



June 2024

Chess *Moves*



Reports on the English Championships and the 4NCL, the ECF Charity Marathon for Ukraine, John Nunn on Mickey Adams and much more ...

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the June edition of *ChessMoves*!

Many congratulations to Gawain Jones and Elmira Mirzoeva, winners of the English Championship and the Women's English Championship respectively after incredibly tense and exciting play-offs in both events. Nigel Towers provides an overview, and Danny Gormally reports in his usual honest and direct style.

We also feature an in-depth report from Jonathan Rogers on the nail-biting conclusion to the 4NCL's 2023-2024 season, where no fewer than three teams tied for first place on match points in Division 1, Wood Green emerging as champions by just half a game point over Manx Liberty, with The Sharks a further half-game point behind.

Glenn Flear also writes in detail about a remarkable endgame from the recent European Senior Team Chess Championships in Slovenia which played a key part in England securing gold in the 50+ section. We also have plenty of instructional material as John Nunn, Glenn Flear and Danny Gormally provide us with their usual high-quality grandmaster content.

Dates for your diary should definitely include ChessFest in Trafalgar Square on 7th July and the British Championships in Hull, which run from 25th July until 4th August.

All the games within are presented in PGN format here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/June.pgn>, but note that you will need to use ChessBase or a PGN viewer to access the games.

Have a great month!

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EVENTS

British Chess Championships by Nigel Towers



The 2024 British Chess Championships will be held in Hull at the City Hall and the nearby DoubleTree by Hilton, with events running from Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August 2024 across the two city centre venues. Follow this link: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/> to see the full schedule and details of all the events.

You can find the entry form for all events here: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/british-chess-championships-2024>

We have also scheduled a full programme of social and cultural events in and around Hull City Centre with further details here:

<https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/british-chess-championships-2024-social-programme/>

We will be providing an initial report on the early events at this year's British in the next edition of ChessMoves. In the meantime, readers should note that Ben Graff has produced an excellent article for the June edition of Chess magazine reflecting on British Chess Championships locations over the years.

English Championships 2024 Tournament Report and Results by Nigel Towers, with pictures by Dennis Dicen

Congratulations to the 2024 English Champion Gawain Jones and 2024 English Women's Champion Elmira Mirzoeva, and well played Mickey Adams and Kata Toma, both finishing a very close 2nd by the finest of margins in the two championships in Kenilworth!



2024 English Champion GM Gawain Jones with GM Mickey Adams



2024 English Women's Champion Elmira Mirzoeva with WGM Kata Toma

2024 English and English Women's Championships - Summary Report

The two championships were played over four days at the Holiday Inn in Kenilworth, with everything to play for going into the final round 7 on Sunday morning.



English Championship round 7 - top boards (Mickey Adams vs Ameet Ghasi and Peter Wells vs Gawain Jones)



Round 7 – view across the top 16 boards



Women's Championship round 7 – top two boards



Women's Championship round 7 - view across the playing area

Final Standings

At the end of round 7 GMs Jones and Adams were tied for top place in the English Championships on 6 points, followed by 12 players on 5 points.

1	GM	Adams, Michael	ENG	2750	4NCL Guildford	6
2	GM	Jones, Gawain C	ENG	2663	Guildford	6
3	GM	Wells, Peter K	ENG	2408	Witney	5
4	IM	Ghasi, Ameet K	ENG	2563	Richmond & Twickenham	5
5	GM	Gormally, Daniel W	ENG	2455	4ncl Blackthorne Russia	5
6	IM	Roberson, Peter T	ENG	2459	St Albans	5

7	IM	Wadsworth, Matthew J	ENG	2531	Maidenhead	5
8	GM	Fernandez, Daniel H	ENG	2605	4NCL Wood Green	5
9	IM	Willow, Jonah B	ENG	2536	4NCL Wood Green	5
10		Bowcott-Terry, Finlay	ENG	2328	Halesowen	5
11	IM	Bates, Richard A	ENG	2373	Hackney	5
12	CM	Badacsonyi, Stanley	ENG	2316	Muswell Hill	5
13	CM	Hobson, Kenneth	ENG	2254	Cowley	5
14		Savidge, Daniel	ENG	2157	Chester	5

Kata Toma and Elmira Mirzoeva tied for top place on 6 points in the English Women's Championship, followed by two players on 4½ points and three players on 4 points.

1	WGM	Toma, Katarzyna	ENG	2355	4NCL Wood Green	6
2	WGM	Mirzoeva, Elmira	ENG	2260	West London	6
3		Hryshchenko, Kamila	ENG	2257	West Sussex *	4½
4		Rida, Ruqayyah	ENG	2155	Essex Juniors	4½
5	WCM	Dicen, Elis Denele	ENG	2194	Coventry Chess Academy	4
6	WFM	Varney, Zoe	ENG	2169	4NCL Blackthorne Russia	4
7		Maton, Emily	ENG	2016	Hertfordshire Juniors	4

Play-offs



English Championship play-offs 2024 at the Holiday Inn, Kenilworth

As above both Championships ended with two players tied for top place on 6 points, with the English and English Women's titles decided by play-offs between GMs Gawain Jones and Mickey Adams and WGMs Elmira Mirzoeva and Katarzyna Toma.

The play-off format was two rapidplay games at 20|10, then two at 5|3 blitz if not decided in the rapidplay, and finally an Armageddon game if not decided in the blitz.



Gawain Jones won the first rapidplay game and drew the second to take the English Champion title for 2024.



Elmira and Kata were level at 1-1 in the rapidplay, with Elmira going on to win both blitz games and take the Women's Champion title.

Full results for both events are here: <https://chess-results.com/tnr957360.aspx?lan=1>

Further Reports

You can follow the links below for commentary on the last two rounds on Twitch, and a full report on ChessBase. Final rounds commentary with WGM Lan Yao and IM Harry Grieve: https://www.twitch.tv/ecf_streaming
ChessBase summary report: <https://en.chessbase.com/post/english-championships-2024-r7>

English Championships by Danny Gormally

Prophylaxis, killing opponents' play, and grumbles about money in the English championships

Firstly, a rare grumble. In the hot and sunny weather of mid-June I travelled down to Kenilworth's Holiday Inn hotel to compete in the English championships. This

wasn't the first time I had played - I had also played in the same tournament last year, where I failed to win a prize. This time I tied for third with 5/7, but there were so many players on this score that I won barely anything. Having spent £157 on the train ticket, I got back £90 in prize money, which wasn't even enough to cover my travel. Add in the expense of food, and you start to look at a big loss. Sure, instead of eating in the hotel bar every night I could have saved on money by purchasing a dull and stale sandwich or salad from the local supermarket, eaten in my room no doubt. But part of the appeal of playing chess for a living is the good life.

Good life no more, because I can no longer afford these shuddering losses in expenses and am wondering if I should bother to continue with this life as a chess professional. Certainly, these sorts of tournaments where I end up with a big loss are becoming increasingly less attractive. This is the issue with being a chess player, I guess. Unless you are at the very top then you can hope to break even at best. But in what other profession do you actually make a loss when you compete?

Part of the problem lies in the limited prize fund. The tournament was only seven rounds, and the cost of paying for grandmasters and other titled players to stay in the hotel meant there were only four main prizes, and the tournament was tightly packed into only four days. You could point to the German Championship in contrast, where the first prize is a staggering 30,000 euros.

Of course, in England we already have the British Championships, which to all intents and purposes these days is a glorified English Championship as very few of the higher-ranked Scottish players compete, and long gone are the days when an Indian delegation would come over to play. From speaking to some of the other players in Kenilworth, the conditions at the British Championships this year are much improved, so that's a positive sign. And some of the international masters also got their hotel costs covered in the English Championships as well, also a progressive step. In order to improve the prizes in the English Championships and in home grown tournaments the ECF could appoint a sponsorship and corporate officer, because quite frankly the prizes just aren't good enough. If you arrive at a situation where the 2300–2500 rated players can't afford to play as there is no upside, then I would venture to suggest that these events will lose a lot of their lustre. I understand it is not easy - most companies in the current climate are tightening their coffers, not loosening them. Even the mighty juggernaut Chess.com just had to release some staff, as the momentum from the pandemic has not been built on and chess has been losing players.

Let's move away from this embittered rant and look at the chess itself. In round 1 I won, in round 2 I took a bye so I could see England play a dreadful match against Denmark, and then in round 3 I faced a younger player in Thomas Carroll.

Gormally, Daniel W - Carroll, Thomas

Round 3: Gormally, Daniel W - Carroll, lichess.org, 21.06.2024

<https://lichess.org/broadcast/-/-/qVdEAnMA>

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 a6 5.Bg5



I have played this line against the Chebanenko Slav on many occasions, but with mixed success. Probably I need to come up with an alternative after this game, as the opening didn't exactly go to plan.

5...Ne4 5...dxc4 is an alternative for Black: 6.a4 h6! 7.Bf4 Nd5 8.Bg3 b5 with rather messy play.

6.Bf4 Nxc3 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.g3 8.e4 is equally popular. I once lost a game against Krishna in 2017 from this position, but that was partly down to making a very bad mistake quite early on, and generally being out of form in that tournament. Not to say that Krishna didn't deserve his win in that game, because he played excellently once I went wrong. 8...b5 9.a4 Bb7 10.Qb1 e6?! 11.Bxc4 Nd7 12.Bd3 Be7 13.0-0 0-0 14.c4 b4 was that game, and now 15.c5!+- would have given White a huge advantage.

8...b5 9.Bg2 Nd7 10.0-0 Bb7 11.Ne5 Nxe5 12.Bxe5 Black has played a good system, and the game is level. Black's extra pawn is counterbalanced by White's lead in development and more active position.

12...e6 13.e4?! Maybe a morning game move. Or perhaps also a rust move, or maybe I'm just not very good. Take your pick.

13.a4 f6 14.Bf4 Be7 15.e4 0-0 16.h4 would have been unclear.

13...f6 14.Bf4



14...Ba3! I had underestimated this developing and prophylactic device, as one of White's main ideas with a4 is prevented. I now felt very uncomfortable, as it wasn't clear at all to me what plan White actually had. How I regretted not playing a4, as at least the rook on a1 could have breathed in that scenario, and there was also the threat of ...Bb2 to now deal with as well.

I was hoping for 14...Be7 15.Qg4! which looked great for White, if hardly completely conclusive, as the black king can go to f7. If 15...Kf7, 16.a4 with decent pressure for White.

15.Qh5+ g6 16.Qh6 From a human perspective this is entirely logical, as you prevent Black from castling.

But my Fritz 19 prefers 16.Qf3!, which makes me wonder if we overestimate the power of castling. You are only moving your king to another part of the board, after all. If 16...Qe7, 17.h4 0-0 18.e5! fxe5?! 19.dxe5 with decent play.

16...Qe7 16...Bf8 17.Qh3 Bc8? 18.e5! should be avoided by Black.

17.e5 f5 18.Bg5 Qf8 19.Qh4 White must not allow the queen trade.

19...h6 20.Bf6



20...Be7? My opponent played this quite quickly, but I feel this was a serious mistake, letting me back in the game. Just when he has contained my play he fails to act prophylactically enough and lets me back in it.

I was very concerned about 20...Rh7!, which seemed to be more about killing my play than anything else, but would have been very effective nonetheless. One idea could be to play Rh7–f7xf6 giving up the exchange to remove any tactical danger, and then just castle queenside. White is struggling to come up with ideas. Another idea that the engine indicates is to play the king to d7, where it is perfectly safe. If 21.Rab1 to prevent Bb2, 21...Rf7 22.Rfe1 Kd7 and Black seems better.

21.a4 I was very relieved to be able to play this.

21...Bxf6 22.exf6 g5?! 22...0–0–0 would have been very bold, and was a tough move to play, practically speaking. 23.Rfe1 g5 24.Qh5 Qxf6 25.Re5 just leads to a very sharp position, but I'd probably rather play White, as my king is safer.

23.Qh5+ Qf7 24.Qe2 0–0 The issue is that despite the presence of the queen on f7, the black king is rather draughty on the kingside, and White has very easy play with pressure down the e-file.

25.Rfe1 Rae8 26.axb5 cxb5 27.Bxb7 Qxb7 28.Qh5! Kh7 29.Re5 Qc6?



A big mistake, and now White has a chance to win.

29...g4 30.Rxe6 Rxe6 31.Qxf5+ Kh8 32.Qxe6 Qf3 33.f7 was also not great for Black.

30.Rc5? I think this is an indication of why my chess has gone downhill in the last few years - my calculation is not as crisp and incisive as it once was. Old age is setting in. My thought process before this move was 'I'll play Rc5, there's some Rxa6 stuff in the air. If he goes back to b7 then I'll either take on a6 or I'll go back to e5, repeat, and

see if I can come up with something better than Rc5 later.' All this shows is that I'm not confident in my ability to nail the win down straight away. I was also feeling hungry at this point, despite only eating breakfast a couple of hours earlier. A common issue for me, and perhaps an indication of pre-diabetes. When you're hungry you get distracted, and it is hard to focus on one position. You want to move on quickly.

I didn't even consider the possibility of 30.f7! which was winning at once. 30...Re7 31.d5 Qd6 32.Rae1 chokes the oxygen out of Black; as an alternative to what I played I only looked at 30.d5!, which admittedly was also very strong, and should have been preferred to the move played in the game. If 30...exd5? (30...Qd7 31.Rxa6 Rxf6 32.Qd1! is fairly snazzy.) 31.Re7+–.

30...Qb7! 30...Qd6? 31.Rxa6 is what I was hoping for, and fairly obviously winning easily for White. If 31...Qxa6 32.Rc7+–

31.Rxa6! Ra8 32.Rac6? Ra1+ 33.Kg2



33...Rxf6?? I had seen 33...Ra6! 34.d5 Rxc6 earlier in my calculations, and was 'hoping' that there was some way of recapturing that would turn out well for White. There isn't. If 35.Rxc6 (35.dxc6 Qb6!) 35...Qd7=.

34.d5! But now it is winning fairly trivially, as all the tactics work out for White.

34...Ra7 A miserable square to have to put the rook.

35.Qe2+– f4 36.Qe4+ Kg7 37.Qe5 f3+ 38.Kh3 Kg6 39.Rc7 Qa6 40.R5c6 Qa1 41.Qe4+ Kh5 42.g4# 1–0

Catabay, Mae Katelyn Rose - Varney, Zoe

Round 5: Catabay, Mae Katelyn Rose - Va lichess.org, 22.06.2024

The Women's Championship came down to a play-off, just as the Open did. Over seven rounds it is difficult to get any separation over the rest of the field. It will be

interesting to see if the nine rounds of the British Championship see any different outcome, but I can imagine the main event going to another nervy tie-break. I'm not sure, however, if I agreed with the decision to have a separate Women's Championship. I understand the desire to do so, to create an exciting event for the women. But it felt strange playing in a hall with almost no women players, other than Ana Williams. One thing you could say, however, is that Kenilworth is a fantastic place for a chess tournament. The town is lovely, and the hotel is excellent. It would be difficult to think of a better venue.

1.e4 e5 2.f4 The Kings Gambit. I once played this in Hastings, but it was more for the shock value than anything else. It obviously contains a great deal of poison, but also a great deal of risk.

2...exf4 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.e5 Nh5 5.Be2 d6 6.exd6?! This makes life too easy for Black.

6.0-0 dxe5 7.Nxe5, when you won't lose a piece to Qd4xe5 as h5 will be hanging at the end.

6...Bxd6 7.0-0 0-0 8.d4 Nf6 9.Bd3 c5 10.c3 Nc6 Zoe is particularly well prepared, and not for nothing does she have a record as one of the most active players on Chessable. As usual she has achieved an excellent position from the opening. But that's not her problem; her issue is converting. She had a number of good positions in the championship that she probably should have won.

11.d5 Ne7 12.c4 Nf5 13.Nc3 Ng4 14.Re1 Nge3 15.Bxe3 Nxe3 16.Qd2 f5 17.Nd1 Ng4 18.h3 Nf6 19.Nc3 Nh5 20.Nb5 Bb8 21.Qf2 a6 22.Nc3 Qf6 23.Rad1 Bd7 24.Bc2



24...b5?? Up to now Zoe has done everything correctly, but now she goes badly astray.

All players, including myself, need to work on their prophylaxis and their ability to limit their opponents' ideas, and to that end 24...Bd6!→ would have been a fairly depressing move for White to see on the board.

There's your play gone! In my opinion Zoe would become an even stronger player (she's already fairly strong, and has improved a lot over the last few years) if she struck a greater balance to her play. What I mean by that is that there are some scenarios where she plays aggressively when it is not warranted, and timidly when she needs to play with aggression. Once she becomes better at striking the balance, she'll become even more of a force to be reckoned with.

25.d6! Necessary and strong. Now the threat of Nd5 becomes incredibly awkward to deal with.

25...Kh8 25...Bxd6 26.Qd2 is possibly what Zoe overlooked, when Black loses material.

26.Ne5 Be6 27.Qf3 g6 28.Qxa8 Bxd6 29.Qc6 Bxe5 30.Qxc5 Bxc3



31.bxc3? Too casual; I think both players were beginning to get short of time.

31.Rxe6! was a fairly easy tactic for this level and would have forced immediate resignation. When you have a chance to nail down the win you should take it! One can only speculate that Mae overlooked this idea completely.

31...Bxc4 32.Bb3 Bg8 33.Qe5 Qxe5 34.Rxe5 Rc8 35.Re7 Nf6 36.Rd6 Ne4 37.Rxa6 Nxc3 38.Raa7 Ne4 39.Rac7 Rd8 40.Red7 Rxd7 41.Rxd7 Bxb3 42.axb3 Nc5 43.Rd8+ Kg7 44.b4 Na6 45.Rd4 Kf7 46.Rxf4 Ke6 47.Rh4 h5 48.Kf2 Ke5 49.Ke3 Nc7 50.Kd3 Nd5



51.Rd4?? White had already messed up the win; and this is the issue when you violate Caissa's parameters: chess comes back to punish you.

51.g3! f4 52.g4! (52.gxf4+? Nxf4+ 53.Kd2 g5—) 52...Nf6 53.gxh5 g5 54.Rg4 was a study-like draw. Hard to find in time trouble!

51...Nf4—+ 52.Ke3 Nxc2+ 53.Kd3 Nf4+ 54.Ke3 Nd5+ 55.Kd3 g5 0–1

Final 4NCL Weekend – Some Chess by Jonathan Rogers

In the previous edition I told you that Wood Green narrowly – as narrowly as possible, in fact – won the first division of the 4NCL 2023/24 season. It was a close three-way race between themselves, Manx Liberty and the Sharks, which went down to game points after Wood Green lost their match points advantage by losing to Manx Liberty on the Sunday. I also promised you some chess in this edition.

An ageing annotator moans about losing his narrative

When I promise to annotate, I have always meant to restrict myself to chess which I myself could understand. Most of my writing on chess was in the 1990s, when I craftily limited myself to annotating games to which I could give a plausible spin. Oh, you could spin a narrative back then! I would pick a couple of instructive mistakes in a game and show how they inevitably lead to defeat, not being aware of the several resources that still existed.

But engines do change everything. Now there are always further resources, and you, the reader, can always find them for yourselves (and I suppose, if I did a really good job, I should have inspired you to do that). Further, with engines, there are no longer good moves (just correct ones) whilst there are an infinite number of bad moves. So any narrative threatens to be both complicated and quite depressing.

They even play a role in determining the selected games. I was going to laud Gawain Jones' active play on the black side of an isolated queen pawn position over Malcolm Pein in round 10, for example. But the engine only much liked his position for one move, and shortly afterwards, fully back in the game, Malcolm blundered and resigned instantly. So much for that one, then. No narrative after all.

On the positive side, with the help of engines I can now realistically seek to understand very difficult or highly technical games, such as Gawain's win on the previous day against Michael Adams. But really, let's be honest now: are you very interested in this 66 move game, or rather just in the result, which certainly promises to make this year's British Championship more interesting?

If you are thinking that it sounds as though Gawain at least had a good final weekend – yes, we are back to the subject in hand now - you would be right. He topped all that by winning in the final round against Alexei Shirov, the latter's first ever defeat in the 4NCL. This must be the most successful individual performance of all at a 4NCL weekend. It did his own team, White Rose, no particular good, but it certainly shook up the hired guns of the two favourites.

The Saturday of the last weekend

But the first day's play was all about the Sharks, since they had the difficult pairing of Wood Green Youth's team. Wood Green Youth finished an impressive fourth at the end of the season, and boasted a string of dangerous young players. While having many GM norm seekers sounds very much like a first world problem, it is still a first division problem too. When several players in the same team chase a GM norm, there are usually not enough GMs in the opposing teams for them all to play. Thus might a captain become the victim of his own success)

The Sharks prevailed by 5-3, helped by black wins from Daniel Fernandez and Ameet Ghasi. Wood Green captain Lawrence Cooper noted the particular danger which these two players add to the Sharks side, because they seem to be unusually able to play for a win very naturally with Black. Indeed, Ameet made 3/3 with Black in this final weekend. But it is Daniel's game that you get to see.

S Bazakutsa - D Fernandez 4NCL (First Division) Round 9, 4th May 2024

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e6 3.e4 c5 4.e5 Ng8 5.d4 cxd4 6.Qxd4 Nc6 7.Qf4

When I was young (!) it would be 7 Qe4 here. The text threatens 8 Ne4, thus effectively forcing 7...d6.

