

Chess

Carlsen Victorious at Wijk aan Zee

Magnus moves
to new all-time
high of 2872



Vitiugov Rocks Gibraltar

Nikita nudges
out Nigel Short
in tiebreak

PLUS

Coverage of all the latest 4NCL action
The Ruy Lopez - a dangerous weapon?
Gormally's Christmas in Groningen
Peter Lalic on the chess rules of thumb

Chess

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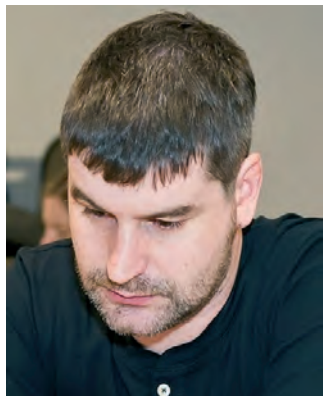
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Wood Green Fight Back

Simon Ansell on the second 4NCL weekend

Normal service was resumed for the big teams at the first 4NCL weekend of 2013. Wood Green's difficult first weekend was previously reported in detail, but now they scored two 5-3 victories against Cambridge University and Barbican to return to the top of Pool A. Jonathan Rowson was in good form, scoring 2/2 on board two for the reigning champions.

J.Rowson-K.Mah

Wood Green vs. Cambridge
Schlechter Slav

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♙f6 4 ♘c3 g6

Not the most popular system, but solid. Black mixes Slav and Grünfeld set-ups, but ...c7-c5 is a key break in the latter and here it is no longer possible in one move.

5 ♙f4 ♙g7 6 e3 0-0 7 h3 ♙e6 8 ♖b3

Forcing a queenless middlegame in which White will have a slight advantage with pressure on the queenside.

8...♗b6

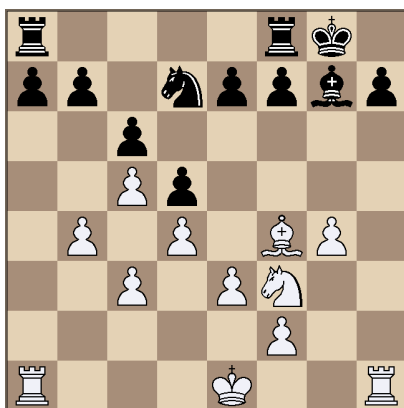
8...b6 weakens the queenside light squares too much, now that the light-squared bishop is unable to develop to b7.

9 c5 ♗xb3 10 axb3 ♙e4 11 b4 ♙d7 12 ♙d3 ♙f5 13 g4!

Forcing matters, and probably necessary as Black had rushed to prepare his central

pawn break: for example, 13 b5 e5! with sufficient, active play.

13...♙xc3 14 ♙xf5 gxf5 15 bxc3 fxc4 16 hxg4



16...f5

White's queenside pawn diamond c3-b4-c5-d4 is incredibly solid and will now be easily resistant to the pawn breaks ...b7-b6 and ...e7-e5, so Mah chooses another method. It was hard to sit and wait passively, as the h-pawn is a serious weakness – White was threatening ♙e2 followed by doubling on the h-file.

17 gxf5

17 g5 was also possible, still with play against the h-pawn, but Rowson prefers to

open the g-file to create potential kingside attacking chances.

17...♙xf5 18 ♙e2 e5 19 ♙g3

19 dxe5 ♙xe5 20 ♙d4 ♙f7 21 b5 is the first choice of my computer and indeed this gives Black concrete problems to solve, but this is a very inhumane solution – why destroy the beautiful pawn diamond?



19...exd4

19...e4 20 ♙d2 was an alternative, but still no fun for Black who now also has to contend with a possible ♙b3-a5, hitting the b7-pawn. It is instructive to consider this position, which at a casual glance may seem only 'better' for White. Black has absolutely no active play and weaknesses on both sides of the board. This combined with the quality of the bishops (the black bishop is the very definition of 'biting on granite!') leads me to believe that White is already technically winning, despite the material equality.

