



Chess *Moves*

July 2024



World Senior Team Chess Championships Report, Counties Championship Round-Up, ECF Grassroots Support Initiative and much more ...

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the July edition of *ChessMoves*!

We begin with the great news that the England 65+ team are World Senior Team Champions, with the 50+ team picking up a very creditable bronze medal as well at the recent World Senior Team Championships in Poland. England players also picked up a clutch of individual medals in what proved to be a highly successful event for English senior teams. Nigel Povah's and Keith Arkell's report includes a selection of wonderful annotated games.

There's also a full round-up of the recently concluded Counties championship by Mark Murrell, together with reports from around the country and the usual comprehensive range of articles from our regular contributors.

Other highlights in this issue to bring to your attention:

- We're delighted to announce an initiative to support grassroots chess intended as a multi-year initiative to help promote and develop chess across England. Organisations and individual ECF members/chess players can apply for support – more information, including a link to the prospectus and application form, [here](#).
- The British Chess Championships are now underway. The majority of events will be broadcast live - there's a full listing of where to follow the games [here](#).
- Our friends at ChessMood are offering all their 500+ hours of grandmaster-crafted courses FREE until 31 July. These come highly recommended. More details [here](#).

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

Enjoy!

IM Andrew Martin Email: a.martin2007@yahoo.co.uk

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EVENTS

England 65+ 1st Team Win the World Senior Team Chess Championships by Nigel Povah and Keith Arkell

The World Senior Team Chess Championships took place in the wonderful city of Krakow, Poland, from 2nd to 11th July. It truly was a most enjoyable venue with many interesting places to visit in the city, and excursions to the fascinating Wieliczka salt mine and the moving experience of Auschwitz for those keen to explore the locality.

England fielded an unprecedented nine teams, and the team line-ups, with individual scores in brackets, were as follows:

50+ 1: Mickey Adams (6½/8), John Emms (3½/7), Glenn Flear (5/7), Keith Arkell (5/7), Nigel Davies (5/7).

50+ 2: Graeme Buckley (3½/8), Steve Dishman (7/9), Gary Clark (5/7), Chris Duncan (4/7), Paul Townsend (2½/5).

50+ 3: Phil Crocker (4½/9), Martin Burrows (4/9), Jeremy Fraser-Mitchell (2/9), Bob Noyce (5½/9).

50+ 4: Stephen Homer (2½/8), Haran Rasalingam (5½/8), Edgar Wilson (4/8), Kevin Winter (3½/6), Andy Proudfoot (1½/6).

50+ Women: Sue Lalic (4½/9), Ingrid Lauterbach (2/8), Natasha Regan (3½/6), Sheila Jackson (3½/7), Petra Nunn (3/6).

65+ 1: John Nunn (6½/9), Tony Kosten (7/9), Jonathan Mestel (4½/7), Paul Littlewood (2½/5), Terry Chapman (5/6).

65+ 2: John Pigott (6½/8), Chris Baker (4½/7), Tony Stebbings (5/7), Nigel Povah (5/7), Chris Beaumont (3½/7).

65+ 3: John Quinn (5/9), Stephen Orton (5½/9), Brian Hewson (5/9), Jon Freeman (3½/9).

65+ 4: Richard Freeman (4/8), Peter R Wood (4½/8), Stewart Reuben (1/6), Bob Kane (1½/6), Roger Scowen (1½/4).

50+

The 50+ 1st team were second seeds behind a strong team from the USA, and despite strong competition from Iceland and Italy as well we had high hopes of a good outcome, as we had four competent GMs - John Emms, Glenn Flear, myself and Nigel Davies, and one super GM - Mickey Adams, the reigning 50+ World Champion, and the strongest-ever player to dip a toe into seniors chess. We started well with a comfortable 4-0 victory over 18th seeds USA 5 Brothers - yes, they really are five brothers! We then continued with a convincing 3½-½ victory over USA Women. Round 3 saw a battle between the 50+ 1st and 2nd teams, which ended in a 3-1 victory for us, with wins from Mickey Adams and Nigel Davies.

Having reached the serious stage of the event, round 4 saw us face third seeds Iceland, and Mickey showed his class by destroying an ex-candidate in a mere 19 moves.

Adams, Michael - Hjartarson, Johann B50

50+ Krakow (4), 05.07.2024

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.Nc3 a6 Inviting White to transpose back into a standard Open Sicilian with 4.d4, but Mickey chooses the most popular alternative.

4.g3 d6 4...b5 is most popular and probably best, when White can continue with Bg2 or open the position with d4.

5.Bg2 Nf6 6.e5! White breaks in the centre to open the position and utilise his lead in development.

6...dxe5 7.Nxe5 Qc7?! Black would do better to challenge the knight with 7...Nbd7.

8.Nc4 Bd7 9.d3 Bc6 10.Bf4 Qd8 11.Ne4



11...Nd5 Exchanges don't help Black due to White's lead in development: 11...Nxe4 12.dxe4 Qxd1+ 13.Rxd1 Nd7 14.Na5 Rc8 15.Rd2 Be7 16.Ke2 when White enjoys a comfortable advantage. 11...Be7 was best, continuing with development.

12.Be5 Nd7 13.0-0 Nxe5 14.Nxe5 Rc8?



There isn't really time for this.

14...Be7 leaves Black only slightly worse, as the doubled c-pawns will be hard to get at after 15.Nxc6 bxc6.

15.Qh5! Out of the blue, White's initiative becomes too much.

15...g6 15...Rc7 16.Nxc6 bxc6 (16...Rxc6? 17.Nc3! g6 18.Qe5 f6 19.Qe4+-) 17.Qe5.

16.Nxg6!+- fxg6 **17.Qe5!** With an inevitable loss of material.

17...Qe7 17...Nf6 18.Qxe6+ Be7 19.Nxf6+ Kf8 20.Bd5 Bxd5 21.Nxd5 Rc6 22.Qe5+-; 17...Rg8 18.Qxe6+ Ne7 19.Nf6#.

18.Qxh8 Kd7 **19.d4**

1-0

Normally I have quite a good feel for when to steer my game to a draw in the best interests of the team, but against Iceland I got it all wrong and self-destructed by playing far too ambitiously with my kingside pawns against GM Thorhallsson. This was my first loss in many months of international chess, and resulted in a drawn match. I did, however, maintain my tradition of winning the FIDE blitz tournament on the rest day, amassing 8½ points from the 9 rounds.

After a further tied match against Italy and a narrow loss to the USA, it was quite surprising that in the last round England still had chances to snatch gold if a couple of players from other teams had found one or two improvements against our rivals. Overall, though, there is no doubt that the USA deservedly took top honours, with Italy taking the silver.

The organisers broke with the usual tradition of issuing gold, silver and bronze medals for the best individual performances on each board at the closing ceremony, only handing out the gold medals. Mickey Adams of

course took gold on top board. Had they followed tradition I would have won silver, with both Nigel Davies and Steve Dishman (in the second team) winning bronze. Glenn Flear and John Emms played solid chess, and John again did a sterling job as captain. However, on the whole I feel that the England 50+ 1st team were a little lacklustre, and we underperformed in only gaining the bronze medal when we were the second seeds.

England 1 have played in all ten editions of the World 50+ Championship, and I have been privileged to be selected for them all, a journey which began in 2014, and during this time we have won gold once, silver three times and bronze four times.

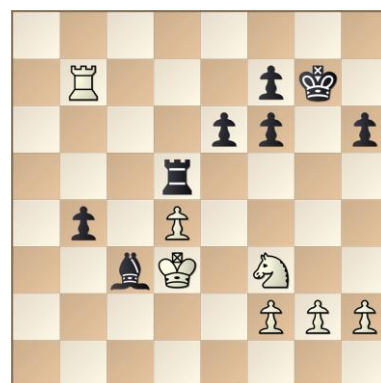
The 50+ second team exceeded their seventh seeding by finishing fifth with some great performances, particularly from Steve Dishman who scored a fantastic undefeated 7/9, which is all the more amazing as he played three GMs and four other titled players and gained 32 rating points.

The third team had a tougher time, but with only four players they each had to play all nine rounds, with Phil Crocker scoring a respectable 50% on board 1. The fourth team pretty much matched their seeding, with their captain Haran Rasalingam scoring an impressive 5½/8 on board 2 and gaining 80 rating points!

50+ Women

England's 50+ women faced more female competition this year than usual with five other women's teams, including strong opposition from Estonia and the USA. They began well with a 2½-1½ win over the 50+ fourth team, thanks to wins from Sue Lalic and Petra Nunn. In round 2 they had a fantastic 2½-1½ win against a strong Slovakian team led by GM Martin Mrva, who was held to a draw by Sue Lalic, with Sheila Jackson producing the solitary win on board 3.

Briestensky, Rastislav (2274) - Jackson, Sheila (1988) D12
FIDE World Senior Team Chess Championship 50+
Krakow, Poland (2.3), 03.07.2024



Sheila had played well to go a pawn up against her higher rated opponent, who now blunders a second pawn.

32.Ra7? 32.Rb8 Ra5.

32...Bxd4 Perhaps he had forgotten about this simple tactic.

33.Nxd4 e5 34.Rb7 Rxd4+—+ With two extra pawns this is clearly winning, but Sheila plays this in an exemplary fashion to deliver the full point.

35.Ke3 f5 36.Rb6 f6 37.Rb7+ Kg6 38.Ke2 f4 38...h5 will probably come to the same thing.

39.f3 f5 39...Kg5.

40.Rb6+ Kg5 41.Rb5 e4 42.fxe4 Rxe4+ 43.Kf2 Rc4 44.Rb8 Rc2+ 44...h5 45.Rg8+ Kf6 46.Re8 b3 47.Rb8 Rc3 48.Rb5 h4 49.h3 Re3 50.Rd5 Re5 51.Rd6+ Re6 52.Rd2 Rb6 53.Rb2 Ke5.

45.Kf3 Rc3+ 46.Kf2 b3 The pawn edges forward.

47.Rb6 h5 48.Rb4 Rc2+ 49.Kf3 b2 Now the white rook is confined to the b-file.

50.Rb6 Rd2 51.Rb4 Kf6! It's now time to activate the black king.

52.Rb5 52.Kxf4? allows the tactic **52...Rd4+ 53.Rxd4 b1Q**, when Black will soon convert her advantage.

52...Ke6 52...h4 was also good, restricting White's pawns.

53.h4 Kd6 54.Kxf4 Kc6 55.Rb8 Rxb2 56.Kxf5 Kc5 With the black rook guarding b2 and cutting off the white king from the h5 pawn, Black can simply advance her king to escort the b-pawn home.

57.Ke4 Kc4 58.Kf3 Rh2 59.Kg3 Rd2 60.Kf4 Kc3 61.Kg5 Rd5+ 62.Kg6 Rc5 Shielding the king, so ...Kc2 will see the b-pawn home.

0–1

They then had another excellent result, only losing to fourth seeded Italy, who fielded 3GMs and an IM, by 2½–1½, thanks to Sue Lalic drawing on top board against GM Alberto David and Natasha Regan beating GM Lexy Ortega after he blundered in a drawn ending.

Regan, Natasha K (2015) - Ortega, Lexy (2386) A09
FIDE World Senior Team Chess Championship 50+
Krakow, Poland (3.3), 04.07.2024

1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.b4 f6 4.e3 e5 5.c5 a5 6.Qa4+ Bd7 7.b5 Bxc5 8.Bc4 Ne7 9.exd4 exd4



10.0–0 10.Ba3 is the main line: **10...Na6! 11.0–0 Nb4 12.Re1 Bg4 13.d3 Bxf3 14.gxf3 Kf8 15.Nd2 Ned5 16.Ne4 Be7**, with a dynamic balance.

10...Bg4 11.Ba3 11.Qb3 a4 12.Qd3 Bf5 13.Qe2 Qd6.

11...Nd7 Black has good development, and White doesn't have quite enough for the pawn.

12.Re1 Nb6 12...Bxf3! 13.Bxc5 Nxc5 14.Qa3 Qd6 15.Qxf3 0–0–0 16.Na3 Ng6.

13.Qb3 Qd6 13...a4! 14.Qd3 Qd6.

14.Bf7+ Kf8 15.Be6 Bxe6 15...a4 16.Qd3 Bxe6 17.Bxc5 Qxc5 18.Rxe6 Kf7 19.Re1 Ng6.

16.Bxc5



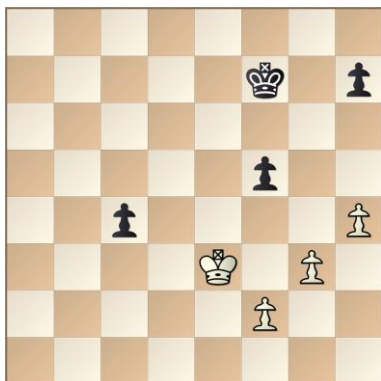
16...Bxb3?! the resulting exchanges free White's position and allow her to activate her knight. **16...Qxc5! 17.Qxe6 Re8 18.h4 h5 19.a4 Qd5 20.Qxd5 Nbx5 21.Nxd4 Kf7.**

17.Bxd6 cxd6 18.axb3 Kf7= 19.Nxd4 a4 20.bxa4 Rxa4 21.Rxa4 Nxa4 22.h4 Rc8 23.Na3 Nb6 24.g3 Nc4 24...Ra8 25.Nac2 g6=.

25.Nxc4 Rxc4 26.Ne6 Rc8 27.Nxg7 Rc5 28.Ne6 Rxb5 29.Kg2 Nc6 30.d4 d5 31.Nc7 Rb4 32.Nxd5 Rxd4 33.Nf4 b5 34.Re6 Rxf4 34...Rc4=.

35.Rxc6 Rc4 35...Re4 36.Rb6 Re5=.

36.Rxc4 bxc4 37.Kf3 f5 38.Ke3



38...f4+?? an inexplicable blunder from the Italian GM, who must have forgotten that White can capture with her king.

38...Ke6 39.Kd4 h5 40.Kxc4 f4 was the way to do it: 41.gxf4 (41.Kd4 Kf5 42.gxf4 Kxf4 43.Kd5 Kf5 44.Kd6 Kg4 45.Ke5 Kxh4 46.Kf4 Kh3 47.Kg5 h4 48.Kh5=) 41...Kf5 42.Kd3 Kxf4 43.Ke2 Kg4 44.f3+ Kxh4 45.f4 Kg4 46.Kf2=.

39.Kxf4 Ke6 40.Ke4 It's all over, as White will go two safe pawns up. Although Natasha was fortunate to win this game, she deserves a lot of credit for ensuring she would achieve at least a draw against her GM opponent.

1-0

England Women generally faced much tougher opposition than their female counterparts, and unfortunately this told against them in the final standings, with Estonia Women (who they drew with) taking the gold on 10 match points, and USA Women edging them into the bronze position with one extra game point, after both finished with nine match points.

65+

The 65+ first team were top seeds, and they started with a convincing 4-0 win against Denmark SK 2012, which included a fine win by seniors debutant GM Jonathan Mestel which was all the more impressive after many years of inactivity. In round 2 they comfortably brushed Germany Eppingen aside by 3½-½ to maintain their momentum.

The 65+ second team had a tough match in round 2 against fourth seeds Slovakia, losing by 2½-1½ despite John Pigott winning an impressive game against GM Lubomir Ftacnik on top board.

Pigott, John C (2290) - Ftacnik, Lubomir (2455) B96

FIDE World Senior Team Chess Championship 65+ Krakow Poland (3.1), 04.07.2024

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Nbd7 Ftacnik's choice against John Nunn in the European Senior Team Championships in May, where he had prepared a detailed engine analysis.

8.Qf3 h6 9.Bxf6 Pigott favours the less common but more successful capture rather than the retreat.

9.Bh4 e5 10.Bxf6 (10.Nf5) 10...Nxf6 11.Nf5 Bxf5 12.exf5 e4 13.Qe3 Qa5 14.0-0 0-0 0-0 when John found the best move which ensures equality 15.Qa7 ½-½ Nunn, J (2552)-Ftacnik, L (2446) EU-chT Seniors 65 Terme Catez 2024 (4.1).

9...Nxf6 9...Qxf6 10.0-0 0-0 g6 (10...Be7? when the engine now gives the powerful novelty 11.Nf5! b5 (11...exf5 12.Nd5 Qg6 13.exf5 Qxf5 14.Qe3 Ne5 15.Nc7+-) 12.Nxd6+ Bxd6 13.Rxd6+-) 11.g3 Qe7 12.Bg2 Bg7 13.Nb3 0-0 14.Qd3 1-0 Hakobyan, A (2621)-Tissir, M (2375) Sharjah Masters 4th 2021 (4).

10.0-0 0-0 Qc7 11.Bd3 Be7?! Black is preparing to castle into the attack.

11...Bd7! intending to go long is more sensible: 12.g4 0-0 13.h4 Kb8 14.g5 Ng8=.

12.Rhe1 0-0 12...e5 13.Nf5 Bxf5 14.exf5 exf4 (14...0-0 15.Be4 Rd7 16.Nd5 Nxd5 17.Bxd5 Kb8 18.Re4 with a clear advantage) 15.Nd5 Nxd5 16.Qxd5 Kf8 17.Be4 ½-½ Broniek, M (2259)-Kopasov, E (2271) LSS WC-2013-P-00017 LSS email 2009.

