-pawn and preparing for the final push with e6.

33...Rc4 34.e6 Rxe6 35.Nxe6 fxe6 36.f7+ Kh7 37.Rxe6 Qg5 38.Bd6



I had played 38.Bf4?! originally without letting go of the bishop, but quickly retreated it back to where it had come from when I was shocked to see that it blundered the bishop after 38 ...Rxf4 39.Rxf4 Qxf4 ... but even that was winning for White after 40.Rxg6!

38...d4 Threatening mate in one. 39.Rf2 Rxc3 40.Qxd4 Qc1+ 41.Kh2 Rxh3+ 42.Kxh3 Qh1+ 43.Kg3



and Black runs out of checks.

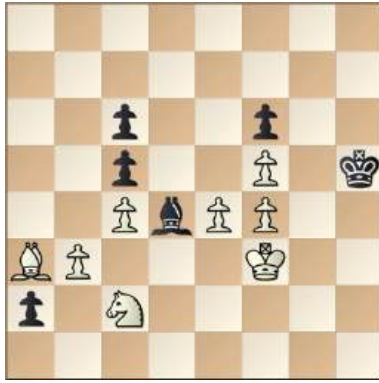
1-0

Twelve games down, four to go. Marco Gallana is winning on board 2, Bob Eames has a huge attack on board 5, Alex is at least level on board 10, as is Mat Dydak on board 15. It is looking as though the match will be tied, with Middlesex winning comfortably on board count – predicted at Middlesex 24’ Surrey 38. Thus Surrey have to find wins, and this just does not look likely. As expected, Bob hammers home his advantage and Alex attains a draw. Middlesex trail 6½-7½ (current board count Middlesex 22, Surrey 38).

So, the match was going to the wire, with two games left, Middlesex trailing by one point, and needing a win and a draw to tie the match with a comfortable win on board count.

**Match: Open – Surrey vs Middlesex**  
**Board 15: Mateuz Dydak (Middlesex) - Robin Haldane (Surrey)**

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Bxc6 dxc6 5.0-0 Bg4 6.h3 h5 7.d3 Qf6 8.Nbd2 g5 9.Nc4 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 Qxf3 11.gxf3 f6 12.Be3 0-0-0 13.Rfd1 Ne7 14.d4 exd4 15.Bxd4 Bg7 16.Ne3 b6 17.c4 c5 18.Bc3 b5 19.b3 b4 20.Bb2 c6 21.Kh2 Rxd1 22.Rxd1 Rd8 23.Rxd8+ Kxd8 24.Kg3 Ke8 25.Ng2 h4+ 26.Kh2 Kf7 27.f4 Ng6 28.f5 Nf8 29.Ne3 Nd7 30.Kg2 Bf8 31.Ng4 Bd6 32.Kf3 Bf4 33.Ke2 Ke7 34.Ne3 Kf7 35.Ng2 Be5 36.Bc1 g4 37.Nxh4 gxh3 38.Kf1 h2 39.Kg2 Bd4 40.f4 a5 41.Kxh2 Nb6 42.Nf3 a4 43.Ne1 a3 44.Nc2 Nxc4 45.bxc4 b3 46.axb3 a2 47.Ba3 Kg7 48.Kg3 Kh6 49.Kf3 Kh5



50.Nxd4!? a1Q 51.Bxc5 Qc3+ 52.Ke2 Kg4 53.e5 Qb2+ 54.Kd3 Qb1+ 55.Kc3 Qc1+ 56.Kb4 Qd2+ 57.Ka4 Qa2+ 58.Kb4 Qd2+ 59.Ka4 Qxf4 60.exf6 Qc7 61.Kb4 Qb7+ 62.Ka5 Qf7 63.Be7 Kf4 64.Nxc6 Kxf5 65.Nd8 Qe8 66.c5 Qd7 67.b4 Qa7+ 68.Kb5 Qb8+ 69.Ka5 Qa7+ 70.Kb5 Qb8+ 71.Kc6 Qc8+ 72.Kb6 Qb8+ 73.Nb7 Qe5 74.c6 Qd4+ 75.Kc7 Qc4 76.Nd6+

1-0

It seemed this was going to be the case, but when Mat Dydak allowed his opponent to queen (50. Nxd4 (??, !? or !!) a1=Q), soon after Marco Gallana had agreed a draw, it looked as though we were going to lose  $7\frac{1}{2}$ -8 $\frac{1}{2}$  as somehow Surrey contrived to find the additional  $\frac{1}{2}$  point to take them over the winning line. OK - should we panic now? No, as Mat's decision proved inspired; yes, his opponent had queened but it was never possible for the king to support her as Mat had too many pieces left (K+B+N+6P vs. K+Q+2P), thereby taking away key squares so the opponent's king could not infiltrate. With careful play, Mat went on to bring home the point, tie the match and see Middlesex win on board count by the closest margin possible: 37-38.

Now, dear reader, you may say that I am putting a positive spin on Mat's game, but I say that Mat channelled his inner Carlsen and had the position completely under control – which is easy to say when you've won! For those of you not familiar with the reference, in the recent Global Chess League match between Anand and Carlsen Carlsen underpromoted and so had K+B+N+4P vs. K+Q+2P: [see here](#). OK - so not quite identical, but the same principle!

When the dust had settled the only conclusion to draw is that we had seen a match that had it all: plenty of wins (10), both sides having a fragile lead (+2), positional and tactical oversights, and inspirational play. A hard-fought match played in good spirit between two familiar foes. Commiserations to Clive Frostick, who has done a fantastic job in reviving Surrey's pride, but he and his team came up against a redoubtable Middlesex. My congratulations to the Middlesex team and squad. It

seems that the Middlesex giant has finally awoken at the National Stage!

Victory, albeit on first tie-break board count, sees Middlesex lift their 30<sup>th</sup> national title, thereby setting a new record – although to be fair ever since Middlesex won the first BCF title in 1908 they have always set new records in the County Championships, the most notable being that up to 1957 Middlesex had won the same number of titles (19) as ALL the other counties put together! Further congratulations go to the team and squad as they not only secured the 30<sup>th</sup> national title but attained Middlesex's 26<sup>th</sup> SCCU/national double! Their last was in 1988-89. It is to be noted that Middlesex lead Lancashire in this statistic too (Middlesex – 26; Lancashire – 16). Not bad for a county that many say does not exist, supported by the musings of former Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman:

'Dear Middlesex, dear vanished country friend,  
Your neighbour, London, killed you in the end.'

I think is safe to say, 'Middlesex beg to differ!'

We look forward to defending both titles in 2023-24. Go on the Middlesex!



Middlesex - National Open Champions

## ChessFest 2023



The UK's largest chess event took place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July in London's Trafalgar Square. Now in its third year, the annual open-air chess festival saw over 14,000 people attend the free event organised by the charity

Chess in Schools and Communities to promote and raise awareness for the game we all love.

After two previous years of scorching 30+ degree temperatures, the 2023 event took place under cooler conditions and thankfully remained rain-free, not that we're convinced that any of the 350+ chess boards would have been vacated for anything less than a deluge.

The highlight of the day was the living chess displays which have been the centrepiece of previous events. With actors taking the place of the pieces, they re-enacted some of the best games played by UK players, with GM David Howell on hand to commentate on the re-enactment of his game against Ivan Sokolov from the 2009 Staunton Memorial.

ChessFest also offered a 'Challenge the Chess Master' where the masters had two and a half minutes to the public's five, with prizes to those who managed a win or a draw. The number of masters was steadily increased throughout the day from the scheduled four to nine to cope with the long queues that formed. It was a veritable 'who's who' of the chess world, with GM David Howell, GM Gawain Jones, GM Luke McShane, GM Ravi Haria, GM Stuart Conquest, IM Andrew Martin, IM Harriet Hunt, IM Richard Palliser, IM Tom Rendle, IM Callum Kilpatrick, IM Malcolm Pein, WGM Katarzyna Toma, FM Tim Wall, FM Jonathan Pein and FM Akshaya Kalaiyalahan all taking turns. Even titled players like GM Jonathan Rowson and IM Gavin Wall, who had turned up to spectate, were co-opted into pitching in!

At the other end of the spectrum, one of the UK's brightest prospects and the World Under 8 Rapid and Blitz Champion, Bodhana Sivanandan, challenged the USA's own prodigy, nine-year-old Megan Paragua in a match played live on the internet from Trafalgar Square and broadcast on the giant screen with commentary for the public. Although, ahead in both games Bodhana lost the match  $\frac{1}{2}:\frac{1}{2}$ , but captained a London Juniors team to a win in a match played against ChessFest Liverpool, who were having their own outdoor festival at Liverpool ONE Chavasse Park.

New for 2023 was the interactive chess puzzle competition organised by ChessKid starring the star of the online platform, FunMaster Mike (FM Mike Klein). All children attending ChessFest were given new accounts to ChessKid and given ten minutes to solve as many puzzles as possible on their mobile phones or devices. Hundreds took part, with the giant screen showing a live leader board. If the results are anything to go by, the future of UK junior chess is looking bright, with some awesome scores being recorded.

To cap it off, Chess in Schools tutors were offering children and adults a free chess lesson in the 'Teaching Zone'. Lessons ranged from how the pieces move to the ultra-advanced nuances of the Accelerated Dragon. A total of 35 tutors provided close to 500 lessons throughout the day.

ChessFest also took place in Nottingham on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July and in Hull on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July, with the juniors from Hull emerging victorious in their online challenge game against London.

ChessFest will be back in 2024, and will be looking to build on this year's success by bringing chess to more people across the UK.

## Report on the European Club Cup and Club Cup for Women 2023 by Lawrence Cooper

This year's events took place in Durres, Albania. The format of both events was a seven-round team Swiss event. In the Open, teams were allowed six players and a squad of eight, while for the women it was four players and five in the squad. This was the first time that I had sent teams to both events in the same year, so it has been a busy couple of months.



*The Wood Green Open team*

The Wood Green Open team comprised GM Ravi Haria, IMs Matthew Wadsworth and Jonah Willow, FMs Borna Derakhshani, and Conor O'Donnell and Viktor Stoyanov. There were two changes to the Women's team compared with 2022, with Lan Yao and Akshaya Kalaiyalahan making their debuts in the competition, replacing Irene Sukandar and Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant. The same five will represent England in the European Team Championship in November.





*The Wood Green Women's team*

My teams were joined by Slough Sharks, Blackthorne and Celtic Tigers in the Open and She Plays To Win in the Women's.

Initial feedback from the tournament was very favourable. There was efficient organisation meeting players from the airport, a very nice resort and pleasantly warm temperatures. The hotel was initially virus-free...

The first round featured an unfortunate pairing with Wood Green facing She Plays To Win. With the memory of Wood Green losing to their youth team in the 2021-22 season my paranoia feared a giant-killing performance by our opponents. The modest number of live boards meant that I had to pace up and down for hours at home without being able to witness any of the action. Ultimately, a giant-killing was avoided, and Wood Green eased home by 3½-½.

In the Open. Wood Green were the only team in the top half of the draw, whilst the other three had a crack at an upset against the top teams. Facing a total of sixteen GMs and two IMs, it was left to Jonathan Nelson of Blackthorne and Diana Serbanescu of Celtic Tigers to secure draws to avoid 6-0 defeats. Wood Green won their match 5-1.



*Ravi Haria faces Magnus Carlsen*

After playing (and winning) his first game in over twelve months in round 1 Ravi Haria and the Wood Green team faced the number 4 seeds and eventual winners. After conceding a draw on top board in round 1, Offerspill Sjakklubb felt the need to strengthen their team and unleashed Magnus Carlsen on top board! I was delighted that Ravi got the chance to face him. Slowly but surely though, Magnus took control in the middle game and both the clock and position became critical. A desperation sacrifice was coolly refuted. It was left to Borna to avoid the whitewash, which he did with an excellent win against GM V Pranav (rated 2579). He subsequently scored heavily, and was one of the main reasons why his team finished first. Conor was desperately close to a draw on board 5 and Viktor was also doing fine for some time, but eventually both were defeated, with the final score 5-1.

Slough Sharks suffered a surprise defeat, but Blackthorne and Celtic both managed match wins, the latter against Gonzaga.

Wood Green Women also had a tough challenge; they faced Superchess, who went on to win the event. The team seemed well placed to win the match, but, although Harriet ground out a win against a much higher rated opponent and Lan Yao had a good draw with Black, the remaining two boards saw promising positions evaporate and end in defeat.

She Plays To Win had a great result, defeating a higher-seeded Italian team, with excellent wins for Kamila Hryshchenko (with Black against IM Sophie Milliet) and Abigail Weersing. A draw for Emily Maton meant a very encouraging victory and a sign that the team fully belonged alongside such strong opposition.

Round 3 in the Open saw Wood Green and Sharks defeat lower-rated opposition, whilst Blackthorne and Tigers lost to higher-rated opponents. I think this was the first round where defaults started to appear, probably due to the 'light seasonal virus' which had over 100 reported cases, all in the same hotel!

She Plays To Win had another fine result, drawing 2-2 with higher-rated opponents thanks to wins from Abigail and Emily. Sadly, Zoe was struck down by the virus and had to miss her game. Wood Green recovered from their round 2 near miss with a comfortable match victory, although Akshaya did almost give her captain a heart attack when missing a tactic. Fortunately, by the time I'd removed my head from my hands the opponent had opted for another move and the game soon ended in our favour.

In round 3 Wood Green were in the top half of their score group, and wins from Matthew, Borna (now on



4/4!) and Conor helped them to a 4-2 win and six match points. Slough Sharks and Blackthorne also won to return to a 50% score, and Celtic Tigers drew to move to 3 points.

Wood Green Women came unstuck in round 4 against another higher-seeded team, again 2½-1½. This time the score was a fairer reflection: Akshaya was in trouble but recovered to draw, whilst Kata was again rather unlucky, another good game spoilt by one tactic. This was Akshaya's last day in Albania as she had only been able to take enough time off work for rounds 1-4. Ironically, her departure coincided with the virus gathering pace in the team hotel.

She Plays To Win did lose in round 4, but welcomed back Zoe to the team. Abigail continued her fine tournament to remain unbeaten with two wins and two draws.

Having beaten the Israeli club Rishon Lezion's B team in round 4 Wood Green faced their much stronger A team the following day. The opposition cheekily rested Boris Gelfand, their top board, but were still strong enough to win boards 1 and 4 (Borna's first loss) and draw the other four games. Sharks and Blackthorne both lost to higher-rated sides, with Peter Roberson having to default his game (presumably another victim of the virus). Celtic Tigers won their match, though, to move to five match points.

Wood Green Women staged a great escape in round 5. Kata again played a good game but faltered when in sight of the finishing line, and then lost on time whilst trying to find a way to avoid perpetual check. Harriet's opponent, possibly influenced by board 4, offered a draw when close to winning. This gave the team a glimmer of hope and Jovanka and Lan Yao cashed in, winning the top two boards and guiding the team to their third win of the event. Although She Plays To Win lost, there was a very welcome win for Zoe against a higher-rated opponent.

Wood Green won narrowly in round 6 thanks to 3/3 with White for Matthew, Borna and Viktor. Celtic Tigers lost, but both Sharks and Blackthorne won to move back ahead of the Tigers.

In theory, Wood Green Women received a favourable pairing in round 6 with a very realistic chance of a match win taking them to 8 points and maybe even an outside chance of a medal with a last-round win. Sadly, though, the virus struck hard, and Jovanka, Harriet and Kata were all unable to play. Having spoken to them, I know this was upsetting for them, and if there had been any way they felt they could make it to the board and play they would have done. Although I informed the Chief Arbiter five hours before the start time that we might not have a full team I regret not making a final decision

sooner, as this may have caused the players unnecessary stress when already very ill. There was confusion over whether we could play with just one player, but in the end a compromise was reached with Lan Yao playing their board 3, who was most in need of a game for norm purposes. This was only agreed at the board, though, so both players had wasted morning preparation. From our team's perspective the subsequent win for Lan Yao was some consolation as it put her in a strong position for a board medal. She Plays To Win drew their match, thanks to a win from Kamila and draws from Zoe and Emily.

The virus struck again in round 7, and this time it was Borna who was unable to play. This was very unfortunate for him as he was on 5/6 and needed a draw for a third IM norm. It would have only been 25 games though, so he would have required another norm to complete the title. Losing their top scorer was a big blow, and the team eventually lost 4-2 to the higher rated Dutch Leiden team. Ravi seemed on his way to victory, but soon after a post on Facebook from a well-known English GM complimenting his play and predicting victory the advantage slipped, and the game ended in a draw. The final score was 4-2, as the Dutch also won on bottom board in a long ending. The team ended on eight match points, matching their 2018 total, albeit with only Jonah remaining from that line-up.