20 cxd4 ♙f8 21 b5!

The typical minority attack break creates further weaknesses.

21...cxb5 22 ♙hb1 ♙e6 23 ♙xb5 ♙af8

Mah has a tactical sequence in mind to create at least some play, but unfortunately it falls short.

24 ♙h4 ♙xd4

I find it somewhat appropriate that this frustrated bishop, often the star piece in the Grünfeld proper, finds it necessary to sacrifice itself unsuccessfully on the d4 strong-point!

25 ♙d1 ♙xc5 26 ♙xf5 ♙xf5 27 ♙xb7 ♙g5 28 ♙f4 ♙e4 29 ♙g1+ ♙f8 30 ♙h6+ 1-0

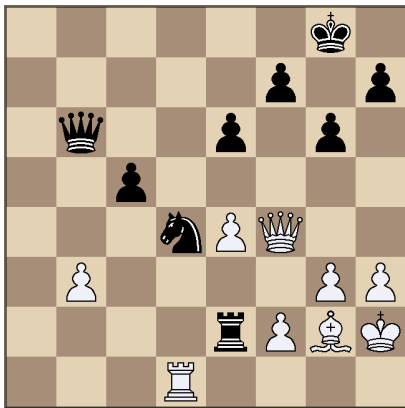
DIVISION 1a	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Wood Green Hilsmark 1			5-3	5-3		4-4		7-1	21	7
2 Cheddleton 1			3-5		7-1	6½-1½	5-3		21½	6
3 Barbican 4NCL 1	3-5	5-3		4½-3½				7½-½	20	6
4 Cambridge University 1	3-5		3½-4½				5-3	5-3	16½	4
5 Guildford 2		1-7				3-5	6-2	4-4	14	3
6 e2e4.org.uk 1	4-4	1½-6½			5-3		2½-5½		13	3
7 Sambuca Sharks		3-5		3-5	2-6	5½-2½			13½	2
8 BCM Dragons	1-7		½-7½	3-5	4-4				8½	1

Division 1b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Guildford 1			6½-1½		6-2	4-4	7-1		23½	7
2 White Rose 1			2½-5½	5½-2½	7-1			5-3	20	6
3 Barbican 4NCL 2	1½-6½	5½-2½		5½-2½				4-4	16½	5
4 South Wales Dragons		2½-5½	2½-5½			4½-3½		5-3	14½	4
5 Jutes of Kent	2-6	1-7				5½-2½	5-3		13½	4
6 Wood Green Hilsmark 2	4-4			3½-4½	2½-5½		7-1		17	3
7 Warwickshire Select 1	1-7				3-5	1-7		4½-3½	9½	2
8 Blackthorne Russia		3-5	4-4	3-5			3½-4½		13½	1

A very fine game by Jonathan Rowson, and one that shows the consequences of drifting into a passive position against a strong grandmaster – even for a strong IM such as Karl Mah.

Adam Eckersley-Waites hit back for Cambridge with a fine game against the French Grandmaster Robert Fontaine, but wins for David Howell and Nick Pert saw Wood Green comfortably home.

R.Fontaine- A.Eckersley-Waites Wood Green vs. Cambridge



Black is significantly better here, due to the strong knight and weak b3-pawn.

37...e5!

The only thing for Black to be careful of is the slight weakness of his king, as shown by 37...xb3? 38 a1!, which forces a draw by perpetual check after 38...a2 39 xa2 xa2 40 b8+ g7 41 e5+, etc. Eckersley-Waites instead trades his e-pawn for the white f-pawn, creating more damage to the white pawn structure and king.

38 xe5 xf2 39 e8+ g7 40 e5+ f6?

A mistake, which should have allowed a draw – but this was very difficult to see and requires highly accurate play by White to demonstrate. After 40...f6! 41 xf6+ xf6 Black is much better, if not already winning in the endgame.

41 e7+ h6 42 f8+ g5 43 c1?