13.e5 Ne8 13...dxe5 14.fxe5 Nh7 15.Kb1 Bd7 16.Qe4 Ng5 17.Qe3 Rfd8 18.h4 Nh7 19.g4 Be8 (19...Bxh4? is far too risky: 20.Rh1 Bg5 21.Bxh7+ Kh8 22.Qf2 Kxh7 23.Ne4 Bc6 (23...Qxe5? 24.Nf3!) 24.Nxg5+ Kg8 25.Ngf3+-) 20.g5 g6 21.Ne4 hxg5 22.h5 Qxe5 23.Nf3 Qf4 24.hxg6 fxe6 25.Qe2, when Black stands worse due to his shattered kingside.

14.Kb1! So as to avoid any ...Bg5 checks, always a useful prophylaxis in these types of positions.

14.g4 dxe5 15.fxe5 Bd7 16.Qe4 g6 17.Kb1 Qb6 18.Qf4 Bg5 19.Qg3 Rd8 (19...Qxd4 20.Be4 Qc5 21.Rxd7) 20.h4 Be7

21.Qf4 Kg7 22.h5 Bg5 23.Qf2 1-0 Debevec, B (2245)-Hasanagic, A (2064) SLO-CupT F3 email ICCF email 2006.

14...Bd7 15.Qe4+- g6 16.h4



White prepares to lever the position open with h5.

16...Ng7 17.h5! Regardless, as it opens the h-file.

17...Nxf5 18.g4 dxe5 Trying to complicate matters.

18...Nxf4 19.Qxf4 Bg5 (19...dxe5 20.Qxh6 Bf6 21.Rh1 Rfe8 22.Rdf1 Bg7 23.Qh7+ Kf8 24.Rxf7+ Kxf7 25.Rf1+ Ke7 26.Qh4+ Kd6 27.Ne4+ Kd5 28.c4+ Kxd4 29.Rf3 with Qf2 mate to follow) 20.Qf2 dxe5 21.Nf3 Bf4 22.Ne2+- when White is clearly in control. 18...Ng7 19.Qh1! h5 20.gxh5 Nxf5 21.Rg1 Ng7 22.Rxg6 fxg6 23.Bxg6+-.

19.gxh5! exd4



20.Qxd4?! 20.Rg1! was more forceful, but you can't blame John for keeping it simple and trying to maintain an advantage without complications against his illustrious opponent. 20...Bf6 21.Rxg6+ Bg7 (21...fxg6 22.Qxg6+ Bg7 23.Qh7+ Kf7 24.Bg6+ Ke7 25.Qxg7+- is crushing) 22.Rf6! Rfe8 23.Rg1 Kf8 24.Qg6! Bxf6 25.Qxf6 Qd8 26.Qxh6+ Ke7 27.Qg5+ Kf8 28.Qg7+ Ke7 29.Ne4 Bc6 30.Qg5+ Kd7 31.Nf6+, with a decisive advantage.

20...g5! Ftacnik finds the only move to keep him in the game.

21.Nd5!? 21.Ne4 f6 22.fxg5 fxg5 23.Rf1 Bb5! 24.c4 Rad8 25.Rxf8+ Bxf8 26.Nf6+ Kh8 27.Nd7+ e5 28.Qf2 Qxd7 29.Qf6+ Bg7 30.Qg6 Bf8 31.Qf6+ Bg7 32.Qg6, with no more than a draw.

21...exd5 22.Rxe7 Qd6?? Short of time, Ftacnik blunders.

22...Rae8! 23.Rxe8 Rxe8 24.Rg1 g4=.

23.Re5!+- Black's now in big trouble as g5 is collapsing.

23...Bg4 Attempts to save g5 with 23...f6 or 23...g4 run into 24.Rxd5, winning a piece.

24.Rg1 f6 25.Rxd5 Qe7 26.fxg5 hxg5 26...f5 27.Rd7 is hopeless, e.g. 27...Rad8 28.Bc4+ etc.

27.Qxg4

1-0

Round 3 was a tighter affair for the first team, who faced another German team, Germany Zaehringen Reloaded, who they defeated by 2½-1½ thanks to the following win from Terry Chapman on bottom board after his opponent misjudged a level position. The game is interesting because it features several similar skewers at the end.

Vogel, Robert (2100) - Chapman, Terry P D (2287) E04
FIDE World Senior Team Chess Championship 65+ Krakow Poland (3.4), 04.07.2024



In this level position White's activity compensates for the doubled c-pawns, particularly as the advanced c-pawn can be won with Na4, but instead White tries to exploit Black's undefended pieces on his back rank with this skewer.

24.Ra8?? 24.Na4= Na6 (24...Rd1+ 25.Kg2 Ra1? 26.Ra8+-) 25.Nxc3 Nb4 26.Ke1 Be6 27.Na4 Bd5 28.Nc5=.

24...Na6!+- This wins material due to the threat of ...Bh3+.

25.Rxc8 25.Rxa6 Bxa6 26.Nxa6 Rd4 27.Bc2 Rd2 28.Be4 c2—; 25.Nxa6 Bh3+ 26.Ke1 Rxa8—; 25.Bf5 Nxc5—.

25...Rxc8 26.Nxa6 It looks like White has won two pieces for the rook, but the advanced c-pawn ensures Black wins more material.

26...Ra8 27.Nc5 27.Nb4 Ra4! is a winning skewer.

27...c2!

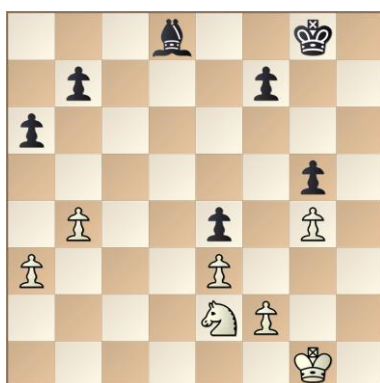
28.Bxc2 28.Nb3 c1Q+ 29.Nxc1 Ra1—.

28...Ra1+ 29.Kg2 Rc1 With yet another winning skewer.

0–1

The 65+ first team beat the solid Slovakian team, who have often thwarted us in the past, by 2½-1½ thanks to a win from Tony Kosten against GM Jan Plachetka on board 2 in this instructive knight versus bishop endgame.

Kosten, Anthony C. (2360) - Plachetka, Jan (2289) A37
FIDE World Senior Team Chess Championship 65+ Krakow Poland (4.2), 05.07.2024



32.g4 Tony had enjoyed an edge for much of the game after saddling his opponent with an IQP, but recent exchanges have resulted in this level endgame. However, the Slovakian GM now goes wrong, creating a target on a6 for the knight.

32...b5? The engine is happy to jettison the e4-pawn, with the view that the bishop is superior to the knight in this open position and White will struggle to make his extra kingside pawn tell if he secures one: 32...Be7 33.Nc3 f6 34.Nxe4 Kf7 35.Kf1 (35.Nc3 Ke6 36.e4 Bd6 37.f3 Be5 38.Nd5 b5 39.Kf1 Bb2 40.Nc7+ Ke5 41.Nxa6 Kd4 42.Kf2 Bxa3=) 35...a5 36.bxa5 Bxa3 37.Nd2 (37.Ke2 Bb4=) 37...Ke6 38.Ke2 Bb4 39.Nb3 Kd5 40.Kd3=.

33.Nc3 Bf6 34.Nxe4 Bb2 35.Nc5 Bxa3 36.Nxa6? Tony misses the more accurate 36.Nd3!, when the bishop is

trapped by the knight and White can simply advance his king: 36...Kf8 37.Kg2 Ke7 38.Kf3 Kd6 39.Ke4 f6 40.f4 Kc6 41.Kd4 Kd6 42.fxg5 fxg5 43.e4 Kc6 44.e5 a5 (44...Kd7 45.Kd5 is hopeless) 45.bxa5, and Black is in big trouble with those two passed pawns to deal with.

36...Kg7= 37.Nc7 Bxb4 38.Nxb5 This exchange of all the queenside pawns now means White needs to somehow attack Black's f-pawn.

38...Kf6 39.Nd4 White's extra pawn doesn't count for much unless White can penetrate with his king, which Tony manages to do.

39...Bc3? A subtle difference, but the bishop is less active here.

39...Bc5! =.

40.Nf5 Ke5 41.Kf1 Ke6 42.Ke2 Ba5 43.Kd3 Be1 44.f3 Bb4?! Mistakenly allowing the white king to advance to the important e4-square. 44...Kd5=.

45.Ke4 Ba3 45...Bd2 46.Nd4+ Kf6 47.Nb3 Be1 48.Kd5 Bf2 49.e4.

46.Nd4+ Kf6 47.Kd5 Now the king starts to make his way round to e8.

47...Bc1



48.e4?! 48.Nf5!+— was more accurate: 48...Bd2 (48...Ba3 49.Kc6 Ke6 50.Kc7 Bc5 51.Kd8+—) 49.Kd6 Bc1 50.Kd7 Kg6 51.Ke8 Ba3 52.Ne7+ Kg7 53.Nc6 Bc5 54.e4 f6 55.Kd7 Kf7 56.Nd8+ Kg6 57.Ke6 is similar to the game.

48...Bb2 48...Bf4! 49.Nc6.

49.Nc6 Bc1? 49...Ba3! preventing the king from advancing was essential.

50.Kd6+— There's no stopping White now.

50...Ba3+ 51.Kd7 Kg6 52.Ke8 Now that the king is attacking the f7-pawn he will be able to force it to advance, and then gain access to e6 for his king.

52...f6 52...Kg7 53.Nd8 f6 54.Kd7 Kg6 55.Ke6 transposes, as White will play Nc6–e7+ and Kf5.

53.Kd7 Bb2 54.Ke6 Bc3 55.Ne7+ Kg7 56.Kf5 The ideal square for the king.

56...Bb2 57.Nc6 The knight manoeuvres to the better d7-square.

57...Bc1 58.Nb8 Bb2 59.Nd7 The knight is perfectly placed, attacking f6 and supporting the e5-advance to break the black pawn chain.

59...Bc1 59...Ba1 60.e5! fxe5 61.Kxg5 will see White go two pawns up with an easy win.

60.Nxf6

1–0

Round 5 saw a match between the joint leaders England 1 and France Cercle d'Échecs de Strasbourg, which resulted in a 2-2 draw thanks to this fine win by John Nunn and annotated by him, offsetting Paul Littlewood's defeat to the in-form Louis Roos.

Nunn, John D M (2552) - Sharif, Mehrshad (2324) C11
WSTCC 65+ Krakow (5), 06.07.2024

The French team from Strasbourg had listed the solid IM Sharif on top board, but he mysteriously failed to show up for the first four rounds. When we were paired against them for round 5 I was anticipating playing Daniel Roos, but this was the round when Sharif arrived. The resulting game was the only one he lost in the event, and enabled England to draw the match 2–2.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3 a6 8.Qd2 b5 This simple queenside advance is one of the main lines against the Steinitz system in the French. Black gains space and puts White off queenside castling.

9.h4!? This h-pawn advance has been played far less frequently than 9.dxc5, even though it poses Black some problems. White intends to retain the option of taking on c5, while making some progress on the kingside.

By far the most popular line here is 9.dxc5 Bxc5, and now either 10.Bxc5 or (10.Bd3).

9...b4 This reply has scored best for Black, the other main choices being 9...Bb7 and; 9...Qb6.

10.Na4 Qa5



Sooner or later the c5– and d4–pawns will be exchanged, and a big question is whether the c6– and f3–knights will be exchanged as well. Generally speaking it's better for White to keep these knights on (the reasons will be given later) but the only way for Black to make sure they are swapped is to play 10...cxd4 11.Nxd4 Nxd4 (if 11...Qc7 , for example, White can avoid the exchange by 12.Nf3) 12.Bxd4, but this has the disadvantage that it leaves the d7–knight without a good square.

11.Nxc5 It's also good to play 11.b3 cxd4 12.Nxd4, which leads to roughly the same situation as in the last note.

11...Nxc5 12.dxc5 Bxc5 Over the next couple of moves there's a battle for tempo over the bishop exchange. Black would like White to take on c5, drawing his queen into a more active position without loss of time, while White would like Black to force the exchange with ...Qb6, losing a move.

13.h5 Black now faces the choice of whether to allow h6 or play ...h6 himself.

13...h6 This looks like the correct decision.

After, for example, 13...Qb6 14.Bxc5 Qxc5 15.h6 g6 16.Qf2 the ending is very favourable for White because Black always has to worry about Ng5 attacking the h7–pawn, and as pieces are exchanged this problem steadily becomes more acute. Incidentally, this is one reason why it is better for White to have the f3– and c6–knights on the board.

14.Bd3 White continues to find useful moves without having to exchange on c5.

14...Qb6 Black concedes defeat in the battle for a tempo.

Perhaps Black should have tried 14...Bd7 to see if White can find another move apart from Bxc5. 14...Bxe3 15.Qxe3 b3+ 16.c3 bxa2 17.b4 Qa3 18.Qd2 is even better for White.

15.Bxc5 Qxc5 16.Qf2 The move of a 65+ player!

The younger Nunn would probably have played 16.Rh3 followed by Rg3, taking aim at g7 and forcing Black into a slightly awkward defence of the pawn, since it is much too dangerous to play ...0-0. According to the computer, this is slightly better than the move played, but I did not like an empty space around my king while the queens were on the board.

16...Qxf2+ 17.Kxf2 Ke7 Black would like to play ...a5 and ...Ba6, but after 17...a5 18.Bb5 Bd7 19.Bxc6 Bxc6 20.Nd4 White has a safe advantage with knight against bad bishop.

18.a3 Bd7 Black should probably have swapped on a3 at some stage over the next couple of moves; for example, 18...bxa3 19.Rxa3 a5 20.Bb5 Bd7 21.Bxc6 Bxc6 22.Nd4 Bd7 is only slightly better for White as the half-open b- and c-files give chances for counterplay. If Black tries 18...a5 now, then 19.Ke3 Ba6 20.axb4 Bxd3 21.cxd3 Nxb4 22.Rhc1 Rhc8 23.Nd4 gives White a large advantage.

19.Ke3 Rhb8 20.b3



20...a5?! This was Black's last chance to take on a3, and not playing ...bxa3 leads to a sharp deterioration in his position.

21.a4! Exploiting Black's mistake. At first sight it looks odd to fix a pawn on the same colour as the white bishop and to definitely leave White with a backward c-pawn. However, blocking the queenside gives White a free hand to focus on the other side of the board. Moreover, any queenside counterplay by Black will be very slow; for example, he has to play ...Bc8-a6 to swap the bishops, and even afterBxd3 cxd3 he needs several further moves to get a rook to c3.

21...Rc8?! Black doesn't realise the danger and plays a mechanical move.

21...f6 was the best chance, although 22.Rh4! followed by Rg4 puts Black under pressure on the kingside.

22.g4? A mistake, although it requires very accurate play by Black to exploit it.

22.Rh3! followed by Rg3 would have been awkward. During the game I underestimated this plan because after White plays Rg3 and Black ...Rg8 it isn't possible to win a pawn by Bh7 because of ...Rh8, when Rxg7 drops a piece to ...Kf8. However, tying the enemy rook down to g8 actually confers a significant advantage to White. After 22...Rg8 23.Rg3 Rac8 24.Nd4 Nxd4 25.Kxd4 Black is without useful moves, while White can play Rf1-f3 and then he really is threatening to win a pawn by Bh7, because in the line mentioned earlier White can defend the g7-rook by Rfg3. It isn't easy for Black to counter this plan.

22...f6! Having been given a second chance, Black aims to gain some counterplay along the f-file.

23.Rag1 With the simple plan of g5, gxh6 and Rg6 or Rg7+.

23...fxe5 24.fxe5 Rf8 24...d4+ 25.Ke2 doesn't really help Black, as now his knight is immobilised.

25.g5 Rxf3+? The right idea, but the wrong execution.

The passive 25...Rf7?! is possible, although White retains an advantage by 26.Bg6 Rff8 27.Rh2 intending to double rooks on the g-file. The correct defence was 25...d4+ 26.Ke4 Rxf3! 27.Kxf3 Nxe5+ 28.Ke2 Nxd3 29.cxd3 (29.Kxd3 e5 followed byBf5+ is also fine for Black) 29...Bc6 30.gxh6 gxh6 31.Rg7+ (31.Rh4 Bd5 is similar) 31...Kd6 32.Rhg1 Bd5 and the threats to the weak white queenside pawns give Black enough counterplay for this material disadvantage. In this line Black exploits the downside of White's earlier a4.

26.Kxf3 Nxe5+ 27.Ke2 Black is missing the tempo ...d4, and this makes all the difference.

27...Kd6 27...d4 28.gxh6 gxh6 29.Rg7+ Kd6 30.Rh4 also wins.

28.gxh6 gxh6 29.Rg7 Rc8 Black cannot immediately occupy the g-file with his rook, so he waits for Rh7.

30.Rh7 Rg8 31.Rxh6 Rg2+ A typical situation in that White has won material, but Black has a bit of counterplay. It's

important to keep a clear head and find the safest winning continuation.

32.Ke1 32.Kf1 is also good, but 32.Ke3?! makes it unnecessarily complicated after 32...Bc6 and ...Ng4+ to follow.

32...Nxd3+ The immediate 32...Bxa4 is another try, best answered by 33.bxa4 b3 34.Bf5! b2 35.Rxe6+ Kc5 36.c3.

33.cxd3 Bxa4 The last chance, otherwise the h-pawn is too fast.

34.Rh8 34.bxa4 b3 35.Rh8 Kc7 36.Rf1 b2 37.Rf7+ Kd6 38.Rb8 also wins.

34...Bb5 35.h6 35.Rh3 a4 36.bxa4 b3 37.Rb8 is also good.

35...Bxd3 36.h7 Bxh7 37.R1xh7 e5 38.Ra7

1-0

Sadly this minor setback was followed by another 2-2 draw with Israel 1, which meant that France, who managed to beat Slovakia, became sole leaders.