Sadly, the other three English teams were also defeated. Harry Grieve was the latest default victim. There was very good news for Ben Purton, though. Not content with settling for a CM title, he completed a fantastic tournament to score 5/7 (4½ in the last five rounds) and to qualify for the FM title. Ben has had a tough year, but I hope that this (and I suspect Sharks beating Wood Green in the 4NCL) will have provided him with some welcome respite. Celebrations may not have been quite as raucous as normal for Sharks, though, as Ben was one of many suffering with the virus.

I was resigned to informing the arbiters that we wouldn't be able to field a team in the Women's event in the final round and hoping that would be enough for Lan Yao to win a board medal. The few hours' rest had clearly helped, though, and I sensed a real resolve to play the last round. This did indeed happen, and somehow the team found the strength to play games lasting four to five hours. Lan Yao was under pressure against GM Monika Socko, and I did worry about the board medal slipping away. However, she defended well and drew without much difficulty. Harriet's game was looking very good, and I started to dream of her also making a medal. Sadly, there was a point swing in the game, and she fell to defeat. Board 1 was far less clear, but unlike last year, when Jovi lost from a position of strength to GM Stefanova, this time she triumphed after

being in some difficulty. Kata converted her advantage and we had finished on a very high note. Whilst being aware that Lan Yao was now very likely to get the silver medal on board 2 there was a very welcome bonus when the updated board listings showed that Jovanka had won the bronze medal on board 1!



*Lan Yao receives her silver medal trophy - photo by Niki Riga*

She Plays To Win finished with a very impressive  $3\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}$ , winning the top three boards. It was great to see two English teams and nine of the top English female players in the competition, and the team can be very proud of their six match points, comprising two match wins and two match draws, and finishing three places above their initial seeding. Even better, Abigail Weersing qualified for her Women's FIDE Master title.

Apologies that I've had to resort to rather a lot of results journalism, but many of the matches weren't on live boards, and with a tight deadline to submit the report I haven't been able to try to assemble games - and the organisers have shown no sign so far of publishing them.

There were many positives to the tournament. The organisers were very efficient in transferring players from the airport, unlike 2022 in Austria where players spent many hours waiting to be picked up. The resort was very impressive. The number of entries in both events was amazing. However, over one hundred cases of what the locals called 'light seasonal virus' in the official hotel has barely been mentioned by anyone but the poor players. There is no sign of any apology from the ECU or the hotel to the players and captains, and all I have heard from them is how wonderful the tournament was. It remains to be seen if any federations will raise the issue, especially those who have people on the ECU Board. When teams are forced to stay in a

specific hotel and pay for full board one would hope that they could eat there safely.

No report is complete without thanking all those who helped make participation possible. It is no exaggeration to say that without the support of the organisations listed below I wouldn't have been able to send a Women's team. Along with other organisers I am incredibly grateful for any contribution that these and similar organisations are able to provide.

The English Chess Federation Women's Director, Aga Milewska, has continued her fine work in her second year as director. The timing of the event, a month before the European Team, meant the players got a very useful warm-up event. This time she not only provided funds from her budget but even spent much of her time in Albania looking after the Wood Green female players who had fallen victim to the virus!

The Chess Trust was established in 2015, helped by a significant bequest from Richard Haddrell. It has the support of the English Chess Federation and aims to provide support to amateur chess in England both in terms of playing and teaching. They again gave generously to help the Wood Green Women's team. I hope they will view the two board medals favourably and continue to support women's chess.

The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust helped towards Viktor Stoyanov's expenses for the tournament. English Chess Federation International Director Malcolm Pein's directorate paid for the English team's entry fees. With the expected HM Government money, I hope that more of our many deserving norm seekers will get the help they need to pursue their titles and, beyond that, to aim for 2600 and higher.

Tournament links:

Board prizes in women's section:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr775458.aspx?lan=1andart=81andturdet=YESandflag=30>

Open section final standings:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr774133.aspx?lan=1andart=0andturdet=YESandflag=30>

Women's section final standings:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr775458.aspx?lan=1andart=1andturdet=YESandflag=30>

Tournament website: <https://clubcup2023.com>

Below are some games from the tournament.

**FM Derakhshani, Borna – GM Pranav, V**

38th ECC Open 2023 Durres ALB (2.2), 02.10.2023

1.e4 c6 2.Nf3 d5 3.Nc3 Bg4 4.h3 Bxf3 5.Qxf3 e6 6.Be2 Bc5 7.0–0 Ne7 8.Rd1 Bd4 9.Bf1 0–0 10.Ne2 Bb6 11.d4 Nd7 12.Ng3 Rc8 13.c3 Ng6 14.Bd3 Bc7 15.Nh5 Qh4 16.Qg4 Qe7 17.Re1 Rce8 18.e5 f5 19.Qe2 c5 20.f4 Bb6 21.Be3 Rc8 22.a3 cxd4 23.cxd4 Nb8 24.Rad1 Nc6 25.Bb1 Qh4 26.Kh2 Rf7 27.Rf1 Nf8 28.g3 Qd8 29.g4 g6 30.Nf6+ Rxf6 31.exf6 Qxf6 32.Qf2 Na5 33.Ba2 Nd7 34.Rc1 Nc6 35.b4 Rf8 36.g5 Qg7 37.Rfd1 h6 38.b5 Ne7 39.h4 Nc8 40.Qe1 Nd6 41.a4 Ne4 42.Kg2 Qe7 43.Rd3 Qd8 44.Bd2 Kf7 45.a5 Bc7 46.a6 bxa6 47.bxa6 hxg5 48.hxg5 Rh8 49.Rh3 Bb6 50.Be3 Rxh3 51.Kxh3 Qe7 52.Ra1 Kg8 53.Bb1 Nd6 54.Bd3 Bd8 55.Kg2 Nb6 56.Bd2 Ne4 57.Bb4 Qc7 58.Qh4 Qg7 59.Rh1 Nc4 60.Bxe4 fxe4 61.Qh3 Kf7 62.Bc5 e3 63.Qh8 Qxh8 64.Rxh8 Nd2 65.Rxd8

1–0

**GM Carlsen, Magnus – GM Haria, Ravi**

38th ECC Open 2023 Durres ALB (2.2), 02.10.2023

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 Nc6 5.Nf3 Bd7 6.Be2 cxd4 7.cxd4 Nge7 8.0–0 Nf5 9.Nc3 a6 10.Bg5 Be7 11.Bxe7 Qxe7 12.Qd2 0–0 13.Rae1 Qd8 14.Bd1 f6 15.Ba4 b5 16.Bc2 fxe5 17.dxe5 Kh8 18.Ne2 Nh4 19.Nxh4 Qxh4 20.f4 Rac8 21.Bb1 Qh6 22.Qe3 Qh4 23.Rc1 Qe7 24.Qh3 h6 25.g4 d4 26.a3 Kg8 27.g5 Nxe5 28.Rxc8 Bxc8 29.fxe5 Qxg5+ 30.Qg3 Rxf1+ 31.Kxf1 Qd2 32.Bg6

1–0

**IM Houska, Jovanka - GM Stefanova, A.**

27th ECC Women 2023 Durres ALB (7.1), 07.10.2023

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Bg5 c6 6.e3 h6 7.Bh4 Be7 8.Bd3 Nbd7 9.h3 0–0 10.Qc2 Re8 11.Nf3 Ne4 12.Bxe7 Qxe7 13.Bxe4 dxe4 14.Nd2 f5 15.g4 Nf6 16.gxf5 Bxf5 17.0–0–0 c5 18.dxc5 Qxc5 19.Nb3 Qe5 20.Nd4 Be6 21.Nxe6 Rxe6 22.Rd4 Rc8 23.Rhd1 Kh7 24.Kb1 Qh2 25.Rb4 b6 26.Qa4 Qxf2 27.Qxa7 Qxe3 28.Rb3 Qf3 29.Rg1 Rg8 30.Qf7 Rd6 31.Nd5 e3 32.Nxe3 Qe4+ 33.Ka1 Rd7 34.Qc4 Re8 35.a3 Ree7 36.Qb5 Rb7 37.Nc4 Qf4 38.Rbg3 Ne4 39.Rg4 Qf6 40.Ne3 Re5 41.Qd3 Qd6 42.Qc2 Rbe7 43.Nc4 Qc6 44.Qg2 Rg5 45.Rxg5 hxg5 46.Nd2 Qg6 47.Nf3 Qf6 48.Qg4 g6 49.Re1 Ra7 50.Re3 Nc5 51.Nxg5+ Kh6 52.Qh4+ Kg7 53.Rf3 Rxa3+ 54.Rxa3 Qf1+ 55.Ka2

1–0

**WIM Yao, Lan – WGM Eric, Jovana**

27th ECC Women 2023 Durres ALB (3.6), 03.10.2023

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Be7 8.Qf3 Qc7 9.0–0–0 Nbd7 10.g4 h6 11.Bxf6 Bxf6 12.h4 Nb6 13.g5 Bxd4 14.Rxd4 Qc5 15.Rd2 Bd7 16.Be2 Na4 17.Nxa4 Bxa4 18.g6 0–0 19.b3 Bc6 20.gxf7+ Rxf7 21.Bc4 Re8 22.Rhd1 b5 23.Be2 Ref8 24.Qg4 Bxe4 25.Qxe6 Qc3 26.Kb1 Qe3 27.f5 Kh8 28.Bd3 d5 29.Bxe4 dxe4 30.Rd8 Qf3 31.R1d5 Qh1+ 32.Kb2 Qxh4 33.Qxf7 Rxd8 34.f6 Rg8 35.fxg7+ Rxg7 36.Qf5 e3 37.Qf8+ Kh7 38.Rd8 Qg5 39.Qh8+ Kg6 40.Rd6+ Kh5 41.Qe8+ Kh4 42.Re6 e2 43.Re4+ Kg3 44.Re3+ Kh4 45.Qe6 Qf4 46.Re4 1–0

**WSTCC Reports  
by Nigel Povah**

The 2023 World Senior Teams Chess Championships (WSTCC) have taken place in the beautiful location of Struga on Lake Ohrid in North Macedonia, and the setting couldn't be more idyllic, with fabulous views over the lake with a wonderful mountain range in the background.

Getting to Ohrid was a major challenge as there are no direct flights, and so the English delegation (comprising six teams of four to five players) travelled via Vienna, Belgrade, Skopje or Tirana, which meant there were a number of travel cancellations and delays, with Glenn Flear (in the England 50+ 1 squad) and Tony Kosten (in the England 65+ 1 squad) arriving a day later than intended.

Stewart Reuben had a particularly frustrating travel experience, as he explains: 'My trip to North Macedonia proved to be very difficult, as it was for some other people. I had intended to stay three nights in Albania before going on to Ohrid by car, thus bringing the number of countries I have visited up to 105. Unfortunately, the flight to Tirana in Albania was first much delayed and then cancelled. There were no seats on the plane for the next couple of nights, so I returned home from Luton and decided to give up on the whole trip.

'But I spoke to Nigel Povah, and he persuaded me to give it one more try. How pleased I am that he did so. I changed my route and stayed one night in Vienna, before travelling by air to Ohrid. Nigel had arranged a number of rooms at the hotel overlooking the lake. The first night the sky was beautifully clear. I don't think I have seen such a complete sight of so many stars since I was in Tahiti last century. Moreover, the view of Venus was so bright that at first I thought it must be a man-made satellite. That, together with meeting old friends

– all younger than me (!) – has so far made this a very special occasion.'

The 50+ event had 22 teams, of which three were Women's teams to contest the Women's Championship. England 1 were second seeds behind a strong team from the USA. England 2 were the eighth seeds, England 3 13<sup>th</sup> and England Women 14<sup>th</sup>.

The 65+ event had 26 teams, with England 1 being second seeds behind a strong Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK team, with England 2 20<sup>th</sup> seeds.

Pictures are by Mark Livshitz. A full photo gallery can be found here:

<https://seniorteam2023.fide.com/tournament/photogallery/>

You can find a press release from Nigel Povah here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/Seniors/wstcc-reports-from-nigel-povah/>



### Round 1 – 19<sup>th</sup> September

This round saw England 50+ 1 (Mickey Adams (above), John Emms, Keith Arkell and Nigel Davies) paired against England 50+ 3 (Russell Granat, Phil Crocker, Clive Frostick and Brian Hewson), and the result was quite predictable, although not the score, which was 3½-½ as Russell Granat managed an impressive draw with Mickey Adams and may have even stood fractionally better in the final position.

England 50+ 2 (Steve Dishman, Andy Lewis, Gary Clark and Tony Stebbings) beat Scotland 4-0, while England 50+ Women (Sue Lalic, Sheila Jackson, Ingrid Lauterbach and Petra Nunn) lost by the same score to a strong Italian team who were seeded third.

England 65+ 1 (John Nunn, Terry Chapman, Chris Baker and Nigel Povah) beat Austria 1 by 3-1, while England 2 lost by the same score to Germany (eighth seeds).

### Round 2 – 20<sup>th</sup> September

England 50+ 1 beat Poland 3-1, thanks to wins from Mickey Adams and Glenn Flear (who had now arrived).

England 50+ 2 lost 2½-1½ to the Italians, so, although disappointing, not too bad a result as they were heavily outrated. England 50+ 3 beat Uruguay by 2½-1½ thanks to wins from Phil Crocker and Brian Hewson. England 50+ Women beat Scotland by 3½-½, with Sheila Jackson demonstrating her ability to win K, B and N vs K.

England 65+ 1 beat Kosovo by 3-1 thanks to wins from John Nunn (below) and Tony Kosten, who had also arrived by now. England 2 beat 25<sup>th</sup> seeds Sweden Skane by 3-1, with wins from England's two oldest players in the delegation, Geoff James and Stewart Reuben, both of whom are in their eighties!

So after the second round England 50+ 1 and England 65+ 1 were both joint top of their sections, with tough matches in round 3 against Italy and Slovakia respectively. England Women were sharing the lead with China ShenZhen Women, and had a tough round 3 match against ninth seeds Slovakia.



### Round 3 – 21<sup>st</sup> September

A good day for England, as the England 50+ 1<sup>st</sup> team beat Italy by 2½-1½ thanks to a win from Mickey Adams.

England 50+ 2 continued to show their dominance over the other British teams with a 3-1 win over Wales, while England 50+ 3 lost by 3½-½ to Montenegro, with Russell Granat getting the solitary draw against another GM.

England 50+ Women had an excellent result against ninth seeds Slovakia with a 2-2 draw, thanks to a draw from Sue Lalic on top board against GM Martin Mrva and Petra Nunn drawing against an IM on board 4, while Ingrid Lauterbach scored an impressive victory on board 3 to offset Sheila Jackson's reversal on board 2.

England 65+ 1 beat Slovakia by 2½-1½, securing revenge for their defeat in the recent European Senior Team Championships, with Terry Chapman winning a very tense game on board 3 against IM Alois Lanc, who was their sole victor in that European match, so justice was



served! England 65+ 2 lost 2½-1½ to Austria Steiermark, with Tim Spanton scoring a good win on board 3.

After three rounds, England 50+ 1 and England 65+ 1 were still both joint leaders of their sections. There were some enticing pairings in round 4, with the England 50+ 1<sup>st</sup> team playing a solid Iceland team, while England 2 faced the USA and England 3 were paired against England Women. In the 65+ section England 1 were playing the top seeds Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK, and England 2 were paired against Italy.

#### **Round 4 – 22<sup>nd</sup> September**

After yesterday's success, today was much tougher. The England 50+ 1 team only managed a 2-2 draw with Iceland, thanks to another win from Mickey Adams to offset Glenn Flear's defeat.

England 50+ 2 faced the mighty USA team, and although they lost 3-1 both Andy Lewis and Tony Stebbings achieved creditable draws against strong GMs. Meanwhile the all-England clash between England 50+ 3 and England 50+ Women was a very tight contest, with England 50+ 3 emerging victors by 2½-1½ thanks to a solitary win by Clive Frostick against Ingrid Lauterbach.

England 65+ 1 also had a bad day, losing by 2½-1½ to top seeds Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK, with Chris Baker losing a tough game and Tony Kosten unfortunately overlooking a saving resource for his opponent in a clearly winning position. England 65+ 2 lost 3½-½ to fifth seeds Italy, with Geoff James getting a creditable draw against an IM, despite being outrated by over 200 points.

England 50+ 1 were still joint leaders and would face the USA in round 5 in what would clearly be a crunch match. England 65+ 1 were now joint third, but were still in with a chance as they had now played the first and third seeds and had a much easier game against tenth-seeded Belgium. There was another all-England clash, with England 50+ 2 paired against England 50+ 3 and England 50+ Women playing Canada, whilst England 65+ 2 were due to play Austria 1.

#### **Round 5 – 23<sup>rd</sup> September**

England 50+ 1 unfortunately lost by 2½-1½ to the USA in what was a tightly contested match, as John Emms failed to hold a tricky rook and pawn ending a pawn down.

