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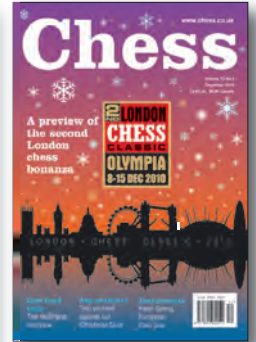
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FRONT COVER: Astrid Sund, Co-Director" of Wallace Chess, dresses up as the Black Queen for the launch of chess in Holland Park, London. Wallace Chess runs camps every holidays and Sunday coaching for children in London. It was founded by two time Australian Champion and IM John-Paul Wallace for further information visit www.wallacechess.com

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4NCL

Rounds 7-8 of the British Team League season Report by Andrew Greet

ROUNDS SEVEN and eight of the 4NCL (British Team League) took place on 26-27 March at the familiar venue of Daventry. The end of the seventh round is a key point of the season, at which time the teams in the top and bottom halves of the 'A' and 'B' pools move into their respective championship and relegation pools which they will inhabit until the end of the season. The fates of some teams had already been decided before the start of round seven while others remained very much in the balance until the end of play.

For some mysterious reason, at the time of writing the games from round eight have not yet found their way onto the customary access points of the 4NCL website. We will therefore have to content ourselves with some games from round seven, but fortunately there was no shortage of interesting ones.

We will begin with a look at the top end of the first division, where Wood Green Hillsmark Kingfisher (WGHK) 1 faced e2e4.org.uk. Board one featured a nicely played game.

Round 7 WGHK 1 - e2e4.org.uk
S.Gordon - A.Slavin

Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♖f6 **2 c4** e6 **3** ♗c3 ♗b4 **4** ♖c2 ♗c6
Slavin opts for a slightly offbeat but still fairly respectable sideline, which is sometimes reached via a "Knights' Tango" move order. **5** ♗f3 **d6** **6** ♗d2 **0-0** **7** a3
♗xc3 **8** ♗xc3 In such positions White's bishop pair should give him a slight plus, but he must take care not to open the position too quickly when behind in development. **8...♖e7** Preparing ...e5.



9 e3 This is the main line, although 9 g3 is also quite popular. **9...a5!**? The main line is 9...e5 10 d5 ♗b8 when 11 ♗d2 is

similar to the game, except for the mutual pawn moves on the queenside. To tell the truth, I am not sure which side is more likely to benefit from the difference. **10 b3** A sensible reply, although several strong players have simply ignored the advancing a-pawn with 10 ♗e2 **10...e5** **11 d5** ♗b8 **12** ♗d2!? Despite being one of the main lines in the position without the moves ...a7-a5 and b2-b3, in this exact situation it has almost never been played. 12 ♗e2 and; 12 h3 have been more common. **12...c6**



This seems to be the first new move. **12...♗bd7** and; **12...♗g4!**? have been tried previously. **13 dxc6** 13 e4!? is possible, even if it looks a little strange to move the pawn for the second time. **13...bxc6?!** This seems to be the root of Black's troubles. I think he should have

played more dynamically with: **13...♗xc6!** **14** ♗d3 h6 (14...♗d4!? **15** ♖b2 is slightly better for White) **15** 0-0 **d5** **16** cxd5 ♗xd5 **17** ♗b2 ♗e6 when White's bishop pair remains a valuable asset, but Black's pieces work well together and he only stands slightly worse. **14 ♗d3 d5** In the game Lev-Kosashvili, Israel 1990, which reached this position via a different move order, Black preferred **14...c5!**? . This keeps the position more closed and the pawns on dark squares complement Black's bishop nicely, although his position remains somewhat worse overall. **15 0-0** ♗g4 **16** ♖fe1 Creating an escape square on f1 for the bishop. **16...♗bd7** **17** b4 ♖fc8



18 c5!? Gordon commits his pawns to a rigid formation. This purposeful move keeps the advantage, although White



Photo: Steve Connor

Alexei Slavin (left) contemplates his sixth move against Stephen Gordon at Daventry.



