



Chess*Moves*

February 2024



Reports from Cambridge and Harrogate,
previews of the British and the English
Championships and much, much more ...

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the February edition of *ChessMoves*! This month's edition contains the very welcome news that the 2024 British Chess Championships will be held in Hull from Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August. Full details here: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>.

One of the ECF's flagship events, the Cambridge International Open, took place recently. I could not resist pulling out a game from round 3 between two of our youngest and most promising junior players.

Sivanandan, Bodhana - Banerjee, Supratit

2nd Cambridge International Open (3.17), 20.02.2024

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 dxe4 4.Nxe4 Nd7 5.Nf3 Ngf6 6.Nxf6+ Nxf6 Forget the Sicilian Dragon, which was the opening favoured by kids in my era. These days it's time to rev up the French Rubinstein. Having just written a book on the Rubinstein, I can say that the variation is under-appreciated, although whether it is an opening for a ten year old to play on a regular basis is open to question. Black is clearly hoping to grind White down using better technique.

7.c3 Kasparov's move. White waits with the bishop on f1, hoping to find a better square than d3.

7...c5 8.Ne5 a6 9.Be3 Qc7 10.Qa4+ Bd7 Carlsen played it this way: 10...Nd7 11.Bb5 cxd4 12.Bxd7+ Bxd7 13.Nxd7 Qxd7 14.Qxd4 Qxd4 15.Bxd4 f6.



This type of position is typical of the line - level. White has a queenside majority, but Black has plenty of play to offset this edge. 16.Ke2 Rc8 (perhaps 16...e5 17.Be3 Kf7 18.Rhd1 Ke6 19.c4 Be7 was most precise) 17.Rhd1 Be7 18.Be3 Rc7 19.a4 Kf7 20.a5 Ke8 21.Ra4 Rd7 22.Bb6 (22.Rad4! Rxd4 23.Rxd4 h5 24.c4 leaves White with the upper hand, although it is an advantage which is tough to convert) 22...Rxd1 23.Kxd1 Bd6 24.Ke2 Kd7 25.Rd4 e5 26.Rc4 Ke6 27.Kd3 f5 28.f3 Kd5 29.Rh4 Be7 30.Ra4 h5 31.Ra1 h4 32.c4+ Ke6 33.h3 Rh6 34.Re1 Rh8 35.Bc7 Bf6 36.Bxe5 Rd8+ 37.Kc2 Bxe5 38.f4 Rd4 39.Rxe5+ Kf6 40.Kc3 Shevchenko, K (2684)-Carlsen, M (2853) Warsaw 2023 0-1 This is all the database gives me, so I assume White lost on time.

11.Nxd7 Nxd7 12.0-0-0 0-0-0 13.Be2 Nb6 14.Qc2 Nd5 Well played. The knight finds a nice central square and equalizes the position.

15.Kb1 c4



16.g3N



Fifteen moves of Rubinstein theory culminate in the first new move. Black is denied the use of f4. Extraordinarily, we find that Carlsen has been here before as well, this time with White! As I believe this to be a game with an extremely fast time control, I will keep commentary to a minimum. 16.Bf3 b5 17.Rhe1 Be7 18.Bc1 Kb7 19.Re5 Bf6 20.Bxd5+ Rxd5 21.Rxd5 exd5 22.Re1 Qd7 23.Qe2 g6 24.g4 Bd8 25.Bf4 Kc6 26.Qe5 Rf8 27.f3 h5! 28.gxh5 gxh5 29.Qxh5 Re8 30.Rxe8 Qxe8 31.Qe5 Qd7 32.a3 f6 33.Qb8 Qh7+ 34.Ka2 Bb6 35.Qc8+ Bc7 36.Qxa6+ Kd7 37.Qxb5+ Ke6 38.Qc6+ Kf5 39.Bxc7 Qg8 40.a4 Kg5 41.a5 Kf5 42.a6 Qg1 43.Qxd5+ Kg6 44.a7 Qd1 45.Qxc4 Qe1 Carlsen, M (2862)-Tang, A (2538) Lichess.org INT 2021 1–0

16...Qc6 White would be a tad better after 16...Nxe3 17.fxe3, but there would be a long way to go.

17.Bc1 Be7 18.f4 g6 19.Bf3 h5 20.h3 Qc7 21.Rhf1 b5 22.Be2 Kb8 23.Bd2 Ka7



Black is playing the position well, in advance of his years. Basically the only way for White to open the game up is via the pawn levers b2–b3 or g3–g4. The first seems suicidal, and so we wait to see whether Bodhana can engineer the second break.

24.Bf3 a5 25.Rfe1 Bf6 26.a3 Rd7 27.Bg2 Qc6 28.Re2 Rhd8 Holding tight with 28...Rdd8 was also a decent option.

29.g4 hxg4 30.hxg4 b4 Black will not stand passively by.

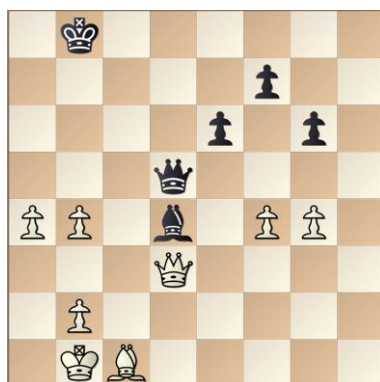
31.cxb4 Bxd4? 31...axb4 was correct, and Black has enough counterplay: 32.Bxb4 (32.Bxd5 Rxd5 33.Bxb4 (33.axb4 Bxd4 34.Rc1 Rc8) 33...Rxd4 34.Rxd4 Rxd4 35.Bc3 Rxf4 36.Bxf6 Rxf6 37.Rf2 Rxf2 38.Qxf2+ Ka6) 32...Nxb4 33.axb4 Qb5 34.Re3 Rxd4.

32.Re4! Bodhana pounces on the loose black position.

32...Bg7 33.Rxc4 Qb5 34.Rc5 34.Bxd5! was pretty good: 34...Rxd5 (34...exd5 35.Rc5 Qb6 36.Qa4) 35.Be3+ Kb8 (35...Kb7 36.Rc1) 36.Rc1 Qb7 37.Rc7.

34...Qb6 35.Rxa5+ 35.Qa4!.

35...Kb8 36.Bxd5 Rxd5 37.Rxd5 Rxd5 38.Bc1 Rxd1 39.Qxd1 Bd4 40.Qb3 Qc6 41.Qd3 Qd5 42.a4



Eventually the queenside pawns will decide the game. Black has no counterplay.

42...e5 43.fxe5 Qxe5 44.Qf3 Qe7 45.Bd2 Bg7 46.a5 Qe6 47.b5 g5 48.Qd3 Bf6 49.a6 Be7 50.Qd4 Qg6+ 51.Kc1 Qe6 52.b6 Qc6+ 53.Bc3 Qh1+ 54.Kc2 Qg2+ 55.Kb3 Qh1 56.Qe5+ Ka8 57.b7+ Qxb7+ Never say die. 58.axb7+ Kxb7 59.Qxe7+ Kc6 60.Kc4 f5 61.b4 f4 62.b5+ Kb6 63.Bd4+ Ka5 64.Qa7# 1-0

I'm sure that these two will have many hard-fought games in the future.

As usual, this month's magazine is packed with news and instructive articles, and all the games within are presented in PGN format here --- <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ChessMoves-Feb-2024.pgn> --- but note that you will need to use Chessbase or a PGN viewer to access the games.

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EVENTS

British Chess Championships 2024

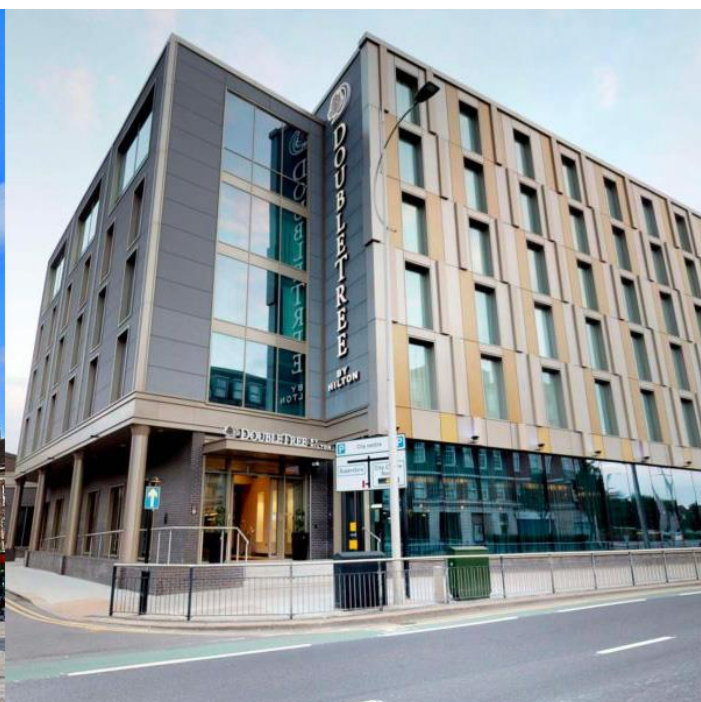
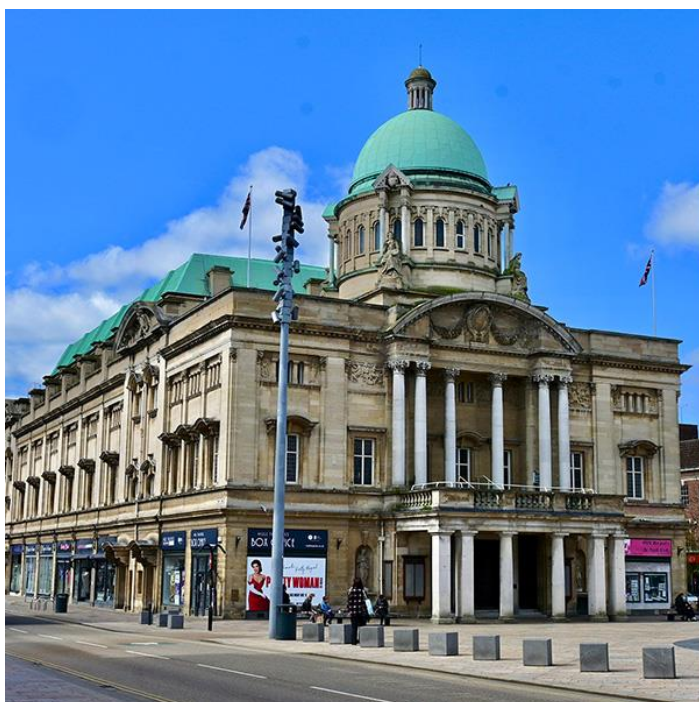


We are pleased to announce that this year's British Chess Championships will be held in Hull, with events running from Thursday 25th July to Sunday 4th August. Chess events will be taking place at two Hull city centre locations – The City Hall and the DoubleTree by Hilton. This will be the 110th British Chess Championship in a series which has run almost unbroken since 1904.

The British Championship, British Junior Championships and British Senior Championships are restricted to citizens of the UK, British Overseas Territories, or the Republic of Ireland, or players who have been resident for the last 12 months in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands, or the Isle of Man.

In addition, players wanting to take part in the main British championship will need to qualify based on their title, rating or other qualification criteria as set out in:

- a) the [British Championships eligibility and qualification regulations](#);
and
- b) the supporting [British Grand Prix rules](#)



Main Playing Schedule

This year's Championships will be played over 11 days from 25th July to 4th August. The summary schedule is as shown below:

	Location *	Thurs			Fri			Sat		Sun		Mon		Tue			Wed			Thurs			Fri			Sat			Sun	
		25/07/24			26/07/24			27/07/24		28/07/24		29/07/24		30/07/24			31/07/24			01/08/24			02/08/24			03/08/24			04/08/24	
		A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	A	P	A	P	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P	E	A	P
Championship	Hull City Hall								1		2	3		4			5			6			7			8			9	PO
Major Open								1		2	3		4				5			6			7			8			9	
Over 50											1	2		3			4			5			6			7				
Over 65										1	2		3				4			5			6			7				
Under 16									1		2	3		4			5			6			7							
Under 14									1		2	3		4			5			6			7							
Under 12									1		2	3		4			5			6			7							
Under 10									1		2	3		4			5			6			7							
Under 8									1		2	3		4			5			6			7							
Under 16 Rapidplay Champ					1-6			7-9																						
Under 14 Rapidplay Champ					1-6			7-9																						
Under 12 Rapidplay Champ					1-6			7-9																						
Under 10 Rapidplay Champ					1-6			7-9																						
Under 8 Rapidplay Champ					1-6			7-9																						
Under 16 Blitz Champ				1-9																										
Under 14 Blitz Champ				1-9																										
Under 12 Blitz Champ				1-9																										
Under 10 Blitz Champ				1-9																										
Under 8 Blitz Champ				1-9																										
AM Open	Hull Doubletree by Hilton									1		2		3			4			5			6							
Under 2050											1		2		3		4			5			6							
Under 1900											1		2		3		4			5			6							
Under 1750											1		2		3		4			5			6							
Under 1600											1		2		3		4			5			6							
Under 1450											1		2		3		4			5			6							
Weekend Atkins Open					1	2	3	4	5																					
Weekender Penrose U2000					1	2	3	4	5																					
Weekend Soanes U1750					1	2	3	4	5																					
Weekend Yates U1500					1	2	3	4	5																					
Rapidplay																										1-9				
Blitz															1-9						1-9									

Key

Key	Session
	40/90 + G/30 + 30'
	G/90 + 30'
	G/15 + 10
	G/3 + 2'

(A = am; P = PM; E = evening. Numbers denote round numbers. PO = playoff if required)

* Please note that locations for some of the quickplay events are provisional at this stage and may move between venues depending on entry numbers.

Social Programme

As in previous years, there will be a full programme of social and outdoor events, including lectures, simuls, drop-in chess, and local tours/walks around the fascinating city of Hull.

History of the British Chess Championships



British and British Women's Champions from 1905 onwards

The British Chess Championships have run in an almost unbroken series since the first British in 1904, which was played in Hastings and won by William Ewart Napier as British Chess Champion and Kate Finn as British Women's Champion. Hull's association with top level British events predates the first British Championship by almost 30 years, with Hull player Amos Burn tying for first place with Joseph Henry Blackburn in the recently formed British Chess Association's second and third BCA Congresses in 1886 and 1887. H E Atkins won the second event in 1905, and still holds the record for the most

Championship title wins – nine wins from eleven appearances between 1905 and 1925. WGM and IM Jovanka Houska holds the record for the most British Women's title wins, with a total of nine wins between 2008 and 2019. You can find out more about the history of the British Chess Championships in the Wikipedia article here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Chess_Championship, and please refer to the excellent Britbase for a comprehensive collection of BCC games going back to 1904 here: <https://www.saund.co.uk/britbase/>

2nd Cambridge International Open



The 2nd Cambridge International Open took place from 19th to 24th February 2024 at the historic University Arms Hotel next to Parker's Piece in Cambridge. The ECF would again like to thank the hotel for their continued support in hosting this prestigious event which attracted an array of GMs and IM's from England and internationally. The event was expertly managed by a top level arbiting team led by IAs Shohreh Bayat with IM Matthew Carr and FA Satish Gaekwad.

The event was played as a nine-round accelerated Swiss tournament, with the opportunity for participants to achieve international title norms. The field included a total of eight GMs and twelve Ims, with the top four seeds including last year's winner GM Michael Adams, together with Italian GM Francesco Sonis, Dutch GM Sergey Tiviakov and GM Daniel Fernandez. Also competing were IM Shreyas Royal who was targeting his final GM norm, and WCM Bodhana Sivanandan.

You can find further details of the event on the tournament web site at the link here, including a photo gallery with pictures from the playing area and venue: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/2nd-cambridge-international-open/>

Pictures from this year's Cambridge International by Shohreh Bayat and Satish Gaekwad.



A view across the playing area in the ballroom at the University Arms, with Parker's Piece in the background



GMs Peter Wells and Eldar Gasanov, who clashed in round 2



Junior prodigies WCM Bodhana Sivanandan and Supratit Banerjee



A view across the top boards for round 7 with GM Sergey Tiviakov playing Midlands IM Jonah Willow on board 1

The majority of games, including those on the top boards, were broadcast from the live boards at the venue with a commentary stream covering the event with WIM Natasha Regan and guests. You can catch up on the full set of commentaries on Natasha's Twitch channel at the link here: https://www.twitch.tv/wim_natasharegan

The commentary videos will also be copied to the ECF's YouTube Channel together with some video footage from the event.

Full details of the tournament including pairings and results can be found at the link here: <https://chess-results.com/tnr811519.aspx>

Final standings are shown in the table below.

Place	Seed	Title	Name	FED	FIDE rating	Pts
1	1	GM	Michael Adams	ENG	2673	7
2	3	GM	Sergey Tiviakov	ENG	2534	7
3	14	IM	Martin Haubro	DEN	2421	7
4	4	GM	Daniel Fernandez	ENG	2526	6.5
5	10	IM	Matthew Wadsworth	ENG	2444	6.5
6	13	IM	Peter Roberson	ITA	2426	6.5



Chief Arbiter IA Shohreh Bayat with (left to right) IM Martin Haubro, GM Sergey Tiviakov and GM Michael Adams with the Cambridge Trophy

GM Michael Adams won on tiebreak from Sergey Tiviakov and Martin Haubro with the top three players finishing on 7 points. GM Daniel Fernandez and IMs Matthew Wadsworth and Peter Roberson finished fourth equal on 6½ points in a closely fought tournament.

Congratulations go to Michael Adams on retaining his Cambridge International title and winning the 2024 Cambridge Cup.



Shohreh Bayat with Truan Asgarova, CM Bodhana Sivanandan and Ruqayyah Rida

Ruqayyah Rida of Essex Juniors finished as top female player on 5½, followed by WCM Bodhana Sivanandan on 4½ and Turan Asgarova who also finished on 4½.

Prize giving photographs are courtesy of Reza Islam. We will be featuring a detailed report on the event in next month's edition of ChessMoves.

For a YouTube video about the event follow this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6icDJuNluHE>

4NCL 31st Congress, Harrogate 2024 by Keith Arkell

It was a pleasure to return once again to the splendid and spacious playing halls of the Old Swan Hotel in Harrogate. After a few rounds, while I was pacing the floor waiting for my opponent to move, I took in the top dozen or so boards, and it was striking to observe that for every IM/GM/experienced player there was a tiny child! These kids are becoming a formidable force at ever younger ages, and it was not even surprising that when the dust had settled, a nine-year-old was one of the joint tournament winners. I say it was no surprise, because I had already witnessed Supratit Banerjee from Scotland draw with GM-strength player Ameet Ghasi in round 1 of Hastings a few weeks earlier.

Sharing first place with Supratit were GM Peter Wells, the strong and solid Paul Townsend, who also tied for first place last year, and 15-year-old Lorenzo Fava. Dropping one draw too many to be in this pack were the top two seeds, IM Gediminas Sarakas and myself.

Apart from my failure to arrive in time for round 1 at Bristol last April, I've been winning these British weekenders non-stop since Hull back in 2021, and here I had no regrets, because a draw with Black against Peter Wells is fine and both Lorenzo Fava and Piotr Denderski played at a very high level - in fact with 98% and 97% accuracy respectively.

Back to the star of the show, and here is the game which brought Supratit Banerjee, four years younger than Scotland's perhaps better-known prodigy, Frederick Waldhausen Gordon, into a share of first place:

Michael Bulford - Supratit Banerjee
 4NCL Harrogate (5), 01.2024

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Be7 4.Nf3 Nf6 5.Bg5 0-0 6.e3 c6
 7.Rc1 Nbd7 8.a3 b6 9.cxd5 exd5 10.Bd3 Re8 11.0-0



11...Nf8?! It was better either to complete his development with 11...Bb7 or ease his position with 11...Ne4. Instead, Black invites pressure against c6.