England 50+ 2 beat England 50+ 3 by 3-1, with Steve Dishman and Tony Stebbings securing wins against Russell Granat and Helen Frostick respectively. England 50+ Women managed a 2-2 draw against Canada, with Natasha Regan winning an exciting game on board 4 to offset Sue Lalic's defeat on top board.

England 65+ 1 bounced back to beat Belgium by 3½-½, with John Nunn winning a particularly impressive game on top board, while Terry Chapman continued his good form to achieve a comfortable win and take his score to 3½/4. England 65+ 2 drew 2-2 with Austria 1, who very sportingly agreed to allow us to change our team after the deadline for team list submissions, as Stewart Reuben unfortunately suffered a nasty fall and wasn't feeling able to play. Fortunately, Stewart wasn't too seriously hurt, although he was clearly somewhat shaken by the episode.

England 50+ 1 slipped to 4<sup>th</sup> equal, but having played most of the top teams had an easier run in after their tricky match in round 6 against North Macedonia. England 65+ 1 moved up to joint second and were due to play France in round 6.

#### **Round 6 – 24<sup>th</sup> September**

It was a day of England match draws in the 50+ section. England 50+ 1 could only manage a 2-2 draw against North Macedonia, with Mickey Adams once again winning on top board to cancel out Keith Arkell's loss. England 50+ 2 also drew 2-2 with 6<sup>th</sup> seeded Montenegro, thanks to a good win from Gary Clark after Andy Lewis, who wasn't feeling too well, suffered his first defeat. England 50+ 3 had a very creditable 2-2 draw with seventh-seeded Poland, thanks to an impressive win by Brian Hewson against an IM who outrated him by nearly 300 points! England 50+ Women drew 2-2 with Sweden, thanks to Natasha Regan winning her second game since her late arrival.

However, there were two wins for our 65+ teams. England 65+ 1 managed to beat France by 2½-1½ in a very tight match, thanks to Tony Kosten bamboozling his opponent in their mutual time trouble, and England 65+ 2 beat Austria 2 by the same score, thanks to a sole victory by Stewart Reuben who had clearly recovered from his nasty fall.

England 50+ 1 were still lying in joint fourth place, but were three match points behind the USA, so their best hope now was probably to secure silver. England 50+ Women were joint top of the Women's section with China, who were ahead of them by one game point, but as they had yet to play one another, there was still everything to play for. England 65+ 1 were now in sole second place behind Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK, who were two match points ahead. England were due to play third-placed Israel in round 7, so a victory would cement second place and keep the pressure on the top seeds. Monday 25<sup>th</sup> was a rest day, so the chess resumed on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Round 7 – 26<sup>th</sup> September**

England 50+ 1 managed to beat England 50+ 2 by 3-1, thanks to yet another win from Mickey Adams, this time

joined by Glenn Flear. England 50+ 3 beat Scotland by 2½-1½ thanks to wins from Clive Frostick and Brian Hewson but unfortunately England 50+ Women lost 3½-½ to Uruguay.

England 65+ 1 managed to beat Israel by 3-1 with good wins from Tony Kosten and Terry Chapman, who is having a fantastic tournament. England 65+ 2 had a disappointing day and lost 4-0 to North Macedonia.

Italy had an impressive 3-1 victory over the USA and were now leading the 50+ section, whilst Iceland were also just ahead of the USA who were now in third place, which still left England 50+ 1 lying in fourth place, and they would do well to secure one of the top medals. England 50+ Women were now lying second behind China ShenZhen in the bid for the Women's title and they had to hope they could play them in one of the remaining two rounds in order to have a chance of overhauling them. England 65+ 1 had consolidated their second place behind Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK, who were still two match points ahead.

#### **Round 8 – 27<sup>th</sup> September**

England 50+ 1 beat Montenegro by 3-1, with Mickey Adams and John Emms winning on the top two boards. England 50+ 2 beat Slovakia by 2½-1½, with a notable win from Steve Dishman against GM Martin Mrva. England 50+ 3 lost by the same score to China ShenZhen. England 50+ Women beat North Macedonia 50+ Women by 3½-½.

England 65+ 1 beat Finland by 3-1 with wins from Tony Kosten and Nigel Povah, and England 65+ 2 beat Sweden by 2½-1½ thanks to wins from John Quinn and Stewart Reuben to offset Tim Spanton's loss.

With Italy and Iceland drawing 2-2, the USA were back on top of the 50+ section by a mere half game point ahead of Italy. The final round pairings of Poland (seventh seeds) versus the USA and Italy versus Montenegro (sixth seeds) promised to provide a very intense finish. England 50+ 1 were one game point behind Iceland, so the fixtures of Iceland versus England 2 (eighth seeds) and England versus China ShenZhen (tenth seeds) should determine who got the bronze medal. If the two England teams did well, then England 1 could secure the bronze and England 50+ Women might be able to overhaul China ShenZhen to secure the gold medal if they could score heavily against Finland (21<sup>st</sup> seeds) and make up for their two game points deficit.

England 65+ 1 were still in silver medal position and would require Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK to lose their final match against another Germany team, which based on ratings was highly unlikely. England 65+ 1 would be likely to secure the silver if they avoided

losing by more than 3-1 to 12<sup>th</sup> seeded Switzerland SG Riehen.

#### **Round 9 – 28<sup>th</sup> September**

England 50+ 1 beat China ShenZhen 50+ by 4-0, whilst England 50+ 2 lost to Iceland by 2½-1½, and these two results meant that England 50+ 1 secured the silver medal behind the USA, who beat Poland 4-0 in the final round to overtake their rivals. England 50+ 3 lost 3½-½ to the all-GM team from North Macedonia, with Brian Hewson getting the solitary draw.

England 50+ Women beat Finland by 2½-1½, which saw them leapfrog China ShenZhen 50+ Women by just half a game point, to take gold and retain their Women's 50+ World title!

England 65+ 1 beat Switzerland SG Riehen by 4-0 to confirm their silver medal in the 65+ section behind Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK, who drew 2-2 with their German compatriots - but they very nearly lost this match as the German board 4 was comfortably ahead before he slipped up and allowed his opponent to secure the draw. Had Germany Lasker Schachstiftung GK lost this match by 2½-1½, England 65+ 1 would have won the gold by one game point, such were the small margins. England 65+ 2 beat Wales Silures by 2½-1½.

#### **Final Results**

##### **World Seniors Open 50+**

1. USA 15 match points 26 game points
2. England 1 14 match points 24½ game points
3. Iceland 14 match points 24 game points

##### **Board Medals**

Mickey Adams – Gold for board 1 – undefeated with a rating performance of 2761!

Glenn Flear – Bronze for board 3

Nigel Davies – Bronze for the reserve board 5

##### **World Seniors Women 50+**

1. England Women 9 match points 17½ game points
2. China ShenZhen Women 9 match points 17 game points
3. North Macedonia Women 1 match point 6½ game points

##### **World Seniors Open 65+**

1. Germany Lasker 17 match points 25½ game points
2. England 1 16 match points 26 game points
3. Slovakia 13 match points 21 game points

##### **Board Medals**

John Nunn – Bronze for board 1

Tony Kosten – Gold for board 2

Terry Chapman – Silver for board 3

Nigel Povah – Silver for the reserve board 5

#### England 50+ 1: Second Place, Second Seeds

1. Mickey Adams 8/9; 2. John Emms 5/8; 3. Glenn Flear 4½/7; 4. Keith Arkell 3/6; 5. Nigel Davies 4/6

#### England 50+ 2: Eighth Place, Second Seeds

1. Steve Dishman 4/9; 2. Andrew Lewis 4/9; 3. Gary Clark 6/9; 4. Tony Stebbings 5½/9

#### England 50+ 3: 18<sup>th</sup> Place, 13<sup>th</sup> Seeds

1. Russell Granat 2/7; 2. Philip Crocker 2½/8; 3. Clive Frostick 3½/8; 4. Brian Hewson 4½/8; 5. Helen Frostick 1/5

#### England 50+ Women: 13<sup>th</sup> Place, 14<sup>th</sup> Seeds

1. Sue Lalic 3½/8; 2. Sheila Jackson 2½/8; 3. Ingrid Lauterbach 4½/8; 4. Natasha Regan 4/5; 5. Petra Nunn 3/7

#### England 65+ 1: Second Place, Second Seeds

1. John Nunn 5½/8; 2. Tony Kosten 6½/8; 3. Terry Chapman 6½/8; 4. Chris Baker 3/6; 5. Nigel Povah 4½/6

#### England 65+ 2: 13<sup>th</sup> Place, Second Seeds

1. John Quinn 4/8; 2. Geoff James 3½/7; 3. Brian Valentine 1/7; 4. Tim Spanton 3/8; 5. Stewart Reuben 4/6

## 33<sup>rd</sup> NATO Chess Championships by Ben Woolf

In the first week of September this year the UK Armed Forces Chess Team competed in the 33<sup>rd</sup> NATO Chess Championships. The competition is open to serving members of the Armed Forces as well as civilian employees of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Each NATO member country takes turns hosting the event and this year was Slovenia's opportunity. The organisers chose the beautiful sea-side town of Portorož.

The UK is the only country that has competed in every NATO competition, and the team this year were keen to put on a good show despite being heavily outrated by many of the other teams. The team members are selected based on the top six performers at the National Armed Forces Championships. In addition, a team captain and team official are also selected, as well as two 'life-time members' – retired members who have previously attended at least eight NATO championships.

The week started with an opening ceremony and music from the Slovenian military band, followed by official photos, before the first round got under way. The competition is a Swiss tournament, and the seeded first round meant some tough games for the UK contingent -

in particular, life-time member Dave Tucker, who lost a tough fight against the eventual winner of the individual title, FM Robert Stein from Germany. There were some encouraging results for the team, though, with Armed Forces champion Dave Onley and MOD champion Dan Wells both winning their first games.



*The assembled players and spectators stand for the Slovenian national anthem at the opening ceremony*

Day 2 saw two rounds, and again, despite some tough match-ups, the UK team held their own, with former Armed Forces champion Glen Parker winning both of his games and sitting on a healthy 2½/3 going into the fourth round. His demolition of a highly-rated German opponent in round 3 is annotated by Dave Tucker at the end of the article. Dave Onley also had a good result in his second-round game, holding a Danish FM to a draw. He has annotated his game below.

The third day involved only one round, with team official Jimmy Blair winning a good game against a player rated 250 points higher. In the afternoon the competitors had the opportunity to experience some more of Slovenia, with visits organised to a local vineyard and the spectacular Postojna caves. After 4 rounds the UK team stood in 9<sup>th</sup> place in the league table with 9½ points, 3½ points behind tournament leaders Greece.

Thursday involved two more tough rounds. Round 5 saw what can definitely be described as the come-back of the tournament, with life member and Royal Air Force veteran Danny O'Byrne somehow managing to win his game despite blundering a queen for a bishop in the early stages.

Friday was the final day of the tournament. Unfortunately, the team had a tough final round and the only person to improve his score by a full point was MOD player Frazer Graham with a clinical win against his experienced Danish opponent. In the afternoon competitors had the opportunity to take part in a blitz tournament. Top performer among the UK contingent in the blitz tournament was Glen Parker, whose very healthy score of 7½/11 resulted in a 12<sup>th</sup> place finish out

of the 90 competitors, beating the tournament third seed Turkish IM Ege Koksal in the process.

Final standings in the main competition saw the UK finishing in a respectable 12<sup>th</sup> place out of the 21 teams, beating strong teams from both Belgium and the Netherlands. The UK Armed Forces Chess Association is seeing a boom in membership as more people take up the game, and hopefully we can improve on our result at the competition next year, to be held on the Greek island of Rhodes. Honourable mention goes to Dan Wells as the highest-scoring member of the UK contingent.

The team currently receives no official funding or support from the military for representative chess but were fortunate this year to be supported by a generous donation from The Chess Trust, without which some of our members might not have been able to compete. Anyone currently or previously employed by any of the armed forces, or the Ministry of Defence, who is interested in joining the Armed Forces Chess Association should contact Ben Woolf at [benwoolf@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:benwoolf@hotmail.co.uk).



*The playing area – the team have all certainly played in locations with less of a view!*

#### FM F Pedersen 2266 DEN - D Onley 2026 UK (Round 2)

I've shared many beers with Finn over the years, but never have we faced each other over the board. I am always pleased to play strong title players, particularly friends at the NATO Championships.

**1.Nf3 f5 2.d3 Nc6 3.e4 e5 4.d4 exd4 5.exf5 Qf6**



I was relatively content with the opening sequence of moves. I assume Finn was out the book too at this early stage. The aim going forward was to over-protect the d-pawn, get the king safe and round up my opponents f-pawn.

**6.Bd3 Bb4+ 7.Nbd2 Nge7 8.0-0 d5 9.a3 Bd6 10.b4 Bxf5 11.Bxf5 Nxf5 12.Re1+ Nce7 13.Nb3 0-0 14.Nbxd4**



The dust has settled somewhat, and with the removal of White's light-squared bishop I slightly preferred my position. The bishop, pressure on the f-file and the d5-pawn controlling key squares meant that this was a nice position. However, I couldn't find any good plans apart from the natural simplification.

**14...Nxd4 15.Qxd4 Qxd4 16.Nxd4 Ng6 17.Ne6 Rfe8 18.Bb2 Re7 19.Kf1 a5 20.b5 a4 21.Rad1 c6 22.c4 Rae8 23.cxd5 cxd5 24.Nd4?? Rxe1+ 25.Rxe1 Rxe1+ 26.Kxe1 Nf4**





A complete oversight that blunders a pawn. White is in trouble now as his kingside will be left in tatters.

**27.Nf5 Bf8 28.Kd2 Nxb2 29.Nd4 Kf7 30.Ne2 Bd6 31.Nc3 Bxb2 32.Nxa4 g5??**



Wrong idea! I was playing to safeguard the g-pawn if my king moved forward, cement the f4 outpost for a piece (or pieces), retreating back to the action, and support the h-pawn advance. TOO SLOW!! I should have just pushed the h-pawn!

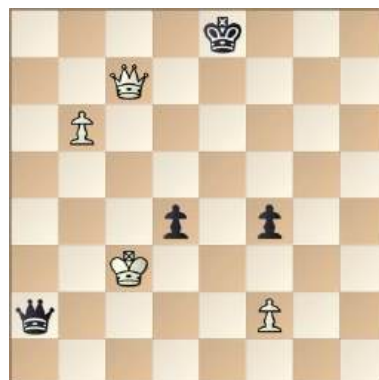
**33.Nc5 b6 34.Nd7 Bc7 35.Bd4 Nf4 36.Bxb6 Ke7 37.Bxc7 Kxd7 38.Be5 h5**



Finn has, as every better player does, taken advantage of a lack of decisiveness at a key time. He is now in the driving seat.

I finally get around to pushing the h-pawn. I promote first, but unfortunately there is no check. The fog of war had engulfed my brain. It was hurting and I needed a beer!

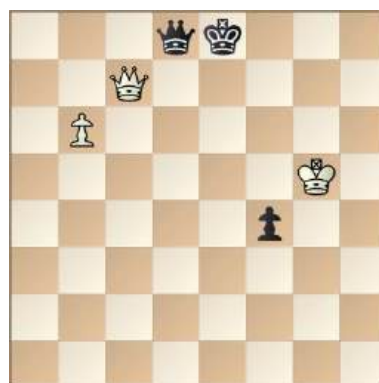
**39.a4 h4 40.a5 h3 41.a6 h2 42.a7 h1Q 43.a8Q Qe4 44.Qc6+ Ke7 45.Qf6+ Ke8 46.Qh8+ Ke7 47.Qg7+ Ke8 48.Qg8+ Kd7 49.Qf7+ Kd8 50.Qc7+ Ke8 51.Bxf4 gxf4 52.b6 Qd4+ 53.Kc1 Qa1+ 54.Kc2 Qa2+ 55.Kc3 d4+**



**56.Kxd4??**

White should leave the pawn alone and instead utilise it to block against checks when the king advances. Once the pawn is removed there is no escape from the checks with correct play. I still was not hopeful in holding this, though, assuming I would run out of checks and the b-pawn would decide the game.

**56...Qxf2+ 57.Ke4 Qg2+ 58.Kf5 Qh3+ 59.Ke4 Qe3+ 60.Kd5 Qd3+ 61.Ke6 Qe4+ 62.Kf6 Qd4+ 63.Kg6 Qd3+ 64.Kg5 Qd8+!**



Phew! A relief to have saved the game. This was a game that could have gone either way, and both of us agreed afterwards that it was a fair result.

**65.Kxf4 Qxc7+ 66.bxc7 Kd7 67.c8Q+ Kxc8 1/2-1/2**

## Round 3

### Ulrich Bohn (Germany) 2161 - Glen Parker (UK) 1973

Opening catastrophe! It is a rare occurrence for a German player at NATO to lose as drastically as this. After move 10 it is all over bar the shouting. Glen Parker mops up easily.