43 e7!, threatening the h7-pawn and continuing to eye the c5-pawn, would have held the balance. Now 43...h6 44 f8+ g5 45 e7 is a draw, and attempting to include the queen in an attack with 45...b5 allows 46 c1! when Black must force a draw with 46...xg2+ 47 xg2 e2+ 48 h1 f3+ 49 h2, etc.

However, 43 h4? was insufficient too: 43...g4! 44 c8+ e6 45 xe6+ (45 xc5? xb3 threatens g3 and actually forces mate; the value of an active king!) 45...xe6 is another good endgame for Black, whose precariously-placed king is actually a strength.

43...c4!

Very well played!

44 f7

The pawn is immune to both captures, as 44 xc4 f3+ 45 h1 f1+! 46 xf1 g1 is mate, and 44 bxc4 xg2+ 45 xg2 b2+ picks up the rook.

44...c6

Hitting the e4-pawn.

45 e7

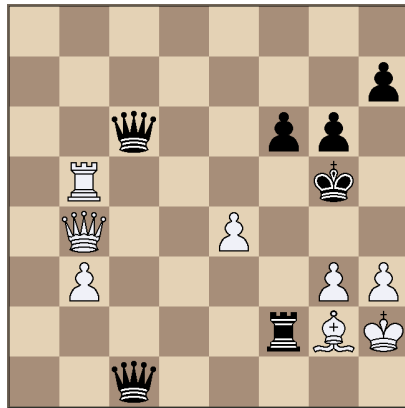
45 h1 d6! attacks the g3-pawn and introduces the possibility of the queen joining the attack along the d-file.

45...c3!

Now the c-pawn decides.

46 a1 c2 47 a5+ b5 48 b4 c1

49 xb5+



49...xb5!

49...h6?? 50 f8 mate and 49...f5 50 e7+, with a draw, were two to avoid!

50 xb5+ h6 51 e5 c2 52 d5 fxe5 53 h4 d2 54 a8 e2 55 h3 e3 56 h2 g7 57 b7+ f7 58 d5 d4 59 c6 e7 60 e4 d2+ 61 g1 e3+ 62 h2 xb3 63 c5 e6 64 d5 f6 0-1

The experienced Barbican team warmed up for their big Sunday match with a 7½-½ demolition of BCM Dragons. I gave a quick Matthew Turner win in my last report, and he was at it again, with Richard Webb his victim this time.

M.Turner-R.Webb Barbicans vs. BCM Dragons *Giuoco Piano*

1 e4 e5 2 c4 f6 3 d3 c6 4 f3 e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 bd2!?

White has tended to prefer 6 e1 or 6 b3 in this position, but as usual Turner goes his own way.

6...d6 7 a4

Now that the e5-pawn is defended, Black threatens ...a5, so this move allows the retreat a2 whilst also gaining space on the queenside.

7...a5

A debatable decision. Webb invests

some time to increase his influence in the centre with ...c7-c5, a manoeuvre often seen in the Spanish game, but it does weaken the central light squares. 7...e6!? might have been my choice.

8 a2 c5 9 c3 c6 10 c4 h6 11 e3 e8 12 h3 f8 13 h2 e7

Again I prefer 13...e6 immediately – bishops such as those on a2 should be exchanged at the first opportunity!

14 f3 e6

Finally, but White is already developing a dangerous kingside initiative.

15 e4 h7 16 xe6 fxe6



17 g3! g5

The alternative 17...h8 18 f4 was also unpleasant.

18 d4

18 f4!? immediately was also strong.

18...exd4?!

For better or worse, Black should have tried 18...h5 19 xg5 (19 e3 keeps a nice advantage), when 19...hxg4 20 xg4 xg5 21 f6+ f7 looks scary, but might be defensible.

19 f4!

Now Black's position quickly falls apart.

19...g7 20 fxg5 hxg5 21 xg5! 1-0

Black resigned due to 21...xg5 22 f6+ with a devastating attack.

Unfortunately for Barbican the next day, Rowson's second fine victory of the week-end together with a win for John Emms extended Wood Green's winning streak.

