



Chess*Moves*

January 2025



**The British Chess Championship, Hastings
International Chess Congress, 4NCL
Huddersfield ... and much more**

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EDITORIAL



Welcome to the January 2025 edition of *ChessMoves*!

We make no apology for the slight delay to this month's magazine, as we've just finalised the dates and venue for this year's British Chess Championships. We're delighted to be able to announce that they will be held **at St George's Hall in Liverpool**, a truly prestigious Liverpool landmark very kindly provided to us by Liverpool City Council, and **the Liverpool Holiday Inn**, with events running from **31st July to 10th August 2025**. For more details about the ECF's flagship event please follow this link:

<https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>.

The first weekend in March also sees the annual British Rapidplay Championship at Holiday Inn Peterborough – West, run as usual by the 4NCL in partnership with the ECF. You can find full details here:

<https://www.4ncl.co.uk/rp/2025/information.htm>.

This month we have the usual cornucopia of articles, with congress activity in particular strongly represented, together with the usual articles from our regular GM and IM contributors. Without in any way wishing to toot my own horn (!), may I bring to your attention the start of a new bi-monthly series of articles in which yours truly hopes to provide instruction for club players, improvers and novices. I would welcome feedback on these articles – you can reach me at the email address below. While writing, I should belatedly thank GM John Nunn for his wonderful series of articles on great British players, which came to an end a few months ago. If you would like to catch up on any of these, or indeed any other articles, they can be found in the *ChessMoves* archive here: <https://www.englishchess.org.uk/enewsletter-archives/>.

Finally, The Sport and Recreation Alliance's Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025 celebrate outstanding achievements by young individuals aged between 18 and 30. Please go to the end of this issue if you would like to nominate someone from the chess world for an award. Time is tight – nominations close on 12th February!

All the games within are presented in PGN format here -

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/ChessMoves-January-2025.pgn> - but note that you will need to use ChessBase or a PGN viewer to access the games.

Enjoy!

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EVENTS

British Chess Championships 2025



We are delighted to announce that this year's British Chess Championships will be held at St George's Hall in Liverpool and the Liverpool Holiday Inn, with events running from 31st July to 10th August 2025. For more details about this prestigious event please follow this link: <https://www.britishchesschampionships.co.uk/>

The press release for the event is below.

Liverpool's iconic St George's Hall to host 'strongest ever' 2025 British Chess Championships

Liverpool will play host to the prestigious 2025 British Chess Championships alongside a wider chess festival this summer, when organisers hope to put on the strongest event in its 121-year history.

Britain's top chess players will converge on Liverpool from 31st July to 10th August as the English Chess Federation's flagship annual event comes to the city for only the second time, it was announced on Friday.

It will culminate in new British champions being named in all age groups.

A series of tournaments featuring the cream of Britain's chess talent, including the Open and Women's Championships, will be held in Liverpool's landmark St George's Hall. A weekend congress for amateurs will also be held at the nearby Liverpool Holiday Inn in Lime Street.

Alongside the competitive events Liverpool will host a festival and programme of social and cultural activities, organised in association with the city's historic Liverpool Chess Club.

This will be the 111th British Chess Championships — a series that has run almost unbroken since 1904. GM Gawain Jones was the 2024 British champion, with WGM Lan Yao and WIM Trisha Kanyamarala the joint British women's champions.

The last two British Chess Championships, held in Leicester and Hull, have seen record numbers competing. Continuing growth is expected this year.

UK chess has also been experiencing a boom in participation among amateurs and success at the top level. In 2024 two new English grandmasters were named: teenage sensation Shreyas Royal and England's newest grandmaster Ameet Ghasi.

The event is being put on by the English Chess Federation in partnership with Liverpool City Council and St George's Hall, with support from the Chess Trust and the John Robinson Chess Trust.

Liverpool City Council's Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Culture, Councillor Harry Doyle, said: 'Liverpool has a long and rich connection with chess and it's a hugely popular activity in schools and communities so we are delighted to be hosting the British Chess Championships later this summer.'

'St George's Hall, with its incredible architecture and acoustics, will offer the perfect backdrop, lending itself perfectly to quiet, focused gameplay, which is sure to result in a thrilling competition for contestants and spectators alike.'

'This is yet another coup for Liverpool as we continue to position ourselves as a versatile events city, and we look forward to working closely with the English Chess Federation and Chess In Schools and Communities to give a warm Liverpool welcome to the best of the best from the chess world.'

It is a welcome return to Liverpool, a city steeped in chess culture. Liverpool boasts a thriving local league and, in Liverpool Chess Club, one of the oldest chess clubs in the world founded in 1837. Atticus Chess Club, based in the Cross Keys Pub in Earle Street, is also a former winner of the National Club Championship.

Chess was also a key theme when the city hosted the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest for Ukraine, with school children encouraged to learn the game to honour the link with Liverpool's sister city, Odesa. Schools were tasked with producing Eurovision-themed chess pieces, and a unique chess event featuring players from Liverpool and Ukraine was held at St Luke's Bombed Out Church.

Liverpool last hosted the British in 2008, the year the city was named the European Capital of Culture. That year grandmaster Stuart Conquest emerged victorious as the

2008 Open champion, while international master Jovanka Houska won the first of her nine Women's titles.

Nigel Towers, the English Chess Federation's Director for Home Chess, said: '2008 was recognised as a strong event with many titled players. However, we expect the return visit in 2025 to provide an even more competitive championship and one of the strongest British tournaments ever, given the increasing numbers of active British grandmasters and international masters and the current generation of top-level juniors.'

Amos Burn, one of the world's strongest chess players in the 19th century, was a member of the Liverpool Chess Club from 1867 until his death in 1925, serving as its president for many years.

Among the top players Liverpool has produced are four-time British Women's champion Sheila Jackson, 15th Correspondence World Championship participant John Carleton, and international masters Gary Quillan and Malcolm Pein, a former British junior champion. Nearby Southport has also produced two grandmasters in Nigel Davies and Stuart Hasling.

4NCL Huddersfield Congress by Nigel Davies

Davies, Nigel R (2302) - Ganti, Shriaansh (1943)

32nd 4NCL Congress Cedar Court, Huddersfield (4.6), 19.01.2025

It was a pleasure as usual to play in a 4NCL weekend congress, this time held in the Cedar Court Hotel in Huddersfield. The venue was great, having recently been refurbished, and I was particularly impressed by the space age check-in facilities. I managed to miss out on a share of first place by drawing a winning endgame in the last round. My most publishable one was this win from round 4 against a young player who was performing at close to 2400 at the time.

1.Nf3 d5 2.g3 Nf6 3.Bg2 e6 4.0-0 Be7 5.d3 c6 A strange answer by Black, which suggested that he was on his own. My guess is that the set-up he now adopts was his line against the Catalan, but this would require me to play c2-c4 and d2-d4.

6.Nbd2 b6 6...Nbd7 7.e4 Qc7 8.Qe2 dxe4 9.dxe4 e5 was best, as in Vaganian, Rafael A - Radjabov, Teimour, 1-0, Wch Blitz 4th, 2008.

7.e4 Bb7 8.Re1 0-0 9.e5 Nfd7 10.Nf1 c5 11.h4 This starts to look quite scary for Black, not least because his queenside play will be difficult to get started. This explains why he wanted to free his kingside by preparing ...f7-f6, but unfortunately this leads to further weaknesses.

11...Re8 12.N1h2 Until this point, the game had followed one of Kochiev's (Kochyev, A - Tuomala, T, Helsinki Open 1996), which here went 12.h5 Bf8 13.h6 gxh6 14.N1h2 f5 15.exf6 Nxf6 16.Bh3 Bc8 17.Ne5 Bg7 18.Nhg4 Nxd4 19.Nxd4 e5 20.Bxh6 Nc6 21.Bg2 Qd6 22.Bxg7 Kxg7 23.Ne3 d4 24.Nc4 Qf6 25.Nxe5 Nxe5 26.Rxe5 Qxe5 27.Bxa8 h5 28.Be4 Bg4 29.Qd2 Qf6 30.f3 Be6 31.Qh2 Rh8 32.Kf2 Qh6 33.f4 Rf8 34.Qh4 Rf7 35.Bf3 Bg4 36.Re1 1-0. Obviously I wasn't aware of this at the time!

12...f6 13.exf6 Bxf6 14.Ng4 Na6 Black wants to be able to defend e6 with this knight by placing it on c7, but there's also the e5-square to think about.

15.c3 b5 15...e5 would also be met by 16.Bg5, with all sorts of threats.

16.Bg5 h6 17.Bxf6 Nxf6 18.Nfe5 Nxd4 19.Qxd4 Nc7 20.d4 Black's position is strategically lost, but it still has to be won by White.

20...c4 21.Bf3 Simply intending to transfer the bishop to the b1-h7 diagonal.

21...Bc8 22.Bd1 Qf6 23.Re3 Qf5 23...Rf8 would be met by 24.Rf3 Qd8 25.Bc2 etc.

24.Qe2 Rf8 25.Bc2 Qf6 26.Re1 Qd8 27.Qh5 Qe8 28.Bg6 Qe7 29.g4 Rf6 30.g5 Rf4 31.gxh6 gxh6 32.Rg3 Qxh4 33.Bh7+ Black is getting mated immediately, or will first lose his queen. **1-0**

4NCL Huddersfield Congress by Danny Gormally

Patel, Keatan (1935) - Gormally, Daniel W (2423)

32nd 4NCL Congress Cedar Court, Huddersfield (1.1), 17.01.2025

The traditional January 4NCL congress took part in Huddersfield this year after having always been held in another Yorkshire venue - Harrogate. Which do you prefer? Huddersfield is a more gritty, earthy, part of Yorkshire, buried away deep in the Calderdale valley. The hotel, the Cedar Court, was very nice and the rooms were

splendid. The only downside was that it was situated off a very busy motorway, but that wouldn't be an issue if you had a car. It was just that going out for a walk, as chess players tend to do, wasn't especially appetizing with cars speeding by. In the first round I had a very typical pairing for an open Swiss event. I was paired against a 17 year old player, Keatan Patel, so I was giving away 31 years. As I said, typical!

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.Bb5+ Nd7 4.c3 Ngf6 5.Qe2



I have faced this system online, and I think over the board as well. White wants to build a strong centre with d4.

5...a6 6.Ba4 e6 7.O-O Be7 8.d4 cxd4 9.cxd4 b5 10.Bc2 Bb7 11.Rd1 O-O 12.Bd3 Re8 13.a4



13...b4?! In general I played very well in Huddersfield. I think what is happening with my chess now is that I'm playing very solidly, and I'm not making many horrendous blunders. It's not exactly earth-shattering stuff, but it seems to be getting the job done. However, this was one of the 'inaccuracies' that I committed during the event. Black doesn't need to play ...b4 just yet, as there was hardly a threat to take on b5. I think this mistake perhaps comes down to a lack of understanding and familiarity with these types of positions. Perhaps I'll know better for next time.

The calm 13...h6!, not giving way on the queenside, was to be preferred. Black should try and wait for White to

play Nc3 before playing ...b4, as at least then you gain some time. I wonder why the engine likes ...h6? Perhaps it has in mind an ambitious plan, to play ...Nf8, then ...g5, with subsequent kingside expansion. Engines seem to love playing their pawns in front of their king, and this has seeped into human practice. Have a look at the games currently being played in Wijk Aan Zee, for example. 14.axb5 axb5 15.Rxa8 Qxa8 16.Bxb5 Bxe4 would be a great development for Black, who has exchanged a fairly useless wing pawn for an important central pawn.

14.a5! An excellent decision, as now the pawn on a6 becomes a long-term weakness for Black, and the pawn on b4 is also marooned and liable to be captured.

14...Nf8 15.Nbd2 15.Ne1! was tough to see, but the idea is to play Nc2 and attack the weakling on b4. White can also think about combining this with playing on the kingside with f4.

15...Ng6 16.Nf1 Nh5! 17.g3 Nf6 I've wasted a move like this to prevent White from playing the knight to g3 and achieving his ideal set-up. I was hoping that the weakening of the kingside with g3 might come back to haunt White.

18.h4 Qb8! This looks a bit odd, but I'm trying to play with a plan. I want to play ...Bc6 followed by ...Qb7, to put some pressure on e4.

18...e5? fails to 19.dxe5 dxe5 20.Bb5+—; I wanted to play 18...Bf8 to prepare the break ...e5, as then the rook on e8 would also control this square. 19.h5!:



... concerned me though, sacrificing a pawn. If 19...Nxh5 (19...Ne7 20.h6 forces some kind of weakening of the kingside for Black) 20.e5, when the knight on h5 is in trouble. 20...dxe5 21.dxe5 Bxf3 22.Qxf3 Nxe5 23.Bxh7+!— is winning for White, was a line I calculated at the board.

19.Bd2 Bc6 20.Re1 During the post-mortem I suggested that 20.Ng5!? might have been better, as at least this

would have made sense of playing 18.h4. This isn't a terrible idea, but the concept of sacrificing the knight doesn't really work out. 20...h6 21.Nxe6 (or simply retreating with 21.Nh3 before attacking later, as Keatan suggested) 21...fxe6 22.e5 Nxh4! 23.gxh4 dxe5 24.dxe5 Nd7 is a bit of a mess. However, the best idea is probably 20.Bg5! h6 21.Bxf6 Bxf6 22.Rdc1:



... when White has a lot of things going for him: good attacking chances on the kingside, and pressure on the queenside. Taking the knight with Bg5xf6 is an idea that both of us I think underestimated in the game.

20...Qb7 21.N3h2?! As Mark Hebden suggested later, it made more sense to play the other knight to h2 and keep the knight on f3, controlling the centre.

21.N1h2 e5 22.d5 Bd7 23.Bg5 is one possible variation. White wants to take, removing one of the defenders of the kingside.

21...Nf8 22.Ng4 Nxg4 23.Qxg4 Nd7 24.Qe2?



Starting to get short of time in this complex middlegame, White makes a serious error, underestimating my next.

24...Bf6! It turns out that d4 is very difficult to defend.

25.Rac1 25.Be3 Bxe4 was the point that was easy to miss earlier. Now you are regretting not playing f3 as White. 25.Qe3 Qa7! would also force White into some kind of

material concession. If 26.d5 Bd4 27.dxc6 Bxe3 28.Bxe3 Nc5+; 25.Bf4, targeting d6, was relatively best.

25...Bxd4 26.Bxb4? Qxb4 27.Rxc6 Ne5 28.Rcc1



28...Bxf2+! Ironically this was the second black game I had in a row where ...Bxf2+! was played. One for Plaskett's coincidences book, perhaps.

29.Kxf2 29.Qxf2 Nxd3+.

29...Qd4+ 30.Kg2 Nxd3 0-1

Gormally, Daniel W (2423) - Astrom, Lars (2098)

32nd 4NCL Congress Cedar Court, Huddersfield (2.1), 18.01.2025

When you are competing in weekends your time for preparation is limited. Based on my own personal experience I would recommend the following: if having a game the following morning, don't prepare the night before. Rather, simply look at what your opponent plays. Then at least that will cut down on what you need to do in the morning. The logic behind this is to save energy. When you have five games packed into a short period of time, this is essential. Obviously, if you are a 14 year old teenager with bundles of energy you can probably do more than old, crumbly Gorm can manage. I don't have a laptop at the moment (hardly ideal), so I tend to use my tablet to Google search my opponent and look up their FIDE profile, and then search for their games on Chess Tempo. My round 2 opponent Lars Astrom from Sweden only had games I could find from 2017 on there. This was hardly encouraging, but at least I knew he played the Slav as Black.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 e6 This was the line I was expecting. I once recommended this variation to Blair Connell, and he scored good results with it.

6.e4 One of the critical variations. White sacs a pawn in typical fashion.

6...Bb4 7.Qc2 b5 8.Be2 Bb7 9.0-0 a6 10.Bd2 h6 11.e5 Nd5



12.Qe4?! This looks good, but probably doesn't create much of a threat. Qg4 can be met by ...g6, for example.

I did consider the best idea 12.Nxd5, but in the end wasn't confident about going for this. 12...Bxd2 13.Nf6+ gxf6:



... 14.Nxd2! was something that I underestimated, as it seemed to drop the pawn on d4. I only really considered taking back with the queen, which indeed poses Black few problems. (14.Qxd2 Nd7!) 14...Qxd4? 15.Ne4 Qxe5 16.Rad1 with a big attack for the material invested.

12...Bxc3 12...Nd7 13.Qg4 g6 14.Ne4 Be7 was one option. This is just very murky.

13.bxc3 c5 13...Nd7! 14.Qg4 Qe7 15.Qxg7 0-0-0, when the black king is quite safe on the queenside, and Black is ready to start his own counterattack with ...Rdg8, for example.

14.Qg4 g6 15.Rfb1



I started to feel quite confident at this point, as this looked like a position that could arise from a variation of the Queens Gambit Accepted, but this was a good version for White. I have pressure on all sides of the board.

15...cxd4 16.Nxd4 b4? Under pressure, Black starts to lose his way.

16...Nc6! didn't feel that bad for Black. 17.axb5 Nxd4 18.Qxd4 axb5 19.Rxa8 Qxa8 20.Qc5!, when White retains pressure, but it's still a fight. (20.Rxb5 0-0 21.Bxh6?. I think my opponent feared something like this in his calculations, but this turns out badly for White: 21...Qa1+ 22.Bf1 Nxc3+.)

17.Bxc4 bxc3 18.Rxb7 cxd2



19.Nxe6!+- With such a powerful rook on b7 and Black being so underdeveloped, tactics like these are hardly surprising.

19...h5 19...Qc8 20.Nc7+-.

20.Qf3 fxe6 21.Qf7# 1-0

Gormally, Daniel W (2423) - Sowray, Peter J (2189)
32nd 4NCL Congress Cedar Court, Huddersfield (4.1),
19.01.2025

In round 3 on the Saturday afternoon I faced a player from India, M. R. Sooraj. In a murky middlegame I went slightly

wrong, and had to defend an endgame a pawn down. Sometimes you need to hunker down and forget that they have a low rating and just try to hold the ending. Such a reality is standard practice in opens these days, as so many players seem to be underrated. Clearly Sooraj's current FIDE rating of around 2130 doesn't fully explain his potential, as he seems to be improving rapidly. I may have overdone the culinary exploits on the Saturday as well. In the morning I had the typical hotel fried breakfast. Then at lunchtime I discovered where the local Toby Carvery was - big mistake. A big queue for the food, so clearly a very popular place. So I'm topping up my breakfast with a large roast lunch. Then in the evening after the game I'm finishing that all off by accompanying some other players to an Indian restaurant in the town centre called 'Indian House' - thoroughly recommended if you are in that area. If that wasn't enough, I then devoured a large Galaxy chocolate bar when I got back to the room, as I was still hungry. The Sunday morning game was a tense one against FM Peter Sowray, the clear leader on 3/3 after he defeated Paul Townsend in a battling game where both players had chances. I knew that Peter had understanding way beyond that of a 2189 player. If he hadn't been working for most of his adult life away from chess he would easily have made IM at least. I felt uncomfortable with the pressure. Somehow, I felt I needed to win, as Peter was half a point ahead of me. But I never like situations where you HAVE to do something. I elected not to change my strategy, and decided just to play solid. In 'must-win games' (if this even was one) it can be a mistake to play something sharp, as your opponent is expecting this approach. Instead, I decided to wheel out the Torre Attack. This approach of just keeping the game going dates back to the famous game in Kasparov-Karpov 1987 when Kasparov had to win to retain his title, and decided to employ a quiet, positional line. The idea of this is to maintain the tension for as long as possible, creating an uncomfortable scenario for the opponent, who is expecting an immediate battle.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.Bg5 Bg7 4.Nbd2 c5! Peter is clearly better prepared to face the Torre than some of my more recent opponents. This seems to lead to a comfortable position for Black.

5.e3 Perhaps 5.c3 was a better try for the advantage, maintaining all the central pawns.

5...cxd4 6.exd4 h6 7.Bh4 0-0 8.c3 d6 During the game I was expecting 8...Nc6!, as this seemed to be the best move order. 9.Bc4 d5, and now you get this in one move. 10.Bb3 Bf5 is surely fine for Black.

9.Bc4 Nc6 10.0-0



10...e5!? Quite a dynamic choice.

10...Qb6! also worried me during the game, because how can White defend b2? Both Bb3 and Nb3 looked awkward, and I felt the endgame after Qb3 would be fine for Black. 11.Qb3 (11.Nb3 a5!?, 11.Rb1? Bf5; 11.Bb3 Na5 when Black snags the bishop pair) 11...Na5 12.Qxb6 axb6 13.Be2 Be6=.

11.dxe5 dxe5 12.Re1 Qc7 13.Bb5 I wasn't completely happy with this, even though it threatens to win a pawn, as it feels a bit strange playing Bc4-b5.

13.Bxf6 Bxf6 14.Ne4 Be7, when Black has everything in order and is ready to play ... Kg7 and rumble forward with the pawns on the kingside. Strategically this looked very dangerous for White, but the engine says it is about equal.

13...Re8?! 13...Nh5!.

14.Nc4 I sensed that he had overlooked this idea. White is ramping up the direct pressure against e5.

14...Nh5



15.Qd6! Obvious, but strong. If I play anything else my position doesn't make sense, but now I get to exchange queens in an advantageous way.

15...Qxd6 16.Nxd6 Re6 17.Rad1 g5 18.Bg3 I did briefly consider sacrificing a piece here with 18.Bxg5 hxg5

18...Nxc3 19.hxc3?



19...Re7? I think this is typical of 10 am chess games that we are both missing the resource 19...Nd4! which would have changed the assessment of the position. Black sacs a pawn to bring the bishop pair to life. If 20.cxd4 Rxd6 21.dxe5 Rxd1 22.Rxd1 Be6=, when Black has enough for the pawn. The pawn on a2 is attacked, and there is also the idea of ...g4, undermining e5.

20.Bxc6 White has nice options here. I strongly considered 20.Nxc8 Rxc8 21.g4, with a long-term positional edge for White. The idea of going Nd2–e4, followed perhaps by Ng3–f5, is quite strong; anyway, you get the point that White has a bind on the light squares. But the issue is that this is ‘quite slow’, and throughout my chess career I have tended to reject positional or technical continuations in favour of more direct, tactical ones. The engine says that 20.Nd2! is incredibly powerful, when Black is in a nasty bind. 20...a6 21.Bxc6 bxc6 22.Nxc8 Rxc8 23.g4:



20...bxc6 21.Nd4 I'm trying to exploit my lead in development and the pin down the e-file. But when I was waiting for Peter to reply, I realized that I had made an error in my calculations.

21...Bd7 22.N4f5 Bxf5 23.Nxf5 Rb7 24.b3 just looked horrible for Black. White is controlling the d-file and is threatening to win a pawn.

22.N4f5 Earlier I had thought that 22.Ne8 was strong, missing that 22...Rb7 23.Nxc6 Bg4! is far from convincing for White.