**1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4** The Accelerated London System is quite popular these days. It is also known as the Jobava line because the Georgian GM plays it often.

**2...c6** Unusual, but not bad. It allows the queen to come out early on b6.

**3.e3 Qb6** This threatens Qxb2. It is possible for White to play in gambit style with 4.Nd2 if he is that way inclined.

**4.b3 d6 5.Bd3 Nbd7 6.Nf3 Nh5** White has not played h3 so why not take this opportunity to win the minor exchange of bishop for knight?

**7.Bg5?!** This allows Black to develop rapidly. 7.Bg3 looks sensible.

**7...h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Ng1??** An ugly retreat that is as bad as it looks. Perhaps White thought he might punish the rapid advance of the black pawns if the knight on h5 had to retreat, since it is under attack from the white queen. Herr Bohn must be fully aware of the German term *Zwischenzug* (intermediate move) but he just forgot about it here.

**9...Qa5+!**



This check is far superior to 9...gxh4 10. Qxh5, although the computer regards that as better for Black too. The point of this move is that the queen defends the black knight laterally, so a subsequent gxh4 will win a piece.

**10.c3?** Going meekly to his fate: White can avoid losing a piece with the rather desperate 10.b4, but after 10...Qxb4+ 11.Nd2 Ndf6 etc Black is much better.

**10...gxh4 11.b4** Too late!

**11...Qg5 12.Nf3 Qf6** Glen was probably wary of grabbing a poisoned pawn with 12...Qxg2, The computer thinks 12...Qxg2 13.Rg1 Qh3 etc is winning for Black.

**13.Nbd2 d5 14.g4 Ng7 15.e4 e5** This prevents e5 by White, and starts to catch up on piece development for the black army.

**16.Qe2 Bd6 17.cxd5 exd5 18.Rg1 Ne6! 19.dxe5 Bxe5 20.Bb5** With a crude threat to win the bishop on e5 because of the pin on the d7-knight.

**20...Bxc3** This is crushing. White could have resigned here with good grace, but staggers on, although resistance is futile!

**21.Rd1 Kd8!** Glen looks to exploit the weakness of White's situation on the e-file.

**22.Qd3 Re8 23.Kf1** What else?

**23...Nf4 24.Qb1 a6 25.Bd3 b5** The bishop at c8 is looking to join the party.

**26.g5 Qe6 27.Ne1 Qh3+ 28.Ng2 Nxd3** Not before time, White resigned. **0-1**



Armed Forces Chess Association President Wg Cdr Glen Parker RAF



Team Official Sgt Jimmy Blair



Newest addition to the team: Off Cdt William Bradley from the Royal Navy



Yours truly: Team Captain Flt Lt Ben Woolf RAF

## What Has The ECF Office Ever Done For Us?

We thought readers might be interested in knowing something about what the team in the ECF Office does, so we've done an analysis of where their time goes. The numbers are reasonably high level, but we're happy that they're broadly accurate.

1. JustGo membership system: maintenance, dealing with new and renewing member matters: 22%
2. International rating support: 14%
3. Producing ChessMoves and the annual Yearbook: 13%
4. Website maintenance and development (e.g. events calendar, registered coaches scheme, club finder facility, news updates, community pages etc): 13%
5. Supporting ECF tournaments and congresses: 8%
6. Supporting international team trips: 7%
7. Game fee/junior event payments: 5%
8. Bookkeeping, payroll: 4%

9. Supporting Board and Council meetings: 3%
10. Other (e.g. general ad hoc enquiries, rating enquiries, registered coaches scheme, certificate of excellence, national title/master points support, press and media enquiries, IT support and maintenance): 11%

A few take-aways:

1. Pretty much all of the Office team's time is spent on membership-related support.
2. 22% of the team's time to support the JustGo membership system and handling membership matters effectively represents only around half a full time equivalent person for around 17,000 members, which we think compares pretty favourably with, for example, the United States Chess Federation's four membership staff for around 90,000 members.
3. A number of Office services cost pretty much the same per member regardless of membership category: 1., 3., 4., 7., 8., 9. and 10. = 71%.
4. A number of Office activities are incurred in support of non-local league activities, supporting the thesis that members who play in both local leagues and congresses make somewhat more use of ECF services in some areas than members who only play in local leagues: 2., 5. and 6. = 29%.
5. The changes that were approved at the ECF's Annual General Meeting on Saturday 14 October have simplified the membership scheme by combining the Silver and Gold membership categories (removing a barrier to participation in FIDE-rated events), while maintaining the Bronze membership category for those who only participate in club or league chess. The simplified two-tier system means that those who play in congress as well as league chess, and so are likely to make more use of ECF services and office time, will continue to contribute rather more in membership fees to support the ECF's work compared with players who play only in local league chess - see points 3 and 4 above.

None of the above analysis takes account of the work done by the ECF's wonderful army of volunteers without whom the ECF could not function. We pay tribute both to them and to our Office staff, who provide the critical services that support both our volunteers and our members



## An English Double at the World Senior Chess Championships by Nigel Povah

Michael Adams and John Nunn have both become World Senior Chess Champions!



The World Senior Chess Championships were held in Terrasini, a small, pretty town near Palermo in Sicily, from 24<sup>th</sup> October until 5<sup>th</sup> November. As is now traditional in senior chess, there were two age groups, 50+ and 65+, with Open and Women's sections in each case. The English delegation was relatively small with just two players in the 50+: Petra Nunn, who preferred to play in the Open section rather than the Women's section, and top seed Mickey Adams. The 65+ section had a larger English contingent of eight players, with the leading names being top seed John Nunn, John Pigott, Terry Chapman, Tony Stebbings and myself. Travel to Sicily proved much easier than the difficult time most of us experienced when travelling to North Macedonia for the World Senior Team Championships in September, and everyone turned up on time with no major problems to report.

However, despite the weather being fantastic and the hotel beautifully located on the coast with wonderful sea views, the tournament didn't get off to the best start as the players found a number of matters to challenge them. The first issue of note was that the Chief Arbiter wanted to enforce a 'no draws in under 30 moves rule', and this troubled quite a lot of the players who saw no reason for this restriction. Bearing in mind that we were

all seniors, and this was an 11-round event, it was quite likely that some players would welcome the occasional short draw and an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful weather and the local facilities. This issue therefore became a major topic of discussion at the 'technical meeting' before the first round, and fortunately, after some pressure from the players, the arbiters checked with FIDE and this requirement was dropped. Further niggling matters arose during the event, such as only having a 15-minute default time rather than the more customary 30 minutes, which led to a number of totally avoidable and unhelpful defaults. I won't trouble you with outlining the various other concerns but suffice it to say that the view amongst quite a few of us was that the event could have and should have been run much better than it was.

Fortunately, however, things were running much better over the board. Mickey made a strong start in the 50+, scoring 4½ from his first five games, but then he faced six GMs in a row and drew with the first four of them, before finishing very well with two wins to end on 8½/11 (undefeated) and edge out Serbian GM Suat Atalik on tie-break, after he too finished with 8½.

Here's a crucial win by Mickey in round 10 to keep him in contention:

**Adams, Michael (2670) - Minasian, Artashes (2462) [B12]**

World Senior Chess Championship 50+ (10), 04.11.2023  
*[Notes by Nigel Povah]*

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.h4 h5 5.Bd3** Currently very popular, and a move that Caro-Kann expert Daniel Fernandez admits poses Black some challenges. **5...Bxd3 6.Qxd3 e6** 6...Qa5+ has been suggested as being the better follow-up, as Black tries to challenge White's attacking threats by offering an early queen exchange: 7.Nd2 (7.Bd2 Qa6 8.e6! Qxd3 9.exf7+ Kxf7 10.cxd3 Nh6 11.Nf3 Nf5 12.Nc3 Nd7 13.Ne2 g6=½-½ Nakamura, H (2736)-Fedoseev, V (2678) Speed Chess Super Swiss KO Chess.com INT blitz 2020 (4.3)) 7...e6 8.Ngf3 Nh6 9.0-0 Nf5 10.Nb3, when Black can choose between ...Qa6 or ...Qb5. **7.Nf3 7.Bg5** is the main move: 7...Qb6 8.Nd2 c5 9.c4 Qxb2 10.Rd1! Nc6 (10...Qxd4? 11.Qb3 Qxe5+ 12.Ne2 Qc7 13.cxd5 exd5 14.0-0+ when White's lead in development is crushing) 11.Ne2 Nb4 12.Qf3 Nc2+ 13.Kf1 Nxd4 14.Nxd4 Qxd4 15.Qb3 Be7 16.cxd5 exd5 17.Qxb7 Rd8 18.Rh3=0-1 Greet, A (2399)-Ghasi, A (2471) BCF-chT 2223 (4NCL) England 2022 (7.1). **7...Nh6?! 7...Qa5+** is still the way to go: 8.Nbd2 Ne7 9.0-0 Nf5 10.Nb3, transposing to the note with 6...Qa5+. **8.Bxh6+- Rxh6 9.Nc3 9.Nbd2** has been the more common choice here: 9...c5 (9...Nd7?! 10.0-0 a6 11.Rfd1 Be7 12.g3 g6 13.c4+/-1-0 Le, Q (2713)-



Speelman, J (2509) PRO League Stage Chess.com INT rapid 2020 (2)) 10.c3 Nc6 11.0-0+/. 9...Nd7 10.Ne2! Rerouting the knight to support his kingside play. 10...Qa5+ 11.c3 Qb5 12.Qd2 c5 13.a4 Qb6 14.0-0 c4?! This gives White a target to enable him to open the b-file [14...Be7 was better, although White is still comfortably on top]. 15.a5 Qc6 16.Rfb1+-



Preparing to open the b-file to create further pressure. 16...Be7 17.b3 cxb3 18.Rxb3 Rh8 19.Qb2 b6 20.axb6 axb6 21.Rxa8+ Qxa8 22.Nf4 Mickey is playing on both sides of the board. 22...g6 23.Ng5 The white knights are quite intimidating, with potential sacs on e6 and g6, and capturing on g5 will concede control of the dark squares. 23...Qc6 24.Qa1 Rg8 25.Qc1?!+= The engine likes the clever but unobvious pawn sac, opening the position: 25.c4! dxc4 (25...Qxc4 26.Rc3 Qb5 27.Qa8+ Bd8 28.Nfxe6 fxe6 29.Rc6 Nf8 30.Rd6+-) 26.Re3, threatening d5 followed by e6. 26...Bxg5 27.hxg5. Ke7 28.Qa3+ Ke8 29.d5 exd5 30.e6 Nc5 31.Qa7 Qb7 32.Qa1 fxe6 33.Nxe6 Nxe6 (33...Ne4 34.f3+-) 34.Rxe6+ Kd7 35.Qf6+- 25...Bxg5 26.hxg5 Kf8 27.Qa3+ Kg7 28.Qe7 Ra8?



Failing to appreciate the danger to f7, which Mickey's next move exploits. 28...Rf8! defending f7 was wiser, but this allows White to grab the a-file 29.Ra3 Kg8 30.Kh2, preparing Ra7 without allowing ...Qxc3-c1+ and ...Qxf4+ etc. 30...Qb7+= preventing Ra7, when, although White is slightly better, it isn't obvious how he can best improve his position. 29.c4! Once again the pawn sac,

but this time in order to open the third rank for the rook. 29...dxc4 30.Rf3+- Rf8 31.d5! White's forces coordinate beautifully. 31...exd5 32.e6 Ne5 32...Nc5 33.Nxh5+! gxh5 34.Rxf7+ Rxf7 35.Qxf7+ Kh8 36.g6 with mate to follow. 33.Qf6+ Kh7 34.Qxe5 1-0

Petra Nunn (a member of the Women's team which recently won the Women's World Senior Team Championship), finished with 4½ in the Open 50+ section, which was more or less in line with her seeding, but she spoilt a number of very promising games, some of which were against some strong players, so she was rather disappointed with her performance.

The 65+ section saw three English players getting off to good starts. John Nunn scored 5/5 and looked to be playing well, while Tony Stebbings also made a good start with 4/5, only losing to John in round 4, but he struggled in the second half of the tournament, to end on 6/11. Terry Chapman was also having another good tournament and made a most impressive start with 6/7.

John Nunn had three tricky GMs to play in rounds 6-8, and he drew with French GM Nikolay Legky before losing in round 7 to Argentinian GM Daniel Campora after slipping up in a winning position, and then he drew with German GM Rainer Knaak in round 8. So at this stage on 6/8 John began to question his chances, but we all agreed that it was a case of taking it one game at a time and seeing what happened.

Meanwhile, Terry Chapman drew with the tournament leader Argentinian GM Daniel Campora in round 8 to reach 6½/8, the same score he made in World Senior Team Championship in North Macedonia. Sadly, however, he lost a very disappointing game in round 9 against GM Rainer Knaak after Terry had an overwhelming position, when a win would have seen him become joint leader on 7½/9. He bounced back the next day to have the better of the draw against John Nunn, but finished with an unfortunate loss to end on 7/11.

John Nunn's last three games were quite eventful, and he managed to muster 2½/3 to finish with 8½/11, thus enabling him to edge ahead of Slovakian GM Lubomir Ftacnik on tie-break and retain the 65+ World Senior title he won last year. Here's his critical game from round 9:

**Nunn, John (2560) - Renman, Nils-Gustaf (2340) [C19]**

World Senior Chess Championship 65+ (9), 03.11.2023  
*[Notes by Nigel Povah]*

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Ne7 7.a4 Qa5 8.Bd2 Nbc6 9.Nf3 Bd7 10.Be2 f6 11.c4 Qc7 12.cxd5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.cxd5 Nxd5** transposes. **12...Nxd5 13.exf6 gxf6 14.c3 Rg8** 14...0-0-0 15.0-0 Rhg8 again transposes. **15.0-0 0-0-0 16.a5!?**



John comes up with an interesting novelty which, given it is engine-approved, might have been part of his preparation. 6.Re1 is the main move, and was played as long ago as 1977 in this game: 16...e5 17.c4 Bh3 18.Bf1 Nb6 19.d5 Nxc4 20.dxc6 Qxc6 21.g3 Bxf1 22.Rxf1 e4 23.Qb3 (23.Qc2 Qd5 24.Bf4 exf3 25.Rac1 Ne5) 23...Qd5 24.Rac1 Nxd2 25.Nxd2 Qxd2 26.Rxc5+ Kb8 27.Rb5 Rg7 28.Rb1 Rdd7 29.Qe6 e3 30.fxe3 Rge7 31.Qg8+ Rd8 32.Qb3 Rdd7 33.Qg8+ Rd8 34.Qb3 Rdd7 ½-½ Spassky, B (2610)-Korchnoi, V (2645), Candidates, Belgrade 1977. **16...e5 17.a6** 17.Kh1+= was simpler, but John has never been one to shy away from complications. **17...Bh3** 17...b6 18.Qb1 exd4 19.cxd4 Nxd4 20.Nxd4 Qe5 21.Bf3 Qxd4 22.Rd1+= **18.axb7+ =+** Bold but risky. 18.Nh4! was best: 18...b6 (note that 18...Rxc7+ 19.Nxc2 Rg8 20.Bf3 Qg7 doesn't work because of the clever 21.Qb3! Bxc2 22.Qxb7+ Qxb7 23.axb7+ Kxb7 24.Bxc2+-) 19.Kh1 Be6 20.Nf3=) **18...Kb8 19.g3!** 19.Nh4 no longer works because of 19...Rxc7+! 20.Nxc2 Rg8 21.Bf3 Qg7, when White doesn't have the Qb3xb7+ resource: 22.Bxd5 Bxc2 23.f3 Bxf3+ 24.Kf2 Qg2+ 25.Ke1 Bxd5 with a decisive advantage. **19...e4?!** A reasonable idea, but Black should capture on d4 first: 19...cxd4! 20.cxd4 e4 21.Nh4 e3 with crazy complications, e.g. 22.fxe3 Rxc3+ 23.Kh1 (23.hxc3? Qxc3+ 24.Kh1 Qxh4 25.Be1 Bg2+! 26.Kxc2 Rg8+ 27.Bg4 Rxc4+ 28.Qxc4 Qxc4+-) 23...Nxe3 24.hxc3 Nxd1 25.Bf4 Bxf1 26.Bxc7+ Kxc7 27.Bxf1 Ne3 when Black is slightly better; if 19...Bxf1 20.Bxf1 cxd4 21.cxd4 e4 22.Ne1 Nxd4 23.Qa4= when Black's weakened king position gives White enough compensation for the exchange. **20.Re1** 20.Qa4! exf3 21.Bxf3 Bxf1 22.Kxf1, when the engine thinks White is slightly better, despite only having two pawns for the

rook! Clearly Black's problem is the vulnerability of his exposed king, as the following sample line indicates: 22...Qb6 23.c4 Ndb4 24.Bf4+ Kxb7 25.dxc5 Qxc5 26.Qb5+ Qb6 27.Be3 Qxb5 28.cxb5 Kc8 29.Rc1 Rge8 30.bxc6 Rxe3 31.fxe3 Kc7 32.Ra1 Kb6 33.Ke2 with an edge. **20...e3! 21.Bxe3 Nxe3 22.Qa4!** If 22.fxe3? Rxc3+ 23.Kh1 Bg2+ 24.Kg1 Bxf3+-, **22...Nd5** (22...Nf5! targeting g3 and d4 23.Kh1 Rge8 24.dxc5 h5=+) **23.Qa3** John is trying to encourage Black to capture on d4 (23.Rec1=). **23...Rge8!** If 23...cxd4? 24.Nxd4 Nde7 25.Qa6! Qb6 26.Qxb6 axb6 27.Bf3 Nxd4 28.cxd4 Nd5 29.Bxd5 Rxd5 30.Ra8+ Kxb7 31.Rxc8+- **24.Bb5 Rxe1+ 25.Nxe1 Nde7 26.Nd3**