Photo: Steve Connor

GMs Jonathan Parker (left) and Matthew Turner don't know it yet but they are about to lose to the 'reds' of Cheddleton (Jonathan Hawkins and Danny Gormally respectively).

was somewhat spoiled for choice as 18 h3 and; 18 bxa5!? also look promising. **18...axb4** Perhaps Black could have considered the immediate 18...h5!? to avoid simplifications on the queenside. **19 axb4 h5 20 gxa8 gxa8**



21 g2! With this dual-purpose move Gordon develops pressure on the a1-h8 diagonal while also safeguarding his light-squared bishop from being exchanged. **21...g6 21...g8 22 g1** keeps control. **22 h1** White's bishop is the more useful as it exerts an influence over the queenside, so Gordon quite rightly avoids exchanging it. **22...h6 23 a1!** Posing an awkward problem for Black. **23...g8** This allows an invasion on the seventh rank, but exchanging would have enabled White's queen to take up a threatening position. **24 a7 24 f3** was also very strong. Gordon may have been reluctant to allow the disruptive 24...d4!? (24...e4 allows 25 d4 (or 25 e5, with positional domination in both cases.)) 25 exd4 e4, but after 26 e1 White is a pawn up for very little. **24...g6 25 f3 e8**



26 b5! Having improved all his pieces, Gordon opens up the position for his bishops. **26...xc5 27 xe5 27 bxc6 gxc6 28 xe5** leads to similar play. **27...cxb5 28 xg6 fxg6 29 xb5 ce4?**



This natural move allows an instant refutation. **29...c8!** would have kept Black in the game, although with two bishops, a better pawn structure and more active major pieces, White has a big advantage. **30 xf6!** One of the biggest advantages of the bishop pair comes from having the ability to exchange one of them at an advantageous

moment. **30...xf6 31 b7!** The pressure along the seventh rank is enough to decide the game. **31...h5** In view of Black's temporary lack of coordination, this is the only defence available. But now the knight becomes a target. **32 e2**



The computer prefers 32 h3!? d4 33 g4 (33 exd4 f8 keeps Black alive for the moment) 33...dxe3 34 gxh5 exf2+ 35 h1 which it evaluates as winning for White, but I doubt that any human player would choose this over the game continuation. **32...c8?** This final error leads to a swift end to the proceedings. **32...f6** was a bit more resilient although, after 33 xd5+ h8 34 hx5 gxh5 35 xh5, White's two-pawn advantage should enable him to win without too much trouble.; **32...c8!** was the last chance; Black is still in trouble but at least he would have avoided losing a piece. **33 f7+ h7 34 g4 f8 35 xd5 f6** Black is a clear pawn down but he can resist for a while longer. **33 g4 c1+ 34 g2 e4+ 35 e3** Black's brief counterattack comes to an end, and with it the game. **35...g1+ 36 xg1 xf3 37 c8+ h7 38 a8 g5 39 gxh5 d1+ 40 g2 xh5 41 g8+ 1-0**

WGHK did not have it all their own way, as GM Nick Pert was outplayed and beaten by the rising star Yang-Fan Zhou, who has had an excellent season and looks to be on course for an IM norm. Nevertheless, the reigning champions eventually prevailed by a convincing margin, helped in part by the following win by Bogdan Lalic.

Round 7 WGHK 1 - e2e4.org.uk
B.Lalic - D.Arutyunova





Photo: Steve Connor

Plain sailing for P&P against Warwickshire but for Mark Hebden's shock defeat at the hands of German FM Dr Guntram Hainke (right), currently working at Birmingham University.

After a dubious opening Black's position is already hanging by a thread, and Lalic mops up efficiently. **20 c6!** There were other ways to win, but Lalic's choice is the prettiest as well as the most effective. **20...xc6 20...bxc6 21 a1** wins a piece. **21 xc6 bxc6 22 d3! g6** After **22...f5 23 xe6** Black can resign.