22...Be6 23.Nxg7 Kxg7 24.Rxe5



24...Kf8 was better, but Black will have to grovel a pawn down to try and save this endgame.

25.Re8 This wins a whole rook.

25.Ne8+ also wins, but at least Black might play on then:
25...Rxe8 26.Rxe8+-. **1-0**

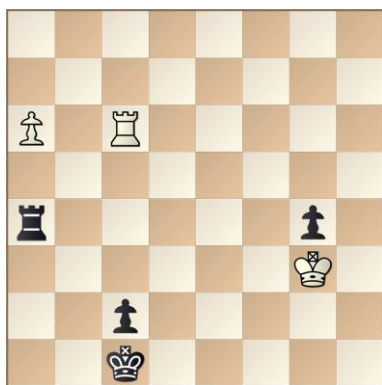
ChessMoves

now, as I had another boring draw and showed little fight. Fair point, but when you are financially hard-up it can be quite depressing to leave with nothing, and that would have been the case if I had lost. 3½/5 was winning zero prize money as it turned out. Because we drew quickly, it meant that tournament victory was out of my hands, and Peter's as well, because if board 2 was decisive we'd finish second equal instead. But Indy Southcott-Moyers defended very well in an unpleasant endgame, which is typical of him, and the game did indeed end peacefully.

However, some of the other games were more dramatic. Trisha Kanyamarala defeated Mark Hebden in an endgame when Mark blew a winning position. Perhaps this solidified her reputation as the comeback queen as she had lost in round 1, so 4/5 was an excellent result. At that point five players were tied on 4/5, and Nigel Davies had a chance to join us, but it seemed that fatigue affected him, just as it seemed to affect Mark, because he surprisingly failed to convert a completely winning rook and pawn endgame. In fact, this was so surprising that Peter Wells was unaware of this when I told him the result the next day at breakfast, as he had been watching this game, had already written it off as a win for Black, and had already assumed there were six joint winners.

Astrom, Lars (2098) - Davies, Nigel R (2302)

32nd 4NCL Congress Cedar Court, Huddersfield (5.4),
19.01.2025

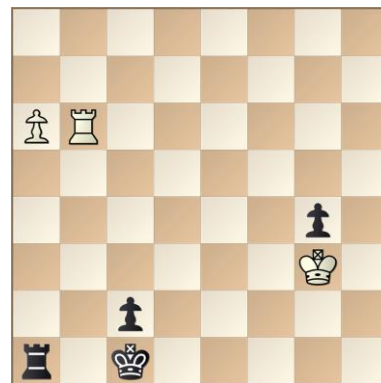


68.Rb6? Having now achieved a drawn endgame, Lars gives Nigel a second chance to win.

White should attack from the side with 68.Rh6!, when there isn't even anything clever that Black can try.

68...Kd2? I said to Peter at breakfast that the engine can make us all seem like patzers, because in endgames like this it just makes everything seem especially obvious. When I was watching this game live it was swinging from 0.00 to minus -4.5, and so on.

Black had a quiet win here with 68...Ra1!:



... which I think was tough to see, as you are losing the pawn on g4. But the point is that Black doesn't need to really build a bridge later, as the white king is too far away. 69.Kxg4 Kd2 70.Rd6+ Ke3 71.Rc6 c1Q+.

69.Rd6+ Kc3 70.Rc6+ Kd3 71.Rd6+ Rd4 72.Rxd4+ Kxd4 73.a7 c1Q 74.a8Q Qe3+ 75.Kxg4 Qe4+ 76.Qxe4+ Kxe4 ½-½

4NCL Huddersfield Congress by Peter Wells

I have to confess that it was only as I sat down to write this report that I realised that we are just approaching (almost to the day) the significant landmark of having enjoyed 10 years of 4NCL congresses. It is certainly not as a consequence of any particular success that I recall playing in the very first of these in Birmingham at the start of 2015. Rather, I remember feeling some optimism that this event - with its excellent playing conditions and welcoming attitude to titled players - might be the start of something which could represent a timely revival of the English weekend scene. Ten years on, while acknowledgement is also due to the e2e4 events which proceeded them, and to some of the other leading weekend events around the UK, this does seem like a good moment to celebrate what a great contribution these 4NCL events have already made. It was nice to see Danny Gormally - on his increasingly prolific YouTube channel - both calling for more players to support these tournaments and paying tribute to the hard work of the organisers. [Please support 4NCL tournaments - YouTube](#) was one of three videos he posted over just a single weekend in Huddersfield!

My particular favourite of these tournaments - which I have played every year since its inception - has been the one in Harrogate. I loved both the beauty of the town with its impressive range of cafes and restaurants and the (mostly unfaded) grandeur of the Old Swan Hotel, and was thus disappointed by the news that the 2025 edition

would not be going ahead. This feeling was only partly assuaged by the announcement of the event's continuation with a change of venue: the Cedar Court Hotel on the outskirts of Huddersfield. I guess there is a sense in which loving Harrogate provides as much evidence of somebody 'loving the North' as loving Edinburgh does to their being a fan of Scotland as a whole. Yet I really do have a soft spot for northern cities more generally - as befits a player who has played for White Rose for more than 15 years. I have good memories indeed of the centre of Huddersfield, having played the congress there (longer ago than I would care to remember) under the energetic stewardship of Nigel Hepworth, who still played a key role in the arbiting team this time around. Yet what would a hotel near to a motorway junction some way out of town have to offer? I needn't have worried. The venue turned out to be excellent. The hotel itself surpassed expectations, with a tournament hall comfortably able to accommodate all three sections. The location - although indeed some way from the city centre - boasted beautiful scenery, excellent pubs and a superb farm café, all within walking distance. This is Pennine country after all, and if there is one thing which can beat northern cities it is much of the countryside which surrounds them.

This tournament almost inevitably seems to throw up a clash of generations. In line with the last couple of years the Open section featured a trio of 'gracefully ageing GMs' pitted against a variety of talent, young and 'not so young'. It was strengthened this time not only by the presence of Danny Gormally but by the very welcome addition of the likeable and talented young Irish siblings Tarun and Trisha Kanyamarala.

Each of the first three rounds served to reinforce the message that none of the favourites were likely to run away with this. Indeed, after three rounds another highly experienced (and well-loved) competitor, Peter Sowray, having edged out fellow senior Paul Townsend in Round 3, became the only player on 100% going into the final day. Incidentally, I was stunned to hear that these two concluded during their chat after the game that they had played once as juniors, but never again in all the intervening years until now!

Round 4 proved pivotal in many respects – Danny Gormally discusses his victory over Peter Sowray elsewhere on these pages – while in two fascinating but somewhat untidy battles I defeated an in-form Okhai Shabir, with Indy Southcott-Moyers ending Tarun Kanyamarala's challenge for the top honours from what looked to me like a rather shaky opening. That left Danny, Indy, the very sharp Indian player Sooraj Menothuparam Raju and me as equal leaders going into the last round,

and set up, perhaps surprisingly, the first GM clash of the tournament.

Of course, when the first clash between GMs results in a fairly quick draw this is not infrequently the occasion for some criticism, and the assumption that they might have entered the game with peaceful intentions. In fact, although tired from a 4½-hour game in the morning (culminating in victory with rook and bishop against rook!), I was happy enough with Danny's choice of opening and had every intention of having a go. I do not usually regard 18-move draws as publishable, but the tactic which I spotted in the nick of time - and which entirely took the wind out of my sails - seems unusual, and surprising enough to be worth sharing here.

Peter Wells – Danny Gormally

32nd 4NCL Congress, Huddersfield Round 5

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 Bb7 6.Bg2 Bb4+ 7.Bd2 a5 8.0-0 0-0 9.Qc2!? I just about remembered that this was the recommended move back in 2006 when I wrote a book on the Queen's Indian. Occasionally I still get an opponent tell me that they were put off playing a particular opening against me because I wrote a book on it aeons ago, to which the best reaction is probably just to smile politely and mourn lost powers of memory. The move has a logic. If 9.Nc3, Black gets the harmonious position he is looking for after 9...Bxc3! 10 Bxc3 d6 followed by ...Nbd7 etc, whereas now Black needs to be wary of the b4-bishop one day being cut off if White can find a timely move for the d2-bishop.

9...Be4 10.Qb2 d5



This is a standard enough pawn structure, but 9...Be4 is relatively unusual, and I failed to tune into the fact that it changes everything. The best move here is the most obvious – 11.a3! – since after 11...Bxd2?! 12.Nbxd2 the bishop feels a bit vulnerable on e4, and if then 12...Bxf3 13.Nxf3 White's pieces feel well coordinated. Better would be the immediate 11...Bxf3!, but White can still claim a modest edge. Unfortunately, I opted for another

familiar pattern – exchanging the knight on f6, with the intention of playing a later a3 and Nc3 to maximise pressure on Black's centre – without realising that the position of the bishop on e4 changes *everything*!

11.Bg5?! h6! 12.Bxf6 Qxf6 13.cxd5 exd5 14.Nbd2! An essential change of plan. I had already realised that my intended idea might falter due to a weak d4-pawn, but it only gradually dawned on me how drastic this would be. The intended 14.a3? actually runs into an evil 'Zwischenzug' (from the diagram - one for Natasha Regan's second edition?).



14...Bxf3! 15.Bxf3 Bc5!, when the clumsy bishop on f3 prevents the defence of d4 with a pawn, and after 16. Rd1 Nc6! we have a nice illustration both of the unbalancing impact of opposite-coloured bishops and the perils of the (undefended) fianchettoed queen. After the move played White is completely fine, but my dreams of pressure on Black's position were essentially busted.

14...Bxd2! 15.Qxd2 Nc6 16.Rfd1 Bxf3!?

The engine isn't a huge fan of this, but it seemed to me to be a good judgement arrived at depressingly quickly. It was the final straw for my enthusiasm. At the close the engine says about +0.2 for White, but in human terms I thought it might even be easier for Black to make some gestures on the kingside than for White to get anywhere on the other flank. It was anyway very useful to know Danny's thoughts at this stage, as I might try quite different things if I know that he is playing for a win!

17.Bxf3 Ne7 18.Rac1 ½-½

The board 2 game was more overtly hard-fought, but ended with typically tough resistance from Indy to secure half a point. At one stage it looked as if the winners on 4/5 might be joined by both of the other GMs, but Mark Hebden blundered in a very advantageous endgame against Trisha Kanyamarala, and Nigel Davies uncharacteristically failed to convert his excellent rook ending, so ultimately it was just Trisha who was able to join the round 4 leaders to make a five-way tie for first

place. A slightly feeble finish by me, but I must say that I was happy overall, and I think I reflect the general mood in expressing gratitude to the organisers for a very enjoyable event.

To finish, a slightly more chunky encounter from the Saturday afternoon.

Peter Wells - Alan Peart

32nd 4NCL Congress, Huddersfield Round 3.

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 g6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.Be2 Nbd7 7.0-0 e5 8.Be3 Qe7 9.Qc2 c6 10.Rad1 Opening choices are always a bit tough when there is so little information about an opponent. In this case, the paucity of games - given the level at which he appears to have been playing - really constitutes something of a mystery. I hope he will not mind me saying that in this case it prompted a Google search which, though not very revealing regarding his relative chess inactivity, did lead me to think that this is someone with whom it would have been fascinating to discuss more than just a few positions from the game!



10...Re8?!

This always feels like something which Black should try to avoid in principle, since the rook ideally belongs on f8, supporting the ...f5 break as soon as White closes the centre. It is always important for White to have the release of the tension covered, the main point here being that 10...exd4 11.Nxd4 Re8 12.f3 d5?! 13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Ndb5 is awkward for Black. In his outstanding *Chessable* course Gawain makes a strong case for 10...h6!?, but that is another (albeit fascinating) story.

11.d5! c5 12.a3 Ng4!? 13.Bg5 f6 14.Bd2 f5!?



This was the product of a long think, during which I began to realise that this very sharp pawn break might be my opponent's intention. What I like about it is that it seeks to make a virtue of the rook being on e8 – supporting a sharp push of the e-pawn rather than bemoaning the shortage of cover on f5. The problem is that it is not quite sound, but in practical play at least attempts at a more direct refutation looked rather risky. For what it is worth, stressing about the 'bad bishop' with 14...Bh6?? would deservedly cost a piece after 15.h3! – it is the King's Indian bishop after all, and often full of potential even when it looks a bit grim. The 'routine' move was 14...Nh6, when I had in mind something like 15.Nb5 Nf8 16.b4 b6 17.bxc5 bxc5 18.Ba5!?, trying to accelerate the customary queenside initiative.

15.Ng5!? Not a bad practical response, incidentally emphasising Black's omission of ...h6. As the engine points out, White has excellent compensation after 15.exf5! e4 16.Ng5 e3 17.Ne6! (hitting g4) 17... Nxf2 18.Bxe3 Nxd1 19.Qxd1, with a monster knight on e6, or 17...exf2+ 18.Kh1, when 18...Nxe2? is met by the calm 19.Rxf2. I am not usually one to shy away from complications, but I decided the move chosen had enough sting, with less potential for mishaps.

15...Ndf6 16.Ne6! Bxe6?! I expected this, and anticipated that the weaknesses of the d5-square and the d6-pawn – together with the exchange of Black's best attacking piece – would spell ample compensation. I thought less about 16...f4!?, when (whatever I said about the King's Indian bishop earlier) White has no intention of taking on g7, and thus will likely end up relying on the positional rather than the direct tactical component of his compensation. The engine still loves White, but there is always a nagging doubt that part of this is just its renowned anti-King's Indian prejudice!

17.dxe6 Qxe6



18.exf5 This felt right, although 18.Nb5!? Nxe4 19.Bxg4 Nxd2 20.Qxd2 fxg4 21.Nc7 also looks like a very healthy transition, with the d6-pawn likely to fall into the bargain.

18...gxf5 Interestingly, 18...Qxf5!? is perhaps the better move, at least looking at the responses likely to be found by humans! After 19.Qxf5 gxf5 White retains some advantage after either 20.h3 Nh6 21.Bxh6 or 20.Nb5 Red8 21.h3 Nh6 22.Bxh6 Bxh6 23.Nxd6, although perhaps forgivably I had overlooked the engine's annoying riposte 23...Bc1!! Instead White has 20.f3!? Nh6 21.g4!, since the open f-file renders the knights vulnerable, and the g4 pawn thus exempt from capture. It would be a tough call to pretend that I had all of this covered!

19.h3 Nh6 20.Nb5 Ne4?



The first move which I was very pleased to see, since 14...f5 rendered the play so concrete. All the way through I had been more enthusiastic about any clear positional advantages I could gather, rather than grabbing at the exchange, so the correct course of action – kicking this knight away to fight for the light squares – didn't cost me too much thinking time.

21.Bf3! Nf7 22.Bxe4 fxe4 23.Nc7 Qg6 24.Nxa8 Rxa8 25.Kh1! But of course not 25.Rfe1 e3! 26.Qxg6 exf2+, complicating unnecessarily.

25...Rb8 26.Rfe1 b5 27.Qxe4 bxc4 28.Bc3 Qe6



Black is not benefitting that much from the b-file in itself, but it is imperative to stop Black from breathing life into his position with ...d5. White's next two moves are pivotal to the conversion – create pressure against e5, and maintain the beautiful blockade on the light squares. After this I just needed to be careful not to blunder something in time-trouble, and the closest I came to disaster was when I knocked a couple of pieces over while clumsily executing a move on about move 35!

29.f4 Rd8 30.Rd5 Kh8 31.Qxc4 Qg6 32.fxe5 Rg8 33.exd6 Nxd6 34.Bxg7+ Rxd7 35.Qg4 Qf7 36.Qf3 Qg6 37.Red1 Nf7 38.Rxc5 For a moment I found myself checking that the pawn ending after 38.Rd8+ Nxd8 39.Rxd8+ Rg8 40.Qc3+ Qg7 41.Qxg7+ Kxg7 42.Rxg8+ Kxg8 is indeed a simple win. Still, in a moment of rare self-awareness I also found myself asking: 'Why bother to check that?'.

38...h6 39.Rc8+ 1–0 As White can force the exchange of queens.

4NCL Congress Huddersfield - Photos





Caplin 98th Hastings International Chess Congress

by Pam Thomas

The 98th Congress was opened on 28th December by Dominic Lawson, President of the English Chess Federation, who made the first move, and by the sponsor of the event, John Ashworth, CEO of Caplin Systems Limited.

The event, which ended on the evening of 5th January, was voted a success despite the weather. The prize-giving was conducted by Congress Chairman GM Stuart Conquest, and the prizes were presented by John Ashworth.

The nine-round Masters Tournament was won by an untitled Chinese player Xue Haowen, aged 17, with a score of 7/9. In second place was French GM Pierre Laurent Paoli with 6½/9.

English GM Danny Gormally, top seed Chinese player Zhang Pengzhang, and American Kirk Ghazarian followed half a point behind. England's youngest ever grandmaster Shreyas Royal finished on 5½/9. A total of 112 players took part in the Masters event.

The Con Power Christmas, New Year and Weekend Congresses were all popular.

There was commentary each day by a variety of commentators. There was a good audience each afternoon.

Thanks go to the John Robinson Trust for their support, which benefits Juniors taking part in the Congress. Thanks also go to the White Rock Hotel for their generosity throughout, and Alexanders Hotel.

During the congress Sussex Juniors held their annual event. The large playing room was packed, but the concentration was extraordinary. Once again there was a delegation from South Korea, including 14 juniors who were going on to Prague to play in another event. They were amused to find that Horntye is on Bohemia Road, and said, 'Now we go to the real Bohemia.'

The organisers of the event now turn their attention to the next two events, with the second being the centenary event. All suggestions are welcome - in 1995 there were several events to mark the centenary of the first Hastings event, which included several of the most prestigious chess players in the world. A living chess game between Patrick Moore and grandmaster David Bronstein took place on the pier, and a summer congress was held at William Parker School - playing cricket, as well as chess, in brilliant sunshine!

The results from the Caplin Hastings Masters and associated events can be found at the following link:

<https://archive.chess-results.com/tnr841689.aspx?lan=>

Danny Gormally has covered a number of games from the congress in his Coaching Corner article, which can be found on page 46.

Forthcoming ECF Events

The ECF is very pleased to announce the following events:

The British Rapidplay Championship 2025 1st – 2nd March:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/british-rapidplay-championship-2025/>

The English Seniors Chess Championships 24th – 28th April:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-seniors-championships-2025/>

The Cambridge International Open 26th – 31st May:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/3rd-cambridge-international-open/>

The English and English Women's Chess Championships 13th – 16th June:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/english-championships-2025/>

Please follow the links for more information and online entry.

FEATURES

The Isolated Queen Pawn by Andrew Martin

Welcome to a bi-monthly set of articles in which I hope to provide instruction for club players, improvers and novices. I'll try to keep the content simply written and easy to understand.

Hebden, Mark (2489) - Longson, Alexander (2294)

Wakefield 4NCL op-A 8th Wakefield (5), 03.04.2016

**1.d4 d5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 dxc4 4.e3 e6 5.Bxc4 c5 6.0-0 a6
7.Bb3 Be7 8.Qe2 cxd4 9.exd4**



Here we have a classic case of the isolated queen pawn (IQP). Is the pawn on d4 strong or weak? Can White generate enough initiative to compensate? To review the general rules for IQP positions:

If you hold the IQP you should:

- 1) Develop actively;
- 2) Aim to attack;
- 3) Avoid exchanges;
- 4) Look to dissolve the IQP if necessary, or cramp the opponent with a timely advance.

When playing against the IQP the recognised techniques are:

- 1) Prepare to defend;
- 2) Seek exchanges;
- 3) Aim for the endgame, keeping the better pawn structure;
- 4) Blockade any advance by putting a piece on the square in front of the pawn;
- 5) Surround, attack and then hopefully win the isolated pawn.

Let's see if any of these ideas feature in our first game.

9...Nc6 10.Rd1 Na5 10...0-0 11.Nc3 Nb4 would be a decent alternative, looking to blockade with ...Nd5.

11.Bc2 b5 12.Nc3 Bb7 13.Ne5 0-0 14.Bg5



Hebden correctly moves his pieces to the most active squares possible.

14...Rc8 14...Nd5! definitely came into consideration, when I think Black is absolutely OK, as the trading of pieces is forced: 15.Bxe7 (15.Nxd5 Qxd5 16.Be4 Qxe4 17.Qxe4 Bxe4 18.Bxe7 Rfe8 19.Bb4 Nc6=) 15...Qxe7 16.Ne4 (16.Nxd5 Bxd5=) 16...Rac8 17.Nc5 Nc6! 18.Nxb7 (18.Nxc6 Bxc6 19.Qe5 a5 20.Be4 Rfd8=) 18...Qxb7 19.Be4 Rfd8=.

15.Rac1 Nc4 Longson eyes another way to get the pieces off, but White has more to work with here.

16.Nxc4 Rxc4 17.Qd3 Eyeing h7.

17...g6 18.Bb3 Rc8 19.Qh3!



The h3-square is a common location for the white queen in many Queen's Gambit positions, keeping an eye on both e6 and h7.

19...b4 20.Na4 Rxc1 21.Bxc1 Qa5 22.Nc5 This is the sacrifice, which Longson boldly accepts.

22...Bxc5 22...Bd5! is pretty safe, but Black is looking to win, so he takes the pawn and braves the dark-square weaknesses.

23.dxc5 Qxc5 24.Qh4 Qc6 25.f3 Qc5+ 26.Kh1 Nh5?



A mistake, possibly prompted by time pressure.

Black should play the natural 26...Rc8!, when he can negotiate the tactics: 27.Qxf6 (27.Bh6 Qh5! 28.Qxf6 Qxh6 29.Bxe6 fxe6 30.Qxe6+ Kh8 31.Qf6+ Qg7 32.Rd8+ Rxd8 33.Qxd8+ Qg8 34.Qd4+ Qg7=) 27...Qxc1 28.h3 Qc6 29.Rd8+ Rxd8 30.Qxd8+ Kg7 31.Qd4+ f6 32.Qxb4 Qc1+ 33.Kh2 Qc7+ 34.Kg1 (34.g3 Bxf3).

27.Bh6! Re8 Otherwise Rd8.

28.Ba4 Bc6 29.Rc1 White wins material.

29...Qxc1+ 30.Bxc1 Bxa4 31.Qxb4 Bc6 32.Bh6 e5 33.Qd6 Ba8 34.Qxa6 A game where White managed to prove that his active pieces were worth more than the IQP, but Black certainly had his chances.

1-0

Drygalov, Andrey (2475) - Andreikin, Dmitry (2729)

Titled Tuesday intern op 26th Mar Early Chess.com INT (7), 26.03.2024

We may gather from the last game that IQP positions are generally easier to play for the aggressor. Who likes to defend? Yet the role of the defender can take various forms, as we are about to see.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nc6 5.Nc3 Nf6 6.Ndb5 Bb4 7.a3 Bxc3+ 8.Nxc3 d5 9.exd5 exd5



This is the Four Knights Variation of the Sicilian, and more or less the main line of that system. Black accepts an IQP in return for ease of development - the usual deal. The statistics favour White from here, so let us see what Andreikin has in mind.