7...d6 8.Nf3 Nh6!? Provocative but playable. White decides to move his queen to e4 after all, to see how Black now intends to deal with the prospect of 10 Bg5.

9.Qe4 Nxe5 10.Nxe5 dxe5 11.Bxh6 gxh6 12.Qe5 Rg8



You can see the gaps in Black's position, but the bishop on g7 promises to be very strong, and he might have time to castle artificially. Personally I like this for Black, but the engine says that White has plenty of resources too (of course it does).

13.Rd1 Bd7 14.Ne4 Bg7 15.Nd6+ Kf8 16.Qc5 Qe7 17.Nxb7(?) Captures a pawn and threatens 18.Rxd7, but it is the first error according to the Stockfish version preferred by Lichess. White's over the board dilemma is very familiar; 17.Nxb7 might be risky, but suppose that Black has in fact gone wrong and that just taking the material proves to be good? But Daniel's speed of play must have given him some cause to doubt this.

17...Rc8 18.Qd6 If White's position were truly good this would not be necessary. Alas, 18.Rxd7 loses material to Rxc5 19.Rxe7 Re5+, and 18.Qxe7+ Kxe7 19.b3 (in order to protect the besieged b2-pawn) Bc3+ 20.Ke2 Bb4 would greatly embarrass the white knight (and the king too, if 21.c5 Bb5+ 22.Ke3 Bc6 is then the continuation).

18...Bc6 19.Na5 Ba8 Black's pieces are finally safe and coordinated. Now it's about the b2-pawn and White's own queenside, and more generally, how White proposes to develop. Black we already know about – he can shuffle his king to h8.

20.Qd2 Bf6 21.h4(!)



Played not so much in hope of 21...Bxh4?? 22.Qxh6+, but rather to develop the rook on h1 – he clearly won't be castling kingside, and the rook can do a lot of defensive work on the third rank. (We never talk about rooks on ranks, it has been said before. They have their role though, as the engine reveals on the note to White's move 29.)

21...Kg7 22.Rh3 Rgd8 It was better to play 22...Kh8, after which 23.Qxh6 can be met by 23...Bxb2 followed by ...Bxg2.

23.Rg3+ Kh8 24.Qxh6 This way the game continues with White's g2-pawn safe, and now Black has nothing better than 24...Bxb2 25.Nb3, with compensation for the pawn.

24...Qb4+ 25.Rd2 Now it is purely tactical. Unfortunately for Black White can get away with this, notwithstanding his hanging knight on a5, and 25...Bxb2 is met by 26.Rb3. So Black moves the threatened bishop elsewhere.

25...Be5 26.Bd3 f5 27.Nb3 Rc7(?) Understandably not liking 27...Bxg3 28.Qf6+ Kg8 29.Qxe6+ Kg7 30.Qxf5, although, as you might have guessed, the engine recommends it and thinks the resulting position to be balanced. The move played, however, creates a back rank weakness.

28.Re3 Bxb2



29.Ke2(?) Me too. But the engines demand none other than 29.a3! Then 29...Qxb3 is met by 30.Bc2 Qb8 31.Rb3, and 29...Qxa3 by 30.Bxf5 Rxd2 31.Nxd2, again hitting the queen which must, on account of 27...Rc7, cover f8, and now White has a substantial advantage.

You see how difficult it is to maintain an easy narrative these days?

After the text the position is level again, and since White is in desperate time trouble in another few moves he is lost.

29...Bc3 30.Rd1 Qa4 31.Nc1(?) Rb7 Naturally taking a sudden opportunity to hunt the white king.

32.Qxe6? Now it is gone. White had to play 32.Rd2, ideally with a straight face.

32...Rb2+ 33.Kf1 Qxd1+ 34.Re1 Qxe1+ 35.Qxe1 Bxg2+ 36.Kxg2 Bxe1 0-1

The Sunday of the last weekend

Then in round 10 came the match between Manx Liberty and Wood Green, which Manx Liberty had to win. Win they did, though they actually only won one game, Frederick Svane beating Speelman (who, it should be added, scored 9/10 in his other games during the season). Alas, Wood Green could not score any wins of their own, Michael Adams perhaps not having recovered from losing on the previous day. Matthew Wadsworth seemed to come close to winning (against Parligras) but, (sigh) according to the engine, not all that close.

In fact, on this crucial weekend no Wood Green player beat a GM. Marcus Harvey even played three GMs, seeking a GM norm until the end, but could only draw with each in turn. But Wood Green were very good at beating their non-GM opposition, which on the final day proved to be what mattered most.

The narrow Manx win was the dream result for the Sharks, who had got off to a good start in their own match against Barnet Knights. After the first couple of hours a 6-2 win or more was on the cards. Had this come about they would have started the final day with a useful lead in game points over their more fancied rivals. In the end, they had to work hard to win 5-3. The major turnaround was in this game.

M Garcia Martin - E Mirzoeva 4NCL (First Division) Round 10, 5th May 2024



Both teams fielded their female player on board 6, and it is the Spanish IM who is seemingly in control and headed

for a win. All of 25.Qxh6, 25.c3 and 25.Re4 appeal, and yet White chooses the very best – for now.

25.c4! Kc8 26.Re5 But, though not disastrous, this is not best. 26.Rxd4 Rxb3 27.Red1 e5 28.Qg4+ followed by Rd7 would have kept control. White has time to safeguard her own back rank, and then one of the assorted threats to the black king and to the f7-pawn will soon land. However, about that weak back rank...

26...Qxc4! Now Black is at least in the game, and White is rattled, and you know how one mistake follows another...

27.Rd1? The best move for White, astonishingly, is just to cover the weak back rank with 27.h3!. Then 27...Qxd3 28.Rxa5 is winning, because every sensible defence to 29.Ra8+ (e.g. 28...Kb7, 28...Qxb3 or 28 ... Rb8) then permits a devastating 29.Qd6, while 28...Rd8 29.Ra8+ Kd7 30.Ra7+ leads to mate. And if that had happened, we would have said all sorts of wonderful things about 26.Re5.

Black is not obliged to play to take the rook on d3, but after 27.h3! all the joy has gone out of her position. But after 27.Rd1 it is White who must content herself with a draw. Now the b3-pawn falls, with a further attack on the white rook, and Black has time to cover the d6-entry point, when there is no longer a risk of Black losing.

27...Qxb3 28.Rde1 Rd8 29.Rxa5 Kb7(?)



Since Black is now better, this is an error, but a very human one, seeking no doubt to avoid any blunder that might lead to a mate; and when one has been on the ropes the priority is not to be forced back onto them again. If one had nerves of silicon, one would prefer 29...d3, attacking the queen on f4 as well as threatening ...d2. After 30.Ra8+ Kb7! 31.Ra7+ Kxa7 32.Qc7+ Ka6 33.Qxd8 Rb8! 34.Qd6 Qc3 35.Rf1 Rb7, the engine is confident (*of course* it is).

30.Rc5? This ends it. White had to play 30.Ra7+ (playing for perpetual check is all that is left now). Then after

30...Kxa7 31.Qc7+ Ka6 32.Qxd8 Black is a tempo down on the above line, and cannot play ...Rd8 as in the line above because the pawn on d4 now hangs; and after 32...d3 there are, starting with 33.Qa8+, enough checks to make a draw.

It is not obvious why White avoided this. Even if still intent on winning, funny things can still happen when one checks an exposed king. Black allows no more second chances.

30....d3 31.Qf3 Rd5 32.Rxd5 Qxd5 33.Qd1 d2 34.Re2 Rb2 35.h4 c5 36.Kh2 c4 37.Re3 Qd4 38.a5 c3 0-1

The final day

Going into the last round, then, the top three teams were finally matched on match points and Manx Liberty had 55 game points, as did the Sharks, while Wood Green had 54½. But this did not mean that Wood Green had blown it; arguably they were still slight favourites, because their last round opponent Blackthorne, a mid- to lower-table team even with a full team, were below strength and very likely to lose heavily.

Not so Manx Liberty and the Sharks. The Sharks were paired against Cheddleton, until recently a team they would not have been expected to beat at all, let alone by a large score. The Sharks played a good match, and for the third time over the weekend they won by 5-3, but this was never going to be enough. Alas, they had probably lost the title race by not piling on the game points against Barnet Knights.

Manx Liberty were to play White Rose, a team with three GMs and reasonable strength in depth, including a woman grandmaster on board 8. Their challenge was to match the number of game points made by Wood Green, or at least to be just half a point behind (since if game points were tied, then the next tie-break would favour them by virtue of having beaten Wood Green).

Easier said than done. Near ruthless against lesser lights, Wood Green had shot into a 4½ – ½ lead against Blackthorne in around three hours. But Manx gave it a good shot. Their middle to lower boards were in very good shape, and Rasmus Svane emulated his brother's achievement on the previous day in beating a former three times British champion.

R Svane - J Rowson

4NCL (First Division) Round 11, 6th May 2024

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Bb7 5.Bg2 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 a5 7.0-0 0-0 8.a3 Bxd2 9.Qxd2 d6 10.Qd3



10...a4 ?! This does prevent a b2-b4 squeeze on the queenside. But the question is really what the long-term plan might be for defending this pawn, because it is easily enough attacked with a queen and knight on c3, and light squared bishops can be exchanged at White's convenience. In the game Rowson plays for e6-e5, so as to tackle that d4-pawn and hopefully then establish a knight on c5. But planning the game around protecting and justifying the pawn on a4 seems to cause more headaches than simply allowing b2-b4 would have done.

11.Nc3 Ra5 I hope I won't spoil things by saying that this rook does not suddenly switch over to the kingside to deliver a mating attack.

12.Qc2 Qe8 13.Rfd1 Na6 14.Rac1 h6 15.h3 Ba8 16.e4 e5



This is according to Black's plan to get his knight to c5. If White were simply to play d4-d5 or dxe5, this would quite justify Black's play. But White cannot be forced to do this, and Black is reluctant to play ...exd4 since after Nxd4 another piece moves into the centre, and White might threaten to break through with e4-e5 (a point White reinforces with his next move). So a tense situation remains in the centre, but while Black shuffles he has to watch out for the consequences of Nd5 on every move, and White has another idea for resolving the tension at the right moment, as we shall see on move 20.

17.Re1 Nh7 18.h4 Prevents Black from playing ...Ng5 with exchanges. It is the old maxim of keeping pieces on when playing with a stable space advantage.

18...Bb7? This looks like part of a plan to solve the problem of the bishop by rerouting it to the now vacated g4 square, but it does not work in the light of Svane's resolute action. It was better, says you-know-who, to return with 18...Nf6.

19.Nd5 Bc8



20.c5! A thematic breakthrough. Instead of simply exchanging directly on e5, thus allowing c5 to be occupied by a black knight, White first forces a black pawn to occupy the c5-square. Although it temporarily becomes an extra pawn, it is doubled and typically weak. Moreover, in this particular position questions of security then arise over those black pieces on the queenside.

20...bxc5 21.dxe5 dxe5 22.Bf1 Nb8 23.Qc3 Nb8 Black hurries to reroute the knight to c6, but pity that poor rook on a5, whose role in life is now to defend the c5-pawn as well as the a4-pawn.

24.Nxc7 Qe7 25.Nd5 Qd6 26.Red1 This prompts a losing blunder, but either 26.Ne3 or 26.Nd2 is better. In the latter case, Black should surrender the c5-pawn while he can (26...Ra7 27.Qxc5 Qxc5 28.Rxc5 Nd4) and hope that White will have practical difficulties in converting his queenside majority. The text move is less strong because it lacks a direct threat, and allows Black time to play 26...Nf6. Perhaps both players thought that 27.Nd2 would be especially strong here, but the engines show that 27...Bxa6 28.Bxa6 Rxa6 29.Qxc5 Nd4 is an improved version of the above line, and Black has at least some form of compensation for the pawn deficit.

26...Qb8? 27 Ne7+! 1-0

This is the sort of controlled chess one expects from Manx Liberty on a good day. Most of Svane's team mates also had a good day. But a one-move blunder turned a much

better position into a much worse one on board 8; and then - Shirov lost!

A Shirov - G Jones, 4NCL (First Division) Round 11, 6th May 2024



To all appearances this is very good for Black, who has plenty of scope for his rook and no apparent pawn weaknesses. But objectively it is still about equal, because the natural 30...Re2 would not achieve so much. The point is that White plays 31.Nb3 to neutralize the immediate threats on the second rank, and then starts to move his knight on f2 around. Ideally, he would do this after playing h4 first, but it is not the end of the world even if the h2-pawn drops. For example, after 31...g5 32.Nd3 Rxh2 32.Nf2! cuts off the rook, and now White is free to play Ba5xc7. 31...a5 is playable but White can play 32.a4 without immediate catastrophe and Black will then have to worry about a passed white a-pawn.

Personally, I should think that if I got such a nice-looking position against Shirov I could hardly restrain myself from playing the 'active' 30 ...Re2, and then might get carried away to defeat. But Gawain is admirably calm, or perhaps more accurately, forces Shirov to keep his calm. He leaves the rook on e8, and thus retains the option of playing ...Be2, which means that White's knight has to remain on a5. His pragmatism is shortly to be rewarded, but for an altogether different reason.

30...h6 31.h4 Kf7 Simply 33.Kg1 is best, say the engines, who do not see a constructive plan for White, but nor any breakthrough for Black. But Shirov doesn't know - perhaps his team will need him to win? Not having a clear plan *and* not knowing what result is required is quite an unwelcome combination. He at least explores the option of putting a knight on f4 – and loses outright.

32.Nh3?? Bg2+! It is a piece for a piece – but Black is handed the second rank on a platter, and without the bishop, White's pawns could hardly be more difficult to defend.

33.Kxg2 Re2+ 34.Kf3 Rxd2 35.Nf4 Rxb2 36.Nc6 Ke8
37.Ng6 Rxa2 0-1

So it came to pass that Manx Liberty won by “only” 5½-2½ while Wood Green won by 6½-1½. Wood Green thus won the division by half a game point.

As their captain said, there was hardly any sense of inevitability about their victory, and of course they did lose a match over the weekend, unlike their title rivals. But if one were to seek any lessons as to why Caissa preferred them, but only on game points, perhaps it was precisely that they did not give away anything easily. Even in this generally uninspired final weekend, they still scored highly against lower-rated opposition, they did not lose with White, and there were no big swings in any individual game. Any opponent still had to play a complete game in order to win against any of them.

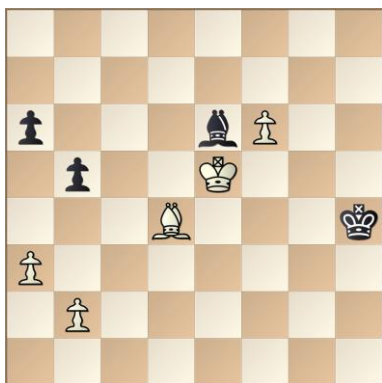
As for Manx, they will be back. I gather that they have recruited Shreyas Royal for their team next year, and so you see, plans are under way *as we speak*.

The ageing annotator makes his peace

All right! I will show you an interesting moment that would have gone unnoticed but for those engines, and I will just have to try to construct some narrative around it.

The moment also played a key role in determining the relegation spots in division 2. As reported last time, this came down to the aforementioned Caissa choosing between Anglian Avengers and SchachAttack. After the Avengers won their last three matches to order, Caissa decreed that SchachAttack should at least have to draw with division winners Barbican. This they managed to do, but only after Barbican missed their opportunity to win this endgame.

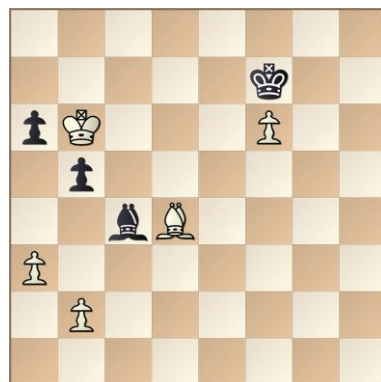
J Pigott - K Nicholas, 4NCL (Second Division) Round 11, 6th May 2024



I was nonchalantly wandering around the bar, and became aware that there were a number of relegation-placed teams who were channeling unusually supporting vibes to the Barbican cause, much more so than was the actual Barbican captain. They were also losing faith in the said cause. Indeed, while Barbican (John Pigott, playing White) had been winning this game earlier, now this position had been reached which the engines say is drawn. Black has time to bring his king to g6 to stop the f6-pawn advancing, and although White’s king can march to the queenside and win a pawn, it will be no good if he is just left with a single a-pawn. In that case, Black will have time to march his king to a8 while the bishop prevents f6-f7, and that will be a draw even if his bishop needs to sacrifice itself for the f-pawn.

It was assumed that Black was drawing after all sensible moves, say either of 42...Bc4 and 42...Bb3. However, similar though they may appear, only one of these draws, and the engines instantly when wild when Black chose the losing option. Here is your task: which leads to which? Why does the difference matter? And generally: what on earth is going on?

Answer: **42...Bc4** offers potential protection to the weak pawn on a6, and *loses*. Fortunately for them, SchachAttack got away with this. After **43.Kd6 Kg5 44.Kc5 Kg6 45.Kb6 Kf7**



John could not see how 46.Kxa6 could win after 46...b4+ 47.Ka5 bxa3 48.bxa3 Ke6, followed by the king march to the corner (and 47.Kb6 bxa3 48.bxa3 Bb3! also brings the white king too far back). So concerned he was about allowing ...b4 that he settled on playing **46.b4?**, which allowed a draw on the spot after **46...Bb3 47.Kxa6 Ba4**. And so SchachAttack lived to compete again in division 2 next year.

For the win, John had to notice that after 46.Kxa6 b4+ 47.Ka5! bxa3 he should instead play 48.b4! Now he has a passed b-pawn as well as a f-pawn, and Black cannot draw by sacrificing a bishop for either of the pawns. All the while, that Black a3-pawn can simply be left where it is; it

Cotswold Chess Congress 2024 Report by Michael Ashworth



Michael Ashworth

cannot be helped, and crucially it does not distract White's bishop from protecting f6 while his own b-pawn advances.

Now, why would 42...Bb3 have made all the difference? The real lesson from the above line is that Black's drawing chances are all to do with timing ...b5-b4 correctly. It will always be the case that ...b4 can be played without immediately losing, since it will always be unthinkable for White to play axb4 when Black can play ...Bc4 and ...Bb5. But what matters is that ...b4 must be played when it creates a *real* threat of ...bxa3, because there are various lines when ...bxa3 can be met by b2-b4, winning, instead of bxa3, drawing.

The reason why 42...Bc4? loses is that there is never a good earlier moment to time ...b5-b4. Had Black tried 45.Kb6 b4, then White would retreat with 46.Kc5, and because he also attacks the bishop on c4, he would still win a pawn in a way which also allows him to create a passed b-pawn (and there is no miracle save with 46...bxa3 47.Kxc4 a2 48.b4).

Now we see why 42...Bb3! would draw. After 43.Kd6 Kg5 44.Kc5 Kg6 45.Kb6 b4! 46.Kxa6 (46.axb4? Bc4) bxa3 White cannot play 47.b2-b4 because the bishop on b3 blocks him from doing so; and recapturing on a3 leads to a draw for the above reasons. 42...Bb3 is the move, because it enables ...b4 and ...bxa3 without enabling White to reply b2-b4.

One more point. Since White has no need to hurry, could he retreat his bishop to c3, in case that makes any difference to Black's drawing resource ...b4? Alas, it does not make enough of a difference. If it were there already, it would enable White to be two pawns up after 45.Kb6 b4! 46.Bxb4 Kxf6 47.Kxa6, but again the position is drawn because the rook pawn is of the wrong colour; and so the black king has time to walk to a8 and his bishop can always sacrifice itself for White's b-pawn at the right moment. It is not quite Walther vs Fischer from the latter's '60 Memorable Games', because then White even had the 'right' coloured rook pawn and still, famously, let it slip to a draw. As if there were not already enough reasons to avoid opposite coloured bishop endings.

That, then, is my final weekend selection. But all the games are available on the 4NCL website, including those in divisions 3 and 4 for those who are interested; and let's hope that another closely fought season will be soon upon us.

During the May bank holiday weekend (25th to 27th May) the 54th Cotswold Chess Congress was held at King's School in Gloucester. Across the three sections (Open, Major and Minor) more than 125 players competed over what was a successful weekend of chess.

We were delighted with the number of junior players who entered the congress this year, with several of them playing up a section to challenge themselves against the tournament's strongest players, which is great to see.

Open Section

The Open was FIDE-rated this year, which helped to attract more players to enter the event. A total of 52 players entered the Open, the highest number in recent years. The prize winners in the Open were as follows (names of junior prize winners are shown in **bold**):

Joint 1st place (5/6): David Spence, Thomas Brown

Joint 3rd place (4½/6): Michael Ashworth, **George Zhao**

Gloucestershire Champion: Michael Ashworth

Rating Prizes

Joint junior prize: **Elis Denele Dicen** (4/6), **Ruben Nangalia Evans** (4/6)

1600 - 1799 rating range: Abhishek Pradhan (3/6)

1800 - 1830 rating range: Jaehyun Sung (3/6)

1831 - 1880 rating range: **Adithya Vaidyanathan** (4/6)
(and joint junior winner)

1881 - 1950 rating range: **Kushal Jakhria** (4/6) (and joint junior winner)

1951 - 2000 rating range: Bruce Baer (3½/6)

As well as those mentioned above, 11 other junior players entered the Open section, meaning that around a third of the entrants in the section in total were juniors:

Jan Murawski

Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham

Qixiang Han

Dylan Wastney

Zack Norris

Ayan Pradhan

Lindsay Pyun

Yiwen Ding

Qixuan Han

Akshath Shivakumar

Florence Spirling

Major Section

The Major section had a total of five juniors competing, two of whom played well enough to earn prizes.