23 xe6 23 ex7! is crushing, but the game continuation is also more than good enough. **23...a8** Black could have set one final trap with **23...b4!**, with the point that **24 exb4?** allows **24...a1+ 25 b1 f1+ 26 g2 xxb1 27 d8+ f7 28 g5+ g7 29 e7+ g8 30 xh7+ f8** when there is no mate and a draw is the most likely outcome. However, White can still win comfortably enough with **24 d1!** or **24 e4!**. **24 f1 b2 25 f3 1-0** Black resigned, as mate is imminent.

Meanwhile, in the other qualifying pool, leaders Pride and Prejudice (P&P) cruised to victory over Warwickshire Select despite a shock defeat for GM Mark Hebden by FM Guntram Hainke. The advantage of having a team mostly comprised of grandmasters is that even if one of them has an off-day, the chances are that most of the others will still win,

and so it proved. On top board David Howell got the job done in a game which featured some surprising ideas as well as a few missed opportunities...

Round 7 Warwickshire - P&P
N.Thomas - D.Howell



David has steadily outplayed his opponent and the time has come to move in for the kill. **26...xc4!** This should win comfortably, although there were at least two other decisive continuations as well. **26...e6!?** seems rather prosaic compared with the text move, but after **27 ex6 xxe6** Black's position is utterly dominant and White will not be able to avoid a loss of material in the near future.; **26...xg2!** is much more fun: **27 xg2 (27 xg2 f3+! leads to mate) 27...xc4!** With this move Black eliminates the possibility of **exf7+**, thus making **...f3** into a genuine mating threat. For this reason White cannot take the rook, and must remain a pawn down with a rotten position. **27 xc4 f3** According to the computer **27...d1!?** was even more effective, but there is nothing at all wrong with Howell's move. **28 c3 e2+ 29 h1 xc3 30 c2** Thanks to Black's clever combination

White is temporarily a whole piece down, but the game is not completely over as Black has two pieces under attack.

30...e2 More straightforward would have been **30...xg2+ 31 xg2 xe4** when Black is two pawns up while the c5-pawn is also weak. **31 g1** White remains a piece down, but Black's minor pieces are still unstable. **31...b1** Another route to victory was **31...xe4!?** **32 xe2 b3 33 c2 (33 c1 xc5 wins) 33...xa3! 34 xa3 xc5** when White can almost resign. **32 b2**



32...a6? Having an extra piece on the board is a slightly surreal situation, and sometimes a great abundance of promising continuations can serve to confuse and disorientate the player with the advantage. Black could have practically guaranteed the win by means of **32...xb2! 33 xxb2 xe4 34 f3**. With this move White exploits his opponent's lack of coordination to win back some material, but it is not enough to save the game. **34...c4! 35 b7! (35 xxb1 xxc5 wins) 35...xc5 36 b8+ f8 37 xxb1 xa4**. With three pawns for the exchange and two rampant bishops, Black should not have too much trouble winning the game. **33 xxb1?! 33 f3!** would have led to a position in which Black has no material advantage and would effectively have had to win the game all over again. **33...xc5 34 c2 d6** The dust has settled, and Black has emerged with an extra pawn and a seemingly dominant position. One would expect the rest to be a formality, but the drama is not yet over. **35 f3 d3 36 c3 b4?**





Photo: Steve Connor

Graham Morrison (Barbican 2, second from left) playing Daniel Bisby of Cambridge University. Despite Morrison's success, his team lost to the 'Light Blues'.

36...♙xe4 would have kept a decisive advantage. 37 ♖xe5? White misses his final opportunity. After the correct 37 ♖b3! Black lacks a convincing discovered attack with his bishop, and the e5 pawn is doomed. Black must also take the time to do something about the potential skewer of his queen and rook. From this position any result would have been possible. 37...♗xe5 38 ♜xe5 ♙xe4 Now Black is simply a pawn up with better pieces, and White has no realistic prospects of saving the endgame. 39 f3 ♙d5 40 ♜d3 ♙f8 0-1

comfortable win over Sambuca Sharks. Cambridge University edged out Barbican 2 in a competitive match, although both teams found themselves in the relegation pool at the end of the day. Here is the end of a nice win by Graham Morrison of Barbican. (Graham has annotated the whole game for the 4NCL website, and I would certainly recommend checking it out.)