10.Bd3 0-0 11.0-0 d4!



The IQP advances, hoping to cramp the opponent and stop the easy realisation of the bishop pair and superior pawn structure. It is ideas such as this that keep the Four Knights line popular.

11...Bg4 is also reasonable, with interesting play after **12.f3 Bh5 13.Bg5 Qb6+ 14.Kh1 Ne4!? 15.Nxe4 dxe4 16.Bxe4 Qxb2 17.Qb1 Qb6**.

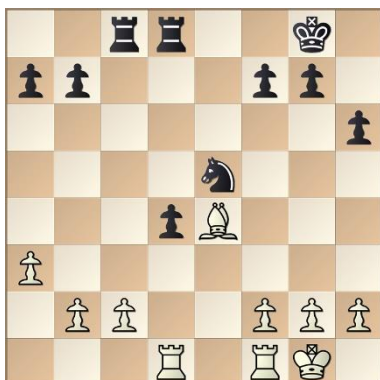
12.Ne4 Bf5! Black inviting exchanges is paradoxical, but he understands that the IQP is cramping White's style.

13.Bg5 Bxe4 14.Bxe4 h6 15.Bxf6 15.Bh4 g5 16.Bxc6 bxc6 17.Bg3 Qd5! leaves Black well centralised, and with an equal game.

15...Qxf6 16.Qf3 White can see nothing better than inviting an endgame where he holds a very slight edge. However, it is not enough to give realistic winning chances.

16...Qxf3 17.Bxf3 Ne5! 18.Be4 18.Bxb7 Rab8 19.Be4 Rxb2 20.Rfb1 Rfb8 21.Rxb2 Rxb2 22.Rd1 Kf8 23.h3 Ra2 seems very playable for Black.

18...Rac8 19.Rad1 Rfd8



Just putting his pieces in the centre, where they are effective enough.

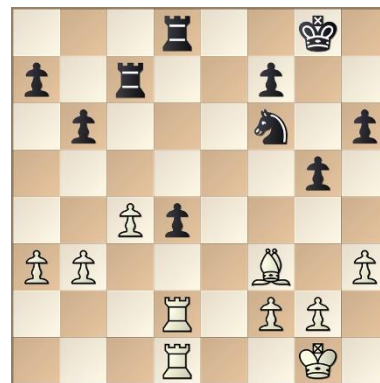
20.b3 Rc7 21.Rd2 Ng4 I think I prefer 21...b5!.



This prevents c2–c4 for at least the near future. It is hard for White to make headway: 22.h3 (taking away g4 from the knight) 22...Rd6 23.Rfd1 (23.f4 Nd7 24.Rfd1 Nc5 25.Bf3 d3 26.b4 Ne6) 23...d3! 24.cxd3 Rd4! 25.Re2 Nd7, and Black has good compensation for a pawn.

22.Rfd1 Nf6 23.Bf3 b6 23...Rcd7.

24.h3 g5 25.c4!



Is this a chance to win?

25...Rcd7 26.b4 26.Bc6! Rd6 27.Bd5! was more difficult to meet.

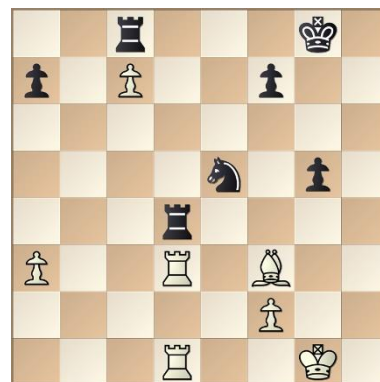
26...h5 27.g4?! 27.Rd3 and chug along was the recommended procedure. In Titled Tuesday tournaments there isn't a great deal of chugging.

27...hxg4 28.hxg4 d3! This pawn is giving White hassle.

29.c5 bxc5 30.bxc5 Rd4 31.c6 Nxcg4? 31...Kg7! intends to answer 32.c7 with 32...Rc8 33.Rc1 Rd7, when Black holds.

32.c7 Rc8 33.Rxd3? What does Black play after 33.Rc1?

33...Ne5



White obviously missed this move.

34.Rxd4 Nxf3+ 35.Kg2 Nxd4 36.Rxd4 Rxc7 I guess White lost on time. An instructive example, where Black was able to demonstrate that his IQP was far from weak. The subject of the IQP is a huge topic, and we have only covered it lightly here. But I do hope that if you get these position-types in your games you will now feel a little more comfortable. **0–1**

Endgames That All Club Players Should Know

by Glenn Flear



Queen and Rook Apiece: Endgame or Middlegame?

If we consider those games where both sides have two pieces, the most frequently occurring (by some way) are rook and knight vs

rook and bishop, which I considered in this column last autumn.

The second most common case is where both players have queen and rook (I estimate on average that it occurs in one game in nineteen). Most readers may not consider this to be in the category of 'endgames', but the possibility of simplification means that endgame thinking is rarely far away.

However, the big difference between this 'pseudo-endgame' and the most heavily simplified positions is that king security is the overriding priority.

Here's an example (slightly off-subject) which illustrates the importance of not underestimating this factor.

Vachier Lagrave, M – Nepomniachtchi, I
Wijk aan Zee 2011



In this major piece only struggle neither king seems to be vulnerable, but not for long!

20.Re4! Rad8 21.c4 f5? Nepomniachtchi wants to force White to make a big decision, but the ultimate consequence is a significant weakening of his own king.

Black should instead press against the centre while keeping his king safely behind the pawn screen: 21...e6! 22.Qe2 Rd6 23.Rb1 (if 23.Re1, 23...b5 dissolves the centre) 23...b6.

22.Re5! Sacrificing a pawn for attacking chances.

22...Qxc4 23.Rc1 Qa6 24.Rce1 Qd6 25.h4! The battering ram is brought into action. Black may have an extra pawn, but this is little comfort when his king is being carved open.

25...Rd7 26.h5 gxh5 27.Rxf5 e5 28.Qg5+ Rg7 The lesser evil 28...Qg6, met by 29.Rxe5 Rxe5 30.Rxe5 Qxg5 31.Rxg5+, would enable Black to survive into a pawn down endgame.

29.Qxh5 Rge7 30.Qf3 Rg7 31.Rf6 Qd8 32.d6 e4 33.Qf5 Rd7 34.Re3 Rxd6 Now a neat finish.

35.Rg3+ Kh8 36.Rg7! Mate is forced. 1–0

The possibility of sharp play with king attacks is key, and even more so than in many middlegames, as here there are no minor pieces to help protect a monarch!

In the following position material is equal, but White's king has less cover, which enables Black to play for a win.

Brunello, S – Grandelius, N
Reykjavik 2019



34...Rf8 35.Qe6 Instead, 35.Qxe7 is met by 35...Qd5+ 36.Kg1 (or 36.Qe4 Qxa2+ 37.Re2 Qa1) 36...Rh8 with an attack.

35...Rf6 36.Qe4 Qg8 37.Qxe7 A better try is 37.d5!, angling to keep lines closed.

37...Qxa2+ 38.Re2 Qd5+ 39.Qe4 Qc4! Black needs to keep queens on the board, hoping to profit from White's draughting king.

40.Qe5 Rb6?! More precise is 40...a5!, when the advance of the passed pawn will be useful, whether White captures on f6 or not.

41.d5 a5 42.Re4 Rb2+ 43.Kh3 Qf1+ 44.Kg4 Rh2 45.Kg5!
The king does its best to run away from harm, but Black can keep up the threats.

45...Qf3 46.Rh4? Amazingly, White can survive (so it seems) if he constructs a novel defensive set-up with 46.g4 Qh3 47.Qg7!.

46...Re2 47.Qh8+ Ka7 48.Qd4+ b6 49.g4 Re4 50.Qf6 Qd3 51.Qf5 Qe3+ 52.Kg6 Re5 53.Rh3 Now the queen endgame is a good choice for Black.

53...Qxh3 54.Qxe5 Qxg4+ 55.Kf6 Qc4 56.Ke7 a4 The a-pawn advances, and White's counterplay is too slow.

57.Kd8 Kb7 58.Qe6 a3 59.Qc8+ Ka7 60.d6 Qg8+ Simplest.

61.Kxc7 Qxc8+ 62.Kxc8 a2 63.d7 a1=Q 64.d8=Q Qxc3+
The queens are (again) exchanged, and the remaining pawn will promote. **0–1**

Play can become very concrete when the position is relatively open and neither king is safe. Tactical resources abound in such positions.

Polugaevsky, L – Spassky, B
USSR ch.1959



1.Qd6+! Kg8 2.Qd3 Qa2 With the black king now on g8, 2...Re1+? fails to 3.Rxe1.

3.Qe4 Kf8 Not 3...Rb8? because of 4.Qxb7!, again exploiting the back rank. However, the tricky 3...Qa4! would keep the tension and limit any disadvantage.

4.Qxb7 g6 5.Qb6 Kg7? Missing the aggressive 5...Re2!, as after 6.Qd8+ Kg7 7.Qd4+ Kg8 White doesn't seem to have anything more than a draw.

6.c6? Correct is 6.Qa5!, which would gain a handy tempo, helping White to consolidate.

6...Kh6? Again, 6...Re2!

7.Qc5 g5 Now 7...Re2 can be met by 8.Qc1+ Kg7 9.Qa1+, trading queens.

8.c7 Re2 9.Qf8+ Mate is not far off. 1–0

In an otherwise inferior position the defender can use threats against the opposing king to keep the balance.

Flear, G – McShane, L
Hastings 2003



White keeps his pieces active, and avoids exchanges to earn the draw.

36.Qc3 Rb8 37.Qf6 Rc8 38.Re7 Qf8 39.Rd7 Qg7 40.Qd6 Qa1+ 41.Kg2 Qg7 42.h4 Qf8 After 42...Qf8 my opponent offered a draw, as he saw that I would have kept queens on with 43.Qf6. $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{1}{2}$

Here is another such case.

Rogers, I – Flear, G
London 1987



At the time I decided that I didn't want to go too passive, as with weak pawns I didn't think that I'd be able to hold

that way. So, I preferred to seek counterplay based around the fact that White's king isn't that secure.

29...f4! 30.Rxd6 Kh7 31.Rxe6 Rxe6 32.Qc7 Rf6 33.Qd7 Aiming to come to g4 to bolster the kingside. Instead, pawn grabbing would get White into trouble: 33.Qxa5? f3 34.g3 e3.

33...h5 34.Qd2 h4 35.Qd7 Re6 36.Rd5 e3! 37.fxe3 fxe3 38.Rd1 After 38.Rh5+ Qxh5 39.Qxe6 Qd1+ 40.Kh2 e2 White would have to take a perpetual.

38...e2 39.Re1 Qg3 40.Qd2 Qe5 41.Qd3+ g6 42.Qd7+ Kh6 43.Qd4 Qg3 44.Qd2+ g5 45.b4 axb4 46.cxb4 Qb8!?
47.Qd4 After 47.Rxe2 Rxe2 48.Qxe2 Qxb4= it would be nigh on impossible for White to advance his passed pawn safely while avoiding a barrage of checks.

47...Qg3 48.Qf2 Qd3 49.a4 Kg6 50.b5 Qc4 51.Kh2 Qxa4 52.Rxe2 Rf6! But not 52...Rxe2? 53.Qxe2, as this would offer White winning chances, with his queen defending the pawn while helping to cover his king from checks.

53.Qe3 53.Qc5?? is plain bad: 53...Qf4+ 54.Kh1 Qf1+ and White loses his rook.

53...Qxb5 54.Qe4+ Kh6 55.Qe7 Qb8+ 56.Re5 Qd6 57.Qe8 Rf5 58.Qh8+ Kg6 59.Qg8+ ½-½

Even in positions where it looks like the kings are safe and other factors may seem to be more relevant, the possibility of threats against one king or the other is omnipresent.

Marjanovic, S – Fedorowicz, J
Paris 1986



One side having an extra outside passed pawn is a fairly common scenario. The plan that gives the most winning chances usually involves getting the passed pawn going, thus forcing the opponent to deal with it as best they can, while creating threats on the (now lightly defended) other wing.

38...Rb8 Firstly, a period of consolidation is necessary to reduce any opposing counterplay.

39.g3 Qb5 40.Qf4 Marjanovic didn't opt for 40.Rc7!, which is more active. Of course Black could then try 40...Qb1+ 41.Qxb1 Rxb1+, with the type of endgame that is known to be a book draw, but no easy matter to defend. Indeed, such a scenario is often won on a regular basis in practice.

As a rule of thumb, I tell my pupils that the stronger side wins with the a-pawn 'one time in three' (and if the passed pawn were a b-pawn, as much as 'two times in three'). There is no statistical basis for my claims, it's just my experience and the need to convey that the engine's '0.00' assessment isn't the most important part of endgame play!

40...Re8 41.Kh2 a5 42.h4 h5 43.Qd4 g6 Both sides aim for this robust structure on the kingside in order to keep their respective kings well protected for the time being.

44.Rc7 The engine assesses the position as '0.00' again. However, let's face it, we'd all take Black!

44...Qf5 45.Kg2 Rc8 46.Rd7 The queen endgame with an extra outside passed pawn is generally recognized as winning, so White naturally avoids trading rooks.

46...Qb5 47.Ra7 Qc6+ 48.Kh2 Qf3! Tricky.

49.Re7? After 49.Rxa5?? Rc1 White would be mated;

Correct, however, is 49.Qe3!, when the rook endgame should be tenable, especially with the defending rook placed behind the passed pawn.

49...a4 Again, the passed pawn is used as a decoy.

50.Qd2 Ra8?! Much stronger is 50...a3! 51.Re3 Qa8.

51.Qa2 Rd8 52.Re3 Qf6 53.Re4! a3 54.Rf4? Now White has 54.Ra4! Rd3 55.Rxa3 Rxa3 56.Qxa3 Qxf2+ 57.Kh1, and the draw would be within reach.

54...Qe7 55.Rf3 Ra8 Black has consolidated again, and now manoeuvres for a while, seeking a breakthrough.

56.Re3 Qc5 57.Rf3 Ra7 58.Re3 Kh7 59.Rf3 Qf8 60.Rf6 Qe7 61.Rb6 Qd7 62.Rf6 Qb7 63.Rd6 Qf3! 64.Rb6 Ra5 65.Rd6 Ra7 66.Rb6 Qc3 67.Rb1 Qd4 68.Rb8 Qc3 69.Rb1 Qf6 70.Kg1 Qe6! With conditions being favourable, it's Black's turn to seek a rook endgame.

71.Qc2 For those who need convincing, 71.Qxe6 fxe6 72.Ra1 a2 73.Kf1 Kg7 74.Ke2 Kf6 75.Ke3 Kf5 would be hopeless, as White won't be able to hold with such a passive rook.

71...a2 72.Ra1 Qd5 73.Kh2 Ra3 74.Qb2 Ra4 75.Kh3 Qf3 76.Re1 Hardly better would have been 76.Kh2 Re4! 77.Rxa2 (or 77.Qxa2 Re2) 77...Re1, a variation that well illustrates the overall plan for the stronger side.

76...Rxb4+! A neat trick to finish matters off. **0–1**

Having a weak king was too much of a handicap for the World Champion in the following example, although the final result was far from evident for some time.

Karpov, A – Balashov, Y

Rostov-on-Don 1980



With this structure both the rook endgame and the queen endgame would offer excellent drawing chances, but with both queen and rook remaining on the board Karpov was unable to hold, his king being unable to find any sort of secure shelter.

54.Rd3 Qe7 55.Rf3 Qb7 56.Kg3 Re1 57.Qd4 Qc7+ The tame 57...Kh7? would allow counterplay with 58.h5!, as then Black's king is brought into the equation.

58.Qf4 Qa7 59.Rf2 Rg1+ 60.Rg2 Ra1 61.h5 Now this is ineffective.

61...g5! Keeping the wing closed, and with a gain of tempo.

62.Qe5 The alternative 62.Qf6 allows Black to play 62...Qc7+, when White's king proves to be too exposed: 63.Kf2 Qc5+ 64.Kg3 Ra3+ 65.Kh2 Qc7+ 66.Kg1 Rd3 67.Qxh6? (bad, but what else?) 67...Rd1+ 68.Kf2 Qf4+ 69.Ke2 Rd2+, and mates.

62...Ra5 63.Qd6 Ra3+ 64.Kh2 Rf3? A slow move that enables White to fight back.

Correct is 64...Qe3!, when the attack is too strong, e.g. 65.Qxh6 (65.Qd1 Qe5+ 66.Kh1 Ra1) 65...Qe5+ (or 65...Qh3+) etc.

65.Qe5 Balashov's idea no doubt took into account 65.Qxh6 Qe3, with decisive threats.

However, the best move 65.Re2! threatens counterplay. I suspect that both players overlooked the following resource: 65...Rf2+ 66.Kh3!! Rxe2 67.Qb8+! Qxb8 and stalemate!

65...Re3 66.Qd6 Rf3? 66...Re1!.

67.Qe5? Again, 67.Re2!.

67...Re3 68.Qd6 Re1 69.Qd8+ Kg7 70.Qd2 Qc7+ 71.Rg3 Rc1! 72.Qd4+ Kg8 73.Qe3 Rb1 74.Qc3 Qb8 75.Qf3 Ra1 76.Kh3 Qb1? Better is 76...Qb2! 77.Qg2 Qc1 78.Rb3 Ra4 79.Rb8+ Kh7 80.Rb3 Rf4 81.Rg3 Qe1 82.Qc2+ Re4 83.Kh2 Kg8.

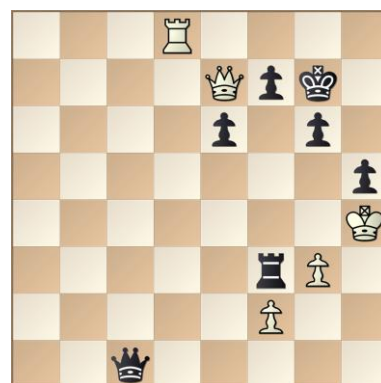
77.Qd5 Another well-hidden stalemate resource occurs: 77.Rg1!! Qxg1 78.Qxf7+ Kxf7=.

77...Qf1+ 78.Qg2 Qe1 79.Kh2 Ra4 80.Qg1 Qe5 81.Kh3 Ra2 82.Qb6? Qe4 83.Qd8+ Kg7 84.Qd1 Re2 85.Qf1 f5! Balashov introduces an additional element into the mix, and the defences are cracked open. **0–1**

As in the previous example, stalemate does sometimes arise in the most unexpected situations.

Lasdis – Zemitis, V

Riga 1936



White was able to find a checking sequence leading to an amazing draw.

1.Qf8+ Kf6 2.Qh8+ Kf5 3.g4+! hxc4 4.Rd5+! exd5 5.Qc8+ Qxc8 Stalemate! Where did that come from? **½–½**

Of course there are times when the stronger side has to accept a vulnerable king in the quest for victory.

Tseitlin, Mi – Flear, G
Hastings 1996



33...Rd5! Giving up the eighth rank, but assuring firm support for the d-pawn.

34.Rc8+ Kh7 35.Qa8 Qf3+ 36.Kg1 Qd1+ 37.Kg2 d3 A sign that I felt that I wasn't in too much danger.

38.Rh8+ Kg7 39.Qf8+ Kf6 40.Rh7 Qf3+ 41.Kg1 Rd7 Even the improbable 41...d2 42.Rxf7+ Ke5 43.Qg7+ Ke4 44.Qxg6+ Qf5! wins, but keeping matters as simple as possible can reduce the risk of overlooking something.

42.Qg7+ Kf5 43.Qf8 Qd1+ 44.Kg2 Qf3+ 45.Kg1 Qb7 Slow but sure.

46.Qh6 e5 47.Qd2 Qf3 48.h3 gxh3 49.Rxh3 Qe2 50.g4+ Kf6 51.Qc3 d2 0–1

Against Tseitlin the black king was just wriggling away from checks, but in the following example the king lends its support in order to increase the pressure.

Bryson, D – Flear, G
Dundee 1991



It turns out that the weakness of the e4-square is sufficient for Black to put pressure on his opponent.

26...Re4 The rook limits White's actions, while pressing against the f4-pawn.

27.Qd2 h5 The engine gives 27...Qb7!, after which the rook on a6 is struggling to find a satisfactory square, for example 28.Ra1 Rxf4+! 29.Qxf4 Qxb2+, when Black exploits the exposed nature of White's king.

28.Kg1 Kg6 29.Ra1 The weakness of f4 (and the well-insulated black king) forces White onto the defensive.

29...Qg4 30.g3 h4 Now it's the whole of the kingside that is creaking!

31.Qd3 hxg3 32.hxg3 Qe2 33.Rd1? Instead he should seek an active rook in the endgame with 33.Qxe2 Rxe2 34.Ra6!, with excellent drawing chances.

33...Kf5! With the opponent totally passive, Black can improve his king's potential to be a positive force (with the coming endgame in mind).

34.b4 Kg4 35.Qxe2+ Rxe2 36.Rd3 Kh3 White's passive play has enabled Black's king to be brought into the battle.

37.Kf1 Rg2 38.b5 cxb5 39.Rxd5 Rxg3 40.Rxb5 Kg4! The most precise, again getting the king ready for the next phase.

41.f5 Rf3+ 42.Kg2 Rxf5 43.Rb1 Rc5 44.Rc1 In rook endgames two connected passed pawns usually beat a lone one.

44...g5 45.Kf2 Kf4 46.Ke2 Ke4 47.Kd2 f5 48.Re1+ Kf3 49.Kd3 f4 50.Kd4 Rc8 51.Rg1 g4 52.Rf1+ Kg3 53.Rg1+ Kh3 0–1

In the following position my opponent had plenty of activity for a pawn, but failed to find the right continuation.

Flear, G – Boudre, JP
Saint-Affrique 2000



27...Qd4 28.Rc3 Rd5 29.Rxb3 If 29.g3, 29...Rxe5 30.Qb1+ Rf5!=.

29...Rxe5 Best is 29...Qd1! 30.Re3 Qc2, using tactics to regain the pawn. In fact White then only has one acceptable move: 31.Qf1, when 31...Qxb2= would be at least equal.

30.Qb1+ g6 As usual, with both heavy pieces left on the board king security is in both players' minds.

31.g3 Re2 32.Rf3 Kg7 33.Qc1 Qd5 Capturing on b2 isn't a good idea here: 33...Rxb2? 34.Qc7, or 33...Qxb2? 34.Qc7.

34.Qc3+ e5 35.Re3 Qd1+ 36.Kg2 Qd5+ 37.Kg1 Qd1+ 38.Kg2 Qd5+ 39.Rf3 g5?! A tempting move, but this leads to a weakening of his own king's pawn shield. It would have been better to temporize with 39...Qb7 40.b3 Qd5.