Joint 1st place (5/6): Clinton Wells, Brendan O’Gorman, **Emma Kong**

Rating Prizes

Junior prize: **William Yu** (3½/6) (next highest placed junior after Emma Kong)

1400 - 1599 rating range: Nick Holmes (2½/6)

1600 - 1682 rating range: Sam Wood (4/6)

1683 - 1712 rating range: Derek Edwards (4/6)

The other juniors in the Major section were:

Krish Keshari

Mitchell Darkes

Robert Lacey

Minor Section

1st place: **Oleksii Pustyntsev** (5½/6)

2nd place: William Purlé (5/6)

Joint 3rd place (4½/6): Stephen Williams, Patrick Sartain, John Sleggs, **Siyao Ou**

Rating Prizes

Junior prize: **Siyao Ou** (4½/6) (next highest placed junior after Oleksii Pustyntsev)

0 - 1000 rating range: Edwin Brown (2/6)

1001 - 1300 rating range: **Thomas Burns** (2½/6)

1301 - 1410 rating range: **Yicheng Ding** (3/6)

1411 - 1469 rating range: William Taplin (3½/6)

1470 - 1540 rating range: John Sleggs (4½/6)

The other juniors in the Minor section were:

Siyuan Ou

David Purle

Jaime Ashworth

Ben Hughes

Yihua Ding

In total 30 juniors entered the congress. It was encouraging to see plenty of juniors winning prizes across all three sections. As a result of receiving a grant from the John Robinson Youth Trust, we were pleased to be able to give £15 back to each junior on their entrance fees, as well as increasing the junior prize winnings to £240 in total. We hope that we will continue to see junior chess on the congress circuit thriving in the months and years to come, and we look forward to hosting an equally successful congress next year.

The 5th EACU FIDE-Rated Congress by Adrian Elwin

The Open section of the 5th EACU FIDE-Rated Congress was a triumph for the next generation, with half the main prizes going to juniors; teenager Rishi Vijayakumar won with 4½ out of 5 ahead of IM Alan Merry on 4, with two more juniors, Ruqayyah Rida and Adam Nawalaniec, sharing 3rd place with 3½ with Declan Shafi and Martin Walker. Subject to confirmation, Ruqayyah as well as Ethan Pang gained enough rating points to achieve the title of Women’s Candidate Master and Candidate Master respectively.

The Under 1950 section was won by James Briginshaw with 4½ out of 5, with Daniel Thompson on 4 and Graeme Jones and Okwose Marc Obi on 3½.

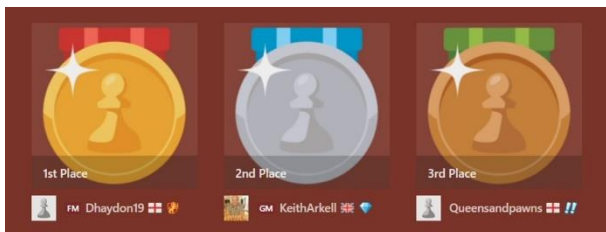
The Under 1650 was won by Stephen Pride with 4 points, with Gert de Block and Matthew Farley sharing 2nd on 3½.

Thanks to the Patrick Ribbands Legacy Trust we were able to offer an additional junior prize in each section, which resulted in nearly 30% of all entrants being juniors. In the Open this increased Ruqayyah’s and Adam’s prizes. In the Under 1950 the winner was Advik Saxena, and in the Under 1650 the winner was Oliver Ferris. Patrick, who was a mainstay of the EACU scene for many years, passed away in 2021.

FEATURES

ECF Charity Marathon for Ukraine 2024

The ECF ran a 24-hour charity online chess marathon from 1st to 2nd June in aid of the British Red Cross's Emergency Ukraine Appeal. Once again the marathon proved hugely popular, with over 300 players taking part from the ECF Open club on Chess.com. This year's event included many grandmasters and international masters, providing a rare opportunity for hundreds of players at all levels to play opponents of the highest standard, including British champions and titled players from England and overseas.



GM Danny Gormally took an early lead on Friday afternoon but was overtaken by FM David Haydon, who led throughout the night and into Sunday to win the event with an amazing total of 765 points scored, with 206 wins, 21 draws and only 13 losses out of 240 games played. David was followed throughout by previous year's winner Keith Arkell, who led the chasing pack with a final score of 650 points, which was highly impressive but not enough to catch David this year. Jude Shearsby came in third on 455 points, followed closely by Like Lau in fourth on 421 points and Charlie Storey in fifth on 420 points.

The top 30 finishers were:

No.	Fed	Title	Name	Rating	Score
1	GBR	FM	David Haydon	2645	765
2	GBR	GM	Keith Arkell	2392	650
3	GBR		Jude Shearsby	2255	455
4	HKG		Luke (Lut Yin) Lau	2456	421
5	GBR	FM	Charles Storey	2481	420
6	GBR	IM	Matthew Wadsworth	2607	361
7	GBR	CM	Jan Murawski	2264	329
8	GBR	IM	Richard Pert	2675	317
9	SGP	CM	Junior Tay	2264	307
10	GBR	IM	Richard Bates	2365	299
11	GBR		NottheBishopSacrifice	2343	297
12	GBR		Robert Starley	2157	294
13	UKR		Andrii Cherepaniak	2150	278
14	GBR		AIM Richard L Bowman	1743	275

15	GBR	WFM	gobbles19	2248	228
16	GBR	WFM	GEMdzq	2268	228
17	NOR		upoe610	2162	223
18	UKR		Vladimir Tushinsky	2281	216
19	GBR		CarmelJane	2024	214
20	GBR	FM	Grzegorz Toczec	2436	201
21	GBR		Tiger Tank	2189	200
22	GBR		nasir rizvi	2072	194
23	GBR		Andrew Brett	2140	192
24	UKR		Tatarinov_Maxim	2271	189
25	GBR		Andrew Grillage	1874	179
26	GBR		Andrew McGettigan	2069	174
27	FRA		Vincent S	1990	166
28	GBR		Neil Druggan	1708	164
29	UKR	GM	Mikhail Golubev	2493	163
30	GBR		Gary Fischer	1753	157

You can find full details of the event at the link here:

<https://www.chess.com/tournament/live/arena/ecf-charity-marathon-for-ukraine-3420293>

Over 6600 games were played over the 24 hours, with a PGN download from the event at the link here:

https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/ECF_Charity_Marathon_for_Ukraine_2024-06-01-16-59.pgn

The event was streamed live over the 24 hours and can be played back at:

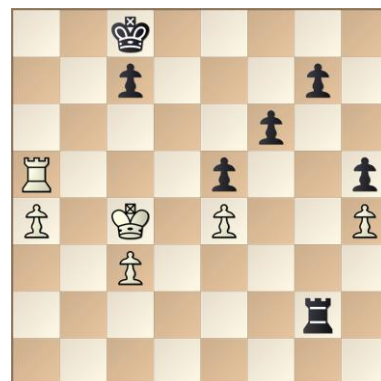
https://www.twitch.tv/WIM_natasharegan

The stream was organised by WIM Natasha Regan and featured a top class commentary team.

Kevin Thurlow has kindly provided the following two game extracts.

Kevin Thurlow (1896) – Keith Arkell (2431) A40

Live Chess Chess.com, 01.06.2024



Despite the pawn minus and the fact mine are all isolated, I thought I had chances here.

50.Ra8+ Kb7 51.Rg8 Rg4 52.Kd5 c6+ 53.Kc5 Rxe4
 54.Rxg7+ Ka6 55.Kxc6 Rxa4 56.Rg6 Rf4 57.Kd5 Kb5
 58.c4+ Kb4 59.c5 Rd4+ 60.Kc6 f5 61.Kb6 f4 62.c6 f3
 63.Rf6 e4 64.c7 Rc4 65.Kb7 Kc3 66.c8Q Rxc8 67.Kxc8 The
 white king is a long way from the action...

67...Kd2 68.Kd7 Ke2 69.Ke6 f2 70.Ke5 e3 71.Ke4 f1Q?
 71...Kd2 draws: 72.Rf4 e2 73.Rxf2 Kd1 74.Rxe2 Kxe2
 75.Kf4 Kd3 76.Kg5 Ke4 77.Kxh5 Kf5 78.Kh6 Kf6 and either
 Black gets the king to h8 or he continues to track the white
 king.

72.Rxf1 Kxf1 73.Kxe3 Ke1 73...Kg2 74.Kf4 Kh3 75.Kg5.

74.Kf4 (A win at last – this is really happening. There’s
 daylight between the kings.) 74...Ke2 75.Kg5 Ke3 76.Kxh5
 Ke4 77.Kg6 Ke5 78.h5 Ke6 79.h6 Ke7 80.h7 1–0

I’m guessing that’s not going in ‘Arkell’s Endings, Part 2’!
 This led to wild celebrations in this part of Somerset, as
 my lifetime score against Keith is now +1=0-21. In
 fairness, he was probably shattered by already playing for
 about six hours, and even a mastermind can go wrong
 occasionally. Next target is to get something other than
 zero in a proper game against Keith.

Kevin Thurlow (1871) – David Haydon (2657) D51
 Live Chess Chess.com, 02.06.2024



Stockfish says play Rh1 and h4. I thought it’s time to go
 for central play.

27.d5 exd5 28.Nxd5 Bxd5 (he has to eliminate the white
 horse) 29.Rxd5 Rxd5 30.Rxd5 Rxd5 31.exd5 Qxe3+?
 31...Qe5.

32.Kxe3 Ke7 33.Kd4 Kd6 A classic Zugzwang position.
 Nobody wants to move the king.

34.g3 g6 35.f4 gxf4 36.gxf4 a5 37.a4 bxa4 38.Kxc4 But
 now I can move the king.

38...g5 39.fxg5 fxg5 40.Kb5 Kxd5 41.Kxa4? Ke4? 41...Kc4!

draws.

42.Kxa5 Kf3 43.b4 Kg3 44.b5 Kxh3 45.b6 g4 46.b7 g3
 47.b8Q g2 With a black pawn on f2 or h2 it would be a
 draw. Luckily it is on g2.

48.Qh8+ Kg3 49.Qg7+ Kf2 50.Qf6+ Ke3 51.Qg5+ Kf2
 52.Qf4+ Ke2 53.Qg3 Kf1 54.Qf3+ Kg1 55.Kb4 Kh2 56.Qf2
 Kh3 57.Kc3 Kh2 58.Qh4+ Kg1 59.Kd2 Kf1 60.Qf4+
 60.Qe1#! Oops - missed that in the time scramble.

60...Kg1 61.Ke2 Kh1 62.Qh4+ Kg1 63.Kf3 Kf1 64.Qf2# 1–
 0

It’s nice to beat a superstar. About four games later I lost
 to someone under 1200. Oh well. It is more evidence for
 the random nature of blitz.

When my father was teaching me chess he emphasized
 that the most important part of chess was the end game.
 He was right. On the Sunday morning I played several
 consecutive 2500s, which can lead to a feeling of gloom,
 but you need to shake it off. I did wonder aloud, ‘Are there
 any weak players here?’ The obvious answer was ‘No’ as
 the next game appeared. ‘2800! Oh – it’s Michael Adams’.
 I do like a challenge, but that went as expected. You need
 to be fearless.

It was an interesting and enjoyable event. I also found
 myself playing fellow Somerset resident Sasha Matlak,
 having already played him four times in the last year in
 Somerset competitions. No wins yet, but maybe next
 season...

I am steeling myself to go through the commentary link
 on the ECF site. Last year Matthew Sadler looked briefly
 at one of my games, made a few nice comments, then let
 out an anguished ‘NOOOOO!!!!’ as I blundered horribly. I
 probably never even noticed it was a blunder.

Great British Chess Players by John Nunn



Michael Adams (1971-)

Michael ('Mickey') Adams was born on 17th November 1971 in Truro, Cornwall. His chess talent manifested at an early age, and he won several junior events in England before venturing onto the

international stage with a silver medal at the World Under 16 Championship in 1987. In that same year, aged 15, he became the world's youngest international master (at that time). Only two years later he also secured the grandmaster title.

Adams won the British Championship eight times in the period 1989-2023 and, if he is motivated to do so, it seems likely that he could exceed Penrose's total of ten titles. In 2016, his winning score of 10/11 equalled the highest-ever total and was 1½ points ahead of second-placed David Howell. He has also played well in Olympiads, mostly on top board, and in his 13 consecutive appearances for the England team he secured an individual bronze in 2004 and silver in 2014. He had even better results in the European Team Championship, with individual golds in 2001 and 2011.

Adams has taken part in several World Championship cycles, achieving good results in several without ever gaining the title itself. He came closest in the 2004 knock-out event, where he reached the final before losing in the tie-break games to Kasimdzhanov. Apart from the world championship, his individual tournament successes are too numerous to list, but the highlight was probably Dortmund 2013, where his first place ahead of Kramnik secured a rating performance of 2925. Now aged 52, he plays less than before but remains very successful, and in 2023 won the British Championship, the World 50+ Championship and the London Chess Classic.

Adams has a natural talent for chess which is rarely surpassed. His pieces seem to drift onto the correct squares, so that his positions always have a sound foundation. This is reflected in his classical choice of openings. He has always favoured 1.e4 as White, while with Black his main openings have been the Caro-Kann and 1...e5 against 1.e4, and the Nimzo-Indian, Queen's Indian and Queen's Gambit Declined against 1.d4.

Coupled with a sharp eye for tactics, he is a truly universal player, equally at home in a long grinding ending or a sacrificial attack. The game below, against a world-class player, shows the latter side of his play.



Michael Adams - Veselin Topalov

Wijk aan Zee 2006

Sicilian Defence, Scheveningen Variation

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Be2

This quiet line against the Najdorf was always Karpov's favourite. Rather than enter pure Najdorf lines, Topalov prefers to switch to a Scheveningen.

6...e6 7.0-0 Be7 8.a4 The modern way to play the Classical Scheveningen involves a4 to restrict Black's queenside play.

8...Nc6 9.Be3 0-0 10.f4 Qc7 11.Kh1 Re8 Kasparov tended to play this way, although there are other lines for Black such as 11...Nxd4 12.Qxd4 Bd7 followed by ...Bc6.

12.Bf3 Bf8 Kasparov played 12...Rb8 several times, but there's nothing wrong with Topalov's choice. Black's position is solid, and it's not easy for White to prove a significant advantage.

13.Qd2 The main alternative is 13.Nb3, after which the earlier game Adams-Topalov, San Luis 2005 finished 13...b6 14.e5 dxe5 15.fxe5 Nd7 16.Bxc6 Qxc6 17.Nd4 Qb7 18.Qh5 g6 19.Qh4 Nxe5 20.Ne4 Be7 21.Ng5 Bxg5 22.Bxg5 f5 23.Rae1 Qd5 ½-½.

13...Na5 The most popular move here, but in my view it is more logical to play in the centre by 13...Nxd4 14.Bxd4

e5. After 15.Bf2 exf4 16.Bd4 Qe7! 17.Qxf4 Be6 White has only a faint edge.

14.b3 Forced if White wishes to claim any advantage. The c3-knight is weakened, but the knight on a5 is temporarily out of play.

14...Rb8? Black must be accurate, and after this inferior move White has a dangerous initiative. 14...d5? is also wrong, since after 15.e5 Nd7 16.Nce2 Black cannot play 16...f6? due to 17.Nxe6! Rxe6 18.Bxd5, and White won in D. Navara-Pedersen, Morso 2002. 14...Bd7 is best, although 15.Nde2 Rac8 16.Bd4 still favours White.



15.Rad1? This position occurs nine times in MegaDatabase 2024, and not one White player found the tactical line 15.e5! dxe5 16.fxe5 Nd7 (16...Qxe5 17.Bf4) 17.Ne4 Nxe5 18.Bf4 f6 19.Qf2 Bd7 20.Bh5 Red8 21.Qg3, with a devastating attack in return for the pawn.

15...Nc6 Best, or else Black runs into e5 next move.

16.Bf2 This renews the threat of e5. The immediate 16.e5 dxe5 17.Nxc6 bxc6 18.fxe5 Nd5 leads nowhere, as the attack on e3 means that White has no time for Ne4. The computer suggests the intriguing 16.a5!?, which is certainly not the most obvious move.

16...Nd7?! Preventing e5, but this is too passive. 16...Bd7 was best, also preventing 17.e5? since after 17...dxe5 18.Nxc6 Black can play 18...Bxc6. In this case White would only have an edge.

17.Bg3! Once again e5 is threatened.

17...Nxd4 18.Qxd4 b5



19.axb5?! White again misses the chance for a powerful 19.e5! when 19...dxe5 (19...b4 20.Ne4 d5 21.Ng5 Qxc2 22.f5 gives White an enormous attack) 20.fxe5 bxa4 21.Nd5! Qxc2 22.Qf4 Qf5 (22...exd5 23.Be4) 23.Qxf5 exf5 24.e6 fxe6 25.Bxb8 Nxb8 26.Bh5! leads to a favourable ending for White.

19...axb5 20.b4 Now 20.e5? b4 21.Ne4 d5 22.Ng5 Ba6! is good for Black, as his bishop is developed to an active square with gain of time. Mickey instead plays to nullify Black's queenside activity.

20...g6? This phase of the game revolves around whether White can play a favourable e5. Topalov's casual move allows the central push, which could have been prevented by 20...e5 21.Qd2 exf4 22.Nd5 Qb7 23.Qxf4 Ne5 with a roughly level position. Trying to exchange queens by 20...Qc4 or 20...Qb6 was also possible.

21.e5 d5 21...Bg7 22.Ne4 d5 23.Nf6+ Nxf6 24.exf6 Bf8 25.Rfe1 is also unpleasant for Black.

22.f5! Once given the chance, Mickey plays the attack superbly.

22...gxf5 22...Qc4 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.Qxc4 dxc4 25.Nd5 exd5 26.Bxd5+ Kh8 27.e6 and 22...Qb6 23.fxe6 fxe6 24.Nxd5 exd5 25.Bxd5+ Kh8 26.Qh4 Be7 27.Qh6 are even worse, so Black may as well accept the sacrifice.

23.Nxd5! Qc4 23...exd5? 24.e6 Qb6 25.exf7+ Kxf7 26.Bh5+ is hopeless.

24.Qd2! 24.Nf6+?! Nxf6 25.exf6 Qxd4 26.Rxd4 e5! is less strong.



24...h6 24...exd5 25.Qg5+! wins after 25...Kh8 26.Bxd5 Qg4 27.Qxg4 fxc4 28.Bxf7 Re7 29.e6 or 25...Bg7 26.Bxd5 Qxc2 27.Bxf7+! Kxf7 28.Qh5+ Kg8 29.Rc1! Qe4 30.Qxe8+.

25.h3! A brilliant quiet move. White strengthens his attack by denying the black queen the g4-square after the sequence ...exd5 Bxd5. Now Black is surprisingly short of constructive moves.

25...exd5 25...Bg7 26.Nf6+ and 25...Bb7 26.Ne3 lose material, while after 25...Kh7 White can again improve his position with the further quiet move 26.c3!. In view of the lack of good alternatives, Black now decides to accept the piece.

26.Bxd5 Qxb4 27.c3 Qc5?! 27...Qe7 was a tougher defence, although 28.Rxf5 Nxe5 29.Rxe5 Be6 30.Bxe6 fxe6 31.Qe2 Bg7 32.Re4 gives White a large advantage due to Black's exposed king.

28.Rxf5 Re6 28...Nxe5 29.Rxe5 Rxe5 30.Bxe5 Rb6 31.Qf4 Qe7 32.Qg3+ Qg5 33.Qf2 wins material.



29.Rxf7! This further sacrifice utterly destroys Black's kingside defences.

29...Nb6 29...Kxf7 30.Qf4+ wins after 30...Ke7 31.Bh4+ or 30...Ke8 31.Bxe6 Nxe5 32.Rd5.

30.Rdf1 By now White has several ways to win. 30.Qf4 was a bit quicker, but the move played is good enough.

30...Nxd5 31.Rxf8+ Qxf8 32.Rxf8+ Kxf8 33.Qxd5 White is not only ahead on material but retains a strong attack.

33...Ke8 34.Bh4 Bd7 35.Bf6 b4 36.Qe4 Bc8 37.cxb4 Rb7 38.Qg6+ Kd7 39.Qxh6 The last enemy pawn bites the dust.

39...Kc7 40.Qf4 Kb8 41.h4 Rc7 42.h5 1-0

Endgames All Club Players Should Know by Glenn Flear



Practical King and Pawn Endgames

I think serious club players have already come across many of the basic principles of king and pawn endgames, perhaps by reading the early chapters of many an

endgame book. However, getting the priorities sorted between such thoughts as 'having the more active king', 'the superior pawn structure', 'more dangerous passed pawn', 'reserve tempi', or 'is there a Zugzwang hereabouts?' isn't evident, and then there is the need to weigh up time against prophylaxis. So 'simple' endgames are often not simple at all!