In round 7 we were pleased that the second team were paired against France, and we knew this was a crucial match as a draw, or better still a victory, would put the first team back in the lead. There was much talk the evening before the match about how we could do the first team a huge favour if we could put a dent in France's ambitions, and the first team were offering to buy us all drinks if we succeeded! The match was fairly level to start with, although Louis Roos (who had scored 6/6 so far) launched a speculative kingside attack as Black against Tony Stebbings on board 3, and this looked unclear. Then both John Pigott's and my game took a turn for the worse. After about three hours play Tony Stebbings' opponent suddenly lost on time, probably because his attack had run out of steam, and Tony had taken control - and this was followed by Chris Baker securing a draw on board 2. So, it fell to John Pigott and me to secure another draw from either of our two games to halve the match. Both games looked bad, but then John Pigott somehow managed to rescue a draw. Shortly after this my opponent started to squander his clear advantage, and I began to get some counterplay against his exposed king, and all of a sudden he opted for safety, allowing me to secure a repetition and get another draw, enabling us to win the match 2½-1½! Needless to say, a few drinks were consumed that evening!

As the first team had already beaten Italy by 2½-1½ thanks to a win from Terry Chapman on board 4, England 1 now became sole leaders with two rounds to go.

The final two rounds were quite uneventful, with the first team rewarding the second team for their help by beating them 3-1! The final round saw the first team beat Finland by 3½-½ to recapture the World Team Championship title!

The final placings were: 1st England 1 with 16 match points; 2nd Israel with 15; 3rd France with 14; and a creditable 4th for England 2 with 12.

It was great that the first team achieved this result, especially as this is FIDE's centenary year, almost to the day that FIDE was founded in Paris on 20th July 1924.

The first team played well, with excellent performances from John Nunn and Tony Kosten on the top two boards, both winning the individual gold medals, along with Terry Chapman on board 5 who won the silver medal and solid performances from Jonathan Mestel (the bronze medal) and Paul Littlewood on boards 3 and 4, the latter being an excellent captain and steering his team to success.

Another impressive milestone was achieved by John Nunn, who shared his ambition with a number of us that should his team win the gold medal, he would be the simultaneous holder of the individual world and European titles, along with the European and world team titles. We were all delighted that we were able to help him achieve this amazing feat by completing the quartet, a feat which may never be repeated!

The 65+ second team had a pretty good tournament, finishing fourth and bettering our seventh seeding. John Pigott had a great event, scoring an undefeated 6½/8 and securing the individual silver medal for Board 1. I secured the bronze medal for board 4 with an undefeated 5/7.

The 65+ third team had a very good tournament in finishing ninth, well ahead of their seeding. This was due to some excellent performances from John Quinn, who scored an impressive 5/9 on top board including drawing with GM Heikki Westerinen, as well as Stephen Orton and Brian Hewson who also recorded solid scores. The 65+ fourth team had a much tougher tournament and finished 28th, but had good performances from Richard Freeman and Peter Wood on the top two boards, both scoring 4½/8.

Our thanks must go to the ECF and the Chess Trust for once again providing the funding necessary to support our top teams, along with support from several of the players. Their generosity and support is, as always, very much appreciated.

Counties Championship 2024

Round-Up

by Mark Murrell



Open final

19 counties from the five home unions participated in the national stages of the various events that comprise the ECF Counties Championship, with Cleveland making a welcome return to union and national competition.

Each union can enter at least two of their regional counties into each event by way of nomination, and for the most part nominations are determined by union-run qualifying competitions. Well supported qualifying competitions earn an additional place. Each region has different qualifiers best suited to their demographics, which tends to see the East and West unions focus on the average team rating event (Minor Counties, with a team cap of 2050) and U1850 rating limited competition. These two sections at the national stage are the best supported events, and often the most competitive. 2024 was no exception.

The competition began at the Sheffield Chess Centre with the sole match in the preliminary round (triggered by more than eight nominated teams), where in the U1850 event Yorkshire, often one of the fancied teams along with Middlesex, found that runner-up status in the qualifier (one of five second nominees) had landed them with an extra match against Staffordshire at an excellent venue that had the benefit of live display boards.

The following month saw the start of the Minor Counties, U1650 and U1450 events, with the open and U2050 events not starting until the semi-final stage in June, mainly due to the lack of entries from the Midlands, which has struggled for teams following the two-year hiatus occasioned by Covid, not helped by the loss of the Greater

Manchester teams to the North. The open and U2050 were North vs South contests.

The South dominated the U1450 section, fielding teams with a high percentage of rapidly improving junior players and producing three semi-finalists and both finalists. Essex saw off the Northern Counties and then the Midland Counties Champions, but fell well short of Middlesex, the Southern Counties Champions in the final, who gained their first national title in this event at the Whittlesford Memorial Hall.



U1850

The North were dominant in the U1650 section, with convincing semi-final wins by Greater Manchester and Yorkshire over Midlands (Lincolnshire) and South (Surrey) opposition. Yorkshire hosted Greater Manchester at the Bradford Latvian Club, looking to become another regional chess centre (after Ilkley and Sheffield), and managed to field a team with an average of 1638 by the time the match was played. Greater Manchester had improved too over the season, averaging 1629 in comparison, so Yorkshire really had to earn their second successive national title.

Having made short work of Staffordshire in the U1850 preliminary round, Yorkshire were fortunate to prevail in the quarter-finals against Hampshire, who were considerably lower rated, before encountering Hertfordshire (qualifying via the East rather than the South) who stopped them in their tracks rather convincingly - the underdogs for the second match in succession. In the other half of the draw Greater Manchester had to battle all the way to the final, first defeating Middlesex, who looked odds on for a post-Covid indisputable U1850 triple crown that was not to be. Before Covid Middlesex were the last U160 Champions, with the trophy now presented in the U1850 section. Another tight victory over Lincolnshire then followed in the semis. The final, which had been intended to be

played alongside the open competition, was switched to Coventry at Warwick University and produced an 8-8 thriller, with Greater Manchester prevailing on board count (a better result on the higher boards) - a union and national double for Greater Manchester, who last won (U160s) in 2012.

The U2050s started out as a North vs South affair, but did not finish that way. Greater Manchester (NCCU Champions) had a narrow win over Surrey, while Essex (SCCU Champions), with a long pedigree in this section, were comfortable dispatched by Cleveland to set up an all-NCCU final also played at Bradford, mid-way but still an all-Yorkshire trip for Cleveland. The final proved to be something of an anti-climax, with a comprehensive Greater Manchester win. They last won this trophy (U175 back then) in 1993.



U1450

Going into the 6th July finals day Greater Manchester were contesting three of the six titles, and converted two of them, marking their return to NCCU competition in some style.

In recent years Lincolnshire have been strong contenders in the Minor Counties and were again in 2024, cruising to the final with comfortable wins over Bedfordshire and Somerset. In the final at Whittlesford they faced Sussex, who had had to battle hard to survive each round. These

days Sussex players only compete as an open team in the Southern Counties competition, so are used to toughing it out over a long campaign. They survived a quarter-final scare against Worcestershire, winning narrowly against lower-rated opposition to meet Norfolk in the semi-final. There was nothing to separate the teams on paper at the start of play, and there was nothing between them at the close following an 8-8 tie. The cluster of wins in the middle order outweighed Norfolk's cluster lower down to give the tie-break win to Sussex. A late player withdrawal gave Sussex a slight rating advantage in the final, with the top six boards being broadcast live. The match went to the wire, with a second 8-8 tie in a row for Sussex. This time it was greater success at the top of the order that proved decisive, and gave Sussex a well-earned trophy. Sussex last won this competition in 1996.

The 103rd Counties Championship Final was played at Newark-Upon-Trent a week earlier on 30th June to accommodate Surrey's England representation at the World Seniors with the sporting agreement of Northumberland. All games were broadcast live, with WIM Natasha Regan and GM Peter Wells providing live [commentary](#) too.

Northumberland as NCCU Champions met Kent in the semi-finals and pulled off a narrow victory over 12 boards despite being outrated. Surrey had an unusually comfortable victory over Yorkshire, who will no doubt be back with a vengeance. There is a new order in the North with a resurgence in county chess started during the Tim Wall NCCU presidency, and looking like continuing with the welcome return of Lancashire to competition in store for 2024/2025.

The final was too close to call on team exchange and for a long part of the afternoon, before Surrey's middle order took control to win an eighth Championship after the disappointment of being runners-up on tie-break in 2023, another union and ECF double too.

My thanks to the arbiters who have supported the championships around the country during the knockout stage: Peter Ackley, Lara Barnes, Phill Beckett, Francis Bowers, John Bowley, Richard Buxton, Chun Chui, Adrian Elwin, Rob Hammond, Harrison Marriott and Robin Slade.

Mark Murrell
ECF Controller, Counties Championship

The Finals – results and games

[Championship](#)

Northumberland 6 – 10 Surrey

[Minor Counties](#)

Sussex 8* – 8 Lincolnshire

[U2050](#)

Greater Manchester 12½ – 3½ Cleveland

[U1850](#)

Hertfordshire 8 – 8* Gtr Manchester

[U1650](#)

Greater Manchester 6 – 10 Yorkshire

[U1450](#)

Middlesex 8 – 4 Essex

Open Championship

Livechess: <https://view.livechesscloud.com/#a146de3b-7629-4faf-adac-1096e93a6aa7>

Lichess: <https://lichess.org/broadcast/counties-open-2024/round-1/tOCcfkni>

Minor Counties

Lichess: <https://lichess.org/broadcast/ecf-county-championship-minor-counties/round-1/OuEJ7R0A#boards>

PGN files

[Open 2024](#) | [Minor Counties](#)

[U2050](#) | [U1850](#) | [U1650](#) | [U1450](#)

SCCU/London Club Championships by David Gilbert

Chess can be thrilling, can't it? But there's something about team chess that makes it even more intriguing, often with the last game to finish surrounded by anxious, nail-biting team-mates. The 3rd SCCU/London Club Championships took place at St Luke's in Kidderpore Avenue (the home of rapidplay in the capital) on Saturday 22nd June. The venue was filled with 37 teams from Essex, Kent, London, Middlesex, Surrey and Sussex. The event was oversubscribed six weeks before a piece had been pushed, and there were ten disappointed teams on the waiting list. We're going to need a bigger hall!



Picture by Brendan O'Gorman

Teams of four played six rounds in three sections: Major (average 2100), Intermediate (average 1850) and Minor (average 1600). The time control was a generous 25 minutes, with a five second increment. And it was fun!

If you're a chess organiser, expect the worse and be ready for anything. Horribly, one team dropped out of the Major the night before the event, too late to promote a replacement from the waiting list. So with five teams the format for the Major was changed to an individual Swiss, with points counting towards each team's total. The arbiters cleverly pressed all the right buttons on Chess-Results to ensure that there were no games between team-mates.

In the Major Richmond & Twickenham repeated their win from 2023, but only just!

Team	Points
Richmond & Twickenham 1	14½
Streatham 1	14
Streatham 2	12½
Beckenham & Bromley 1	12
Pimlico	7

Streatham 2's Venkataramanan Tiruchirapalli won the 'Silver Pieces' award for the highest scoring player in the Major - he was really very good, scoring 5½/6!



Venkataramanan Tiruchirapalli (right) takes on Ian Snape (Beckenham) in round 6 – picture by Brendan O'Gorman

Wanstead Dynamos picked up the individual trophies for the Intermediate section for the second year. Wanstead seem to be able to get their teams within a hair's breadth of the maximum rating. That's the game!

	Team	P	W	D	L	Match Pts	Game Pts
1	Wanstead Dynamos	6	5	1	0	11	18½
2	Charlton	6	4	1	1	9	14½
3	Dartford & Swanley 1	6	4	0	2	8	12½
4	Wanstead Cavaliers	6	3	1	2	7	16½
5	Kent Juniors 1	6	3	1	2	7	13
6	Richmond & Twickenham 2	6	3	1	2	7	12
7	Beckenham & Bromley 2	6	3	0	3	6	13½

8	Barnet Juniors 1	6	3	0	3	6	12½
9	Sidcup	6	3	0	3	6	11½
10	Streatham & Brixton 3	6	2	2	2	6	11
11	DHSS	6	2	1	3	5	11
12	Medway	6	2	0	4	4	9½
13	London Deaf	6	1	0	5	2	7½
14	Treasury	6	0	0	6	0	4½

The Minor section saw the chess equivalent of a blanket finish; Epsom won their last match against Dartford & Swanley 2, while Crowborough went down to Kent Juniors 2 by the narrowest of margins. Phew!

	Team	P	W	D	L	Match Pts	Game Pts
1	Epsom	6	5	0	1	10	15½
2	Crowborough	6	4	1	1	9	16½
3	Kent Juniors 2	6	4	1	1	9	14½
4	Beckenham & Bromley 3	6	4	1	1	9	14
5	Barnet Juniors 2	6	3	1	2	7	14½
6	DHSS 2	6	3	1	2	7	13½
7	Dartford & Swanley 2	6	3	1	2	6	11
8	Snodland	6	3	0	3	6	14½
9	Charlton 2	6	2	2	2	6	12½
10	Kingston	6	2	2	2	6	12
11	Wanstead All Stars	6	2	1	3	5	12
12	HMRC Croydon	6	2	1	3	5	11
13	She Plays to Win 3	6	2	1	3	5	10½
14	Medway 2	6	1	3	2	5	10
15	Wanstead Warriors	6	0	4	2	4	10½
16	She Plays to Win 1	6	1	1	4	3	9
17	She Plays to Win 2	6	1	1	4	3	8
18	Latymer School	6	1	0	5	2	6½

Thanks to our brilliant arbiters Alan Atkinson, Rob Hammond and Lance Leslie-Smith, with support from Michael Flatt. The plan is to do it again in 2025. And thanks too to Brendan O’Gorman for his fabulous photographs that can be found here:

<https://brendanogorman.smugmug.com/Chess/2024/SC-CU-TEAM-Rapidplay-2024>

7th Crewe Congress by Andrew Crosby



I am delighted to be able to report on the progress of the 7th Crewe Congress following on from the 6th that I covered in the August 2023 edition of *ChessMoves*. The huge popularity of the 6th Congress resulted in an overwhelming entry response for 2024, which reached the 200 maximum over three weeks before the closing date.

The stadium venue, which was used for the first time in 2022, is the key to the ongoing success of the congress. It is located only five minutes’ walk from Crewe railway station.

The organisation team was unchanged: club chairman Dave Price and Nigel Gardner. Chief Arbiter Matthew Carr was ever present and provided very useful input. He was assisted by Dan Turner, Colin Abell and Dave Price.

The venue has a large refreshment area, where the special meal deal proved very popular. The catering team was again recruited and managed by Nigel and Lesley Gardner. The analysis room, which is also a good size, contained Howard Wood's book and equipment stall.

The 200 entries were a new record, marking a 21% increase on 2023's 164. 22 players (11%) were from other federations spanning four continents. Diversity of federation was most evident in the Open section, with 10 different federations represented. Another pleasing feature of the Open section was the high proportion of under 18 players - 15 out of 44, a good third. Female

participation remained static at 10 players, and efforts will be made to attract more in 2025.

Leading players included the returning Lithuanian IM Gediminas Sarakasauskas, FM Jonathan Blackburn and British Championship runner-up Steven Jones. Very welcome additions were Jacob Connor Boswell, who started his chess career locally at Cheddleton, and WCM Ruqayyah Rida.



IM Gediminas Sarakasauskas



FM Jonathan Blackburn

All four sections (Open, Major, Inter and Minor) were very competitive, with the winners in doubt until the final dramatic round.

The Minor section, reduced from under 1500 to under 1450, grew significantly from 29 in 2023 to 42 (45% up). After three rounds Phil Clare and Faith Hill led with 2/3, with six players on 2½. The fourth round created a five-way tie on 3½ as Phil and Faith were joined by David Lovegrove, Matthew Blackwell and Christian-Gabriel Dragan.



Christian-Gabriel Dragan

The key game in the final round proved to be Faith against Christian-Gabriel, as it was the only one to produce a winner from the five-way tie. In a tense endgame Christian-Gabriel managed to recover from being an exchange down to become outright winner of the section. It was good that Faith returned after last year's appearance and competed so well.



Joe Moxon and Oskar Jarzynski

The Inter section, reduced from under 1750 to under 1700, grew from 51 in 2023 to 70 (37%). Joe Moxon, James Flint, Mohammed Rohan and Oscar Jarzynski were in a four-way tie on 3/3 entering the fourth round, when Oskar emerged as the only one on 4/4. The final round paired fellow Crewe club members Oskar and Joe, who was one of four on 3½. Theirs is the featured game, in which 12 year old Oskar scored a great win to maintain the only 100% record in the entire congress despite playing throughout against higher rated opponents. The Swiss Master programme gave Oskar a performance rating of 2421 for this event. Finally, I want to draw attention to the performance of nine year old Anvikkashri Prabhakaran, the only female in the section, who scored 3/5. From a starting rank of 62 she finished in 16th-26th place with 11 others.

In the Major (under 1950) after three rounds the sole leader on 3/3 was Ayan Pradhan, pursued by Oleg Cukovs, Martin Burns and Tony Slinger on 2½. In round 4 Ayan drew with Tony, and Oleg beat Martin to take the lead on 3½. Six were on 3 points, including Danny McMenamin in this very closely contested section. Danny scored a crucial win in the final round to share top spot with Oleg and Ayan, who drew.