J.Parker-J.Rowson Barbican vs. Wood Green *Nimzo-Indian Defence*

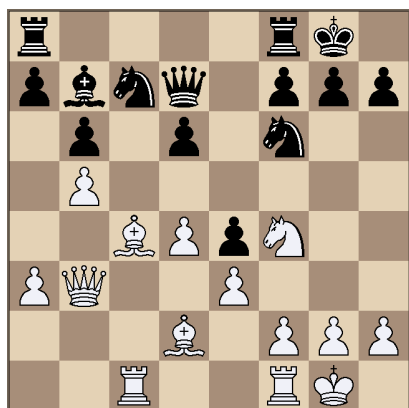
1 d4 f6 2 c4 e6 3 c3 b4 4 e3 0-0 5 d3 d5 6 ge2 dxc4 7 xc4 e5 8 0-0 e7!?

Unusual. 8...c6 and 8...exd4 have been played more often.

9 a3 d6 10 b5

Parker takes the opportunity to exchange knight for bishop.

10...e4 11 xd6 cxd6 12 f4 b6 13 d2 b7 14 c1 a6 15 b4 c7 16 b5 d7 17 b3



17...g5!?

Gaining space and play on the kingside, although a standard plan for Black with the e3-d4 vs. d6(d5)-e4 central structure, should here be very double-edged due to the absence of Black's dark-squared bishop, especially if the centre opens.

18 ♖h3

18 ♖e2? loses a piece: 18...d5 and the bishop has no retreat.

18...h6 19 a4 ♖ac8 20 ♖h1?!

To bring the knight back into play via g1, but White should probably be trying to open up the game by means of f2-f3 in order to exploit the dark squares – this will be a lengthy process, but there is not yet any real danger to the white king. With this in mind 20 ♖e2 might have been better.

20...♗d5 21 ♘g1 ♖e6 22 ♗xd5 ♘cxd5 23 a5

I'm not sure what this move achieves, but already it's hard to suggest an active

plan for White, who has been outplayed over the last few moves.

23...♗g7 24 axb6 axb6 25 ♖c6 ♘g8!

A very fine retreat, to evict the annoying white rook from c6 while freeing the f-pawn for a potential advance.

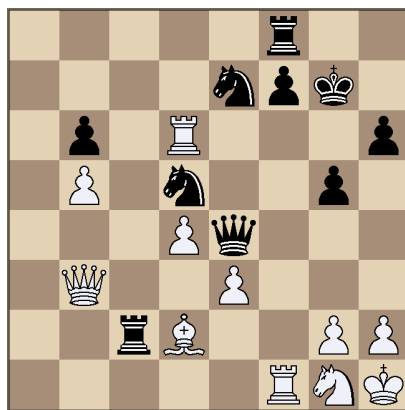
26 f3

Parker initiates complications, but it backfires surprisingly quickly.

26...♗ge7!

Sacrificing a pawn to activate the rooks.

27 fxe4 ♖xe4 28 ♖xd6 ♖c2



29 ♖f2

29 ♖f3 g4 is no improvement.

29...♖a8!

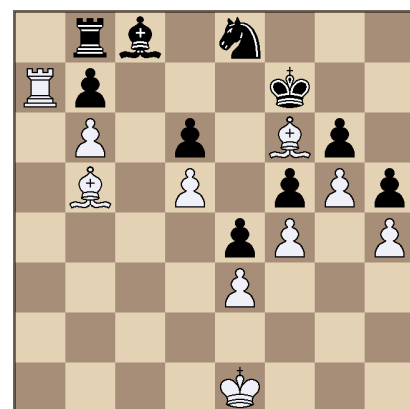
Black's attack plays itself.

30 ♖b1 ♖aa2 31 ♖f1 f5 32 ♖d1 ♘xe3 33 ♖h5 ♘g4 0-1

It's very unusual to see such a strong player as Jonathan Parker lose in this fashion, but credit must go to Jonathan Rowson for an accomplished game.