Round 7 Barbican 2 - Cambridge Un.
G.Morrison - D.Bisby



27 ♜xd6! Sacrificing the exchange is not a difficult decision here, but it is nice all the same. 27...♙xf1 28 ♜xf1 28 ♜xe8 ♙xe8 29 ♜xf1 ♖f4+ 30 ♜g1 ♖xf5 31 d6 also gives excellent winning chances, but quite frankly it would be too generous of White to sacrifice his mighty knight for one of Black's pitiful rooks. 28...♙ed8 29 ♜e4 ♖f4+ 30 ♜g1 ♖xf5 White's pawns were too strong to be left on the board, but now the open f-file enables White to carry out a lethal attack. 31 ♜f6+ 31 e6!? fxe6 32 ♜f6+ ♜f7 33 ♖f3 was also winning. 31...♜f8 31...♜g7 32 ♖f3 does not change much. 32 e6 fxe6 33 ♖f3 ♖g6

P&P were missing two of their biggest stars in Jones and Adams, but were helped by the return of Jonathan Rowson who scored two good victories for them.

In terms of qualification for the championship pool, the competition between Cheddleton and Wood Green Hillsmark Kingfisher (WGHK) 2 for the number four spot in Pool A could hardly have been any closer. WGHK 2 had defeated Cheddleton earlier in the season, but the latter had scored better in the remaining matches and led their rivals by a single match point at the start of round seven. However, Cheddleton faced a much more difficult pairing against Barbican 1.

WGHK 2 made a powerful statement and obliterated their opponents, Pandora's Box Grantham, by an almost perfect score of 7½-½. Nevertheless, it was Cheddleton who had the last laugh after pulling off a highly impressive upset win over the higher-rated Barbican 1. Jonathan Hawkins and Danny Gormally played especially well to defeat Jonathan Parker and Matthew Turner respectively.

Elsewhere White Rose solidified their place in the championship pool with a



34 dxe6! ♙d1+ 35 ♜f2 Black's counterattack is over as quickly as it started. 35...♙bd8 36 ♜d5+ 1-0

Here is one last game from round seven, which was once again won by the player on the losing team.

Round 7 The ADs - Betsson
I.Snape - R.Bates



After a lacklustre opening Black has quickly slid into a miserable position, and Snape smashes through in style. 21 ♙h5! g6?! Allowing a swift demolition. The only way to prolong the game was 21...♙xd6 22 exd6 ♖d7 although I hardly need state that Black is losing this position. 22 ♙xg6! According to the computer this is the best choice, although White's position is so good that just about any sacrificial continuation would have won – apart from 22 ♖xg6+, which really would have been too optimistic! 22 ♖xf7.; 22 ♜xf7 and; 22 ♜xe6 were all good enough. 22...fxg6 23 ♜xe6 ♖c6 24 ♜xd8 ♙xd8





Photo: Steve Conlour

Cheddleton, headed by Hawkins, Gormally and Arkell, line up against WGHK1. The result was a narrow defeat by 3½-4½. Jonathan Hawkins (red top) beat Stephen Gordon.

25 ♖b3+! The most accurate, although 25 ♖xc6 ♗xd1+ 26 ♗xd1 ♖xe8 27 ♖b3+ was also winning easily. **25...♗g7 26 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 27 ♖f7+ ♖h8**



28 ♗d6 If White had really wanted to show off then he might have chosen 28 ♗f6 ♖b5 29 ♗d5!! for the cameras. **28...♖c8 28...♖b5 29 ♗xb6** is the end. **29 ♗xg6 ♗g8 30 ♗xh6 ♗g7 31 ♖f8+ 1-0**

As I mentioned previously, the games from round eight have not yet been made available so we are going to have to leave it there. The most notable event from Sunday's play was undoubtedly a power failure which occurred approximately one and a half hours after the start of play, and caused a delay of thirty or forty minutes. It emerged that the power company was working to fix the problem, but it was unable to say how much time this might take. It was decided that the games should restart, with players being given the option to move to an alternative room with more natural light. Inevitably, just a few minutes after this relocation took place, the lights came back on.

The final three rounds of the season are scheduled for 30 April to 2 May, so you can look forward to a final enlightening report in next month's magazine.

