

Chess



MAGNUS FORCE

Carlsen wins Candidates



Carlsen pips Kramnik in an epic London Candidates



Vassily Ivanchuk shows how he defeated Carlsen



What's Boris Gelfand's advice for FIDE?

Chess

Chess Magazine is published monthly.
Founding Editor: B.H. Wood, OBE. M.Sc +
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Website: www.chess.co.uk

Subscription Rates:

United Kingdom

1 year (12 issues)	£49.95
2 year (24 issues)	£89.95
3 year (36 issues)	£125

Europe

1 year (12 issues)	£60
2 year (24 issues)	£112.50
3 year (36 issues)	£165

USA & Canada

1 year (12 issues)	\$90
2 year (24 issues)	\$170
3 year (36 issues)	\$250

Rest of World (Airmail)

1 year (12 issues)	£72
2 year (24 issues)	£130
3 year (36 issues)	£180

Distributed by:
Post Scriptum (UK only)
Unit G, OYO Business Park, Hindmans Way,
Dagenham, RM9 6LN - Tel: 020 8526 7779

LMPI (North America)
8155 Larrey Street, Montreal (Quebec),
H1J 2L5, Canada - Tel: 514 355-5610

Views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Editors. Contributions to the magazine will be published at the Editors' discretion and may be shortened if space is limited.

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Chess Magazine (ISSN 0964-6221) is published by:
Chess & Bridge Ltd, 44 Baker St, London, W1U 7RT
Tel: 020 7388 2404 Fax: 020 7388 2407
Email: info@chess.co.uk, Website: www.chess.co.uk

FRONT COVER:

Cover Design: Matt Read

US & Canadian Readers – You can contact us via our American branch – Chess4Less based in West Palm Beach, FL. Call toll-free on 1-877 89CHESS (24377). You can even order Subscriber Special Offers online via www.chess4less.com

**Printed in the UK by The Magazine
Printing Company using only paper
from FSC/PEFC suppliers
www.magprint.co.uk**

Contents

Editorial	4
Malcolm Pein on the latest developments	
60 Seconds with...	7
Boris Gelfand on La Liga, O.Henry and a fingerfehler	
Carlsen's Narrow Hurrah	8
All the action from an epic London Candidates	
The New Challenger	25
Janis Nisii portrays the Grandmaster she's watched grow up	
Inside London	30
Exclusive Annotations from Boris Gelfand and Vassily Ivanchuk	
Don't Forget the Second Teams!	32
Simon Ansell reports from an exciting 4NCL weekend	
Bringing on Back the Good Times	36
Peter Lalic's latest advice for the club player	
Chess in Guam	38
Chris Briscoe ventured to the tiny Pacific island for a tournament	
Find the Winning Moves	42
Can you do as well as the players in the Candidates?	
How Good is Your Chess?	46
Daniel King was inspired by an encounter from Las Vegas	
Forthcoming Events	49
Where will you be playing in May?	
Home News	50
The Easter weekend, as ever, heralded a number of congresses	
Overseas News	52
Action from the Bundesliga and a small tribute to Robert Byrne	
Solutions	54
New Books and Software	55
The latest reviews and arrivals at Chess & Bridge	
Saunders on Chess	58
A look at the Candidates and the World Championship cycle	

Photo credits: Kanwal Bhatia (pp.21, 24), Chris Briscoe (pp.38, 40, 41), Calle Erlandsson (pp.7, 16), Eteri Kublashvili (pp.14, 18), Zeljka Malobabic (p.10), Ray Morris-Hill (pp.1, 19, 33, 34, 50, 52), Janis Nisii (p.59), Alexei Yavlinsky (pp.8, 11).

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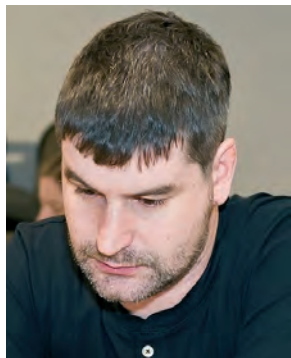
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Special thanks to Chris Ravilious for compiling the index.



Remember the Second Teams!

Simon Ansell reports from the 4NCL at Hinckley

I left you last time with just a couple of issues remaining to be settled before the 4NCL split after round 7 into the Championship and Relegation Pools. In Pool A, Cambridge University and e2e4 met, the winners taking the fourth qualifying place to the Championship Pool. On paper, the teams were evenly matched, but Cambridge finished comfortable winners by 5½-2½. Daniel Bisby was convincing on board 3 against Peter Sowray.

D.Bisby-P.Sowray Cambridge vs. e2e4 Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♙f5 5 ♘g3 ♙g6 6 ♙c4 e6 7 ♘1e2 ♘f6 8 O-O ♘bd7 9 f4 ♘b6 10 ♙d3 ♙xd3 11 ♙xd3 g6 12 c4 ♙d7?!