Cheddleton are also in a good position to qualify for the Championship Pool and may yet trouble Wood Green in their round six meeting. They scored two easy victories against Guildford II and last weekend's heroes e2e4, who unfortunately were unable to continue their good form. They still have a chance of claiming the remaining qualification spot, though, with Cambridge and Guildford 2 being their rivals.

Guildford remain top of Pool B, despite being held to a draw by Wood Green's second team in a match where on top board Nigel Short tied Andrew Greet completely up in knots, resulting in one of the most dominating positions I've ever seen with material equality.



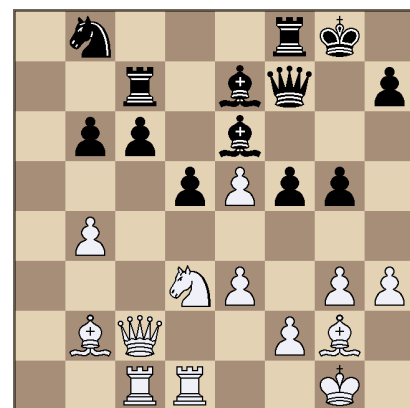
Indeed, after **45 ♗d8** Black had little choice but to resign.

CHESSEX Executive Editor Malcolm Pein replied for Wood Green on board seven to equalise the match and potentially do his first team a favour in the title race.

Yorkshire's White Rose are a point behind in second, but had a tough weekend, losing to Barbican II on Sunday, while their close Saturday match against your correspondent's team, Blackthorne Russia, included several exciting games.

P.Wells-S.Ansell

White Rose vs.
Blackthorne Russia



We join my own game a bit before a



Powerful use of the Nimzo-Indian gave Jonathan Rowson a fine victory.

time-scramble in which we both only just made move 40. Peter was worse off than me, soon having only a minute for ten moves, but I would argue he is more used to it than I am, so the effect was probably neutral.

24 b5?!

This position came from a Stonewall Dutch, where neither of us were particularly well-versed in the theory. Objectively White is better here, but the position is complex. I was expecting 24 f4 to stop any black kingside counterplay, when the situation remains tense.

24...c5 25 dxb4

The point of White's 24th, but Peter told me he had simply missed my response.

25...d7! 26 a6?!

Now I can achieve my kingside pawn break and start a dangerous attack. Probably Peter should have retreated with 26 d3, but it's always difficult to move backwards and admit the failure of your plan.

26...f4! 27 exf4 gxf4 28 gxf4 xxf4

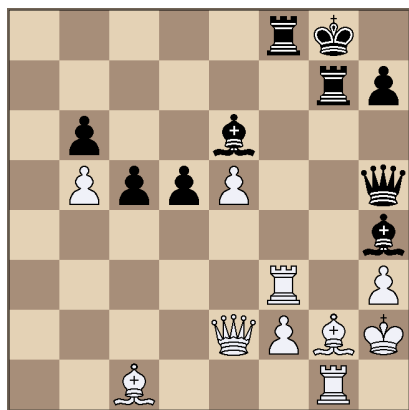
Perhaps it was better to take first with 28...xa6, so as not to lose tempi with the f8-rook and accelerate the attack, but with little time on my clock I was reluctant to create a dangerous passed pawn only two squares away from queening.

29 bxb8 xxb8 30 d3 h4!

The bishop is excellently placed here, pressuring the f2-pawn and stopping the white rook joining the defence on g3.

31 f3 h6 32 h2 f8 33 g1 g7 34 c1 h5 35 e2

White threatens fxf8+, winning the queen. So far we have both negotiated the complications reasonably well, without any obvious errors. I was aware I was probably doing well, but couldn't see a knockout blow. That's because there isn't one.



35...xf3?

The computer sees things without any emotion, doesn't bother looking for an immediate finish and suggests the simple 35...xf3!, when it's hard to find a move for White and I can start thinking about rolling the c- and d-pawns.