**26...Kxb7??** Renman was clearly finding it difficult to decide how to continue here, as he took over 20 minutes on this move and made the wrong choice: 26...cxd4! sees Black maintaining his advantage, although perhaps Renman was wary of opening the c-file because of a possible Rc1 or 27.Nb4, but these come to nothing: 27.Nc5 (27.Nb4 Qxb7 28.Bxc6 Nxc6 29.Nxc6+ Qxc6 30.Qxa7+ Kc8 and Black is clearly winning) Qb6 28.Rb1 dxc3 29.Na6+ Kxb7 30.Qxc3 Kc8 - +, **27.d5+-** 27.Nxc5+ also wins: 27...Ka8 28.Bd3 Bc8 29.Be4 Rd6 30.Bg2+- with two pawns and a powerful attack for the piece. **27...Rxd5** If 27...Nxd5?? 28.Nxc5+ Kc8 29.Qa6+ Kb8 30.Bxc6+-, **28.Nf4! Bd7 29.Qb3! Na5** If 29...Qe5 30.Bc4+ Nb4 31.Rc1+-, **30.Qb1 Bxb5 31.Nxd5 Nxd5 32.Qxb5+ Qb6 33.Rxa5 Qxb5 34.Rxb5+ Kc6 35.c4 Nb6 36.Ra5 Nxc4 37.Rxa7 Nd2 38.f4** Intending Kf2. **38...Kd5?** Short of time, Renman blunders his knight to Rd7+, but he was losing anyway. **1-0**

**Final standings****50+ (91 competitors)**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Michael Adams 8½ Tiebreak 3 77
- Buchholz
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Suat Atalik 8½ Tiebreak 3 76½
- Buchholz
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Maxim Novik 8
- 67<sup>th</sup> Petra Nunn 4½

## 65+ (155 competitors)

1<sup>st</sup> John Nunn 8½ Tiebreak 2 70½

Buchholz

2<sup>nd</sup> Lubomir Ftacnik 8½ Tiebreak 2 69½

Buchholz

3<sup>rd</sup> Nikolay Legky 8

20<sup>th</sup> Terry Chapman 7

24<sup>th</sup> John Pigott 7

45<sup>th</sup> Nigel Povah 6½

48<sup>th</sup> Tony Stebbings 6

77<sup>th</sup> Brian Hewson 5½

92<sup>nd</sup> Mick Stokes 5

120<sup>th</sup> Hassan Erdogan 4½

Our successes at the senior level are further evidence of England's growing reputation as a leading nation at senior chess, following our recent successes at both the World and the European Senior Team Chess Championships.

## European Team Chess Championships 2023



Congratulations to WIM Lan Yao, who has secured a bronze board medal at the European Team Chess Championship 2023 on board two. In addition, she has achieved her first IM norm and her fifth WGM norm. For Lan Yao's performance, see

<https://chess-results.com/tnr832215.aspx?lan=1&art=81&turdet=YES&flag=30>

We offer our commiserations to the England Open team, who finished in 6<sup>th</sup> place and narrowly missed out on a medal position. The England Women's team finished in 13<sup>th</sup> place.

For England's overall results see

<https://chess-results.com/tnr832215.aspx>

for the Open and

<https://chess-results.com/tnr832216.aspx?lan=1&art=0&turdet=YES&flag=30>

for the Women. For individual board results see

<https://chess-results.com/tnr832215.aspx?lan=1&art=81&turdet=YES&flag=30>

for the Open and

<https://chess-results.com/tnr832216.aspx?lan=1&art=81&turdet=YES&flag=30> for the Women.

Below are two games from the event. The first is Lan Yao's final round match against Pia Cramling.

### Yao, Lan (2344) - Cramling, Pia (2440) [B48]

European Women's Team Championship chess24.com (9.1), 20.11.2023

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e6 5.Nc3 Qc7 6.Be3 a6 7.g4 h6 8.h4 Nf6 9.Nxc6 bxc6 10.Qf3 Rb8 11.0-0-0 Qa5 12.Rd3 Qb4 13.b3 d6 14.e5 Nd7 15.exd6 Ne5 16.Qd1 Nxd3+ 17.Qxd3 Qxd6 18.Qe4 Qb4 19.Qxc6+ Bd7 20.Qc4 Rc8 21.Qxb4 Bxb4 22.Ne4 Bc6 23.f3 f5 24.gxf5 exf5 25.Nd2 a5 26.Rg1 Bc3 27.Bd3 Rf8 28.Nc4 Rd8 29.Bc5 Rf7 30.Nd6+ Rxd6 31.Bxd6 Bxf3 32.Bb5+ Kd8 33.Rg3 Bf6 34.Rxf3 Bxh4 35.Rd3 Bg5+ 36.Bf4+ Ke7 37.Bxg5+ hxg5 38.Rd7+



1-0

Below is a Nikita Vitiugov's win over Jorden Van Foreest:

### Van Foreest, Jorden (2700) - Vitiugov, Nikita (2712)

24th European Teams Budva MNE (6.13), 17.11.2023

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.Qc2 g6 5.g3 Bg7 6.Bg2 0-0 7.d3 d6 8.0-0 Bg4 9.e3 Qd7 10.a3 Bh3 11.b4 Nh5 12.Bb2 Bxg2 13.Kxg2 f5 14.Rae1 Nd8 15.d4 e4 16.Nd2 Nf7 17.b5 Rae8 18.a4 Ng5 19.Rg1 f4





20.exf4 Nxf4+ 21.gxf4 Rxf4 22.Re3 Bxd4 23.Kh1 Bxe3  
24.Nd1 Rh4 25.Nf1 Bf4 26.Nde3



0-1

## Bodhana Sivanandan wins Gold at the World Girls Under 8 Championships

*The article below is reproduced with the kind permission of Leonard Barden*



England's outstanding eight year old talent Bodhana Sivanandan completed a remarkable treble and a 33-game winning sequence on Thursday, when she won her 11<sup>th</sup> and final round game at the World Girls Under 8 Championships at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

The Harrow primary school year 4 pupil won all her 11 games in the classical tournament to add to her 22/22 in the World Under 8 Rapid and Blitz which she achieved at Batumi, Georgia in June. Her eighth birthday was in March, but FIDE ages are based on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Sivanandan's maximalist approach and will to win were typified in the ninth round, where she slowly ground down her Vietnamese opponent in a queen and pawn endgame which the computer showed as 0.00, totally drawn, while [her best win](#), against the silver medallist from China, was well fought until the loser weakened her pawn structure on move 26.



Sivanandan already has a FIDE blitz rating of 2021, and performed well against 2000+ male opponents at the recent Riga Open. She also played [an informal match](#) against the former British champion Peter Lee, 79, who commented ruefully that 'the last time I was wiped out by a woman was by Nona Gaprindashvili in 1966'.

Victory for Sivanandan is the first by an English player in a classical junior world championship for a quarter of a century, since Nicholas Pert and Ruth Sheldon won the Open and Girls Under 18 crowns in 1998. The 90s were a golden decade for English juniors, as Harriet Hunt won the World Girls Under 20 in 1997, while Luke McShane won the World Under 10 in 1992.

Sivanandan's talent was spotted early by Harrow Chess Club, and for the past year her coaching by the former world semi-finalist GM Jon Speelman has been sponsored by the biotech company e-therapeutics, whose chief executive is IM Ali Mortazavi, while the John Robinson Chess Youth Trust has backed her travel to open tournaments in Spain and Latvia.

Her current level is the highest ever by an English pre-teen girl, yet she still has some way to go. A rating of at least 2100, Woman FIDE Master standard, is the minimum for a good performance in strong Open or Women's international events.



You can also read about Bodhana's success on Chess.com at the following link:

<https://www.chess.com/news/view/8-year-old-bodhana-scores-historic-triple-world-championship-title>

## National Club Championships 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October by Stephen Greep



*Bryony Eccleston and Aashita Roychowdhury of She Plays to Win cut the Championship cake*

After a gap of five years (with the exception of an online version in 2021), the National Club Championships were revived at the fine venue of the Canham Turner Conference Centre, Cottingham Road, Hull University over the weekend of 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> October. It was played as a five-round Swiss with teams of four (but squads of up to six allowed) with three sections: an Open, and two sections for teams with an average rating of under 2000 and under 1700.



*The National Club Championships underway*

The venue has hosted a number of previous national events, and the team from Hull had run the successful online National Club Championships in 2021, so it seemed a logical choice to ask them to revitalise the event for 2023.

Everything was all set up and ready to go when storm Babet intervened. Trains from Kings Cross were cancelled until the Saturday, and travelling conditions across the Midlands were terrible. This resulted in two teams not being able to get to Hull at all, one not able to play until the Saturday morning, and a number of teams playing on the Friday evening with two or three players. This didn't unwind totally until the Saturday afternoon, the conditions having resulted in a number of triangular matches as the arbiter team, led by IA Adrian Elwin and supported by FAs Tom Evans and Richard Buxton, sought to ensure the maximum number of games for all players. Due to the storm the original entry of just under 90 players was reduced by 10. Some players (and teams) made heroic efforts to get to Hull to play.

There were a significant number of local teams, and over 40 local players took part in the event. All the sections were keenly contested, and nothing was certain until the end of the final round on the Sunday. The last games to be finished determined the winners and runners-up in the Open and U1700 sections. Such was the uncertainty that the team from Beverley, who were runners-up in the U2000 section, left thinking they had not been successful. There were some tense scenes on Sunday evening waiting for all the games to be finished, the calculations as to positions being made all the more complicated by the triangular sessions on the Friday evening and Saturday morning.

The Open section was especially close. The two leaders, 3Cs and Heffalump Hunters, were tied going into the last round; their match result in round 5 being a 2-2 draw, 3Cs were declared winners on tie break. In the U2000 and U1700 sections there were clear winners, but the runner-up slots in both were also decided on tie-break. Special mention should be made of Ron Kemp, aged 87 with a rating of 1356, who scored 2 out of 3 for Victoria Dock, helping them to a title win in the U1700 section.

A special mention should also be made of the She Plays To Win B team, who scored six match points playing with only three players.



*New trophies*

Local sponsorship provided new trophies for all winners and runners-up as well as banners, pens and scoresheets to give the event a more 'personalised' flavour. The ECF would like to thank the Hull and East Riding Chess Association, VHEY (Visit Hull and East Yorkshire) and other sources of local support for their sponsorship, which enabled the event to take place.

The majority of games were played on live boards, and the final round benefited from live commentary by GM Peter Wells and WIM Natasha Regan. All the games can be replayed, and you can revisit the live commentary, plus see all the cross tables on the National Club Championships website, here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-national-club-championships-2023/>

There are a number of photographs from the event on the website, but more may be found, courtesy of Brendan O'Gorman, here:

<https://brendanogorman.smugmug.com/Chess/2023/National-Club-Championship-2023/>



*The successful teams from 3Cs in the Open and Victoria Dock in the U1700 with their trophies*

The title winners and runners-up who shared the prize money of £1,500 were (winners' names first):

Open: 3Cs and Heffalump Hunters (on tie-break, each team scoring six match points)

U2000: Hull 2 (winners on seven match points) and Beverley Patzers

U1700: Victoria Dock (winners on eight match points) and Hull Chess Club 3

Peter Wells kindly annotated the game below from the event.

#### **Sterck, Arno – Ashton, Adam**

ECF National Club 2023 Round 5 – Heffalump Hunters vs 3Cs

**1.Nf3 d5 2.e3 Nf6 3.b3 Bg4 4.Bb2 Nbd7 5.d4 e6 6.Nbd2 Be7 7.Bd3 c5 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qe1!?**

The downside of the relatively aggressive move of the bishop to d3 is that the pin on the f3-knight is quite annoying, and it is easy to understand why White is keen to side-step this. Still, I can't help finding this a bit artificial, and it does leave me wondering whether the set-up could be tweaked at an earlier stage.

**9...Rc8**

Nothing wrong with this of course, but my engine mentions the possibility of 9...cxd4 10.exd4 Bf5! so that after 11.Bxf5 exf5 Black has a nice grip on the e4-square. I partly like this because it is a throwback to the way I used to handle the black side of the Exchange Caro-Kann in my youth (on at least one occasion to the consternation of my Bundesliga team-mates), but this does look like a very appealing version of the plan too. If you were ever going to believe in this structure, this might be the moment!

#### 10.Ne5



#### 10...Nxe5?!

I guess Adam wanted to take immediately, to ensure that White would be denied the option of f4 and taking with the f-pawn. Nonetheless, since Black's bishop should be headed for g6 anyhow, I quite liked 10...Bh5, even without the engine's intriguing insight that 11 f4 cxd4 12 cxd4 Nxe5 13 fxex5 Ng4! 14 h3 Nh6 leaves the knight well placed if it can later head to f5 following an exchange of light-squared bishops.

#### 11.dxe5 Nd7 12.h3 Bh5 13.e4 Qb6?!



It is much harder to make sense of this, however. It is true that Black should avoid closing the centre, since 13...d4 14 f4 would give White a strong c4-square and a free hand on the kingside. However, supporting the d5-point with 13...Nb6!? makes more sense to me, while

the thematic pawn sacrifice to secure c5 for the knight 13...c4!? appeals even more after 14.bxc4 Nc5 15.exd5 Nxd3 16.cxd3 exd5 with decent counterplay when the bishop arrives at the healthy post on g6.

#### 14.c4

White could also consider releasing the tension in the centre immediately, since after 14.exd5! exd5, 15 c4 and 15 Bf5 both pose Black some problems.

#### 14...Bg6 15.Qe2 dxe4 16.Nxe4 Rcd8 17.Rad1 Nb8



#### 18.Nf6+?

Knowing when to keep building the pressure and when to strike a (hopefully) decisive blow often constitutes one of the toughest judgement calls in chess, and I suspect no player in history has been immune from occasionally making the wrong choice in such situations. There is even a load of conflicting advice to point to: 'strike while the iron is hot' on the one hand, against the Soviet School's near-adulation of patience and the avoidance of impetuous errors on the other. I sometimes have the words of the young Anatoly Karpov ringing in my ears at such moments, too. When asked about his strikingly solid and mature style, he replied in exemplary Soviet fashion: 'Of course, sacrifice when it is correct; but bridges I do not burn – it's not my style.'

In this case it is understandable that Black's last move - withdrawal of a key defensive knight – might act as a prompt to look carefully at sacrificing, and it certainly caused us considerable excitement in the commentary when this move landed on the board. However, in the cold light of calculation White's main idea is to land mate on g7, and his problem will be that Bf8 generally covers this threat and – should White try to sacrifice the exchange on d6 – Black will be able to recapture with the queen, which can be expected to replicate this function effectively. Moreover, White had a natural and patient 'building' move in 18 h4!, intending not just to dislodge the bishop from g6 but to apply immediate pressure to that square in the event that Black exchanges on e4 and



will then be obliged to play ...g6 to avoid mate. Ironically, if Black were to be greedy enough to reply 18...Bxh4?, then the idea from the game really comes into its own after 19.Qg4 Be7 20.Nf6+! gxf6 (20...Bxf6 survives longer, but it is none too appealing to play with a white pawn on g7 here!) 21. exf6 Bd6 22 Qh4 Kh8 23 Bxg6 fxe6 24 f7+ e5 25 Qf6#. Of course, none of this would have been forced, but Black's resources would have been seriously challenged by this exercise of restraint. At the end of the day, the decision to sacrifice here just feels a bit too much like bridge-burning.