Mike Surtees and Jacob Connor Boswell

The Open section had a topsy-turvy nature, as most of the leading players could not sustain their performance. Things were going to plan for FM Jonathan Blackburn and Jacob Connor Boswell, who led with 3/3. Close behind were IM Gediminas Sarakasauskas, Maksym Larchikov, Richard Lee, and the ubiquitous Mike Surtees. Maksym made headlines when he left war-torn Ukraine to make his mark in UK chess at Hull. Jonathan was held to a draw with White by Jacob, resulting in a final round encounter with Gediminas with the black pieces. Round 4 finished with Jacob, Mike, Gediminas and Jonathan on 3½ after Gediminas beat Richard, Mike beat Maksym, and James Russell emerged with 3 after a win over Graham Bolt. In the final round Jonathan found himself in a rook and pawn endgame a pawn down against Gediminas and lost, while Mike did extremely well to beat Jacob to finish on 4½, equal first with Gediminas. James completed a great comeback with a further win against Bruce Baer to grab sole third place with 4.

The Congress finale was the presentation of the goody bags from the sponsor Mornflake, who have been milling oats for nearly 350 years. These are extra prizes for the highest-scoring two players in each section after round 4. The presentation provides a great photo opportunity to capture the delighted winners before they go off to enjoy their well-earned oats.

In conclusion, the 2023 and 2024 congresses have established this event as a significant one in the ECF calendar, and it will surely go from strength to strength!

Here is the decisive encounter in the final round when Oskar Jarzynski completed a 100% sweep in the Inter section.

Joe Moxon - Oskar Jarzynski

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Bc5 7.d3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 h6 10.Re1 Be6 11.Nbd2 Bb6 12.Nf1 Re8 13.Ng3 Qd7 14.Bxe6 Qxe6 15.Nf5 Ne7 16.N3h4 Nxf5 17.Nxf5 d5 18.Qf3 dxe4 19.dxe4 Rad8 20.Bxh6 gxh6

21.Qg3+ Ng4 22.Qxg4+ Qg6 23.Qxg6+ fxg6 24.Nxh6 Kg7 25.Ng4 Rd2 26.Rab1 Rf8 27.Rf1 Rf4 28.a3 Rxe4 29.Rbe1 Rxe1 30.Rxe1 Rxb2 31.Rxe5 Rb3 32.a4 bxa4 33.Re4 a3 34.Ra4 Rxc3 35.Rxa6 Rc1+ 36.Kh2 Ra1 37.Ne5 a2 38.Nd3 Rd1 39.Rxa2 Rxd3 40.Rc2 Rd8 41.Rc6 Rd6 42.Rxd6 cxd6 43.Kg3 Kf6 44.Kf3 Kf5 45.g3 g5 46.Ke2 Ke4 47.f3+ Kd4 48.h4 gxh4 49.gxh4 Bd8 50.h5 Bg5 51.Kf2 Bf4 52.Ke2 Kc3 53.Kf2 d5 54.Ke2 d4 55.Kd1 d3 0-1

Visually Impaired British Championship

This event took place at the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate from 22nd to 29th June and was organised by the Braille Chess Association (BCA), an organisation for all visually impaired players.

There was a big age difference between the top three seeds, from Brandon Read (Somerset) the top seed aged 20, Stan Lovell (Scarborough), the title holder aged 89, and Bill Armstrong (Staffordshire), winner on four previous occasions aged 83.

All three players reached 2½/3. In round 4 Armstrong won while Read vs Lovell ended as a draw. Two key games settled the Championship.

Round 5: Lovell – Armstrong

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nc3 b6 3.e4 Bb7 4.e5 Nd5 5.Nxd5 Bxd5 6.c4 Bb7 7.Nf3 e6 8.Be2 Bb4+ 9.Bd2 Bxd2+ 10.Qxd2 d5 11.exd6 cxd6 12.0-0 0-0 13.Rac1 Nd7 14.Ng5 h6 15.Nf3 Nf6 16.h3 Ne4 17.Qd1 Rc8 18.Nd2 Nxd2 19.Qxd2 Qg5 20.Qxg5 hxg5 21.Rc3 Ba6 22.Rfc1 d5 23.b3 Rfd8 24.Kf1 dxc4 25.Bxc4 b5 26.Bd3? Rxc3 27.Rxc3 Rxd4 28.Ke2 b4 29.Ke3 e5 0-1

Armstrong reached round 6 half a point ahead of Brandon Read. Two draws would give him the Graham Lilley Trophy, while Read needed a win. This affected decisions during the game.

Round 6: Armstrong – Read

1.e4 e6 2.d3 b6 3.g3 Bb7 4.Bg2 f5 5.Ne2 Nf6 6.Nd2 d6 7.Nf4 Qe7 8. 0-0 fxe4 9.Re1Nbd7 10.Nxe4 Nxe4 11.Bxe4 Bxe4 12.Rxe4 Nc5 13.Re1 g5 14.Nd5 Qf7 15.Bxg5 Kd7 16.Nf6+ Kc6 17.b4 Nd7 18.c4 Nxf6 19.Qf3+ d5 20.cxd5+ exd5 21. Rac1+ Kb7 22.Qxf6 Qxf6 23.Bxf6 Bxb4 24.Bxh8 Bxe1 25.Be5 c6 26.Rxe1 Re8 27. Bc3 Rxe1 28.Bxe1 1-0

Armstrong's draw with Mark Kirkham in round 7 left final places as follows:

1st Armstrong 6, 2nd Kirkham 5, 3rd= Read, Lovell and associate member Ian Blencowe 4½.

IBCA 2024 by Owen Phillips



The last round saw some long tussles, particularly on boards 2 to 5, but GM Marcin Tazbir of Poland disposed of his opponent relatively quickly to finish top on 7½/9 and complete the double of winning IBCA's World and European Championships! The silver medal went to IM Jacek Stachanczyk of Poland on tie break, and the bronze to Roberto Clemente of Spain. Also on 6½/9 in fourth and fifth places on tie break were Michal Racis of Poland and IM Rasim Nizam of Bulgaria.

WIM Lubov of Ukraine finished on 4½/9 after a fast start. England's representative Gary Hogan's highest finishing opponent was Dieter Riegler of Germany on 5½/9, finishing in 18th place. Gary drew his last-round game with an Albin Counter Gambit to finish on 4/9 in 47th place, one above his seeding.



Gary Hogan

The whole event was extremely well organised, with results and next round draws being posted particularly quickly online. IBCA and all twenty-two of the federations present thanked and congratulated the Romanian hosts, the organisers and the arbiters for carrying out a first-rate job.

FEATURES

Great British Chess Players by John Nunn



Matthew Sadler (1974 -)

Matthew Sadler was born on 15th May 1974 and, like many of the players featured in these articles, showed early promise. He took part in some world junior championships and competed in the annual

Lloyds Bank tournament, where he showed an ability to topple much stronger opponents. Matthew gained the international master title aged 14, and went on to become a grandmaster aged 19. Soon after this he won the 1995 British Championship with a score of 8½ out of 11. He played very successfully for the English team in several events, gaining a gold medal for the best result on board 4 (10½/13) at the 1996 Yerevan Olympiad and a silver medal with 7/9 on board 4 at the European Team Chess Championship in Pula in 1997. Also, in 1997 he tied for first (with Michael Adams) in the British Championship.

His results at this time suggested he would go on to rival Nigel Short and Michael Adams at the pinnacle of British chess, but in 1999 something unexpected happened – Matthew announced his retirement from chess and went to work in the IT industry.

Many strong players have a kind of love-hate relationship with the game; they, like everyone else, enjoy winning, but the adrenaline-rush of competing is offset by the fact that playing top-level chess is extremely stressful. For professional players it's even worse if your finances depend on regular good results. Matthew's retirement was not total, as he continued to play in the Bundesliga and some events in the Netherlands, where he was living at the time. However, he didn't play at all from 2004 to 2010, but then seemed to regain his love of playing and staged a successful comeback. He had several good

results in the following years and scored 7/10 for England at the 2014 Tromsø Olympiad (the fourth best result on board 4). By 2020 he had pushed his rating up to 2694, but since then has not played a single rated game, so that remains his rating to the present day. It is to be hoped that Matthew's second retirement does not last forever, as his games are usually interesting and hard-fought.

In addition to his over the board career, Matthew has been a successful chess author, reviewer and commentator. His most notable book is probably *Game Changer* (New in Chess, 2018), co-authored with Natasha Regan, which analysed the impact of the revolutionary computer software AlphaZero.



Matthew Sadler

Noted for his fierce demeanour at the board, Matthew's results depend on excellent opening preparation coupled with an alertness to exploit any mistake. Even in a bad position he remains a dangerous opponent and is quick to turn the game around if given the chance, as in the following game.

Johann Hjartarson - Matthew Sadler

Malmö 1995

English Opening

1.c4 c5 2.b3 Nf6 3.Bb2 Nc6 4.Nf3 e6 5.g3 Be7 6.Bg2 0-0 7.0-0 d5 Black reacts to White's double fianchetto in classical style.

8.e3 The alternative is 8.cxd5, when 8...exd5 9.d4 leads to a Tarrasch, while 8...Nxd5 9.d4 cxd4 10.Nxd4 gives White a slight edge in a roughly symmetrical position.

8...d4 8...b6 is also playable, but Matthew prefers to head for a reversed Modern Benoni.

9.exd4 cxd4 10.Re1 White has extra time compared to a standard Modern Benoni, both because he is White and because Black will have to put some effort into achieving ...e5. On the other hand, the bishop on b2 is not

necessarily well-placed, as after ...e5 it is 'biting on granite'.

10...Ne8 This move, intending ...f6 and ...e5, is associated with Ivanchuk, although it was played as long ago as 1968. 10...Re8 and 10...a5 are decent alternatives, so it seems that Black has few problems in this position.



11.a3?! The inclusion of the moves with the a-pawns helps Black, because it deprives White of the chance to activate his bishop by Ba3. 11.d3 f6 12.Na3 e5 13.Nc2 Nc7 is also fine for Black, so the critical line is 11.Ne5 Nxe5 12.Rxe5 f6 13.Re1 e5 14.Ba3 with perhaps a slight edge for White.

11...a5 12.Ne5 The most logical move, as if Black is allowed to play ...e5 unchallenged he will have a very comfortable position.

12...Nxe5 13.Rxe5 f6 14.Re1 e5 15.d3 Rb8 I think it was slightly more accurate to play ...Nc7-e6 as soon as possible to put White off f2-f4. Without this pawn move it is hard to see much of a future for the b2-bishop.

16.Nd2 Nc7 17.f4?! 17.Qe2! was better, as Black then cannot play 17...Ne6 due to 18.f4 exf4? 19.Bd5, so to counter the threat of f4 he must play a clumsy move such as 17...Rf7.

17...exf4 18.gxf4 b6 19.Qe2 Bc5 20.Qf2 Bf5 21.Ne4 Qd7 The position is equal. Playing f4 has allowed White to weaken the d4-pawn and Black must continually defend it, but he can take comfort in his space advantage and the weak white pawn on f4.

22.Qd2 22.b4!? axb4 23.Nxc5 bxc5 24.axb4 Rxb4 25.Ba3 is an interesting idea, but Black can continue 25...Na6! 26.Bxb4 Nxb4, which maintains the balance as the d3-pawn is doomed.

22...Bxe4?! Giving up this bishop is a significant and unnecessary concession. The tactical 22...Bh3 23.Bxh3 Qxh3 24.b4 axb4 25.axb4 Qg4+ is fine for Black after, for

example, 26.Ng3 Bd6, but the simplest move was 22...Na6, preventing b4 while keeping the light-squared bishop.

23.Rxe4 f5 24.Re5 Qd6 Black's plan has prevented b4, but left him with few active prospects. However, it isn't easy for White to make progress, and for a time he quietly manoeuvres.

25.Qf2 Rbd8 26.Kh1 Kh8 27.Qg3 Rf7 28.Bf3 Rdf8 29.Qf2 Rd7 30.Qh4 Rdf7 White shows no real signs of making progress, and Matthew patiently awaits events.

31.Qg3 Rd7 32.h4 Rf6 33.h5 Qf8 34.Qf2 Qd6 35.Qg2 Qf8 36.Rae1 Rd8 Avoiding the trap 36...Bxa3? 37.Bxa3 Qxa3 38.c5! (threatening a back-rank mate) 38...h6 39.Bc6 followed by cxb6, and White wins.

37.R1e2 Rd7 This time 37...Bxa3? loses to 38.Bxa3 Qxa3 39.Re7.

38.Qg1



With a possible b4 in mind.

38...Qd8? Matthew prevents b4 by covering d4 a third time, but runs into back-rank difficulties. In fact b4 wasn't much of a threat, and the simple 38...h6 would have kept the balance, since 39.b4 axb4 40.axb4 Bxb4 41.Bxd4 may be met by 41...Bd6, exploiting the weak f4-pawn.

39.Qe1! Now Black must retreat to cover the back rank.

39...Rf8 40.Bc6?! Missing the chance to weaken the long diagonal by playing 40.h6!, after which 40...gxh6 41.b4 axb4 42.axb4 Bd6 43.Bxd4 loses at once. The only move to avoid an immediate loss is 40...Qf6, but even then 41.Rh2!, renewing the threat of b4, would be unpleasant for Black.

40...Rd6 41.Bf3 Rh6 Matthew doesn't give White a second chance to play h6, but he remains in a difficult position, as the rook isn't well placed on h6.

42.Rg2 Qd7? Black cannot prevent b4, because 42...Qd6 43.Qg3 leaves him with no reasonable way to protect g7 (43...Rf7 44.Rxf5 Rhf6 45.Rxf6 Qxf6 46.Bc1 leaves White a pawn ahead). However, 42...Rf7 43.b4 Bd6 44.Bxd4 Bxe5 45.Bxe5 axb4 46.axb4 Re6 was a tougher defence, as g7 is better defended by the rook rather than the queen.

43.b4 axb4 44.axb4 Bd6 45.Bxd4! An excellent exchange sacrifice. The two active bishops and strong pressure against g7 provide fantastic compensation for the small sacrifice.

45...Bxe5 46.Bxe5 Ne8 47.d4 In addition to Black's problems on the kingside, he also faces the prospect of White creating two connected passed pawns.

47...Nf6 48.Rg5 Rg8 49.d5 Qa4 Activating the queen in the hope of harassing the slightly exposed white king.

50.Qc3 Qa2



51.Kg1? Not a bad move if followed up correctly, but the simplest win was by 51.Qd3!, cutting out a back-rank check and intending d6-d7. Then 51...Qf2 52.Qe2 Qh4+ 53.Kg2 leaves Black totally tied up, and unable to counter the advancing white pawns.

51...Qb1+ 52.Kg2? This is a more serious error, since now White's rook cannot be used to shield the king. 52.Kh2! would still have won after 52...Qf1 (the ingenious 52...Ra8 53.Rg1! Ra2+ 54.Kh1 Qe4 is met by 55.Re1!) 53.Bxf6 Rxf6 54.Rg2! (intending c5) 54...Ra8 55.d6 Ra1 56.d7 Qh1+ 57.Kg3 Rd6 58.Qe5, but this is much more complicated than the win Hjartarson missed the previous move.

52...Ra8 Suddenly Black has serious counterplay, and White must take care not to lose.

53.Bd4! The only move. 53.Bxf6 loses beautifully after 53...Ra2+ 54.Kh3 Rxh5+! 55.Rxh5 (55.Bxh5 Qh1+) 55...Qf1+ 56.Kh4 Qg1! 57.Bxg7+ Kg8, and White must give up his queen to avoid mate.

53...Ra2+ 54.Kg3? It's very hard to adjust when you have been winning and things suddenly turn against you. White could still have drawn by 54.Bf2! Rc2 55.Qe5 Qxb4 56.Qc7, and with his king more secure White has enough counterplay to hang on.

54...Qf1! Threatening 55...Nxh5+ 56.Rxh5 Rxh5.

55.Qe3



Now 55...Nxh5+ fails to 56.Rxh5, and there is a mate on e8.

55...Rxh5! Black strikes with a spectacular finishing combination.

56.Rxh5 Or 56.Bxh5 Rg2+ 57.Kh4 Rh2+ 58.Kg3 Rh3#.

56...Nxh5+ 57.Kh4 57.Bxh5 leads to mate after 57...Rg2+ 58.Kh4 Qh1+ 59.Qh3 Qe1+ 60.Bf2 Qe7#.

57...h6! The only move to win, relieving the back rank and threatening mate in one. 57...Rh2+?? would even lose after 58.Kg5 Rg2+ 59.Kxf5.

58.Kxh5 Kh7! Another only move, preventing the king slipping away via g6.

0-1

It is mate in three more moves.

Endgames All Club Players Should Know

by Glenn Flear



Bishop versus knight: When the bishop is stronger

Some players swear by bishops, others like the trappy nature of knights, but let's try to be objective.

In essence there are certain situations where the bishop tends to excel. Here is a list of such cases:

1. There is potential for action on a wide front or on both wings;
2. The pawns are broken;
3. The presence of a passed pawn (for the bishop's side) that limits the opponent's liberty;
4. Weaknesses on the same colour complex as the bishop (pawns or entry squares);
5. A passive or sidelined knight, or one unable to gain much influence;
6. Unlike a knight, a bishop can lose a move by manoeuvring, thus creating the right conditions for Zugzwang;
7. A bishop generally combines attack and defence better in a race situation.