36 xf3 f7 37 xg7+ xg7 38 g4 d4 39 f4

White's passed pawns are now just as

dangerous as Black's.

39...e7 40 g2 xg4 41 xg4+ g6 42 f5 xg4 43 hxg4

We have reached an amusing endgame and one that turns out to be drawn. Play is more or less forced.

43...c4 44 f6+ f7!

44...xf6 45 exf6+ xf6 46 g3 e5 is probably a draw too, but I wasn't sure about it at the time and was exhausted. The text is more aesthetically pleasing and much easier to calculate!

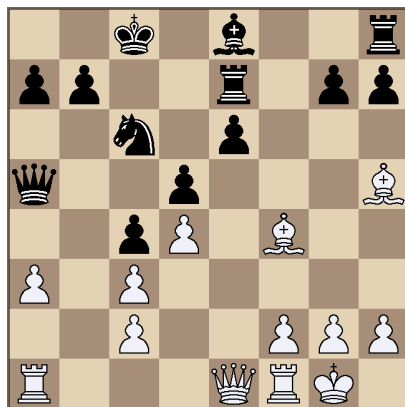
45 fxe7 c3 46 g3 d3 47 f3 d2 48 xd2 cxd2 49 e8+ xe8 50 e2

White is just in time and the pawn endgame is drawn.

50...d7 51 xd2 e6 52 e3 xe5 53 f3 d5 54 f4 c5 55 g5 xb5 56 h6 c5 57 xh7 b5 58 g5 b4 59 g6 b3 60 g7 b2 61 g8 b1+ 62 g6 xg6+ 63 xg6 ½-½

Dave Ledger won a nice game for Blackthorne on board five:

D.Ledger-N.Crood Blackthorne Russia vs. White Rose



19 g5!

19 g4 was also possible when White retains some pressure due to the two bishops and weak e6-pawn, but the text is more accurate and shows good judgement of the ensuing attack if Black takes the bait, as transpired in the game.

19...xh5?

19...d7 was necessary, when after 20 g4 White retains the advantage.

20 xe7 xe7 21 xe6+ d8

Now there is a forcing sequence that finishes by picking up the loose bishop. Dave did well to calculate it all in advance.

22 d6+! e8 23 ae1 d8

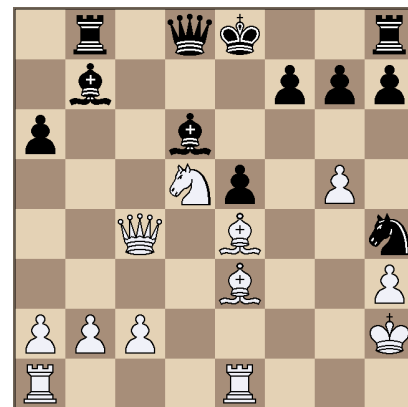
24 xe7+! xe7 25 b8+ f7

After 25...d8 26 e5+ the bishop is lost, but the text is no better.

26 xh8 g6 27 b8 a6 28 f4+ g8 29 c1 h6 30 e1 d7 31 h3 e4 32 f3 g6 33 e3 h7 34 e7 a4 35 f8 1-0

White Rose replied with wins for our editor, Richard Palliser, Jean-Luc Weller and Teresza Olsarova to take the match 5-3.

T.Olsarova-R.Eames White Rose vs. Blackthorne Russia



23...0-0?

If you need a refresher course on your chess clichés, we've already seen 'biting on granite' in Rowson-Mah, above. Here Bob helpfully demonstrates 'castling into it'. 23...c8 would have at least stayed on the board, but White still has many good options.

24 xh7+! xh7 25 xh4+ g6

25...g8 26 f6+ with mate to follow is no improvement!

26 e4+ h5 27 h7# 1-0



Teresza Olsarova attacked in style.

Blackthorne went on to lose Sunday's match to South Wales Dragons too, not helped by your correspondent's passive display with the white pieces. I was duly and deservedly clinically dispatched by IM John Cooper. We remain bottom of Pool B and are again in serious relegation trouble.