John Saunders presents a game from Division Three:

**4NCL Division 3, Round 7
M.Lunn - C.Gibson
Nimzo-Indian Defence**

We love it when a GM leaves a queen en prise or generally goes off the rails in a game, but almost as compelling is when a good club player suddenly does something daft. The player of the black pieces in this game is rated 2000+ and is a very competent performer – usually... **1 d4 ♖f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♗b4 4 ♖c2 0-0 5 e4** An odd thing noted on the database is that some top players like to punt this less regarded but aggressive line in blitz and rapidplay, but stick to more conservative lines for proper chess. **5...d5 6 e5 ♖d7** Black normally plays 6...♗e4 here.

Interestingly, a strong analysis engine of my acquaintance had a think about 6...♗c6!? 7 exf6 ♗xd4 8 ♗d1 ♖xf6 – but after 9 a3 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 ♖f5, isn't White just a piece for two pawns down? Hmm, maybe Rybka has the occasional off-day too. **7 ♗d3 7 ♖f3** or 7 cxd5 look more sound but White continues in an optimistic frame of mind with this and his next (dubious) move and is rewarded rather more richly than he deserves. **7...dxc4!?** 7...c5 is probably better but the text may not be totally mad either. **8 ♗xh7+ ♖h8 9 h4**



9...f5?? A moment of madness. 9...c5!? and you have to start fancying Black's game as he is on the point of breaking

up the pawn centre and possibly winning the e5 pawn. **10 ♗g6** Not only is the bishop safe on g6, it helps to set up a winning attack. One wonders if Black spent his time analysing 10 exf6 ♗xf6 11 ♗g6 ♗c6, etc, and simply overlooked this obvious alternative. **10...♗b6 11 ♖e2** Nothing to be done. In order to punish himself for his terrible error, Black allows the gruesome finale to be played out on the board. **11...♗e8 12 ♖h5+ ♖g8 13 ♖h7+ ♖f8 14 ♖h8+ ♖e7 15 ♖xg7 mate**

Pool A Final Table	P	W	D	L	GP	Pts
Pride & Prejudice	7	7	0	0	42½	14
Betsson.com	7	5	1	1	34	11
Barbican 4NCL 1	7	4	1	2	35½	9
Cheddleton 1	7	4	0	3	31	8
Wood Green Hilsmark 2	7	3	1	3	29½	7
The ADs	7	2	1	4	23	5
Warwickshire Select 1	7	1	0	6	17½	2
Pandora's Box Grantham	7	0	0	7	11	0

Pool B Final Table	P	W	D	L	GP	pts
Wood Green Hilsmark 1	7	7	0	0	44½	14
e2e4.org.uk 1	7	5	0	2	30	10
White Rose 1	7	4	1	2	28	9
Guildford A&DC 1	7	4	0	3	29½	8
Cambridge University 1	7	3	1	3	26	7
Oxford 1	7	3	0	4	25½	6
Barbican 4NCL 2	7	1	0	6	21½	2
Sambuca Sharks	7	0	0	7	18½	0

Championship Pool	P	W	D	L	GP	Pts
Wood Green Hilsmark 1	4	4	0	0	23½	8
Pride & Prejudice	4	4	0	0	23	8
White Rose 1	4	3	0	1	15½	6
Barbican 4NCL 1	4	1	1	2	16	3
Betsson.com	4	1	1	2	14	3
Cheddleton 1	4	1	0	3	12½	2
e2e4.org.uk 1	4	1	0	3	12½	2
Guildford A&DC 1	4	0	0	4	11	0

Demotion Pool	P	W	D	L	GP	Pts
Cambridge University 1	4	4	0	0	20½	8
Wood Green Hilsmark 2	4	3	1	0	21½	7
Oxford 1	4	3	0	1	19	6
The ADs	4	2	1	1	16½	5
Barbican 4NCL 2	4	2	0	2	17	4
Warwickshire Select 1	4	1	0	3	12	2
Sambuca Sharks	4	0	0	4	13½	0
Pandora's Box Grantham	4	0	0	4	8	0