40.h3 Kg6 41.b4 Re4 42.Qb3! Rc4 Going back isn't good: 42...Qd7 43.Qc2 (White's turn to pin!) 43...f5 44.g4 Rxb4 45.Rxf5 and Black's king would be too weak to survive. Also bad would be 42...Qxb3? 43.Rxb3, as White's rook would then be ideally placed.

43.Kh2? The precise 43.g4! would consolidate the kingside.

43...Qd4 44.g4 e4 45.Rf5 Qd3? A final error.

The easiest way to draw was to disrupt White with 45...e3!, e.g. 46.Qxe3 (or 46.fxe3 Qd2+ 47.Kg3 Qe1+, and Black has too many checks with White's king now being so exposed) 46...Qxe3 47.fxe3 Rxb4, and the extra pawn can't be exploited.

46.Qa2! Suddenly it's Black's king that is open to the winds!

46...Rc7 Or 46...f6 47.Qa6 Qc3 48.Qe6 etc.

47.Rxg5+! Not the only move, but it emphasizes the downside of Black's g-pawn push (see 39...g5?!).

After 47...Kxg5 48.Qa5+ Kg6 49.Qxc7 White is two pawns to the good. **1-0**

If the defender has a safe king and a better structure he can often hold, despite being a pawn down.

Flear, G – Emms, J
Oakham 1994



24...Rc8 25.Qb3 Rc5 26.Rd1 Qc7 27.Rd3 b5 28.g3 g6 29.Qb2 Rc4 30.Qd2 Kg7 31.h4 h5 32.Rd6 Qc5 But not 32...Rxc3? because of 33.Qd4+.

33.Rxa6 Rxc3 34.Qd6?! The rook endgame is only drawn, so it would have been better to keep the queens on with 34.Qd8! Rc1+ 35.Kh2, but the defence would still be tough to break down following the precise 35...Qe5! 36.Ra8 Kh6!.

34...Qxd6 35.Rxd6 Rc2 36.Ra6 b4 37.Kg2 Rb2 38.Kf3 b3 39.axb3 Rxb3 40.Kf4 Rb2 41.f3 Rb4+ 42.e4 Rb3 43.Rd6 Ra3 44.e5 Ra4+ 45.Ke3 Ra1 46.Rd4 Kf8 47.Kf4 Ke7 48.Rd6 Rf1 49.Rf6 Rh1 50.Kg5 Rg1 51.Kh6 Rg3 52.f4 Kf8 53.e6 Ke7 54.exf7 Kf8 55.Rxg6 Rg4 56.Kxh5 Rxf4 57.Kg5 Rxf7 58.h5 Rf1 59.Kh6 Rf5 60.Ra6 Kg8 61.Kg6 ½-½

Exercise 1



Black found a way to drive home his advantage, can you?

Exercise 2



Black seems to have the initiative, but can he (with the move) exploit it?

Exercise 1 - Solution

Snapik - Filipowicz

Poland 1974

1...Ra1! Black goes into attacking mode. Instead, 1...Qh4+ 2.Rh3 Qf4+ only repeats.

2.Qxc6 Seeking a counterattack with 2.Qc8+ Kh7 3.Qf8 requires a careful response: 3...Qh4+ 4.Rh3 Qf2 5.Rf3 (5.Rg3 Qg1+ 6.Kh3 Qh1+ 7.Kg4 Rf1 with a decisive attack plus a safe king!) 5...Qg1+ 6.Kh3 Ra2 7.g3 Rh2+ 8.Kg4 Qc1 (every move a threat!) 9.Rf4 Qd1+ 10.Rf3 Qd2 11.Rf4 Qe2+ 12.Rf3 Rxf5! 13.Kxf5 Qxf3+ 14.Kh4 h5!.

2...Rf1 3.Qe8+ No better is 3.Qa6 Qh4+ 4.Rh3 Qe1 etc.

3...Kh7 4.Qe7 Qc1 5.Rf3 Rh1+ 6.Kg3 Qe1+ 7.Kg4 If 7.Rf2 then 7...Rxf5 8.Qxf7 Rf5—+.

7...f5+ 8.Rxf5 Or 8.exf6 Qe4+ 9.Rf4 Qxg2#.

8...Qe4+ 9.Kg3 exf5 The extra pawn cover for his own king helped Black to attack the opponent's monarch without any risk. **0–1**

Exercise 2 - Solution

Bogatyrev, O – Zagoriansky, E

USSR 1947

1...Ra3+ 2.Kg4 After 2.Rd3 the elegant 2...Qd4!! wins - a lovely tactic that Black missed in the actual game.

2...Qh2 3.Qf2 Or 3.Rd3 Rxd3 4.Qxd3 Qxg2+.

3...f5+ 4.Kh4 Rxf3+! and mates next move.

Book of the Month by Ben Graff

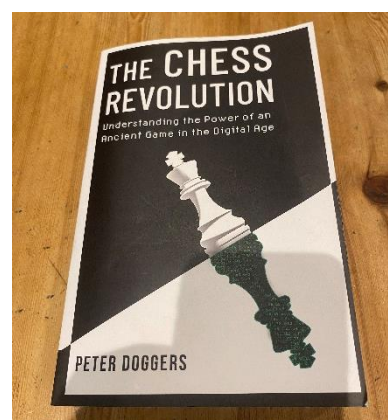


The best new writing and the greatest classics under one roof... in association with Forward Chess

The Chess Revolution – Peter Doggers (Little, Brown Book Group | Robinson)

Chess play entails narrative intrigue. Undertaking a chess game trips a sense of adventure, of venturing into surprises and unanticipated situations.

Robert Desjarlais – *Counterplay: An Anthropologist at the Chessboard* (quoted in *The Chess Revolution*)



I spotted a copy of *The Chess Revolution* at the book stall during the London Chess Classic. It's a hefty tome, running to over 400 pages, elegantly bound in a black and white cover. The byline fairly represents the aim as 'Understanding the Power of an Ancient Game in the Digital Age.' From the history of chess, through to its representation in popular culture, and thoughts on the game's stars, this is an extensive work. The narrative

sweep also explores cheating, AI, and the online era we now live in.

As Doggers observes, 'It seems that, like no other game, chess has always been an activity with a certain magic, something to enjoy, but also something that inspires esteem or awe, and should be treated with respect.' The high quality of the writing, Doggers own strength as a player, and his obvious love of chess - all shine through.

Yet there is one challenge that we should note at the outset of this review, namely whom the book is for. Doggers has aimed to write something '... serving the contingent of new chess fans who've encountered the game as Netflix watchers or YouTube subscribers, and are in desperate need of a good introduction to this sport and the world beyond it.' He notes that 'Insiders of the chess world might recognise many of the stories and anecdotes, but there's plenty for them to discover, too.' It's a fair observation. There are sections of this book where I felt that I already knew what was coming, but there is much that is fresh, and I wanted to focus on some of the ground that was newer to me in the rest of this column.

The sheer ubiquity of chess in popular culture, from *Friends*, through to *Seinfeld*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Frasier*, *The Simpsons*, and elsewhere, is noted as something that we perhaps take for granted. Mike Klein is quoted as having attempted to document all the chess references he could find, a futile exercise which led him to conclude that 'I gave up after about four weeks. Even when not seeking out the game, it found me far too often, and the many references inundated me.'

As to why it's chess rather than some other game that has become such a cultural touchstone, Matthew James Seidel observes that 'The most obvious explanation why fiction is so replete with chess players is that, at their core, chess and stories are about the same thing – conflict. And that is a particular kind of conflict that is utterly devoid of chance. Whether a king is playing against a beggar, or a nuclear physicist against a kindergartner, all that matters are the choices you make.' It does seem that there is something about the game's paradoxes, its simplicity and complexity, the hidden depths and easy to understand narratives, that no other game can match.

Scott Frank, the screenwriter for *The Queen's Gambit*, is quoted as observing that the secret behind the success of the hit series was that in some ways that it is not about chess at all – which again goes to show how much imagining can be layered on top of the sixty four squares. In this context, 'It's about a child growing up, interrupted by this brilliant talent that she has. It's very difficult to have a normal life if you have an extra-normal ability in

almost any area, so this story is much more about her demons than it is about her obsession with chess. In fact, there's nothing you need to know about chess.' I could not help but think that there was a broader chess metaphor in here somewhere. We are clearly not all prodigies. Yet the drama that plays out in all our games is about us trying to make the most of ourselves, and battling our own limitations and inner struggles. What could be more compelling than that?

I found the section on Kasparov visiting Fischer's grave perhaps the most moving chapter of the book. 'Snow is falling, and the road is slippery. Garry Kasparov, however, is determined to continue the drive.' After a respectful pause on arrival, Kasparov stands at the graveside. 'It is a historic moment for chess. The two giants of the game had never met, yet never were they so close.' It is hard not to rue the lost games the pair would have played, had Fischer's mental health allowed - two champions whose eras should have overlapped, but did not.

Kasparov has written elsewhere that it fell to him to be the world chess champion during the decade when chess computers and the world's best players were of roughly similar strength. In 1985 Kasparov had been able to win a simultaneous against computers by 32 – 0. Yet by 1997 the playing technology had changed out of all recognition, as IBM's \$20 million investment in Deep Blue saw their 'market capitalisation increase by billions overnight' when it edged Kasparov in controversial circumstances.

Perhaps there is not much in the retelling that readers will not already know, but Doggers does write it well, and draws out Kasparov's most endearing quality – that he is all too human. How would you fancy telling the world champion that he had inadvertently resigned in a drawn position in the second game? One of his seconds had to break this to him, the following day. 'Garry clutched his head and froze in the middle of Fifth Avenue. There were no expletives, no cursing, just stunned silence.'

It is equally difficult not to feel Garry's pain at the press conference after his defeat in the final game. 'He stared into the middle distance over everyone's head, avoiding eye contact and scarcely blinking, looking like he might spontaneously combust.' I tend to be in the camp that believes that Kasparov was technically a stronger player than Deep Blue, but it's hard for any thinking or feeling entity to play against a device that has no fear. As Bill Letterman somewhat unfairly put it on his show, 'Deep Blue defeated Garry Kasparov. In a related story earlier today the New York Mets were defeated by a microwave oven.'

The section on the rise of AI from the pioneering work of Charles Babbage in the 19th century, through to AlphaZero in the 21st, is well told. One new facet for me was the thoughts of the programmer Tord Romstad on the conventional wisdom that the programme had taught itself to play in a mere four hours. He observed that 'This four-hour claim is kind of true, but at the same time also kind of ridiculous, because they were using an immense amount of hardware, like thousands of machines training in parallel. If you wanted to do this at home, it would take about 40 years.'

The sections on the rise of internet chess and chess streaming are fascinating. The story of how the ICC squandered its massive lead over chess.com is interesting, and serves as a warning to any organisation that thinks it has secured dominance in any particular field. As ICC's Chief Operating Officer Ruy Mora put it, 'We were a ship without a clear captain. It was like a soap opera, like *Dallas* or *Dynasty*. I think we had at least four or five people who were CEO for a year.'

The way in which sometime chess.com programmer Thibault Duplessis left the organisation to form Lichess is also highlighted. As Chess.Com co-founder Jay Severson put it, 'I would say we are on non-speaking terms.' Perhaps though Doggers' relationship with Chess.com (where he is Director of News) means that he does not fully explore the relative merits of Chess.com and Lichess. I personally much prefer playing on Lichess, and it will be interesting to see what the future holds for both platforms.

Perhaps the best way to look at this book is as you would an old friend. Much of what they say does not come as a surprise after all this time, but they still make for congenial company. Moreover, when they do take the conversation in new directions, it's highly engaging. All in all, *The Chess Revolution* is that companion. I have no doubt that most players would enjoy a few happy hours with this work.

It's a Puzzlement!

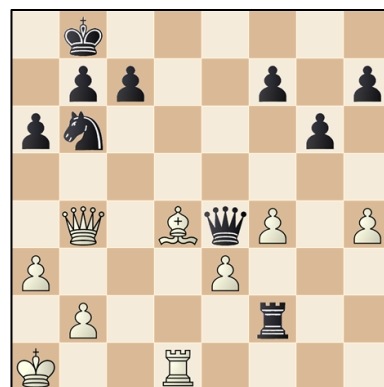


Welcome to our puzzles section! Here are this month's puzzles - all hand-picked by [ChessPuzzle.net](https://chesspuzzle.net)

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!

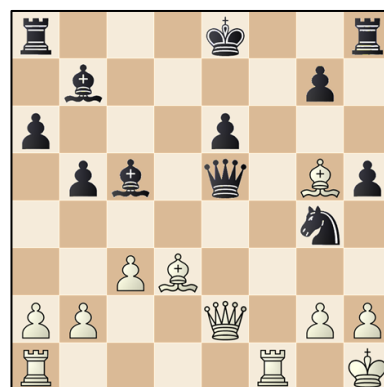
When you click on the links below you need to play a move to see the hint and/or solution.

Puzzle 1 – WFM Subramanian, Anusha – FM Napoli,N
Titled Tue 17th Dec Early, chess.com INT



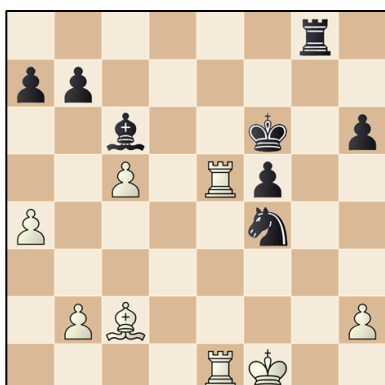
White to win - [Puzzle One](#)

Puzzle 2 – FM Haydon, D – FM Garcia Correa, J
Titled Tue 24th Dec Early, chess.com INT



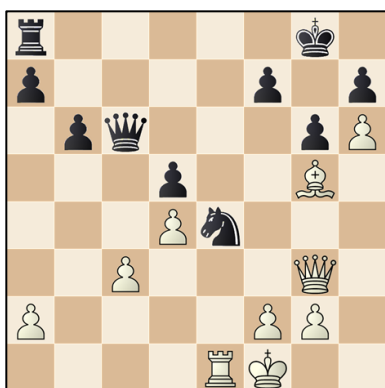
White to win - [Puzzle Two](#)

**Puzzle 3 – WFM Rida, Ruqayyah - FM Waldhausen
Gordon, Frederick**
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



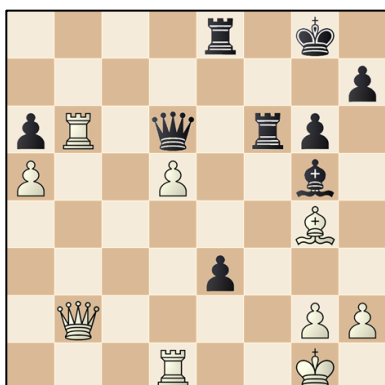
Black to win - [Puzzle Three](#)

Puzzle 4 – CM Abrahams, Daniel - Rubeck, Jonathan
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



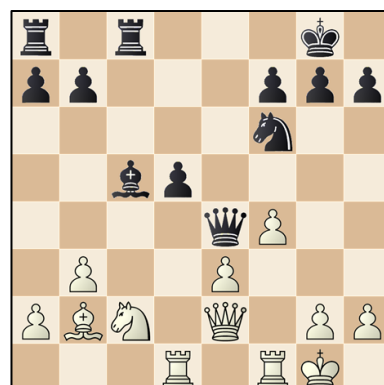
White to win - [Puzzle Four](#)

Puzzle 5 – GM Royal, Shreyas - Steiners, Emils
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



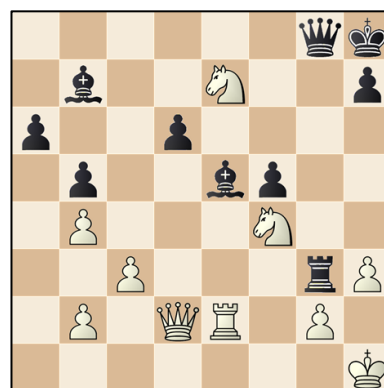
Black to win - [Puzzle Five](#)

**Puzzle 6 – FM Dong, Bao Nghia – FM Fernandez,
Michael**
London Classic Masters, London ENG



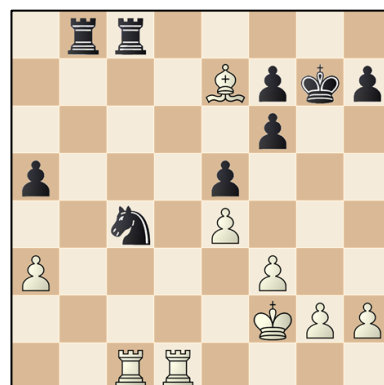
Black to win - [Puzzle Six](#)

Puzzle 7 – FM Smith, A P - CM Zhang, K B
London Classic Masters, London ENG



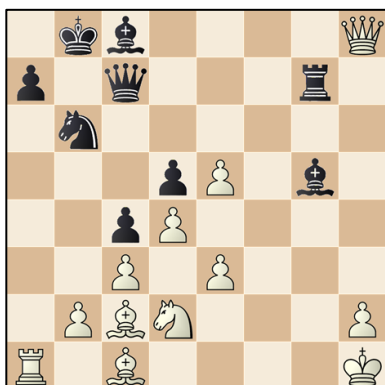
Black to win - [Puzzle Seven](#)

Puzzle 8 – IM Marusenko, Petr - Brewer, Callum D
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



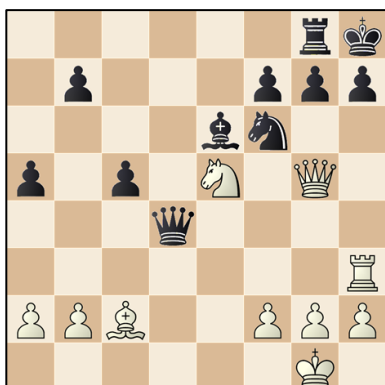
Black to win - [Puzzle Eight](#)

Puzzle 9 – Stokes, Stephen - Malinovsky, I
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



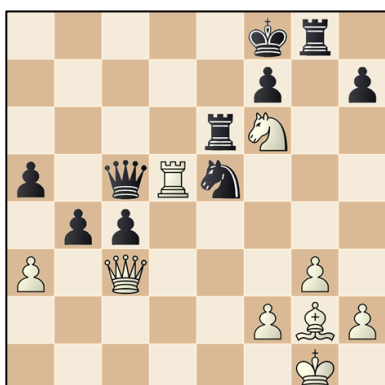
Black to win - [Puzzle Nine](#)

Puzzle 10 – Cheng, Louis - Zhu, Yaoyao
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



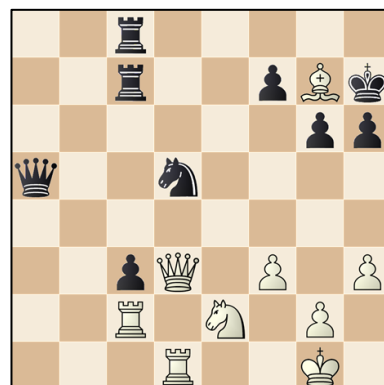
White to win - [Puzzle Ten](#)

Puzzle 11 – Stepanyan, Henrik – He, Tom Junde
Keith Escott Mem Open, Sutton Coldfield ENG



White to win - [Puzzle Eleven](#)

Puzzle 12 - Steiners, Emils – GM Gormally, D
Hastings Masters 2024-25, Hastings ENG



Black to checkmate - [Puzzle Twelve](#)

All in One

For all the puzzles on one page just visit
https://chesspuzzle.net/Puzzle/1030668?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=januarynews

... by clicking the link above or via the QR code.



ChessPuzzle's Most Liked Puzzles of 2024 by Martin Bennedick

ChessPuzzle.net's most liked puzzles of 2024 are in, and two *ChessMoves* selections have claimed the top spots! Players can 'like' puzzles they enjoy by using the site's thumbs up button, and each 1st January I compile the most popular puzzles from games played in the previous year.

The silver medal goes to Ana Williams, who deflected both rooks with a wonderful combination, while Alex Bullen's very surprising and original tactic from his 4NCL game earned him the gold medal for the most popular chess puzzle in 2024!

The bronze medal goes to Salem Saleh for a stunning combination played in the Sharjah Masters.

Here are the top three puzzles.

GOLD

CM Alex Bullen – Paul Talsma

4NCL Div 2 2023-24

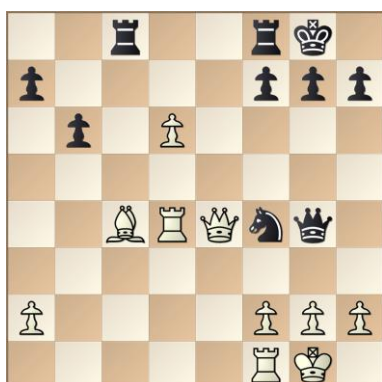


SILVER

Eldar Alizada - Ana Williams

British Rapidplay 2024, Peterborough ENG

2024.03.02



BRONZE

Vladimir Fedoseev - A.R. Saleh Salem

7th Sharjah Masters 2024, Sharjah UAE

2024.05.16



Want to challenge yourself with more brilliant moves? You can play through all top 50 puzzles here:

https://chesspuzzle.net/List/11003?utm_source=ecf&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=januarynews



From the Archive

New Year, New Strategy: De Montfort University Special Collections Checkmates Social Media!

by Dr Natalie Hayton, Assistant Archivist

As we ring in the New Year, the DMU Special Collections team is making bold moves to promote the English Chess Federation Library (ECF) -- one of the most extensive libraries in our care - with a fresh approach to social media and online engagement. This year we're expanding our presence to Bluesky, Threads, Facebook, and Instagram, while continuing to use our blog and online exhibitions to ensure that no chess enthusiast is left in the dark about this incredible resource. It's all part of a calculated gambit to bring the world of chess history to a wider audience which began when the ECF Library was first deposited in 2021. We knew that we had to capture the momentum with a winning strategy—and so the social media hashtag #ChessTuesday was born. The hashtag has since become a grandmaster move, sparking engagement and lively discussions.

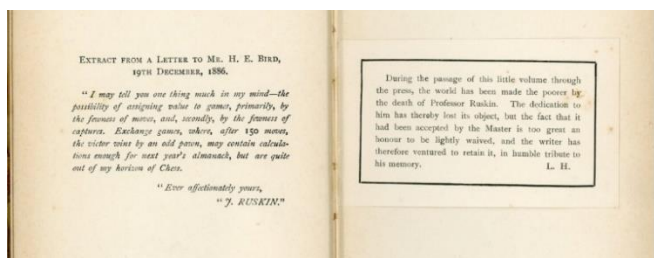
With weekly posts exploring a diverse range of historical chess-related topics such as programmes, magazines, recordings, puzzles, ornate chess sets, clubs, and more, here's a small glimpse into our discoveries as we continue to delve deeper into the collection. Highlights from 2024 below include four seasonal picks, showcasing some of our most popular posts from when our main game was played on X (formerly Twitter).