Jutes of Kent were missing their top board, Simon Williams, but still did enough to defeat Warwickshire and give themselves another good chance to play in the Promotion Pool. They were unable to make much impression on Guildford on Sunday, though, and I finish with two convincing victories from this match.

G.Jones-G.Camus de Solliers Guildford vs. Jutes of Kent *French Tarrasch*

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 h6

A waiting move. One point is to delay ...♗f6 until White has developed his king's knight, thereby avoiding the dangerous line 3...♗f6 4 e5 ♗f7 5 f4.

4 ♘gf3 ♗f6 5 e5 ♗fd7 6 c3 c5 7 ♔d3 ♗c6 8 ♔c2

This retreat allows the d2-knight to move to b3 and lend extra support to the d4-pawn. 8 0-0 g5!? starts complications that are by no means bad for Black.

8...♗b6 9 ♗b3 cxd4 10 cxd4 a5 11 a4 ♗b4 12 ♔b1

The bishop has to move again, but this is no great hardship now that White has secured the centre. The black pieces are hardly in a position to exploit the loss of time.

12...♗c7?!

The queen has to move so that Black can develop his queenside, but 12...♗a6 seems more natural, delaying White getting his king to safety. Play might continue 13 ♔e3 ♔e7 14 ♗c1 when White will eventually get castled and have a small but stable advantage after ♗d3.

13 0-0 ♗b6 14 ♔e1 ♔d7



15 ♗c5!

An excellent pawn sacrifice, gaining the dark squares and really the only sensible option as the a4-pawn was under attack.

15...♗xc5 16 dxc5 ♗xc5 17 ♔e3 ♗c7 18 b3 ♗c8

18...♗c3 19 ♔d4 achieves nothing.

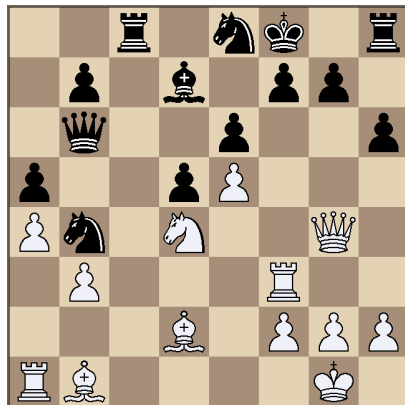
19 ♗d4 ♗a8

Not a happy square for the knight!

20 ♗g4 ♗f8 21 ♔d2!

Evicting the annoying b4-knight before White starts proceedings on the kingside.

21...♗b6 22 ♗d4 ♗c7 23 ♔e3! ♗e8 24 ♗f3



24...f5?

A blunder, but Black's position was difficult anyway. 24...♗g8 was the only move to stay in the game, but after 25 ♗f4 f5 26 exf6 ♗xf6 27 ♔g6 White still has more than enough compensation for the pawn – the main feature of the position is the out-of-play rook on h8.

25 ♗xf5! h5 26 ♗xg7+ ♗g8 1-0

Black resigned before either 27 ♗xe6+ hxg4 28 ♗f8# or 27 ♗xh5+ ♗g7 28 ♗xg7# could occur. Very convincing play from Gawain Jones.

I.Johannesson-M.Hebden Jutes of Kent vs. Guildford *King's Indian Defence*

1 c4 g6 2 ♗c3 ♔g7 3 d4 ♗f6 4 e4 d6 5 ♗f3 0-0 6 ♔e2 e5 7 0-0 ♗bd7 8 d5 a5 9 ♗c2 ♗c5 10 ♔g5 h6 11 ♔e3 b6 12 ♗d2 h5!?

Unusual according to my database (12...♔g4 is the most common move). Mark Hebden knows his King's Indian positions inside out, though, and this smells of something cooked up at home.

13 f3 ♗fd7 14 b3

White begins the standard plan of queenside expansion with b4, but he never gets it in.

14...♔f6

The point. The h6-pawn is no longer en prise, allowing Black to activate the bishop.