12.Qa4 b5 13.Qc2 N6d7 14.Bxe7 Qxe7



15.Na2?! Positionally motivated, but striking immediately with 15 e4! would have caught Black napping.

15...Bb7 16.Nb4 Rac8 17.Bf5 g6 18.Bxd7 Nxd7 19.Nd3



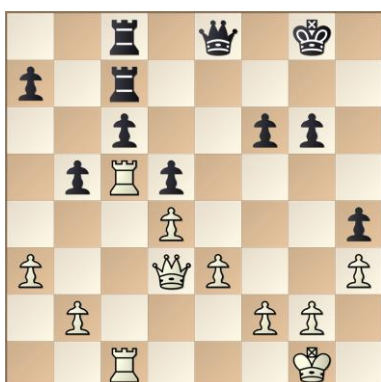
White has obtained a grip on the dark squares, and the bishop on b7 looks particularly lame.

**19...Rc7 20.Nc5 Bc8 21.Nxd7 Bxd7 22.Qd2 Rc8 23.Rc5 f6
 24.Rfc1 Qe4 25.Ne1 h5**



26.Qc2 Also possible was the immediate 26 Nd3 to b4, increasing the pressure.

26...Qe8 27.Nd3 Bf5 28.Qd2 Bxd3 29.Qxd3 h4 30.h3



30...f5 I like that Black is playing optimistically on the kingside, as if to say that he has his weaknesses on the other flank under control.

31.Qd1 Re7 32.Qb3 Rec7 33.R1c3 g5 34.Qd1 a6 35.Qf3 Qg6



36.g4 In principle White is right to open lines while his opponent is distracted defending c6, but there was no rush, and I might have brought my king over to the queenside first.

36...fxg4 37.Qxg4 Rf8



38.Rxd5?? A losing blunder. White should potter around with something like 38 f3, and decide later whether to break with e4 or f4. Supratit is certainly well in the game by now, though. In some ways this game is typical of a talented youngster getting the better of a more experienced opponent. Michael Bulford is a strong player with good positional understanding, but Supratit remained tactically sharp and vigilant, and was ready to pounce when the opportunity arose. I remember 'winning ugly' many times in the early days of my chess adventures!

38...Qb1+ 39.Kg2



39...Rxf2+! Very nice!

40.Kxf2 Rf7+



0-1

Stockport Rapidplay 28th January

Wow, what a phenomenal day! Not since the 1990s chess boom have we had so many players enter the Rapidplay, and we needed to close entries in the week leading up to the event. The Minor section in particular had huge interest, and the number of juniors participating doubled from last year. While it did at times get crowded in the bar area and foyer, there was plenty of space in the playing halls.

The juniors made their mark on the day as Tim Elgar came third in the Open; juniors Maksym Kryshafor and Joel Bartlett took the top two spots in the Major, and Shlok Maheshwari and Zak Buthfer were joint winners of the Minor.

17 players competed in the Open Section, which was won by Owen Crawford with a stunning $5\frac{1}{2}/6$ despite being the lowest-seeded player in the section. In second place was Tim Wickens on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$, and Tim Elgar and Adam Ashton tied for third place, with Tim Elgar winning the under-1960 rating prize.

Out of 32 players competing in the Major Section, young Maksym Kryshafor triumphed with $5\frac{1}{2}/6$. Close behind on $5/6$ was another junior, Joel Bartlett of Liverpool, and third place went to Stephen Hill on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$. Rating prizes for under 1800 were won by Paul Doherty and Kevin Winter on $4/6$, and the under-1750 was won by Alannah Ashton (another junior, if you're counting!) and Nathan Harvey-Jones with $3\frac{1}{2}/6$. The Stockport League Trophy was won by Joel McBeath from Ashton Chess Club with $4/6$.

40 players played in the Intermediate section. The runaway winner was Eric Bennett with a perfect $6/6$. In second place was Paul Woodfinden on $5/6$, and Piotr Stachowiak came third on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$.

The two rating prizes were won by juniors: Denzel Supatan (who also won the Stockport League Trophy) in the under 1600, and Hunain Malik in the under 1525, both with $4/6$. The junior prize was won by Ben Newton on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$.

A huge entry into the Minor section had 80 players battling it out. First place was shared by juniors Shlok Maheshwari and Zak Buthfer on $5\frac{1}{2}/6$, with a five-way tie for third place between Nigel Gardner, Sam Burchett, Suleiman Niswar, Oscar Lingard, and Ben Smith.

Sam Burchett also won the prize for best junior player, with Suleiman Nishwar taking the best under 15-year old prize. Highest scoring under 12 was Mukil Balamurugan

on $4/6$, and the under 10 prize was shared by Saswin Thiruvarudchelvan and William Bartlett, both on $3/6$. A special £100 under 1300 prize was given in the Minor and this was split five ways between Jake Hutchinson, Darren Stanway, Claire Kerton, Matthew Poon, and Jon Rowlinson on $4/6$. The latter four also split the (adult only) under 1275 grading prize, with the adult only under-1375 prize split between Neil Treadwell and John Moorhouse on $4\frac{1}{2}/6$. Third-placed Oscar Lingard and Ben Smith also shared the best unrated player prize.

The Stockport league trophy in the Minor was won by Dylan Prothero of Ashton Chess Club.

The veterans prize (highest scoring veteran in all sections) was shared by Tudor Rickards and Richard Walsh with $4/6$ each in the Open.

Results

The cross-tables can be seen at the following links:

[Open](#) | [Major](#)

British Rapidplay 2024



There is still time to enter the 2024 edition of the British Rapidplay Championship on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd March 2024 at the Holiday Inn Peterborough – West, Thorpe Wood, Peterborough, PE3 6SG.



Further information can be found here:

<https://www.4ncl.co.uk/rp/2024/information.htm>

... and here's the entry form:

<https://form.jotform.com/233470870173355>

English Championships 2024



English Seniors Championship



2023 winners (from left to right): Over 65 IM Chris Baker, Joint Over 50 GM Keith Arkell and GM Mark Hebden.

Just a reminder that the **English Seniors Championships** will take place between **Friday 24th May and Tuesday 28th May 2024** at the **Holiday Inn in Kenilworth, Warwickshire**.

Eligibility

Over 50: players must be aged 50 or over on 31st December 2024.

Over 65: players must be aged 65 or over on 31st December 2024.

Players must be born in England or have lived in England for at least the preceding 12 months. In addition, if they have a FIDE registration, it must be ENG.

Rating

Both sections will be FIDE-rated and ECF-rated.

Schedule

The playing schedule will be as follows over the long bank holiday weekend:

Round 1: Friday 24 th May	16.00
Round 2:- Saturday 25 th May	10.00
Round 3: Saturday 25 th May	16.00
Round 4: Sunday 26 th May	16.00
Round 5: Monday 27 th May	10.00
Round 6: Monday 27 th May	16.00

Round 7: Tuesday 28 th May	11.00
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Website and entry form

For more information and entry form, please go to: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships-2024/>.

English and English Women's Championships



Last year's champions – GM Mickey Adams and WGM Kata Toma.

Also a reminder that the **English Championships and English Women's Championships** will take place between **Thursday 20th June and Sunday 23rd June 2024** at the **Holiday Inn in Kenilworth, Warwickshire**.

Eligibility

Players must be born in England or have lived in England for at least the preceding 12 months. In addition, if they have a FIDE registration, it must be ENG.

Capacity

We will be implementing a venue-based limit on player numbers across the two championships, together with a rating floor.

Qualification for the English Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players subject to capacity limits where:

They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st April 2024; or

They have a rating over 1900 ECF or FIDE in the respective April rating lists.

There will be up to eight reserved places for general wildcard entries from players who have not otherwise qualified, regardless of their rating.

Qualification for the English Women's Championships

Direct entries will be accepted from eligible players where:

They have a FIDE title of GM, WGM, IM or WIM as at 1st April 2024; or

They have a rating over 1700 ECF or FIDE in the respective April rating lists.

The minimum rating of 1700 may be lowered to 1600 ECF or FIDE if there is still space available based on entries received up to 7th June.

There will be up to four reserved places for general wildcard entries from players who have not otherwise qualified, regardless of their rating.

Ratings

The higher of FIDE rating and ECF rating will be used in determining potential qualification. In the event that a player has neither an ECF nor a FIDE rating, the organisers will assign an estimate based on available data on a case-by-case basis.

Schedule

The playing schedule will be as follows:

Round 1: Thursday 20 th June	10.00
Round 2: Thursday 20 th June	16.00
Round 3: Friday 21 st June	10.00
Round 4: Friday 21 st June	16.00
Round 5: Saturday 22 nd June	10.00
Round 6: Saturday 22 nd June	16.00
Round 7: Sunday 23 rd June	10.00
Playoffs (if required): Sunday 23 rd June	15.00

Web site and entry form

For more information and entry form, please go to:
<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2024/>

Here are some pictures from last year's English Seniors event ...



The playing hall



Natasha Regan, Chris Baker and Keith Arkell



Susan Selley with Natasha

2024 British Universities Chess Championship

by Alex Holowczak

The 2024 BUCA British Universities Chess Championship took place on 24th-25th February at the Holiday Inn Leicester. It was the first over the board version of this Championship since 2020 after three years of online and hybrid tournaments. 40 teams from 18 universities participated.

The tournament was divided into four sections of 10 teams, each played as a Round Robin.

Championship

The section in which the Championship was contested had three rating favourites on paper: Cambridge, Oxford and Warwick. Round 1 saw Cambridge and Oxford paired against each other, with Oxford winning 3-1. The three teams then won their remaining matches on Saturday. Round 6 saw an unexpected loss for Oxford, 2½-1½ to Imperial, which brought them back into a tie with Cambridge. Suddenly Warwick were two match points ahead, with matches against Oxford and Cambridge to come in rounds 7 and 8. It wasn't to be for Warwick, though, who lost 3½-½ to Oxford and 3-1 to Cambridge. Going into the final round, Oxford and Cambridge were tied on match points, with Oxford ahead on tie-break by 24 game points to 23½. The second tie-break was the result of their head-to-head match, which meant Oxford could afford to tie with Cambridge on game points and win the tournament. In round 9 Cambridge piled on the pressure with a 4-0 win against Bath, leaving Oxford, winning 2½-5½ against Bristol at the time, needing a win in the last game to win the Championship. The win is Oxford's 15th in the history of the Championship, and their first since the last over the board tournament in 2010.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP	GP
1	Oxford 1		3-1	3½-½	1½-2½	3½-½	2½-1½	2½-1½	4-0	4-0	3-1	16	27½
2	Cambridge 1	1-3		3-1	3-1	4-0	4-0	2½-1½	3-1	3-1	4-0	16	27½
3	Warwick 1	½-3½	1-3		3½-½	2½-1½	4-0	3½-½	4-0	3½-½	4-0	14	26½
4	Imperial 1	2½-1½	1-3	½-3½		2½-1½	2-2	3½-½	3½-½	3½-½	3½-½	13	22½
5	Bristol 1	½-3½	0-4	1½-2½	1½-2½		2-2	2½-1½	3-1	2½-1½	3-1	9	16½
6	Nottingham 1	1½-2½	0-4	0-4	2-2	2-2		2-2	2-2	3-1	3½-½	8	16
7	Birmingham 1	1½-2½	1½-2½	½-3½	½-3½	1½-2½	2-2		1-3	3-1	3-1	5	14½
8	Loughborough 1	0-4	1-3	0-4	½-3½	1-3	2-2	3-1		1½-2½	1½-2½	3	10½
9	UCL	0-4	1-3	½-3½	½-3½	1½-2½	1-3	1-3	2½-1½		2-2	3	10
10	Bath	1-3	0-4	0-4	½-3½	1-3	½-3½	1-3	2½-1½	2-2		3	8½

Plate

With the Championship restricted to University first teams only, the main favourites in the Plate were the second teams of Cambridge, Oxford and Warwick. Going into the final round, Cambridge 2 and 3 were tied on match points, game points, and drew their match 2-2, and after the arbiter team hurriedly checked the rules to see what the third tie-break was, they could see Cambridge 2 were ahead by virtue of the board count in the head-to-head match between Cambridge 2 and Cambridge 3. Warwick 2 and 3 were only one match point behind, so four teams had a realistic chance of winning. In the final round Cambridge 2 and Warwick 2 both won their matches; leaving Cambridge 3 to need to beat Warwick 3 by a better score than 3-1 to finish ahead of their own second team. They led 1½-½, but lost the last two games, which resulted in them losing the match but also finishing out of the medal places as a team.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP	GP
1	Cambridge 2		3-1	2-2	2-2	2-2	3-1	3-1	2-2	3-1	3½-½	14	23½
2	Warwick 2	1-3		3-1	2-2	2½-1½	2-2	3½-½	3½-½	2-2	4-0	13	23½
3	Warwick 3	2-2	1-3		2½-1½	3½-½	2½-1½	1-3	3-1	3-1	3-1	13	21½
4	Cambridge 3	2-2	2-2	1½-2½		2-2	3-1	3-1	2-2	2½-1½	4-0	12	22

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP	GP
5	Oxford 3	2-2	1½-2½	½-3½	2-2		3½-½	½-3½	2½-1½	2½-1½	3-1	10	18
6	Exeter	1-3	2-2	1½-2½	1-3	½-3½		3-1	2-2	3½-½	3-1	8	17½
7	Oxford 2	1-3	½-3½	3-1	1-3	3½-½	1-3		2-2	2-2	3-1	8	17
8	Cardiff 1	2-2	½-3½	1-3	2-2	1½-2½	2-2	2-2		2-2	2-2	6	15
9	Southampton 1	1-3	2-2	1-3	1½-2½	1½-2½	½-3½	2-2	2-2		4-0	5	15½
10	Bristol 2	½-3½	0-4	1-3	0-4	1-3	1-3	1-3	2-2	0-4		1	6½

Bowl

The third-tier competition was a little less dramatic than the Championship and Plate, with LSE cruising to victory in all but one of their matches.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP	GP
1	LSE		4-0	3-1	3-1	2½-1½	3-1	3-1	2-2	3-1	4-0	17	27½
2	Cambridge 4	0-4		2-2	3-1	2½-1½	3½-½	3½-½	3-1	4-0	4-0	15	25½
3	Imperial 2	1-3	2-2		4-0	2-2	2-2	2½-1½	2½-1½	3-1	4-0	13	23
4	Oxford 4	1-3	1-3	0-4		3½-½	4-0	3½-½	4-0	4-0	3½-½	12	24½
5	Nottingham 2	1½-2½	1½-2½	2-2	½-3½		3½-½	3-1	3-1	2½-1½	4-0	11	21½
6	Warwick 4	1-3	½-3½	2-2	0-4	½-3½		2½-1½	3-1	1½-2½	2-2	6	13
7	Middlesex	1-3	½-3½	1½-2½	½-3½	1-3	1½-2½		3-1	2-2	3-1	5	14
8	Reading	2-2	1-3	1½-2½	0-4	1-3	1-3	1-3		2½-1½	2½-1½	5	12½
9	Leicester 1	1-3	0-4	1-3	0-4	1½-2½	2½-1½	2-2	1½-2½		3-1	5	12½
10	Kent 1	0-4	0-4	0-4	½-3½	0-4	2-2	1-3	1½-2½	1-3		1	6

Shield

Bristol 3 won all but one of their matches, and won the Shield with a round to spare.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	MP	GP
1	Bristol 3		2½-1½	2-2	3½-½	3-1	3-1	3½-½	2½-1½	3½-½	3-1	17	26½
2	Southampton 2	1½-2½		3½-½	½-3½	3-1	3-1	3-1	3-1	4-0	2½-1½	14	24
3	Birmingham 2	2-2	½-3½		1-3	3½-½	3-1	2½-1½	4-0	3-1	4-0	13	23½
4	Nottingham 3	½-3½	3½-½	3-1		2-2	2½-1½	3½-½	1-3	2-2	4-0	12	22
5	Cardiff 2	1-3	1-3	½-3½	2-2		2-2	3-1	3-1	3-1	3-1	10	18½
6	Loughborough 2	1-3	1-3	1-3	1½-2½	2-2		3-1	2-2	3½-½	2-2	7	17
7	Warwick 5	½-3½	1-3	1½-2½	½-3½	1-3	1-3		3-1	3½-½	3-1	6	15
8	Leicester 2	1½-2½	1-3	0-4	3-1	1-3	2-2	1-3		3-1	2-2	6	14½
9	Kent 2	½-3½	0-4	1-3	2-2	1-3	½-3½	½-3½	1-3		4-0	3	10½
10	Leicester 3	1-3	1½-2½	0-4	0-4	1-3	2-2	1-3	2-2	0-4		2	8½

BUCA relied heavily on a number of organisations to make the tournament happen over the board in 2024 without whom the tournament could not have happened:

- The John Robinson Youth Chess Trust, whose generous funding enabled the tournament to be financially viable;
- Redmeet, for sourcing the venue;
- 4NCL, who allowed us to use their software to administer the tournament;
- The English Chess Federation and Shropshire Chess Association, for letting us use their digital chess boards so that the games in the Championship and Plate could be broadcast on Lichess.

FEATURES

Exchange Sacrifices and the Psychology which Surrounds Them by Peter Wells



Since tournament reports have featured heavily in my recent *Chess Moves* columns with the promise of more to come, I decided that I would go for something completely different this month and revisit a topic that has been one of my favourites

over some decades: the exchange sacrifice. Clearly it is not an unmitigated pleasure to recall that it is now nearly a quarter of a century since I began my lengthy series of strategy columns for *ChessBase Magazine*. Still, I observe with more satisfaction that (back at the turn of the millennium) I lost no time in getting stuck into some fundamental topics. I was enthusiastic to push the idea that the appropriate considerations for deciding whether to trade pieces - concentrating upon the respective *functions* of the pieces directly involved in the exchange and crucially the impact of their removal upon the pieces which remain on both sides - is also a pretty good basis for assessing the worth of those sacrifices in which a piece is removed from the armies of both sides.

Of these, it is fair to say that the exchange sacrifice (giving up a rook for a minor piece) is probably the most significant. If we focus upon the relative values of pieces based upon the functions they are performing in a particular case, we will get less hung up about their typical values and this should act as a counter-weight to excessive materialism - or so the thinking went. This was shortly after the publication of John Watson's seminal *Secrets of Modern Chess Strategy* which claimed - in line with the author's claim that modern chess increasingly emphasised the concrete over the general - that the prevalence of exchange sacrifices is probably the most significant development in chess strategy since Nimzowitsch and a major contribution to its increasingly dynamic turn. I didn't need much encouragement to dive into this subject, but I still well remember that John Watson's infectious enthusiasm did give tremendous impetus to this latent fascination.

I hope that the appeal this subject holds for me is readily understandable. As beginners we find a basic outline of the relative value of the pieces to be an absolutely indispensable tool, but as we improve we benefit from

observing that it frequently obscures as much as it reveals. We discover not just that positional factors can compensate for a material deficit, but also (perhaps without necessarily making the distinction explicit) that a piece can simply be stronger than the opponent's piece of nominally higher value, either because of the specific role it is playing or because it fits so perfectly with the structural features of the position. In other words, the compensation for your excellent exchange sacrifice might be primarily extrinsic to the actual transaction, or it may just be that your beautiful knight is simply better than your opponent's lousy rook! Compensation is to me a fascinating subject more generally. We learn how time, the initiative, a safer king, more secure pieces or even a tighter pawn structure are all factors which can offer good value in exchange for a material deficit. Yet we also appreciate that there are many types of 'temporary' positional advantage - a lead in development being a classic example - which will often need to be transformed into something more enduring, such as extra material. The interplay between material and position is ongoing and dynamic and, to me, vitally important to the enduring fascination of the game.