Winter: Programme for the Rheims Tournament, 1959



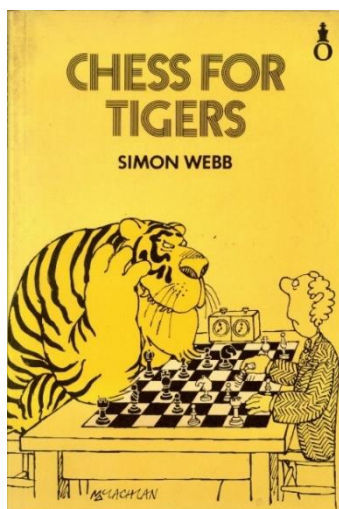
'A perfect glass of champagne to toast the first #ChessTuesday of the New Year, this rather stylish cover of a programme for the French Chess Championship held in Rheims, 1959, won by César Boutteville'. No, it is not lost on us that the tournament was held in September!

Spring: *The Games of Greco* by Louis Hoffman, 1900



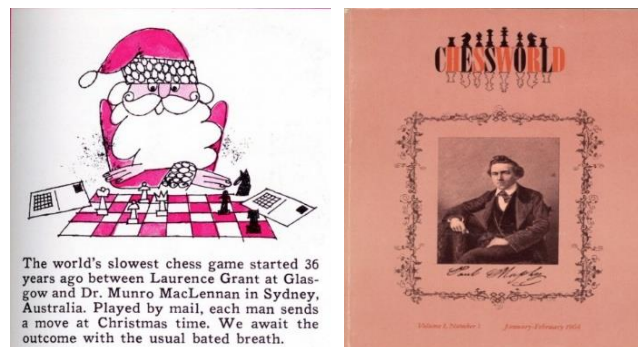
'This well-known book by Hoffman includes an extract from a letter of by John Ruskin to Henry Bird, and an encomium to Ruskin by Hoffman, with Ruskin pondering the value of games with the most and least moves and captures.'

Summer: *Chess For Tigers* by Simon Webb, 1980



With such a fabulous front cover how could it fail to engage? Posted on #TigerDay as well as #ChessTuesday, a quotation from the blurb emphasizes its advocacy of a ruthless approach: 'The Tiger is a vicious beast... He doesn't care about making the "best" moves. All he cares about is winning.' Posted during the Summer Olympics, comments from our regular followers agreed that it is indeed a 'great book.'

Autumn: *Chess World*, 1964



Perfect for a post in the run up to the Christmas period, here we proclaimed: 'Tradition = Legendary! Pace = Painful! With one move every Christmas we have the slowest game of chess ever according to *Chess World*. Can you name any recent contenders?' Our new social media strategy for 2025 will involve continuing to showcase the ECF Library, highlighting cataloguing and preservation projects to boost awareness and access, as well as an appreciation of the fabulous items in the collection. By embracing a broader array of platforms we hope to create a dynamic, interactive space for sharing historical news, factoids, and more, for entertainment and enlightenment. So, if you're ready to make a move and stay up to date with the latest from the ECF Library, there are plenty of reasons to follow along on your favourite platform. Let's keep this exciting game in play! Happy New Year!

DMU Special Collections Social Media Handles



Bluesky: @dmuspecialcolls.bsky.social



Facebook: DMUHeritage



Instagram: @dmuspecialcollections



Threads: @dmuspecialcollections



X/Twitter: @DMUSpecialColls

Blog: <https://library.dmu.ac.uk/archivesblog>

Online Exhibitions:

<https://library.dmu.ac.uk/specialcollections/exhibitions>

NEWS and VIEWS

Matthew Wadsworth Gains Third GM Norm at Roquetas Chess Festival

Congratulation to Matthew on achieving his third GM norm at the above event which took place at the beginning of January. He now needs to gain an additional 10 rating points so that he can claim the title. The full results of the event can be viewed at:

<https://info64.org/roquetas-chess-festival-2025-xxxvi-international-open/standings>

2025 King's New Year's Honours: Stephen Rigby – British Empire Medal



Steve Rigby, the founder of Oldham-based 3Cs Chess Club over forty-six years ago, has been awarded the British Empire Medal in the 2025 King's New Year's Honours for services to chess and his work with young people in the community. He becomes only the thirteenth person in the country to have received a national honour from the monarch specifically because of their involvement with the game of chess.

The honour has been granted to Steve just twelve months after he also received the national Points of Light award, the recipients of which are personally selected by the Prime Minister (then Rishi Sunak) for outstanding voluntary service within their community. On that occasion he was the first person to have had their work for the benefit of chess recognised in such a prestigious manner.

It was in 1978 that Steve, a former headteacher at a number of Oldham schools, founded the Children's Chess Club of Oldham (now known locally, nationally, and internationally as 3Cs) along with fellow local teacher Roy Williams, after they were informed that many already established chess clubs were unwilling to accept children.

Therefore Steve and Roy agreed to establish an Oldham schools' chess league, assisted by notable contributors

such as Gareth Lewis, Brian Whitworth and Arthur Marsden, as well as other teachers interested in providing opportunities for Oldham children to compete in what was at that time considered a somewhat elite academic pastime. From this early schools' league the Oldham U11 and later U9 teams were formed, both of which continue to represent the town to this day under the capable care of Dale James, himself one of Steve and Roy's original group of players in 1978, and who became the first 3Cs player to win a British title when becoming the national U14 champion in 1984.



Steve began coaching chess in local schools before he and Roy Williams formed 3Cs in 1978

Although the U11s' first match ended in a disastrous 23-1 defeat against a mighty Manchester team Steve and Roy were not discouraged, and worked to improve the team's performance. The recruitment of experienced coach Phil Adams was a major step forward, together with the idea that the way to improve the children's level of skill was to play against more experienced adults. To this day that is still the blueprint for the 3Cs club.

3Cs' weekly club nights now attract youngsters from near and far, many of whom compete in events both nationally and internationally after having started to learn chess under Steve's guidance. Indeed, one such player was a young Stephen Gordon, who has since progressed to become a grandmaster and English champion.

As well as encouraging youngsters to play chess, Steve Rigby also sees the importance of support given to them by parental involvement. As a consequence notable examples such as Tony Ashton, Alan Burke, Glyn Towse, John Walton, Andy Lewis, Tim Horton, Vic Pelling, Everson Correa and others have been seen playing in teams alongside their children, while Lorraine Towse and Rose Kaliski have provided valuable behind the scenes work.

In 2009 Steve was honoured by the English Chess Federation as the recipient of the President's Award for Services to Chess. In addition, as a result of Steve's often unnoticed hard work in always trying to improve the club, 3Cs have won the ECF's Club of the Year award on three occasions; an honour which no other club in the country has ever been granted more than once since its inception in 1984.



In 2009 Steve took a group of young 3Cs players on tour to play chess in Portugal

Many of the youngsters Steve first nurtured now play regularly for 3Cs in the local adult league, resulting in the club having won the Manchester League in eighteen of its last twenty seasons. The 3Cs' impressive roll of honour currently shows 39 of its young players as having represented England, 28 having become national champions at various levels, and 12 who have achieved master titles. However, it isn't just success that Steve craves. He gets far more pleasure in seeing new young faces coming through the door on 3Cs' club nights, and, in his words, 'having a relatively small and unfashionable town in the world of chess like Oldham being able to compete at the highest level with others who have far greater resources.'

3Cs have also twice qualified for the European Chess Club Championships, yet while their opponents were often a mix of 'imported' players who were paid to represent their team, Steve gained pleasure in knowing that the 3Cs side had mostly come through the club's own youth development system and were all genuine club members.

Furthermore, the 45th anniversary year of 3Cs in 2023 not only brought the club national publicity with an appearance on the BBC1 prime time television programme *The One Show* as well as becoming the first club to win the Manchester League eight years in a row, but also the ECF's National Club Championship (the chess equivalent of the FA Cup), yet again with a full team of players who were products of the club's junior coaching system.

Steve said of his new honour: 'I am delighted to receive this award, not only for myself but also on behalf of the remarkable people who I have spent time sharing the same vision with, and who have all helped to make our achievements possible. That so many have supported the club's inclusive nature to provide opportunities for all has been a great inspiration to me all my life.'



ECF Club of the Year award; BBC 1's The One Show interview; Points of Light winner

'My thoughts, of course, go to friends and colleagues no longer with us, but who bought into the dream that Roy and I had so long ago. I am sure that Gareth Lewis, David Monaghan and Steve Wild, to name a few, would appreciate our efforts, and be delighted by the progress made in the 46 years since then.'

'Although much success has come 3Cs' way, its main aim is, and will always be, making chess more accessible to young boys and girls. I've just got on with the whole promotion of the club, but have always taken a lot of pride in the fact that Oldham can stand by itself and be represented at such a high level. Being able to compete on equal terms (and often prevail) against those who can rely on support from external sources certainly reflects the commitment of many 3Cs members both past and present.'

Steve's passion for the 3Cs club and chess hasn't diminished. Early in 2025 he will be travelling to support the 3Cs junior team in the Four Nations Chess League, and, although having since retired from teaching and moved out of the Oldham area to live in Guilsfield in Wales, he still makes the 200 miles round trip to attend 3Cs club nights, while also helping in the development of a new chess club in Welshpool, nearer his home.

Away from chess, Steve's other passions are bowls (at which he has already represented his newly adopted county of Powys), salmon fishing and rugby league, the latter of which saw him working behind the scenes for over 25 years at Salford Red Devils and also coaching the Oldham schools U11 team to victory in the Lancashire Cup as well as when they played in the curtain-raiser to the 1984 Rugby League Challenge Cup final at Wembley Stadium.



Steve formed Welshpool chess club, and coached Oldham the U11 rugby league team at Wembley

For more information of 3Cs chess club follow this link:
<https://www.3cscchessclub.com/>

ECF Tournament Rules Updated

The ECF tournament rules for ECF-rated games have been updated to include:

Reference to the latest versions of ECF and FIDE documents;

Clarification of the guidance on storage of electronic devices;

Clarification of the rules on recording of moves.

You can find the updated ECF tournament rules here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/ecf-tournament-rules/>

FIDE Titles/Honours

We have recently updated this section of the website. Readers are invited to check the information contained in the link below and contact Andrew Walker at the ECF Office on webmaster@englishchess.org.uk with any amendments or additions:

<https://www.ecfresource.co.uk/fide-titleshonours/>

British Chess Educational Trust Awards 2025

We are inviting nominations for the BCET awards for 2025, which are aimed at junior schools (including colleges and other education establishments) and junior clubs in the United Kingdom. The awards 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 in the school/club.

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 schools and junior clubs. The ECF website <https://www.ecfresource.co.uk/ecf-awards/#bcet> lists the schools/clubs that have received the award in the past, with a selection of 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 considered justified.

Recommendations for awards, with citations, should be sent directly to John Wickham, 55 Shakespeare Way, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6SL, or by email to j.r.wickham@btinternet.com, or via the respective UK national federation (England – English Chess Federation,

Scotland - Chess Scotland, Wales - Welsh Chess Union, and Northern Ireland - Ulster Chess Union) by 31st May 2025.

ECF Grassroots Chess Initiative: An Update

Over £80,000 still available for applications which meet the grassroots chess criteria

The ECF grassroots chess initiative was launched in July 2024. Details of the programme and how to apply can be found in the prospectus here:

<https://www.englishchess.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Grassroots-Prospectus.pdf>

Funds have been allocated on a regional basis; each of nine regions, led by a regional co-ordinator, has £10,000 for grassroots awards. A small central team of Stephen Greep (ECF Non-Executive Director and Chair of the grassroots fund), Mike Truran (ECF CEO) and Nigel Towers (ECF Director of Home Chess) oversee the process and have a smaller amount of funds for cross-regional applications.

The regions, and their coordinators, are:

- North West (Richard Walsh);
- North East (Mick Riding);
- Yorkshire and Humberside (Andrew Wainwright);
- West Midlands (Tim Lane);
- East Midlands (Paul Mottram);
- East of England (John Wickham);
- South East (to be confirmed);
- Greater London (Chris Skulte);
- South West (Nikki Forster).

Applications for funding are considered quarterly and the first two tranches of applications have now been assessed.

To date 64 applications have been made, of which over two thirds have been supported by awards of grants. Grants totalling £23,500 have been made – that said, 80% of funds for regional grants are still available, so there are lots of opportunities for further applications. Applications can be made at any time; the date for the next assessment is 1st March (and then 1st June). We are expecting the funds available through the initiative to last for up to two years. To make a successful grant it is highly recommended that you read the prospectus and target your application accordingly. The maximum for individual grassroots chess grants is expected to be in the region of £1,000 - more for requests for cross-regional applications.

Unsurprisingly, most awards have been made to support the purchase of equipment for new and developing clubs and congresses, but we have also seen a range of community developments, together with help for schools and prison chess. The initiative has supported clubs and associations, junior and school chess clubs, community chess developments, and prison chess.

General enquiries can be made to the Chair of the grassroots chess initiative, Stephen Greep (sjgreep@gmail.com).

We are grateful to Chess & Bridge and DGT, who have provided equipment at significantly reduced rates to enable our available funds to go further.

The following is a list of awards made to date, showing the breadth and regional distribution of awards.

Alsager Owls Chess Club	Equipment and venue hire for new junior chess club
Ashton Community Chess Club	Support for training/coaching
Basildon Chess Club	Clocks for club development
Bath Chess Club	Club development training events
Bracknell Chess Club	Clocks to support development of family and junior chess club.
Bure Valley Primary School	Equipment to aid teaching chess in local schools
Cavendish Church of England Primary School	Equipment for new school chess club
Chess Centre, Ilkley	Support for new congress development
Chess in Cheshire	Support for the development of new chess events in Cheshire
Chess for Life	Support for new club start-up
Chessmates - York	Support for junior satellite events at Chessmates event
Cramlington Community Chess Club	Clocks and publicity flyers for new club

Crewe & Nantwich Library Chess Club	Equipment support for new and developing library chess clubs
Cumbria Chess Association	Support for community chess events in Cumbria
Darwinian Knights Chess Club	Sets, boards and clocks for a new club
Dorchester Chess Club	Sets, boards and clocks for club development
Durham University Chess Society	Clocks to enable local league participation
Edge Hill University	Sets, boards and clocks for club development
English Chess Federation	Sets and boards for chess in prison initiatives
Fareham Academy	Sets and boards for a new school junior development
Ferndown Junior Chess Club	Support for the development of a new junior chess club
Folkestone Junior Chess Club	Support for the development of new junior chess club
Gosforth Chess Club	Support for gazebo purchase for community events
Halesowen Chess Club	Demonstration board and stand for junior coaching
Lancashire Chess Association	Clocks to help the development of county chess
Lido School of Chess	Equipment to support club development
Luton Chess Club	Sets, boards and clocks for club development
Maidenhead Chess Club	Club development support - publicity/social media and training
Medway Chess Club	Funding to support the development of new congresses

Meltham and Denby Dale Chess Club	Support for new congress development
Merseyside Chess Club	Sets, boards and clocks for junior club development
Morley Junior Chess Club	Sets and boards for new junior chess club
New England Chess Club	Set-up and first year costs of a new junior club section
Play Chess Initiative (Glossop centred)	Wide range of equipment, literature and other support for new community chess initiative
Richmond Upon Thames College	Outdoor chess tables
St John the Evangelist Chess Club, Walton, Liverpool	Equipment to support the development of a new chess club
She Plays to Win	Support for new programmes for the She Plays To Win initiative
South Bristol Chess Club	Support and growth for club in deprived area
South London	Support for new women's and junior club development
Thornaby Chess Club	Sets and boards to support chess development at Middleton St George Village
Turing Chess Academy	Sets, boards and clocks for club development
Wells Chess Club	Support for the development of a junior chess club, including coaching
Wigan Chess Club	Publicity and DBS checks for new club
Willesden & Brent Chess Club	Schools chess club development and events support in Brent

Stephen Greep, ECF Grassroots Initiative Chair

ECF Grassroots: Celebrating More Than Ten Years of Folkestone Juniors Chess Club

by Matthew Cussens



Folkestone Juniors Chess Club is the only dedicated junior chess club in South East Kent. In fact, the first member (nickname: double crazy), having started out at five years old, is now 17 and helps to coach the youngsters.



The club meets every fortnight, so there is always next Saturday free for other things. New members take an oath. They put on the club hat (a Viking helmet), place their left hand on a chess book, raise their right hand, and repeat the words: 'I (insert name) do solemnly pledge allegiance to Folkestone Juniors Chess Club and will do all that I can in our never-ending quest for world domination. Hooray!' They always giggle at the last part. Our best hope for world domination is Shreyas Royal, an honoree member who visited the club in 2018 to raise funds for his chess career, and gave an excellent presentation aged just ten! He also played some blitz games; my record against him is played three, won one, and I came second in the other two. He is now the youngest GM in England, which

shows you what just one visit to the FJCC can do for you! His nickname is Elvis. I communicate with the chess spirits, and they tell me the player's chess name. I asked the chess spirits what chess name the surname Royal should have, and they replied, 'De-ugh', but I didn't think that was appropriate, and so they told me his nickname should be 'King.' Royal – King. Simple! But when I told Shreyas he replied, 'Elvis is the king' and that has been his nickname ever since.



We used to enjoy the use of an outdoor chessboard and a giant chess set. In summer the club met under the sun, and every August we had a tradition that one Saturday, when the clock struck midday, we held an annual water pistol fight, and everyone got soaked – especially me! But in 2024 overnight we lost our venue, the local sports centre, when it closed, and a new venue meant a huge jump in rent (and no outdoor board anymore) - that is when the ECF grassroots fund jumped in and helped smooth the transition with a grant. With that help, and with time, the club is growing and continuing to support junior chess in our area.

More details can be found here:

Visit: <https://folkestonejnrchess.wixsite.com/juniors>

Contact: folkestonejuniorchessclub@gmail.com

20th Anniversary Tournament of the Goðinn Chess Club Skjólbrekku Mývatnssveit

The 2025 Goðinn chess club 20th Anniversary Tournament will begin at 7pm on March 13th. The six-round tournament will be played in one Swiss open section, and will be held in the Skjólbrekku Mývatnssveit, Iceland.

Schedule

- 1st round Thursday 13th March 19:00
- 2nd round Friday 14th March 11:00
- 3rd round Friday 14th March 17:30
- 4th round Saturday 15th March 11:00
- 5th round Saturday 15th March 17:30
- 6th round Sunday 16th March 10:00

Players can take two byes in rounds 1-5. A request for a bye must be submitted to the tournament director/arbiters before or at the end of the previous round. If a bye is requested for the first round this must be marked on the registration form. Half a point is given for a bye.

A player who arrives at the chess venue more than 30 minutes after the start of the round will automatically lose the game.

Arbiters: IA Gunnar Björnsson and Hermann Aðalsteinsson

Prizes

- 1st place: ISK 150,000 (1000 Euro)
- 2nd place: ISK 100,000 (700 Euro)
- 3rd place: ISK 50,000 (350 Euro)

Additional prizes:

65+: ISK 25,000 (170 Euro)
U18+: ISK 25,000 (170 Euro)
U1800: ISK 25,000 (170 Euro)
Unrated: ISK 25,000 (170 Euro)

Tiebreaks:

1. Most games played
2. Buchholz (-1)
3. Buchholz
4. Head-to-head results
5. Sonneborn-Berger

Entry fees (GM, WGM, IM and WIM free of charge):
ISK 10,000 (70 Euro), ISK 7,000 (50 Euro) for 18 years and younger and unrated.

The tournament will be FIDE-rated.

Tournament website:

<https://afmaelismot.godinn.is/>

Tournament on Chess-results:

<https://chess-results.com/tnr1076409.aspx?lan=1>

Registration:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfyp7hg6oZnf_86M22EBPbJdxK2jfgVlh_xc-rUQDdABMIMjw/viewform

EasyJet flies every Tuesday and Saturday from Manchester and London to Akureyri. The tournament organizers will take care of transferring players from Akureyri Airport to the tournament venue and back. Players can rent a car at Akureyri airport if they wish (60

minutes drive to/from the venue). EasyJet flies also to Keflavik airport.

<https://www.easyjet.com/en/cheap-flights/iceland/akureyri>

For further information please contact Hermann on +354 8213187 or lyngbrekku@simnet.is

Chess by the Sea

The Djerba Chess Festival takes place between 15th and 23rd February 2025.



Festival 2024

The Djerba International Chess Festival is a unique blend of sport, tourism, and culture, held annually on the beautiful island of Djerba in February. The festival is not limited to elite competitions; it offers a variety of tournaments suited to all levels and interests. More details can be found here:

<https://djerbachessfestival.com/data/the-event>

Shropshire Chess Congress January 2025 by Chris Lewis



Mid-tournament snow failed to checkmate Shropshire's premier chess event, which set a record for entries.

With players coming from not just Shropshire, Wolverhampton, and across the Midlands, but also

travelling from as far as South Wales and Yorkshire, it was feared that the arctic blast would force many to pull out at a crucial stage.

However, only eight, mainly living in rural areas, decided not to play in the final two rounds of the five-round competition held from 3rd to 5th January. 'The snow was potentially a bit of a hiccup, but we were lucky it was not as bad as had been feared,' said Shropshire Chess Congress' joint organiser Chris Lewis. Nevertheless, fellow organiser Phil Love decided not to risk being snowed in at his Newport home, and slept in his camper van at the Telford venue.

A total of 171 players entered the congress, although in the event 166 took part. The bumper entry for the tournament held at the premises of Wrekin Housing Trust took us to capacity, and meant that we had to close the entry list several days in advance. 'It's definitely a record,' said Chris, who added that factors in the success were both the venue and the on-site food. A first for the congress in its 50-year history was a special £100 prize for the best performing female player. 'One of the big focuses of Shropshire chess this year is female chess. Our proportion of female players, even relative to the English Chess Federation as a whole, is quite low. I don't know why - it's a mystery. I think we are at 5% and the overall average is around 9% in the ECF. It's something we want to address, and this is just a first step.'

Around half a dozen female players entered the tournament. First prize in each of the four sections was £300. Joint winners of the Open section were Shabir Okhai of Syston chess club and FIDE Master Tim Kett. Glyn Pugh was outright winner of the Major. Junior player Waylon Chan from Newport shared first prize in the Inter with Neil Homer and Nicholas White. In the Minor section Cesar Pileggi of Darwinian Knights was outright winner on 4½ points.

London Chess League FIDE-Rated Weekenders

by FA Rob Hammond and NA John Sargent

London Chess League FIDE Weekenders



The London Chess League organises weekend tournaments throughout the course of each playing season. These are fun, competitive FIDE-rated tournaments, held within a stone's throw of central London in Hammersmith, and allow players of all abilities to enjoy a weekend of classical chess in the capital.

As part of this, an U1400 'My First Tournament' section has been introduced which has seen great uptake and feedback from players – and we would love to share this with you!



From Newbie to Chess Master: Your Guide to Entering the Exciting World of Chess Tournaments

Have you ever been captivated by the strategic elegance of chess? Perhaps you devoured 'The Queen's Gambit', and now yearn to match wits on the checkered battlefield? But where do you even begin, especially if the chess world seems like an exclusive club for seasoned veterans?