Playing a great deal can help hone one's skills, especially if one then makes the effort to go back and examine any resulting endgames to find the salient points. Another way to boost our wisdom is to play through some notable examples from master games, and try to determine why certain moves and plans were chosen.

So this month I have chosen a series of practical positions where the decisions are made after taking into account various general considerations, but the main skill required is to calculate plausible continuations and keep doing so throughout!

The difference between success and failure in many an endgame often comes down to determining in advance what will be going on after a forthcoming process of simplification. So our analysis of any king and pawn endgame needs to begin well before it actually arises on the board! So many inexperienced players trade the remaining pieces with little thought, and only then start to analyse the resulting simplified position, but by then it's often too late!

I dealt in some detail with this subject in the January 2024 edition of *ChessMoves*, but I can't help including another example in which the English player was rather fortunate to save the game, and this had a significant effect on the final standings in the recent European Seniors 50+ Team Championships in Slovenia.

Bellia, F – Conquest, S
Terme Catez 2024



White has an extra pawn, plus targets in the black camp, and so it seems his winning chances are quite good.

51.Be3 Bf4 52.a3 Here 52.Bxf4 gxf4 53.Kc3! is strong. We note that although 53...Bxe4 54.fxe4 would then leave Black with a protected passed pawn (often a handy asset), the white king is in its square, so it's not so dangerous. On the other hand, Black will be unable to cope with White's pair of widely spaced passed pawns.

52...Bh7 53.Kd2? Sloppy play. Bellia overlooks that now the pawn up king and pawn endgame isn't winning.

In the case of 53.Bxf4 gxf4 54.Kc3 he unpins, and is now ready for his knight to play an important role. With two passed pawns it looks highly promising for White, but Black's position nevertheless retains resources.

The most precise way forward seems to be to obtain a superior version of this idea with 53.a4! Bg6 54.Bxf4 gxf4 55.a5!, fixing the weakness on a6 before releasing the pin.

53...Bxe4! 54.fxe4 Bxe3+ 55.Kxe3 Kc5 56.Kd3 a5 White can't make progress as there is no route into the black camp, and after 57.Kc3 a4 it's Zugzwang! 58.Kd3 Kc6 59.Kc2 Kb6 is dead drawn.

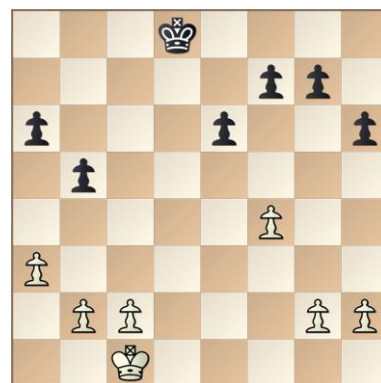
So Bellia tried...

57.a4 Kb4 58.c5 Kxc5 59.Kc3 Kd6= ...but at this point the game was agreed drawn, as both players understood that there was no chance to make progress. ½–½

The moral of this tale is to be aware of the consequences of simplification into a pure king and pawn endgame, as an extra pawn isn't a guarantee of a win. Don't jump to conclusions, as concrete variations can at times throw up exceptions to general rules.

Here's a game where Black missed a chance to save himself.

Tal, M – Djurasevic, B
Varna 1958

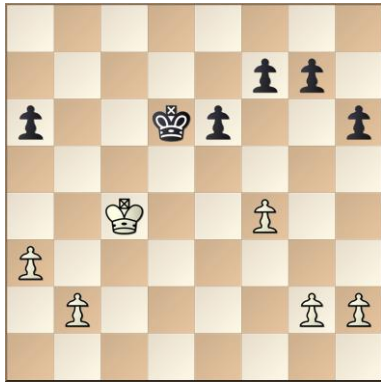


Tal happily sought out this king and pawn endgame (partly because there was nothing doing with other plans in the middlegame). He certainly has chances to create problems for his opponent due to his easier to manipulate majority, but I doubt that anyone (even the future World Champion!) would have been sure of the outcome at this point.

31.Kd2 Kd7 I was surprised to see that after 31...g5 32.fxg5 hxg5 33.h3+— the engine wasn't convinced at first that White is winning (as Tal had asserted), but after a short period it changed its assessment, as White will obtain two widely spaced passed pawns. So continuing 33...f5 34.g3 f4 35.gxf4 gxf4 (two fine-looking passed pawns for Black, indeed, but no prospects of competing against White's two widely spaced passed pawns, the second of which is about to appear on the board) 36.b3 Ke7 37.c4 bxc4 38.bxc4 e5 39.h4 e4 40.h5 Kf6 41.c5, and now it becomes evident that Black is going to be far too slow.

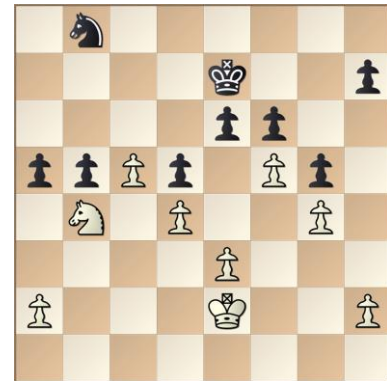
32.Kd3 Kd6 33.c4 As a rule it makes sense to obtain an outside passed pawn if possible, and this move seems to lead to this end.

33...bxc4+ 34.Kxc4



Pillsbury, H – Gunsberg, I

Hastings 1895



34...e5? This fails to make enough threats with the kingside majority.

Correct is 34...g5! 35.g3 (after 35.fxg5 hxg5 36.h3 e5 37.g3 f5 the thrust 38.h4?? now fails to 38...f4!) 35...gxf4 36.gxf4 e5 37.fxe5+ Kxe5=, and Black has a passed pawn and sufficient counterplay to hold the balance.

35.fxe5+ Kxe5 36.b4 f5 37.b5 axb5+ 38.Kxb5 f4 39.a4 g5 40.a5 g4 Or 40...Kd6 41.Kc4 Kc6 42.Kd4 (now the general rule of an outside passed pawn can be tested - White is going to enter into the heart of Black's pawns, but he still has to be vigilant) 42...Kb5 43.Ke4 Kxa5 44.Kf5 Kb4 45.h3! (45.Kg6?? would be an expensive error: 45...g4+ 45...Kc3 46.Kg6 Kd2 47.Kxh6 Ke3 48.Kxg5+-.

41.Kc4! A decisive switchback to contain the black majority.

If Black had continued the struggle then 41...Ke4 (41...Kd6 42.Kd4 Kc6 43.Ke4 f3 44.gxf3 gxf3 45.Kxf3 Kb5 and Black's king will arrive too late) 42.a6 f3 43.a7 f2 44.a8Q+- (it's check!) 44...Ke3 45.Qa3+ Ke2 46.Qd3+ Ke1 47.Qe3+ Kf1 48.Kd3 etc. **1-0**

The following elegant endgame occurred in the last round at Hastings 1895, Pillsbury's most famous tournament victory, with Pillsbury needing to win to stay ahead of Chigorin.

Pillsbury came up with a great combination that led to a winning pawn endgame.

29.c6! One couldn't play this move with any confidence without analysing deeply.

29...Kd6 If 29...axb4 then 30.c7+-.

30.fxe6 Nxc6 If 30...axb4 31.e7 Kxe7 and again 32.c7.

31.Nxc6 Kxc6 32.e4! A strong blow that needed to be calculated before committing himself to c5-c6.

32...dxe4 33.d5+! The two connected passed pawns are decisive here, as Black can't create enough play with his own pawns. However, a hypothetical slight difference in the pawn structure on either wing could easily change the result, which is why calculation is absolutely necessary when it gets sharp!

33...Kd6 34.Ke3 Not such a difficult move this time, but again the only one.

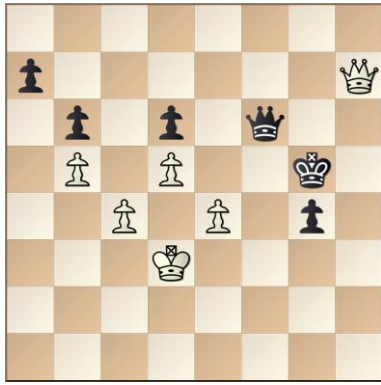
34...b4 35.Kxe4 a4 36.Kd4 h5 Desperation!

37.gxh5 a3 38.Kc4 f5 39.h6 f4 40.h7 1-0

In the following example Alekhine won convincingly enough, but there was another, highly instructive winning plan, outlined in the note to Black's 64th move.

Keres, P – Alekhine, A

Dresden 1936



59.Qg8+ Kf4 60.Qe6 Kg5 61.e5!? Trying to muddy the waters.

If White were instead to go back with 61.Qg8+ then Black could seek shelter with 61...Kh4 62.Qh7+ Kg3, and the passed g-pawn should eventually see him home.

61...Qxe5 62.Qxe5+ dxe5 63.Ke4 Kf6 64.Ke3 Kf5 With a passed pawn duo being mutually supportive Black's king can involve himself elsewhere on other matters. White's pawn structure looks impressive, but can be undermined: 64...Ke7 65.Ke4 (65.Kf2 e4 66.Kg3 e3) 65...Kd6 66.Ke3 Kc7 67.Ke4 Kb7 68.Ke3 (68.Kxe5 g3 69.d6 g2 70.d7 Kc7) 68...a5 69.bxa6+ Kxa6 70.Ke4 Kb7 71.Ke3 Kc7 72.Ke4 Kd6 73.Ke3 b5 74.cxb5 Kxd5, after which Black's king will eliminate the remaining white pawn and then come back over to help the passed pawns advance.

65.Kf2 e4 66.Ke2 g3 67.Ke3 Kg4 Otherwise 67...Ke5 (with the plan outlined above in mind) still works.

The text is a committal move, but naturally Alekhine would have calculated this deeply before allowing his opponent counterplay.

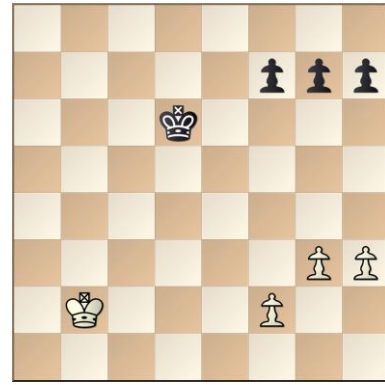
68.d6 g2 69.Kf2 Kh3 70.d7 e3+ 71.Kf3 Worse is 71.Kg1 e2 72.d8=Q e1=Q#.

71...g1=Q 72.d8=Q Qf2+ 73.Ke4 e2 The queen endgame isn't difficult to win, as there is a shelter on f1.

74.Qd7+ Kg2 75.Qg4+ Kf1 0-1

The endgame with three pawns each on the same wing that occurred in the following example has practical significance, as it crops up from time to time.

Kottnauer, C – Thomas, G
London 1947



As a rule, if one king has a head start on its counterpart and can thus invade the opposing camp, then this should lead to a win, but as so often it needs calculating correctly!

44...Kd5 45.Kc2 Ke4 46.Kd2 Kf3 47.Ke1 White defends his pawns for now, but Black has various winning plans.

47...g5 A logical move restricting White's h-pawn advance; however, it isn't the only way.

I remember seeing another winning plan from an analysis of one of my own games: 47...Kg2 48.h4 h5 49.Ke2 (it's worth knowing that Black's advantage is decisive, the plan being to break up White's pawns at the right moment) 49...f6 50.Ke3 f5 51.Ke2 f4 52.gxf4 Kh3 53.Ke3 Kxh4 54.Kf3 Kh3 55.f5 h4 56.Kf4 Kg2 etc.

48.Kf1 h5 49.Kg1 f6!? 50.Kf1 f5 51.h4!? Trying a last chance lunge.

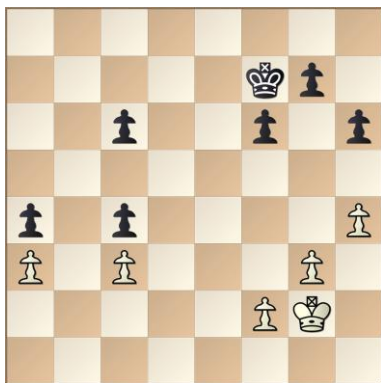
Thomas had no doubt anticipated that following: 51.Kg1 h4 52.gxh4 gxh4 53.Kf1 f4 when there is a decisive Zugzwang, as 54.Kg1 Ke2 55.Kg2 f3+! 56.Kg1 Ke1 is clear.

51...gxh4 52.gxh4 Kg4 53.Kg2 Kxh4 54.Kf3 Kg5? The wrong way, it seems. Correct is 54...Kh3! 55.Kf4 Kg2 56.Kxf5 (56.Kg5 Kxf2) 56...h4.

55.Kg3 f4+ 56.Kh3 Suddenly it becomes evident that White has escaped. A (passed) pawn up doesn't always mean that it's winning! ½-½

King manoeuvres are often required to prepare a Zugzwang, such as by inducing the opposing king onto an inferior square. Always look out for such ideas if the opponent has only limited room available.

Teichmann, R – Blackburne, J
Berlin 1897



The extra pawn can't be used directly, but Black is able to use his king in an instructive manner.

50...Ke6 51.f3 Kf5 52.Kf2 h5 53.Kg2 g5 54.Kh3 Ke5 55.hxg5 fxg5 56.Kg2 Kf5 57.Kh2 Alternatively, 57.Kh3 Ke5 (57...g4+ doesn't work here due to 58.Kg2!) 58.Kg2 Kd5 59.Kh2 Kd6 60.Kh3 Ke6 61.Kg2 Ke5 62.Kh3 and finally 62..h4!.

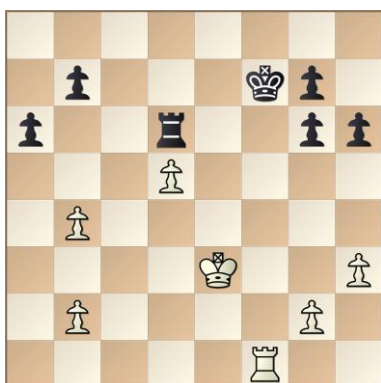
57...Kf6 58.Kg2 Maizelis worked out the way forward after 58.Kh3 at this point: 58...Ke6 59.g4 h4 60.f4 gxf4 61.Kxh4 Ke5 62.g5 Ke4! 63.g6 f3 64.g7 f2 65.g8=Q f1=Q (the queen endgame is winning for Black) 66.Qe6+ Kd3 67.Qxc6 Qf4+ 68.Kh5 Qh2+ 69.Kg4 Qe2+ 70.Kg5 Qe3+ 71.Kh5 Kxc3 72.Qxa4 Qc5+ 73.Kg6 Kb2.

58...Kg6 59.Kh2 h4 60.Kh3 Or 60.gxh4 gxh4 61.Kg2 Kf5 62.Kh3 Kf4, and the outside passed pawn constitutes a decisive advantage.

60...hxg3 61.Kxg3 Kf5 62.Kf2 Kf4 63.Ke2 Kg3 64.Ke3 c5 65.Ke2 Kg2 It's over: e.g. 66.Ke3 Kf1 67.Ke4 Kf2 68.Kf5 Kxf3 69.Kxg5 Ke3+. **0-1**

When in doubt, keep the pieces on!

Botvinnik, M – Flohr, S
Moscow 1944



Here Flohr decided to trade rooks, but this seems to be an error.

43...Rf6 Instead, 43...Ke7 44.Kd4 Rb6 45.Kc5 Rb5+ would have denied White any realistic chances to make progress.

44.Rxf6+ gxf6 45.g4! This star move renders Black's majority rather unwieldy.

Incorrect would be 45.Kd4? due to 45...b6 46.g4 Ke7 47.h4 Kd6 48.Ke4 a5, as this doesn't leave White with any advantage in the race that follows from 49.h5 gxh5 50.gxh5 axb4 51.Kf5 Kxd5 52.Kxf6 Kc4!.

45...Ke7 46.h4 Kd6 47.Ke4 The king goes directly to e4, with the intention of invading via f5.

47...b6 48.h5 gxh5 49.gxh5 a5 50.Kf5 Another way to win is with 50.bxa5 bxa5 51.b3! Kc5 52.Kf5 Kxd5 53.Kxf6 Kd6 54.Kg7 Ke7 55.Kxh6 Kf6 (in such situations, it's worth remembering that White can force the black king to give way) 56.Kh7 Kf7 57.h6 Kf8 58.Kg6 etc.

50...axb4 51.Kxf6 Kxd5 52.Kg6 Ke6 Now 52...Kc4 would be too slow.

53.Kxh6 Kf6 54.b3 Black is in Zugzwang.

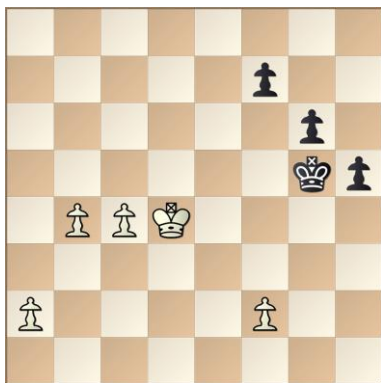
54...Kf7 55.Kg5 Kg7 56.Kf5 Kh6 57.Ke5 Kxh5 58.Kd5 Kg5 59.Kc6 Kf5 60.Kxb6 Ke6 61.Kc5 Kd7 62.Kxb4 Kc6 63.Ka5 Black resigned due to 63...Kb7 64.Kb5 Kc7 65.Ka6 Kb8 66.Kb6 with a book win.

Essentially the golden rule is that with K+P vs K, if the attacking king is on the sixth rank in front of the pawn it's a win. This rule holds true if the pawn is on the b- to g-files (but not on the a- and h-files, when Black can hide in the corner and is saved by stalemate). **1-0**

I found some instructive moments from my own games, which is convenient as I can use some of them in this article! However, as a training exercise, I suggest that you go through your own archives looking for (and then reanalysing) some notable moments in your own endgames.

A race situation doesn't necessarily mean just pushing pawns as fast as they will go; sometimes slowing down the opponent is important.

Flear, G - Ongut, TG
Vaujany 2022



43...h4 44.Ke3! The only winning move.

The 'routine' 44.b5 isn't at all convincing as 44...h3 45.b6 h2 46.b7 h1=Q 47.b8=Q Qh4+ would be far from clear.

44...Kg4 After 44...h3 simply 45.Kf3 kills off any danger.

45.Ke2! Prophylaxis is again the smartest approach.

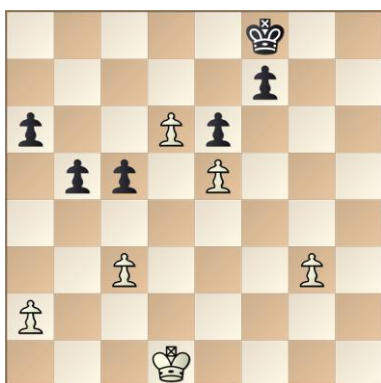
I also thought about 45.f3+ Kg3 46.b5, which your engine will confirm is winning, but it's far more complicated: 46...f5 (or 46...h3 47.b6 h2 48.b7 h1=Q 49.b8=Q+ Kg2 50.Qb2+ Kg3 51.Qe5+ Kg2 52.Qg5+ Kf1 53.Qg3!) 47.b6 f4+ 48.Ke4 h3 49.b7 h2 50.b8=Q h1=Q 51.Qxf4+ Kf2 52.Qd2+ Kg3 53.Qd6+ Kf2 54.Qb6+ Kg3 55.Qxg6+.

45...h3 46.Kf1 Kf3 47.Kg1 With the kingside locked down, White will be able to advance on the queenside without the stress of counting and calculating deep variations.

1-0

Flear, G – Ferrari, L

Cap d'Agde rapid 2013



It soon becomes evident that the protected passed d-pawn will keep Black's king tied down. However, in order to win the white king must participate, but Black has a queenside majority, so there is no easy journey up the kingside. Evidently, something needs to be done on the queenside.

Analysis indicates that despite having a minority of pawns, he can create a second weakness, i.e. a second passed pawn (to overload the defensive king) or the elimination of the whole queenside.

45...Ke8 46.g4 Kd7 47.g5 White first fixes the kingside so there won't be any ...f6 surprises.

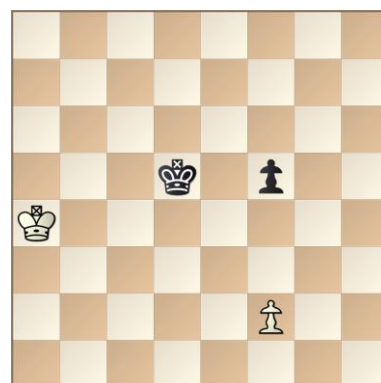
47...a5 Leaving the pawns where they are doesn't help: 47...Kc6 48.Kc2 Kd7 49.Kb3 Kc6 50.c4 Kd7 51.cxb5 axb5 52.a4 bxa4+ (52...b4 53.a5 Kc6 54.Kc4 Kd7 55.a6 Kc6 56.a7) 53.Kxa4 Kc6 54.Ka5 Kd7 55.Kb5 Kd8 56.Kxc5 Kd7 57.Kb6 Kd8 58.Kc6 Kc8 59.d7+ Kd8 60.Kd6 f6 61.g6. Nor does 47...c4 help: 48.Kc2 Kc6 49.Kb2 Kd7 50.a4 Kc6 51.Ka3 Kd7 52.axb5 axb5 53.Kb4 Kc6 54.Ka5.