Some years later - in 2006 - I homed in more specifically on the subject of exchange sacrifices in a pair of strategy columns which touched on issues which - in spite of all the manifest changes in the way players are approaching chess some 18 years later - seem to remain surprisingly pertinent today. I was struck by the apparent explosion in the number of games featuring exchange sacrifices and began to wonder whether exchange sacrifices had ceased to be something exceptional and were becoming somehow almost routine. In support of this thought I had Jonathan Rowson's seemingly shocking claim in his 2005 work *Chess For Zebras* that, 'In my experience most GMs now think of exchange sacrifices as mainstream - no more exciting than exchanging bishop for knight, but this hasn't yet trickled down into other levels of the game'.

It takes a moment to process the strength of this claim and I suspect that part of the intention was to be deliciously provocative. Of course, it would be absurd to claim that giving the exchange no longer requires compensation: but then again, most top players also look for some form of compensation when giving up the bishop pair, even if - as an occasional Trompowsky player - I sometimes have to deploy quite a broad-minded optimism about where I am going to be able to find this. This all brought to my mind the words of Max Euwe when responding to the explosion of exchange sacrifices from a much earlier era (the Soviet Union of the 1950s) in his celebrated middlegame volumes. In the section *Relative Worth of the Pieces* he opens the chapter on 'The Exchange' with the emphatic words 'The advantage of the exchange is decisive. There

can be no two opinions about this, and it is necessary to begin this chapter by stating it definitively.’ Whilst this is essentially correct, I rather had the sense that this was a great authority watching the ground shift beneath his feet, perhaps trying to put his own doubts to rest as much as those of his readers.

The truth, of course, is that, without compensation, the advantage of the exchange does indeed remain decisive. In this regard it is worth noting that examples in which one player *wins* the exchange and the material advantage is duly exploited will still very heavily outnumber exchange sacrifices. My database searches in preparation for this article unequivocally confirmed this. What has changed, I believe, is our increasing sensitivity to different types of compensation and in this regard the engine continues apace the process of broadening our minds.

If Jonathan was exaggerating then, it is perhaps more surprising that reality has in my view not yet caught up with his claim even now. My impression is that even very strong players still fall victim to strong exchange sacrifices not infrequently by underestimating such powerful ‘exchanges’ of pieces which they would never overlook if the nominal value of the pieces were the same.

The highest profile example of recent times was undoubtedly from the last World Championship match.

Ding, Liren – Nepomniachtchi, Ian
World Championship Game 4, Astana 2023



From the diagram, Ian Nepomniachtchi – already facing considerable pressure for a pawn, surprised the world by playing the serious error **28...Nd4?** and suffering an emphatic first defeat after the powerful exchange sacrifice **29.Rxd4! cxd4 30.Nb3 g5 31.Nxd4 Qg6 32.g4!** securing the strong-point on f5, whether Black captures or not **32...fxg3 33.fxg3 h5 34.Nf5 Rh7 35.Qe4 Kh8 36.e7 Qf7 37.d6! cxd6 38.Nxd6 Qg8 39.Nxe8 Qxe8 40.Qe6 Kg7 41.Rf1 Rh6 42.Rd1 f5 43.Qe5+ Kf7 44.Qxf5+ Rf6 45.Qh7+ Ke6 46.Qg7 Rg6 47.Qf8 1-0**

Of course, one possible interpretation of this would be to suggest that the chess world’s borderline horrified reaction to 28...Nd4? illustrates just how accustomed we as observers have become to exchange sacrifices. Indeed, this one is not hard to explain in terms of ‘function’. Black’s key task is to blockade the two scary centre pawns and he allowed the ‘exchange’ of his best blocking unit. Nonetheless, an audience armed with engines routinely generates outrage. Whilst I was certainly somewhat taken aback by Nepo’s mistake, I would rather pose the question: would Nepo have even considered the move 28...Nd4 if it had been a minor piece due to remove it? I think we can all guess the answer.

With apologies to one of my favourite players (and favourite people) I would suggest that what happened to Luke McShane in the fourth round of the London Chess Classic is another (if milder) version of the same phenomenon.

Bartel, Mateusz - McShane, Luke
13th London Chess Classic 2023 Round 4



I think Black could be very satisfied with the outcome of the opening and the simple **21...fxg3 22.fxg3 Ne5!?** with a possible ...c5 to come according to circumstance would probably have left Luke quite comfortable. However, he instead permitted the weakening of his structure in order to try and tie up White’s pieces with

21...Ne5 22.gxf4 gxf4 23.Rd1 c5 24.Ne2 Bg4?

It wasn’t entirely too late to switch plans and minimise the damage by trying to contest the centre with **24...f5!?**. However, I suspect that the attempt to restrict Bartel’s pieces which the move chosen represents was implicit in Luke’s decision at move 21. Unfortunately, this pin proves to be very far from absolute, especially against a man who had produced an excellent course on exchange sacrifices for the (now sadly defunct) Chess 24 website. Again, however subconsciously, I am sure that the promise of material gain led Black to underestimate both the damage

to his pawn structure and the power that the white knight will exhibit in just a couple of moves' time. I am even more certain that Luke will immediately have understood how serious are the implications of White's investment.

25.Nxf4! Bxd1 26.Rxd1 Kb8 27.Nd5 Rf8 28.f4 Nc6 29.f5



A shocking transformation. The white knight is somewhat spoilt for choice for great outposts, whilst its black counterpart will, by contrast, find no stable squares. The rest was brief and rather painful.

29...Qg7 30.Nxb6 Qg5 31.Be6 Qxh5 32.Nd7+ Rxd7 33.Bxd7 Ne5 34.Be6 Qg5 35.Kc2 h5 36.d4 Nf3 37.Qf2 Qf4 38.dxc5 h4 39.Rd3 1-0

If a player with Luke's excellent judgement can fall prey to this danger, it is hardly surprising that additional tactical factors can mess with a player's expectations still further. I was rather struck by this moment from the World Rapid Championship in December.

Madaminov, Mukhiddin - Ponkratov, Pavel

World Rapid Championship Round 13 – Samarkand 2023



There is no doubt whatsoever that a player of Pavel Ponkratov's calibre - never mind one with considerable experience in the French Defence - understands completely the necessity of holding together Black's light-

square blockade here. Positionally, the move 23...Nce7 is strongly indicated, when the defence looks solid enough. Still, Ponkratov is neither the first, nor will he be the last, player to make the costly assumption that an innocent 'gain of tempo' sought by attacking a powerful piece will necessarily force it to move.

23...Rhg8?? 24.Rxf5!

A fine Zwischenzug, but not a particularly difficult one, neither in terms of the minor calculation required nor in terms of assessing the compensation for the exchange. Black's position simply falls apart after this. It is even clearer in this case that Black will have realised the disastrous nature of his blunder immediately. My suspicion, though, is that if the move 24 Rxf5 had not itself involved a material sacrifice, it would likely have proved more visible - somewhat paradoxically, given that Black will not have had the slightest doubt that White's compensation is more than ample.

24...exf5 25.Qh6 Ne7 26.Qd6 f4 27.Nxd5 Nxd5 28.Qxd5 Qb7 29.Qxb7+ Kxb7 30.Bxc4 and White has a crushing advantage, for all that there were to be some hiccups in its conversion.

Of course, I do not have room here to consider all the psychological factors which impact upon exchange sacrifices. I have concentrated so far on a latent, most likely subconscious, materialism which suggests to me that Jonathan Rowson's description of the commonplace nature of such sacrifices remains somewhat exaggerated. However, I fully acknowledge that I could also quote examples of players over-obsessing about the purity of their positional compensation – especially that involving archetypically elegant minor pieces. Together with a well-developed sense of the danger of greed, this can sometimes lead players to overcompensate and in fact underestimate the importance of a material deficit. The hazards are by no means all one way.

What of the second part of Jonathan's claim – namely that the prevalence of exchange sacrifices has yet to filter down to players at lower levels? This, I suspect, was largely correct and remains so. It is anecdotal evidence only, but I have showed some of the finest exchange sacrifices I know to my pupils, and they have fully appreciated their artistic quality and probably even been persuaded that they have represented the most efficient route to victory. However – and obviously somewhat frustratingly for a coach – all of these positives have on occasion managed to coexist with such comments as 'but I don't think I would play that in my own games'! Part of this is about the all too natural fears to which Mihail Marin alludes in his chapter on Petrosian in his superb book

'Learn from the Legends'. 'Once the artistic feeling has been satisfied, the practical player starts thinking about the result. Being an exchange down, perhaps one should be happy with a draw.' I suspect many of us have been there. We know that the compensation should be convincing, but being material down is nonetheless just a little bit scary.

There is an objective reality to attach to this argument as well. Rooks are pieces which tend to have their heyday in the later stages of the game. They are usually the last pieces to develop and the ones which gain the most in strength as the clutter on the board gets cleared. So alongside the nervousness which might accompany having even the best minor piece against a rook is the fact that the latter is likely to improve as the game proceeds. I think this tough reality is related to another psychological phenomenon. Again, I don't have hard evidence for this, but it accords with both my perception of my own failings and my observations of others'. I think that when sacrificing the exchange we tend to focus too much on the quality of the minor pieces and not enough on the rooks. This may be simply because there is so much more literature and thinking on minor pieces and their respective qualities than there is about rooks – we are, of course, very accustomed to comparing them *with each other*. It may also be that in justifying the loss of material we naturally focus on the pieces which need to be 'exceptional' and perhaps we even have a less well-developed sense of what to expect from a typical rook. Whatever the reason, perhaps the simplest way to improve our assessments of exchange sacrifices is to ask simple questions about the rook. Are there open files? If so, are these likely to lead to entry squares and counterplay, not just as the positions stands now, but after any foreseeable pawn breaks?

By way of illustration, I offer one of the most impressive exchange sacrifices I have seen in recent years, with light notes.

Duda, Jan - Baklan, Olexander

French Team Championship Top 12, Montpellier 2015

1.e4 d6 2.d4 Nf6 3.Nc3 e5 4.dxe5 dxe5 5.Qxd8+ Kxd8 6.Bc4 Ke8 7.Nf3 Bd6 8.Be3 a6 9.Bb3 Nc6 10.Nd2 Na5 11.f3 Nd7 12.Nc4 Nxc4 13.Bxc4 c6 14.Kf2 b5 15.Rhd1 Bc5



16.Bxf7+!

I was really stunned by this when I first saw it, and I expect it came as quite a shock to Baklan too. Maybe in the future a similar sacrifice may be described as 'something Black should have foreseen' – in line with some of our previous examples – but I don't think we are there yet. Nonetheless, Stockfish doesn't take too much convincing.

16... Kxf7 17.Rxd7+ Bxd7 18.Bxc5 Be6 19.Ke3 g5 20.Nd1!

This elegant redeployment of the knight is a good moment to take stock. So, White has a pawn for the exchange but what else? Well, another very significant factor is the opposite-coloured bishops, which means that Black's weakness on e5 will be easy to attack and relatively awkward to defend. Meanwhile, whilst there is an open d-file, the entry squares are easy to cover – with moves such as Nd3, which have the added virtue of combining attack and defence. More problematic is the fact that the f3-pawn offers Black a 'hook' with which to try to open the g-file. Here the entry squares will be tougher to cover. White needs to be sure that he will be far advanced with his own plans. It is important as always not just to admire White's elegant minor pieces, but to ensure that they are facilitating tangible progress.

20...g4 21.Nf2 gxf3 22.gxf3 Rhg8 23.Bb4

This baffled me a bit at first sight, but the bishop attacks the e5-pawn much more effectively from c3 because a defence with ...Kf6 and Rg5 can then be met with f4 – using the pin along the c3-h8 diagonal.

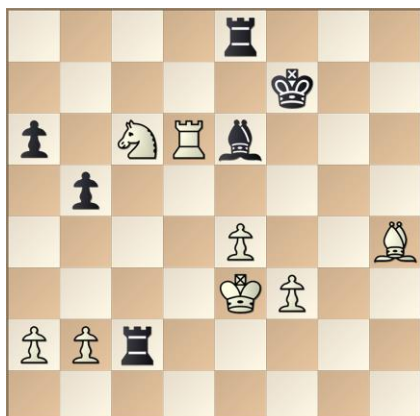
23...Rg2 24.Bc3 Rxh2 25.Nd3?!

The simple 25.Bxe5! Rg2 26.Rh1 Kg8 27.b3 Re8 28.Nd3 would have actually been a cleaner way of keeping Black's rooks contained.

25...Rg8 26.Nxe5+ Ke8 27.Nxc6 h5 28.Rd1 h4 29.Be5 Rhg2 30.Bf6

Yes, White threatens not only the h4-pawn, but also 31 Ne5, completing an efficient mating net.

30...Kf7 31.Bxh4 Rxc2 32.Rd6! Re8?



33.Rxe6!

Again, the interplay between positional factors and material. For all the activity and initiative which the white pieces have enjoyed, the final transformation of the advantage is about simple material gain. One final thought. The engine's sympathy with a large number of exchange sacrifices is not about some general sense that we have hitherto underrated minor pieces in comparison with rooks. This can fairly easily be confirmed by observing that the engine also sometimes suggests giving *two* minor pieces for a rook in positions in which human players have tended to be resistant to that temptation. The only way to make sense of this paradox is to understand the range of types of compensation (both structural and dynamic) to which the engine is drawing our attention. The game remains incredibly rich. Here, though, the two pieces have a very comfortable time converting.

33...Rxe6 24.Nd8+ Kg8 35.Nxe6 Rxb2 36.Nc7 Rxa2 37.e5 Rc2 38.Bd8 Rc3+ 39.Kd4 Rc1 40.e6 Rd1+ 41.Ke5 Rxd8 42.e7 Rc8 43.e8Q+ Rxe8+ 44.Nxe8 a5 45.Nf6+ Kf7 46.Nd5 b4 47.Nb6 b3 48.Na4 Ke7 49.f4 Kd7 50.Kd5 Ke7 51.f5 1-0

Endgames All Club Players Should Know

by Glenn Flear



Knight Endgames

I'm probably not surprising many of you when I state that knights are curious beasts in that they can be very powerful in a small area of the board, and yet helpless when it comes to what's

happening on the other wing. Still, in knight endgames many of the decisions that one needs to make are based quite heavily on these evident thoughts, as you'll see in what follows!

For club players, the most important position to become familiar with is the one below.

Converting an extra pawn



How confident would you be of winning this position? White has a clear extra pawn and no particular problems, which would seem to be enough to guarantee a win, but things are not that simple in practice!

I've played this position out against some junior players and many of them struggle, as they are not too clear about what plan to employ.

To enlighten us all, here is a plausible continuation given by Averbakh:

1.Kf1 Ke7 2.Ke2 Kd6 3.Kd3 Kc5

Black naturally tries to stop White obtaining a passed pawn.

4.Nc2 Nd5 5.g3 a5 6.b3 f5 7.a3 g6 8.b4+

A neat pawn sacrifice.

8...axb4 9.axb4+ Kd6

In the case of capturing with 9...Nxb4+ 10.Nxb4 Kxb4 11.Kd4 then White's king is closer to the kingside, which will ultimately lead to a win after something like 11...Kb3 12.f4 Kc2 13.Ke5 Kd3 14.Kf6 Ke3 15.Kg7 Kf3 16.Kxh7 Kg2 17.Kxg6 Kxh2 18.Kxf5 Kxg3 19.Kg5 etc.

10.Kd4 Nc7 11.f4 Nb5+ 12.Kc4 Nc7 13.Ne3

Black has no option but to stay passive for the moment. The more direct 13.b5 Nxb5 14.Kxb5 Kd5 would give Black some hope, as his king will then be able to get amongst White's kingside pawns. It's better to avoid giving your opponent a lifeline if you can help it.

13...Kc6 14.Kd4 Kd6 15.Nc4+ Kc6

Or, if he goes the other way, 15...Ke6 16.Ne5 Kd6 17.Nf7+ Ke7 18.Ng5 h6 19.Nf3 Kf6 20.Kc5 Ne6+ 21.Kd6 g5 22.b5 etc.

16.Ke5 Kb5 17.Ne3 Na6

After 17...Kxb4 18.Nd5+ the pawn endgame would again yield a decisive advantage for White.

18.Nd5 Kc4 19.Nf6 h5 20.Nd5 Nb8 21.Ne7

and the black kingside pawns will be demolished.

I hope you agree that this sequence is highly instructive. Just this one example can give us a great deal of insight into the steps involved in the winning plan here, and in many similar cases:

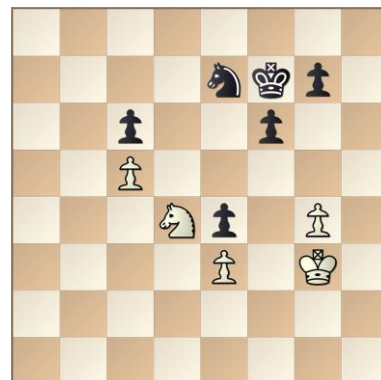
1. One should aim to improve one's pieces as much as possible before committing one's pawns.
2. While keeping the opponent quiet, for example, by denying him any active squares, the stronger side can often make some improvements in the pawn structure.
3. When things are in place, it's then time to set about creating a passed pawn.
4. The passed pawn is an important asset which will occupy the opponent's thoughts! There are then two eventualities:
 - a. The pawn can be forced through if the opponent's pieces don't defend against it particularly solidly.
 - b. If, on the other hand, the opponent puts all his resources into stopping the pawn, then one can create opportunities on the other wing.

Switching between the flanks is quite thematic, and often

creates further problems for the opponent. It can be thought of as a good example of 'the principle of the second weakness', which is a typical idea in many middlegames and endgames when aiming to over-stretch a defender.

Berg, K – Flear, G

Esbjerg 1982



Here's another example of angling to exploit a pawn-up advantage, but with a more broken pawn structure.

48....g5

This denies White access to the f4-square.

49.Kf2 Ke8

It's laborious indeed, but the king threatens to head for d7, whereupon the knight would be liberated from its defensive task.

50.Ne2 Nd5 51.Ng3 Nc3 52.Ke1

The e-pawn is defended, but not securely, and will soon be lost. However, Black in the meantime gains some time to place his pieces on active squares while White is otherwise occupied equalising the pawn count.

52...Ke7 53.Kd2 Na4 54.Nxe4 Ke6

Black has had to give back his extra pawn, but White's three pawns are isolated and vulnerable, especially the c5-pawn.

55.Ke2 Ke5 56.Kf3 Nb2 57.Nf2 Nc4 58.Ne4 Ke6!

A little 'shimmy' on the way to the optimal set-up.

59.Ke2 Ne5 60.Nf2 Kd5

Now the c5-pawn is condemned.

61.Kd2 Nd7 62.Nd3 Nxc5 63.Nb4+ Kd6

The pawn has been happily digested, and now the next step is to create problems for White on both flanks.

64.Ke2 Nd7 65.Kf3 c5 66.Na2 Ne5+

With both of White's pieces tied down, Black's king will be able to penetrate.

67.Kg3 Kd5 68.Nc3+ Kc4 69.Ne4 Nd7 70.Kf3 Kd3 71.Nf2+ Kd2 72.Ke4 Ke2 73.Nd3 c4 74.Nb4 c3 75.Kf5 Kd2 76.Ke6 c2!

Simplest.

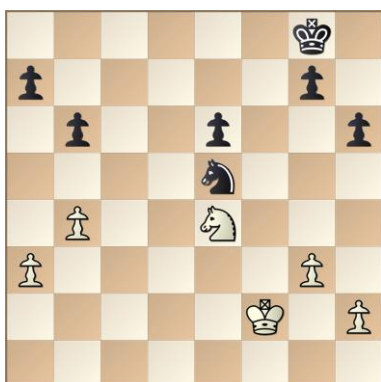
77.Na2

Or 77.Nxc2 Kxc2 78.Kxd7 Kd3 79.Ke6 Kxe3 80.Kxf6 Kf4—+.