Fear not, aspiring chess player! This article is your gateway to the thrilling world of chess tournaments. We'll guide you through the initial steps, transforming you from a curious beginner to a confident competitor.

The Challenge of Entering the Chess Circuit

For established chess players tournaments might seem like second nature. They've likely honed their skills through years of school matches and junior events, gradually progressing to the world of weekend congresses and local leagues. However, for the uninitiated, the chess scene can be an enigmatic subculture, shrouded in mystery.

Mention your newfound interest in chess to an acquaintance, and brace yourself for the inevitable: a conversation about 'The Queen's Gambit', a name-drop

of a legendary chess champion from decades past, or - if you're lucky - a reference to their favourite chess streamer.

Breaking Down the Barriers: Introducing 'My First Tournament'

So how do you bridge the gap between enthusiastic beginner and tournament participant? Look no further than the **'My First Tournament'** initiative, pioneered in the London Chess League congresses. This programme offers a unique and welcoming space for budding chess players to take their first steps into competitive play.

What to Expect at 'My First Tournament'

Imagine yourself seated alongside fellow chess enthusiasts in a dedicated section of a bustling weekend chess congress. This is precisely the environment that **'My First Tournament'** fosters. Here's what makes this programme exceptional:

- **Structured Learning:** In addition to experiencing the thrill of a real tournament, you'll receive invaluable instruction on the laws of chess and conventions that govern chess events.
- **Personalised Coaching:** The **'My First Tournament'** section typically attracts eight to 12 entrants, creating an intimate atmosphere. This allows for one-on-one coaching and guidance on best practices throughout the event.
- **Actual Tournament Experience:** This is the real deal! You'll play an official tournament, complete with official chess ratings awarded after the event.
- **Tournament Conditions:** Immerse yourself in the authentic atmosphere of a chess tournament. You'll use tournament-grade boards and pieces, learn how to operate a chess clock, and discover proper game notation techniques - all essential skills for competitive play.
- **Standard Play Games:** Get ready to test your new-found knowledge in up to five standard play games spread over a Saturday and Sunday schedule. Be prepared, as these games can last up to three hours each!

From Daunting to Rewarding: Embracing the Chess Journey

Many participants at **'My First Tournament'** express initial feelings of intimidation about the whole process.

However, the programme's emphasis on patience, guidance, and a supportive environment ensures a truly rewarding experience. Players often remark on how much they enjoyed the event and how eager they are to participate in future tournaments.

Ready to Take the First Step?

Are you ready to embark on your chess journey? The London Chess League events are expertly organised by John Sargent. The arbiters (chess referees and your coaches) for **'My First Tournament'** are the esteemed international arbiter Adam Raoof and FIDE arbiter Rob Hammond. The events take place at The Mindsports Centre, conveniently located at 21 Dalling Road, London W6 0JD.

For more information on **'My First Tournament'** and similar events visit the London Chess League website <https://londonchess.com> or the Chess England website <https://www.chessengland.com>.

Join the Exhilarating World of Chess!

Don't let the initial mystery of the chess world deter you. With **'My First Tournament'** you have the perfect stepping stone to enter the exciting world of chess tournaments. So what are you waiting for? Sharpen your strategic thinking, embrace the challenge, and get ready to make your first move!

Next Events

14th – 16th February (My First Tournament: 15th - 16th February)

14th - 16th March (My First Tournament: 15th - 16th March)

30th May – 1st Jun (My First Tournament: 31st May - 1st June)

Enter online here:

<https://form.jotform.com/223566285096970>

JUNIOR MOVES

Littlewood's Choice



David Hardy of Ashton Community Chess Club sent me the following game that was played in the Stockport League between Andreas Iliopoulos and Tim Edgar. Andreas used to play in the London League for Athenaeum before having a break from chess for a few years. He is now based in Manchester and plays for Urmston. Tim has just turned 17, and went to Ashton CCC at the start of 2022, having taught himself chess in lockdown. He played his first league chess in September of the same year, and his grade has risen to 2125... a remarkable achievement in such a short time.

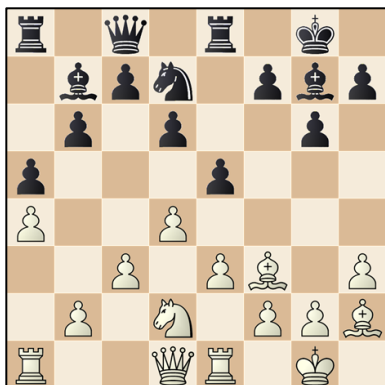
A. Iliopoulos - T. Elgar

Stockport League 13/11/2004

1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 g6 3.e3 Bg7 4.Nf3 0-0 5.h3 d6 6.Be2 b6 7.0-0 Bb7 8.Nbd2 An alternative for White is 8.a4, when Caruana recently chose 8...a5 in response, whereas Firouzja preferred 8...a6. In both cases, though, Black went on to win.

8...Nbd7 9.a4 a5 10.c3 Ne4 10...Re8 is also a sensible choice, and leads to chances for both sides.

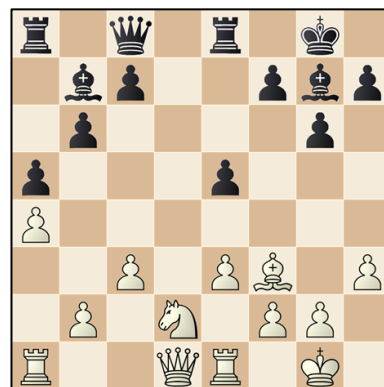
11. Nxe4 Bxe4 12.Nd2 Bb7 13.Bf3 Qc8 14.Re1 e5 15.Bh2 Re8



Both sides have played solidly, and the position is about equal. However, White now chooses to resolve things in the centre, which makes the position easier for Black to play.

16.dxe5 Nxe5!? I think slightly better is 16...Bxe5, as after the exchange of the black-squared bishops Black has a small advantage.

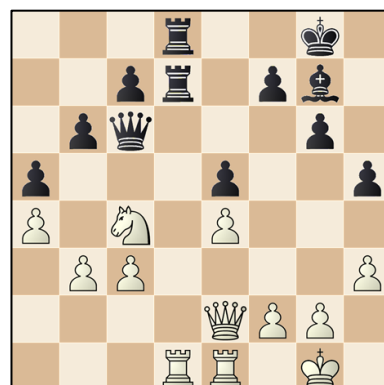
17.Bxe5 dxe5?!



Not a mistake, but the more flexible 17...Rxe5 leaves Black with a comfortable position.

18.Bxb7 Qxb7 19.e4 Rad8 20.Qe2 Rd7 21.Nc4 Qc6 22.b3 Red8 Black's control of the d-file gives him a slight advantage, but it should not be enough to win against careful play by White. However, he now makes a mistake.

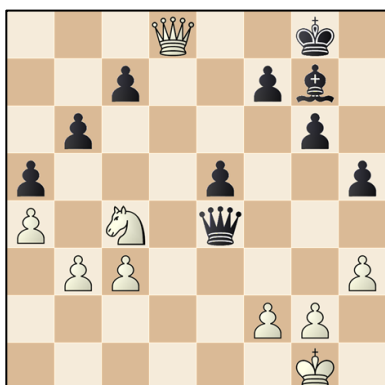
23.Rad1?! h5?!



Black is concerned about his back rank, and so does not win a pawn by 23....Rxd1 24.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25.Qxd1 Qxe4, but after 26.Qd8+ Bf8 27.Qxc7 Qe1+ 28.Kh2 Qxf2 29.Qxb6 Qf4+ 30.Kh1 Qc1+ 31.Kh2 Qxc3 32.Qxa5 Qxb3 33.Nxe5 Kg7 the position is somewhat better for Black because of the weak dark squares around the white king. Admittedly this is not easy to assess, so Tim prefers to keep the position fluid and not transition into an ending yet.

24.Rxd7 Rxd7 25.Rd1? However, it is now much safer for Black to win a pawn, so White should have preferred 25.Qc2 or 25.g3, when Black has only a very slight advantage.

25.....Rxd1+ 26.Qxd1 Qxe4 27.Qd8+?

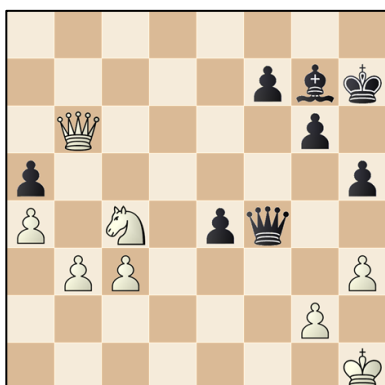


Tougher was 27.Ne3, but Black is still better after 27...Qc6 28.Qd8+ Kh7 29.Qe7 Qe6! 30.Qxe6 fxe6, as the black bishop is stronger than the knight in this position. A possible continuation is 31.Kf1 e4 32.c4 Bd4 33.Ke2 Kh6, and the black pieces are much more active.

27...Kh7 Also good was 27...Bf8, but this is the natural continuation for Black.

28.Qxc7?! More stubborn was 28.g3, but Black still stands very well after 28...Qe1+ 29.Kg2 Qxc3 30.Qxc7 Qxb3. However, there is still some work to do!

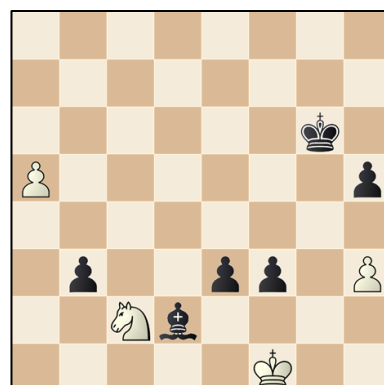
28....Qe1+ 29.Kh2 Qxf2 30.Qxb6 Qf4+ 31.Kh1 e4



Black is now clearly winning because of the weak squares around the white king. For example, if 32.Qxa5 then 32...Qf1+ 33.Kh2 Bh6, and wins. White therefore swaps queens, but this leads to a lost ending.

32.Qe3 Qxe3 33.Nxe3 Bxc3 Black is now a clear pawn up, and Tim makes no mistake in converting this to a win.

34.g4 Bd2 35.Nc2 f5 36.gxf5 gxf5 37.Kg2 f4 38.Kf2 Kg6 39.Ke2 Bc3 40.Na3 f3+ 41.Kf1 e3 42.Nc2 Bd2 43.b4 axb4 44.a5 b3 0-1



A game with very few tactics, but it still required accurate play for Black to eke out the win. It will be interesting to see what progress Tim makes over the next few years as he gets more experience of tough match play. Meanwhile, if you have played any interesting games as a youngster that you would like to have published in my column, please send them to me at plittl@hotmail.com. I cannot promise that they will appear, but I will give them every consideration.

FM Title for Max Pert

Congratulations to Max Pert, who achieved a FIDE rating of over 2300 at the 2024 XTX Markets London Chess Classic Masters in December, and has been awarded the FM title following the FIDE January ratings update.

World Cadet and Youth Rapid and Blitz Championships 2025

This event takes place in Rhodes, Greece, from 12th to 18th April 2025. The registration deadline is **7th February 2025**, and you can find more details as well as the online registration form, here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/s1vh6h8r19vm57r/>

FIDE World School Chess Championship 2025

Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia 19th to 29th March 2025. A minimum of one parent must attend with each child who is playing in the tournament. The registration deadline is **14th February**. All the details, together with online entry, are here:

<https://britchess.wufoo.com/forms/fide-world-school-chess-championships-2025/>

A Male-Dominated Game? by Andrew Martin



Photo with permission of Aga Milewska

For the last ten years St Catherine's School in Bramley, England has been the sole or co-sponsor of the English Chess Federation National Schools Girls Team Championships - a school with vision, and a federation providing important support.

Numbers have grown year on year to the point at which 330 girls came from all over the UK to play in the latest event on 26th January.

This was a real occasion, not only emphasising the competitive and intellectual side of chess, but also the social side too, which women and girls value highly. Win, lose or draw, the friendly, collegiate atmosphere was there for all to see.



Photo with permission of Aga Milewska

Such was the popularity of the tournament that it featured on BBC TV and radio with substantial airtime, which cannot fail to boost the profile of chess in a positive way.

More women and girls are playing chess than ever before, starting to form a natural balance within the game. From the outset St Catherine's has tried to provide an opportunity which it seems as though the girls are only too willing to take up.

The tournament is structured as two semi-finals, one over the board and one online, followed by an all play all final of ten teams taking place in April. It is great to see the event becoming more and more popular.

Final results Under 11:

[https://chess-results.com/tnr1079089.as ... turdet=YES](https://chess-results.com/tnr1079089.as...turdet=YES)

Final results Under 19:

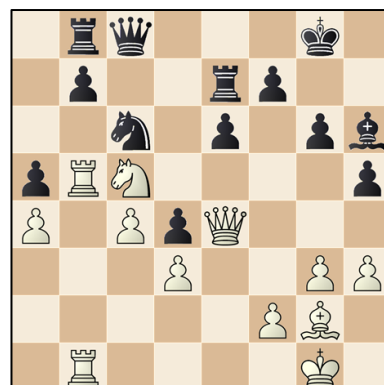
[https://chess-results.com/tnr1079109.as ... turdet=YES](https://chess-results.com/tnr1079109.as...turdet=YES)

Overall, a very successful day!

IMPROVERS

Paul Littlewood on Tactics

The dramatic finish to the 11th game of the 2024 World Championship match occurred in the following position.



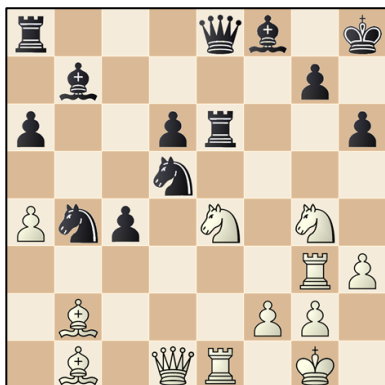
White to Move

Gukesh Dommaraju - Ding Liren

World Championship Game 11, 08/12/24

Ding has just blundered, and Gukesh unleashed the tactic **1.Qxc6!** Ding now resigned, because if 1...bxc6 then 2.Rxb8 wins, while if 1...Qxc6 2.Bxc6 wins a piece, as 2...bxc6 is not possible because of 3.Rxb8+.

It made me think about other world championship games that had been decided by a decisive tactic. The first one that came to mind was the brilliant game between Kasparov and Karpov in 1990. This was the position.



White to move

Garry Kasparov - Anatoly Karpov

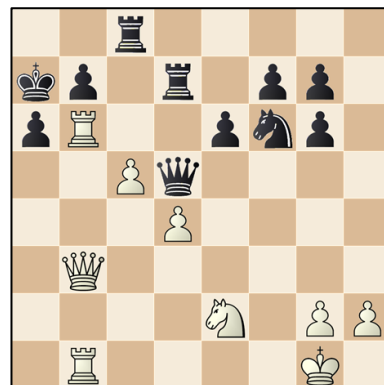
World Championship Game 20, 1990

In this complicated position Kasparov played the brilliant **1.Nxh6!**, beginning an extraordinary series of tactics. There are now two basic options for Black: ...1...Rxh6 or 1...c3. Karpov correctly worked out that if 1...Rxh6, 2. Nxd6 is very strong. A possible continuation is 2...Qxe1+ 3.Qxe1 Rxd6 4.Qe4 Nd3 5.Qh4+ Kg8 6.Bxg7! Bxg7 7.Qg4 Kf7 8.Qxg7+ Ke8 9.Qxb7, and wins. There are other possibilities for Black, but in all of them White retains the upper hand.

Therefore Karpov chose **1...c3**, and now the game continued **2.Nf5 cxb2 3.Qg4** with a vicious attack. Various moves in defence have been looked at here, but none of them seem to save Black. Karpov played **3...Bc8**, but after **4.Qh4+ Rh6** (if 4...Kg8 then the quiet move 5.Kh2 is very strong, with the devastating threat of 6.Ng5) **5.Nxh6 gxh6 6.Kh2 Qe5 7.Ng5 Qf6 8.Re8 Bf5** and now Kasparov could not resist the dramatic sacrifice **9.Qxh6+!**, obtaining a winning ending after **9...Qxh6 10.Nf7+ Kh7 11.Bxf5+ Qg6 12.Bxg6+ Kg7 13.Rxa8**. The game finished **13...Be7 14.Rb8 a5 15.Be4+ Kxf7 16.Bxd5+**, and Karpov resigned, because if 16...Nxd5 17.Rxb2, and White is easily winning.

Interestingly though, even stronger at the end was **9.Nf7+! Qxf7 10.Qxh6+ Bh7 11.Rxa8**, when mate will shortly follow. A beautiful combination by Kasparov, and a perfect illustration of how important tactics are.

Here now are two positions for you to solve from past world championship matches, with the solutions at the end of the article.

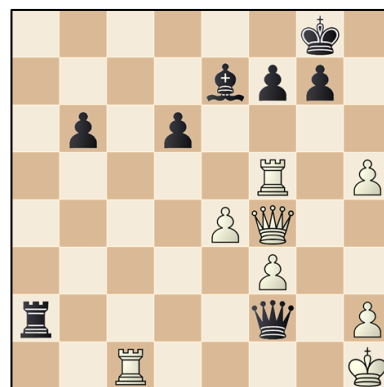


White to move

Mikhail Tal - Mikhail Botvinnik

World Championship Game 17, 1990

Botvinnik has just blundered, allowing Tal a winning combination. What did he play?



White to move

Magnus Carlsen - Sergey Karjakin

World Championship Game 16, 2016

Black seems to have some dangerous threats, but how did Carlsen finish him off with a sparkling tactic?

Answers:

Mikhail Tal vs Mikhail Botvinnik

White won by **1.Rxa6+**, because if 1...Kxa6 2.Qb6#, or 1...bxa6 2.Qb6+ Ka8 3.Qxa6+ Ra7 4.Qxc8#.

Magnus Carlsen vs Sergey Karjakin

White won by **1.Rc8+ Kh7** (if 1...Bf8 then 2.Rxf8+ Kxf8 3.Rxf7+ leads to mate) **2.Qh6+!** and Black resigned, because if 2...gxh6 3.Rxf7#, or 2...Kxh6 3.Rh8#.

Paul Littlewood Email: plittl@hotmail.com

Gormally's Coaching Corner

by Danny Gormally



Caplin Hastings Masters

When I arrived to play at Hastings in late December and entered the playing hall I nearly had some kind of anxiety attack. Somehow it didn't feel real. I think this was because Hastings is normally a tournament that I play in after a break of several weeks. But in this case, it was my third tournament in a row, after Bali Benidorm (a successful gain of two rating points and 200 euros won) and Sitges (a less successful 3.2 rating points lost and zero prize money won.)

Hastings is a coastal town that doesn't have the money (or sun) of a town like Sitges with its proximity to Barcelona. In fact, according to my father, Hastings is the poorest coastal town in the whole of the UK. There is clearly an issue with drugs, and increasing homelessness. But the people are honest and earthy, and there are plenty of bars and restaurants dotted not only around the main part of town, but also the charming old town as well. The main organiser of the event this year was Stuart Conquest. Stuart, with his energy, personality and passion, seems to have elevated this Swiss tournament to the level of a major international open, almost like a mini-Gibraltar, because I don't think I've seen such a mixture of different nationalities and different types of players in a tournament held in the UK. Ably assisted by the sponsors Caplin and John Ashworth, it can be hoped that Hastings will remain a fixture in the English chess calendar for many years to come.

If there was an unfortunate development this year it was that this was the first time I had played in a Hastings Masters where you had to play more than one game a day. Of course, this is becoming more and more common in recent years as organisers look to cut costs. No doubt the British Championships and the 4NCL will have to follow suit soon, although I hope not as I find it difficult to play two games a day to a high level, and I hope that in

future years Hastings can revert to the old system. I don't think it's a coincidence that my worst day came on one of the two-round days, and to begin with I missed an opportunity in the morning game.

Gormally, Daniel W (2424) - Bozinakis, Pavlos (2271)
98th Caplin Hastings Masters 2024 Horntye Park,
Hastings, Unite (5.7), 31.12.2024

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 d5 3.c4 e6 4.Nc3 c5 5.e3 a6 6.a3 dxc4
7.Bxc4 b5 8.Ba2 Bb7 9.0-0 cxd4 10.exd4 Be7 11.Re1 0-0
12.Bf4 Nc6 13.d5 Nxd5?



My opponent blunders, but due to ego I ended up responding too quickly.

13...exd5! could have transposed to the game. 14.Nxd5 Nxd5 15.Bxd5 Bf6=.

14.Nxd5? in the brief post-mortem my opponent suggested that 14.Bxd5! was much more testing. After we looked at some variations I realized he was right. 14...exd5 15.Nxd5.



Now it becomes very awkward for Black. There is a big threat of taking on e7, winning material. How to deal with that? 15...Bf6 (incredibly, the computer says that giving up the queen with 15...Bd6 16.Bxd6 Qxd6 17.Ne7+ Qxe7 18.Rxe7 Nxe7 is one of the best chances that Black has. But who would resign themselves to such a variation, particularly at 10.30 in the morning? : if 15...Bc5 16.Rc1

Ba7 17.Bc7, when Black experiences decisive tactical problems, e.g. 17...Qc8 18.Rxc6+–) 16.Bc7! one of the tactical ideas that I missed when I tried to calculate this line earlier. Basically, my thinking was: he puts the bishop on f6, and I don't see anything. It is too superficial a thought process. (16.Rc1 is also better for White, as 16...Bxb2? 17.Bc7 Qc8 18.Rxc6 wins material) 16...Qc8 17.Nxf6+ gxf6 18.Qd6 Qf5+–.



In a practical game Black can still have some hope, as at least the next few moves will be straightforward if given the time (...Rae8, ...Re6 etc.)

14...exd5 15.Bxd5 Bf6!



Now I realized I had nothing. In fact, I wasn't sure why I assumed I would have anything earlier, as Black has everything in order. c6 is already defended and the pressure exerted by the bishop on d5 is going to be negated by a quick ... Na5. Realizing that I could easily be worse in some later endgames, I decided to bail out and preserve some energy for the afternoon game.

16.Bd6 16.Rc1 Na5 (16...Rc8!) 17.Bxb7 Nxb7, and I couldn't see anything for White here. It just looked dead equal for me in the game, but in fact I was wrong again, as the engine does give some hope for White here: 18.b4 to make the knight on b7 bad. 18...Qxd1 19.Rexd1 Rfd8 20.Kf1 Bb2 21.Rxd8+ Nxd8 22.Rc2 with the tactical idea of 22...Bxa3? 23.Bd2+–.