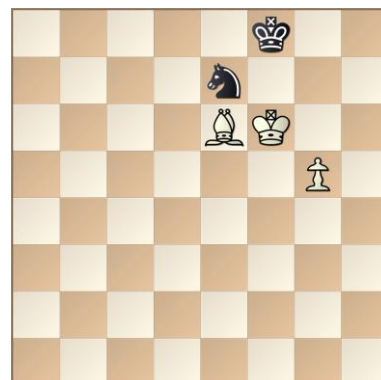
Of course, knowledge of general principles, despite giving one a useful grounding, can only take one so far. If the defender can set up a fortress, or get his pieces more quickly into the main arena, then the side with the bishop may not be able to make any suspected advantage felt.

One subject that needs to be addressed is the fact that slight differences in the pawn structure can be decisive. This often means that the defender should be very careful about getting his pawns stuck on the same colour as the bishop, especially if he is passively placed.

In the case of bishop and pawn vs knight first appearances aren't always a good indication of the likely result. This is often because apparently well placed defensive pieces can sometimes be undone by Zugzwang, whereas poorly

positioned forces can on occasion hold as a key tactic just works at the right moment!

Flear, G – Happel, H
Montpellier 2006



Here my opponent didn't want to allow my king into g7, but allowing the pawn to that square was a fatal error.

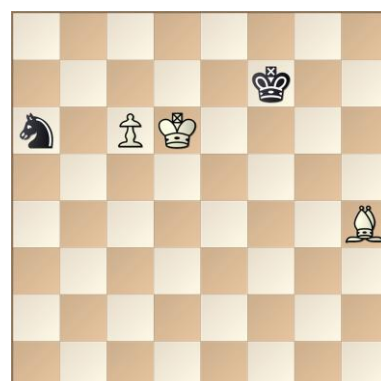
82...Nc6? Correct was 82...Ke8! 83.Kg7 Nc6 84.Bd5 Ne5 and the pawn remains stopped in its tracks.

83.g6 Ne7 84.g7+ Ke8 85.Bb3 Kd8 86.Kf7 Kd7 87.Bc4 Kd6
If 87...Nf5 then 88.Be6+.

88.Be6 It's Zugzwang. One general rule that my opponent would have done well to have applied is for the defender not to allow the pawn to get too far advanced.

1-0

Of course calculation is a higher priority than generalisations, so be careful about jumping to conclusions!



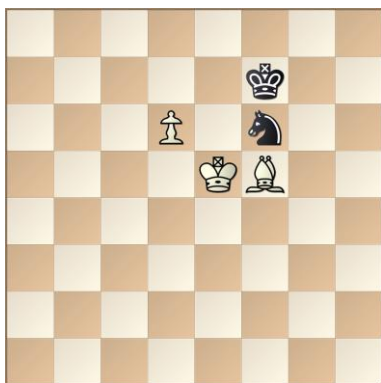
The knight is involved in a rearguard defence of the c7-square. Despite looking a little shaky on a6, this position should be drawn. White can only boot away the knight by bringing his king across, and this enables the steed the opportunity to find a more durable posting.

1.Be1 Ke8 2.Ba5 Kf7 3.Kd5 Ke7 4.Kc4 Kd6 5.Kb5 Nc7+ 6.Kb6 Ne8 7.Bb4+ Kd5 8.Kb7 Kc4 9.Be7 Kd5 10.Bf8 Kc4 11.Kc8 Kd5 12.Kd7 Nf6+ 13.Kc7 Ne8+ 14.Kb7 Kc4 15.Ba3 Kd5 16.Be7 Finally, White has K-c8-d7 in mind, so Black needs to remain vigilant and find the only move...

16...Ke6! Stopping the bishop from getting comfortable on e7.

Note that, although it's losing, the following is instructive: 16...Kc4? 17.Kc8 Kb5 (17...Kd5 18.Kd7 is already Zugzwang) 18.Kd7 Kb6 Now (in order to win) we notice that the key squares b6, c5, and f6 all need to be controlled by the bishop. So 19.Bh4 Kb5 (19...Kc5 20.Bf2+ Kd5 21.Bd4!) 20.Bg5 Kb6 21.Be3+ Kb5 22.Bd4 with Zugzwang.

Surprisingly enough, in the following example, even though he looks in decent shape with his king and knight linked, Black actually loses (whether he has the move or not), as he soon has to give ground.



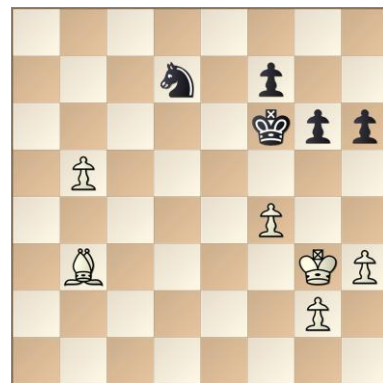
1.Be6+ Kg6 2.Bc8 Kg7 3.Bh3 Kg6 If instead 3...Kf7 then 4.Bf5 Ne8 (4...Nh5 is nicely met by 5.Bg6+! Kxg6 6.d7) 5.Bg6+! (the trick works here, but not 5.d7? Ke7!) 5...Kxg6 6.d7+.

4.Ke6 Kg7 The alternative 4...Ne4 fails to 5.Bf5+.

5.Bf5 Yet again, Zugzwang is decisive.

If the stronger side has an extra pawn (but with pawns present on both wings), then aiming to stretch the defence to breaking point is worth thinking about. It sounds nasty, but it's often the best plan!

Nimzovich, A – Janowski, D
Karlsbad 1907



An extra outside passed pawn is a significant advantage, but converting isn't always evident. White has a handy passed pawn that isn't in danger, but this can't be used directly at present. So first of all White improves his pieces.

1.Kf3 Ke7 2.Ke3 f6 3.Kd4 Kd6 4.Bd1 Nb6 5.Bf3 Nc8 Now, with his pieces on good squares, it's time to improve the structure.

6.h4! Ne7 7.Be4 Bearing down on the main soft spot on the kingside.

7...g5 Worse is 7...f5 8.Bf3 Nc8 9.Bd5 Ne7 10.Bf7 (Zugzwang!), as White's king can then penetrate after any king retreat.

8.fxg5 fxg5 9.hxg5 hxg5 10.b6 g4 No better is 10...Nc6+ 11.Bxc6 Kxc6 12.Ke5 etc.

11.b7 Kc7 12.Ke5 g3 13.Kf4 Ng8 14.Kxg3 Nf6 15.Bf3 Nd7 16.Kf4 Kd6 17.Kf5 Ke7 18.Bc6 Nb8 19.Bb5

1-0

Here's an example from my own tournament practice. Again, White wins by combining threats on both wings and ultimately overloading the defence.

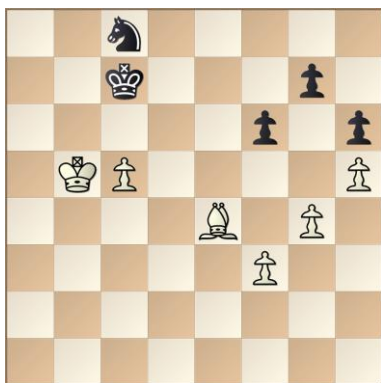
Hamdouchi, H – Flear, G
Saint-Affrique 2012



The extra pawn should yield a winning advantage, as Black has no counterplay.

40.c5 Ne7 41.Be4 Kf7 42.Ke3 Ke6 43.h5 This fixes the black pawns, but of course the h-pawn is on a light square, so such an idea should only be undertaken after due reflection. It certainly turns out to be good enough.

43...Ke5 44.g4 Ke6 45.Kd4 Kd7 46.Kc4 Kc7 47.Kb5 Nc8



48.Kb4 Ne7 49.Kc4 Kd7 50.Kb5 Kc7 White has made as much progress as possible without committing himself, but now a decision needs to be made.

51.c6!? Funnily enough, my opponent has placed all his pawns on light squares and yet he is seriously restricting the black pieces. So, one shouldn't be too dogmatic. It can be the right idea, but requires calculation to make sure it's the defender who is tied down and not the attacker!

51...f5!? Lashing out to give the opponent an extra but crippled pawn.

If instead **51...Nc8 52.Kc5 Ne7 53.f4** then Black finds himself in Zugzwang, and after the further moves **53...Nc8 54.Kd5 Ne7+ 55.Ke6** the win would be trivial.

52.gxf5 Ng8 53.f4 Nf6 54.Bf3 Ne8 55.Kc5 Nd6 56.Kd5 Nxf5 57.Ke5 Ne3 58.Ke6 White penetrates, and the struggle is over.

58...Nc2 59.Kf7 Nd4 60.Kxg7

1–0

More difficult to assess are those cases when material is equal and neither side has a passed pawn.

Plater, K – Botvinnik, M
Moscow 1947



Here Black has the better majority and some targets in the white camp on the queenside. However, it's only because his king is able to penetrate that he can make the difference felt.

40...Kd6 41.Nd4 g6 Preparing ...e6–e5.

42.g3 e5 43.fxe5+ fxe5 44.Nc2 Hopeless is **44.Nxc6 Kxc6 45.Ke3 Kc5 46.Ke4 Kb4** etc.

44...Be4 45.Ne1 Kc5 46.Ke3 Bf5 47.Nf3 Nor would **47.Nd3+** do: **47...Bxd3 48.Kxd3 Kb4** and so on.

47...Kb4 48.Nd2 If **48.Nxe5** then simply **48...Kxb3**.

48...Bc2 49.Kf3 Bxb3 50.Ke4 Bxc4 51.Kxe5 Bd3 52.Kd4 Bf5 Black has a workable majority, whereas White has no real counterplay.

53.Nc4 b5 54.Nd2 a4 55.Kd5 Bh3 56.Kd4 Bg2 57.Kd3 Kc5 58.Kc3 b4+ 59.Kd3 Bd5 As you'll know (especially if you've read some of my previous columns!), there's no rush when the opponent is just waiting.

60.Nb1 Be6 61.Nd2 Bf5+ 62.Ke3 Bc2 Of course ...a4–a3 is coming.

0–1

In the next example White needs to find the right idea straight away.

Flear, G – Ledger, D
Hastings 2012



White would seem to have serious winning chances, as he has B vs N in an open game where there is play on a wide front. In addition, Black has the worse structure and some pawns vulnerable on light squares.

31.Be4?! After the game I was thinking of 31.f5!?, but the engine doesn't believe that all those pawn islands are a problem after 31...gxf5! (31...Kf7?! 32.fxg6+ hxg6 enables 33.h4! and the pawn is fixed on g6) 32.Bxf5 Kg7.

However, the correct way to make the advantage felt is to advance the king up the board before the opponent is well organized: 31.Kf3! Kg7 (31...Nf6 32.Bc4+ Kf8 33.Be6 then Black is squeezed) 32.Ke4 Nf6+ 33.Ke5! in view of 33...Ng4+ 34.Ke6 Nxh2 35.Be2.

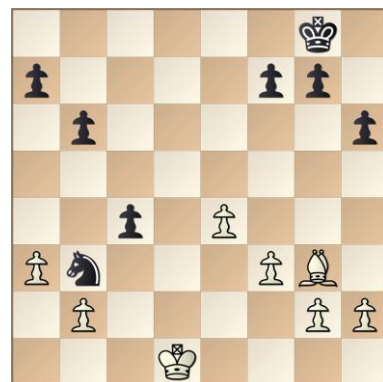
31...e6 32.a3 Or 32.Kd3 Nb6.

32...a5 33.Kd3 Nb6 We note how the pawns cover the dark squares, while the knight keeps the opposing king out of his camp by covering c4.

Black was now past the worst, and favourite to draw.

In the following example, against the same opponent(!), the penetration of the stronger side's king could have been avoided.

Flear, G – Ledger, D
Liverpool 2008



Short of time, my opponent played a natural but erroneous move.

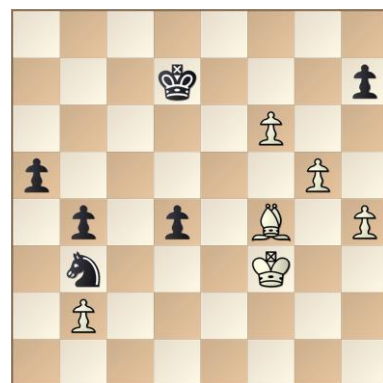
32...Kf8? A higher priority is setting in place the queenside defences: 32...b5! 33.Kc2 Nd4+ 34.Kc3 Nc6 and it will be hard for White's king to be able to penetrate.

33.Kc2 b5 34.Kc3 Nc1 35.Bf2 a6 36.Be3 Nb3 37.a4 Na1 38.axb5 axb5 39.Bf2

1–0

Sometimes the king isn't required to help out if the bishop and pawns are very favourably placed.

Flear, G – Hebden, M
Southend 2009



With highly unbalanced pawns the bishop's influence is often decisive. Here the black knight is too far away from the kingside, and can't intervene.

48.h5 Ke6 49.g6! A neat combination.

49...hxg6 50.h6 Kxf6 51.Be5+! Kxe5 52.h7 a4 53.h8=Q+ Kd5 54.Qa8+ Kc4 55.Qa6+ Kc5 56.Qxa4 Nd2+ 57.Ke2 Nc4 58.Qa7+ Kd5 59.Qf7+ Kc5 60.Qf8+ Kb5 61.b3 Na5 62.Qb8+ Kc5 63.Qe5+

1-0

More often than not the king and bishop need to work as a team.

Stoltz, G – Kashdan, I
The Hague Olympiad 1928



I was very impressed in my youth when I saw this example. Black won by combining threats on both wings, but he is helped by two factors:

1. White has some pawns on vulnerable squares;
2. The black king can get to an active/advanced central square in time.

28...Kf8 29.Kf1 Ke7 30.Ke2 Kd6 31.Kd3 Kd5 Being well installed on the d5-square, Black is already limiting White's pieces.

32.h4 Bc8 33.Nf3 Ba6+ The white monarch has to choose which way to go, and Black's will then head in the opposite direction!

34.Kc3 h6 In order to maintain control, prophylactic play is often required.

35.Nd4 g6 36.Nc2 Ke4 37.Ne3 f5! The knight's outpost on e3 needs undermining.

38.Kd2 f4 39.Ng4 h5 40.Nf6+ Kf5 41.Nd7 Bc8 42.Nf8 Latching onto the g6-pawn delays the plan with ...Kh4, but the knight gets into difficulties.

If 42.Nc5 then the direct Kg4 would follow.

42...g5 43.g3 gxh4 44.gxh4 Kg4 45.Ng6 Bf5 46.Ne7 Be6 47.b4 Kxh4 48.Kd3 Kg4 49.Ke4 h4 50.Nc6 Bf5+ 51.Kd5 f3 52.b5 h3 53.Nxa7 h2 54.b6 h1=Q 55.Nc6 Qb1 56.Kc5 Be4

0-1

I had a similar scenario in the following game.

Flear, G – Papadiamandis, E
Cannes 2019



My opponent's draw offer at this point hints that he didn't realize that the bishop was superior to the knight to the extent that this position is actually quite difficult to defend! To be fair, the engine doesn't think that it's very much, but I still believe that White is favourite to win.

26.Bxc3 Nxc3 27.Bc4 Kf8 28.Kf1 Ke7 29.Ke1 f6 I was wondering about my opponent continuing with 29...f5!?, breaking a few principles (it happens!) about placing another pawn on a light square, but seeking some counterplay based around the e4-square; a plausible sequence would then be 30.f3 Kd6 31.Kd2 Nd5 32.g3 g5 33.Kd3 Ke5, and because Black is so well centralized I think that he has decent chances to hold.

30.Kd2 Na4 31.Ke3 h6 32.Kd4 Kd6 33.Bf7 If the defender is passive, every time he touches a pawn it can help the stronger side, as potential weaknesses then appear on the board!

33...g5 34.Ke4 Nc5+ 35.Kf5 Ke7 36.Bc4 Nd7 37.Bb5 Ne5 38.Be2! Kf7 39.g3! The knight must be dislodged from its outpost.

39...Ke7 40.f4 Nc6 41.Kg6 Nd4 42.Bg4 f5!? 43.fxg5! My opponent was hoping that I'd fall for 43.Bxf5 gxf4 44.gxf4 Ne2 45.Kxh6 Kf6, when a draw would be the likely result due to White's blocked-in king.

43...fxg4

After 43...hxg5 44.Bxf5 Nf3 45.h3 the g5-pawn won't last much longer.

44.gxh6 Ne6

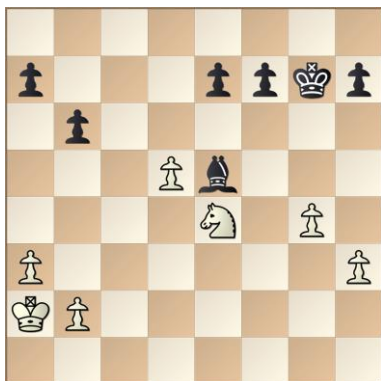
Or 44...Nf3 45.h7 Ne5+ 46.Kg7 Nf7 47.h8=Q+.

45.h7 Nf8+ 46.Kg7 Nxh7 47.Kxh7 Kf7 48.Kh6 Kf6 49.Kh5 Kf5 50.Kh4 a6 51.Kh5 a5 52.a4

1-0

Black's king arrives in the centre first in the next example.

Harakis, A – Flear, G
4NCL 2010



38...Kg6 39.Kb3 f5! Enabling the black king to enter the fray.

40.Nf2 Bg3 41.gxf5+ Kxf5 The white pieces cannot defend both wings, as there isn't the time to set up any barricades.