**18...gxf6 19.exf6 Bd6 20.h4**

We were expecting something like 20.Qe3, when the threat to invade on h6 leaves Black no choice, and after 20...Rfe8, perhaps 21.Bxg6 hxe6 22.h4 (22.Rxd6 Qxd6 doesn't help, as I mentioned above) 22...Bf8 23.h5, but Black can start liquidating with 23...Rxd1 24.Rxd1 Rd8 25.Re1 g5! 26.Qxg5+ Kh7, when the attack starts to run out of steam.

20.Bxg6 hxe6 21.Qg4!? may be the cleverest try, but Black even has a choice here. The 'obvious' 21...Rfe8 22.h4 Kh7 23.h5 Rg8 24.hxe6+ Rxe6 25.Qh5+ Kg8 just about holds together, as 26.Rd3 can be met with 26...Qc6! and an annoying counter-threat of mate on g2. Still, even 21...Bc7!? 22.Qh4 e5 works, by threatening to remove the pivotal f6 pawn. After 23.f4 Rxd1 24.Rxd1 Qe6 25.g4 Nd7 it is again becoming clear that White lacks the firepower to create further threats.

**20...Bxd3 21.Rxd3 Kh8 22.Rfd1 Rg8 23.Qh5 Qc7 24.Bc1 Nc6 25.Bh6 Bf8!**

Just in time to hold everything together.

**26.Rxd8 Nxd8 27.Bxf8 Rxf8 28.Rd3 Rg8 29.Qd1 Nc6 30.Rd7 Qf4! 31.Rxf7 Ne5 32.Rxh7+**

This time the investment of material looks like the only way to continue the struggle. White manages to amass as many as four pawns for the rook in the coming moves, but it is still hopeless. Once the f6-pawn is rounded up Black can push the e-pawn with relative impunity, safe in the knowledge that his opponent's pawns are too far back for any position without queens to present serious technical challenges.

**32...Kxh7 33.Qh5+ Qh6 34.Qxe5 Qg6 35.g3 Rf8 36.Qxc5 Qxf6 37.Qxa7 Rf7 38.Qe3 Qf3 39.Qd4 e5 40.Qd2 e4! 41.c5 e3!**

Forcing a decisive liquidation to a winning ending, which Adam converts very proficiently.

**42.Qxe3 Qxe3 43.fxe3 Rf3 44.Kg2 Rxe3 45.b4 Ra3 46.b5 Rxa2+ 47.Kf3 Rc2 48.c6 bxc6 49.bxc6 Rxc6**

**0-1**

## 2023 Delancey UK Chess Challenge Terafinal 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October by Alex Longson



The 2023 Delancey UK Chess Challenge concluded with the Terafinal held at Blenheim Palace on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October. 60 players took part across five all-play-all age group sections (U8/10/12/14/18). All players had done remarkably well to make it to this stage – the Terafinal is exceptionally difficult to qualify for! The quality of chess on display was very high indeed.

### Background to the 2023 Terafinal

The UK Chess Challenge is an annual competition for UK juniors (ages 5-18) which has run every year since 1996 and has seen over a million children participate. Many of the previous winners have gone on to become international masters or grandmasters, including Adam Hunt, Thomas Rendle, Lorin D'Costa, Stephen Gordon, Yang-Fan Zhou, Brandon Clarke, Marcus Harvey, Matthew Wadsworth, Joseph McPhillips, Harry Grieve and Yichen Han.

Headline numbers for the 2023 season:  
Over 1000 schools represented  
Over 5,000 Megafinal entries  
31 OTB Megafinals with two online  
Three over the board Gigafinals with one online  
One Challengers  
One Terafinal

To qualify for the Terafinal players first had to qualify via a Megafinal and then qualify for the Terafinal via one of the following strong national events:



Scottish Gigafinal, Broughton High School 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> June  
 Northern Gigafinal, Wright Robinson College  
 Manchester 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> July  
 Southern Gigafinal, Sandown Race Park 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> July  
 Online Gigafinal, 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> September  
 Challengers, Northampton Town Centre Hotel 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>  
 September

## **Terafinal 2023 Report**

### **Under 8**



The U8 section was jam-packed with the UK's strongest U8 players, and it is amazing to see so much talent at such a young age. Many of these players would be competitive in much older sections, and it is clear that the future of UK chess is looking bright in the hands of these players.

The battle for first place was dominated by two players; Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (England) and Louis Cheng (Scotland). The two met in round 9 with Dildarav half a point behind, but managing to gain a hard-fought victory to take a half-point lead which he didn't relinquish. Their final point tallies of 10½ and 10 (from 11 rounds) indicate their dominance in the event.

Amy Ba was the convincing winner of the top Girls prize, scoring a very creditable 50% and finishing 3½ points clear of her nearest rival. Amy even won an U10 Gigafinal this season (playing up a category).

1<sup>st</sup> – Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (Sythwood), 10½/11  
 2<sup>nd</sup> - Louis Cheng (Edinburgh Chess Academy), 10  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Krish Keshari (Chess with Dino), 9  
 Girls – Amy Ba (Oxford High), 5½



*U8 Champion - Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham*



*U8 Girls Champion - Amy Ba*

### **Under 10**



It was really difficult to predict a winner in this event where four nationalities were represented (English, Indian, Ukrainian and German). A case could be made for many players who have had strong seasons. The standings were close throughout, and in the end first place was decided in the final round in the game between George Zhao (Westminster Under School) and Junyi Zhang (St Paul's). Junyi, needing a win, lost on time, though by then the endgame was difficult to save.

George is already a multi-time winner of the event, having won the U10 event in 2022 and also finishing as runner-up in the 2021 U8 event.

The Girls prize was also decided in the final round clash between Sheng Lu (Germany) and Aashita Roychowdhury (England). Aashita, needing to win, manufactured a winning pawn endgame, but it was tricky to convert, and in pressing too hard she even managed to lose the game.

1<sup>st</sup> – George Zhao (Westminster Under School), 10  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Junyi Zhang (St Paul's), 8½  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Ashwin Anjulan (Loyola Prep), 8  
 Girls – Sheng Lu (Chess Rising Stars), 3½



U10 Champion - George Zhao



U10 Girls Champion - Sheng Lu

## Under 12



The race for first place in the U12 section proved to be the closest across all the sections, and in the end the trophy was decided on tiebreak score as both Elis Denele

Dicen and Tom Junde He (both of Coventry Chess Academy) finished joint first on 8½ points after drawing their individual game.

Elis is another multi-time winner, winning the U8 Girls in 2019, the U10 Girls in 2020 and the U10 Open in 2021. She is the only girl in the competition's history to win an Open title, and now she has done it twice. Elis is a member of the Chess Trust's Accelerator Programme and is currently the 17<sup>th</sup> ranked girl in the world in her age category.

Coventry Chess Academy, under the stewardship of Paul Lam, continue to produce some outstanding junior talents and this one-two is testament to their high standards.

1<sup>st</sup> (and top girl) – Elis Denele Dicen (Coventry Chess Academy), 8½  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Tom Junde He (Coventry Chess Academy), 8½  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Pengxiao Zhu, 7½



U12 Champion - Elis Dicen

## Under 14



This was another heavily-stacked section with multiple British champions, former UKCC winners and two members of the Chess Trust Accelerator Programme. The deserving winner, Stanley Badacsonyi (Fortismere), went through undefeated, including decisive victories



over the second and third placed finishers. Stanley is making a name for himself as a very dangerous and fast player on the UK scene, and it is fantastic that he has now achieved this latest accolade.

The Girls' title was a close affair, with Dhriti Anand (North London Collegiate) narrowly edging out Lindsay Pyun, in part due to her victory over her nearest rival in round 10. Dhriti also won the Girls U12 title in 2022 and is now a multi-time winner.

A special mention to Kenneth Hobson, who was runner-up now for the third time. Kenneth gained his CM title this year and defeated his first grandmaster – hopefully next year he'll make a run on the U18 championship.

1<sup>st</sup> - Stanley Badacsonyi (Fortismere), 9½  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Kenneth Hobson (Cowley), 8½  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Theo Khoury (Gillotts), 8  
 Girls – Dhriti Anand (North London Collegiate), 3



U14 Champion - Stanley Badacsonyi



U14 Girls Champion - Dhriti Anand

## Under 18



The U18 section included an international master and a FIDE master, and the standard of play was higher than ever. The two top seeds met in round 6, and Artem Lutsko (Tytherington School) was the decisive winner after Rajat Makkar's opening gambit backfired.

In the last 18 months many strong young players from Ukraine have joined the England chess scene, and junior chess has been greatly enriched by this. Artem becomes the UK Chess Challenge's first champion from Ukraine, and he did it in great style with a thumping 7/7 at the Northern Gigafinal and almost completing a clean sweep in the Terafinal, only being held to a draw in the very last round by second place finisher Aron Saunders.

Aron (Downend and Fishpond) had a great tournament, going through undefeated to second place. Aron, or 'QED' to his online followers, has racked up some impressive achievements in speed chess and variants online, and it is great to see the results now following over the board.

In the battle for the Girls title Tashika Arora narrowly finished ahead of Abigail Weersing after prevailing in their crucial round 7 clash.

1<sup>st</sup> – Artem Lutsko (Tytherington School), 10½  
 2<sup>nd</sup> – Aron Saunders (Downend & Fishponds), 9  
 3<sup>rd</sup> – Sanjith Madhavan (St Ninian's High, Scotland), 8  
 Girls – Tashika Arora (Oxford), 4½



U18 Champion - Artem Lutsko



U18 Girls Champion - Tashika Arora

### Taking Part in the Challenge

Schools, junior chess clubs and parents can easily get involved in the 2024 Challenge either by contacting the team on [admin@ukchess.co.uk](mailto:admin@ukchess.co.uk) or visiting the website here:

<https://www.delanceyukschoolschesschallenge.com/>

Schools or clubs taking part receive a school/club tournament kit containing materials necessary to run a chess tournament plus prizes for all the players, including certificates, badges and a trophy.

For parents and players a Megafinal is often their first experience of competitive chess outside the school environment, while the Gigafinals and later stages are some of the strongest junior competitions around. The Terafinal itself is fearsomely strong and notoriously difficult to qualify for!

### Acknowledgments and Appreciations

We are extremely fortunate and grateful to be able to host the event at such a spectacular venue, and the team at Blenheim Palace made us feel very welcome and helped ensure we were able to run everything as planned – including using the ‘Long Library’ for the prizegiving: literally a red carpet prizegiving! Once again, a huge thank you to our sponsors Delancey, without whom this event could not take place.

We would also like to express our thanks to our core team and the many helpers and organisers this year. In no particular order:

Dominic Hare, Pat Armstrong, Rahil Ahmad, Pauline Whitehead, Alex Holowczak, Nevil Chan, Ken Regan, Matthew Carr, Emma-Jane Billington-Phillips, Sean Marsh, Jon Hunt, Ray Sayers, Ed Jones, John Upham, Maha Chandar, Jamie Mitchell, Jennifer Wilson, Harry Marron, David Eggleston, Julian Clissold, Ravi Kumar, John Stubbs, Oliver Stubbs, John Hipshon, Lara Barnes, Alex McFarlane, Chris Lewis, Daniel Knight, Mark Newman, Richard Croot, Mohammad Rezaul Islam, Thomas Evans, Ritika Maladkar, Andrew Smith, Jo Wildman, Andy Howie, Nilanga Jayawarna, Jorel Ali, Maria Manedilou, Chris Russell, James Corrigan and Adam Robinson. There are many others, of course – apologies if I have missed people!!

This was the first ever Terafinal to take place without the founder Michael Basman, who is sadly missed and to whom we ourselves and UK junior chess are so deeply indebted.

### Games from the 2023 Terafinal

The following two games both won a ‘Mike Basman Best Game’ trophy:

#### **Liu, Jack (1920) - Gera, Marvin (1783) [B12]**

2023 UK Chess Challenge Terafinal Under 18, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, 09.11.2023

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nd2 e6 5.Nb3 Qc7 6.Nf3 Nd7 7.Be3 Ne7 8.Be2 h6 9.0-0 Bh7 10.a4 a5 11.Bd2 b6** If 11...0-0-0 12.Bxa5. **12.Rc1** White aims to open the c-file to exploit the position of the black queen. **12...Ng6**



Once the knight moves away from the d5 square c4 becomes more attractive for White. **12...Qb7 13.c4 dxc4 14.Bxc4 Nd5** is solid enough for Black. **13.c4! Qb7 14.cxd5** White of course opens up the position, as Black's kingside is still undeveloped. **14...cxd5 15.Bb5** Threatens Bc6. **15...Rc8 16.Qe2 Rxc1 17.Rxc1 Be7** Black



would desperately love to castle! **18.Bc6** Making way for the queen. **18...Qa7 19.Qb5 Bd8**



Black prepares ...Ne7, trying to push White back. Now Jack finishes the game with great force and accuracy. If **19...0-0 20.Bxd7** wins a piece. **20.Bxa5!! bxa5 21.Nc5** With a triple attack on d7. **21...Ngf8 22.Nb7!** An easy move to miss, as the knight seemed well placed on c5. However, it's heading for d6. **22...Qb8** If **22...g5 23.Nd6+ Ke7 24.Nc8+** and White wins the queen – and if Black tries **22...Be7** guarding d6, then the white rook plays a decisive role: **23.Bxd7+ Nxd7 24.Rc8+ Bd8 25.Rxd8+ Ke7 26.Qxd7# 23.Nd6+ Ke7**



**24.Qxb8! Nxb8 25.Nc8#** A beautiful checkmate. **1-0**

**Khoury, Theo (2132) - Hobson, Kenneth (2060) [C00]**

2023 UK Chess Challenge Terafinal Under 14, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire, 09.11.2023

**1.e4 a6** A fitting opening for a Mike Basman award! **2.d4 e6** This has been played recently by Magnus Carlsen in some rapid games and even at the European Club Cup, and surprisingly isn't so bad. **3.Bd3 3.Nd2** d5 transposes to a line of the French Tarrasch. **3...b5** This gives the game more of a St George flavour than the French. **4.Nf3 Bb7 5.0-0 c5 6.c3 Nf6 7.Bg5 7.e5 Nd5 8.dxc5 Bxc5 9.a4** puts Black under some pressure. **7...Be7 8.Nbd2 d6 9.Re1 Nbd7 10.Qe2** White has played sensible moves and emerged with a small advantage. **10...0-0 10...h6** - challenging the bishop immediately may have been

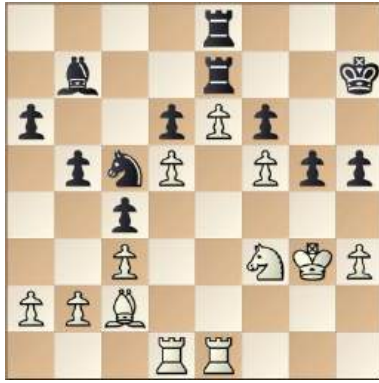
better. **11.Rad1 e5** The position now has some of the hallmarks of a Spanish Chigorin. **12.Nf1 Nh5 13.Bxe7 Qxe7 14.g3 g6 14...exd4 15.cxd4 Rfe8 16.d5 Nh6** Looks roughly balanced. **15.Ne3 Rac8 15...exd4 16.cxd4 Rfe8** would have been a better try for Black. **16.d5 c4 17.Bc2**



**17..Ng7** The knight ends up misplaced here, and Black never does get the f5-break in. **18.Nh4 Qg5 19.Qg4?! 19.Nhg2 f5 20.exf5 gxf5 21.f4** retains a slight advantage for White. **19...Qxg4 20.Nxg4 h5 20...f5?** doesn't work because of **21.exf5 gxf5 22.Nh6+ 21.Ne3 Nc5 22.Kg2 Rc7 23.f4** White is the first to strike with the f-pawn. **23...exf4 24.gxf4** White now reorganises very effectively, and threatens to make use of the mobile pawn centre. In the meantime. Black's g7-knight is a problem piece. **24...Re8 25.Nf1 Rce7 26.Ng3 Bc8 27.h3!** A useful piece of prophylaxis against ...Bg4. **27...Kh7 28.Nf3 f6?!**



**29.e5! Nf5 29...fxe5 30.fxe5 dxe5 31.d6 Re6 32.Ng5+** is great for White. **30.e6 Nxg3 31.Kxg3 Bb7** Maybe Black had to try **31...f5**, but it doesn't look pleasant. **32.f5 g5**



**33.Nxg5+! Kg7** If 33...fxg5 34.f6++-. **34.h4!** Other moves are also good, but style points for this one! **34...fxg5 35.hxg5 h4+ 36.Kg4 Rf8** Black resigned, as the white pawns are too strong. **1-0**

## UK Open Blitz Finals 2023 by Nigel Towers

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



The winners and UK Open Blitz champions for 2023 are:

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

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

## Open Championship




Open Winner - GM Eldar Gasanov



Joint English Blitz Champions IMs Andrew Horton (top) and Ameet Ghasi
















Rk.		Name	Rating	Pts.
1		GM Gasanov, Eldar <b>UK Open Blitz Champion 2023</b>	2465	11½
2		IM Horton, Andrew P <b>Joint English Open Blitz Champion 2023</b>	2393	10½
3		IM Ghasi, Ameet K <b>Joint English Open Blitz Champion 2023</b>	2558	10½
4		FM O'Gorman, Tom	2288	9½
5		FM Dong, Bao Nghia	2305	9
6		GM Speelman, Jon S	2523	8½

7		FM	Kozusek, Daniel	2306	8
8			Boswell, Jacob Connor	2128	8
9		IM	Sarakauskas, Gediminas	2343	8
10		IM	Camacho Collados, Jose	2265	7½
11		IM	Willow, Jonah B	2368	7
12		GM	Arkell, Keith C	2393	6
13		IM	Al-Saffar, Araz Basim Mohammed S	2301	5
14			Maxwell, Daniel	2109	5
15			Norris, Ethan	2068	3½
16			Sanger, Jake M	1995	2½

## Women's Championship



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

Rk.			Name	Rtg	Pts.
1			Dicen, Elis Denele <b>UK Open Blitz Women's Champion and Joint English Women's Blitz Champion 2023</b>	1916	11
2		WCM	Sivanandan, Bodhana <b>Joint English Women's Blitz Champion – 2023</b>	1944	11
3		WFM	Hng, Mei-Xian Eunice	1949	10½
4		WGM	Mirzoeva, Elmira	2078	10½
5			Hryshchenko, Kamila	2010	10½
6		WFM	Hng, Mei-En Emmanuelle	2116	8½
7			Orlovskaya, Madara	1970	8
8			Barwick, Carmel J	1845	7½
9			Bhatia, Kanishka	1768	7½
10			Hariharan, Shambavi	1723	7½
11			Sainbayar, Anuurai	1496	4½
12			Kong, Emma	1399	4
13			Briggs, Irina	1560	2
14			Walker, Elmira	1578	1½
15			Ou, Siyao	1387	0½

Further details are available at the link below:

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

All games were played on live boards and broadcast via the DGT cloud and various online providers. We will also be organising commentary for the finals on Twitch.tv. The full set of pairings and results for the Championships are available at these links:

Open Championship

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

Women's Championship

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

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

**DGT Livechess Cloud**

Open Blitz 2023 (UK Blitz Championship Open Final 2023)

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

Women Blitz 2023 (UK Blitz Championship Women Final 2023)

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

**Lichess**

Open

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

Women

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

**Chess.com**

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

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

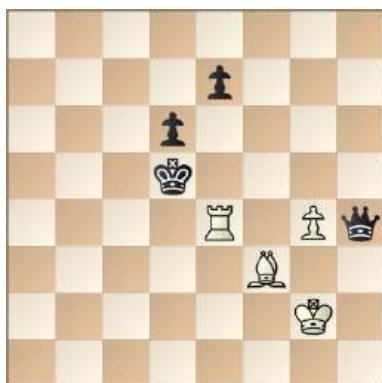
After a tough and nervous UK Open Blitz qualifier in London, the finals in Leamington Spa were just a pleasure to play in. Playing blitz is always about luck, and if you have it on the right day you need it you can win. A blitz tournament is quite unpredictable - anyone has a chance to beat anyone.

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



**Gasarov, Eldar - Ghasi, Ameet K**

2023 UK Open Blitz 02.12.2023



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

**124.g5!**

It suddenly turns out that Black is losing his queen.

**124...Qxe4 125.Bxe4+ Kxe4 126.g6****1-0**

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

**Kozusek, Daniel - Willow, Jonah B**

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



**20...cxd4?** 20...Qh4= was better.

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

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

**1-0**

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

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

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



The game continued:

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

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

**0-1**

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

**Sarakauskas, Gediminas - Camacho Collados, Jose**

2023 UK Open Blitz, 02.12.2023



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

**24.Qxe1 Nxd3 25.cxd3 Nxb3 26.Qc3+-****1-0**



And finally, my own missed win.

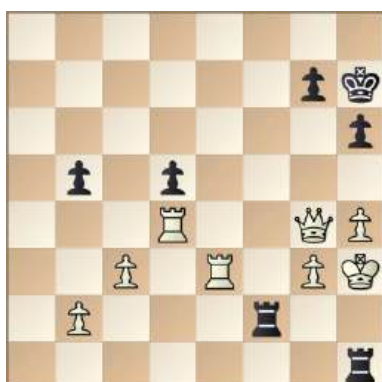
**O'Gorman, Tom - Gasanov, Eldar**

2023 UK Open, 02.12.2023



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

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



1-0

**Commentary**



WIM Natasha Regan provided commentary on the live board broadcasts from the finals on her Twitch channel at [https://www.twitch.tv/WIM\\_natasharegan](https://www.twitch.tv/WIM_natasharegan) starting with round 2 at 12.20pm on Saturday and running until the end of round 15 at about 6.30pm. Natasha was joined by a top level commentary team with the detailed schedule as follows:

12.20pm – 2.00pm – Rounds 2-5

Stanley Badacsonyi and WIM Natasha Regan

2.15pm – 4.15pm – Rounds 6-10

GM Matthew Sadler and WIM Natasha Regan

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

GM Peter Wells and WIM Natasha Regan

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

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

## London Chess Classic - Adams Wins with 'Best Ever Result' While Royal Achieves Second GM Norm



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

A full report on the event can be found here:

<https://www.chess.com/news/view/london-chess-classic-2023-round-9?fbclid=IwAR2HTVbPEyyYjbBCXUJLZ2HvpOcmej7XQSJtwVWcJiTz8zOzYeui56XAARk>

Here's the cross table of the event:

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

In Mickey's own words, 'I think it's huge because to win any tournament at the age of 52 is just really amazing, and this one is a completely different level to the other successes I had this year, so I think in many ways it's

probably my best-ever result! Because other tournaments that I won were when I was in my prime as a player, and it's completely different now, a completely different challenge to play when you're playing people so much younger than yourself.'

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

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

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

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

It is sometimes amazing what can be achieved at the last minute, and if the fortnight or so between the announcement of the 13<sup>th</sup> London Chess Classic and the start of play did not afford very much time for anticipation, it nonetheless gave us plenty to look forward to. Despite some regrets at the lack of public access to the venue and the absence of supporting events – aside from a ProBiz Cup which proved as successful as ever - the tournament in other ways represented a return to something enticingly reminiscent of its early glory days. The top English players were not quite up against the world's very best this time it is true, since the extraordinary Indian talent Dommaraju Gukesh - still just 17 years old - was the only representative from the world top 20. Nonetheless, the tournament did pit three of our best players and one rising talent against a very powerful field at classical time

controls – an event strong enough, indeed, to count as part of the FIDE circuit which afforded it the possibility to influence qualification for the 2024 Candidates. Moreover, if the organisers – Chess in Schools and Communities with its energetic Chief Executive Malcolm Pein – were looking to maximise both media interest and entertaining fighting chess, then their selection of players worked supremely well.

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

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

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

is how simple chess looks...the pieces simply go to good squares and that is it'.

### Michael Adams – Mateusz Bartel

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 3

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

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

**7.a4 f6 8.Be3 Qb6!?**



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

**9.Nbd2! fxe5**

I should declare that I am something of a fan of Mateusz Bartel. I thoroughly enjoyed his Chess24 course on exchange sacrifices, featuring much striking play from his own games – although it was a bit sad for me that it was Luke McShane who turned out to be the victim of the rather nice example which he generated here in the

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

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

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

**14.Bh5+!**

A typical Mickey nuance. Rather than the routine 14.Nd4 Nh6, the text teases out another weakness at a moment where 14...Bg6 15.Bxg6+ hxd6 16.Qg4! would be awkward to meet.

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

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

**18.Nd4 Qe7**

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

**19.Ra3!**

Finding an upside to both the advances of the a-pawns and the exchange of the dark-squared bishops! Another illustration of Vishy's comment that Mickey makes it all look so simple, but – much as those who sought to emulate Karpov's style have found – this alertness to positional nuance is among the hardest of chess skills to learn, never mind replicate.

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

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



## 22...Kf7?

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

## 23.cxd5 exd5 24.Re1 Ke6

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

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

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

## 30.Qd6+ Kf5



## 31.Rxb7!

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

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

## 1-0

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

## Mateusz Bartel – Jules Moussard

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 2

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



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



a5, it is not clear that White's development really supports such ambitions either. More specifically, the well-known defensive technique (notably from the Sicilian Scheveningen) of trying to force the issue with 8...h5! before the attacker is ready to open files at leisure might have worked quite well here. Moussard's response – a strike back in the centre – clearly has plenty of pedigree too.

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

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

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



**16...0-0?**

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

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



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

**21...f6?**

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

**22.Nf3! Nxf3+ 23.Qxf3**

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

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



**28.Bxe5!**

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

**28...Rxf3 29.Rxf6! Qh1+ 30.Ke2**

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

**1-0**

**M. Amin Tabatabaei - Nikita Vitiugov**

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 7

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



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

**9... d5!**

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

**10.g5 d4 11.gxf6 dxc3 12.fxc3 Bxc3 13.f5**



**13...cxb2 14.Bxb2 Qb6**

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

**15.Ba3 Qe3+?!**

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

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

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

**18...Nc5?!**

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

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

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

**22.Qd5 Nxb3 23.Qxe5+ Kxf7 24.hxg3 Qh1+ 25.Kf2 Qc6**



**26.Bh5+?**

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

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

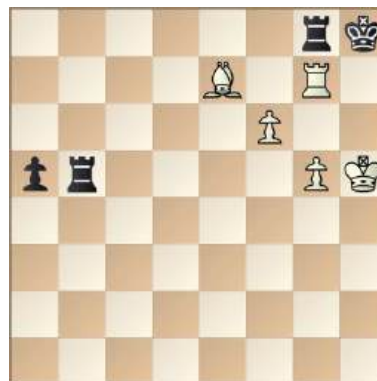
I don't want to clog up this phase of the game with too many notes, but it is worth observing that seeking to return the exchange to seek solace in a rook and opposite-coloured bishop ending with 34...Rxc6 35.fxc6 Bxa4 fails to stem the flow of White's direct attack after 36.Rg7+ Kh8 37.Rh7+ Kg8 38.Bg7! Bc2 39.Bb2, when Black is obliged to give up a piece to avoid mate with 39...Bxc6 40.Rg7+.

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

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

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

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



At first glance it looked as if Vitiugov was pulling off another of this tournament's miracle escapes, since 50.Rxc8+ Kxc8 51.Kg6 does not secure the advance of the f-pawn after 51...Rb6! and if then 52.Kh6, Black can reroute to check from behind with 52...Rb1!

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

**50.Rg6! Rxc6 51.Kxc6 Rb6 52.Kh6!?**

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

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

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

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

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

Of course, in terms of the clash of styles, a case could be made that it was the players who prioritised solidity and

the taking of their chances when available – notably Adams and Royal, whose approach ultimately won the day. For one thing, it ought to be noted that not just Bartel but Tabatabaei too was the victim of Mickey’s other most convincing victory.

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

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

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

#### Dommaraju Gukesh – Jules Moussard

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 4



White is not only winning, but has so far shown a good balance between snatching material and making strong consolidating moves. Unfortunately, here – where the natural 26.Qd4 would have been very strong, he chose instead **26.Rd2??**. Moussard’s tactical antennae were

alerted, and the devastating retort **26...Bxa3!** appeared shortly after. Neither 27.Qxa3 Ra8! nor 27.bxa3 Qxc3 28.Rd4 (28.Bd4 Qxf3) 28...Rec8 offer any hope for White, while after **27.Rd4 Bxb2+ 28.Kd2 Ne6 29.Rd3 Bxc3+ 30.Rxc3 d4 31.Rd3 dxe3+ 32.Qxe3 Rxd3+ 33.cxd3 Nd4!** Gukesh also felt obliged to call it a day. **0–1**

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

#### Jules Moussard – Shreyas Royal

London Chess Classic 2023 – Round 8



Far from providing the white queen with the extra stability she needed, White’s last move – **41.Kd3?** (from e3) did quite the opposite - a great example of the need to stay vigilant even in positions where tactics might be felt unlikely to play any role. With **41...Nf6!** Shreyas’s worst piece is suddenly en route to becoming a monster, and cannot be captured since the opening of the c7-g3 diagonal supports a winning 42...Rxc3+, while (perhaps most extraordinarily) even 42.Qh6+ is no ideal solution, since after 42...Qh7 43.Qxh7+ Nxh7 it is impossible to retain both the g3- and h4-pawns. For all that, it would have been an improvement on **42.Rg1 Ne4 43.Kc2 Qh7! 44.Kb3 Bxh4 45.Bc3 Nxc3 46.Bf3 Rg6 47.Rg2 Qh6 48.Bd2? Bg5 49.Qxg3 Bxd2 50.Qh2 Rxc2 51.Qxh6+ Bxh6 52.Bxg2 Bd2** which left Black in total control with a relatively simple technical task ahead.

Hans Niemann, was of course, another player whose extraordinary flair in his previous tournament had raised significant expectations. Yet somehow here he seemed to lack the same ambition. He appeared all too willing to share the spoils in his games with Black, a strategy which took a knock when a fine game by Andrei Volokitin – the man whose victory in the UK-Ukraine match a few months ago had put one of the few slight dampeners on Mickey Adams’ year – made it look as if it was, perhaps, over-reliance on the Berlin defence which was speaking for itself. He took Hans on in the ending which so many players with White now seem to avoid, somehow



established threats against the black king, and then rounded off with an elegant (if not strictly necessary) exchange sacrifice.

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

## Chess Problem News / Endgame Studies by Ian Watson

### Problem News

Chess problem solving was mainly online in 2020 - 2022, but the post-COVID resurgence of physical chess events has continued. The annual British Chess Solving Championship restarted in May; it was won by David Hodge, who regained the title he had won in 2019. Second was many-times-winner Jonathan Mestel, but third was a newcomer - Kamila Hryshchenko. Kamila arrived in the UK in 2022, because of the Ukraine war, and is now a British resident; at only 20 years old, she may be the youngest solver to achieve such a fine result in the British Championship. Those same three solvers were selected as the UK team, and won the bronze medal, at the World Chess Solving Championships in September in Batumi, Georgia. David Hodge is now ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in the world; his next targets may be to overtake Jonathan Mestel and John Nunn, the two higher-rated UK solvers. It will be tough, however, for him to catch up with the World Chess Solving Champion, Danila Pavlov. Danila is the strongest chess solver there has ever been. He is only 21 years old, but he has already won the World Championship three times consecutively, including at Batumi. He wins almost every tourney he enters and is more dominant at solving than Magnus Carlsen is at over the board.

Chess problemists do both solving and composing. One of the advantages of composing chess problems over playing chess is that you can do it whenever and wherever it suits you - on your way to some big meeting, you pull out your set or your iPad and try out some new

idea to see if it works. Quite a few of our finest composers have been major figures in their work and have still found the time to compose problems. One such was Michael Lipton, who composed for some six decades, in spite of being one of the world's leading development economists. He died in April 2023, but was continuing exploring new chess problem ideas even into early 2023. This first problem was part of an article Michael published in January 2023 in *The Problemist Supplement* (one of the British Chess Problem Society magazines). Your task in a two-mover is to find White's first move, but to be sure it is the correct move, you need of course to verify that there's a mating move in response to all Black's replies.

### Michael Lipton

*The Problemist Supplement 2023*



### Mate in 2

Another fine problemist who died in 2023 and was well-known in other fields was Colin Sydenham. A highly reputed lawyer and a classical scholar whose translations of Horace's odes continue to be used by academics, Colin was a stalwart of the chess problem community since he discovered the genre in the 1970s. This problem was the first prize winner in the *BCM* composing tournament in 1979.

### Colin Sydenham

*BCM 1979*



## Mate in 2

John Ling, who died in February, created the magazine *Problem Observer*, and edited it for nearly 50 years. That is an impressive achievement, and yet he was already 45 years old when he started it in 1972. His first problem was published in *Chess* in 1942. The following problem is one of his classics:

### John Ling

*The Problemist* 1953



## Mate in 2

Now a different type of problem: a helpmate, which means White and Black are cooperating together to give checkmate to the black king. The seven-and-a-half move stipulation means that White plays first and will deliver the mate on his eighth move. So, the move sequence is WBWBWBWBWBWBWBW. Your task is to find all those moves.

### Brian Cook

*The Problemist* 2023



## Helpmate in 7½ moves

That problem was by Brian Cook, the creator of the netchex.club website, where there are very many chess problems for online solving - more details at the end of this article.

Another Brian, Brian Chamberlain is a composer of selfmates. In selfmates, White is trying to get himself checkmated and Black is trying to avoid giving mate. The move sequence goes, WBWB, with Black's second move giving mate. Here, 1...Nf4 would be mate, but of course Black won't play that move unless he is forced to do so.