16...Re8 17.Bxf7+ Kxf7 18.Qd5+ Kg6 19.Rxe8 Qxe8 20.g4! h6 21.Re1 Qd7 22.Qe4+ Kf7 23.Qd5+ Kg6 24.Qe4+ ½–½

Samarasinghe Jude, Ranga (1944) - Gormally, Daniel W (2424)

98th Caplin Hastings Masters 2024 Horntye Park, Hastings, Unite (6.8), 31.12.2024

I remember having a conversation with myself after the round 5 game. I went into town and got an unhealthy burger and fries from the burger van on the walkway to the shopping centre, and had a heart to heart with myself. The way I saw it, a chess player's worst enemy is their own brain – and their best friend at the same time. I missed that opportunity in round 5 because my ego over-estimated how intelligent my chess brain is. My ego told me 'Make a move quickly, because your opponent is playing fast! You must match him!', forgetting that you can't possibly know everything about a position in a 30-second think. If I play a good game I want to be able to tell someone after the game if they ask me about a position from it. I want to be the world's leading expert on that position. But too many times, it seems I don't have a clue, because I don't give my brain enough time to make the connections and actually apply any wisdom to the position. My opponent in round 6, Jude Samarasinghe, had a good tournament, and seemed clearly stronger than his rating of 1944. For most of the game I kept my ego under control, but towards the end, when matters became critical, I was unable to do so, and it led to an unfortunate and angry meltdown.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Bc4 e6 7.Bb3 b5 8.f3 Nbd7 9.g4 A very aggressive approach, but White is also creating weaknesses.

9...Nc5 10.Bg5



I found combining this with Bc4–b3 and g4 a bit strange. It seems like White is becoming over-extended, like Germany in 1941, trying to attack in the West while also launching Operation Barbarossa.

10.g5 Nfd7 11.Be3 seemed more natural.

10...Bb7 11.h4 h6 12.Be3 e5?! 12...Qc7! preparing ...d5 is better, with the idea of meeting the response e5 by just taking on e5.

13.Nf5 Nxb3 14.axb3 g6 15.Nxh6? By now I had realized that 15.Ng3! d5 16.exd5 Nxd5 17.Nxd5 Qxd5 18.Qxd5 Bxd5 19.Kf2 certainly wasn't favouring Black.

15...d5 15...Bxh6 16.Bxh6 Rxh6 17.g5 Rh7 18.gxf6 Qxf6 19.Nd5 was what he had been hoping for, but Black can do better.

16.exd5 b4!



Now Black should win material.

17.Ne4 17.Na4 Nxd5 is a catastrophe for White.

17...Nxe4 17...Nxd5 18.Bg5 Qb6! was a reasonable alternative, when Black holds all the trumps.

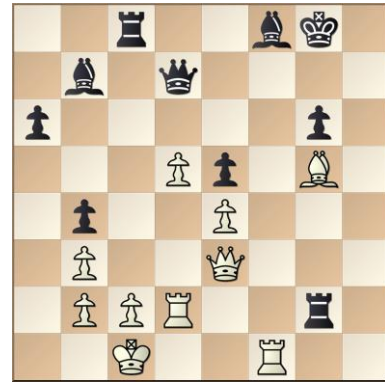
18.Nxf7 18.fxe4 Bxh6 19.Bxh6 Rxh6 20.Qe2 in a practical sense wasn't that clear, as the bishop on b7 remains rather passive stuck on b7.

18...Rxh4 19.Rf1! My opponent resists well.

I had been hoping for 19.Nxd8? Rxh1+ 20.Ke2 Rxd1 21.Rxd1 Ng3+ 22.Kf2 Rxd8 23.Kxg3 Rxd5, with an easy technical win.

19...Kxf7 20.fxe4+ Kg8 21.Qf3 Qd7 22.Bg5?! I felt he was bluffing with this move. There didn't seem to be any real attack for White.

22...Rxg4 23.Qe3 Rc8 24.0-0-0 Rg2 25.Rd2



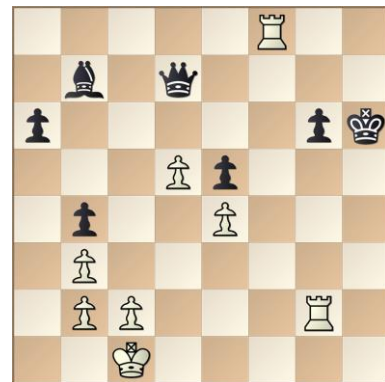
25...Bc5?! It was tempting to win the queen, but it becomes difficult in practice after this, and I wasn't up to the task.

25...Qg4! A move I had seen earlier, but perhaps hadn't investigated enough, was winning easily. 26.Bf6 Rxd2 27.Kxd2 Qg2+ 28.Rf2 Qg1 is an example.

26.Rxg2 Bxe3+ 27.Bxe3 Kg7?! A sign that I'm shaky. The position was fairly complex, and there are emotions going on. 27...Qh7!→.

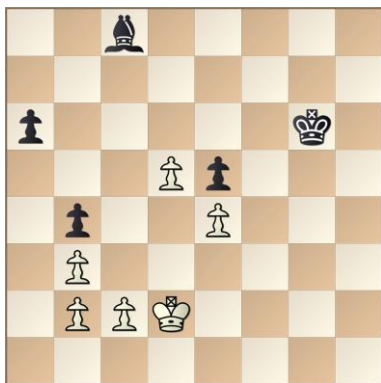
28.Bg5 Rf8 29.Bh6+ He played this instantly, as if to show I had blundered. 29.Rh1!.

29...Kxh6 30.Rxf8



30...Qe7?? And this really was the blunder that I think he had been hoping for.

I had seen the superior 30...Kg7!, but then I began to wonder. What happens if he gangs up on g6 and goes for the king vs king and bishop ending? Does he have too many pawns? Flustered, and feeling rushed, I didn't spend enough time working it out. 31.Rf3 (31.Rf5 Bxd5!) 31...Qd6 32.Rfg3 Bc8 33.Rxg6+ (if he waits Black can gradually improve, for example 33.c4 Bd7 34.Kb1 Be8→) 33...Qxg6 34.Rxg6+ Kxg6 35.Kd2.



This was something I feared, but the engine says it's completely winning for Black. It's probably a sign that I need to work on the technical side of my chess as well, as I'm sure other players would just know this is winning, or would have seen similar endings before. Maybe I need to hire Glenn Flear as my coach! 35...Kg5 36.Ke3 a5 37.c4 and I stopped around about here, as it looked too messy. But Black can easily stop the pawns: 37...Bg4 38.c5 Kf6—+.

31.Rh8+ Kg7 32.Rgh2! The last two moves were bashed out immediately by my opponent. Now Black can't avoid losing material.

32...Qc5 33.R2h7+ Kf6 34.Rxb7 Qg1+ 35.Kd2 Qd4+ 36.Kc1 Qg1+ 37.Kd2 Qf2+ 38.Kd1 Qf1+ ½–½

Gormally, Daniel W (2423) - Liu, Tianyi (Jack) (2180)
98th Caplin Hastings Masters 2024 Horntye Park, Hastings, Unite (7.7), 01.01.2025

If there is an upside to dropping draws and losses in Swiss tournaments, it's that you can get easier pairings, at least on paper. That wouldn't be the case in all-play-alls, for example. So, I had a chance to bounce back in round 7. I wasn't paired against a 2500+ on one of the top boards, which would likely have been the case if I had won. Instead, I was playing a junior rated 2180. However, this is someone I have faced before, and Jack Liu seems highly promising. It wasn't a surprise to me that he won the Weekender, a tournament that began immediately after the Masters had completed. In some ways he reminds me of David Howell, as he plays the Grunfeld, and although he is often in time trouble he seems to hold his nerve very well in these situations. He's also good technically and in the endgame. I prepared very well for this game for once, even with just my trusty tablet to hand, and we followed my preparation past move 20.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Nf3 c5 8.Rb1 0–0 9.Be2 cxd4 10.cxd4 Qa5+ 11.Bd2 Qxa2 12.0–0 Bg4



13.Rxb7 Not that common, but in the only game in Bali Benidorm that I had lost I played this line, and I noticed that the engine was giving this as the top move for White when I examined the game afterwards. This is because when you glance at games afterwards you are often looking at sites like Lichess where the engine is working on a low depth. I think on a higher depth the engine just gives this line as 0.00, like a lot of opening variations these days!

13...Bxf3 14.Bxf3 Bxd4 That's the problem. White loses the all-important centre, and the only thing to show for it is a slight initiative.

15.Bg5



15...Rd8 The soundest choice, leading to equality. Black sets up a ...Bxf2 idea.

15...e5 is another line, but it looks risky to shut the bishop on d4 from the kingside. If you don't know this is theory it's hard to commit to over the board in my opinion. 16.Bh6 Rc8 (16...Nc6 17.Bxf8 Rxf8 18.Rc7 doesn't quite give Black enough compensation) 17.Qd3 was what I was going to try, although this doesn't seem convincing for White. The whole variation with Rxb7 is more of a practical punt than anything else; if White wants they can also more or less force a draw in the variation beginning with 17.Bg4 Rc3. White's problem is that the queen on d1 is compressed and lacks active squares: 18.Re7 Nc6 19.Be6 fxe6 20.Rg7+ Kh8 21.Rf7=. 15...Nc6?! is an inferior

choice: 16.Rc7! Rfd8 17.Rxc6 Bxf2+ 18.Rxf2 Rxd1+ 19.Bxd1 and White gets too much material for the queen and is clearly better.

16.Qc1 Na6 17.Bxe7 Rac8 18.Qf4 Nc5 19.Bxc5 19.Bxd8 Nxb7 is not convincing, as once the bishop on d8 moves the black knight will quickly jump back to c5, setting up ...Nd3 ideas.

19...Rxc5 20.Bd1! A neat switchback, but Black has enough resources to not be bothered.

20...Be5 20...g5!? was an interesting alternative. 21.Qf3 Rc1 with ideas of taking on f2.

21.Qh4 Rf8 22.Bb3 Qa5! 23.Bd5 Rc7



My preparation ended here, but my feeling before the game that this would be difficult to navigate for Black was correct, as to find all these accurate moves had cost my opponent on the clock, and subsequently I was oceans of time up. My opponent now had less than ten minutes plus increment for the rest of the game (there was no extra time on move 40), whereas I had more or less the time I began the game with. And the problem is that there is still life in the position. White has a plan: rumble forward on the kingside with g3 and f4, and combine this with attacking f7.

24.Rxc7 Qxc7 25.g3 Bd4 26.Qg5 Qe5 27.Qd2 Kg7 As Jack mentioned afterwards, it would have been better to have played 27...Rb8 intending ...Rb2 with serious counterplay. 28.Rd1 was my intention, but it fails to lead anywhere after 28...Bc5=.

28.Kg2 Bb6 29.Rd1 Rd8 30.f4 Qe7 31.Qc3+ Kg8 32.Rd2 Qc7 33.Qf6 Rf8 34.Bc6 White would like to play 34.e5, but 34...Qc1! is an annoying response. 35.Re2? Qg1+ 36.Kh3 Qf1+ 37.Rg2 Qd1! even wins for Black: 38.Be4 Bd8+.

34...Rd8 35.Bd5 Rf8 My opponent was defending very calmly despite his low time, and in frustration I couldn't

make anything work. So, I decided to manoeuvre around a bit more.

36.Bb3 Qb7 37.Re2 Bd8 38.Qc3 Bb6 39.Qf3 Re8 40.Bd5 Qc7 41.Qb3 Rf8 42.Rc2 Qd7 43.Rc6 Qg4 44.Qc2 Qd7 45.h3 Qe7 46.Qc3



Here I thought that I'd strengthened to almost the maximum and must be doing well, but still the engine is not that impressed, and only gives White a tiny edge.

46...Qd7 46...Rd8!?, with ideas of sacrificing on d5 that White must be careful about.

47.g4 Because Black doesn't have any active ideas, the computer thinks this is almost a Zugzwang position with all the pieces on the board. One of the top lines the engine gives goes 47.Qf6 Qd8 48.Qe5 Qd7 49.Qc3, handing Black the move. If Black moves the rook it weakens f7. 49...Qe7 50.h4! Rd8 51.Kf3 Rd7 52.h5, when the line continues 52...gxh5 53.Rh6 Qc5, although this is not much different to the game, and Black is surely holding the endgame.

47...Qe7 48.g5 48.Kg3!! Brilliantly using the white king, but this escaped me in the game.

48...Rd8! Darn! Can't you make one mistake with your flag almost hanging?!

49.Qb3 Rd6 49...Rd7!.

50.Qb4 Around about this point of the game I was starting to use up my big lead on the clock, trying to find a forced win which was proving elusive.

50.Bxf7+ was one of the ideas that I had looked at, but with age comes a decline in calculation. I just couldn't find anything convincing: 50...Kg7.



(50...Qxf7 51.Qxf7+ Kxf7 52.Rxd6+—) 51.Be6!! was an idea that had passed me by, although it's not that surprising because the black king is in a cage. If I had found this there would have been a good chance that his flag would have teetered over the edge trying to find a reply. (51.Bd5 Rxc6 52.Qb2+ Rf6!=; 51.Qb4 Rd2+!=) 51...h6! 52.Qc3+ Kh7 53.Qe5! with good winning chances.

50...Bc7 51.Qc5 Rd7 52.Qxe7 At least with this decision I displayed some new-found maturity. The old me would have kept the queens on, desperately trying to hustle a win, but there is always another way. The endgame is better for White, and carries zero risk.

52...Rxe7 53.Kf3 Kf8 54.h4 Bb6 55.h5 Rc7 56.Rf6 Rd7 57.Kg4 Bd4 58.Rc6 Bb6 59.f5 The engine thinks another way to make progress is by 59.h6! Ke8 60.Ba2 Kf8 61.Bb3 Ke8 62.e5.

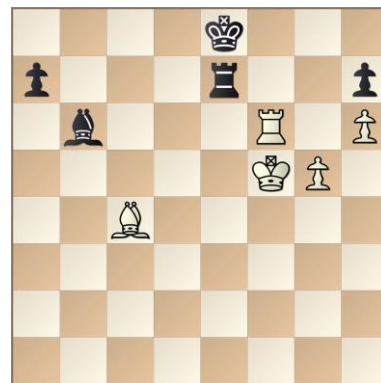


A breakthrough with e6 is coming. This ending is very uncomfortable for Black, as h7 is a long-term weakness that is impossible to solve.

59...gxf5+ 60.Kxf5 Kg7 61.Bb3 Bc7 62.e5 Bb6 63.Rf6 Bd8 64.Rc6 Bb6 65.h6+ Kf8 66.e6 fxe6+ 67.Kxe6 Re7+ 68.Kf5 Re2 69.Bc4 Re7? Finally, he cracks, and of course I don't take advantage.

69...Rf2+ 70.Ke6 Rd2 seemed to be still holding.

70.Rf6+ Ke8



71.g6?? By this stage I had around about two minutes plus increment, and fatigue and nerves were also playing a role.

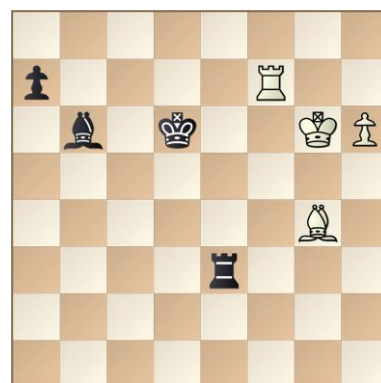
I had originally intended the much stronger 71.Bb5+!, but then changed my mind, because I was tempted by setting a trap. 71...Kd8 72.g6! hxc6+ 73.Kxc6 Re3 74.h7 Rg3+ (74...Rh3 75.Rf8++—) 75.Kf5 Rf3+ 76.Kg4—+.

71...hxc6+ 72.Kxc6 Re3! I cursed myself when he played this, reasoning that given his defence so far, I shouldn't have been expecting him to make a tactical error.

The trap I had been hoping for, but is easy to avoid, is 72...Bd4? 73.Bb5+ Kd8 74.Rd6++—.

73.Bb5+ Ke7 74.Rf7+ Ke6 I was surprised, given his excellent defending, that he didn't just go down the line 74...Kd6 75.h7 Rh3, which seemed like a fairly pedestrian draw. (possibly my opponent rejected this variation as he saw that 75...Bd4? 76.Rd7+ wins for White)

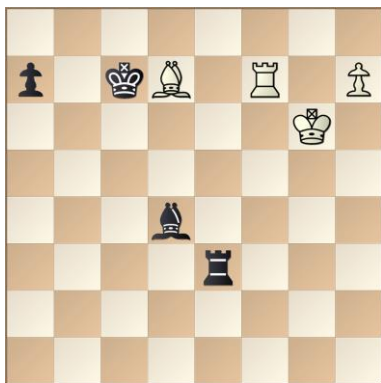
75.Bd7+ Kd6 76.Bg4



76...Kc6?? Time trouble agony.

76...Re8 77.h7 Bd4=.

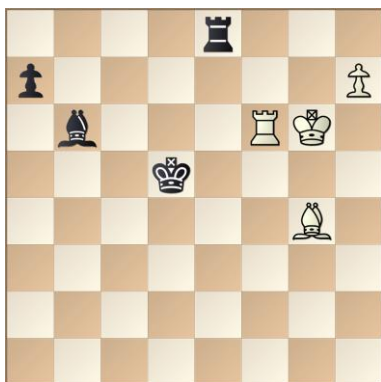
77.Rf6+ 77.h7 Bd4 78.Bd7+ Kc7.



79.Rf6 was an even cleaner win, as the black rook lacks squares from which to stop the white h-pawn.

77...Kd5 77...Kc7 78.h7 Re8 79.Be6 Rh8 80.Rf4 was also winning for White. 80...Kd6 81.Ba2 Kc5 82.Kg7 Rxh7+ 83.Kxh7 Kb5 84.Kg6+—.

78.h7 Re8



79.Be6+ 1–0

Stefansson, Vignir Vatnar (2550) - Gormally, Daniel W (2423)

98th Caplin Hastings Masters 2024 Horntye Park, Hastings, Unite (8.3), 02.01.2025

In round 8 I faced one of the top seeds in 21 year old Vignir Stefansson from Iceland. I think he might have been overdoing the partying a little bit, as I heard that the Icelandic New Year's celebrations ended at approximately 6 am in a local club. Whether this affected his performance in this game only he knows.

1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 3.e5 Nd5 4.Nf3 d6 5.exd6



5...e6 A lot of my theory dates from the 1990s (before my opponent was even born!) and hasn't developed much since then. I vaguely recalled this move order from a rapidplay game between Short and Kasparov, played after their 1993 classical match had finished.

6.g3 I'm pretty sure that's what Short played as well. White is aiming for simple, logical development with little risk.

6...Bxd6 7.Bg2 0–0 Perhaps 7...e5 was an alternative, fighting for central control.

8.d4 Nc6 9.0–0 cxd4 10.Nxd4



10...Nde7?! An indication that my knowledge of the theory is lacking, as this is slightly sub-optimal.

10...Nxd4 11.Qxd4 Qc7! is apparently usual, not fearing the capture on d5. This is something I learned later when visiting the commentary room, where Lawrence Trent was providing an overview of the games. This theme of White being reluctant to part with the light-squared bishop, even when gaining a pawn, becomes a theme in the game as well. **12.c4 Nf6 13.Nc3 Bd7=.**

11.Nxc6! Nxc6 12.Nd2 White has a slight pull - the knight will go to c4 or e4 unchallenged.

12...e5 13.Nc4 Bc7 14.Ne3 Be6



15.Qa4?! The problem is I'm not sure if this creates a threat of taking on c6 or not, as White loses so much if he gives up the light squares.

I feared 15.Qe2, when White seems better; the threat is to play Rd1, put the queen on b5 and threaten b7.

15...Bb6! I think this was my best decision of the game, wagering that it was a bluff to take on c6. This was part of my new intuitive approach. Of course, I couldn't work out mathematically if he could take the pawn or not; I just judged that he couldn't.

16.Nc4 When he backed off like this I sensed his uncertainty.

16.Bxc6 bxc6 17.Qxc6 Qd3 18.Rd1 Qe2 gives Black obvious compensation.

16...Qd3 17.Ne3 17.Nxb6 axb6 18.Qd1 seemed like the best practical try, as White will have the bishop pair to compensate for losing the a2-pawn.

17...Rad8 18.Bf3 Qg6 19.Re1



19...f5! As Black clearly has a strong attack brewing, White decides to finally take the pawn to at least get some material for his troubles.

20.Bxc6 bxc6 21.Nc4



21.Qxc6 f4—+.

21...Bxf2+! A nasty shot - I just didn't see a defence for him.

21...f4 22.Nxb6 axb6 was also very good, as White is extremely exposed on the light squares, so Black should be able to gain a decisive attack by combining the queen and bishop. But clearly Black can hope for even more here.

22.Kxf2 f4 23.gxf4 23.g4 Qxg4 is also hopeless; White is paying big time for the underdeveloped queenside. 24.Nxe5 Qh4+ 25.Kf1 Bh3+ 26.Ke2 f3+, when the queen on a4 hangs.

23...Qh5



24.Rxe5 24.Nxe5 Qxh2+ 25.Ke3 Qg3+ 26.Ke2 Qg2+ 27.Ke3 g5! is vicious: 28.Qe4 gxf4—+.

24...Qxh2+ 25.Kf3 Qh3+ 26.Kf2 Qh4+ 27.Kf3 27.Kg1 Qg3+ 28.Kh1 Bd5+ 29.Rxd5 Rxd5 30.Ne5 Rxe5! was a line that I saw in the game. 31.Qc4+ Rd5—+.

27...Bg4+



28.Kg2 Qh3+ 29.Kg1 Qg3+ 30.Kf1 Bh3+ 31.Ke2 Qd3+ 32.Kf2 Qf1+ mates by force. **0-1**

Gormally, Daniel W (2423) - Xue, Haowen (2502)

98th Caplin Hastings Masters 2024 Horntye Park, Hastings, Unite (9.1), 03.01.2025

Excited by this win in round 8 against a very strong player, I slept very poorly the night before the final round which was due to start at 10 am. I was due to play the clear leader, 16 year old Haowen Xue from China. I made the mistake of ordering a large cappuccino from the White Rock hotel bar and subsequently I was extremely wired when I got back to my own hotel. I looked at my phone in the early morning when I still couldn't sleep and it was 2.20 am. I finally got to sleep at just after 5 am, and woke up around two hours later. I couldn't function in these circumstances; I needed some sleep. It's a lesson learned for future tournaments. Was I willing to go all in? I lacked the courage to do so, and feared the outcome if I lost. 6/9 looked like winning very little money. 6½/9, however, was certain to get some kind of reasonable pay-out. 7/9 would give either £2,000 or £2,500 depending on the result on board 2. Such is the difficult situation you are often faced with as a chess professional. Should I offer a quick draw or not? Obviously, you don't want to just give up on a tournament win in such a cowardly way, but it wasn't certain my opponent would accept anyway. He was young and ambitious, and clearly more highly rated than me. In the end, in my sleep-deprived state, I decided that I was going to offer a quick draw just so that I could clarify the situation in my mind. If he played on, at least I wouldn't have any regrets later, and there would be no thoughts about whether he would have accepted or not if I had offered. In the end he accepted my draw offer, and it meant outright tournament victory for him and his final GM norm and title.