77...c1Q 78.Nxc1 Kxc1 0–1

Flear, G – Chandler, M

Walsall 1992



Black's extra pawn ensures him a big advantage, but White can put up a fight and hope to gain some counterplay, first by sidelining the opponent's knight, and then by attacking his queenside pawns.

31...Nc4 32.Ke2 Nxa3 33.Nd6 Kf8 34.Kd3

The black knight is inconvenienced, but there isn't sufficient time to round it up.

34...a6 35.Nc8 b5 36.Nd6 Ke7 37.Nb7 Nc4

Black has saved his knight, and now hopes to consolidate, but the soft spot on a6 gives White some hope.

38.Kc3 e5 39.Nc5 Kd6

If 39...a5 40.bxa5 Nxa5 White has 41.Kb4.

40.Nxa6

Now it's White's knight that has been drawn to the edge of the board, so Black seeks play on the other wing.

40...Ne3 41.Nc5 Kd5!

Improving one's king should never be underestimated.

42.Kd3 Nc4 43.Na6 e4+ 44.Kc3 Ke5 45.Nc7 Nd6 46.Na6 h5!

There's no rush. White already has his hands full with the e-pawn and the queenside.

47.Nb8 Kd5 48.Na6 g5 49.Nc7+ Ke5 50.Kd2 h4

Creating an advanced pawn which, I might remind you, is not far from the promotion square!

51.gxh4 gxh4 52.Ke3 Nf5+ 53.Kf2 Nd4 54.Ke3 Nc2+ 55.Ke2



I eventually lost the game, but the remaining moves weren't recorded. Here is a logical continuation that I've contrived where Black wins by creating threats on three fronts!

After 55.Ke2 Black could continue with 55...Nd4+ 56.Ke3 h3! with the threat of 57...Nf3. Then 57.Kf2 Kd6! 58.Ne8+ Kd5 59.Nf6+ (or 59.Nc7+ Ke5 60.Ke3 Nf3 61.Nxb5 (61.Kf2 Nxb2 62.Kg3 e3—) 61...Nxb2—) 59...Ke5 60.Ng4+ Kf4 61.Ne3 Nf5 and White's pieces are pushed off their best defensive squares, a typical theme. 62.Nd5+ Ke5 63.Nc7 Kd4 (OK, one could keep defending the b-pawn, but this is the most incisive) 64.Nxb5+ (if 64.Ke2 Kc4 the b4-pawn is a problem, and after the further moves 65.Na6 e3 something has to give) 64...Kd3 65.Nc7 e3+ 66.Ke1 Nd4—+.

Flear, G – Midoux, S
French League 2010



Here White's task is complicated by the fact that Black's knight is so influential.

39.a4

More active is 39.Nc4! Nxf3+ 40.Kf2 Nd4 (40...Nxb4 loses the knight to 41.Kg3) 41.Nxe5, when White has succeeded in exchanging off his main weakness and now has a passed pawn: 41...Nc2 42.Nc4 b5 43.Ne5 Nxa3 44.Ke2 Nc2 45.Nc6 a6 46.Kd2 Na3 47.Ne5 and Black has problems on both wings (g6 and the trapped knight).

39...Kf7 40.Kf2 Ke6 41.b5 a6 42.bxa6 bxa6 43.Nc4 Nb3 44.Ke3 Nc5 45.a5 Nb3 46.Kd3

After the impatient 46.f4?! exf4+ 47.Kxf4 Nd4 48.e5 Nb3 Black holds firm.

46...Nc1+ 47.Kd2 Nb3+ 48.Kc3 Nd4 49.Nd2 Kd6 50.Kc4

There is some pressure, but Black has a wide choice of plausible defences.

50...Ne6

50...Nc6 51.Nb3 Nd8 52.Nc5 Nc6 53.Nxa6 Nxa5+ 54.Kd3 Nc6 55.Ke3 with winning chances, as White's knight will be able to come back into the game next move.

50...Ne2 51.Kb4! (rather than 51.Nb3 Ng1) 51...Nf4 52.Nc4+ Ke6 53.Kc5 and invades as in the game.

50...Nc2 51.Kd3 Nb4+ 52.Kc3 Nc6 53.Nb3 goes back to the line arising from 50...Nc6.

51.Kb4 Nd4 52.Nc4+ Ke6 53.Kc5 Nxf3 54.Kb6 Kd7

If 54...Nxb4 then 55.Kxa6 Ng2 56.Kb6 h4 57.a6 h3 58.a7 h2 59.a8Q h1Q 60.Qe8#.

55.Kxa6 Kc7 56.Kb5 Nxb4 57.Nxe5 Ng2 58.Nxg6 h4

59.Nxb4

Giving up the knight is simplest. Black cannot cope with three widely-spaced passed pawns.

59...Nxb4 60.Kc5 Ng6 61.Kd5 Kd7 62.a6 Ne7+ 63.Ke5 Nc8 64.Kf6 1-0

Réti

1929



With knight and pawn versus knight there are often winning chances when the pawn is far advanced, and the defending pieces are stretching to hold it back from going even further. Naturally the stronger side should be careful about allowing the opponent to give up his knight for the pawn.

As a rule, the a-pawn is particularly unpleasant for the defender. Even if it gets into a blocking role, his knight has less room in which to manoeuvre (due to the vicinity of the edge of the board). Réti's study shows that the diagram position is a win:

1.Nc5! Kb4 2.Nd7 Ka5

There is also a second defensive try: 2...Nd6+ 3.Kc7 Nb5+ 4.Kb6 Nd6 5.Nb8 Nc8+ 6.Kb7 Nd6+ 7.Kc7 Nb5+ 8.Kb6 Kc4 9.Nc6 Nd6 10.Ne7 Nb5 11.Nf5 Kb4 12.Nd4! Nd6 13.Kc7 Kc5 14.a7.

3.Nb8 Nd6+ 4.Kc7 Nb5+ 5.Kc6 Ka4 6.Kb6 Kb4 7.Nc6+ Kc4 8.Ne7 Kb4 9.Nd5+ Kc4 10.Nc7 Nd6 11.Kc6 Nc8 12.Kb7 Nd6+ 13.Kb8

Flear, G – Bifulco, M

Cannes 2023



I've always been unsure about the commonly occurring knight and four pawns versus knight and three on the same side. Reuben Fine gave it as normally a win with some deep analysis, but I found a drawing resource in one of his lines. Furthermore, in practical games it's often very hard to tie down the opponent enough to exploit the extra pawn. So I prefer to think of it as a 50–50 endgame (i.e. one wins it about half the time). Here, I was able to convert my advantage, as my opponent allowed me to exchange when it was highly favourable for me.

47.Rb6 Kd5?

He should have preferred 47...Ra3+ 48.Ke4 Ra4+ 49.Nc4+ Ke7 50.Kd5 Nf5 51.Rb7+ Kf8 52.Nd6 Ne7+, with a likely draw.

48.Nb5 Rd7 49.Rd6+! Rxd6 50.Nxd6 Ke6 51.Ke4

Black's knight is dominated.

51...f6

If 51...Ke7 then 52.f5! wins.

52.Nb5 f5+

After 52...fxe5 matters flow smoothly for White: 53.fxe5 Ne8 (or 53...Nf5 54.Nd4+) 54.Nd4+ Ke7 55.Kf4 Nc7 56.Kg5 Kf7 57.e6+.

53.Kd4 Kd7 54.Kc5 Ne6+ 55.Kd5 Ke7 56.Nd4 Nc7+ 57.Kc6 Ne8 58.Nb5 Kd8 59.Nd6 Ng7 60.Nf7+ Ke7 61.Nh8

An unusual way to exploit a weakness on g6.

61...Ke6 62.Nxg6 Kf7 63.Kd7 Kxg6 64.Ke7 Kh7 65.Kf7

Black is squeezed!

If we now turn our attention to some positional factors that can affect the result, then the most significant one is the presence of a **wing passed pawn**. **1–0**

Lasker, Em. – Nimzovich, A
Zürich 1934



Knights are not comfortable when having to blockade distant passed pawns. Not only does it take some time to get across the board to stop the passer, but the knight is then far from what's going on elsewhere.

Black to play has the advantage here. His pieces are more active, but the main feature is that the outside passed pawn on h4 ties down the enemy knight. White's forces are thus split, and Black is soon able to get one of his rook pawns going.

1...Nd4+ 2.Kb1

Or 2.Kd3 Ne6 3.Ke3 (3.Kc2 Kc4) 3...Kb3 4.Nf4 Kxb2 5.Nxe6 a3 and the knight can't stop the a-pawn.

2...Ne6 3.Ka2 Kc4 4.Ka3

White obtains some counterplay, but Nimzovich only needs his one remaining pawn to win.

4...Kd4 5.Kxa4 Kxe4 6.b4 Kf3 7.b5 Kg2 0–1

If White continues with 8.b6 Kxh3 9.Kb5 (it's convenient that 9.b7 Nc5+ works for Black!), 9...Nd8 and the b-pawn isn't going anywhere.

The statement that knight endgames are like king and pawn endgames is often heard, and originally associated with Botvinnik (I think!). I would agree in those cases when positional factors dominate proceedings, when the following factors are worth taking into consideration:

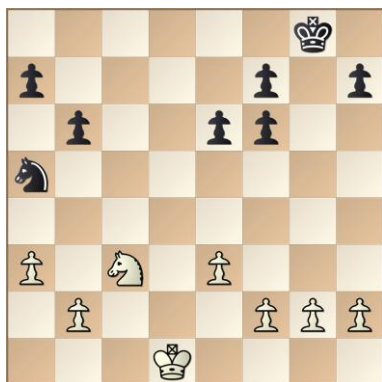
1. A well-placed king is an important asset;
2. Pawn structure strengths and weaknesses can be significant;
3. Knights can't lose tempi, so any manoeuvring for Zugzwang has to be done by the king.

However, knight endgames naturally have their own features, the most important being sacrificing the piece

for time or pawns, something that occurs on several occasions in the following examples.

In any case, Botvinnik's rule of thumb doesn't apply if everything comes down to calculation, the knights are in the heat of the action, and tactics galore dominate proceedings, so don't be too dogmatic!

Flear, G – Wirig, A
French League 2005



Here Black has a slightly inferior pawn structure (three pawn islands against two) and White can thus obtain some pressure, even if it shouldn't be enough to win with best play.

24.Kc2

It's too early for 24.g4 in view of 24...Kg7 25.Kc2 Kg6, preparing counterplay on the kingside.

24...Kf8

Maybe 24...f5 is a good idea, to compete for space.

25.Nb5 Nc6 26.g4!?

The idea is to make the opposing kingside pawns difficult to advance.

26...Ke7 27.Kc3 a6 28.Nd4

28.Nc7 gets nowhere after 28...Nb8 29.Na8 Nd7 etc.

28...Ne5

The pure king and pawn endgame wouldn't be comfortable for Black, so my opponent correctly avoided the risk.

29.h3 Kd6 30.f4 Nd7 31.b4

The black knight is temporarily denied any useful

outposts.

31...b5 32.Kd3 Nb6

Now some counterplay is coming, so White must adapt.

33.Nb3 Na4 34.Kd4 e5+ 35.Ke4 Ke6

After 35...Nc3+ 36.Kf5 Nd5 37.fxe5+ fxe5 38.e4 Nf4 39.h4 White's active king would offer serious winning chances.

36.Nd2 Nb2

This time 36...Nc3+! could be best: 37.Kd3 Na4 38.Ne4 Nb2+ 39.Ke2 Nc4 40.f5+ Ke7 41.Nc5 Nxa3 42.Nxa6 Kd8 43.Kd3 Nc4 44.Nc5 Nb6 45.Ke4 Kc7 and so on.

37.h4 h6 38.h5

The h-pawn is advanced to a potentially threatening square on h5.

38...Nd1 39.Nb3 Nc3+ 40.Kd3 Nb1 41.Nc5+ Ke7 42.Nxa6 Nxa3 43.Nc7 Kf8

If 43...Kd7 then 44.g5! works nicely due to the presence of the advanced h-pawn.

44.Nd5 Kg7 45.Nb6 f5

Freedom, but at a price.

46.gxf5 exf4 47.exf4 Kf6 48.Ke4

The tempting 48.Kc3? falls short: 48...Kxf5 49.Kb3 Nb1 50.Kc2 Na3+ 51.Kb2 Kxf4 52.Kxa3 Kg4 53.Nd5 Kxh5 54.Nc3 Kg4 55.Nxb5 h5 56.Nc3 h4 57.b5 h3 58.b6 h2=.

48...Ke7 49.Nd5+ Kd6 50.Ne3 Kc6 51.Kd3 Kd6 52.Kc3 f6

Or 52...Kc6 53.Kb2 Nc4+ 54.Nxc4 bxc4 55.Kc3 Kb5 56.f6+–.

53.Ng4

Avoiding the natural 53.Kb2? Nc4+ 54.Nxc4+ bxc4 55.Kc3 Kd5 56.b5 Kc5 57.b6 Kxb6 58.Kxc4 Kc6, which isn't advantageous.

53...Nc4 54.Kd4 Na3 55.Nxh6

Now the h-pawn is passed!

55...Nc2+ 56.Kc3 Ne3 57.Ng8 Nxf5 58.h6 Nh4 59.f5 1–0

Flear, G – Domenech, V
St.Affrique 2012



Here my opponent sought the exchange of queens, but this doesn't turn out to be the simplest way to a draw. With no real counterplay, the pawn on c5 turns out to be a significant weakness.

30...Qe4?!

He should have preferred to keep the tension with 30...Ne4=.

31.Qxe4 Nxe4 32.Ke2 Kf6 33.Ke3 Nc3 34.Ne1 Ke5?!

Perhaps 34...Nd1+ but I then quite like 35.Kf4!? (rather than 35.Ke2 Nc3+ 36.Ke3 Nd1+=) 35...Nxf2 36.Kf3 Nd1 37.Nd3.

35.Nd3+ Kd6

Now with Black tied down to c5, and with no real counterplay White can seek to increase the pressure by opening up another front.

36.f4! f6 37.g4 Nd1+ 38.Kf3 g5

If 38...Nc3, then 39.g5 hxg5 40.fxg5 fxg5 41.hxg5 makes progress.

39.fxg5 fxg5 40.h5?!

Simpler would have been 40.hxg5 hxg5 41.Ke4+—.

40...Nc3 41.Ke3 Nb1 42.Ke4!

White is confident that the h5-pawn is going to be fast enough, so is willing to give up his b-pawn. Not, however, 42.Nf2 Nc3 43.Nh1 Ke5 44.Ng3 Nd1+ 45.Kf3 Kd4 46.Nf5+ Kc3=.

42...Nd2+ 43.Kf5 Nxb3 44.Kg6 Nd2

I don't think that 44...Nd4 holds either: 45.Kxh6 b3 46.Kxg5 Ke7 47.h6 Kf7 (47...Nf3+ 48.Kf4 Nh4 49.h7 Ng6+ 50.Kg5 Nh8 51.Kh6 Kf6 52.g5+ Kf5 53.g6 Nxg6 54.Kg7 Kg5 55.Nxc5 b2 56.Ne4+ Kf5 57.Nd2+—) 48.Ne5+; 44...Ke7 45.Kxh6 Kf6 46.Kh7 Nd2 47.Kg8 Ne4 48.Nxc5!.

45.Kxh6 Nxc4

If 45...b3, then 46.Kg7.

46.Kxg5

Or 46.Kg7 Ne5 47.h6 Nxd3 48.h7.

46...b3

After 46...Ke7 there is 47.Nxc5 Kf7 48.Nb3.

47.h6 Ke7 48.h7 Nd6 49.Ne5!

The race is winning.

49...b2 50.h8Q Nf7+ 51.Nxf7 b1Q 52.Qf6+ Ke8 53.Ne5 Qc1+ 54.Qf4 Qd1 55.Qf7+ Kd8 56.Qf8+ 1–0

Knights have a habit of getting themselves trapped, so always be on the look-out for snares! The first one isn't difficult to find.

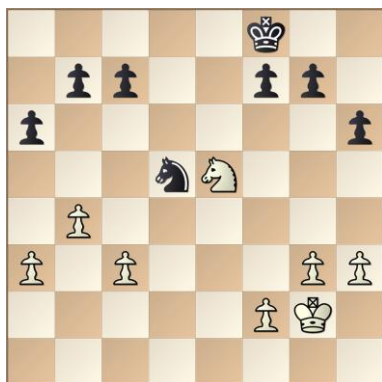
Flear, G – Hebden, M
Walsall 1992



60.Ng5 h5 61.Ne4

And what is the knight on h1 going to do now?!

61...Kc6 62.b4 Kd5 63.b5 Kxe4 64.b6 Kf4 65.b7 Kg4 66.b8Q Ng3 67.Qd8 Kh3 68.Qg5 1–0



Sometimes knights are attracted to a pawn on the edge of the board, but there can be danger!

31.Nd7+

A better idea would be 31.c4.

31...Ke7 32.Nc5 b6 33.Nxa6 Nxc3 34.Kf3

Grabbing the c-pawn would have been preferable, but the justification requires a long line of analysis: 34.Nxc7! Kd7 35.Na6 Kc6 36.Kf3 Kb7 (trapping the steed, which forces White to pay a price for its liberty) 37.b5 Nxb5 38.Nb4 Nxa3 (Black has an extra pawn, but White's pieces now occupy good defensive squares) 39.Ke4 b5 (39...Nb5 40.Kd5 Kc7 41.Nd3) 40.Kd4 Kb6 41.Nd5+ (otherwise, 41.g4!? Ka5 42.Nd3 Nc4 (or 42...b4 43.Kc5 b3 44.Kd4 Nb1 45.Kc4 Nd2+ 46.Kc3) 43.f4 Ka4 44.g5 hxg5 45.fxg5 g6 46.Nc5+ Ka3 47.Nd3! and White seems to be holding) 41...Ka5 42.Kc5! Nc2 43.h4 (and Black cannot use his b-pawn) 43...b4 44.Nxb4! Nxb4 45.Kd6 and surprisingly Black cannot hold onto his kingside, so a draw would be the logical result from here.

34...Kd6 35.Ke3 Nd1+ 36.Ke2 Nb2 37.Nb8

The knight is in a cage, but can still wriggle.

37...c6

Maybe 37...c5!.

38.h4 Kc7 39.Na6+ Kb7 40.b5 c5

The natural move to keep the knight from emerging. Still, 40...cxb5! seems to work, as 41.Nb4 Nc4 42.Nc2 fails to 42...Ka6 43.Kd3 Ka5 44.Kc3 Ka4 etc.

41.h5 Nc4

It's better to sort out the kingside first: 41...g6! 42.hxg6 fxg6 43.f3 g5 44.g4 Kc8 45.Kd2 Nc4+.

42.a4 Nb2 43.a5?

After 43.Kd2! Nxa4 44.Kc2 it's Black's knight that is now trapped! 44...c4 saves the black steed, but allows White's to escape, as following 45.Nb4 White seems to be OK.

43...bxa5 44.Nxc5+ Kb6 45.Nb3 a4

Now it's the dreaded a-pawn that overwhelms the knight.

46.Nd4 a3 47.Kd2 a2 48.Nc2 Na4 49.Na1 Kxb5 50.Kc2 Kc4 51.f4 f5 52.Nb3 Kd5 0–1

The presence of over-extended pawns is a notable issue in knight endgames, as there is no defending them from afar!

Roberson, P – Flear, G

4NCL 2008



Pawns that seemed on good-looking squares in the middlegame can come under attack once simplification occurs, if they don't have close-up support.

36...Ke8 37.Kf3 Kd7 38.c3 b5 39.Kf4 Ke6 40.Kf3?

The notorious 40th move! Now White's h-pawn turns out to be difficult to defend.

White could instead try 40.a3 a5 41.a4 trying to mix matters, but the simplest route to equality involves 40.Ne4! Nf5 41.Nc5+ Kd6 42.Nxa6 Nxh4 43.Nc5 and he is able to exchange off his weak h-pawn for one of Black's.