15 ♔h1?

Enabling the bishop to retreat to g1, but the white pieces become tangled on the kingside and the punishment is brutal. In chess it's always a good idea to cut across your opponent's plans and here 15 ♗b5 was better, holding up Black's plans due to the

pressure on the c7-pawn. Mark may have intended 15...♔a6 to exchange the annoying knight before continuing with ...♔g5, but White has definitely gained something in this instance as Black's kingside play will not be nearly as strong without his light-squared bishop.

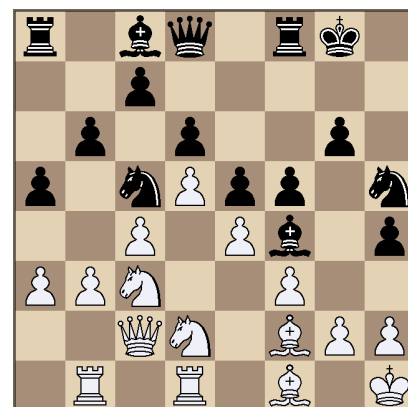
15...♔g5 16 ♔g1 h4 17 ♗ab1

The b-pawn now requires defence before White can play a2-a3.

17...♗f6 18 ♗fd1

White's queenside play is so slow that it can just be ignored: 18 a3 ♔f4 19 b4 ♗h5! is a standard attacking manoeuvre, and in this case one that is extremely effective. There is no good defence to ...♗g3+. The text frees f1 for a white piece to help the defence, but to no avail.

18...♗h5 19 ♔f2 f5 20 ♔f1 ♔f4 21 a3



21...♗g3+! 22 ♔xg3

Objectively, 22 ♔g1 was better, but it's hard to tolerate a such a knight in the heart of your king's position.

22...hxg3 23 h3 ♔e3 24 b4

Belatedly, White starts his queenside play.

24...♗d7 25 exf5 gxf5 26 ♔d3 axb4 27 axb4 e4!

Creating a fantastic square on e5 for the knight. Black's plan is simple: sacrifice on h3 and give checkmate.

28 fxh4 f4 29 ♗f3 ♗e5 30 ♗f1 ♗e7 31 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 32 ♔e2 ♗h8 33 e5 ♔f5 0-1

A decisive sacrifice on h3 follows. Strangely White's only serious mistake seems to have been the innocent-looking 15 ♔h1. This game shows the value of understanding a position and Mark Hebden certainly understands the King's Indian Defence very well – I wonder how many similar kingside attacks he has launched in his career?

Only Blackthorne and Warwickshire have no chance of making the Championship Pool, but still need to pick up points for the forthcoming relegation battle, so there is everything to play for when the 4NCL returns to Staverton Park in Daventry on 23-24 February for rounds five and six. We'll have a full report in the April *CHESS*.

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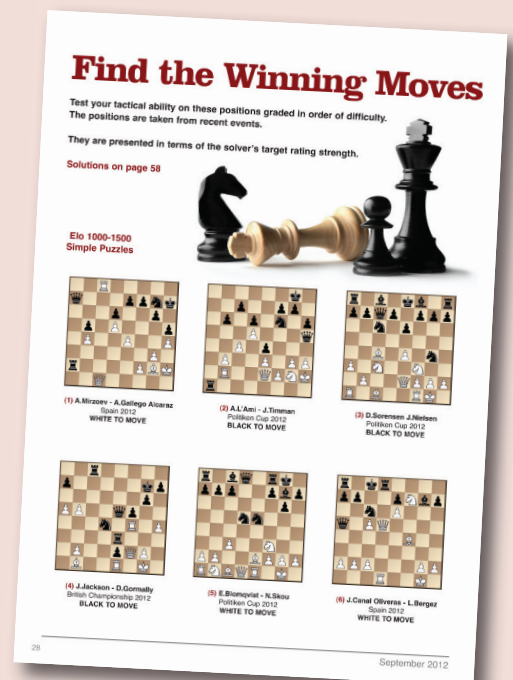
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