### Brian Chamberlain

*The Problemist* 2023



## Selfmate in 2 moves

Our final problem has an unusual stipulation: White is to play and to force stalemate (not checkmate), in two moves. So, White's second move will stalemate Black and Black is trying to prevent that happening. Michael McDowell's problem has two solutions - two ways to achieve the stipulation - so you need to find them both.

### Michael McDowell

*The Problemist Supplement* 2023



## Stalemate in 2 moves - two solutions

To see more chess problems, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at [www.theproblemist.org](http://www.theproblemist.org)

If you enjoyed solving these problems, you could try some online solving. At the Netchex.club website, there

are many problems to try your skills on. Every month, there are also several online tournaments, where you solve against the clock. There are tournaments for beginners, intermediate solvers, and experts. The tournaments include a range of types of problem, direct mates (such as mates in two), helpmates, selfmates and endgame studies. Have a go! Visit <http://www.ihandicap.mobi/chess> or just Google Netchex.club.

## Solutions

(Lipton) **1.Qxf5** (threat 2.Rh8). 1...Bf6 2.Qh7; 1...Nf6 2.Qxg5; 1...Nf4 2.Qg4; 1...Bf3 2.Qxh3. Notice that there are four Black interferences on the f-file, each releasing the White queen to move. There's also a 'try' (a move that almost solves, but fails to a single Black reply): 1.Bxf5? meeting 1...Bf3 with 2.Bxf2 but Black has 1...Nf4! This was based on a 1916 problem by Lewis Rothstein.

(Sydenham) **1.Nb5** (threats 2.Qc5 and 2.Qxc4). 1...Rxb5 2.Rxc4; 1...Bxb5 2.Bc5; 1...Kxb5 2.Qb6 There is also a 'set mate' in the diagram, meaning a mate that occurs if Black moves first: 1...Kc3 2.Bd2. The arrangement of the Black bishops and rooks, in a straight line with the bishops on the outside, has the name "organ pipes"; it is typically used by composers to generate interferences when the bishops block the rooks, and the rooks block the bishops.

(Ling) **1. Qc6** (threats 2.Rb5 and 2.Kd6). 1...Bxc6+ 2.Kxc6: 1...Rf4/g4/h4 2.Kd6; 1...Be6+ 2.Kxe6; 1...Rc4 2.Kxc4; 1...Rd4+ 2.Kxd4; 1...Re4 2.Kxe4; 1...Rb4 2.Ra6. A masterpiece.

(Cook) **1.Kb2 Kh8 2.Kb3 a1N+ 3.Kc4 Nb3 4.Kd5 Nxd2 5.Ke6 Ne4 6.Bxh6 Nf6 7.Kf7 Nh7 8.Bg7** mate. (Apologies to regular solvers of helpmates - I have altered the way the moves are written out to make them more familiar to over-the-board players.)

(Chamberlain) **1.Qf8** (threat 2.Qf4+ Nxf4). 1...exf2/e2 2.Qf3+ Qxf3; 1...Qxf8 2.f3+ Qxf3; 1...Nf6 2.f3+ Bxf3; 1...N~ 2.Qf3+ Bxf3. The four variations show all possible pairs of Q/P sacrifices on f3 forcing B/Q mates.

(McDowell) **1.Qc6** and **1.Rc6**. In reply to either of those, Black can only move his knight, which White then captures, but the knight has its maximum of eight possible moves. The theme is called a 'Black knight wheel'.

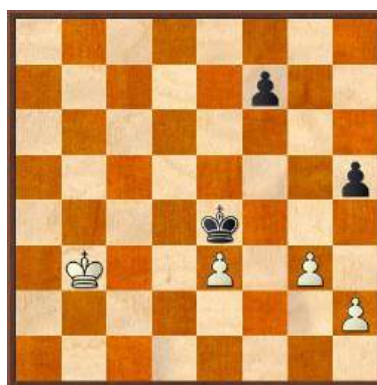
## Endgame Studies

2023 was the year of the pawn endgame. It saw the publication of *A Book of Bedtime Pawn Endings* by John Beasley, the doyen of British endgame studies. The

book includes many classic British-composed pawn studies, in addition to masterpieces by such all-time greats as Grigoriev and Zinar. In this article, however, I want to present newer compositions, ones that were first published in 2023, so we'll begin with one that appeared in my column in *ChessMoves* in May 2023. Pawn endings can be surprisingly tough solving but this study by Mike Read isn't very difficult. Maybe you can even solve it from the diagram without setting it up on a board? The solutions to all the studies in this article are given at the end but do try to solve before you look there.

## Mike Read

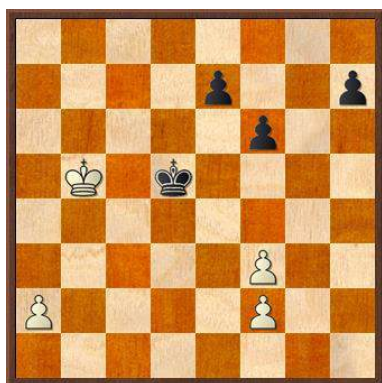
*ChessMoves 2023*



## Draw

Your second solving task is also a pawn ending, by Paul Byway, that was in my *ChessMoves* column in January. It took part in a composing tournament in 1995, the *Philidor 200* event, a composing tourney that celebrated the strongest chess player of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but apart from the tourney report, *ChessMoves* was this study's first appearance in publication. Philidor is famous for his pawn play, and for the quote 'Pawns are the soul of chess'. Incidentally, Philidor lived in London in his later years, so we could claim him as the greatest-ever English chess player. Might start a war with the French chess federation, though! This study has two main lines - after White's first move, Black has two reasonable replies, and they lead to echoed play.



**Paul Byway***ChessMoves 2023***Win**

Paul Byway is a specialist in 'miniatures' - compositions with seven or fewer pieces - so that study, with eight, is unusual for him. Here's one of his with only six pieces. RNB vs Q is a general draw and Black will start endless checking if given a chance. Eight moves to find, ending in a mate.

**Paul Byway***BCM 2023***Win**

Now two studies by John Nunn. John is a study composer and a solving grandmaster; indeed, he is a former World Champion at chess solving. In 2022 and 2023, however, he has reinvigorated the over-the-board play of his younger years - he won the over the board World Championship for over 65s in both years. Happily, it hasn't prevented his composing. This study's core is a position of reciprocal Zugzwang; you'll need to find a way to achieve that position with the right player on move.

**John Nunn***The Problemist 2023***Win****John Nunn***The Problemist 2023***Draw**

In last year's Yearbook I showed you a study by Paul Michelet that used a theme called 'staircases' or 'ladders'. A piece moves along a line, but a single step at a time. To best imitate a stepladder, a piece on h8 needs to go to h7 then g7, g6, f6, f5, e5, and so on - like walking up or down a staircase. Paul has continued to investigate the theme and in October's *ChessMoves*, I presented this new 'staircases' composition by him. The solution to the new version is 28 moves long, but don't be put off - ladder studies necessarily have long solutions, but once you know there's a ladder involved, most of the solution moves are obvious. In this study, the ladder is climbed twice. First, you need to spend seven moves getting ready to climb.





## Win

To see more endgame studies, visit the British Chess Problem Society website at [www.theproblemist.org](http://www.theproblemist.org) or the ARVES site at [www.arves.org](http://www.arves.org).

For more study-solving, visit the Netchex.club website, where there are monthly online study-solving tourneys.

## Solutions

**(Read)** 1.Kc4 Kxe3 2.Kd5 Kf3 3.Ke5 Kg2 4.g4 and draws. Play could continue 4...h4 5.g5 h3 6.Kf6 Kxh2 7.Kxf7 and both sides queen, or 4...hgx4 5.Kf4 Kh3 6.Kg5 f6+ 7.Kf5 Kxh2 8.Kxg4. If 1...Kf3, there is 2.Kd4 Kg2 3.Ke4 Kxh2 4.Kf4 draws.

It's not hard to spot the fine move 4.g4 when you get there; a tough task, however, to foresee it from the diagram position. Without 4.g4, Black can just gobble the h- and g-pawns and push his remaining passer. Mike created this study while he was analysing a game by Leinier Dominguez, in which a related position arose.

**(Byway - pawn ending)** 1.a4 with:

1...Kd6 2.Kb6 Kd7 3.Kb7 h5 4.a5 h4 5.a6 h3 6.a7 h2 7.a8Q h1Q 8.Qc8+ Kd6 9.Qc6+ Ke5 10.f4+ wins.

1...Ke6 2.Kc6 h5 3.a5 h4 4.a6 h3 5.a7 h2 6.a8Q h1Q 7.Qg8+ Ke5 8.Qd5+ Kf4 9.Qe4+ Kg5 10.f4+ wins.

The second win of the queen is sufficiently different to not feel repetitive yet similar enough to harmonise - that is what makes the most pleasing echoes.

**(Byway - RNB v. Q)** 1.Ne5+ Kg7 2.Rg4+ Kh7 3.Be4+ Kh6 4.Rg6+ Kh5 5.Bf3+ Kh4 6.Rg4+ Kh3 7.Bg2+ Kh2 8.Nf3 mate.

Notice that Black's king crawls along in a straight line; such features are, of course, deliberate artistry by the composer. The sidelines are obvious, but (for completeness): 1...Ke6/7/8 2.Nc6+; 1...Kf6/8 2.Nd7+;

2...Kh8 3.Nf7+ Kh7 4.Be4 mate; 2...Kh6 3.Nf7+ Kh5 4.Rb4+; 4...Kh7 5.Rb6+.

## (Nunn - N)

1.Nb6+ cxb6 2.a8Q b2 3.Qa2+ Kc3 4.Kf3 e2 5.Kxe2 Kc2 6.Ke3 b3 7.Qa8 b1Q 8.Qg2+ Kc3 9.Qd2+ Kc4 10.Qd4 mate. Notice that John has built in a 'switchback' - the queen returns to its earlier square a8.

The early alternatives are: 2...e2 3.Qe4+ Kc3 4.Qxe2 b2 5.Qd1 wins; 3.Qe4+? Kb3 4.Kxe3 Ka2 5.Qa8+ Kb3 6.Qg8+ Ka3 7.Qg6 Ka2 8.Qg2 (8.Qc2 Ka1) 8...Ka3 draws; 3.Qg8+ Kc3 4.Qa2 e2 5.Qb1 e1Q 6.Qxe1+ Kc2 7.Qe2+ Kb3 draws; 4.Qb1+ e2 5.Ke3 e1Q+ 6.Qxe1+ Kc2 7.Qd2+ Kb3 8.Qd5+ Ka3 9.Qd1 Ka2 draws. Then we have the 'thematic try' 4.Kxe3? Kc2 which gives the reciprocal Zugzwang position with White to play and continues 5.Ke2 (5.Kd4 b3) but ends in a draw because the winning manoeuvre in the solution line only works when the second rank is not blocked by the white king. After 6.Ke3 in the solution line, it's the same position but with Black to play. The other lines are 6...Kc1 7.Qd5 Kc2 8.Qe4+ Kc1 9.Qc6+ Kd1 10.Qxb5 b1Q 11.Qe2+ Kc1 12.Qd2 mate; and 7...b1N when White wins on material, for example by 8.Kd4 b2 9.Qe4+.

## (Nunn - RR v. Q)

1.Rxe6 Kxe6 2.fxg7 Kf7 3.Kh6 Qa8 4.Rf1+ Kg8 5.g5 Qe8 6.Rf7 b4 7.Ra7 b3 8.Ra6 b2 9.Re6 Qd7 10.Re8+ Qxe8 stalemate. Like the previous study, this has the same type of piece visiting the same square (rook and e6), but this time it isn't a switchback because it isn't the same rook.

Not 1.fxg7? Qd4 2.g8Q+ Kxg8 3.Rxe6 Qd5+ 4.Kf6 Qd8+ 5.Kxg6 Qd3+ wins. 6.Ra1? Qe4 7.Ra7 (7.Ra6 Qb7) 7...Qf3 8.Kxg6 Qc6+ and ...c4. 6...Kxf7 7.g8Q+ Ke7 8.Qd5 draws. 7.Rb7? b3 8.Rxb3 c4 9.Rb6 Qe5 10.Rf6 Qe7 11.Rf8+ Qxf8 12.gxf8Q+ Kxf8 13.Kxg6 Kg8 wins for Black as does 7.Rc7? b3 8.Rc6 Qd7.

## (Michelet)

1.Rxa3 Qxa3 2.Kg6 Qe7 3.Rxh4+ Kg8 4.Rh8+ Kxh8 5.Qa1+ Kg8 6.Qa8+ Qf8 7.Qa2+ Kh8 And now White is ready to climb the ladder for the first time. 8.Qb2+ 9.Qb3+ 10.Qc3+ 11.Qc4+ 12.Qd4+ 13.Qxd7 Rh1 14.Qd5+ Kh8 15.Qxh1+ Nh2 And now the second time. 16.Qa1+ 17.Qa2+ 18.Qb2+ 19.Qb3+ 20.Qc3+ 21.Qc4+ 22.Qd4+ 23.Qd5+ 24.Qe5+ 25.Qe6+ 26.Qh3+ Qh6+ 27.Qxh6+ Kg8 28.Qg7 mate.

Stairway to heaven? The ladders are of course the major attraction, but the introduction is striking too - packed with surprise moves.

The second time on the ladder, if White again plays Qd7, Black has a nasty counter: 23.Qd7? Qf6+ 24.Kxf6 f1Q+ 25.Kg6 and 25...Qa6+ or 25...Qb1+.

# CHESS & BRIDGE

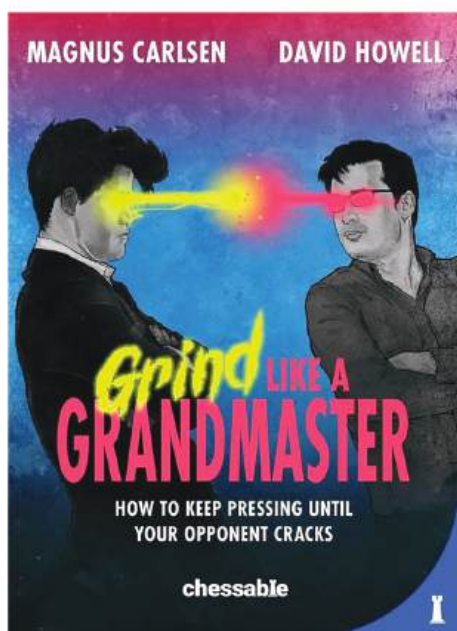
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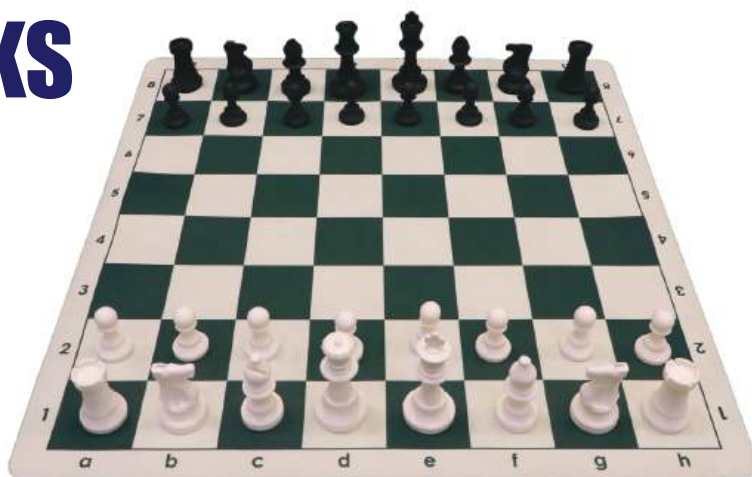
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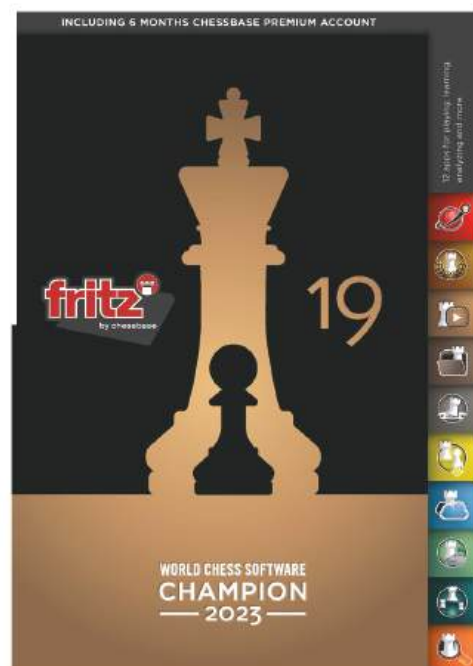
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