40...Nf5! 41.Ne4

After 41.Nxf5 Kxf5 Black's monarch will be able to invade.

41...Nxh4+ 42.Kf4 a5 43.Nc5+ Kd6 44.Ne4+ Kd5 45.Nc5 Nf5 46.Nd7 Nd6 47.a3 Nb7 48.Nb6+ Kd6 49.a4 Nd8

50.Nc8+ Kd7 51.Ne7 Ne6+ 52.Ke5 h4 53.axb5 cxb5 0–1

Flear, G – Saucey, M
St. Chély d'Aubrac 2001



White seeks a simplified knight endgame because the e-pawn will then be vulnerable, as Black's king is too far away.

35.Qd5 Qxd5?!

I think that Black should keep queens on with 35...Qc8!, when White's king would not then be able to join the fray.

36.Nxd5 Ne6 37.Kf1 Kg8 38.Ke2

The e4–pawn is the main target.

38...a5 39.Ke3 Nc5 40.Nc3

The alternative 40.b4 axb4 41.axb4 Nd3 42.Kxe4 Nxf2+ looks messier, but even so the b5–pawn is now a fixed weakness.

40...Nd3 41.Nxb5 Nxb2 42.Kxe4 Kf7 43.Kd4!

Centralising the king enables White to cover several key squares.

43...Ke6 44.Nc3

The black knight lacks squares, so my opponent advanced his pawns - but after

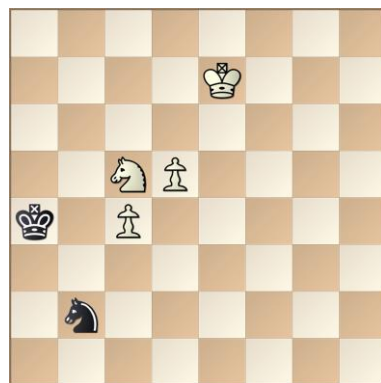
44...h5 45.f3 Kd6 46.Nd5 g5 47.Nf6

...his kingside had become weak!

47...Kc6 48.Nxh5 Kb5 49.f4 gxf4 50.gxf4 Nc4 51.f5 Nd6 52.f6 Ka4 53.Ng3 Kxa3 54.Ne4

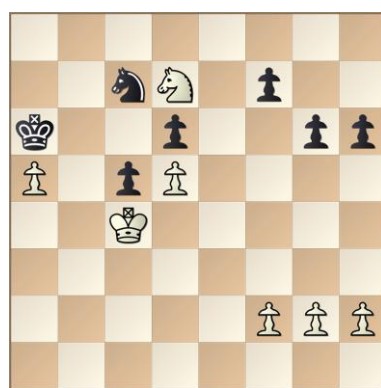
54...Nf7 55.g4 a4 56.g5 is straightforward enough to induce resignation. 1–0

Exercise 1



Black to move can draw. But how?

Exercise 2



How should White continue?

Exercise 3



White has a slight positional advantage (better pawns). Can you think of an appropriate plan?

Exercise 1 (answer)



You need to determine the correct square.

1...Ka3!

The point being that 2.d6 Nxc4 3.d7 Ne5 4.d8Q Nc6+ holds.

After 1...Ka3? 2.d6 Nxc4 3.d7 Ne5 now 4.d8Q+ comes with check!; 1...Kb4? (natural, but flawed) 2.d6 Nxc4 3.d7 Ne5 4.Nd3+! (deflecting the knight from the forking c6-square) 4...Nxd3 5.d8Q 1-0 Khairullin - Valsecchi, Rijeka 2020.

Exercise 2 (answer)

Flear, G - O'Hara, M
Uppingham 1988



37.Nxc5+!

The only move to give serious winning chances.

37...dxc5 38.Kxc5

Suddenly, while Black is picking off the a-pawn, he has problems to solve elsewhere.

38...Kxa5 39.Kc6 Nb5 40.d6 Nd4+ 41.Kb7 Kb5 42.d7 Ne6

Or 42...Nc6 43.Kc7 Kc5 44.d8Q Nxd8 45.Kxd8 Kd6 White's

active king gives him winning chances (and is indeed winning), as you'll see below.

43.Kc8 Kc4

The other try is 43...Kc6 44.d8Q Nxd8 45.Kxd8 Kd6 46.Ke8 Ke6 47.Kf8 Kf6 48.Kg8 h5 49.h4! Ke6 50.Kg7 Ke7 51.f3 Ke6 52.f4 Ke7 53.f5 gxf5 54.Kh6 Kf6 55.Kxh5+—.

44.d8Q Nxd8 45.Kxd8 f5 46.f4 Kd4 47.Ke7 Ke3 48.Kf6 Kxf4 49.Kxg6 Kg4 50.Kxh6 Kh4 51.Kg6 Kg4 52.h3+ 1-0

Exercise 3 (answer)

Flear, G – Mitkov, M
Thessaloniki 1988



39.Nb4!?

This may not yield any real advantage according to Stockfish, but I would argue that this is still quite difficult for Black to defend.

The engine actually prefers 39.Kf1! but the idea is the same: bring the king (as well as the knight) to bear on Black's fragile left-hand side pawns. Here the emphasis is on the king. 39...Ke6 40.Ke2 Kd6 41.Kd2 Kc6 42.Kc3 Kb6 43.h4 (43.g4!?) 43...Kc6?! 44.Kb4 Kb6 45.Nc5 with strong pressure.

39...Ke6 40.Kf1 Kd6 41.Ke2 Ne6 42.Kd3 Nd8 43.Kc3 f5 44.h4 Ke6

Better is 44...h6!, with ...g5 in mind, but White can still try and manoeuvre, e.g. 45.Kb2 Ne6 46.Nd3, and Black isn't out of the woods yet.

45.Na6! Kd6 46.Kb4

Pressing against the b5-pawn.

46...Kc6 47.Nc5

This already feels like Zugzwang!

47...Kb6 48.Nd7+ Kc6 49.Nf6 h5 50.Ng8 Kd6 51.Kxb5 Ke6
52.Kxa4 Kf7 53.Nh6+ Kg7 54.Kb5 Nb7 55.Nxf5+ gxf5
56.Kc6 Na5+ 57.Kxd5 1-0

Great British Chess Players

by John Nunn



Jonathan Speelman (1956 -)



Jon was born on 2nd October 1956, and was part of the generation of British players which included Tony Miles, Jonathan Mestel and myself. He showed considerable promise as a junior, for example winning the British Under 14 Championship in 1969 and tying for first (with Mestel) in the Under 16 the year after. However, his real talent only developed when he became a full-time player after leaving Oxford with a mathematics degree. There followed a steady advance up the rating list, and in 1980 he was awarded the grandmaster title.

Jon had a series of tournament successes, including joint first at Hastings in 1983/4 and 1986/7 and three British Championship wins in 1978, 1985 and 1986. He was also a successful player in the England Olympiad team, taking part in every Olympiad from 1980 to 2006. His best results were 7/9 at Dubai 1986, gaining the silver medal individual board prize, and 8/12 at Novi Sad 1990 and Moscow 1994. However, his best performance was in the

1989-90 World Championship cycle. He qualified for the Candidates from the Subotica Interzonal, and won decisively 4-1 against Yasser Seirawan in the first round of the Candidates. He then beat Nigel Short 3½-2½ in the quarter-finals, and only narrowly lost to Timman in the semi-finals by 4½-3½. In recent years Jon has been less active, but he remains dangerous, and in 2022 he demonstrated that he can still play very well by winning the English Blitz Championship.

As a rough contemporary of Jon, I have played him many times, our first encounter being in the London Under 14 Championship in 1969. It's hard to imagine that this mild-mannered vegetarian could be capable of launching such vicious attacks on the chessboard, but along with most British players of the time I soon learned to keep my king safe when playing him. At his peak he was a danger to any player in the world, and his unconventional strategy, coupled with his attacking prowess, secured him many individual victories. Here's one against a World Champion.

Jon Speelman – Anatoly Karpov

Linares 1991

Nimzo-Indian

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e3 0-0 5.Bd3 d5 6.a3

6.Nf3 is more common, but White has a specific idea in mind.

6...Bxc3+ 7.bxc3 dxc4 8.Bxc4 c5 9.Ne2

This is the reason behind delaying Nf3; White hopes that his knight will be better placed on g3. This line is a favourite of Russian-born grandmaster Alexey Sarana, who now represents Serbia.

9...Nc6 10.0-0 e5 11.Rb1

The most common move by far is 11.Bb2, but Jon likes to go his own way in the openings.

11...Qc7

11...Bf5 looks as if it gains time, since 12.Rxb7? loses to 12...Na5, but after 12.Rb2 White will likely regain the time with a later Ng3.

12.Ba2 Rd8 13.Qc2

White's innocuous opening has given Black easy equality, but Jon is at his best in dynamic middlegame positions of this type.

13...b6



14.Ng3

Offering the d4-pawn, but it's too hot to take.

14...exd4

The simple 14...Ba6 15.Re1 Rac8 completes Black's development and gives him at least equality. Swapping all the pawns on d4 leaves White with a weak d-pawn but opens the position for his two bishops.

15.cxd4 cxd4 16.exd4 Be6

16...Rxd4? 17.Bb2 Rf4 (17...Rd6 18.Be5! wins) 18.Rfe1 gives White an overwhelming initiative; for example, after 18...Bd7 19.Rbd1 Rc8 20.Qd2 Bg4 21.f3 there's no reasonable square for the bishop. Therefore Karpov very reasonably plays to exchange one of White's dangerous bishops.

17.Bxe6 fxe6 18.Bg5!

The only move to trouble Black. The passive 18.Be3 Rac8 only leads to equality.

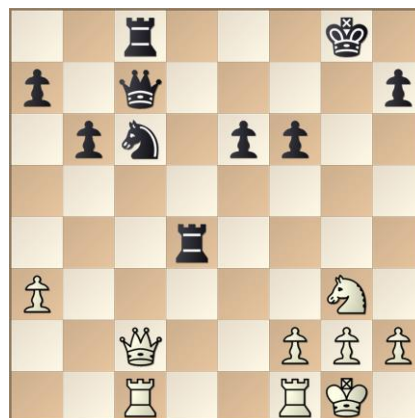
18...Rac8?!

Karpov had not learnt that you do not expose your king against Speelman. 18...Rxd4? 19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Rb3! is even worse, because 21. Rc3 is threatened and both 20...Qd6 21.Ne4 and 20...Qd7 21.Nh5 are lost for Black. However, the solid 18...Rf8 19.Rbc1 Rac8 was better, when the position is close to equality.

19.Bxf6 gxf6 20.Rbc1 Rxd4

Black finally accepts the pawn. This is not bad in itself, but it does demand high-quality defensive play from Black. 20...Qd7 21.Qe4! is also dangerous, since 21...Nxd4?

22.Nh5! wins for White, but 20...Qf4 is more solid as 21.Nh5 can be met by 21...Qg5.



21.Rfe1 Qf7

A good defensive move, shoring up Black's kingside. 21...Qd7 was an equally good alternative.

22.Qc3 Rdd8!

Better than 22...Rd5, when 23.Ne4 gives White dangerous threats.

23.Ne4 e5?

23...Ne5? loses to 24.Qg3+ Kh8 25.Nd6, but 23...Nd4! 24.Qg3+ (24.Qxc8 Rxc8 25.Rxc8+ Kg7 is also equal) 24...Qg6 25.Nxf6+ Kf8 forces the exchange of queens and leads to equality.

24.Qg3+?

24.Qh3! was better, pinning the knight against the rook on c8 and so preventing ...Nd4. Then 24...Ne7 25.Rcd1 Rxd1 26.Rxd1 Qg6 27.Qe6+ Kf8 28.Ng3! (not 28.Nxf6? Qf5 and Black defends) leaves Black in trouble due to his exposed king.

24...Kh8 25.Qh4 Nd4?!

Not 25...f5? 26.Rxc6!, but Black misses 25...Qe7! which equalises, as 26.Nxf6? loses a piece to 26...Rf8.

26.Rxc8 Rxc8 27.Nxf6

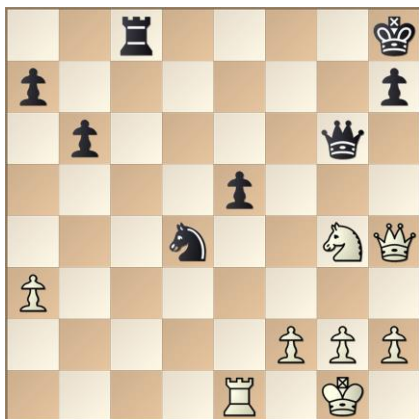
In this line White regains his pawn, and with queens on the board he retains some advantage due to Black's unsafe king.

27...Qg6!

For the moment Karpov is equal to the defensive task and threatens 28...Nf3+.

28.Ng4

Meeting the threat, and targeting the weak e5-pawn.



28...Ne2+?

The continuous pressure starts to tell. 28...Qf5! 29.h3 (29.Nxe5? Qxe5) 29...Qf4 was correct, activating the queen and indirectly defending the e-pawn. Then Black would maintain the balance.

29.Kh1 Nf4

Pinning the g4-knight against the mate on g2, but this move allows White to seize the initiative.

30.h3!

Now that the back rank is relieved White threatens 31.Rxe5.

30...Re8

It's a bad sign that Black needs to play this passive move to defend the weak e-pawn.

31.Rd1

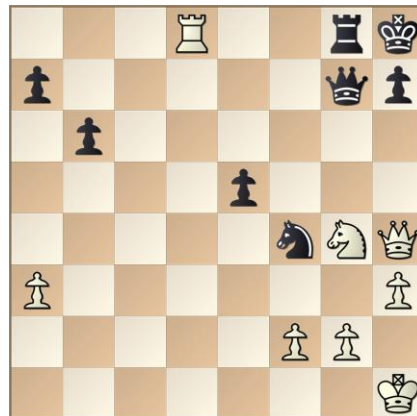
The new threat is 32.Rd7.

31...Qg7?!

31...Qc6 was the best chance, but even here 32.f3 gives White a large advantage.

32.Rd8 Rg8

32...Rxd8 33.Qxd8+ Qg8 34.Qe7 transposes to the game.



33.Rxg8+ Qxg8

33...Kxg8 loses to 34.Nh6+ Kf8 35.Qd8#.

34.Qf6+ Qg7 35.Qd8+ Qg8 36.Qe7 Ng6 37.Qxa7

White wins a pawn while retaining his positional advantages of safer king and weak enemy pawns. Jon makes no mistake in the technical phase.

37...Qe6 38.Qb8+ Kg7 39.Qc7+ Kh8 40.Nh6 Qf6

40...Nf4 41.Qxe5+ wins another pawn.

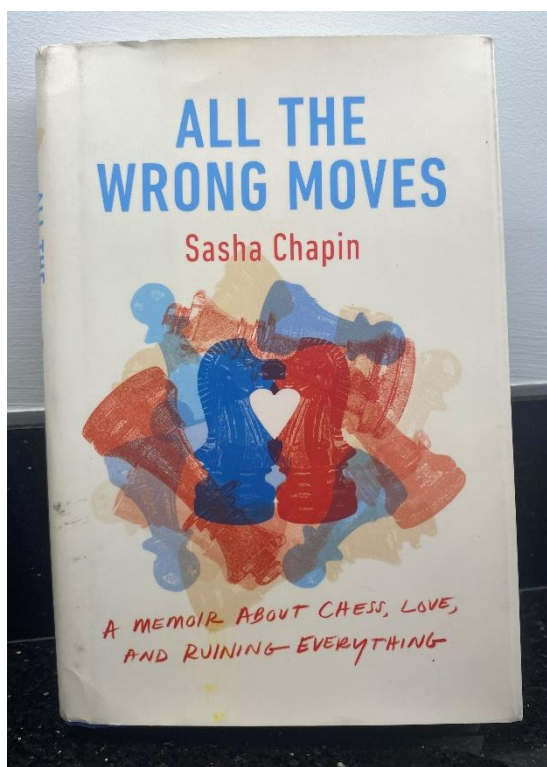
41.Qc8+ Kg7 42.Nf5+ Kf7 43.Qd7+ Kf8 44.g3 h5 45.h4 Kg8 46.Kg2 Nf8 47.Qd5+ Kh7 48.Qb7+ Kg8 49.Ne7+ Kh8 50.Nd5 Qd6 51.Qf7 Ng6 52.Nf6 1-0

Book of the Month by Ben Graff



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

**All The Wrong Moves – A Memoir About Chess, Love,
And Ruining Everything – Sasha Chapin (Doubleday)**



Perhaps the surest sign that you're in love is that you can't stop talking. You find yourself announcing the name of your beloved at the slightest provocation. Given any opportunity, you engage in a vain attempt to explain your infatuation... And this is no less true when the object of your affection is the game of chess. In other words, when you're me.

Sasha Chapin

All The Wrong Moves charts Sasha Chapin's journey through the chess world. This is the story of a chaotic life, the choices Chapin makes, the people he meets, and what he learns both about himself and chess along the way. Having been a sometime player at school, Chapin catches the chess bug to the extent that the occasions when he 'went to Chess.com to play a few online games [which] became my night, which became my weekend' are all too frequent. His working life as a writer essentially loses meaning for him, and his personal relationships become increasingly erratic, as chess takes over Chapin's every waking hour.

While brilliantly written, this was a book that generated mixed feelings for me. To start with the positives, Chapin captures some of what it is to be a chess player with piercing accuracy, at one point observing that 'The world is lousy with chess tournaments. Almost everywhere on earth, you can get checkmated and lose rating points.' His sense that, however bad your last performance has been,

the chess gods owe you nothing the next time out, is nicely done. 'I girded myself with the knowledge that my first tournament game in Bangkok was definitely the worst game I'd ever play. Although sickening defeats might yet follow, none would be as bad as my first devastating loss... You should never do this. Never tell yourself you have been through the worst of anything.'

Chapin's descriptions of the players he encounters also have a ring of truth to them. Up against one particularly nervous character, who seemed stricken by fear before a move had been played, Chapin observed that 'For a chess player, Lasagna didn't like chess very much. Every move seemingly caused him physical pain. His hands shook as he reached for each piece and when he hurriedly deposited each one on its chosen square, he winced and clenched his fist.' His more generic description of the clientele at Bangkok chess club, while a little harsh (and countered by noting there were some more attractive players out there), still had something to it. 'You might have a stereotyped conception of what a chess club looks like. You might imagine that club players tend towards the bespectacled, the dramatically ectomorphic, and the pimpled. You might envision yawning holes in shirts worn by men with improperly thriving facial hair. You would be correct.'

As part of Chapin's chess odyssey, at one point he takes lessons from grandmaster Ben Finegold, and Finegold's insights are compelling, even if they do entail countering the myths we all most likely build around our own play. 'Everyone thinks they are better than they are. Everyone thinks they are underrated. Every game, they think they played badly because their opponent got lucky and picked the wrong move. But it's not true... You'll only improve when you stop making excuses... Being a winner starts when you realize what a loser you are.'

Finegold also shares with Chapin what the 'secret' of chess is, which is something all players surely want to know. While sadly this does not turn out to be a hitherto unknown trick that will enable us to win every game, it is a useful piece of psychological advice that might well lead to marginal gains. Namely 'You have to play like you never want the game to end... In life, and in chess, people make terrible decisions because they're impatient. They want things to end, right now, on their own terms.'

Yet for all this I also had reservations about *All The Wrong Moves*. Chapin ultimately decides that chess has a 'ruinous' effect on him, and that he has no choice but to quit, a kind of moral superiority also seen in J. C. Hallman's *The Chess Artist*, in which another gifted writer engages with the chess scene before walking away. It is not that we can't sympathise with someone who says, 'When I told

my children about my twenties, I didn't want to explain that I spent big chunks of it in my bedroom staring at digital chess pieces, surrounded by granola bar wrappers, occasionally noticing the snow drifting by the window.' It's more that it does not feel that either total immersion at the expense of everything else, or complete cold turkey, need to be the only chess options open to us. Essentially everyone who is reading these words has most likely found a better way to balance their love for chess, with everything else they have going on in their lives.