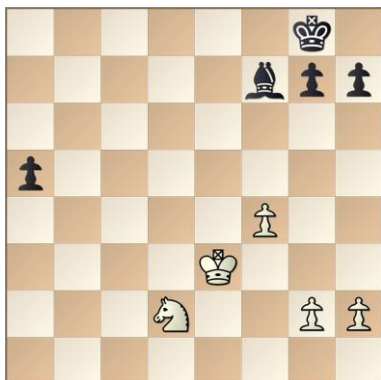
42.Nd3 Ke4 43.Nb4 Bd6 44.Nc6 a6 45.a4 Kxd5 46.Nd8 Bc7 47.Nf7 Bf4 48.Kc3 Or **48.Nd8 e5 49.Kc2 e4 50.b3 Kd6 51.a5 Kd7 52.Nf7 bxa5+.**

48...Ke6 49.Nd8+ Kd7 The knight is trapped, often a danger when it has no support.

0-1

The World Champion was able to squeeze out a win in the following position.

Rellstab, L – Alekhine, A
Salzburg 1943



It's actually another one of those cases where the engine doesn't think that Black has any real advantage, but in practice I think that this would be difficult to defend. One of White's pieces has to be on perpetual guard duty due to the dangerous passed pawn.

40...a4 41.Nb1 Ba2 42.Na3 Kf7 43.g3 Ke6 44.Ke4 Bd5+ 45.Kd4 Bb3 46.h4? It's a well-known rule that unnecessary pawn moves should be avoided by the defender. Here Rellstab disobeys this, and soon pays the price.

However, it's understandable that he didn't want to play too passively, as this would have been doomed to failure, e.g. **46.Nb5! Kf5 47.Ke3? Kg4 48.Kf2 Kh3 49.Kg1 Bc4 50.Na3 Bd3** and White is in Zugzwang.

There was a solution, as in this variation White could instead seek the 'changing of the guard': **47.Nd6+! Kg4 48.Ne8 a3 49.Kc3 a2 50.Kb2** and the pesky knight will capture one of the pawns and then sacrifice itself for the remaining kingside one. The white king will then sit in the corner, a well-known draw.

46...Kf5 47.Ke3 Kg4 48.Kf2 h5 49.Kg2 Bd5+ 50.Kf2 Kh3 51.Nb5 Kh2 52.Na3 Bc6 53.Nc4 Bb5 54.Na3 Ba6 55.Nc2 Bd3 56.Na3 g6 Once again it's Zugzwang, with White being squeezed into a lost position.

57.Kf3 Kg1 58.g4 Kh2 59.f5 A valiant try, but it falls short.

59...hxg4+ 60.Kxg4 Bxf5+ 61.Kg5 Kg3 62.h5 gxh5 63.Kxh5 Bd3 The bishop dominates the knight.

64.Kg5 Kf3 65.Kh4 Ke3 66.Kg3 Kd2 67.Kf4 Kc3 68.Ke3 Ba6 But not **68...Kb3? 69.Kxd3 Kxa3 70.Kc2=.**

69.Nb1+ Kb2

0-1

A useful skill to develop is having the ability to anticipate what might happen after simplification.

Capablanca, J – Jaffe, C
New York 1909



Here, for example, the Cuban maestro prepares forthcoming B vs N endgame by freezing in place a pawn or two on Black's queenside.

31.b4! Nb7 32.Bg4 a5 33.Rah1 Rh8 34.Rxh8 Rxh8 35.Rxh8 Kxh8 36.a3 There is no activity for the knight, and the weak b5–pawn is in both players' minds.

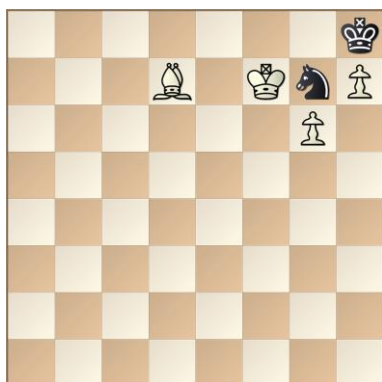
36...axb4 37.cxb4 c4 The passive 37...cxb4 38.axb4 Kg7 39.Bd7 would lead to a slower death. Note the relevance of 31.b4, fixing the b5–pawn to this vulnerable square.

38.dxc4 bxc4 39.a4 c3 40.Bd1

1–0

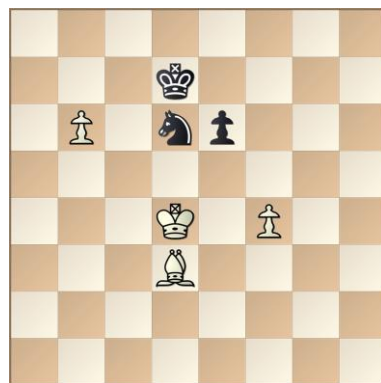
Let's finish with a couple of exercises.

Exercise 1



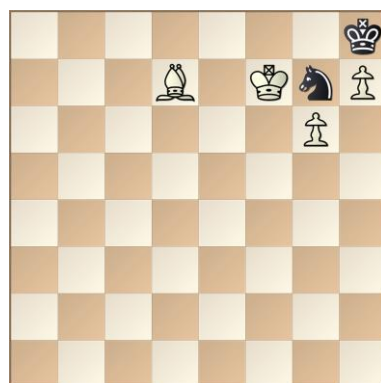
White has a big advantage, but how to win?

Exercise 2



White to play. Can you find a plan/plausible line of play that should lead to a win?

Exercise 1 - answer



Dominating the knight is the first step:

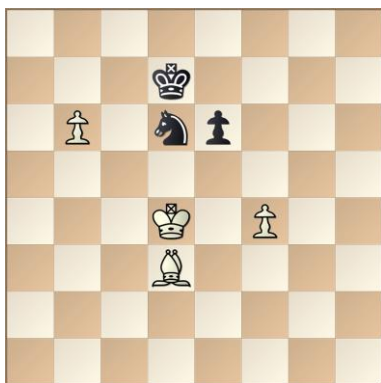
1.Bg4 You may have noticed that Black then resists a little longer with...

1...Nf5 (Tricky!) So then White needs to wriggle...

2.Kf8 Ng7 3.Ke7! ... and now any knight move loses the steed at once, as there is no longer a Stalemate.

Exercise 2 – answer

Eliskases, E – Euwe, M
Buenos Aires / La Plata 1947



58.Kc5 The idea is to nurture the b-pawn into as big a threat as possible.

Instead, increasing the pressure on the e-pawn is less convincing: 58.Ke5 Nf7+ 59.Kf6 Nd6 60.Bf1 Nb7 61.Bc4 Nc5 and Black can resist.

58...Nb7+ 59.Kb5 Nd8 60.Ka6 Kc6 61.Be4+ Kc5 62.Bh1 Too hasty is 62.b7?, as after 62...Nxb7 63.Kxb7 Kd4 64.Bg2 Ke3 White's final pawn is eliminated.

62...Kd4 After the passive 62...Kd6 White could turn the screw with 63.Ka7 or even opt for 63.b7, which now works: 63...Nxb7 64.Kxb7 Kc5 65.Kc7 Kd4 66.Kd6 Ke3 67.Ke5+–.

63.Ka7 e5 Alternatively, if 63...Ke3 then following 64.Kb8 Kxf4 65.Kc7 the remaining pawn will be able to go all the way.

64.f5 It's important to keep the second passed pawn for now.

64...e4 65.Kb8 e3 66.Bf3 Nc6+ 67.Kc7 Nb4 68.Kd6 Now it's evident that Black can't cope with both passed pawns at once.

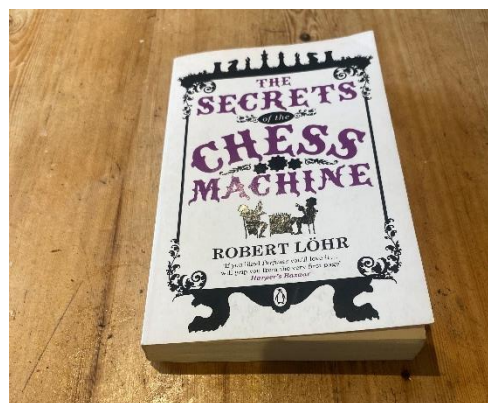
1–0

Book of the Month by Ben Graff



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

The Secrets of the Chess Machine – Robert Lohr



But now really good chess players came to pit themselves against the Turk, members of chess clubs who had read their Philidor and their Modena masters. People began making notes of the Turk's matches to compare them, understand the system behind its play and devise an attacking strategy. Robert Lohr

We were in London for an afternoon show, and happened on a row of second-hand bookshops on Charing Cross Road. It is always so inviting to lose yourself in a world of tall shelves and books that smell of dust and promise, but I had no expectation that this would lead to a review for this column. Yet I discovered a copy of *The Secrets of the Chess Machine*, and could not help but buy it on the spot. Even the pink and white striped paper bag my purchase was placed in intrigued me, and a few hours later I started to read it on the train home.

This fictional imagining of the early years of the Turk will not make you a better player. However, as the summer holiday approaches, perhaps it is time to take a break

from tomes on chess improvement and to dive into a novel instead. This is certainly an easy read, and I can think of worse ways to while away an hour or two on the beach.

Back in the eighteenth century it was hard for people to conceive of what the Turk appeared to be. Namely 'An intelligent machine. An apparatus consisting of springs, cogwheels, cables and cylinders that had beaten almost all its human opponents at the Game of Kings.' The carved wooden figure seemed to be playing the game by itself. 'The clockwork began to rattle, and before the astonished eyes of the spectators, the Turk's wooden arm rose into the air, hovered above the chessboard, came down on the king's pawn and moved it two squares forward to the middle of the board.' Yet it scarcely warrants a spoiler alert to note that this was an illusion.

In this fictional retelling, Wolfgang von Kempelen (who presents the Turk to the Empress and the Habsburg court) has engaged (or more accurately coerced) the services of a dwarf called Tibor, a gifted chess player who can hide within a concealed compartment, so well designed by the craftsman Jacob that 'When one man expressed his doubts – was the Turk really an automaton? – [a] women swore, her voice rising, that no one could possibly have fitted into it, not even a child, no, not so much as a baby.'

I do not want to give the plot away (although I am not sure that this is the strongest facet of this novel.) Suffice to say that, having promised the Empress a chess-playing machine, one deceit leads to another, with increasingly disastrous consequences for von Kempelen, Jacob, and Tibor. As so often in life, those who start out with good intentions are not necessarily destined to find that their endeavours end well if they are built on sand.

Ultimately the paradox is clear. On the one hand, 'If there is any deception about this so-called automaton... the Empress will hear of it, and God have mercy on those who have dared to trick her and her entire court and bring ridicule on the empire.' Yet on the other, 'All the automaton can do is turn wheels and make a noise. Tibor does the thinking. The entire device is just a brilliant deception.'

The Secrets of the Chess Machine gives an intriguing perspective as to how we have viewed machines through the ages. When the Turk (or more accurately Tibor) is held to a draw for the first time, Tibor fears it will prove to be a disaster. However, in reality '... This draw only added to the Mechanical Turk's fame: for one thing, its fallibility made it seem more human to the people of Pressburg, and for another the result spurred on its next opponents

to try for a draw against the machine too, or even be the first man to defeat it.'

So somehow the perceived flaws of 'machines' back then served to make them more relatable, and perhaps the same holds in our own era too. We might logically understand that the devices we interact with daily have no soul, but when we look at them we are inevitably trying to catch a glimpse of ourselves. Perhaps it was little wonder that the Turk elicited such a reaction, although of course, unlike today's AI chess computers, the Turk was a human after all.

The chess itself is strong in relation to atmospheric, a little weaker on specifics. All the fictional matches played by the Turk in this period are well described, and we get a strong sense of the power of the occasion and the ability of chess to bring together a host of interested spectators. However, '... the little castling manoeuvre, with the rook moving to the square vacated by the king' is far from the only chess error, and some of the technical descriptions of the games are somewhat lacking, but not so much as to ruin the book as a light-hearted read.

Robert Lohr notes in an afterword that while the story of the Turk in the nineteenth century is relatively well documented, 'much less is known about its early days.' This fictional story, as Lohr observes, draws on what we know about Wolfgang von Kempelen and the Habsburg empire of that time, although as Lohr also notes, von Kempelen's character is very different from this fictional portrayal.

Yet perhaps we should not quibble too much. To enjoy this book properly a little suspension of disbelief is called for, and there is no reason not to dive in on this basis. This won't be the best book that you've ever read, but it deserves its place in the ranks of decent chess fiction.

I'll now be taking my usual August break, but I look forward to being back in the autumn, when we'll be looking at Ben Johnson's *Perpetual Chess Improvement* and Andrew Soltis's *How to Choose a Chess Move*. Until then, whatever books you choose to pack in your suitcase, enjoy the summer.

My Favourite British Chess Championship Venues by Danny Gormally

In this article I'm going to rate the best of British championship venues. Please leave any comments on social media on which ones you rate as the best venues; anyway, here are mine.

1. Torquay

Although my first British Championship was in Nottingham in 1996, and Hove 1997 was the first year of Smith & Williamson sponsorship when the first prize was propelled to £10,000, perhaps the British itself didn't really start in my memories until Torquay in 1998. In my view and, I would guess, many others', Torbay is the perfect location for a British Chess Championship. Even the journey to Torbay is pleasant as you rattle past the sunken boats in Exmouth and the often sea-lashed platform in Dawlish, until you are deposited in deepest and sleepy south Devon at the small train station situated near Torre Abbey. The abbey is flanked by a pitch and putt golf course near the tennis courts - head slightly north from there and you reach the Riviera Centre where the chess takes place.

This is a perfect venue for the sprawling tournament that the British has become, as there are at least two large main halls as well as several smaller rooms around the centre which can host some of the side events. Because it has its own microclimate Torquay always seems hot, and over the years I've played well here, and in the British Championships in general. Somehow it is easier to play chess when it is warm and sunny, but there have been some sour moments as well. I recall losing an important game to a young Luke McShane in 2002, in a Sicilian Defence where I made a crucial tactical howler at some point and was easily punished in a rook vs bishop ending. I trudged away from the venue utterly despondent. Why am I not good enough? Why are these players so much better than me? Why am I prone to these stupid brain freezes? Instead of processing what had just gone wrong and taking steps to alter my future outcomes, I was instead afflicted by these negative thoughts.

This was the same British Championships where Luke went into the last round as favourite, and surprisingly (or at least it seemed like a surprise at the time) lost to R B Ramesh from India. Ramesh is now much better known as the coach of present and future superstar Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa. Perhaps Torquay is the place then for upsets or unearthing new talents, as it was also the venue where Harry Grieve won the British Championship when an unheralded FM, but these players were probably just a lot better than we realised at the time.

This area of the world is so alluring that some of England's strongest players like Keith Arkell and Jonathan Hawkins have relocated to Torbay altogether. Finish your game, stroll up to Appleby's and have a drink in the beer garden and order some food, and soon other chess players will arrive, and you'll have a laugh about your games and the absurdity of playing chess for a living, all while you gaze

across the bay as the sun goes down and shadows sprawl along your table.

If there is a flaw in Torquay it is that the beach is relatively small, so that you get the impression of a squashed-in Cannes, or mini-Brighton. But that impression soon changes once you realise that it's the gateway to towns like Paignton and Brixham, offering plenty of promise for exploring if you can find the time.

2. Scarborough

1999 was one of my favourite British Chess Championships, and that is perhaps because it was one of the first times where I felt in the thick of the action. That is what you are there for after all; you are there to win it - that is what you train for, to have a chance to make history and win a British Chess Championship and join some of the legendary names who have won it in the past: Jonathan Penrose, Nigel Short, Tony Miles, Michael Adams among others.

I raced to 4 out of 4, and as I was leaving the Ocean Room where the chess takes place, I ran into Scottish chess journalist John Henderson. 'In the clubhouse, Danny?' He joked.

One of the things that helped me in that edition was that because I was bereft of funds and had to sleep on a sofa bed in a room that was next to that of one of my fellow competitors, I was outside my comfort zone. To earn money, I would go down to the venue in the morning and spend a few hours inputting games into the bulletin published by Richard O'Brien, who is sadly no longer with us. And because I was looking at so much chess before the game it helped to focus my mind, and after four rounds I was clear leader. The ironic thing was that I probably didn't realize how close I was to breaking through to becoming British Champion or wasn't mentally ready for such an outcome. If I had known then what I know now - that it can become harder as you grow older, not easier - I would have tried everything in my power to win it. In any case Julian Hodgson was much more experienced and used that experience wisely to defang me in round 5. And Julian had, or I should say has, a sense of humour and a personality as well. In the last round, when he was in the process of winning the £10,000 first prize and I was in the process of blowing one of many grandmaster norms, he came up to me said that I was the second most talented player in the tournament. What a compliment, even if said in jest, but it still didn't stop me fleeing the venue, almost in tears, when I inevitably lost to Nigel Davies's positional approach. Two losses in the tournament in the same way - in positional, strategic games. Instead of putting my head down and working hard on that part of

my game I retreated into misery, and spent that evening in morose fashion, nursing some cans of lager and refusing to go out and socialise with the others. I didn't want to see any chess players and instead stared forlornly out of the window as a lightning bolt struck the garden only a few feet from where I stood.

Scarborough is in some ways a typical British coastal town, but in other ways it is not typical. Because it is situated up North, there isn't the money you often see in southern venues. People are often poor, but they are also proud in their identity, and the food and culture in Scarborough isn't at all bad. You can get some greasy fish and chips, and very fine they are too. There is also a large Chinese restaurant just as you leave the centre of town and head towards the north bay. When I went back there for a weekend only a few months ago what struck me was how little the town had changed from twenty-odd years ago, when the British used to come there regularly. All the same shops and cafes were still there. The people looked the same.