48.Kc2 b4 Or 48...a4 49.Kb2 Kc6 50.Ka3 Kd7 51.c4 bxc4 52.Kxa4 Kc6 53.Ka3.

49.Kb3 Kc6 50.Ka4 c4 51.cxb4 c3 52.b5+ There might be some other ways for Black to handle his queenside, but I'm confident that (with one's enhanced knowledge!) the reader will be able to work out how White can win in each case! **1-0**

Flear, G – Zschiedrich, H

Montpellier 2010



Here I chose the wrong square.

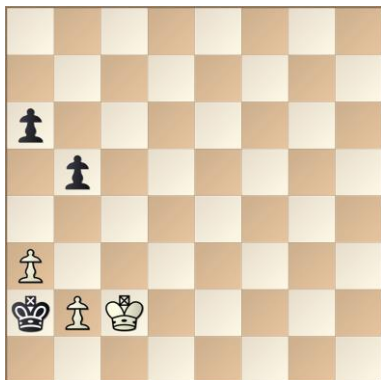
Sometimes our emotions get in the way of our calculating ability (I was feeling lucky and relieved to have got this far, as I had been completely outplayed earlier on).

60.Kb4?? I should have chosen 60.Kb3! Ke4 61.Kc3! Kf3 62.Kd4! f4 63.Ke5=. If I remember correctly, I had worked this out in advance, but somehow got confused and lost the plot!

60...Kd4 61.Kb5 f4 Black wins time to advance his f-pawn.

62.Kc6 f3 63.Kd6 Kd3 64.Ke5 Ke2 65.Kf4 Kxf2+. **0-1**

Flear, G – Chandler, M
London 1990



Here there is no real room for generalities; White just has to get his next move right.

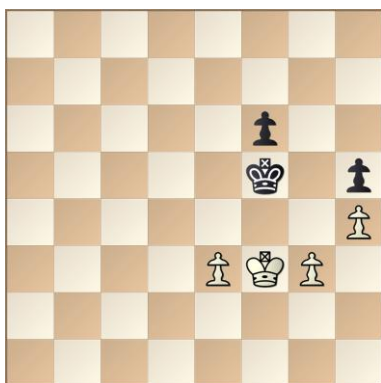
49.a4! Bad is 49.Kc1?, as after 49...a5 Black will soon win the b-pawn: 50.Kc2 (50.b4 a4!) 50...b4 51.axb4 (51.a4 Ka1 52.Kb3 Kb1) 51...axb4 52.Kc1 b3.

49...bxa4 Now 49...b4 fails to 50.a5!

50.Kc1 Black cannot make progress with only a-pawns remaining. So what's the moral of this tale?

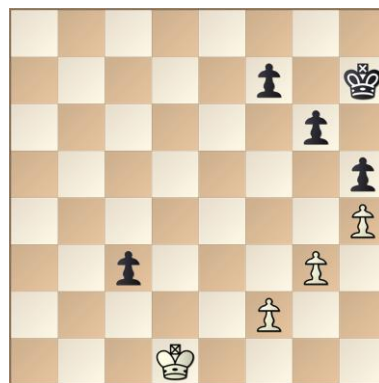
Calculate! ½–½

Exercise 1



White to play and win

Exercise 2



There are three reasonable candidate moves: 1...Kg7, 1...g5 and 1...f6. Is there a way for Black to win? Take your time!

Exercise 1 answer

Nicoara, M – Langer, K Chartres 2024.

White can win with a temporary pawn sacrifice.

1.g4+! Instead, 1.e4+? Ke5 2.Ke3 f5 3.exf5 Kxf5 4.Kf3 Ke5 led to a draw in the game.

1...hxg4+ 2.Kg3 White obtains a decisive passed pawn e.g.

2...Kg6

Or 2...Ke4 3.Kxg4 Kxe3 4.Kf5.

3.Kxg4 f5+ 4.Kf4 Kf6 5.h5

Exercise 2 answer

Belkhodja, S – Flear, G Champigny 1984.

Of the three ideas only one of them does the trick. I played...

54...g5?

...which enables Black's king to enter the fray quickly, but unfortunately White has enough resources.

55.hxg5 Kg6 56.Kc2 Kxg5 57.Kxc3 Kg4 58.Kd2 Kf3 59.Ke1 Kg2 60.Ke2 f5 61.Ke3 Kf1 62.Kf3 Kg1 63.Ke2 Kg2 ½–½

The king walk 54...Kg7 55.Kc2 Kf6 56.Kxc3 Kf5 is not effective due to 57.f3!, so this doesn't work either.

In fact...

54...f6! is correct, intending 55...g5.

55.Kc2 After 55.f4 there is no longer an impediment to invading the white camp: 55...Kg7 56.Kc2 Kf7 57.Kxc3 Ke6

58.Kd3 Kf5 59.Ke3 Kg4 60.Kf2 Kh3 61.Kf3 and now 61...f5! is Zugzwang (or, if you prefer, Black obtains the lateral opposition): 62.Kf2 Kh2 63.Kf3 Kg1 64.Ke3 Kg2.

55...g5! Now this works!

56.Kxc3 gxf4 57.gxf4 Kg6 58.Kd3 Kf5 59.Ke3 Kg4 60.Ke4
Or 60.Ke2 Kxf4 61.Kf3 Kh3 62.Kf4 Kg2.

60...Kxf4 61.Kf5 Kh3 62.Kxf6 and the decisive move is **62...Kg4!**

To find the answer here between three plausible methods, a reasonably deep calculation is required.

I believe that practising this sort of exercise on a regular basis is a vital way of improving your over the board accuracy.

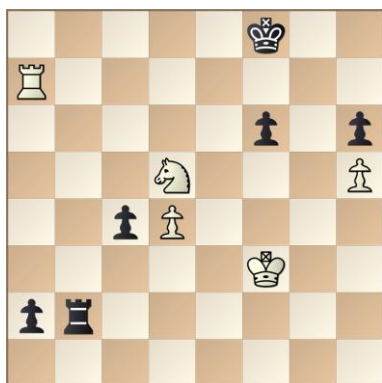
The Endgame That Baffled Everyone!

by Glenn Flear

In the recent European Senior Team 50+ Championships the top two seeds (England and Italy) met in a match that everyone knew was going to have a big impact on the final result. Although Keith Arkell obtained a winning position in the opening, the other three games involved the Italian players pushing and our guys defending in each case.

For most of the afternoon, it seemed to me that John Emms was probably solid enough, but Stuart Conquest was in trouble, and my opponent was pressing throughout. So, it seemed that the match could go either way.

Godena, M – Flear, G
Terme Catez 2024



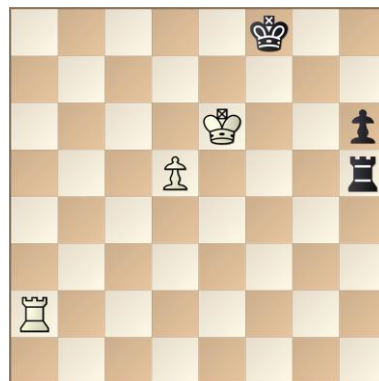
After surviving White's middlegame onslaught, I decided to steer the game towards a 'drawn' rook endgame. Little did I know...

54...c3 55.Nxc3 Rb3 56.Rxa2 Rxc3+ 57.Ke4 Rh3 58.Kf5 Rxf5+ 59.Kxf6 Somewhere in this sequence it dawned on me that there was still some work to do to earn my half-point.

59...Ke8 Also possible is 59...Kg8, when 60.Ke6 is again the most challenging.

60.Ke6 Kf8 Just wriggling!

61.d5 Now comes a decision that I reckon just about everyone would get wrong.



61...Rh1? The natural move, placing the rook as far away as possible in order to be disruptive from behind the opponent's passed pawn.

But my choice turns out to be (or should have been) a decisive error!

The saving move is 61...Rh3!, it seems. Why here, everyone present was wondering? Would Carlsen have played this? That's a thought; maybe somebody could ask him for me! More on this precise move below.

62.d6? With modern time limits, decisions have to be made quickly, and neither of us had an inkling that White could now win with the following line: 62.Ra8+ Kg7 63.d6 Re1+ 64.Kd5! (it's important to skirt around the d7-square, as 64.Kd7? Kf6! should be drawn, as in the game) 64...Rd1+ 65.Kc6 Rc1+ 66.Kb7 Rb1+ 67.Kc7 Rc1+ 68.Kd8 Kg6 69.d7 h5.



Now White cuts Black's king along the fifth rank with 70.Ra5! which means that 70...h4 71.Ke7 Rd1 72.d8=Q Rxd8 73.Kxd8 is a book win.

62...Re1+ 63.Kd7 Kf7 64.Ra5 The fifth rank cut-off plan again (as in the note above), but in this case Black has a resource that I managed to find.

64...Rd1! 65.Rf5+ Kg6 66.Re5 Kf6! Instead, going into an out-and-out race would lose, but keeping a close eye on the d-pawn forces White to release his grip on the fifth rank. For the record, 66...h5 is too slow: 67.Ke7 h4 68.d7 h3 69.d8=Q Rxd8 70.Kxd8 h2 71.Re1+-.

67.Rh5 Kg6 68.Re5 Kf6 69.Rh5 Kg6 70.Rc5 Kf6 71.Kc7 Ke6 Hitting the d-pawn as planned.

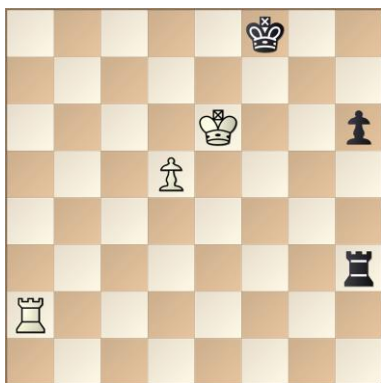
72.Rc2 h5 73.Re2+ Kf5 Occupying the fifth rank, and thus being able to support the h-pawn.

74.d7 h4 75.d8=Q Rxd8 76.Kxd8 h3 After 77.Re3 Kg4 it's clearly drawn.

½-½

What a relief!

But let's try and understand what was going on. Let's go back to the position that would have arisen after the star move 61...Rh3!.



If White now tries the same winning plan (see the note to White's 62nd move):

62.Ra8+ Kg7 63.d6 Re3+ 64.Kd5 White again heads for d8, whilst leaving the d7-square available for his pawn.

64...Rd3+ 65.Kc6 Rc3+ 66.Kb7 Rd3 67.Kc7 Rc3+ 68.Kd8 h5 Counterplay!

69.d7 Kf6 70.Ra5 OK, Black's king is cut off on the fifth, but the h-pawn is still a useful asset. So...

70...h4 71.Rh5 In the case of 71.Rd5 Black also has enough resources: 71...Kf7 72.Rh5 h3 73.Rf5+ Ke6 74.Ke8 Rd3 75.Rh5 Rxd7! 76.Rh6+ Kf5 77.Kxd7 Kg4 is holding.

71...h3 Now the point of having the rook on the third rank becomes clearer. The pawn being as far advanced as h3 enables Black to draw, for example...

72.Rh6+ Kg7 73.Ke7 Re3+ 74.Re6 Rxe6+ 75.Kxe6 h2=.

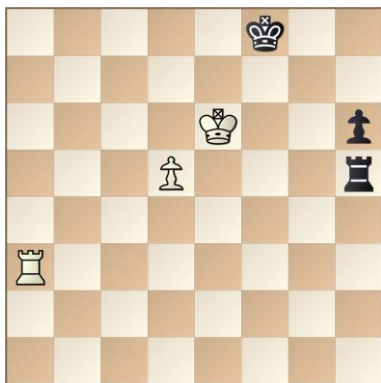
In fact, John Emms held comfortably enough, whereas Stuart on the other hand swindled a draw from his highly dubious pawn-down endgame. We actually maximized throughout, as Keith converted and, along with my draw, England beat Italy 2½-1½ and went on to win the title on tie-break.

So I was pleased to have drawn for myself and the team, but disappointed to have given my opponent a chance.

When I had some time I tried to understand the ramifications of this baffling endgame. The engine sees it all, but no one at the time had suspected that there was a difference between the rook moves. At some point that same evening somebody asked the question. If 61...Rh1 loses, but 61...Rh3 draws, then what's going on if White's rook were originally on the a3-square?

I couldn't give a sensible answer at the time, but now (with silicon assistance) I'm sure that White would be winning were his rook (by sheer happenstance) be found lurking on a3!

So in the following diagram position, the same plan, as we have already seen, works for White, but only just!



61...Rh2 Now, here we go again, with White's king heading for d8, but avoiding the d7-square.

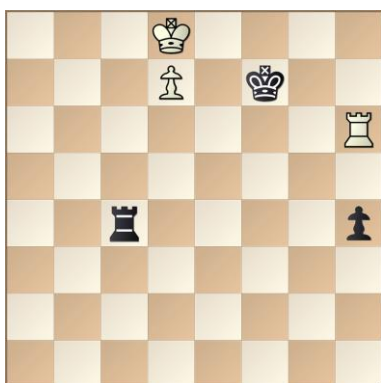
62.Ra8+ Kg7 63.d6 Re2+ 64.Kd5! Rd2+ 65.Kc6 Rc2+ 66.Kb7 Rd2 67.Kc7 Rc2+ 68.Kd8 h5 69.d7 Kf7 No good is 69...Rd2 70.Ke7 Re2+ 71.Kd6 Rd2+ 72.Ke6 Re2+ 73.Kf5 and the pawn will promote.

70.Ra5 The confounded fifth rank again!

70...h4 71.Rh5 We now notice that the pawn is unable to advance further at present and, being so far back, enables White to have more leeway to squeeze out a win.

71...Rc4 Here the key move is...

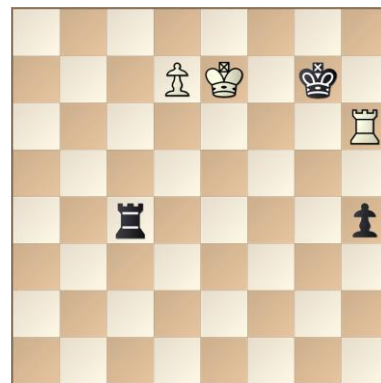
72.Rh6!!



The diagram position turns out to be a mutual Zugzwang (i.e. White to play has no constructive moves, but it's Black to play and he loses).

72...Kg7 Or 72...Kf8 73.Rf6+ Kg7 74.Ke7 etc.

73.Ke7!



Flashy and decisive, whereas 73.Re6 gets nowhere after 73...Kf7.

73...Kxh6 74.d8=Q Rf4 I have to admit I tried to demonstrate a 'convincing' way to convert the advantage with a group of pupils and failed rather dismally! However, after giving the position some further thought, it becomes apparent that if the rook can be forced off the f-file the win becomes clear. Surprisingly, the presence of the h-pawn makes little difference to a standard 'queen versus rook' scenario.

75.Ke6! Kh5 76.Ke5 Rf1 77.Qd3 Rf7 78.Qc4! This reminds me of a manoeuvre accredited to John Nunn. The queen doesn't need to be close to Black's king, it's actually better placed where it has influence at both ends of the f-file.

78...Rg7 If 78...Rf2 79.Ke6! Rf3 80.Qe4 Rf2 81.Qe3 (the rook gets forked if it goes to f8 or f1, so...) 81...Ra2 82.Kf7! (Elegant! Now Black has several plausible moves, but they are all downright bad.) 82...Ra5 (82...Ra4 83.Qe2+ Kg5 (or 83...Rg4 84.Kf6 h3 85.Kf5) 84.Qb5+) 83.Qe2+ Kg5 84.Qd2+. Otherwise, 78...Rf8 79.Ke6! comes to the same thing.

79.Qf4 h3 80.Qf3+ Kh6 81.Qxh3+ Kg6 82.Qe6+ Kh7 83.Kf5 Kh8 84.Qe8+ Kh7 85.Kf6

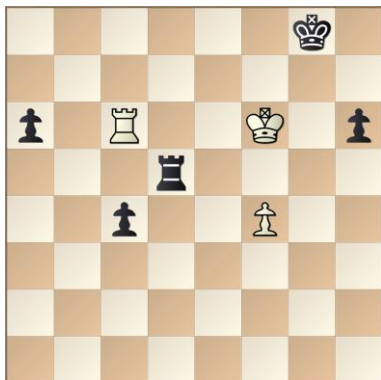
With a well-known endgame, first mentioned by Philidor, where Black is already in a fatal Zugzwang. He must move his rook away from the king and then check, check, check wins for White.

Here are some background examples that enhance even further our understanding of what I've discussed so far.

I had this nagging feeling that I'd read somewhere about the 'natural error' that I made against Godena. After hunting around for a while I found that John Nunn had given some examples in *Nunn's Chess Endgames Volume 2* (Gambit 2010). The following game turns out to have plenty of similarities with my own, the annotations largely being based on John's.

Gurevich, M – Reclis, G

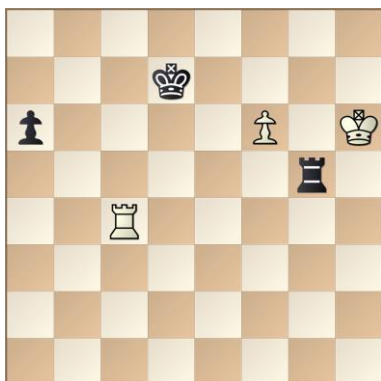
Tel Aviv 1989



51.Kg6 Kf8 52.f5 Ke7 One could start with 52...Rd3!?

53.f6+ Kd7 54.Rxc4 In the case of 54.f7 Black can capture on c6, for example with 54...Rg5+ 55.Kf6 Kxc6 56.f8=Q Rc5 with an engine evaluation of 0.00. In a practical game, however, White could then give a few checks on the off chance that Black would go wrong.

54...Rg5+ 55.Kxh6



Reclis (of course, he's human!) moves the rook to a square as far away as possible to maximize nuisance value. It's the same error that I made! John Nunn points out that Mikhail Gurevich doesn't mention this lapse in his notes, so it seems that he didn't spot the error either.

55...Rg1? Correct is 55...Rg3! (preparing, ages in advance, to support the passed pawn along the third rank) 56.Re4 a5 57.f7 Rf3 58.Kg7 Kd6! (but not 58...Rg3+ 59.Kf8 Rg2 60.Re7+ Kd8 61.Re5 a4 62.Rd5+ Kc7 63.Ke7) 59.Rc4 (59.Ra4 Ke7!) 59...Rg3+ 60.Kf8 Rf3 61.Rc8 a4 62.Ra8 a3 63.Kg7 Rg3+ 64.Kf6 Rf3+ 65.Kg6 Rg3+ (as Nunn's analysis goes) 66.Kh5 Rf3 67.f8=Q+ Rxf8 68.Rxf8 Kc5 and so on.

56.Re4 Rh1+ 57.Kg7 Rg1+ 58.Kf8 Rf1 59.f7 a5 60.Re5? The ubiquitous fifth rank, but here it turns out to be another 'natural' move that doesn't hold up to scrutiny.

John Nunn shows that there is a straightforward win after 60.Re7+ Kd6 61.Ra7 Rf5 62.Kg7.

However, it's not the only way; there is also 60.Rg4 (creating a shield) 60...Rf3 61.Kg8 (61.Rg5 also works) 61...Ke7 62.Rg7 Kd6 63.Rg5! (now it's pertinent to seize the fifth rank) 63...Ke7 (63...a4 64.f8=Q+ Rxf8+ 65.Kxf8 Kc6 66.Ra5) 64.Re5+ Kd6 65.Rxa5 and Lucena will follow.

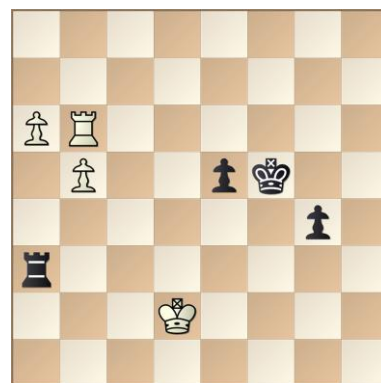
60...a4 61.Ra5 Ra1? Black missed his chance with 61...Rf4! 62.Kg7 Rg4+ 63.Kf6 Rf4+ 64.Kg6 (the Lucena shield doesn't work with Black's king so close: 64.Rf5 Rxf5+ 65.Kxf5 Ke7) 64...Ke6! (the only move!) 65.Ra6+ Ke7 66.Ra7+ Ke6 67.Kg7 Rg4+ 68.Kf8 Kd6! (this shuffle is another only move) 69.Ke8 Re4+ 70.Kd8 Rf4 71.Ra6+ Kc5 72.Ke7 Rxf7+! 73.Kxf7 Kb4 and the draw is finally becoming clear.