Chapin does chart some of his other addictions within this book, and it could well be argued that it was not so much his approach to chess, but rather his drug use, which caused most of his challenges. *All The Wrong Moves* might have seemed more rounded if he had shown the same level of reflection in relation to his more harmful addictions as he does toward his chess. As an aesthetic work, I also felt that the final chapter, which is written in the style of an interview, seemed a little rushed, and not to the same standard as the rest of the book.

Caplin writes that 'Chess pours pure sugar down cognitive pathways that were originally forged for the sake of survival. Our sense of pattern recognition, crucial for making our way under the stars, is tickled when we see lethal potential lurking in an innocuous looking pawn structure.' Yet the reality is that his own chess career consists of a handful of rated games. There is no question that Chapin is an extremely gifted writer. The extent to which we would consider that he was ever really a chess player is more in doubt.

From the Archives

'It is the brain, the little grey cells on which one must rely': Spotlight on Belgian magazine, *L'Echiquier* (The Chessboard)

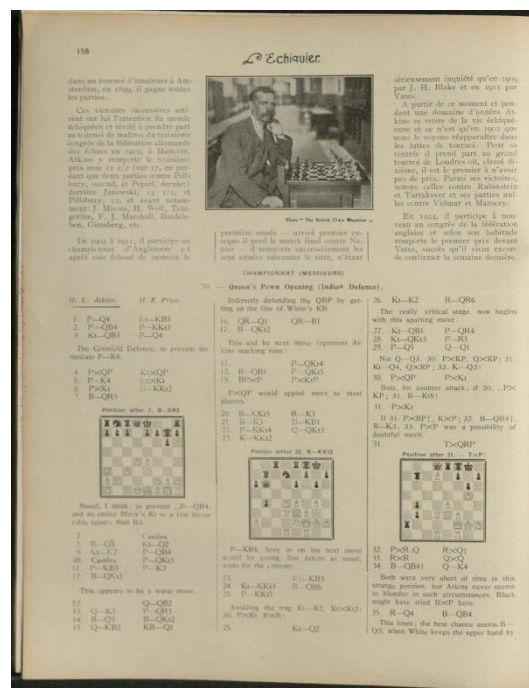


With only a short publishing period of 13 years between 1925-1938, *L'Echiquier* magazine, founded by E. Lancel, still enjoys a considerable amount of respect and popularity amongst players and researchers alike, with its

beautiful art deco style covers, international approach, and features on tournaments, players and puzzles.

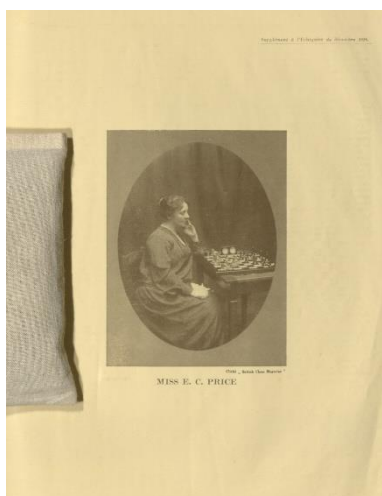


The ECF library contains five leather-bound volumes of *L'Echiquier* runs covering 1925-1928, with the first cover featuring an image from the 1924 Olympic Tournament held in Paris. While non-French reading visitors to the archive will need to be able to translate the magazine to get the most out of the resource, it is easy to find mention of the British Chess Federation (as the ECF was then known) and a variety of British clubs and societies, such as the British Chess Problem Society. These items, like all the international organisations and publications referenced, are printed in their first language.



References to British chess include: the matches and tournaments of the City of London Chess Club accompanied by a short piece (October 1926); a detailed article on 'The 18th Congress of the British Chess

Federation' held in 'Shakespeare's famous town, Stratford.' where the delegates are quaintly described as enjoying the historical sights and buying souvenirs (August 1925). This article also features an image of Henry Ernest Atkins, nine times British Chess Champion; and in the December 1928 issue there is a wonderful portrait of Edith Charlotte Price, five times Women's Chess Champion.



The magazine thus offers a new lens through which to view the historical activities of the British Chess Federation and British chess, and what was deemed noteworthy for Belgian audiences and beyond.

It's a Puzzlement!



Welcome to our puzzles section! Here are this month's puzzles - all hand-picked by ChessPuzzle.net

We provide a link to the relevant ChessPuzzle.net page and a QR Code so you can try the puzzles interactively and get hints if needed or even the solutions!

When you click on the links below you need to play a move to see the hint and/or solution.

Puzzle 1 - GM Speelman, J – FM Kozusek, Daniel UK Open Blitz Final, Leamington Spa, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2 - Kovalskyi, Roman – WCM Sivanandan, Bodhana Hastings Masters 2023-24, Hastings, ENG



White to checkmate - [Puzzle Two](#)

Puzzle 3 - FM Waldhausen Gordon, Frederick – GM Haria, Ravi 4NCL 2023-24, ENG



Black to win
[Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4 - CM Wilk, Igor – FM Martin, Lewis
 Titled Tuesday 30 Jan Early, Chess.com, INT



Black to checkmate - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5 - GM Gasanov, E – GM Speelman, J
 UK Open Blitz Open Final, Leamington Spa, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

Puzzle 6 - FM Kozusek, Daniel – IM Willow, Jonah B
 UK Open Blitz Open Final, Leamington Spa, ENG



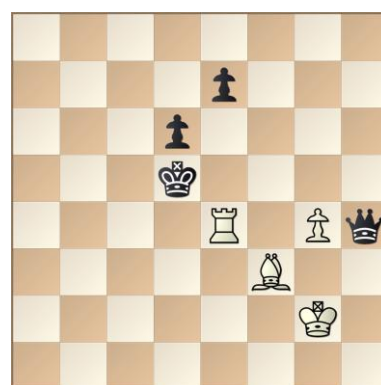
White to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7 - Liu, Tianyi – FM Waldhausen Gordon, Frederick
 Hastings Masters 2023-24, London, ENG



Black to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8 - GM Gasanov E – IM Ghasi, A
 UK Open Blitz Open Final, Leamington Spa, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9 - GM Lagarde, Maxime – IM Willow, Jonah B
 Hastings Masters 2023-24, Hastings, ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

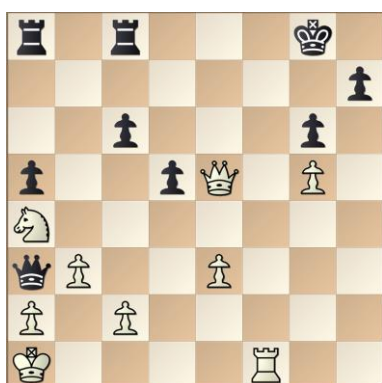
Puzzle 10 - IM Ledger, Andrew J – IM Willow, Jonah B
4NCL 2023-24, England, ENG



Black to win - Puzzle Ten

Puzzle 11 - IM Robertson, P – WFM Preobrazhenskaya, Diana

Titled Tuesday 2nd Jan Early, Chess.com, INT



White to win - Puzzle Eleven

Puzzle 12 - IM Hunt, H – WFM Stangi, A
European Women Blitz 2023, Monaco, MNC



White to win - Puzzle Twelve

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit https://chesspuzzle.net/List/9681?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=februarynews by clicking the link or via the QR code.



NEWS and VIEWS

Manager for Accessible Chess

We are still looking for someone to take on the role of Manager for Accessible Chess.

If you are interested in the role and feel that you can contribute to the ECF's support for accessible chess, please apply to Nigel Towers on director.homechess@englishchess.org.uk

Please use the same email address for general enquiries about accessible chess support.

ECF Grand Prix

The 2022/23 Chessable Grand Prix has now finished, covering events from August 2022 to July 2023, with all prize winners announced and all prizes awarded. We hope to continue the Grand Prix series for future seasons, and will be announcing the starting date for the next ECF Grand Prix season once a suitable sponsor has been identified.

She Plays to Win by Lorin D'Costa

She Plays To Win (SPTW) is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to encourage more girls to learn, play and benefit from chess.

SPTW is focused on girls' chess in:

- Primary schools (under 11)
- Secondary schools (under 18)
- Universities (under 28)

These aims are in line with the ECF '[Development of Women's Chess Progress Plan](#)' (June 2019):

- Encouraging and facilitating chess as a social and competitive activity;
- Encouraging juniors to continue to play chess as they move into adulthood;
- Increasing female membership of the ECF;
- Encouraging and developing social chess.

I set up SPTW in April 2020 at the start of the pandemic, with the idea that there would be free 30-minute Zoom lessons for girls followed by a tournament on Lichess. We all know how difficult it was for the children being stuck indoors, so encouraging them with online chess seemed like a good idea!

Since then we have grown hugely. We have run many events, both online and in person, such as simultaneous exhibitions with 2004 Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova, six-time French Women's Champion, Sophie Milliet, and five-time England Women's Champions Harriet Hunt and Susan Lalic. We have run training days in Scotland, Yorkshire and Essex, working with county junior chess associations.

There is a SPTW Primary and Secondary Girls Online Schools League, which attracts 150-180 girls from across the UK at half-term on Lichess.

We have run two Woman International Master (WIM) norm tournaments in London and Edinburgh, providing opportunities for our top young girls to gain FIDE rating points and try for norms.

The new yearly Flagship Tournament was introduced in June 2023, when 107 girls qualified via the weekly online tournaments for a place in the event.

June 2023 saw a very special event held in the London MindSports Centre in Hammersmith, as eight top young male players (all titled) played a pairs invitational event with eight of our top young female players. This was won in style by 16 year old Alisha Vyas (the day after completing her GCSE exams) and IM Marcus Harvey.

October 2023 also saw a SPTW team make its debut at the European Club Cup in Durres, Albania. Kamila Hryshchenko, Zoe Varney, Abigail Weersing and Emily Maton thoroughly enjoyed competing against some of Europe's top female players. In addition to that, the girls

got to meet and have a photo with Magnus Carlsen (my thanks to David Howell for organising that for us!).

The biggest success, however, has been the creation of four SPTW teams in the 4NCL. Three teams made their debut in November 2022, and this season the extra fourth team has been added. A special university team also encourages girls to continue to play and enjoy chess, as we know there is a big drop-off of retention of girls playing chess once they hit secondary school.

It is quite a sight to see the girls playing in their SPTW hoodies and really feeling part of a team and community. The girls analyse and socialise together, and of course they love trying to beat adult teams with much higher ratings. A recent example this month was the SPTW Young Stars B team, with an average rating of 1259, only losing 4-2 to a team with 1940 FIDE average! The 4NCL has provided a fantastic platform for the girls to get FIDE rated standardplay, chess and they are thriving on it.

One of the main plans we have in future is the 'WFM Programme'. We think it is a very realistic goal for girls to try and aim to get the title of Woman FIDE Master, for which a 2100 FIDE rating is required. We are planning to take a group of girls to the Barcelona Sants Open in August 2024 for FIDE rated games and social experience.

The achievement of Abigail Weersing and Eugenia Karas in reaching the WFM title in the past six months, and Zoe Varney (WCM) being on the verge of doing so, demonstrates the potential this young generation has in the UK.

I would like to thank the following in particular for their support in allowing us to do the events above:

The ECF, which has provided support for the norm events and simul;

Ellen Wilkinson School for Girls, which has provided a venue and support in growing chess at their school;

Davis Woolfe for sponsoring our first Flagship Tournament;

The numerous anonymous donors who have offered financial support. Without them we wouldn't have been able to take part in or run most of the events above.

Support

She Plays To Win needs support to help us achieve and build on the aims and goals set out.

If anyone would like to support She Plays To Win, you can do so here:

<https://www.sheplaystowin.co.uk/donate>

You can also contact us us here:
<https://www.sheplaystowin.co.uk/contact-us>

Lorin D'Costa
She Plays To Win
www.sheplaystowin.co.uk

John Nunn made Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford



Photo reproduced with the permission of Petra Nunn

Many congratulations to John Nunn, who was recently made an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford – the highest honour a college can bestow. The photo above shows him with the Provost, Lord Mendoza.

Brilliant Birmingham University Battle to Victory in 20/20 Chess Championships!

The popular 20/20 Chess Championships returned to the University of Birmingham for the 2024 season finale, and the hosts managed to win the tournament for the very first time.

They survived a scare in the second round, scraping through 2½-1½ against a spirited Reading University A side who deservedly finished third (after travelling the furthest distance to make it there), and then convincingly saw off the remaining teams to win the title with a round to spare.

Nearly £200 was raised for charity in the process, and it was also great to see juniors involved; Potteries Junior Chess Club managed to pick up 1½ points against university teams, which was extremely impressive, demonstrating the frightening potential they have.

There was even time for an impromptu individual blitz tournament afterwards, in which Philip Purcell triumphed after a play-off match.

We are already looking forward to next year's event! If you would like to get involved, please email the Tournament Director at director@worldchessleague.live.



Founder and Tournament Director Peter Hornsby (far left) shaking hands with University of Birmingham Club President Phillip Press.

David's Double

Two British Championships on the trot for David Hodge - chess solving Championships, that is. He was the winner at last year's Winton British Chess Solving Championship, and he retained his title this year.

David only won narrowly on both occasions because the evergreen Professor Jonathan Mestel came very close to overtaking him. Mestel has himself won the title many times and is also a former World Chess Solving Champion.

Third place - one of the regulars? No, a newcomer. Audrey Kueh, with no previous experience at solving championships, although a strong over the board player, achieved a superb score. Audrey narrowly edged ahead of Kamila Hryshchenko for the bronze medal position. Kamila did get a major prize, however - that for the best solving performance over the last 12 months. During 2023/24 she won multiple prizes, had a massive increase in solving Elo rating, and became a regular member of the British solving team at international competitions.

In parallel with the British Championship an Open is held, at the same time and with the same problems to solve.

This was won by one of the world's best solvers, Eddy van Beers from Belgium, with Vidmantas Satkus of Lithuania and Abdelaziz Onkoud of France in silver and bronze positions.

The competitions were held at the splendid site of Harrow School on 17th February. They were sponsored by Winton, the quantitative investment management firm (www.winton.com).

In chess solving events competitors try to solve chess problems, such as White to play and force mate in three moves, against the clock. Points are awarded for how much of the solution the solver finds. You can find all the problems on this site (and you can publish them too): <https://solving.wfcc.ch/tourneys/2024/2024-02-17-E4E628/2024-02-17-GBR-Harrow-on-the-Hill-Champ-Solutions.pdf>

The only problem that none of the competitors fully solved correctly was the second endgame study (by Zachodjakin), so you might like to challenge your publication's readers to try it!
The full results can be found here: <https://solving.wfcc.ch/wsc/2023-2024/2024-02-17-GBR-Harrow-on-the-Hill-Champ-Results.pdf>

Woody Harrelson at HMP Wormwood Scrubs

Woody Harrelson recently joined ECF International and External Relations Director Malcolm Pein to play chess with the inmates of HMP Wormwood Scrubs. You can read more about the visit here: https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/25533564/woody-harrelson-wormwood-scrubs-prison/?utm_campaign=native_share&utm_source=harebar_native&utm_medium=sharebar_native

FIDE Changes to Rating System and Title Regulations



FIDE is making some changes to its rating system and title regulations. You can find further details here:

<https://fide.com/news/2831>

The rating system changes will come into force from 1st March, and are expected to include a one-off change to standardplay FIDE ratings for players with a FIDE rating between 1000 (the current FIDE rating floor) and 2000. For these players an increase will be applied using the

formula $(0.40) \times (2000 - \text{rating})$. Players with a standard FIDE rating of 2000 or more will retain their current rating.

The rating system change is being made by FIDE to combat the noticeable deflation in FIDE ratings following the pandemic. FIDE are also increasing the FIDE rating floor from 1000 to 1400.

There will be no effect on ECF national ratings, which will remain unchanged. The ECF is reviewing the FIDE/ECF conversion formula and will advise any amendments in due course should they be needed.

British Chess Educational Trust Awards 2024



The Chess Trust are inviting nominations for the BCET Awards 2024, which are for junior schools (including colleges and other education establishments) and junior clubs in the United Kingdom. The award to schools and junior chess clubs are for those which have shown outstanding achievements or enthusiasm in chess. We are looking for a citation giving details of the school's/club's achievements, activities, and actions taken to develop and improve the standards of the juniors at those schools/clubs.

The award is an engraved board, a set of wooden pieces and a digital clock. This is a valuable award, and it acts as encouragement and incentive to the schools or junior clubs. The ECF website [Awards – Resource \(ecfresource.co.uk\)](https://ecfresource.co.uk) lists the schools/clubs that have received the award in the past with some citations; please note that a school/club can apply again for an award if the last award was not recent, and where a further award is felt to be justified.

Recommendations for awards should be sent directly to John Wickham, 55 Shakespeare Way, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6SL – or by email to j.r.wickham@btinternet.com. Recommendations can also be sent via the appropriate UK national federation (England: English Chess Federation; Scotland: Chess Scotland, Wales: Welsh Chess Union; and Northern Ireland: Ulster Chess Union) by 31st May 2024.

Glorigic Trophy 2024: Call for Nominations



The Svetozar Gligoric Trophy is an award given by FIDE to individuals who display exemplary behaviour promoting the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship in chess, and that the ECF welcomes nominations by 10th August for onward submission to FIDE.



The first recipient of the Svetozar Gligorich Award was the world champion Magnus Carlsen, who received the trophy just minutes before his debut game at the FIDE World Cup 2021 in Sochi.

JUNIOR MOVES Littlewood's Choice



I noticed recently that 11 year old Adithya Vaidyanathan had won the top Open section at the Shropshire Congress. I did some research on Adithya, and realised he was another very promising English junior.

The following game is not without its flaws, but illustrates the imaginative chess that Adithya can produce.

A. Vaidyanathan - S. Walia

UK Chess Challenge Terafinal U10

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.b4!? Nxb4 4.c3 Nc6 5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d5

Interesting is 6...e6 to prepare d5, as White cannot play 7.d5 because of 7...Qf6, winning.

7.exd5 Qxd5 8. Nc3 Qd8?

White has played the dubious Wing Gambit, which I also tried in my earlier days. However, Black has to be careful, because he can easily slip into a bad position. Essential here was 8...Qa5, as after 9.Bd2 e6 Black stands slightly better.

9.d5! Nb8 10.Rb1 Nd7 11.Bb5 Ngf6 12.Bb2?!



It is not clear where this bishop belongs yet. Much better was 12.0-0!, when after the natural 12...a6 White can continue in sacrificial style by 13.Re1! axb5 14.Nxb5 Nb6 15.Bf4, with a winning attack. For example, 15...Nbx d5 16.Nd6+ Kd7 17.Nxf7 Qa5 18.Nxh8 etc.

12....a6 13.Bc4

It is natural to want to keep this bishop, but 13.Bxd7+ Bxd7 14.0-0 allows White to complete his development. A possible continuation is 14...Bf5 15.Rc1 e6 16.Nd4 Be7 17.dxe6 Bxe6 18.Nxe6 fxe6 19.Qb3 0-0 20.Qxe6+, with a slight advantage to White.

13...g6?!

Better was 13...Nb6 14.Bb3 e5 15.Nxe5 Bd6 16.0-0 0-0, with equal chances.

14.Qe2?



Much stronger was 14.d6!, because if 14....exd6 then 15.0-0 Be7 16.Nd5 0-0 17.Qd4, with powerful threats. If Black then lashes out with 17....b5, there follows 18.Rfe1 Re8 19.Rxe7! Rxe7 20.Nxf6+ Nxf6 21.Qxf6 Re1+ 22.Rxe1 Qxf6 23.Bxf6 winning.