The British also came to the Ocean Room in 2001 and again in 2004, the first of Jonathan Rowson's three British Championships in a row. The abiding memory of that event for me was how utterly confused I was. I had lost my confidence, but a passing comment from another player changed everything. He mentioned how Anand once played the British Championships and would play all his games in under five minutes. This was it - I was the honourable heir to Vishy's speed crown. Gone would be the confused overthinking and worrying about everything; for once I would trust my formidable instincts and the results would flow. I got away with this car crash chess against Stephen Gordon, blowing him away using less than 20 minutes on my clock. But I was helped by the fact that the Rossolimo Sicilian can be quite simple to play for White, and I probably also surprised Stephen with this strategy. No longer, because the cat was out of the bag. Vishy Gormally was on the prowl and coming for us all.

Against Rowson in a 6.Be3 ...Ng4 Najdorf the superficiality of this approach was exposed. There was no depth to my thinking, and I soon understood why Vishy was able to get away with playing in this way and I wasn't. Vishy would think in his opponent's time, and calculate a lot quicker than me when it was his turn to move. He is also one of the best to ever play the game, which probably helps.

So, I was left with the knowledge that I wasn't a genius like Vishy, and that Rowson had used his own talents in a more productive way than I had. Again, I should have used these lessons and used them to drive me forward. If I had worked hard to gain the depth of understanding and calculation that Rowson seemed to have I might have

grabbed a British title for myself. But instead, I retreated into my shell, muttering and feeling sorry. In the concluding rounds, by now completely lost as to what to do, I capitulated further and ended up winning nothing. £10k for Jonathan, nothing for me.

3. Edinburgh

Edinburgh is where Jonathan is from, and although the British Chess Championships were held here in 2003, they haven't been back there since. Which is a pity, as it would be hard to find a prettier place in the entire world, let alone in the UK.

I feel there are at least a couple of reasons for this. For one thing, since the English Chess Federation emerged from the old British Chess Federation Scottish players haven't generally been encouraged to play in the British Championships, and conditions haven't been offered very often to their titled players. Why that is, I'm not completely sure. There is also the factor of rising prices, and hosting a tournament in Edinburgh might be seen as disproportionately expensive currently as that part of the world just increases in popularity and cost, as there are more and more people with disposable income and the rise of Airbnb drives up the rents in these desirable areas.

Edinburgh has steep rises, sometimes shockingly steep as you round a corner, and it strikes you how high up you are. It also has Mackintosh architecture and a sense of history and Gaelic belonging.

The 2003 edition was the second and currently last of the Indian victories, as Kunte took home the title ahead of players like Rowson and Harikrishna. It also ended up in a damp squib for me, as I lost to Joe Gallagher in the penultimate round and failed to win a prize of any serious note. I also lost out, unfairly I believed at the time, on the best game prize.

Despite this disappointing finish I have fond memories of playing the British Championships in Edinburgh, and hope that the British Championships can go back to Scotland in future.

Honorable mentions:

Street 2000 This was a memorable British, as Julian Hodgson started poorly, got his own chair, and was also attacked by a wasp during a game - fortunately the wasp didn't connect - and Julian won his third British title. Although I didn't win one of the main prizes, I won a nice game against Colin Crouch in the final round to at least come away with some decent money (I think it was around £700 or £800 in the end), and that gave me the

impetus to go on and get my first grandmaster norm a couple of weeks later.

Llandudno 2017 One of the first British Championships that was played after they abbreviated the tournament to only nine rounds. There is something very charming about this part of Wales. Llandudno is situated in a neatly packed bay, and it winds around to the cliff of the Great Orme which hosts a herd of mountain goats that was originally given as a gift to Queen Victoria. I stayed with Steve Rush in the town of Prestatyn, so would commute in every day, and that helped my chess because the temptation of going out every night and getting smashed was taken away.

On one of the final nights Steve took his car inland to try and find an old client of his, and on the way back we stopped on a high cliff and looked across the coast of North Wales. In the fading light you could see the spine of Snowdonia, grey and ancient.

Hull 2021 I have had much heartbreak in the British and this was another version where I came very close to winning it, but it still goes down as one of my favourite British Chess Championships. Why? Because there were so few players in the tournament. British Chess Championships are usually chaotic, with too many players and booming arbiter voices being needed to assert control, but this felt like a cosy, not too stressful, renewal. The small numbers were due to the tournament taking place in the aftermath of the Covid pandemic.

If I had to give advice to those trying to win a British Chess Championship and try to learn from someone who has struggled to get over the line, and how to avoid making the same mistakes, I would say that what it mainly takes to win the event is character. When you look at some of the people who have won it over the years that I have been playing, they often have a strong character and personality. Michael Adams, Julian Hodgson, David Howell, including some of the 'surprise' winners (if that isn't too insulting to them) like Jacob Aagaard and Joe Gallagher. They all have a strong character and personality, and that comes through in their chess and their approach to the game. At the time they won the British Championship they completely believed in their chess game and what they were doing.

If you want to learn from what I have done and what I have done wrong, what we can clearly see from this article is that I haven't learned from my mistakes. Remember that if you are a younger player then the British Championships are unlikely to be the last one that you will take part in. If you happen to fail or have a bad

event don't let your head drop like I did, take on board what exactly happened, and try to learn from it.

I always feel like experience is one of the most overrated words, as people don't always use that experience correctly; I know I don't. An experienced player can just be a player with a lot of scar tissue of failures at the British Championships.

There is a reason why Stuart Conquest is the only player north of 40 years of age to break through and a win a British Chess Championship while I've been playing. Because the British can feel like such an overwhelming and important event, the longer you wait to win it, the harder it becomes.

Rating Corner by Brian Valentine

What is becoming increasingly clear in our corner of the chess world is that new players – predominately juniors – can improve much faster than in previous times. What may have been an unrecognised trend became clear with the watershed of the Covid era. More facilities moved online and begat more opportunities for learning.

One of the changes is the type of event in which players first play rated games. Many are introduced to the rating system by playing in rapid chess events. This year for the first time the number of rated rapid chess results is higher than that for standardplay. At some time, these new players are introduced to standardplay chess.

Any changes we make to the rating system need to recognise our main goal of improving rating accuracy. However, we have other goals in maintaining stable average ratings and the spread of those ratings. Also, we would like to keep things simple within these objectives.

All new players start their rating with a presumed dummy draw against a player with an age-related strength. This seems to be working satisfactorily to get from an unreliable category P-rating to a K-rating. However, the procedure can adversely affect ratings for their opponents. There are some great events to introduce new players to standardplay chess, and they tend to be popular with a particular group of established players, who can be significantly affected by the 'under-rated juniors' syndrome.

We have decided to do something to address this. From 1st September some players new to over the board standardplay chess (this excludes those returning to the list after an extended spell away) will have a new floor to

their dummy rating. If they have an active K or A category rating in over the board rapid chess above the age-related default dummy rating, we will use that instead for the default.

Brian Valentine
Manager of ECF Rating

From the Archives

'The World is a Chess Board': New York's Chess Review, 1944.

With recent features taking a more European and British perspective, this month for a change we venture across the pond and back in time to 1944. Having encountered some of the ways chess publications, clubs and players have had to adapt to the upheaval of World War II, here we get another glimpse as we take a closer look at the one and only bound volume of *Chess Review* held in the collection (so far discovered). First published in New York in 1933, *Chess Review* would become the leading chess periodical in the USA until 1969, when it merged with *Chess Life* to become *Chess Life and Review*. During its first year it was edited by grandmaster and US champion Isaac Kashdan, who was replaced when he left to focus on his playing career by chess author and International Master I. A. Horowitz. He would go on to be editor for the next 35 years.

Published monthly from October to May and then bi-monthly from June to September, Vol XII of *Chess Review* contains a complete run for the year, with each issue often sporting a very interesting cover.



Cover for January



Cover for November featuring 'King of Jazz' Paul Whiteman

With regular features such as 'Game of the Month', 'Problems', and news on the latest international matches, there are also some wonderful images of clubs and tournaments from across the USA, from big national events to more grass roots activities. Here are some highlights.



Gisela Gresser plays Adele Raettig in the Women's USA Championship held in New York - Gresser would go on to win the tournament



A 'Chess Hour' with boys and girls at the Charles Sumner Junior High School, St. Louis, Missouri, enjoying their regular weekly chess session



The inauguration of an annual championship tourney by the founders of the New York Filipino Chess Club

But perhaps most fascinating are the readers' letters, which provide insights into the contemporaneous discussions surrounding the 'royal game' and perspectives on world affairs. For example, there seems to be much consternation about the gradual change in chess notation from 'Kt' to 'N'.

N FOR KNIGHT

Sirs:

I think the only reason N isn't used for Knight is because enough courageous pioneers have not raised their voices in protest against an out-moded custom. I raise mine now! N for Knight!

JOHN P. SCOTT

N for Knight

Sirs:

I favor anything that will eliminate the exasperating confusion between Kt and K, both in writing and reading. The argument that Kt is the symbol in worldwide use is hardly convincing as it is limited to English; the Germans use S (for Springer) and the Spaniards use C (for Caballo, meaning horse). . .

S. B. TALMAGE

N for Knight

Kt FOR KNIGHT

Sirs:

Would you tear down the tattered ensign "Kt?" Many an eye has danced to see that banner a-flutter on fields wet with heroes' blood, where fought the glorious armies of Morphy, Pillsbury, Marshall, Lasker, Capablanca, Horowitz and others of the host of the mighty.

"Kt" was their emblem for the daring, odd-gaited, hurdling Knight. "Kt" means Knight. "N" doesn't mean anything. Who would say, "A gay Night was young Lochinvar?" Sacrilege!

Chess is as much a tradition as a game. Let us keep all the lore and trappings, the ancient familiar forms, even the impedimenta, that have enriched it through the ages like old wine.

C. ROSENFELD

Kt for Knight

With humorous as well as serious responses the editors clear the board of those wanting to retain 'Kt' by first stating that 'No iconoclasts, the editors of *Chess Review* have no desire to break tradition just to see the pieces fly'. They then explain that chess notation has been changed many times and that they will be adopting the modern form of 'N' in good time.

A subject of probably more gravitas in the 'Readers' Forum' is that of the role and importance of chess to those serving in the armed forces. February's Forum is specifically dedicated to this, and contains some truly heartfelt letters, such as that by Sgt Harold Lock, who publicly thanks his father for regularly sending him his old copies of *Chess Review*. He also describes the importance of the magazine and the game to him and his peers: 'During those lonely days on the transports and during lulls in battle in both the Sicilian and Italian campaigns, I turn to my chessboard...'. A powerful image, and a reminder that our hobbies and interests can sometimes help to keep us grounded in times of crisis. Many serving also describe how they have set up their own clubs and exhibitions to help teach chess to others in the ranks and/or those recovering in hospital.

Excerpts from letter enclosed:

I believe that chess can be of great service in this war and at the same time bring the joys and delights of chess to millions of Americans. My own experiences in the Army have led me to this conclusion.

Letter from PFC H. Rogosin

Sirs:

I was delighted to discover a copy of CHESS REVIEW when I landed in the hospital here "somewhere in North Africa." The dog-eared appearance of this copy (April 1943) attests to its popularity and I was amazed to see how many of the patients and personnel became interested in the game because of the magazine.

CPL HUGH W. BIGELOW
Somewhere in North Africa.

Letter from Cpl Hugh Bigelow

Fascinating as our one volume of the *Review* is, we hope to discover more issues and more stories from across the globe as cataloguing of the English Chess Federation Library continues.

It's a Puzzlement!



Puzzle 1 - IM Ghasi, A. – CM Banerjee, S.
English Open 2024, Kenilworth ENG



White to checkmate - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2 - Pink, Joshua – Yu, Rock
English Open 2024, Kenilworth ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3 - Fernando, Manel – Khunda, Deema
English Women's 2024, Kenilworth ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4 - FM Derakshani, Borna – Weinstein, Joshua
Ross - Titled Tue 21 May Late, Chess.com INT



White to win - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5 - CM Banerjee, Supratit – Carroll, Thomas
English Open 2024, Kenilworth ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6 - Hryshchenko, Kamila – Rida, Ruqayyah
English Women's 2024, Kenilworth, ENG



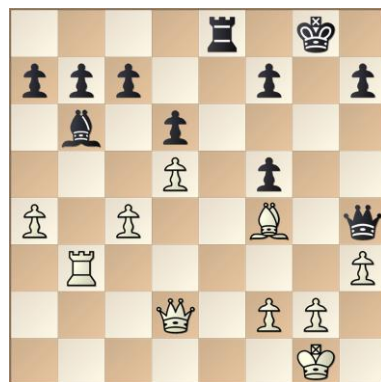
White to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7 - Boswell, Jacob Connor – IM Willow, Jonah B
English Open 204, Kenilworth, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8 - FM Merino Garcia, R – GM Howell, David
Titled Tues 28 May Late, Chess.com INT



Black to win - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9 - Hughes, Ro – Bonafont, P
English Seniors 65+, Kenilworth ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10 - Sefton, Adam – Mikalajunas, Kajus
English Open 2024 – Kenilworth ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11 - Hryshchenko, Kamila – Rida, Ruqayyah
English Women's 2024, Kenilworth ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12 - GM Williams, Si1 – FM Urbina Perez, J
Titled Tues 14 May Early – Chess.com INT



White to win - [Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit
https://chesspuzzle.net/List/10144?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=julynews
by clicking the link or via the QR code.



NEWS and VIEWS

Grandmaster-Crafted Courses for Free

Our grandmaster friends have unlocked and made all their 500+ hours of courses free until July 31. They have courses for all levels from beginners to masters, on all topics from tactics to strategy, from openings to endgames. [Click here](#) to explore their courses and improve your chess.

Rob Willmoth, ECF Director of Membership

Silver and Gold Membership Merge

We've now completed the IT changes to put into effect the decision made at the English Chess Federation's Finance Council meeting last April to merge existing Silver and Gold memberships into one single new Gold membership class.

If you're a Silver member there's no need to do anything - your membership change to the new Gold category will happen automatically. Please note that the changes to membership categories have been made in our JustGo membership system, and are also reflected in the rating system. You can find more information, including details of the new 2024/2025 membership rates, here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/membership-pay-to-play-and-game-fees-2024-25-v1/>

ECF Grassroots Support

The ECF is pleased to announce an initiative to support grassroots chess, as discussed at recent Council meetings. This is intended as a multi-year initiative to help promote and develop chess across England.

Full details about the fund, areas we are looking to support, criteria for applications and how to apply can be found in this prospectus: [Grassroots Prospectus](#)

Organisations and individual ECF members/chess players can apply for support via the online form, a link to which is in the prospectus.

Applications for regional funding will be reviewed by regional coordinators covering all regions of England, while applications involving more than one region will be reviewed by a small central ECF team.

Chess in Prisons

Raymond Keene has written in *The Article* about Carl Portman's fine work on chess in prisons. You can read this at the following link: <https://www.thearticle.com/chess-in-prisons>

Finance Council Minutes

The minutes of April's Finance Council meeting can be read at: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ECF-April-2024-%E2%80%93-Minutes-of-FCM.pdf>

British Chess Championships - Liveboards

The British Chess Championships are now underway. The majority of events will be played on liveboards at the venues in Hull and will be broadcast on Chess.com, Lichess and other platforms. There's a full listing of where to follow the games here: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/bcc-2024-where-to-follow-the-games/>

23,000 Join Bodhana at ChessFest



Record-breaking nine year old Bodhana Sivanandan celebrated her call-up to England's chess team in a packed Trafalgar Square on Sunday as ChessFest drew its biggest-ever crowd.

More than 23,000 people - 8,000 more than last year - descended on London's iconic venue to brave a mixed bag of weather as the UK's annual free chess event got under way.

Bodhana, the superstar schoolgirl from Harrow who was named in England's squad for the Chess Olympiad in September, spent most of the day taking on all-comers in a simultaneous display. She also took to the main stage for a trans-Atlantic match organised by ChessKid.com

against top US talents, and with her father Siva enjoyed meeting many of her new-found fans.

Bodhana said: 'ChessFest was so much fun, I had a great time. It rained very heavily at one point but then the sun came out and I played a lot of chess.'



Bodhana was joined by a host of top UK grandmasters and three other young English super-talents: 15 year old Shreyas Royal, who is on the brink of becoming England's youngest ever grandmaster, fast-rising under 10 Supratit Banerjee, and Ethan Pang, the world's number 1 under 9 player.

British Champion Gawain Jones and England's number 1 Nikita Vitiugov, both world-class grandmasters, treated the crowd to a display of blindfold chess. There was also an appearance from Anthony Mathurin from the BBC show *The Traitors*, who is a chess coach.

The festival, now in its fourth year, drew chess enthusiasts from across the country, including many of the country's top grandmasters, for a day of fun suitable for every level of player. It was organised by the charity Chess in Schools and Communities (CSC), with support from the Mayor of London and XTX Markets.



Malcolm Pein, Chief Executive of Chess in Schools and Communities, said, 'It was wonderful to see over 23,000 people enjoying what is the Glastonbury of chess in Trafalgar Square. A mid-afternoon downpour did not stop play, unlike the cricket!'

More pictures from the day are available [here](#).

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



I was delighted to see that Gawain Jones has just won the English Championship. It has been a very difficult time for him recently, and this victory is a welcome return to the top level of chess. He began playing chess at the age of four, and in 1997 was featured in the Guardian when he became the youngest player ever to beat an international master in an official tournament. After several successes at home and abroad he was awarded the grandmaster title in 2007 at just 19 years of age, and it became obvious that he could potentially be a world-beater.