I'm not sure how the game ended, but 61...Ra1 (did Black resign at an adjournment?) would lose to 62.Rg5! Rf1 63.Kg8 Ke7 64.Rg4! a3 (64...Rxf7 65.Re4+ Kf6 66.Rf4+ 65.Re4+ Kd7 66.f8=Q Rxf8+ 67.Kxf8 a2 68.Ra4+-). **1-0**

I remembered one of my own games where my legendary opponent missed a win by choosing the wrong square for his rook.

Larsen, B – Flear, G

London GLC 1986



59.Rb8? Moving well away from the black king, but costing himself the win in the process.

Instead, by placing his rook on the seventh rank he could have supported the advance of his pawns. This key difference seems to tip the balance in White's favour. After 59.Rb7! g3 60.Ke2! there are two tries:

a) 60...Ke4 61.a7 Ra2+ 62.Kf1 g2+ 63.Kg1 Kf3 64.Rf7+ Kg3 65.Rg7+ Kf3 (or 65...Kh3 66.b6+-) and now the calm prophylactic 66.Kh2!+-;

b) 60...Ra2+ 61.Kf1!.

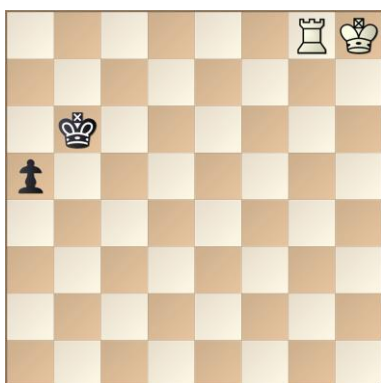
(I used to think that 61.Kf3 was the move, but I was corrected by Stockfish: 61...g2 62.Rg7 e4+ 63.Ke3 Ra3+ 64.Kd4, and now not 64...Ra2? which fails to 65.Rxg2! Rxg2 66.b6!, but instead it's necessary to throw in a check first: 64...Ra4+! 65.Kc5 and only now 65...Ra2: 66.Rxg2 Rxg2 67.b6 (with the King on c5, rather than d4, the e-pawn is dangerous) 67...e3 68.a7 Rc2+ 69.Kb5 Rb2+ 70.Kc6 Rc2+ 71.Kb7 Ra2=).

61...g2+ 62.Kg1 Kf4 63.a7 Kg3 64.Rg7+ Kh3 (64...Kf3 65.Kh2!) 65.b6! and Black is too slow.

59...g3 60.Rg8 Kf4 61.Rf8+ Kg4 62.Ke2 Ra2+ The sealed move, but the result is no longer in doubt.

63.Kf1 g2+ 64.Kg1 Kg3 65.Rg8+ Kh3! 66.Rh8+ ½-½

For those who are still confused about a rook being placed on the fifth rank, here is a straightforward example.



In this case, **1.Rg5!** is effective as Black's king will not be able to support the pawn's advance. You could check alternatives for yourself, but it turns out that it's the only winning move at this point.

If Black then meets this by just temporizing, White brings his king over, and wins slowly but surely, so...

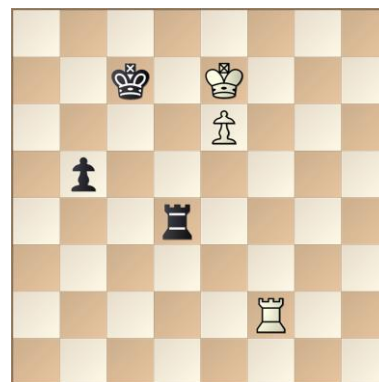
1...a4 2.Kg7 a3 but then...

3.Rg3 picks off the pawn.

Finally, not so long ago, the following high-level game occurred where Black put up a successful defence (similar to mine) despite being temporarily cut-off along the fifth rank.

Giri, A – Maghsoodloo, P

Wijk aan Zee 2024



52.Rf5 b4 53.Kf8 Re4 54.e7 Kd7! The only way to save the day involves harassing the opponent's passed pawn.

By now you will be no doubt be aware that 54...Kc6? 55.e8=Q+ Rxe8+ 56.Kxe8 leaves Black's king stranded and all hope is gone, as if 56...b3 then 57.Rf3 etc.

55.Rf7 Alternatively, White could try 55.Rd5+ Kc6 56.Ra5, but then there is 56...Kd7! (again hitting the pawn) 57.Ra7+ Kc6 58.e8=Q+ Rxe8+ 59.Kxe8 - but now the fifth rank is not guarded, so Black draws with 59...Kd5=.

55...Kc6 56.e8=Q+ Rxe8+ 57.Kxe8 Kc5 Both 57...Kd5 and 57...Kb5 are also OK. The point is to support the pawn by being able to cross the fifth.

58.Kd7 b3 59.Rf1 Kc4 60.Kd6 b2 61.Ke5 Kd3 62.Rb1 Kc2 63.Rxb2+ Kxb2 ½-½

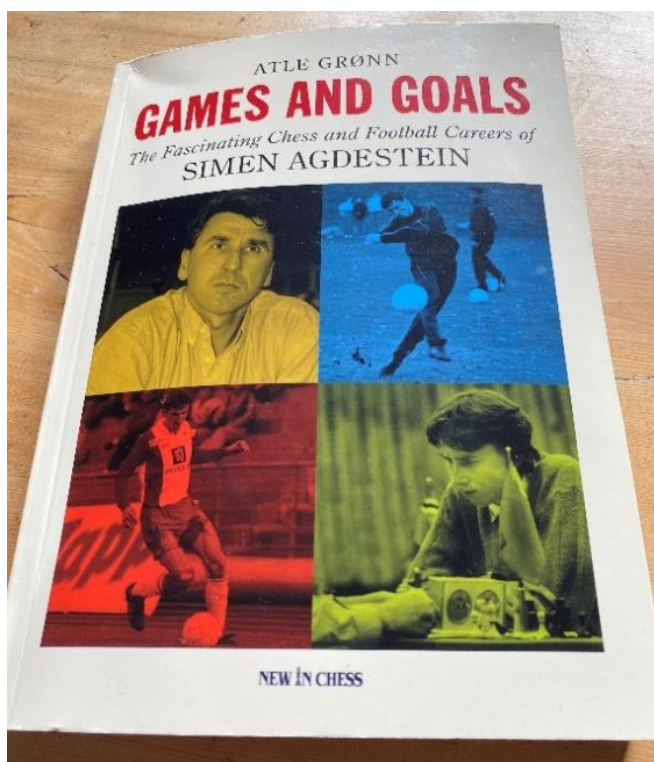
If you have read this article hopefully you will feel enlightened. Still, would you now be able to find the right square for your rook when faced with such a decision in a practical game?

Book of the Month by Ben Graff



The best new writing and the greatest classics under one roof... in association with Forward Chess

Games and Goals – The Fascinating Chess and Football Careers of Simen Agdestein – Atle Grønn (New In Chess)



'Simen was the only person in Norway who had been so naturally gifted in two such contrasting ways. What no one could fully understand though, was how everything was held together in a fragile body and psyche.'

Atle Grønn

We all most likely dream of experiences far removed from our own reality. I can't help but admit that on occasion I have imagined what it would be like to be a grandmaster,

taking my rightful place across the table from Garry Kasparov. There are also times while walking the dog when I contemplate pulling on my national team shirt and stepping out onto the football pitch - fantasies that I am, of course, never going to realise. Yet remarkably Simen Agdestein became both a grandmaster and a Norwegian soccer international.

Perhaps the moral of this story is that the things we think will make us happy are more complicated if they actually happen. As Oscar Wilde put it, 'When the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers.' Grønn notes that Simen had '... a passion for the game and a vulnerability in his temperament that characterizes true chess players of all levels. His story is full of hope and doubts, as well as inner and outer demons that many will recognize.'

Yet for all the challenges inherent in Agdestein's life, as excellently set out in this uncharacteristically lyrical New In Chess offering, this is ultimately a story of immense achievement set against difficult circumstances. For all that might have been, as Grønn notes, Agdestein was 'undoubtedly the best and most interesting chess player Norway produced before Carlsen.' It seems unlikely that his record as both the youngest and the oldest Norwegian chess champion will ever be surpassed. Agdestein's football coach is also quoted as saying that he had '... never seen a striker of Agdestein's calibre. He is undoubtedly the best in Norway. He could have played for any top European club.' Nine Norwegian chess titles and eight Norwegian international caps speak for themselves.

Except, of course they don't quite. Which is where this book is brilliant at sharing the struggles that even the most talented amongst us inevitably face. The mechanics of juggling football and chess prove to be extremely difficult. On one occasion an opponent, knowing the time pressure Agdestein is under to get from one commitment to another, waits for 45 minutes before arriving at the board, and when he does immediately offers a draw. Ultimately, Agdestein's international football career is ended by his decision to play in a chess tournament, and the reality of trying to pursue two elite occupations simultaneously proves close to emotionally and logistically impossible.

There is a sense that despite his talent, Agdestein is somehow always looking for something else, as evidenced by his decision to enrol at a university (where he is essentially mediocre) in addition to his football and his chess. At the time the author recalls not understanding why he had chosen to do this, but 'with the benefit of the maturity of years,' understood that Agdestein 'realized himself through such banal and "boring" things, like friendship, fellowship – and a little

English poetry.’ That said, Agdestein’s studies serve to further overload him, without noticeably making him any happier.

Ultimately Agdestein’s football career is ended prematurely by injury, leading to years of struggle for compensation which conclude with a ‘modest settlement’, and for a period Agdestein has to resort to living on ‘welfare.’ Equally, as with so many brilliant chess players, Agdestein is not quite brilliant enough. In his games against Kasparov he is generally outclassed, and a world title bid never materialises. Kasparov describes Agdestein as the ‘world’s best amateur’, but equally, when asked to compare Agdestein to the then fourteen year old Carlsen, said with a laugh while pointing at Agdestein ‘This guy wasn’t special as a fourteen year old.’

As Grønn puts it, ‘With time, age, and of course, Carlsen, Simen’s star would glitter less brightly, and he became one of the pieces of Norwegian chess, like the rest of us.’ In other words, ‘a fairly ordinary grandmaster,’ if of course it can truly be said that there is such a thing.

Throughout the book there are some fascinating snapshots of the players Agdestein meets along the way. He becomes the youngest ever person to defeat a former world champion by downing Spassky in a Norwegian tournament. Yet in reality ‘Spassky was the big name, but not the favourite – he had become too fond of the good life for that... After the games he lit a cigarette and strolled off to the tennis court to hit a few balls.’

Tal also appears as another world champion in decline. By the latter stages of his career ‘It was not unusual for someone to arrive carrying him. The only time he was seated perfectly vertical and with a clear head was at the start of the rounds. Tal’s way of life could not be cured.’ Another legend, Korchnoi (whom Agdestein looked up to), is described as behaving terribly when he lost. ‘But when he wasn’t playing chess, he could be cultivated and jovial. True, he almost always was playing chess.’

It falls to Karpov to reflect on the difference between football and chess in the Soviet Union. ‘In the USSR chess is something everyone plays, but no one understands. Football is the opposite: A game no one plays, but everyone understands.’

This book contains many fascinating games, with lots of clear diagrams and excellent commentary. Sharp tactical ideas abound, and I enjoyed working through them. There is also an intriguing chapter on Agdestein’s coaching work with Magnus Carlsen, and the way in which Agdestein eventually found a new place for chess in his life. Grønn sums it up best by saying, ‘He had an intense wish to

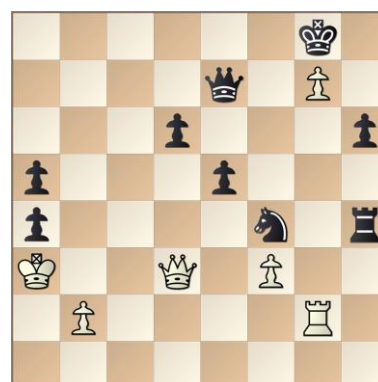
become an ordinary family man, with an ordinary job and an ordinary hobby. This hobby could be chess and brought him genuine chess pleasure.’ Ultimately ‘From the darkness, Simen succeeded in becoming an – almost – average man.’

There is certainly nothing average about this story or this book. Agdestein may not have become the world chess champion or lifted the football world cup high over his shoulders, but his life is no less remarkable for all that. Grønn says that ‘Simen Agdestein was chosen to live out our dream. He had the ability and had to bear the burden for the rest of us.’ Perhaps he did not always carry this burden easily, but is far more relatable as a result. This book is a fitting tribute to an over-achiever who remains all too human.

It's a Puzzlement!



Puzzle 1 - FM Chapman, T – De Coverly, R
English Seniors 65+, Kenilworth ENG



White to win - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2 - GM Flear, K – FM Motuz, K
TCh-EUR Senior 50+, Cartez, SLO



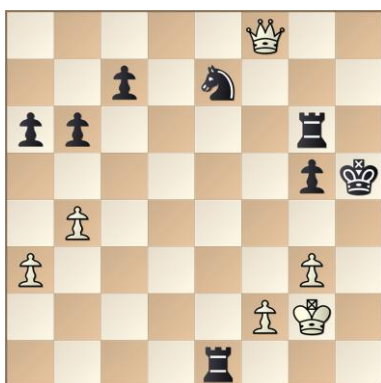
White to win - [Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3 - GM Arkell, K – IM Beaumont, C
TCh-EUR Senior 50+ 2024, Catez, SLO



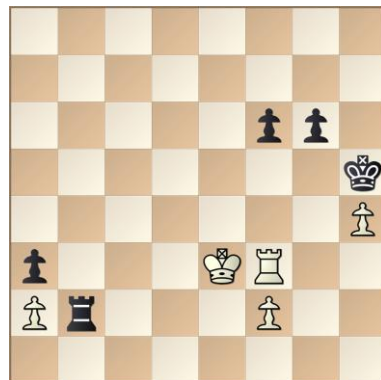
White to win - [Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4 - GM Arkell, K – FM Jaksland, T
TCh-EUR Senior 50+ 2024, Catez, SLO



White to win - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5 - GM Mrva, Mart – GM Emms, J
TCh-EUR Senior 50+, Cartez, SLO



Black to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6 - Bellers, Chris J – Hutchinson, P
English Seniors 65+, Kenilworth, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7 - GM Wells, P – Paterson, Andrew I
English Seniors 50+, Kenilworth, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8 - GM Parligras, M – Burnett, J
4NCL 2023-24, ENG



White to checkmate - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9 - Snape, I – CM Bullen, Alex
4NCL Div 2 2023-24, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10 - Neave, G. – GM Conquest S
TCh-EUR Senior 50+ 2024, Catez, SLO



Black to win - [Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11 - GM Paehtz, Elisabeth – GM Adams, Michael
7th Salamanca Masters, Salamanca, ESP



Black to win - [Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12 - GM Flear, G – FM Mathieu, Phileas
MI ECAM Lyon 2024, Lyon, FRA



White to win - [Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit
https://chesspuzzle.net/List/10109?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=juneneews
by clicking the link or via the QR code below ...

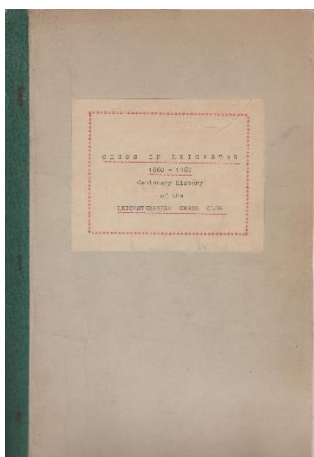


From the Archives

Chess in Leicester 1860-1960

'Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot | But he'll remember with advantages | What feats he did that day'
Chess in Leicester 1860-1960: A Centenary History of the Leicestershire Chess Club

Amongst the gorgeously illustrated magazine covers and glossy chess board pin-ups, a plain and unassuming typed document was plucked from the stacks recently. Discovered to have a significant local connection to where the English Chess Federation library is now held, *Chess in Leicester, A Centenary History of the Leicestershire Chess Club, 1860-1960* has 'come home'. Written and compiled by D. Gould, a member of the club, the history was not commercially printed and limited copies only type duplicated. Worthy of a future close reading, in the meantime we share some highlights.



Cover of the Centenary History, 1960

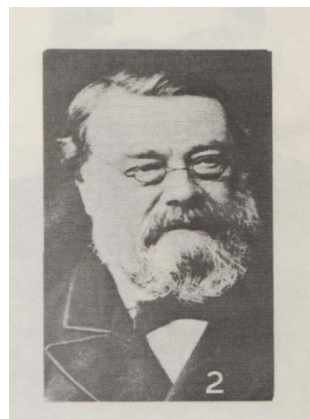


Leicester Chess Club, 1960 - Gould seated furthest on the right

Gould explains that the first records for the club can be dated to August 1860 with the minutes of the first founders' meeting. He does, however, mention that there was an earlier club in Leicester, as a feature in *The Chess Player's Chronicle* in 1840 describes a ball held by the Leicester Chess Club. Gould's research suggests the

present club to be unrelated, and speculates on the potential success and longevity required of a club to have had capacity and funds to hold a ball!

Playfully describing their own club as 'less frivolous', he goes on to provide short biographies of the Leicestershire Chess Club pioneers. Although the following is not included in the biographies, some of the names and occupations immediately jump out at the Leicester local, such as hosiers Russell and Downing and boot and shoe manufacturers Green and Stanyon. Among the chess club's great and good can also be found Cook (potentially associated with the founder of Thomas Cook and Sons, the UK's first travel agency, founded in Leicester, which offered the world's first package tours from 1841), and S. J. Viccars and Whitmore. These club members came from notable mill-owning families and were leading figures among Leicester societies, with the former also a committee member of the Leicester Colleges of Art and Technology, a predecessor of De Montfort University, during the 1880s.



Founding member Benjamin Russell, hosiery manufacturer and founding member of Leicester Chess Club

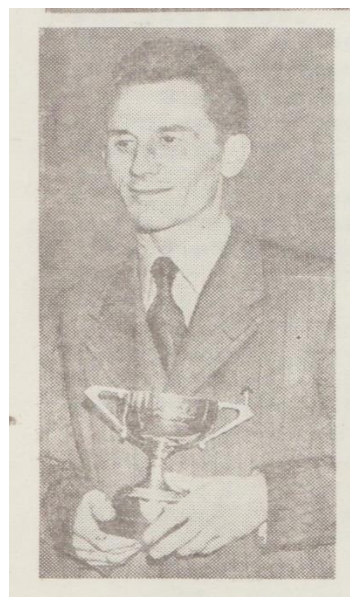
He also mentions Dudgeon, a portrait artist and photographer, and refugees Caillard, a French languages tutor, and Ptacek, a Hungarian music professor. As Gould himself laments, their burgeoning diversity did not extend to 'maidens' at this time. Although not excluded, the club would not see its first long-serving ladies chess player until Miss K. E. Hirst joined the ranks in 1925. Meetings of the club were agreed for Tuesdays and Thursdays at the Temperance Hotel on Granby Street, and the 'first pawn was pushed' on 19th October 1860.

As the club became established, matches between Midlands county rivals (in chess and all other competing spheres) Nottingham soon took off, and some close matches were fought, with the first results against Leicester: 8-9 and then 5-6 in 1877. Victory came in 1880 when Leicester defeated Nottingham 8-5, the team's first defeat in 35 years. The club became a regular feature in the Midland Counties Chess Association tournaments,

and a Leicestershire league was established in 1904. Among the honoured guests who visited the club, Gould relays that members were most enthused about a visit from World Champion Dr Emmanuel Lasker, who gave a 'simul in the Clifton Room of the Y.M.C.A' in 1908, just four years before the passing of the club's last founding member George Green.

World Wars I and II saw a decline in numbers as members joined the Forces. With periods of suspension in the league small tournaments continued, with many games played via correspondence. While funds remained buoyant the club also submitted money to the War Loan in 1915, while in 1949 a small war-time chess league was established for visiting institutions; as well as Leicester and Leicester Victoria, competitors included the Royal Army Pay Corps, the Nomads, a Czech team, and Marks & Spencer.

... but not before mentioning the club's greatest triumph, with Gould's conveying his joy on their winning the National Club Championship in 1957: 'A knock-out trophy open to all the clubs in the land – the FA Cup of chess!'



Tabakiernik with trophy

As unassuming as its exterior may be, we sincerely hope other chess clubs are just as discerning in writing their own fascinating histories, from the pioneers and their first matches to their latest members and their victories... and defeats.



A lightning tournament held at the Turkey Café, Leicester, 1936 - Collier is seated third from the left

While there are many other intriguing extracts to explore, such as the time the club secretary P. E. Collier was able to secure a game with World Champion Alexander Alekhine at the Grand Hotel during the great Nottingham Tournament in 1936, our Leicester chess adventures for now will have to conclude...

Leicestershire Chess Club		Manchester Chess Club	
P.N. Wallis	... ½	Dr. Neumann	... ½
W. Tabakiernik	... 1	C.G. Hilton	... 0
P.D. Sanderson	... ½	J.H. Pollitt	... 1
V.J.A. Russ	... 1	D.B. Grayson	... 0
Dr. K.D. Warren	... 1	B.L. Wilkinson	... 0
R. Starosolsky	... ½	A.F. Stobo	... ½
	4½		1½

Tabakiernik's game was published in the "British Chess Magazine". He had Black in a Ruy Lopez, and gave up a Knight

The National Club Championship final held at Matlock, Derbyshire, on 13th July 1957

NEWS and VIEWS

England Teams for the Olympiad

The England teams for the Chess Olympiad at Budapest in September have been selected. Board orders will be determined by the Selection Committee at a later date.