14....Nc5?

An improvement was the unusual 14...Bh6, guarding g5 and intending to castle kingside next move.

15.Ng5?

The natural 15.Ba3 leaves White in the driving seat after 15....Bf5 16.Bxc5 Bxb1 17.Bd4! Bg7 18.Nxb1.

15...b5 16.Nce4?



This is ingenious, but Black has a way to come through the complications and obtain the better position. Better was 16.Nxb5 axb5 17.Bxb5+, when White wins back material with a decent advantage.

16...Ncxe4 17.Nxe4 Nxe4 18.Qxe4 Bf5 19.Qf3 Bxb1?

This natural move gives White his chance. Instead, 19...bxc4 is best, when 20.d6 is countered by 20...Rb8!

20.d6! bxc4 21.Qc6+ Qd7 22.Qxa8+ Qd8 23.Qxd8+ Kxd8 24.Bxh8 f6?



No doubt stunned by 20.d6, Black now makes a mistake. Instead, 24....exd6 25.Kd2 Bd3 leaves the position about equal, with Black's two extra pawns compensating for the exchange loss.

25.Kd2 Bxa2 26.Ra1 Bb3 27.Rxa6 Kd7 28.dxe7 Bxe7 29.Bxf6

White has activated his pieces, and is now winning.

29...Bb4+ 30.Bc3 Be7 31.f4 Ke8 32. Ra7 h6 33.g4 Bd6 34.Ra8+ Kf7 35.f5?!

Personally I would have preferred the simple 35.Ke3, keeping control and avoiding the loss of the h-pawn. However, White's position is so strong that he is still winning after the move chosen.

35.....gxf5 36.gxf5 Bxh2 37.Ra7+ Kg8 38.f6 Bd6 39.Ra8+ Kf7 40.Ra7+ Kg8 41.Rg7+ Kf8 42.Ke3

The white king now joins the fray, and the end is nigh.

42...Bc5+ 43.Ke4 Ba3 44.Kd5 h5 45.Ke5

Quicker is 45.Ke6 Bd1 46.f7 Bg4+ 47.Kf6 Be7+ 48.Kg6, with Rg8+ to follow.

45....Bd1 46.Kf5 h4 47.Ra7 Bc5 48.Rc7 Bf2 49.Bb4+ Ke8 50.f7+ Kd8 51.Rxc4 1-0



Black cannot prevent the promotion of the f-pawn, so he resigned.

An exciting game, with mistakes made by both sides. However, Adithya made the most of his chances, and then played the ending extremely well to register the full point. It will be interesting to see how he progresses over the next few years.

Meanwhile, if you have played any exciting 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.

Sohum Lohia at Wijk aan Zee



Sohum Lohia won his tournament in Wijk aan Zee, which means he has qualified for the Qualifiers tournament at the Tata Steel tournament next year. This tournament is the level below the Challengers tournament:

<https://amateurs.tatasteelchess.com/tournaments/2024/nine-round/1/2/1494>

Sohum has provided the game below from this tournament:

Lohia, Sohum - Honkoop, Gilian

Wijk Aan Zee 1B (5), 23.01.2024

1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 a6 4.Ba4 Nf6 5.0-0 b5 6.Bb3 Be7 7.Re1 7.d4 d6. I knew this was a move, but I couldn't remember what exactly to do here, so I decided to just go for the main lines because I had good prep in the Breyer.

7...0-0 8.h3 d6 9.c3 Nb8 10.d4 Nbd7 11.Nbd2 Bb7 12.Bc2 Re8 13.Nf1 Bf8 14.Ng3 g6 15.Bd2 15.b3 d5 16.Bg5 h6 17.Bh4 g5 18.Nxg5 hxg5 19.Bxg5 (Polgar - Mamedyarov, Hoogeveen 2006). I saw this before the game, so I knew that Bg5 after d5 in my game should also be good, because b3 doesn't make a huge difference.

15...d5 I hadn't looked at this beforehand, so I thought it shouldn't be good.



16.Nxe5 16.Bg5!?!; 16.dxe5 dxe4 17.Nxe4 Nxe5. I was trying to make this work for some time, but I didn't see anything. 18.Bg5 (18.Nxe5 Rxe5 19.Bg5 Rxe4! 20.Qxd8 Rxe1+ 21.Rxe1 Rxd8 22.Bxf6 Rd2=) 18...Bxe4! 19.Qxd8 (19.Bxe4 Qxd1 20.Raxd1 Nxe4 21.Rxe4 Nxf3+ 22.gxf3=) 19...Nxf3+ (19...Raxd8 20.Bxe4 Ned7 21.Bc6) 20.gxf3 Raxd8 21.fxe4 is slightly better for White.

16...Nxe5 16...dxe4 17.Bg5; 16...Nxe4 17.Nxe4 dxe4 18.Bxe4 Bxe4 19.Rxe4 Nxe5 20.Rxe5.

17.dxe5 Rxe5 17...Nxe4 18.Nxe4 dxe4 19.Bxe4 (19.Bf4 is also simple and good) 19...Bxe4 20.Rxe4 Qd5 21.Qe1 (21.Qe2 f5 22.Re3 Bc5 – my opponent mentioned this variation to me after the game which I hadn't seen, but Qe1 works well for me).



18.f4 Re8 18...Rxe4 19.Nxe4 dxe4 (19...Nxe4 20.Bxe4 dxe4 21.Be3) 20.Qe2.

19.e5 Nd7 19...Ne4 – I didn't consider this seriously during the game, but the engine prefers it to Nd7 20.Nxe4 dxe4 21.Be3 c5 22.Qxd8 Raxd8 23.Kf2. It's much better for White, but the game isn't over.

20.Qg4 c5 21.Rad1 21.Bf5! A nice idea, which I hadn't seen - 21...Bc8 22.Bxd7 Bxd7 23.f5, with e6 coming next.

21...Bg7 22.Be3 Qc7 23.Bf2 23.h4 h5 24.Nxh5 gxh5 25.Qxh5 is similar.

23...Rad8 24.h4 h5 25.Nxh5 25.Qg5 Nf8 26.f5 Rxe5 27.Rxe5 Bxe5 28.Nxh5.

25...gxh5 26.Qxh5 Qc6 27.Bg3? 27.Bh7+ Kf8 28.Qf3 – the engine suggests this, but it's hard to understand. I think the main point is that Black can't do much.



27...Qh6 28.Qg4 Kh8 29.h5 Bc8 29...Rg8 was the equalising move, but it's still unclear: 30.Qf3 Bf8 31.Bh4 Re8 32.Bf5 Be7.

30.Qf3 Nf8 31.f5 Nd7 31...f6 32.e6 Re7 33.Bf4 Qh7. Black can struggle on, but White is winning: 34.Be3+.

32.f6 Nxf6 33.Bf4 Qxh5 34.exf6 Bg4 35.fxg7+ Kxg7 35...Kg8 36.Qf2 Bxd1 37.Bxd1 Rxe1+ (37...Qh7 38.Be5+–) 38.Qxe1 Qh7 (38...Qg6 39.Qh4+–) 39.Qe7+.

36.Qg3 1–0

Glorney Cup 2024

The 2024 Glorney Cup will take place between 23rd and 25th July at the University of Hull.

There will be six teams: England; England A; Ireland; International; Scotland; Wales, and the event will take place over five rounds, with two games on 23rd July and 24th July, and one game on 25th July in the morning.

If you wish your child to be considered either for England, or England A, then please complete this form: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/glorney-cup-expressions-of-interest-england/>

The International team will be composed of players resident in the British Isles who are registered to other federations apart from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. If you wish to express an interest in your child playing in that team, please complete this form: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/glorney-cup-expression-of-interest-international/>

The tournament will be followed by the British Chess Championships, also held in Hull: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>

European Youth Chess Championship

The ECF is accepting registrations for the European Youth Chess Championship in Prague (Czech Republic). The Rapid and Blitz tournaments run from 16th August - 21st August 2024, and the standardplay event runs from 21st August – 1st September 2024.

The entry forms for these events are below: <https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/european-youth-rapid-blitz-championship/> – closing date 24th May.

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/european-youth-chess-championships-2024/> - closing date 10th June.

Chess.com Article – Bodhana Sivanandan

A nicely researched article about Bodhana, including her match-up with Supratit Banerjee at Cambridge: <https://www.chess.com/news/view/bodhana-sivanandan-third-highest-rated-8-year-old-chess-player-ever>

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

As I was thinking about this article I came across the following problem:



White to play and mate in 2

A.F. Mackenzie, American Chess Monthly 1893

The solution is the remarkable **1.Qa2**, with the following main variations:

1...Rxa2 2. Nxc3#, 1...Rbxa2 2.d5#, 1...Ra8+ 2.Qxa8#, 1...Nxe1 2.Re3#

This bolt from the blue key-move spurred me on to look for this type of tactic in real games. Not long after I came across this position:



L. Ftacnik - P. Wolff

New York 1983

It is Black to move, and he played the remarkable **1...Qb2!**
This space-clearing tactic is clearly a bolt from the blue.
The game finished **2.Rxb2 Ne5+ 3.Ke3 Nfg4#**

I then began to look for examples in my own games, and I remembered the following:

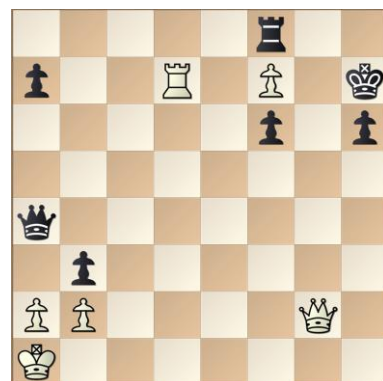


P.E. Littlewood - G.J. Willetts

Correspondence 1976

Black thought he was weathering the storm here, as after the attacked rook moves to h4 he can play Nf6, with a decent chance of surviving. However, **1.Qxf5!** made him resign, because after **1...exf5 2.Ng6** leads to an inevitable mate.

Here are two examples to solve where the winning bolt from the blue tactic came as a complete shock to the losing player. As usual, the solutions are given at the end of the article:



White's position looks lost as Black threatens **1...Qxa2#** and **1...Qxd7**, but what was the amazing winning tactic that he produced?



U. Andersson - W. Hartston

Hastings 1972/73

White has been pressurising Black for some time, and now decided to cash in by playing **1.Qxc7**. Why was this a terrible mistake?

Answers:

Position 1

White played the amazing **1.Qg8+!** and after **1....Rxg8** then **2.f8=N++ Kh8 3.Rh7#**.

U. Andersson - W. Hartston

The bolt from the blue was **1...Qh3+!** This leads to a forced mate after: (a) **2.Kxh3 Bf1#**; (b) **2.Kh1 Qf1+ 3.Bg1 Qxf3#** or (c) **2.Kf2 Qf1#**.

Keep watching for those tactics!

Paul Littlewood Email: plittl@hotmail.com

Gormally's Coaching Corner

by Danny Gormally



How to be a lucky player - Part II

Turner, Matthew - Dunworth, Christopher
Newport (6), 2000

A chess player from my generation who was often referred to as 'lucky' was (and is) Matthew Turner. As already discussed in the first article, the idea of a chess player being lucky is often exaggerated, and partly dictated by style. Matthew Turner, like other 'lucky' players we have already discussed, doesn't tend to lean heavily on opening theory, and often outplays his opponents in the latter part of the game. That produces the effect of seeming to be lucky, more so at least than someone who is heavily prepped, but disappointing once they reach their desired position. One aspect where Turner always stood out was his tactical ability. He had an ability to find the hidden resource, the consequence of having a quick mind, which might explain how he was able to get to the final of Countdown and also complete a degree at Cambridge. Having that tactical ability can enable you to overturn many dubious positions, thus achieving the sobriquet 'lucky'.

1.c4 g6 2.Nc3 Bg7 3.g3 e5 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.e3 d6 6.Nge2 Be6 7.d3 Qd7 8.Nd5 Nd8 9.b3 c6 10.Ndc3 Bh3 11.Bxh3 Qxh3 12.Ba3 Qd7 13.Ne4 Bf8 14.f4 f5 15.Ng5 h6 16.Nf3 Bg7 17.fxe5 dxe5 18.d4 Nf7 19.dxe5 Qxd1+ 20.Rxd1 Nxe5 21.Nxe5 Bxe5 22.Nf4 g5 23.Ng6 Bc3+ 24.Ke2 Rh7 25.Rhf1 Rf7 26.Rd6 Rf6



27.h4? if 'lucky' players have a weakness, it is often that their own technique can be a bit shaky at times. They put so much effort into turning around bad positions that prosecuting their own advantages can seem alien to them.

27.Rd3! Ba5 (27...Rxc6 28.Rxc3 Rf6 29.Rd3 Rd8 30.Bb2 Rf7 31.Rxd8+ Kxd8 32.e4 Ne7 33.Rd1+ Kc8 34.Rd6+–) 28.Ne5, and the weakness of the pawn on f5 will likely prove decisive.

27...Rxd6 28.Bxd6 Kf7 29.h5?! 29.Be5 Kxg6 30.Bxc3.

29...Ke6 30.Bc5 Rd8 31.Nf8+? Turner is a chess optimist, but this is pushing it too far. It was time to bail out with 31.e4! fxe4 32.Nf8+ Ke5 33.Ng6+–.

31...Ke5 32.Ng6+ Ke4 The powerful threat is ... Rd2+, so White feels obliged to part with a pawn.

33.Bd4 Bxd4 34.exd4 Rxd4 35.Re1 f4? 35...Rd3 36.Kf2+ Kd4 37.Re6 Rd2+ 38.Kf1 Rxa2 would lead to a fairly trivial win.

36.gxf4 gxf4 37.Kf2+ Kf5 38.Nh4+ Kg4 39.Nf3! So resilient.

39...Rd8 40.Rg1+ Kxh5 41.Ne5 No doubt Turner was fixing Dunworth with his trademark stare at this point, because the pressure gets too much and Chris soon blunders.

41...Re8 42.Ng6 Nf6 43.Kf3



43...b5? 43...Rg8! 44.Nxf4+ Kh4=.

44.Kxf4 Now the threat is Kf5 and Nf4, and Black has no reasonable defence.

44...Ne4 45.c5 a6 46.Kf5 Nf2 47.Rg2 Nh3 48.Rg4 Ng5 49.Nf4# 1–0

Gormally, Daniel - Turner, Matthew (2491)

Golombek Memorial Paignton (5), 07.09.2000

As already stated, Matthew Turner is a chess optimist. He is able to find hidden resources and interesting ideas because of this optimistic outlook, and is able to turn around bad positions. Most 'lucky' players, if not all of them, are optimists by nature. If you have that positive outlook, then good things happen. Turner is able to turn around a lot of games, and his comeback ratio over the 60 games I took of his from the year 2000 almost 25% in total. That's a fairly high number, and almost as high as Fernandez. Comeback games refers to games where you were losing at some point but were able to turn it around into a draw or a win. If you have a positive outlook, that can communicate to your opponent in a positive way, just as if your head goes down and you look concerned, that can feed confidence into your opponent.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.a3 Ba6 5.Qc2 Bb7 6.Nc3 c5 7.e4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Nc6 9.Nxc6 Bxc6 10.Be2 Qc7 11.f4 e5 12.f5 Bc5 13.Bf3 h6 14.Qd3 Qd6 14...Bd4 15.Ne2 0–0 16.Nxd4 exd4 17.Qxd4 Bxe4!



was better for Black, but this is an engine line, and I'm not sure how much either of us saw of this.

15.Qe2?! I think this shows a weakness in my style, namely that I'm reluctant to go into endgames.

15.Qxd6 Bxd6 16.Be3.

15...Rc8 16.Bd2 Bd4 17.Rd1 Qe7?! 17...a6 18.Qd3 0-0.

18.g4! g6 19.fxg6 fxg6 20.h4 Kd8 21.b4? Kc7 22.Nd5+



22...Bxd5 22...Nxd5! 23.exd5 Ba4 24.c5 Kb8 25.Qe4 Qf8 favours Black.

23.exd5 Kd8? This was a complicated early middlegame, but 23...d6 was preferable, with an advantage.

24.g5



24...hxg5? 24...e4! 25.gxf6 Qxf6 26.Bxe4 Re8.

25.Bxg5 Now Black is in a very awkward pin.

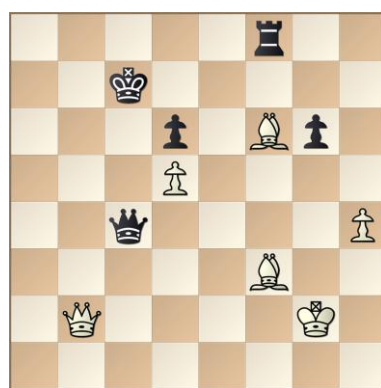
25...Rf8 26.Kf1 a5 27.Kg2 From memory, I felt around here that I was doing well. The black king is badly placed on d8, and all my forces are primed to attack.

27...axb4 28.axb4 Qxb4 29.Rxd4 exd4 30.Qe5 Qe7 31.Qxd4 Qd6 32.Rb1 Ra8 33.Rxb6 Ra2+ 34.Kf1



So far I'm doing everything correctly, and White is now winning.

34...Ra1+ 35.Qxa1 Qxb6 36.c5 Qxc5 37.Bxf6+ Kc7 38.Kg2 d6 39.Qb2 Qc4



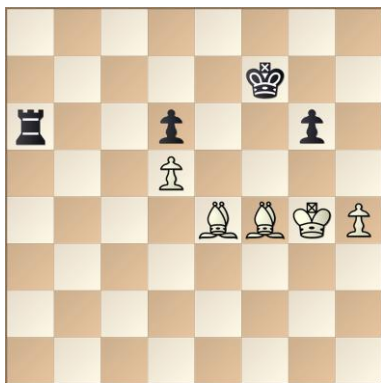
40.Qc3 This is good enough, and I guess I just thought that White would win the resulting endgame as a matter of course. But Turner kept putting up stubborn defence.

Perhaps 40.Bd4 was simplest. 40...Rxf3 (40...Rb8 41.Qd2+) 41.Kxf3 Qxd5+ 42.Kg3 would definitely have concerned me as White only has one pawn left. But the engine thinks this is completely winning, and I guess it is just a matter of time. 42...g5 43.h5+.

40...Qxc3 41.Bxc3 Kd7 42.Kg3 Ke7 43.Bd2 The bishop is already well placed. It was time to attack the g-pawn.

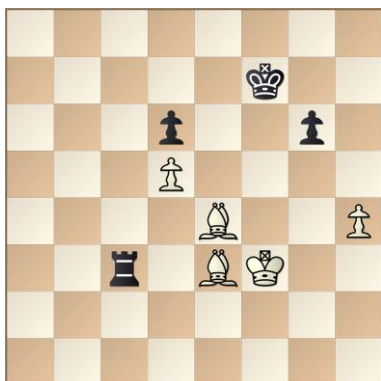
43.Be4 Kf7 44.Kf4 Rc8 45.Bb4 Rh8 46.Kg4 Re8 47.Bf3 Rd8 (47...Ke7 48.Kg5+—) 48.Kg5, and White is gradually making progress and should win.

43...Ra8 44.Bg5+ Kf7 45.Bf4 Ra6 46.Be4 Kf6 47.Bg5+ Kf7 48.Bd2 Ra2 49.Bf4 Ra6 50.Kg4



It is interesting how your opponent's body language can have an effect on your view of the position. Doubtless Matthew was playing quickly and confidently, a bit of a bluff as Black is objectively lost here, but I soon become perturbed, and lose faith in my ability to convert my advantage.