Being so tired, I wasn't thinking straight, and decided to get the bus into Eastbourne a couple of hours after the game had finished, when I would have been better off staying in my room and getting some shut-eye. I

underestimated how long it would take, and by the time I got back to Hastings I ended up missing the prize-giving. Fortunately Stuart Conquest was fairly understanding. Hopefully it will be the last time I miss a prize-giving at Hastings!

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 b6 3.c4 Bb7 4.Nc3 e6 5.a3 Ne4



He had used this line earlier in the event, so I was hardly surprised.

6.Nxe4 Bxe4 7.Bf4 Be7 8.e3 d6 9.Bd3 Bxd3 10.Qxd3 Nd7 11.e4 I was aware before the game that something like 11.h4 0-0 12.0-0-0 was a more combative approach, but this wouldn't have fitted well with my solid policy.

11...a5 12.0-0 12.b3 is an alternative, not allowing Black to clamp with ...a4, but in our brief chat after the game my opponent mentioned some impressive lines starting with 12...e5!.



If 13.dxe5 Bf6!!.



12...a4 13.Rad1 0-0 14.Rfe1

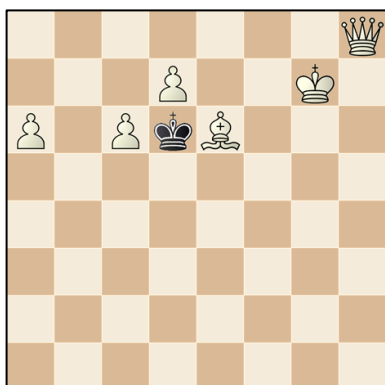
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STUDIES AND PROBLEMS

Monthly Conundrum

by Christopher Jones

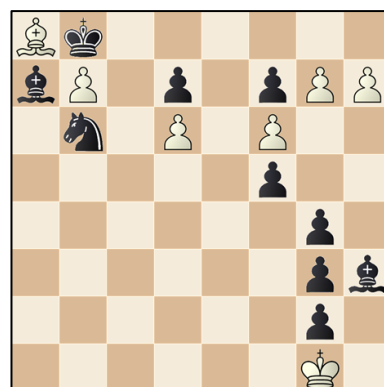
Here is the problem with which I left you last time.



Zdravko Maslar
1st Prize, *Bilten* 1962
Mate in 3

I eulogized the ‘apparently unimprovable economical setting’ achieved by the composer in showing all four possible promotions of the d7-pawn. Not on move 1, though! First we have to set up the play with 1.Qh5!. Now there is no threat, but we have 1...Kc7 2.Qc5 and now 2...Kb8 3.d8=Q# and 2...Kd8 c7#; 1...Kxe6 2.d8=R Ke7 3.Qe8#; 1...Kxc6 2.d8=B Kd6 3.Qd5#; and 1...Ke7 2.Qc5+, with 2...Kxe6 3.d8=N# and 2...Kd8 3.c7#. The need to avoid stalemating Black is a key component in such multi-promotion challenges.

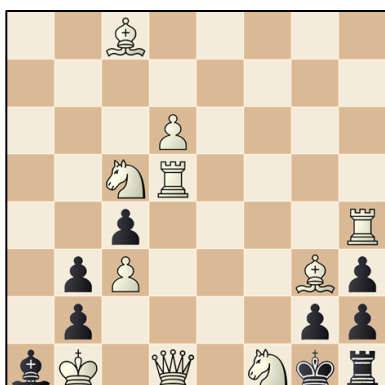
This prompts me to quote one of my all-time favourite problems. This time what we need to avoid is Black checkmating White, as we want White to achieve mate; and even though this is a *helpmate* (a collaborative effort, in which Black is being as helpful as possible) it requires exceptional measures, and again all four possible types of Pawn promotion (*Allumwandlung*, or AUW for short, in problemist parlance) to get there.



Arpad Molnar
2nd Honourable Mention, *Magyar Sakkelet* 1961
Helpmate in 7

If White promotes to queen or rook at g8 or h8, Black's response, 1...Nc8, gives checkmate. We need to play for time and manoeuvre so that Black can be mated in some other way. We have a limited amount of time – Black has two spare non-mating moves with the f5-pawn – but we may need to engineer a bit more time still. So after 1.f4 (as you may recall, Black generally plays first in helpmates, and his moves are shown first in sequences of moves) it has to be 1...h8=N, so that after 2.f3 we can play 2...Ng6, for 3.fxg6, and now it's 3...g8=B, and, after Black's newly-created spare non-mating move 4.g5, 4...Be6, leading to the final stage of the solution: 5.dxe6 d7 6.Kc7 b8=R 7.e5 d8=Q#. AUW – four different white pawns involved, so maybe not a purist's favourite AUW, but for me this is more than compensated by the wittiness of the problem – long helpmates can be fearfully difficult for a composer to get sound, and yet here White has such a massive position that at first glance he looks as though he must mate in short order, with or without Black's co-operation.

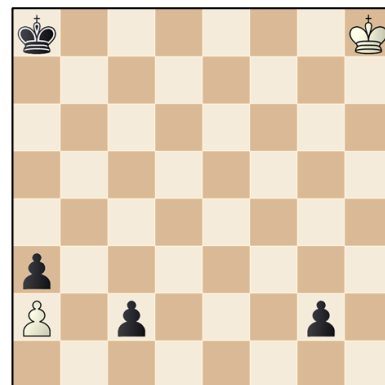
AUW also often features in selfmates (in which White forces an unwilling Black to checkmate White). The following is a good example.



Andrey Selivanov
1st Prize, *Orbit* 2010
Selfmate in 4

If it were Black to play, his only legal move, ...gxf1, looks as though it would be massively disruptive. And, of course, White can't pre-empt this by moving the knight from f1, as this would deliver mate. Instead, he must find a move after which he is well placed to deal with all four possible promotions at f1. It turns out that the only move that is successful is 1.Rg5!. Consider now Black's four possibilities: 1...gxf1=N 2.Qf3! (threatening 3.Be5+ and also 3.Bxh2+) 2...Ne3, and now 3.Be5+ Ng2 or Ng4 4.Qf2+ Kxf2#. If 1...gxf1=B then 2.Rxc4 Kg2 3.Bf4+ Kf2 4.Nd3+ Bxd3#. If 1...gxf1=R then 2.Be5+ Kf2 3.Rf4+ Ke3 4.Qe1+ Rxe1#. This line wouldn't work after 1...gxf1=Q (as then Black could play 4...Qe2), so something different is called for, exploiting the power of the black queen: 2.Bxh3 Qe1 3.Bf4+ Kf2 4.Ne4+ Qxe4#. This last line, in which the black rook at h1 remains a bystander, is a delightful coda. The problem shows the composing grandmaster's skill in engineering unique and thoroughly different continuations after each of the promotions.

Finally, reverting to helpmates, I'll leave you with what I think is a more readily soluble example.



R. Trautner (after J. Bebesi)
Die Schwalbe 1960
Helpmate in 7

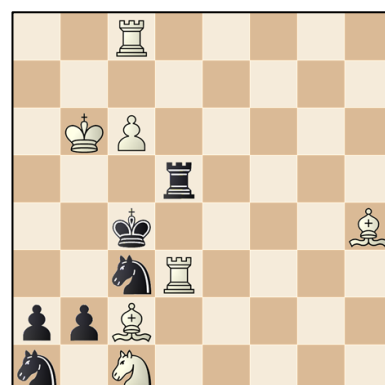
Solution next time! Please don't hesitate to contact me about this problem, or with any other queries or observations.

Christopher Jones Email: cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

How to Solve a Study by Ian Watson

First Footing

Two studies for you to solve. Later in this column I'll give you the solutions, and with them I'll suggest ways you could have gone about the solving.

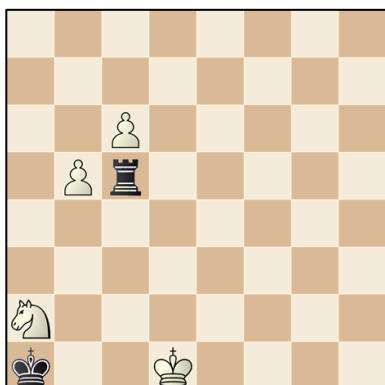


White to play and win

Paul Michelet sets you your first solving challenge of 2025 with this, a new composition. After the introductory moves it resolves to a famous position from the Victorian era, which you may well recognise. If you can guess what that is from the diagram above, well done, because Paul has done his best to disguise it.

The second study is from 1931; it was composed by the great Soviet study composer Mark Liburkin and was

published in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, a magazine of which he became editor in 1945.



White to play and win

Look away now if you want to solve the studies!

The solution to Paul's study is **1.Rxc3+ Kxc3 2.Bf6+ Kxc2 3.Bxb2 Kxb2 4.Nxa2 Kxa2 5.Ra8+ Kb2 6.Rxa1 Kxa1 7.c7 Rd6+ 8.Kb5 Rd5+ 9.Kb4 Rd4+ 10.Kb3 Rd3+ 11.Kc2 Rd4 12.c8R Ra4 13.Kb3**, and wins. The position after 6...Kxa1 is the 'Saavedra study', one of the most famous of all endgame studies. The play from move 7 appeared in a Glasgow newspaper in 1895, with the columnist giving the position as being a draw because of the line 12.c8Q Rc4+ 13.Qxc4 stalemate, but a local reader, Fernando Saavedra, a Spanish monk who was working in Scotland, spotted the winning move 12.c8R.

How to solve Paul Michelet's study? It looks challenging because there are multiple white possibilities available, but Black's threats are very serious and greatly limit White's options. The b-pawn is about to promote, and to do so with check, and 1.Nxa2, for example, will fail to 1...Na4+. So, you have to try 1.Rxc3+ and eliminate both the black pawns, even at the cost of most of your pieces, and then see if you can find a way to win the resulting position. That gets you to the position after 4...Kxa2. From here it's not too hard, because if Black can sacrifice his rook for the c-pawn he'll get to a drawn R vs N ending. There is, however, the move 5.c7 to consider, keeping Ra8+ in reserve. Black has the neat reply 5...Rd3, when promotion allows the black rook to keep checking on the a- and b-files; so 6.Ra8+ Kb2 7.Rxa1 Rb3+, and Black will draw (e.g. 8.Ka6 Rc3).

The introductory moves that Paul has added to the Saavedra position are a sacrificial orgy - White starts with RRBBN, and sacrifices them all to leave himself with only a pawn. There are some minor duals (alternative white moves that also work) in the Saavedra stage of the study, but such things are usually accepted, and particularly so in older compositions.

Liburkin's study has the solution **1.Nc1 Rxb5 2.c7 Rd5+ 3.Nd3 Rxd3+ 4.Kc2 Rd4 5.c8R Ra4 6.Kb3**, and wins. Straightforward, and a routine solve when you know the Saavedra study.

Except... if you know that Liburkin was one of the finest composers of the 20th century, you start to wonder if you've missed something. And you have. Your line is correct... but there's *another* line too. 1...Rd5+ changes things: **1...Rd5+ 2.Kc2 Rc5+ 3.Kd3 Rxb5 4.c7 Rb8 5.cxb8B** and wins. Two underpromotions, not merely the one of the Saavedra; and that from a truly economical position, and a natural one too. Liburkin was justly famous.

If I had told you that this won second prize in the *Shakhmaty v SSSR* tourney of 1931 you would probably have known to take a more careful look at it. A reminder that, when solving studies you should always check the sidelines, even when you're confident you have found the solution.

In view of that, we should examine every other option. In the 1...Rd5+ line:

2.Nd3? Rxd3+ 3.Kc2 Rd5 draws;
3.Kd2? Rxb5 4.c7 Rb2+ 5.Kd1 Rc2 6.Kxc2 stalemate;
5.Nb3+? Rxb3 is check.

One of the great studies of the 19th century, an enhancement of it in the 20th, and a new view of it in the 21st.

Ian Watson

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EVENTS CALENDAR

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

Week Beginning 3 February 2025	
3 February 2025	Coulsden Chess Senior Chess Dicky White
4 February 2025	1st Cheadle FIDE Open
4 February 2025	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess
4 February 2025	4NCL Online Season 11
5 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Spring 2025
5 February 2025	First Wednesday Chess - Potters Bar
6 February 2025	Junior 4NCL Online Season 11
6 February 2025	Hendon FIDE Blitz
7 February 2025	48th Blackpool Chess Conference
7 February 2025	J50th Dyfed Chess Congress, Penglais
8 February 2025	Junior 4NCL
8 February 2025	Earlsfield FIDE Rapidplay
8 February 2025	Gordons School Open Tournament NYC Qualifier
8 February 2025	East Kent EJCOA Juniors' Qualifier, Canterbury
8 February 2025	Golders Green FIDE Rapid Open
8 February 2025	Maidenhead Junior Tournament
8 February 2025	London Women Chess Club
9 February 2025	World Chess League - chess.com
9 February 2025	Norfolk Rapidplay Congress 2025, Coltishall
9 February 2025	Greenwich Peninsula Chess Club Rapid 2025
9 February 2025	Berkshire Junior Open Chess Tournament, Finchampstead
Week Beginning 10 February 2025	
10 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Spring Half Term IOC Coaching
10 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Senior Chess Dicky White
11 February 2025	5th 4NCL Online Spring Congress Round 3
11 February 2025	Muswell Hill FIDE Chess
13 February 2025	Junior 4NCL Online Season 11
14 February 2025	Earlsfield Junior FIDE Rapidplay
14 February 2025	London Chess League FIDE Weekender
15 February 2025	4NCL Weekend 3 Rounds 5-6, Peterborough and Coventry
15 February 2025	Leicestershire EJCOA Zonal, Loughborough
15 February 2025	Hastings Club U2200 Weekender
15 February 2025	2024/25 Newham Junior Grand Prix Fifth Round
15 February 2025	5th Cheam FIDE Rapidplay
15 February 2025	Poplar Rapid Tournaments - 15th Series
15 February 2025	London Women Chess Club
16 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Junior Grand Prix Autumn/Spring Term 2025/25
16 February 2025	EJCOA Zonals, Elstree
Week Beginning 17 February 2025	
17 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Senior Chess Dicky White
18 February 2025	The Isle of Wight U2000 6-Round Tournament, Ryde
18 February 2025	The Isle of Wight International Chess Tournament 2025, Ryde
18 February 2025	Trowbridge February Blitz
18 February 2025	4NCL Online Season 11
19 February 2025	IoW Chess Tournament Blitz, Ryde
19 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Daytime Chess Spring 2025
20 February 2025	Hendon FIDE Rapid
21 February 2025	Wightlink Isle of Wight International Chess Tournament 2025 - DGT Blitz, Ryde
21 February 2025	Doncaster Chess Congress 2025
21 February 2025	The Isle of Wight Chess Congress, Ryde
22 February 2025	2025 Coventry Open

22 February 2025	41st Crowborough Ches Congress
22 February 2025	Stroud Open Rapid Play
22 February 2025	London Women Chess Club
22 February 2025	Southall FIDE Congress
23 February 2025	Leyland FIDE Rapidplay 2025
23 February 2025	3rd Greater London FIDE Rapidplay, Orpington
23 February 2025	Thamesmead London Blitz Open 2025
Week Beginning 24 February 2025	
24 February 2025	Coulsdon Chess Senior Chess Dicky White
25 February 2025	5th 4NCL Online Spring Congress Round 4
26 February 2025	Beckenham FIDE Rated Club Championship
26 February 2025	London Finchley Road 3+2 FIDE Blitz
27 February 2025	IAPS Online Championship 2025 - lichess.org
28 February 2025	6th Simon Barlett Memorial Congress, Torquay
28 February 2025	Earlsfield FIDE Congress
28 February 2025	Ghent FIDE Congress 2025, Gent, Belgium



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



Elk and Ruby
www.elkandruby.com



COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION AWARDS

YOUTH EDITION 2025

COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

Welcome to the communication toolkit for the **Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025**, brought to you by the Sport and Recreation Alliance! Below, you'll find everything you need to spread the word about these awards, as we celebrate and highlight the incredible young people shaping the future of sport and recreation.

The Sport and Recreation Alliance is the **representative body for the sport and recreation sector, with nearly 300 members**. We strongly believe in the transformational power of sport and recreation to positively shape lives and help drive societal and economic growth. We recognise the untapped potential of our sector and actively advocate on its behalf to help foster a happier, healthier and more prosperous nation where more people from all backgrounds can participate and be active.

In 2025, **we will proudly celebrate our 90th anniversary**, and will be reflecting on our history, as well as looking forward to the next 90 years. Central to this vision is celebrating and championing the young people in our sector - the future leaders of sport and recreation - at a very special version of our annual awards: the Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025.



INTRODUCTION & ABOUT THE SPORT AND RECREATION ALLIANCE



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION AWARDS

The Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025 will **celebrate outstanding achievements by young individuals (aged 18–30)** in nine distinct categories. These awards recognise their contributions to coaching, advocacy, community building, sustainability, inclusivity, fundraising, officiating, entrepreneurship, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) in sport and recreation.

The nine award categories this year are:

Young Coach of the Year

Young Advocate of the Year

Young Community Champion of the Year

Young Sustainability Innovator of the Year

Young Inclusivity Champion of the Year

Young Fundraiser of the Year

Young Sports Official of the Year

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Young STEM in Sport Award

The Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025 are a collective celebration of young talent in our sector, and everyone has a role to play. **Whether you're part of an organisation, a community member, or simply someone who knows an inspiring young individual**, there are plenty of ways to get involved!

Who can get involved?

Sports Clubs and Recreation Organisations: Celebrate your young members, coaches, or volunteers by nominating them.

Schools and Universities: Recognise exceptional students who are making an impact through sport and recreation.

Community Members: Know a young person who deserves to be acknowledged? Share their story by nominating them.

Young People: If you're aged 18–30 and have contributed to sport or recreation, self-nominations are welcome!

Supporters and Enthusiasts: Spread the word and help us find as many amazing nominees as possible.



WHO CAN GET INVOLVED AND HOW?



HOW TO NOMINATE

Do you know a young person who's inspiring others and creating a positive impact in sport and recreation? It's easy to nominate them in one of our nine award categories - just follow the simple steps below:

1

Visit our [nomination page](#) - this link will be live on 8 January.



2

Complete our nomination form, providing details about the nominee's achievements.



3

Submit before the deadline.



8 January

Launch of nomination period.

12 February

Nomination window closes.

Early Summer

90th anniversary celebration, to which the finalists will be invited.

Late 2025

Celebration event confirming the nine winners.



TIMELINE



HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!

Website article

Help spread the word by posting the below article on your website:

Nominate for the Sport and Recreation Alliance's Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025

As part of the Sport and Recreation Alliance's 90th anniversary celebrations, we are thrilled to support the launch of the organisation's Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025, a one-time opportunity to recognise and celebrate the outstanding contributions of young people in our sector.

This milestone year is a time to reflect on the incredible achievements of the Alliance's history while also looking ahead to the future. Young people aged 18–30 are at the heart of this future, driving innovation, inclusivity, and positive change. These awards aim to highlight and honour their remarkable efforts.

Nine Categories Celebrating Excellence

The Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025 features nine unique categories to showcase the diverse ways young people are making an impact:

1. Young Coach of the Year – Recognising exceptional coaching talent.
2. Young Advocate of the Year – Highlighting individuals championing the value of sport and recreation.
3. Young Community Champion of the Year – Celebrating those making a difference in their local communities.
4. Young Sustainability Innovator of the Year – Honouring efforts to make sport and recreation more sustainable.
5. Young Inclusivity Champion – Recognising those promoting equality and diversity.
6. Young Fundraiser of the Year – Celebrating remarkable achievements in fundraising.
7. Young Sports Official of the Year – Honouring excellence in officiating.
8. Young Entrepreneur of the Year – Highlighting business-savvy individuals innovating in the sector.
9. Young STEM Award – Recognising the use of science, technology, engineering, or math in sport and recreation.

Why Get Involved?

These awards provide an incredible platform to celebrate the talent, dedication, and leadership of young people who are shaping the future of sport and recreation. Whether you're part of a sports club, a school, or a community organisation—or you're simply someone who knows an inspiring young individual—this is your chance to recognise their efforts.

How to Nominate

Nominating is simple and only takes a few minutes:

1. Visit the [nomination page](#). If you have difficulty completing the form, please email us at awards@sportandrecreation.org.uk.
2. Select the relevant category and provide details about the nominee and their achievements.
3. Submit your nomination before the deadline: 12 February.

Self-nominations are also welcome!

Social Media

We've put together some suggested posts for you to share on your social media accounts - feel free to adapt to your audience!

Shorter post examples for X (formerly Twitter):

1) Generic post

🏆 Celebrating young leaders in sport and recreation!

We're supporting @sportrectweets' #CSRAYouth, as part of their 90th anniversary celebrations, to honour the amazing young people shaping the future of our sector 🌟

Nominate here ↓

<https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/events/event-information/csra-youth-edition-2025-nominations>

2) Category specific

🏆 Do you know an incredible young coach?

The Young Coach of the Year award at @sportrectweets' #CSRAYouth celebrates individuals aged 18–30 who inspire through their coaching in sport or recreation 🏆

Nominate here ↓

<https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/events/event-information/csra-youth-edition-2025-nominations>

Longer post examples for LinkedIn / Instagram / Facebook:

1) Generic post

🏆 We're celebrating young leaders in sport and recreation!

As part of their 90th anniversary celebrations, we're supporting the @sportandrecreation on their #CSRAYouth to honour the amazing young people shaping the future of our sector 🌟

There are 9 award categories, including:

- 🏆 Young Coach of the Year
- 🌱 Young Sustainability Innovator of the Year
- 💡 Young STEM Award

Nominate by 12 February ↓

<https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/events/event-information/csra-youth-edition-2025-nominations>

2) Category specific

🌱 Calling all environmentalists!

The Young Sustainability Innovator of the Year award at @sportandrecreation's #CSRAYouth recognises young people aged 18–30 who are making sport and recreation more sustainable 🌱

From eco-friendly initiatives to innovative solutions, this award celebrates their incredible contributions to a greener future 🌱

🌟 Nominate an inspiring young leader today!

📅 Deadline: 12 February

🔗 Link in bio /

<https://sportandrecreation.org.uk/events/event-information/csra-youth-edition-2025-nominations>



HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!



**HELP US
SPREAD THE
WORD!**

Graphics for the Community Sport and Recreation Awards: Youth Edition 2025, and each of the awards listed below, are available to view and download at the bottom of the page, to support both your website/newsletter and social media posts.

Young Coach of the Year

Young Advocate of the Year

Young Community Champion of the Year

Young Sustainability Innovator of the Year

Young Inclusivity Champion of the Year

Young Fundraiser of the Year

Young Sports Official of the Year

Young Entrepreneur of the Year

Young STEM in Sport Award

[VIEW AND DOWNLOAD THE GRAPHICS PACK HERE](#)



COMMUNITY SPORT AND RECREATION AWARDS

YOUTH EDITION 2025

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!