Open

Michael Adams; David Howell; Gawain Jones; Luke McShane; Nikita Vitiugov

Women

Jovanka Houska; Harriet Hunt; Bodhana Sivanandan; Katarzyna Toma; Lan Yao

ChessFest returns – 7th July



There's less than a week to go until ChessFest 2024, our annual chess extravaganza in Trafalgar Square, London. On Sunday 7th July 2024 from 11am to 6pm CSC will be taking over the whole square for a day of free, family-friendly chess activities, including:

- Free chess lessons from a CSC tutor;
- Simultaneous displays by the top grandmasters in the country;
- Giant chess sets;
- Speed chess galore in the Challenge the Chess Master tent;
- Living chess with actors, replaying famous games of chess on our giant board;
- Puzzle-rush: pit your wits against fiendish chess puzzles on ChessKid.

This year's ChessFest theme is Alice Through the Looking Glass. Will the Red Queen triumph over the White King on our living chess board? Will the March Hare overcome Tweedledum and Tweedledee? Come along to find out. Last year an incredible 15,000 people attended ChessFest. For a flavour of what to expect, please see this video of our 2021 event:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kB62-e_tOB4

No need to book - just turn up on Sunday 7th July for a full day of chess fun!

FIDE Chess for Freedom Conference – Featuring Carl Portman

Carl Portman recently spoke at the FIDE Chess for Freedom conference. His subject matter was 'puzzles for purpose' when he spoke about how chess puzzles could be especially selected to share with prisoners that could be used as an analogy for life back in society.

You can see a video of him speaking at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ld15NpTaiRw>

Chess Tables in Pearson Park, Hull by Graham Chesters



The installation of one of Hull's two government-funded concrete chess tables took place under grey and wet March skies. Now that warmer days have arrived, the habit of using them is growing.

Tony Denison, a local artist, now well into his 80s, was an art teacher who tells the story of how in the early 1970s he built up a school chess club from scratch in a significantly disadvantaged area in Hull. At one point it had over 100 members. He is very familiar with Pearson Park in the city. A couple of years ago he did a marvellous picture of 32 Pearson Park, where Philip Larkin wrote many of his greatest poems. About 150 yards away stands the chess table.

Seeing a couple of players bending over their game, he couldn't resist doing some small preparatory sketches with the intention of doing a full painting in oils. Knowing my interest both in Larkin and chess, he brought his first gouache sketch round to show me. I posted it on the Hull and East Riding Chess Association Facebook page. Within a day or so, two HERCA members emailed me:

'Hi Graham

Dave Cooper and I [Mark Robinson] went to Pearson Park on Sunday at 11:30 for an hour. A chap was loitering where the artist must have stood. He had an iPad. It would be interesting to know if this was a coincidence.'

They were delighted to see themselves captured for eternity. But the anecdote is a powerful example of how these tables can be the social focus for serendipitous meetings. The picture has attracted further interest in the chess tables. We might even, with Tony's permission, turn it into a greetings card in readiness for the much-anticipated visit of the British Chess Championships towards the end of July.

Let us hope that other places with these chess tables find their own Marcel Duchamp!

ECF Awards: Celebrating Excellence, Inspiring the Future

The ECF annual awards are back, and we're looking for the best of the best to join our hall of fame.

This year's awards are now open for applications.

There are nine categories:

1. President's Award for Services to Chess
2. Contribution to Junior Chess
3. Contribution to Women's Chess
4. Contribution to Chess in the Community
5. Contribution to Accessible Chess
6. Online Chess Contribution of the Year
7. Club of the Year
8. Small Club of the Year
9. Congress of the Year

Like last year, the awards will benefit from a generous £2,000 support package from the Chess Trust, so each award (excepting the President's Award for Services to Chess) will not only come with a glass trophy but also a £250 'prize'.

What to do?

- 1) Visit our website:

Head over to <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2024-ecf-awards-submissions-are-now-open>

for detailed information on categories and criteria.

- 2) Prepare your application:

Use the simple form provided to record your achievements and testimonials.

- 3) Submit your entry:

Once you're happy, simply 'click the button' to submit your application to the ECF Awards Committee Chair.

- 4) Wait for the results:

Expected in early August. If you have been successful, you will receive email confirmation once the judging is complete.

Applications close on 14th July 2024 - please don't miss your chance to be part of something special! This is your moment to be celebrated, and to inspire the next generation of chess players. The ECF Awards Committee chairman, Keith Gregory, welcomes informal enquiries about the awards by email: keith31p@gmail.com

ECF Yearbook 2024



The yearbook 2024 hard copy version is now available to order while stocks last – £9.99 for members, £11.99 for non-members! Here's the link to the order form:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/ecf-yearbook-order-form-2024/>

If you didn't receive your soft copy of the yearbook, here's the link:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Yearbook-2024-complete-compressed.pdf>

There is a full contents list below to give you an idea of what's inside, and we sincerely hope you enjoy it.

Report of the Board to Council October 2023

Strategy Statement and Business Plan

Home News 2023 – Courtesy of Chess Magazine

British Chess Championships 2023 by Nigel Towers, Peter Wells, Steven Jones,

Harry Grieve and Oleksandr Matlak

The Chess Trust

The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust

Chess in Prisons by Carl Portman

ECF Awards 2023

ECF Book of the Year 2023

Best of ... Game of the Month by GM Michael Adams
Best of ... Arkell's Endings by GM Keith Arkell
Best of ... Articles by GM Peter Wells
Best of ... Endgames All Club Players Should Know by GM Glenn Flear
Best of ... Great British Chess Players by GM John Nunn
Best of ... Littlewood's Choice and Littlewood on Tactics by IM Paul Littlewood
Best of ... Gormally's Coaching Corner by GM Danny Gormally
Best of ... The Interviews by Mark Rivlin
Articles from ChessMoves 2023:
The 96th Caplin Hastings International Chess Congress
Cambridge International Open
Varsity Match by Stephen Meyler
London Chess Conference by John Foley
British Rapidplay Championship
2023 English Seniors Championships
English and English Women's Championships 2023
European 65+ Championship by John Nunn
European 50+ Championship by Keith Arkell
World Cadets and Youth Rapid and Blitz 2023
English Counties Chess Championships 2022 – 2023 by Nigel Towers and Mark Murrell
ECF Open National Final – Middlesex win 30th title by Anthony Fulton
ChessFest 2023
Report on the European Club Cup and Club Cup for Women 2023 by Lawrence Cooper
WSTCC Reports by Nigel Povah
33rd NATO Chess Championships by Ben Woolf
What Has the ECF Office Ever Done for Us?
An English Double at the World Senior Chess Championships by Nigel Povah
European Team Chess Championships 2023
Bodhana Sivanandan Wins Gold at the World Girls Under 8 Championships
National Club Championships 20th – 22nd October by Stephen Greep
2023 Delancey UK Chess Challenge Terafinal 14th and 15th October by Alex Longson
UK Open Blitz Finals 2023 by Nigel Towers
London Chess Classic – Adams Wins with 'Best Ever Result' While Royal Achieves
Second GM Norm
Chess Problem News / Endgame Studies by Ian Watson

Special thanks go to IM Richard Palliser at CHESS Magazine, CEO Mike Truran, and Andrew Walker.

FIDE World Amateur Chess Championship 2024

All FIDE member federations and eligible players with a FIDE rating under 2300 are invited to participate in the FIDE World Amateur Chess Championship 2024.

The competition will take place in Rhodes, Greece, from 26th October to 5th November 2024. The event is open to players registered by their national federations. FIDE member federations have the right to send as many players as they wish.

The Championship will be held in FIDE rating categories U2300, U2000 and U1700. There will be separate Women's Championship if there are at least ten players from at least two continents in each category. All competitions will be nine-round Swiss tournaments with a classical time control (90 min +30 sec).

The registration deadline for all players, accompanying persons and delegation members is 9th September 2024.

The FIDE World Amateur Chess Championships 2024 official website will be launched soon:

worldamateur2024.fide.com

E-mail: worldamateur@fide.com

[Invitation letter and regulations \(PDF\)](#)

PLEASE NOTE — any players wanting to enter need to make their own arrangements direct with the local organisers.

The Gauss-Glicko Rating System

A paper by Anton Hodgetts, titled *The Gauss-Glicko Rating System: How to de-mystify and de-noise outcome-based, stochastic, relative, chess ratings*, can be found on the ECF website here:

<https://www.englishchess.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Gauss-Glicko-Rating-System.pdf>

Where Can We Play Chess?

One possible answer to the perennial question 'Where can we play chess?' is at your local supermarket. Some of the really large stores have community spaces which can be hired more or less seven days a week, and free of charge during store opening hours.

Watford Chess Club has such an arrangement with their local ASDA. 'It's not ideal for every purpose,' reports

Roger Lancaster. 'That's mainly because, except on the rare occasions when we book the entire space, the chess club can find itself in one room while the local church choir practises in another'.

The spaces can be booked by local community organisations, including chess clubs, but are not available for commercial purposes. ASDA don't expect organisations to hire a venue for free and then charge others for its use! They also expect that appropriate insurance, risk assessments and safeguarding procedures are in place.

Although Watford's arrangement - and the club has hitherto used it mainly as a satellite venue for junior training - is with ASDA, other supermarket groups are believed to operate similar schemes, albeit only at their largest stores.

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



As a junior I was surrounded by talented chess players of my era such as John Nunn and Jonathan Mestel. However, the player who I was most impressed with was Jonathan Speelman.

His family was kind enough to put me up when I played in various London tournaments, so I will be forever grateful to them.

During these stays we often analysed chess positions together, and I was constantly amazed at how brilliant Jonathan was at tactics. He had such a natural Tal-like way of appreciating that other factors were often more important than material. Consider the following game, which was played against a very strong English international player when Jonathan was just 15 years old.

Basman M - Speelman J
British Championship 1972

1.e4 Nf6 2.e5 Nd5 3.Nc3 e6 4.g3 d6 Mike Basman often went his own way in the opening, as he didn't like to play theoretical lines. Here he chooses an unusual fianchetto variation, but Jonathan counters it by sensible play in the centre.

5.exd6 Bxd6 6.Bg2 0-0 7.Nge2 Bd7!? Jonathan ignores the double attack on the black knight and prepares a very interesting sacrifice. However, the straightforward line 7...Nxc3 8.bxc3 Nc6 is a decent alternative which gives Black a slight advantage.

8.Nxd5?! White plays into his opponent's hands. It would have been much safer to play 8.0-0, when the position is about even.



8...cxd5 9.Bxd5? Perhaps White had missed his opponent's next move, because after that he is always on the back foot.

9...Bh3! 10.Bxb7 Nd7 Black has sacrificed two pawns, and is also prepared to sacrifice the exchange. A wonderful concept!

11.d4? Under pressure, White immediately makes another error. The best option was 11.Rg1 Re8 12.Bxa8 Qxa8 13.d4, when Black has a huge initiative but White has chances to survive.



11....Rb8 12.Bf3 Qf6 Also good was 12...Re8 13.Qd3 Qf6 14.Be4 c5, which is excellent for Black.

13.Ng1 Rfe8+ 14.Be3 Bf5 15.g4 Bg6 16.b3 c5 17.Kf1 cxd4 18.Bxd4 Be5 19.c3 Rbd8 Black is still two pawns down but all his pieces are now developed for a central attack while White's are very poorly placed, leaving his position in shreds.

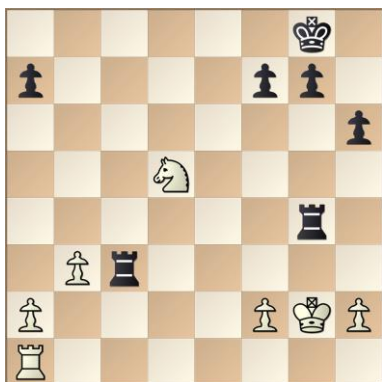


20.Kg2 Bxd4 21.cxd4 Ne5! 22.Bb7 If 22.dxe5 then Rxd1 23.exf6 Rxa1, and the ending is easily winning.

22...Nd3 Another way of winning was 22...Qb6, with the possible continuation 23.Bf3 Rxd4 24.Qe2 f5 25.g5 Nxf3 26.Qxf3 Bf7 27.Qxf5 g6 28.Qh3 Bd5+ 29.Nf3 Qb7, when White is totally lost.

23.Nh3 Rxd4 Even stronger was 23...Qxd4! 24.Rf1 Qb6 25.Bf3 h5 26.Kh1 hxg4 27.Bxg4 Ne5, when White could resign.

24.Qf3 Qe6 25.Rhd1 h6 26.Rxd3 Rxd3 27.Nf4 Rxf3 28.Nxe6 Rc3 29.Nf4 Be4+ 30.Bxe4 Rxe4 31.Nd5 Rxc4+ The ending is easily won for Black, and Jonathan makes no mistake.



32.Kf1 Rc5 33.Rd1 Re4 34.Ne3 Re7 35.Rd8+ Kh7 36.b4 Rc1+ 37.Ke2 Rc2+ 38.Rd2 Rxd2+ Mike resigned, as he is a clear exchange down with no chances of survival against a player of Jonathan's calibre.

What a great game!

Jonathan went on to fulfil his promise as a junior by winning the British Championship on three occasions, and becoming a grandmaster in 1980. At one stage he was ranked joint 4th in the world, and managed to reach the semi-finals of the World Championship in 1989, losing a very close match to Jan Timman.

Meanwhile, if you have played any interesting games as a youngster that you would like to have published in my column then please send them to me at plittl@hotmail.com. I cannot promise that they will appear, but I will give them every consideration.

Second IM Norm for Sohum Lohia

Congratulations to Sohum Lohia, who achieved a second IM norm at the Six Days Budapest June GM B tournament on 3rd-8th June.

New FIDE Titles

Congratulations to Bodhana Sivanandan, who has achieved the FIDE Woman FIDE Master title, Elis Dicen and Ruqayyah Rida who are now Woman Candidate Masters, and Ethan Pang and Indy Southcott-Moyers who are now Candidate Masters.

South West England Chess Matches Against Wales by Chris Strong

A Triumph for South West England!



The annual South West England chess matches for U11s and U14s took place on Sunday 26th May at Redland Green School in Bristol. For many young players this event

marked their first opportunity to compete in an international match.

Under the expert organization of Igor Doklestic and Peter Purland, the teams faced off with enthusiasm. Each team fielded 10 players, playing two games — one with White and one with Black.

The South West England team emerged victorious, securing a convincing win with a score of 14½-5½. Wales defaulted on one board, contributing to South West England's dominant performance.

The U11 teams, however, engaged in closely contested battles. After the first round the score was tied at 5-5, but in the second round South West England pulled ahead with a 6½-3½ lead.

The team photo captures the camaraderie and competitive spirit of the day. Special mention goes to Noah and Zander, who both shared their memorable games.

Bevis, Noah - Nasir, Farouq

SW England VS Wales U11: Round 1 VS Far lichess.org (1.1), 26.05.2024

<https://lichess.org/@/MittensTheGod4000>

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.c3 Nf6 5.d3 h6 6.b4 Bb6 7.a4 a6 8.0-0 0-0 9.Be3 d5 10.exd5 Nxd5 11.Bxb6 Nxb6 12.Bb3 Re8 13.Qc2 Bf5 14.Qa2 Be6 15.Rd1 e4 16.Ne1 Bxb3 17.Qxb3 exd3 18.Na3 d2 19.Nf3 Qf6 20.Rxd2 Ne5 21.Nxe5 Rxe5 22.a5 Rae8 23.Nc2 Nc8 24.Rf1 Nd6 25.Ne3 Qf4 26.Rd4 Ne4 27.Nd5 Qg5? 28.f4 Qh5 29.fxe5 Rxe5 30.Nf4 Qg4 31.Nd3 Re7 32.Nf2 Qe2 33.Nxe4 Kh8 34.Qb1 Re6 35.Rd8+ 1-0

Sarwar, Adam - Bevis, Noah

SW England VS Wales U11: Round 2 VS Ada lichess.org (2.1), 26.05.2024

<https://lichess.org/@/MittensTheGod4000>

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Qb6 5.Nb3 Nc6 6.Be3 Qc7 7.Nc3 Bb4 8.Bd3 Nf6 9.0-0 Bxc3 10.bxc3 d5 11.exd5 Nxd5 12.Bd4 Nxd4 13.cxd4 Nf4 14.Bb5+ Bd7 15.Bxd7+ Qxd7 16.Qg4 Ng6 17.Nc5 Qc6 18.Qe4 Qxe4 19.Nxe4 Rd8 20.c3 0-0 21.Rab1 b6 22.g3 h6 23.Rfe1 Ne7 24.Rbc1 Nd5 25.a3 Nc7 26.Red1 Rc8 27.c4 Rfd8 28.d5 Na6 29.dxe6 fxe6 30.Rxd8+ Rxd8 31.c5 bxc5 32.Nxc5 Rc8 33.Nd3 Rd8 34.Rc6 Nb8 35.Rxe6 Rxd3 36.Re8+ Kf7 37.Rxb8 Rxa3 38.Rb7+ Kf6 39.f4 Ra2 40.Rb5 a5 41.Rb6+ Kf7 42.Rb7+ Kg8 43.Rb8+ Kh7 44.Rb7 a4 45.f5 Kg8 46.Rb8+ Kf7 47.Rb7+ Kf6 48.g4 a3 49.Rb6+ Ke5 50.Re6+ Kf4 51.Rg6 Rb2 52.Ra6 a2 53.Ra4+ Kg5 54.h4+ 0-1

(821) Sharhorodsky, Yaroslav (1665) - Booth, Zander (1546) [B32]

SW England vs Wales U14 Chess.com (2.2), 26.05.2024

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 e5 5.Nb5 d6 6.N1c3 a6 7.Na3 Be7 8.Be3 b5 9.Nd5 Rb8 10.c3 Nf6 11.f3 0-0 12.Nc2 Bb7 13.g3 Qd7 14.h4 Nxd5 15.exd5 Nd8 16.Bh3 f5 17.g4 Bxh4+ 18.Ke2 f4 19.Bb6 Bg5 20.Qd3 g6 21.Rh2 Ba8 22.Bxd8 Rbx8 23.Rah1 Rf7 24.Bf1 Rg7 25.Na3 Qf7 26.Nc2 Bxd5 27.b3 e4 28.fxe4 Bxe4 0-1

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

As I have often stressed, it is very important to keep a look-out for tactics at all stages of the game.

Consider the following position, which is just out of the opening.



P V Byway - P E Littlewood

St. Albans Open 2024

My opponent had clearly decided he wanted no more than a draw, and with that in mind he decided to swap queens by playing 1.Qd6. However, this is a tactical error because his rook is trapped after 1...Qxd6 2.Rxd6 Nd4 3.Nxd4 exd4. Black now threatens 4...Be5 winning the exchange, and there is no sensible way to prevent this.

It is also important to bear in mind that White must now choose a decent square for the attacked knight. There are three options, and two of them make things worse! For example, if 4.Ne2? then 4...d3 wins, because after 5.Bxg7 the Zwischenzug 5...dxe2 wins material.

In fact 4.Nb1 is best, when White loses just the exchange for a pawn and can hope to prolong the battle.

In the game White chose to play 4.Na4 instead, but now Black can play 4...b5 and White is in danger of losing a piece. The game continued 5.Bh3 Ne5 6.Bxc8 Raxc8 7.f4 (7.Bxd4 loses to 7...Nf3+) Nd3 8.Bxd4 Bf8 9. Nc5 Bxd6 10.Nxd3 Rxe4 11.Be5 Bxe5 12.Nxe5 bxc4 13.Nxc4 Re2 and White resigned. His position is hopeless, as he is the exchange down for no compensation.

Consider another position which has arisen after the opening moves.

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Nd4



White sees a chance to renew his threat on f7 by the sharp 6.d6 However, this is a tactical error because Black plays 6...Qxd6, and now after 7.Nxf7 there follows 7...Qc6! 8.Nxh8 Qxg2 (even better than 8...Qxc4) 9. Rf1 Qe4+ 10.Be2 Nf3#

Amazing, as the game has only just started!

Here now are a couple of examples that arise from openings for you to solve, with the solutions being given at the end of the article.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Bg5 Nbd7

Why does the move 5.Nxd5 not win material?



1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Nd4 4.Nxe5 Qg5

Why does 5.Nxf7 not win for White?



Answers:

After 5.Nxd5 there follows 5...Nxd5! 6.Bxd8 Bb4+ 7.Qd2 Bxd2+ 8.Kxd2 Kxd8, and Black has won a piece.

After 5.Nxf7 then 5...Qxg2 6.Rf1 Qxe4+ 7.Be2 Nf3#.

Watch out for those tactics!

Gormally's Coaching Corner by Danny Gormally



Chess and Choking

MilesandFliss - Mochber3875

Rated rapid game lichess.org, 06.06.2024

Chess and choking. With events like Euro 2024, the Olympics, Wimbledon and many others on the horizon (Royal Ascot will be a particular highlight for me) it will be a bumper summer for sports fanatics. Indeed, it will be a distraction for me to even play chess at all, and perhaps I should put tournaments like the English and British Championships on ice to free up my watching calendar. Whenever England play in major international football competitions, much is made of the fact that we haven't won a meaningful trophy as a nation since 1966. That was so long ago, it was ten years before I was born. In many

competitions since then, a lot of our failures were attributed to that fabulous word, 'choking'. We had multiple losses in penalty shoot-outs, and that was given as evidence that we weren't made of the right stuff.