Here for example is a sparkling win against a very strong Dutch grandmaster.

G. Jones - L. Van Wely
Staunton Memorial 2007

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.f4 g6 4.Nf3 Bg7 5.Bb5 Nd4 6.0-0 a6 7.Bd3 b5 8. Nxd4 Bxd4+ 9. Kh1 Bb7 10.e5 Ra7?! White has chosen a slightly unusual line against the Sicilian, but the simple 10...Qc7 is perfectly satisfactory for Black. For example, 11.a4 b4 12.Bc4 e6 13.Nb1 Qc6 14.Qe2 gives equal chances. Meanwhile the move chosen in the game looks a tad clumsy, and exposes the black rook to attack later on.



11.Be4 Bxc3 12.Bxb7 Bxb2 13.Bxb2 Rxb7 14.f5 Black has won a pawn but at the cost of his development, and White now generates a dangerous attack.

14...Nh6 15. Qf3 Qb6? The best chance was 15...Qb8, because if White continues as in the game with 16.e6 f6 17.fxg6 hxg6 18.Bxf6? then the counter-blow 18....Ng4! wins for Black. However, a decent looking line for White after 15..Qb8 is 16.Rae1 Nxf5 17.e6 f6 18.g4 Nd4 19.exd7+ Kd8 20.Qe4 Rxd7 21.c3 f5 22.Qg2 Nc2 23.Rc1, when White wins a piece. There are other possible variations, but White has a strong initiative whichever Black chooses.

16.e6 f6 If 16...0-0 then 17.fxg6 hxg6 18.Qh3 Kh7 19.Rxf7+ Rxf7 20.exf7 Rb8 21.Rf1 Rf8 22.Qc3 wins.

17.fxg6 hxg6 18.Bxf6! exf6 If 18...Rf8 then 19.Qg3 Rxf6 20.Rxf6 exf6 21.Qxg6+ Ke7 22.Qg7+ Kxe6 23.Rf1 Nf5 24.Qg8+ Ke7 25.Qh7+ Kd8 26.Qxf5, with a decisive advantage.



19.Qxf6 Rg8 20.Rae1 d5 21.Qg5 Re7 22.Qxh6 White has won the sacrificed material back, and is clearly winning. However, Black now makes another error which hastens the end.

22.....Qa5? Better was 22...Qd6 23.Rf6 Kd8 24.Qg5 Rh8 25.g3 Kc7 26.Rxg6 when White is easily winning, but at least Black has avoided getting checkmated!



23. Rf6 Qxa2 24.Rxg6 Rf8 25.Qxf8+! Black resigned, because it is mate after 25....Kxf8 26.Rf1+ Rf7 27.Rxf7+ Ke8 28.Rg8#.

A beautiful game by Gawain, who is now one of the strongest players in England, and I sincerely hope he will go on to challenge the world's best in the next few years.

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.

Chess Star, 9, to Become Youngest England Player



Bodhana Sivanandan has been in the news lately. You can read more details here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/sport/article/2024/jul/02/nine-year-old-chess-prodigy-england-youngest>; and: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3g6e653wrlo>

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

It is very easy to believe that tactics only occur in the games of the great masters, but I can assure you that they are part of virtually every game of chess played. As an example of this I wanted to show you some of my own tactical finishes.

Consider the following position that I reached against Max Fuller 45 years ago.

P. E. Littlewood - M. Fuller

British Championships, Chester 1979



Black is threatening a dangerous counter-attack beginning with 1...Re8+, so White must act quickly. Therefore I played the combination **1.Bxg5+**. Now if 1...Qxg5 then my intention was 2.Qe6+ Bg6 3.Qxg6+ Qxg6 4.fxg6 Kxg6, when White is a pawn up with a winning ending. The computer tells me that even better for White is 2.Qc6+ Bg6 3.fxg6 when Black has a lot of checks, but after they are over White is winning. However, this is a line virtually impossible for a human to calculate!

The game therefore continued **1...Kxg5 2.Qc1+ Kxf5 3.Rb5+ Kg6 4.Qc2+ Kh6 5.Qd2+ Kg7 6.Qg2+ Bg6 7.Qxa8** with a material advantage which I converted to a win in a further 15 moves.

Note that without this tactic White would not be winning, so it is essential to spot it in a game.

Here is another example where tactics abound.

M. J. Yeo - P. E. Littlewood
Kettering Open 1979



Black is a pawn down, but now unleashes a series of tactical blows beginning with **1...Nd5!** Clearly then 2.exd5 is bad because of 2...Bxd5 3.Qxh5 Qe3+ 4.Kb1 Nxf4, regaining the sacrificed material with a winning position. However, the calm 2.Nd3 would have held things together, and left White slightly better for choice. Instead White thought he could refute the combination by playing **2.f5**, but after **2...Ne5 3.Qg3** the deflection **3...h4!** gave Black a winning position.

The game continued **4.Qxh4 Qe3+ 5.Kb1**, reaching the following position.



Now Black unleashed a further tactic to denude the white king of protection.

5...Nc3+! 6.bxc3 Bxb3 7.cxb3 Qxe2 8.Rc1 Ra8 9.Rc2 Qe1+ 10.Rc1 Ra1+ 11.Kxa1 Qxc1+. White is now completely lost, as his queen is too far away from the action. The game finished:

12.Ka2 Qc2+ 13.Ka3 Qxc3 14.Ka2 Qc2+ 15.Ka3 Qc3 16.Ka2 b4 17.Qh5 Qc2+ 18.Ka1 Qc1+ 19.Ka2 Qa3+ 20.Kb1 Qxb3+ 21.Kc1 Qc3+ 22.Kb1 Qe1+ 23.Nd1 Qxe4+ 24.Ka1 Nc4, and White resigned as his only counter-chance of Qe8+ has been prevented.

Here now are two more of my finishes for you to solve, with the solutions given at the end of the article.

L. J. Brito - P. E. Littlewood
Hastings 1980/81



Black is clearly winning, but what is the most efficient way to end the game?

P. E. Littlewood - B. Stein
European Team Championships Plovdiv 1983



What accurate sequence did White use to win a key pawn?

Answers:

L. J. Brito - P. E. Littlewood

Black won prettily by **1...Rxb1 2.Qxb1 Qg2+ 3.Ke3 Rxf3+ 4.Kd2 Qg5+ 5.Kd1 Rf1+.**

P. E. Littlewood - B. Stein

The winning continuation was **1.Ng5 Rf8 2.Nxb5!** because if now 2...Bxb5 then 3.Rxc8, when Black must capture with his queen as f7 is hanging.... and then after 3...Qxc8 4.Bxb5 White is a clear pawn up. The game finished **2...Nxe4 3.Rxc6! Bxg5 4.Rxc8 Qxc8 5.Bxg5 Nxe5 6.Bg4** and Black resigned, because the pin of the black knight on d7 will cost him a piece.

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

Monthly Conundrum by Christopher Jones

Here is the problem recently featured on the BCPS website, www.theproblemist.org/, with which I left you last time.



Stavros Iatridis

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

As I said last time, this problem has been described as ‘in the style of Sam Loyd’. I went on to say 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 we have a very unsubtle key move, 1.Rh4, threatening immediate mate by Nf6 or Nf2. At first glance Black seems totally helpless; 1...Qxh4 of course allows 2.Re3#. But he has one resilient move: 1...Qf4. In fact now there is no bludgeoning move that forces mate on move 3, and instead, surprisingly, White has to find the one move that creates a killer zugzwang – 2.Kxb6!. There is a great multiplicity of legal black replies, some of them giving check, but you will be able to find a mating rejoinder to each. If you were set the position after 1.Rh4 Qf4 as a ‘mate in 2’, you would find it much easier to solve, and the clever solution would, I think, make less of an impression. So, I’m with Sam Loyd and with Stavros Iatridis in thinking that the crude intro, making it more of a delight to unearth the far-from-crude subsequent play, is a good thing! Other views, of course, are possible...

In the last *ChessMoves* Ian Watson devoted his section on endgame studies to the significance of en passant captures in studies. They have also featured often in problems. I was recently struck by the following problem.



Aleksandr Azhusin, after D. Biscan
Springaren, 2018
Selfmate in 14

‘Selfmate’ means that White is trying to force Black to mate him, and Black is trying to avoid having to mate White! If you’re prepared to step into this mindset, the effort proves rewarding in this case. (As it often is – it turns out that there are a lot of strategic ideas and themes that can be shown most compellingly in the selfmate genre; and if you ever enter competitive solving competitions you can expect to be asked to unravel a selfmate or two, albeit not one in as many moves as this one!)

This problem shows a remarkable task. I find it quite awesome that a composer found a way to achieve the task; and I also find it a testimony to the quite awesome capacity of chess problem-solving software these days that the position, with all its trillions of possible permutations of moves, has been definitively proved to be sound – the amazing move sequence intended by the composer is the only way to force Black to give mate on the 14th move. (One weakness of computers is that they don’t also examine whether the position could have legally been reached from the initial game array position. One must apply one’s own brain to satisfy oneself that, by however bizarre a sequence of moves, this ugly diagram does satisfy this fundamental requirement of a sound chess problem.)

This is how the play proceeds: 1.a4+ bxa3 e.p. 2.Qxb7+ Kc5 3.b4+ cxb3 e.p. 4.Qb4+ Kd5 5.c4+ dxc3 e.p. 6.Rd8+ Bd6 7.Rdxd6+ Ke5 8.d4+ exd3 e.p. 9.Re6+ Kd5 10.e4+ fxe3 e.p. 11.Red6+ Ke5 12.f4+ gxf3 e.p. 13.Nf7+ Kf5 14.g4+ hxg3#.

A few issues ago we featured a problem by Paul Michelet in which to mate in the specified number of moves White, in the course of the solution, had to move a pawn from d2 to d4. The main line of the solution continued with the black response ...Pe4xd3 e.p., but White’s move had had to be Pd4, not Pd3, because at d4 the white pawn would play an essential part in a mate that would befall Black if, instead of capturing, he simply played a temporising move

with his king. Composers are ingenious in finding ways of deriving piquancy from this quirky feature of the rules of chess. For your 'homework' this time you may like to consider an essentially orthodox problem in which the composer has confronted you with three plausible candidate moves, each of which could be met by either of two possible e.p. captures. Does one of these three candidate moves work?



Matti Myllyniemi
Problem, 1968
 Mate in 2

As usual, if you want to check on the solution you can either feed the position into the computer or wait for the next *ChessMoves*.

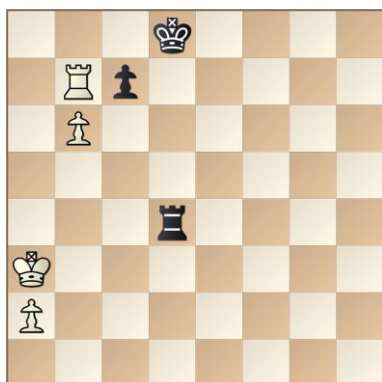
Don't hesitate to email me with any queries at all to do with this column.

Christopher Jones Email: cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

How to Solve a Study by Ian Watson

Adding an intro

Here's a famous study, but in a version with an added introduction.



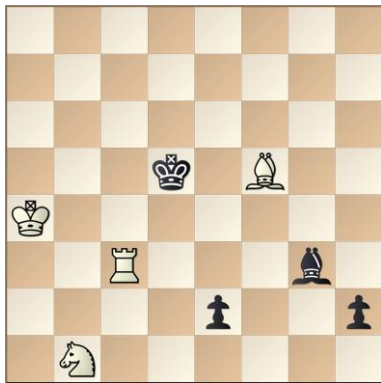
White to play and win

1.bxc7+ Kc8 2.Ra7 Rc4 is clearly a draw, as is 1.Rxc7 Rd6 2.Rb7 Kc8, so 1.Rb8+ it has to be. Black replies 1...Kd7, as 1...Ke7 2.bxc7 is terminal. What now? 2.b7 Kc6 3.Kb3 Kb6 4.a4 Ka7 is drawing. It's not too hard to see 2.Rd8+ - provided you are thinking in composed position mode rather than in actual game mode. So, 2.Rd8+ Kxd8 3.b7 and why isn't that the end? It obviously can't be, because it's too short for a study - with which thought the only plausible defense 3...Rb4 4.Kxb4 c5+ should occur to you. The rest is easy: 5.Kb5 Kc7 6.Ka6 Kb8 7.Kb6 c4 8.a4 c3 9.a5 c2 10.a6 c1Q 11.a7 mate. Not a tough solve, and no sidelines that need clearing up.

The full solution is **1.Rb8+ Kd7 2.Rd8+ Kxd8 3.b7 Rb4 4.Kxb4 c5+ 5.Kb5 Kc7 6.Ka6 Kb8 7.Kb6 c4 7.a4 c3 8.a5 c2 9.a6 c1Q 10.a7** mate. There are a few duals: there's 5.Ka5, and White can delay Kb6 while he brings up his a-pawn, but one can argue that these don't detract greatly, and the verdict of study history has been that this is a classic. John Beasley named the idea of this study the 'White's rook is merely in the way' theme. There is another theme embodied in it; Black's trick of ...Rb4 (sacrificing the rook to enable a pawn move to become check) is known as 'Loman's move'. Loman played that idea, and won the game, when he was pitted against the great Emanuel Lasker in a simultaneous exhibition given by Lasker in London in 1910.

The study was composed by J. Moravec and published in *28 Rijen* in 1925, but Moravec had the white rook on b8, not b7, and the black king on d7, not d8. I don't know who found this way to extend the solution by a move, but I think Moravec would have approved.

Our regular contributor Paul Michelet has a penchant for enhancing existing studies, and your solving task is a study by A. Daniel to which he has added an introduction. Daniel's study was published in *The Chess Amateur* in 1912; if Daniel had thought of the introduction, he might have chosen to publish Paul's position, which is the one in the diagram. Paul's version not only extends the solution, but also adds in a 'try' - an enticing alternative white move which nearly solves, failing only to one black response.



White to play and draw

You can find the solution after the Events Calendar.

Ian Watson Email: ian@irwatson.uk

EVENTS CALENDAR

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

Week Beginning 29 July 2024

30 July 2024	London Chess League 2024 Summer Congress
1 August 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
2 August 2024	Swinton Long Play Congress
4 May 2024	4NCL Season 2023/24 weekend 5 Rouynds 9-11, Daventry and Telford
3 August 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
3 August 2024	London Women's Chess Club
3 August 2024	Split Open

Week Beginning 5 August 2024

6 August 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
6 August 2024	London Chess League 2024 Summer Congress
7 August 2024	First Wednesday Chess, Potters Bar
9 August 2024	Lancaster Standard Play Congress 2024
9 August 2024	52nd Thanet and East Kent Chess Congress 2024
10 August 2024	London Women's Chess Club
11 August 2024	Coulsdon Chess Rapidplay

Week Beginning 12 August 2024

12 August 2024	III Kingston Invitational
13 August 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
13 August 2024	London Chess League 2024 Summer Congress
15 August 2024	Camberley Chess Club Open Blitz Junior Tournament
16 August 2024	Manchester Junior Chess Championship
16 August 2024	Manchester Summer Congress 2024
16 August 2024	Newport Chess Congress 2024
17 August 2024	Greater London Chess Club Summer Rapidplay
17 August 2024	1st Chislehurst Rapidplay
18 August 2024	CCS London Junior Qualifier, London

Week Beginning 19 August 2024

20 August 2024	London Chess League 2024 Summer Congress
22 August 2024	7th Northumbria Masters Chess Congress, Darlington
22 August 2024	Northumbria Masters GM Round Robin 2024
22 August 2024	Northumbria Masters IM Round Robin 2024
22 August 2024	Camberley Chess Club Open Blitz Tournament
22 August 2024	Hammersmith FIDE Blitz 3+2
24 August 2024	English Women's Online Blitz Championship 2024
24 August 2024	3rd Brentwood Bank Holiday ECF Rapid Play Tournament
24 August 2024	15th Leyland Chess Congress
24 August 2024	1st Cambridge FIDE Congress
24 August 2024	Southall FIDE Congress

Week Beginning 26 August 2024

26 August 2024	Thamesmead International GM & IM
26 August 2024	Thamesmead Three Day Congress
27 August 2024	London Chess League 2024 Summer Congress
29 August 2024	Thamesmead Two Day FIDE Congress
30 August 2024	Menchik Memorial Challengers Tournament 2024 (WGM Norm)
30 August 2024	Maidenhead Junior Tournament August 2024
30 August 2024	Wimbledon FIDE Congress
31 August 2024	Darnall & Handsworth (Sheffield) 8th FIDE Rated Rapidplay
31 August 2024	3rd Cheam Rapidplay

How to Solve a Study solution

(Michelet, after Daniel) 1.Rc1 e1Q 2.Rxe1 Bxe1 3.Nd2 Bxd2 4.Bc8 Kc6 5.Bg4 h1Q 6.Bf3+ Qxf3 stalemate.

In the initial position White had R,B,N and Black only had a B; at the end, White has no pieces and Black has gained a whole queen, and yet it's a draw.

The position that Daniel composed was the one that arises in the solution after 2...Bxe1. Paul's intro has added a further sacrifice. It has also added the try 1.Re3?, which has the unexpected refutation (after 1...h1Q 2.Be4+) of 2...Kd4, meeting 3.Bxh1 with 3...Kxe3 4.Na3 Kd3. After 1.Re3? h1Q White could continue 2.Rxe2, but his pieces are poorly placed and the seven-piece databases confirm that Black is winning after 2...Qd1+ (e.g. 3.Bc2 Qd4+ 4.Ka3 Bd6+ 5.Ka2 Qa7+).



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