50...Kf6 51.Bd2 Ra4 52.Kf4 Kf7 53.Be3 Rb4 54.Kf3 Rb3 55.Bc2 Rc3 56.Be4



It is crazy to agree to a draw here. A true chess optimist like Turner surely would have played on; I had been going backwards in the last few moves, but White can hardly lose from here, so why not carry on? You manoeuvre around, and eventually should be able to make progress. I guess I was more concerned about getting back out on the putting green that was outside the venue.

56.Be4 Ra3 57.Kf4 Ra4 58.Bc1! Ke7:

a) **58...Rb4 59.Ba3 Rb6 60.Kg5+-;**

b) **58...Kf6**



is the most obdurate variation. You just wait and try to prevent the attack on b4, which would tie Black down and enable White to make progress. 59.Bd2 Kf7 60.Kf3 (60.Bc3 Ke7 61.Be1 Kf7 62.Bd2 Kf6 63.Ke3 Kf7 64.Bc3 Ra3 65.Kd3 Ra4 66.Bd2 Kg7 67.Ke3 Rc4 68.Kf3 Ra4 69.Bf4 Ra3+ 70.Ke2 Ra2+ 71.Kd3 Ra6 72.Kc4 Ra4+ 73.Kd3 Ra6 it's tough to make progress.) 60...Ra3+ 61.Ke2 Ra4 62.Ke3 Ra3+ 63.Kd4 (63.Bd3 Ra4) 63...Ra4+ 64.Kd3 Ra3+ 65.Kc4 Rg3 66.Bg5 and the white king now intends to raid to b5 and then c6.

59.Kf3 Kf7 60.Bf4 Ra6 61.Bd3 Ra3 62.Ke2 Ra2+ 63.Ke3 for example, was one way to win. ½-½

Clarke, Brandon - Pichot, Alan

POR-chT Sao Joao da Madeira (2.4), 18.07.2023



Brandon Clarke could not really be described as a 'lucky' player, and that's because he is well prepared and is more likely to have his opponents on the back foot from the opening, rather than the other way around. You don't have to come back very often if you are always better. His statistics reflect that because from 48 games that I surveyed, he only had four 'comeback' wins. He had 21 wins, five losses and 21 draws, a reflection that he is mainly a solid chess player. On the few occasions when Brandon was in trouble, he was often able to show comeback abilities.

28.hxg4



Although this position looks like it might have arisen from a Berlin Defence, in reality it was a Scotch Opening. Unfortunately, White is dead lost here for the following reasons: (a). The white pawn on f3 is chronically weak; (b). White doesn't have any targets to aim at, while by contrast Black can easily take aim at White with his bishop pair and active rooks.

28...a4 29.Rf2 29.bxa4 Bc4+.

29...Rh2 30.Rdf1 R7h3 31.Ng1 Rh6 32.Ne2 axb3+? This alleviates some of the pressure.

32...b5! 33.Bd2 b4 34.Nc1 c5, and Black is breaking through.

33.axb3 Kb7? 33...b5 34.Nc1 b4 35.Be1 c5!.



A crucial break to get in, as in contrast to the game Black is able to easily liquidate his doubled pawns, after which his bishop pair will get full control of the board. **36.d5 (36.dxc5 Bxc5 37.Re2 Be8!) 36...c6 37.dxc6 c4+.**

34.Nc1! R6h3 34...c5 35.d5 is still better for Black, but White will quickly play Nd3 and make it tough to break through.

35.Nd3 Be6 36.Rxh2 Rxh2+ 37.Rf2 Rh1 38.Ne5 White is over the worst, at least for the time being. Of course, you'd expect a 2600+ player to keep torturing you with a small advantage, and that's exactly what Pichot does.

38...Bd6 39.Nc4 Bf8 40.Ne5 Be7 41.Kb2 Bg8 42.Kc2 Rh6 43.Rd2 Ka6 44.Kb2 Kb5 45.Rc2 Rh3 46.Rf2 Be6 47.Kc2 Bd6 48.Nd3 Rh1 49.Bb2 Be7 50.Bc3 Bg8 51.Ne5 Bd6 52.Nd3 Bf8 53.Ne5 Be7 54.Kb2 Bd6 55.Nd3 Rd1 56.Rd2 Rf1 57.Rf2 Rh1 58.Kc2 Ba3 59.Re2 Bf7 60.Rf2 Be8 61.Re2 Bd6 62.Rf2 c5 63.dxc5 bxc5 64.Bf6! c4 65.bxc4+ Kxc4 66.Nb2+ Kb4 67.Bxg5 Bb5 68.Nd3+ Kc4 69.Kd2 Ra1 70.Bxf4



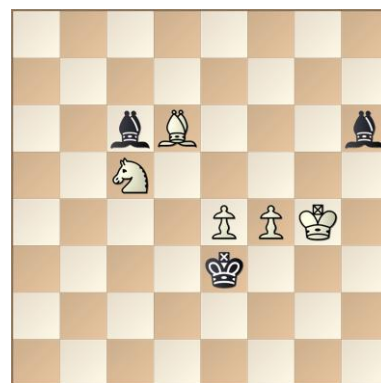
70...Ra2+? As we have already seen in other 'lucky' games, if you defend obdurately enough you often tire out the aggressor and get chances to win yourself, and that's exactly what happens in this game.

70...Bxf4+ 71.Nxf4 Ra2+ 72.Ke3 Ra3+=.

71.Ke3 Rxf2 72.Nxf2 Bc5+ 73.Ke2 Kc3+ 74.Ke1 Kc2 75.Nh3 Bb4+ 76.Kf2 c5 77.Bd6 Kd1 78.Kg2 Ke1 79.g5 Be8 80.Nf4 presumably Brandon was getting short of time, because this is not the most accurate.

80.f4 was a simpler way to the goal. **80...Bd2 (80...Ke2 81.f5 Bc6 82.f6 Bxe4+ 83.Kg3+-) 81.Bxc5+-.**

80...Bd2 81.Nd3+ Ke2 82.Nxc5 Bxg5 83.f4 Bh6 84.Kg3 Ke3 85.Kg4 Bc6



86.Kf5? 86.f5 Be8 87.e5+-.

86...Kf3 87.Kf6 Bxf4 88.Bxf4 Bxe4 89.Ke5 ½-½

25.Kf1?! allowing Black to escape the danger zone.

STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

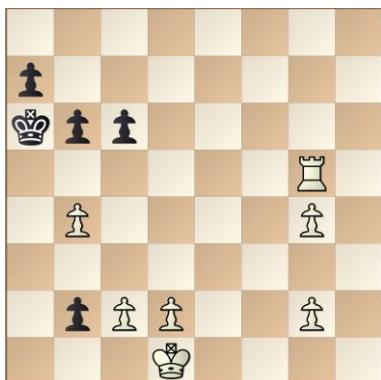
How to Solve a Study

by Ian Watson

Stop That Pawn!

Black has a pawn about to promote, and it seems as if you can't stop it. That's the theme of this month's study for you to solve; it's a new composition by Paul Michelet, our most frequent contributor. The same theme has been used in a few older studies, but as far as I know it doesn't have a name - yet. I offer 'Stop That Pawn!' as its name.

Here's an example, composed by Jean-Claude Letzelter and published in *Europe Echecs* in 1978:



White to play and win

Solving it isn't very challenging, because the promotion threat is so strong. You can play the first move without knowing what it achieves, for lack of alternatives: 1.b5+. How will Black respond? Why is 1...cxb5 not a good reply? Again, not hard to see, given White's lack of options: 2.Rxb5 Kxb5 3.c4+ and 4.Kc2. When you see that, it's also clear why 1...Ka5 doesn't work - you can play 2.bxc6+ and then 3.Rb5 and so on. So, 1...Kb7 instead, but now you've got the theme in your mind you can quickly find 2.bxc6+ Kxc6 3.Rb5 Kxb5 4.c4+ with 5.Kc2 to follow. Job done. Or not... this is a composed study, so you should be suspicious if it's very simple. That thought enables you to find 4...Kb4 5.Kc2 Ka3 6.Kb1 Kb3. Now you notice that you can't just push your g4-pawn, as Black's a-pawn mates you first, but again that makes White's next move easy: 7.c5. That meets 7...a5 with 8.cxb6, and 7...bxc5 with 8.g5, because the promotion will now be with check. This study all but solves itself - so long as you remember to be

suspicious. The full solution is **1.b5+ Kb7 2.bxc6+ Kxc6 3.Rb5 Kxb5 4.c4+ Kb4 5.Kc2 Ka3 6.Kb1 Kb3 7.c5** and wins.

Letzelter was a strong over the board player, and was three times French champion. Most of his chess composing has been done in the years since he largely retired from playing, although there's a fine mate in seven moves problem that he composed when he was a teenager.

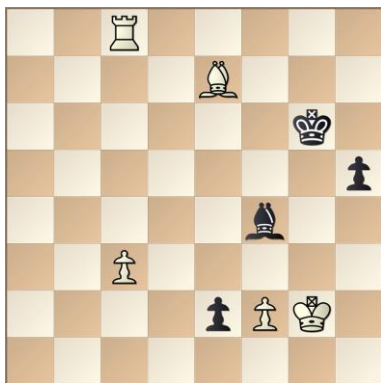
Now another 'Stop That Pawn!' study. This is by one of the great study composers of the early twentieth century, Leonid Kubbel. It was published in 1924, so exactly a century ago, in *28 Rijen*:



White to play and draw

Not as trivial as the first study, but not too tough, because now you know the basic mechanism. That mechanism is: decoying the black king to a square where you can check it by moving the white pawn that's impeding White's king. That clearly can't be done yet, so we need to aim towards it. Begin by trying the obvious first move(s). 1.c7? fails to both 1...Nxc7 and 1...Kd7. 1.Bf4+ seems a better shot, because of 1...Nxf4 2.c7 Kd7 3.Nc5+ and 4.Nb3, but Black doesn't have to capture the bishop and can simply withdraw his king. So it has to be 1.Bc5+. 1...Kxc6 2.Nb4+ is simple, and so is 1...Nxc5 2.c7 Kd7 3.Nxc5+. Therefore 1...Ke5. You can't dislodge Black's knight, so there's only 2.c7 Nxc7. If you capture by 3.Nxc7, White won't be able to defend that B&N v Q ending. Instead, continue to aim for the theme mechanism, which you can probably see now: 3.Bd4+ Kxd4 4.Nc5 Kxc5 5.b4+ Kxb4 6.Kb2 and draws. The full solution is **1.Bc5+ Ke5 2.c7 Nxc7 3.Bd4+ Kxd4 4.Nc5 Kxc5 5.b4+ Kxb4 6.Kb2** drawing.

So to your solving task. Paul has built in a 'try' on move 1; that means a move that almost solves but fails to one response by Black. Your task is to find the correct solution, and also to find why the alternative first move doesn't solve the study:



White to play and draw

The solution is given at the end of the magazine

Ian Watson Email: ian@irwatson.uk

Monthly Conundrum by Christopher Jones

First, let's look at the problem I left with you last time:



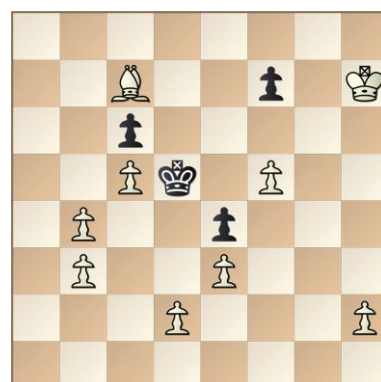
Hans Peter Rehm, Bernd Ellinghoven and Kjell Widlert
Prize, Paris Theme Tourney 1985
Mate in 3

As I said last time, this is more difficult than the problems I usually leave for solving. I gave the hint that we need to improve the position of one of the white pieces in such a way as to threaten mate on move 3, and we can expect the line-up of bBh1 and bRf3 against the white king, masked in the diagram position, to provide the sort of fireworks that composers like to display. And the key is 1.Rd6!, threatening 2.Nxc2+ Kxe2 3.Rd2#. The various ways in which the black rook can move from f3 discovering check do indeed provide fireworks - White must respond accurately to each of Black's possibilities. (It helps that the moves of the f3R open the line of the h5B, defending the d2R.) If 1...Rf2+ or 1...Rf1+, then 2.Nc6+ does the trick. If instead 1...Rf4+, then 1...Nc6+ no longer works (as both the Bh1 and the Rf4 can intercept on the

d-file), but the interception of the h6-d2 line means that we can play 2.Rg2+! Ke1 3.Bd2#. If 1...Rxe3+, then the necessary reply is 2.Ndf3+!, importantly eyeing e1, e.g. 2...Rd3 3.Re1# (alternatively, 2...Kxd2 3.Rd2#, with the bR blocking the 'otherwise flight square', e3). Another defence is 1...Bxe3, whereupon 2.Rxe3 seals the deal.

If you had a go at this one, you may have found the computer a useful ally. If you found all these ramifications without that ally, you really should think about getting into competitive solving!

I said in a recent column that the British Chess Problem Society is a mix of people whose main interest is solving chess problems, and people whose focus is rather on trying to compose problems (with a few people who have a foot in both camps); and I said that, while the solving side of things is quite buoyant, we worry about the dearth of composing talent. Newly composed problems – 'originals' – are the lifeblood of many chess composition websites and magazines (such as the BCPS's journal *The Problemist*), and upon receipt of a magazine I often look first at the originals, partly in the hope of seeing new names (especially British ones) over the diagrams. Alas, I rarely see what I'm hoping for. If you are tempted to try your hand at composing, why not send me what you have composed? In this spirit, here is an original, albeit not by a newcomer to composition, but rather by an experienced composer, some of whose endgame studies you may have seen in Ian Watson's *ChessMoves* studies column:



Mate in 8
Paul Michelet (London)
Original

Before going any further, you may like to have a look at it with a view to perhaps solving it.

A composer usually has in mind a task that he wants to achieve when composing. In this case, you might be able to intuit from the set-up of pawns what it is that Paul wanted to achieve (although I'm not sure whether I would have!).

In the diagram Black has only one legal move. So White has one 'spare' move before, on move 2, granting the black king some freedom to roam – or, at least, to oscillate between d5 and e5. So we start with 1.Bg3, and then, after 1...f6, play 2.Bf2. The reason why f2, rather than e1 or h4, is chosen becomes clear later. Black plays 2...Ke5, and now, because we need the white king to be in closer attendance, we play 3.Kg6. There follows 3...Kd5 4.Kh5 Ke5 5.Kg4 Kd5, and now we come to the nub of this composition. White must play 6.d4!. As we shall see, there is a mating continuation when Black makes the compulsory reply 6...exd4 e.p.; but it was necessary to play 6.d4 rather than 6.d3 because 6.d3 would have allowed 6...Ke5, after which we can't force mate on move 8. After 6...exd4 e.p. 7.Kf4 d2 8.e4 is mate (with d4 now guarded by the bishop that chose to go to f2 on move 2).

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

Christopher Jones Email: cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

The challenge that Paul had set himself was to construct a scenario in which White would *have to* move a pawn two squares to be captured e.p., because moving one square, envisaging a conventional capture, would fail. It is by no means easy to set this up. (Do have a go at emulating this in a sound problem if you are tempted!) It is hoped that the challenge to the composer to set this up will be matched by the pleasure of the solver in unearthing this rather cryptic feature.

In his problems Paul has shown this sort of diagram position – this 'matrix' – to illustrate a number of thematic ideas. I leave you with a revised version of a 2013 problem of his, which you may like to have a go at solving before I reveal the solution in the next issue:



Mate in 7

Paul Michelet

Correspondence Chess, 2013 (version)

No question of an e.p. capture this time, but you will find that Paul had in mind some highly eye-catching strategic play, in which the proximity of the white king to its black counterpart is a significant feature. At first glance 1.Kg5 looks good (1...Ke3 2.Kg4#), but Black can play 1...d5!.

EVENTS CALENDAR

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

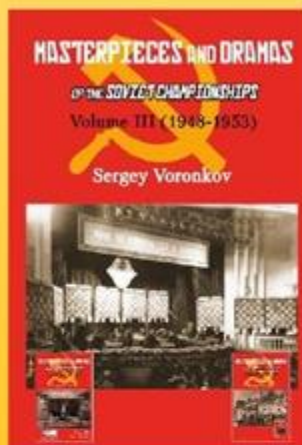
Week Beginning 26 February 2024	
27 February 2024	Simul vs GM Sergey Tiviakov - Snodland, Kent
1 March 2024	5th Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress - Torquay
2 March 2024	BBCA ECF Rated Rapid Chess Tournament - London
2 March 2024	Coulsdon Chess Juniors English Chess Challenge Qualifiers
2 March 2024	5th Swindon Rapidplay
2 March 2024	University of Warwick 6th Rapidplay 2024
2 March 2024	British Rapidplay Championship 2024 - Peterborough
2 March 2024	Maidenhead Junior Tournament March 2024
3 March 2024	8th Brentwood Junior Chess Tournament
3 March 2024	EJCOA Bucks Qualifier March
3 March 2024	Ealing Broadway FIDE Rapid 2024
Week Beginning 4 March 2024	
6 March 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Spring 2024
7 March 2024	Hendon FIDE Blitz
8 March 2024	2023/24 Birmingham & District Junior Chess League -Tournament 4 ECF Team Challenge
8 March 2024	Inaugural Wells Chess Congress
9 March 2024	4NCL Season 2023/24 Weekend 4 Rounds 7 & 8 - Warwick
9 March 2024	YJCA Grand Prix Event 3 - Holmfirth
9 March 2024	Golders Green FIDE Rapid 2024
Week Beginning 11 March 2024	
12 March 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
13 March 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Spring 2024
15 March 2024	24th Fareham Congress
16 March 2024	4NCL Season 2023/24 Weekend 4 Rounds 7 & 8 - Telford
16 March 2024	Wimbledon FIDE Rapidplay
17 March 2024	Kensington FIDE Rapid 2024
Week Beginning 18 March 2024	
19 March 2024	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess 2024
20 March 2024	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Club Spring 2024
23 March 2024	2024 Birmingham Junior Open
23 March 2024	The 1st Bovey Tracey Weekender - Saturday Rapidplay
23 March 2024	Darnall & Handsworth 7th FIDE Rated Rapidplay
23 March 2024	1st Cheam FIDE Rapidply
23 March 2024	Poplar Rapid Tournament
23 March 2024	Southall FIDE Congress
24 March 2024	37th Birmingham Rapidplay
24 March 2024	EJCOA North West Qualifier 2024
24 March 2024	Bourne End One-Day Chess Congress
24 March 2025	Coulsdon Chess Juniors English Chess Challenge Qualifiers
Week Beginning 25 March 2024	
28 March 2024	Southend Easter Chess Festival 2024
28 March 2024	Southend Masters 2024
29 March 2024	Bolton Easter Congress 2024
29 March 2024	4th 4NCL EaSter Congress - Peterborough
30 March 2024	Wimbledon FIDE Congress

How to Solve a Study – solution

(Michelet)

1.Rc6+ Kf5 2.Rf6+ Ke5 3.Rxf4 Kxf4 4.Bg5+ Kxg5 5.f4+ Kxf4 6.Kf2 h4 7.Kxe2 Kg3 8.Kf1 draws.

The first move try is 1.Rg8+? This works against three black responses: 1...Kf5 2.Rf8+ Ke6 3.Bh4; 1...Kh6 2.Bf8+ Kh7 3.Rg7+; and 1...Kf7 2.Bb4 Kxg8 3.c4. It fails to 1...Kh7 2.Rf8 e1Q 3.Rxf4 Qxe7 because the black h-pawn prevents there being a fortress.



New books from Elk and Ruby

- Masterpieces and Dramas of the Soviet Championships: Volume III (1948-1953) by *Sergey Voronkov*
- The Pawn Study Composer's Manual by *Mikhail Zinar*
- 101 Endgame Masterclasses: Rooks and Material Imbalances by *Alexander Galkin*
- Mate Threats and Defense - 1000 Tactical Examples by *Jakov Geller*



Available in the UK
from Chess & Bridge
and on Amazon