I've recently come to the conclusion that 'choking' is a term that is over-used. England's failure at the European and world level was more to do with the fact that we weren't good enough, than that we were failing at a mental level. If we had been as good as Brazil were over that more than fifty year period, we surely would have won a major competition again by now, whatever our mental state.

In fact, I think our failure can be more attributed to a lack of 'technique. In recent years we have worked harder as a squad on penalties with some resulting uptick in results, and now the England football team are starting to win as many penalty shoot-outs as they lose. What I am trying to get over in this roundabout way is that a lot of failures that we attribute to choking are in fact down to other factors, like a lack of ability, a lack of knowledge, a lack of technique, or just plain bad luck. You can use the same logic for chess as well and when Rene Butler recently complained to me that he kept throwing away games due to choking, I wondered if that was the real reason, or if there was something else going on.

Rene lives in Market Harborough in Leicestershire and works in public relations. He's refreshingly open about his chess failures, and seems to regard a lot of them as being down to his inherent inability to get over the line. We normally look at openings together, but on this occasion I asked him to play a couple of games of blitz against random opponents, and then we'd analyse them later. The second game was particularly eye-opening to me because it seemed to demonstrate a lot of the issues that Rene has been having.

1.b4 Rene is a fan of the Orangutan or Polish Opening. Sadly, real orangutans have had their territory eroded in recent years by the destruction of the rainforests in which they reside.

1...d5 1...c6 2.Bb2 Qb6 3.a3 a5! was recommended in an old book of Eric Schillers that I read, in which he tried to give reasonable replies to unusual opening systems. **4.c4 axb4 5.c5!** is one trick that White has available. **5...Qxc5?? 6.axb4+-.**

2.Bb2 Nf6 3.a3 Bf5 4.e3 e6 5.c4! An excellent if obvious move, challenging the black centre.

5...c6



6.cxd5?! But this I described in our post-game review as sub-optimal, something a later review with the engine confirmed. My main issue with this move is that there is no need to resolve the tension so quickly. By taking on d5 you give the black knight the c6-square.

6.Nf3 Nbd7 Now the knight has to go to d7, a slightly more passive square. There is nothing wrong with this for Black, just that the knight is slightly more active on c6 than it is on d7. In a wider sense these little mistakes can accumulate. **7.Be2 Be7 8.0-0 0-0 9.d3** with perhaps a tiny edge for White (**9.cxd5 cxd5 10.d3 a5!**).

6...cxd5 7.Be2 Be7 8.Nf3 Nbd7 9.0-0 0-0 10.d3



10...b6? A very strange mistake, where Black hands the opponent the c6-square on a plate. This mistake is down to a lack of understanding, not choking. In any case, it is too early in the game for either player to be particularly nervous.

10...a5 11.b5 Rc8 was very comfortable for Black, who has a plan of **...Nc5** and **...a4**, gaining territory on the queenside.

11.Nbd2 11.Nd4! Bg6 12.Nc6 Qe8 13.Nxe7+ Qxe7 14.Nd2 already looked like a dream two bishops position for White.

11...Bg4 12.h3 Bb5 13.Rc1 a5 14.Nd4! White finally hits on the right plan.

14...Bxe2 15.Qxe2 axb4 16.axb4 Bxb4?? Presumably missing White's next.

17.Nc6! Winning a piece, and seemingly the game, but as Shakespeare once wrote, the course of true love never did run smooth.

17...Qe8 18.Nxb4 Nc5 19.Bxf6! For the time being Rene shows excellent technique, as exchanging pieces when material ahead is a well-known strategy to bring you closer to the win.

19...gxf6 20.Qg4+ Kh8



21.Nf3 Not by any means costing the win, but the start of a slippery slope. White starts to make second best moves, assuming they are good enough. We are bound to have games where we were winning but somehow fail to get over the line. This happens at any level. But there are certain techniques we can apply to make our life easier in this respect, and I think if we approach winning positions with the same outlook that we approach normal positions, then we can already win half the battle. We simply have to keep looking for the best moves.

21.d4! was much more to the point. If you are losing, the last thing you want to do when you are trying to get back into the game is to see your opponent play with aggression and confidence. You want them to sit back and start playing defensively, trying to protect what they already have. That way you can creep back into the game. 21...Nd7 22.Rc7+-. I think when Rene starts gaining more confidence, he'll start finding these lines and put away his opponents in much easier fashion.

21...Qb5 22.Rb1 Rg8 23.Qh4 Again, slightly sub-optimal, and I don't think this is choking - I think this is more a lack of understanding by Rene.

23.Qf4 just looked more to the point, the queen is slightly better here than it is on h4.

23...Rg6



24.Qf4 So the queen starts moving back and forth. Perhaps I was being cruel to Rene when I suggested that he was engaging 'headless chicken mode' round about here. There is a sense that you are playing without purpose. There are two powerful words that I would use to describe the technical side of chess and getting over the line in winning positions:

1. Purpose. By playing with purpose you are trying to play as efficiently as possible. This is the stage of the game where the work you have done on your calculation becomes even more important. You need to look for plans, look for lines that favour you. Analyse concretely and efficiently.

2. Control. Similar to purpose, I guess. We need to play with control, in the sense we don't lose sense of what we're doing. Keep control of the position, don't get distracted into winning a random pawn that will change the position too much. Keep a lid on the opponent. It feels that choking is often the easy word that we use to replace the real truth, that we need to do a lot of work to fill in the gaps in our understanding and ability. So work on endgames, work on your technique. Hard work can mask a lot of flaws.

And this was another missed opportunity as 24.Nxd5! pretty much closes the deal: 24...Qxd3 25.Nf4+-.

24...Rag8 25.g4 This is surely still winning, but why weaken your king to this degree? Why take a risk at all?

25.g3 felt like a simpler way to deal with the threats on the g-file.

25...f5 25...h5 would also have been annoying. 26.Nh2! and you are keeping Black at bay.

26.Qe5+? Another aimless queen move isn't helping the cause.

26...f6 27.Qd6 fxe4 28.Nd4 gxe3+ 29.Kh2 Qe8! 30.Rg1 Rxe1? Thus end the adventures.

30...Rg2+ 31.Kh1 Qg6 32.Nf3



32...h2!! was even winning for Black!

31.Rxe1 Rxe1 32.Kxe1 Qg6+ 33.Qg3! And that's it, folks. No more excitement in this game.

33...Qh5 34.Kh2 e5 35.Nb5 Qf5 36.Nd6 Qe6 37.Nb5 e4 38.Qxe4 Nxe4 39.Qxe6 1-0

princeofdenmark2 - MilesandFliss

Rated rapid game lichess.org, 06.06.2024

The first game that morning didn't go so well. Arguably, both players in this online blitz battle showed shaky technique.

1.e4 d5 The Scandinavian. As we saw in the last game, Rene likes moving his queen; certain players have some tendencies, and this is one of his. But it's not a bad tendency to have, as the queen is the most powerful piece. Better an active player than a passive one.

2.e5 c5 3.c3 Bf5 4.d4 e6 5.Be3 cxd4



6.Bxd4? A strange recapture. It is easy for me to criticise amateur players, because I have over 25 years of playing chess professionally. But some of the decisions that we professional players make are automatic, and that is one of the reasons why we tend to have good technique. I think most if not all professional players would just take back with the pawn on d4. The more decisions you make automatically, the less under pressure you tend to find yourself in a game. A lot of mistakes that players make aren't because they are choking, it is because they are under pressure, and when you are under pressure mistakes are inevitable. They are out of their comfort zone.

6.cxd4 Nc6 7.Nc3 Bb4 looks more or less equal.

6...Be7 Rene criticised himself later for not playing 6...Nc6.



And again, this should be an automatic decision. You attack the bishop, and either win the bishop pair or win a pawn, and already you have some kind of advantage.

7.Bb5+ Nd7 7...Nc6=.

8.Nf3 a6 9.Bxd7+ Qxd7 10.0-0 Rc8 11.Nbd2



11...Bc5?! This is somewhat over-egging the pudding. I wouldn't even consider giving away the bishop pair, and you are also making the classic amateur mistake of moving a piece more than once in the opening.

Watching the game I wondered about an aggressive approach of 11...h5!? with the idea of ...g5 and g4, gaining space on the kingside; the engine likes just 11...Nh6 and isn't concerned that a plan of h3 and g4 might sideline that piece. Later, after Black castles, ...f6 and ...Nf7 will come into consideration; Rene suggested 11...f6 in the analysis, but perhaps this is a bit premature, as Black is lacking in development. ...f6 is an idea in general, but you probably want to castle first.

12.Bxc5 Rxc5 13.Rc1 Ne7 14.b4 Rc8 I think we both thought that White was slightly better when we discussed this position later. But the ever-objective engine says that it is about equal; sure, Black has lost the cherished bishop pair, but all his remaining pieces are well placed.

15.h3 h6 16.a4 0-0 17.a5 I thought what White was doing was all great, ambitiously clamping the b6-square. But the engine says this is double-edged and risky, because you are also creating weaknesses (the c3-pawn is now a bit weak).

17...Nc6 18.Nb3 Qc7 19.Nc5 Rfd8 19...Be4!

20.Re1 Bh7 21.Nd4 Nxd4? 22.cxd4 Qe7 23.Qf3 Bg6 24.Qg3



24...Qg5?? Forgetting about the b-pawn. Good technique is also about maintaining parity when we don't have the advantage, and maintaining material is part of that.

25.Qxg5 hxg5 26.Nxb7+- Rxc1 27.Rxc1 Rb8 28.Nd6? 28.Rc7 is again automatic, and this is a very easy win for White as he can slowly play the king to c3, followed by the ruthless conversion of the extra pawn.

28...Rxb4 29.Rc8+ Kh7 30.Ra8 Rxd4 As Rene suggested later, Black has good chances here, partly because of the protected passed d-pawn. Also in some situations the bishop can be more effective than the knight.

31.Rxa6



31...Bd3?! Again we see a slight tendency by Rene to overplay it at times. Professional players are more straightforward and decisive.

31...Rd1+ 32.Kh2 d4. Sometimes the simplest variations are best. Get on with pushing the d-pawn!

32.Ra7 Ra4 33.Nxf7 Kg6 34.Nh8+ Kh7 35.Nf7 Kg6 36.Nd6 Ra1+ 37.Kh2 Re1 38.Ne8 Rxe5 39.Rxg7+ Kf5 40.Nd6+ Kf6 41.Rf7+ Kg6 42.Rf3! Now White is back on the winning path.

42...Ba6 43.Ne8? It is not easy at a quick time control to see the cool 43.Re3!, when transition to a knight vs bishop ending leaves White easily winning.

43...Re4 44.Rf6+ Kh7 45.Nd6 Kg7 46.Rf7+ Kg6 47.Rf8 d4 48.Nxe4 1-0

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

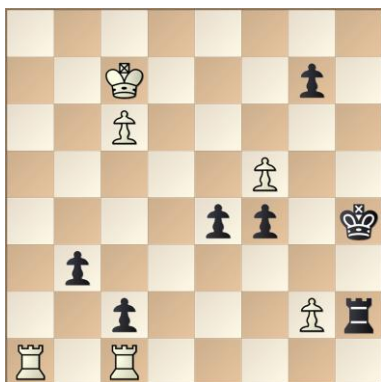
How to Solve a Study by Ian Watson

In Passing....

Giving pawns a double first move speeds up the action greatly in chess, but it does enable a pawn to sneak past any enemy pawn that is waiting to capture it. That, of course, is why we have the en passant rule: to even things up a bit. The en passant rule is quirky, though; instead of letting the enemy pawn capture sideways, it captures diagonally and doesn't end up on the square that the sneaky pawn was on. Chess composers like using these quirkier rules of chess to produce unexpected effects.

Here's a study, composed jointly by the brothers Vladimir and Leonard Katsnelson, that uses the double first move and the en passant capture. I chose it to honor that fine

composer Vladimir Katsnelson, who died in May. It was published in the endgame study magazine *EG* in 2004.



White to play and win

Start by making an initial assessment. Black is down a rook, but the c- and b-pawns more than compensate. White will need to get his c-pawn going before Black can advance those two and the central pawns. The position of the black king looks significant too, it might be possible to get the White a1-rook round the back and attack it.

OK, where do we move the white king, or can we do something else first? A seasoned solver, looking at the diagram position, might wonder why there's a white pawn on f5, and suspect that the first move might be 1.f6; even without knowing why, he would be tempted to try that move. Here we go: 1.f6 gxf6 and the g-file is opened, maybe for an eventual check by the rook. Let's see how it might work: 1.f6 gxf6 2.K-where? Those pawns on e4 and f4 might well be there to block in the black king if it ends up on f5, so perhaps there's a mating position? With that thought, you can vaguely see a position with the white king on d6 preventing ...Ke5. It will need a white rook on g8 or g7, and what else? Oh, yes! White will be able to play g4+, and when Black captures that en passant with his f-pawn there will be Rf1 mate.

You have anticipated the denouement, but you still need to find the moves that get there. 2.Kd6 Kg4 (to free the black rook so it can stop the c-pawn) 3.c7 Rh8 4.Ra7 b2, and now what? You need to get that a7-rook into the action, so 5.c8Q+ Rxc8 6.Rg7+ Kf5 7.g4+ fxg3 e.p. 8.Rf1 mate. Job done? Yes, in that you've found what is very likely to be the composers' solution, so you could just stop; but to appreciate a study properly involves understanding why the alternatives don't work.

With this study, that is quite a bit of work. I'll just run through them quickly here:

1.Kb7? Kg4 2.c7 Rh8 3.Rxc2 bxc2 4.Rc1 Kxf5;
1.Kd6? Kg5 2.c7 Rh8 3.Rxc2 bxc2 4.Rc1 Kxf5 5.Rxc2 f3;

1.Kd7? Kg4 2.c7 Rh8 3.Rcb1 cxb1Q 4.Rxb1 Kxf5 5.Rxb3 g5 6.Rb8 Rh7+;

In the main line:

2.Kb6? Kg4 3.Rxc2 bxc2 4.Rc1 f3;

2.Kb7? Kg4;

2...b2 3.c7;

2...Kg5 3.c7 Rh8 4.Ra5+;

2...Rxc2 3.c7 Rg8 4.Rh1+;

3.Ra8? b2 4.Rg8+ Kh4;

3.Ra7? b2 4.Rg7+ Kh4 5.c7 bxc1Q 6.c8Q Qd1+ 7.Ke7 c1Q;

4.Rh1? b2 5.Rxh8 c1Q.

The full solution is **1.f6 gxf6 2.Kd6 Kg4 3.c7 Rh8 4.Ra7 b2 5.c8Q+ Rxc8 6.Rg7+ Kf5 7.g4+ fxg3 e.p. 8.Rf1 mate.**

That's a pleasing study, but it doesn't fully display the oddity of the en passant move, because even if Black could capture sideways on move 7 he would still be mated by 8.Rf1.

Your solving task, however, does achieve that odder effect. The solution is quite long, but most of Black's moves are obviously forced, so it should not be too challenging. It was composed by Beat Neuenschwander, and first published in *Die Schwalbe* in 2019.



White to play and win

The solutions are given at the end of the newsletter.

Ian Watson Email: ian@irwatson.uk

Monthly Conundrum

by Christopher Jones

First, here is the problem with which I left you last time.



Anatoly Vasilenko and Mark Basisty
3rd Prize, Polski Związek Szachowy 2013
Mate in 2

There are three plausible tries: 1.Bb6? Ng4!, 1.Qc3? Ra2! and 1.Nxf5? c3!. The key is 1.Ne4!, leading to 1...fxe4/Kf3/Kxe5 2.Qxe4/Qf2/Bc7.

It has been many issues since I sang the praises of the weekly problem on the website of the British Chess Problem Society, www.theproblemist.org/. On the home page is the current problem; at the foot of the page you can click on a link to other problems that have been featured, going back many years. The problems have been selected by Michael McDowell with a view to being an interesting challenge to solve, and after solving (or, in my case, after clicking on the link that brings up the solution with an enlightening commentary by Michael!) to present striking and instructive play to enjoy. Here is quite a recent one – in line with what I've said above you may like either to have a go at solving it or may prefer, after a brief perusal of the diagram, to read on to the solution.



Ado Kraemer
Honourable Mention, *Die Schwalbe* 1930

Mate in 4

It's interesting that if you put this problem on a computer using problem-solving software it will tell you only half the story. In looking at the diagram, you may have seen that the move 1.Bg3 would be a killer but for the reply 1...Rxc3. So we'd like to deflect the rook by playing 2.Bf1+; and the key therefore will be a move of the c4-knight. But to what square? The computer will tell you that after the move to this specific square White has an unanswerable threat. Normally, a problem in which there are no defences to the key move requiring a 'rethink' on White's part would be disparaged. But in this case there is a hidden black resource, which is the reason that only 1.Na3! works, as becomes clear in the unfolding of the solution: 1.Na3 Bh1(!) 2.Bf1+ Rg2 – a stalemate defence! But now after 3.Bg3 Black does have a move: 3...bxa3, whereupon White plays 4.Rxh4#.

Here is another problem recently featured on the BCPS website.



Stavros Iatridis
1st Prize, Olympic Tourney, Tel Aviv 1964
Mate in 3

Michael McDowell records that this is a problem that has been described as 'in the style of Sam Loyd'. I think that that is partly because Sam Loyd was not concerned necessarily with subtle key moves, but with the fireworks that ensued from the key move. So you can consider quite strong (unsubtle) key moves – even one which you might think is immediately decisive, but which allows Black just one plausible defence. I'll say no more! But if you don't wish to wait a month for the solution, then either you can get your computer to solve it, or, maybe better, you can enjoy Michael's commentary on the 26th February 2024 problem on the BCPS website.

Please don't hesitate to email me with any queries at all to do with this column.

Christopher Jones Email: cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

EVENTS CALENDAR

The full events calendar is updated daily, and can be found at <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/event-calendar/>

Week Beginning 1 July 2024	
1 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Summer Cup 2024
2 July 2024	London Chess League FIDE Blitz Evening
3 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Summer 2024
3 July 2024	First Wednesday Chess
4 July 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
5-7 July 2024	EJCOA National Youth Finals 2024
6 July 2024	ECF Counties Championships 2024 Finals
6 July 2024	Wimbledon Junior Rapidplay
6-7 July 2024	UKCC Northern Gigafinal 2024
6 July 2024	2024 Sheringham Junior Chess Tournament
6 July 2024	Wimbledon Rapidplay
6 July 2024	Maidenhead Junior Tournament July 2024
7 July 2024	South Shields Summer Blitz 2024
7 July 2024	Ealing Broadway FIDE Rapid 2024
7 July 2024	Kensington FIDE Rapid
Week Beginning 8 July 2024	
8 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Summer Cup 2024
9 July 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
10 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Summer 2024
12-16 July 2024	4th Wood Green Invitational
13 July 2024	Leicester Rapidplay
13 July 2024	1st Yorkshire Blitz
13 July 2024	Southall Junior Rapidplay
13 July 2024	2nd Sandwich FIDE RapidPlay
13 July 2024	Golders Green FIDE Rapid 2024
13 July 2024	Hillingdon School Championships
13-14 July 2024	Southall FIDE Congress
14 July 2024	5th Ashton Rapidplay
14 July 2024	Uxbridge FIDE Rapid Tournament
Week Beginning 15 July 2024	
15 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Summer Cup 2024
16 July 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
17 Jul 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Summer 2024
18-23 July 2024	IV Mindsports International Chess Festival
19-20 July 2024	Wimbledon FIDE Congress
19-21 July 2024	2nd Kent FIDE Congress
20-21 July 2024	UKCC Southern Gigafinal 2024
Week Beginning 22 July 2024	
22 July 2024	Coulsdon Chess Summer Cup 2024
23-25 July 2024	Glorney Cup 2024
25 July – 4 August 2024	British Chess Championships 2024
27 July 2024	Poplar Rapid Tournament
28 July 2024	Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club Rapid 2024
28 July 2024	The Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club Rapid 2024

How to Solve a Study solution

(Neuenschwander)

1.Qa4+ e4 2.Nh5+ Kg4 3.h3+ Rxh3 4.Qd7+ Kxh5 5.g4+ hxg3 e.p. 6.Qxh3+ Kg6 7.Qh7+ Kf6 8.Qf7+ Ke5 9.d4+ exd3 e.p. 10.Qxe8+ Kf4 11.Qxe1 and wins.

Black is compelled to make two en passant captures, and both display the quirkiness of the move. Notice too that the black king does a round trip back to its starting square, known as a 'Rundlauf'.

A few sidelines:

2...Kf5 3.Qd7+ Ke5 4.Qxe8+ Kd5 5.Qb5+ Ke6 6. Ng7+ wins;
3.Qd7+? Kxh5 4.Qxe8+ Kg4 5.Qe6+ Kf4 6.Qf6+ Kg4 7.Qe6+ Kf4 draws;
3...Kxh5 4.Qxe8+ wins;
5.Qxe8+? Kg4 draws;
10.Qe7+? Kf4 11.Qxe1 Nf6+ 12.Kf7 Ne4 draws.

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