The first 11 moves have all been played before, but White's 12th is new according to my database. To me, d7 seems more like a potential square for a knight, rather than the queen that was already doing perfectly well on d8. Indeed, there was no reason not to continue normal development with 12...♙g7 or 12...♙e7.

13 b3!

Immediately giving Black something to think about, as the c1-bishop will take con-

trol of an important diagonal by developing to either b2 or a3, depending on where its black counterpart goes.

13...♙g7 14 ♙a3



14...♘c8?!

Black attempts to castle kingside by rerouting the knight to e7 or d6, but it's too slow. Queenside castling was preferable, as 14...O-O-O 15 ♙c5 followed by a4-a5 is pleasant for White, but not the end of the world. Here a black knight would like to go to d7, but the queen is in the way.

15 f5!

Very energetic play, punishing Black for his slow development.

15...gxf5 16 ♘xf5 exf5 17 ♘g3 ♙d8

18 ♘xf5 ♙f8 19 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 20 ♙g3!

Threatening ♙h4. White's compensation for the piece is obvious: the a8-rook is completely out of the game and once d4-d5 comes, the black king will be in serious trouble.

20...♘e8 21 ♙ae1 f6

21...♘e6, attempting to exchange the strong white steed, can be answered by the surprising 22 ♘g7! when, amongst other things, White is immediately threatening ♘e6+, winning the exchange with a continuing attack.

22 d5!



22...cxd5

22...c5 would have kept the centre closed, but after 23 ♙e6! Black is completely tied up and it's hard to find a move that doesn't lose on the spot.

23 cxd5?!

23 ♘d4 ♘c7 24 cxd5 was even stronger.

23...♘c7?

White's slip on the last move allowed 23...♘cd6 24 ♘d4 ♙c8 when Black might hold on, as the king will feel much safer on b8. Even here, White still has full compensation, as Black will continue to play for several moves minus his a8-rook.

24 d6!

Now the king is permanently stranded and the black pieces completely uncoordinated. The end is nigh.

24...♘e6 25 ♙c3 ♙f7 26 ♘h6 f5

It's hard to suggest any reasonable move for Black, who could have resigned somewhere around here. Sportingly, he

DIV 1 CHAMP POOL		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Guildford 1					7-1	6½-1½	6-2	5½-2½	25	8
2	Wood Green Hilsmark 1			5-3	4-4			5½-2½	5-3	19½	7
3	Barbican 4NCL 1		3-5		5-3		6-2		4½-3½	18½	6
4	Cheddleton 1		4-4	3-5		4-4			5½-2½	16½	4
5	White Rose 1	1-7			4-4		2½-5½	7-1		14½	3
6	Barbican 4NCL 2	1½-6½		2-6		5½-2½		3-5		12	2
7	Jutes of Kent	2-6	2½-5½			1-7	5-3			10½	2
8	Cambridge University 1	2½-5½	3-5	3½-4½	2½-5½					11½	0

DIV 1 DEMOTION POOL		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1	Wood Green Hilsmark			3½-4½	7-1			5-3	6-2	21½	6
2	Sambuca Sharks			4½-3½		5½-2½	2-6		5-3	17	6
3	South Wales Dragons	4½-3½	3½-4½		4-4			5-3		17	5
4	Warwickshire Select 1	1-7		4-4			4½-3½	4½-3½		14	5
5	e2e4.org.uk 1		2½-5½				5-3	2-6	6-2	15½	4
6	Guildford 2		6-2		3½-4½	3-5			4-4	16½	3
7	Blackthorne Russia	3-5		3-5	3½-4½	6-2				15½	2
8	BCM Dragons	2-6	3-5			2-6	4-4			11	1

plays on until mate.

27 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 **28** ♜a5+ ♜b6 **29** ♜xf5 ♜g6 **30** ♜e5 ♜c8 **31** ♜f6 ♜d7 **32** ♜xe6 ♜xf6 **33** ♜e8 mate 1-0

Similarly, in Pool B there was just the one remaining qualification spot up for grabs, to be decided between the second teams of Wood Green and Barbican. Wood Green might have earlier drawn with Guildford, but required victory to progress, and their intentions were clear as they fielded three GMs and three IMs to outrate their opponents by an average of more than 100 Elo points per board. Something went seriously wrong for the titled players, though, as they were unable to win a single game between them, making just three draws (all with the white pieces) on the top six boards. Like Cambridge, Barbican won 5½-2½ to consign their opponents to the Relegation Pool. There was an interesting struggle between Graham Morrison and Neil McDonald on top board.

G.Morrison-N.McDonald Barbican 2 vs. Wood Green 2 *King's Indian Defence*

1 d4 ♜f6 **2** c4 g6 **3** ♜f3 ♜g7 **4** g3 **0-0**
5 ♜g2 d6 **6** 0-0 ♜bd7 **7** ♜c3 e5 **8** e4
c6 **9** h3 ♜b6 **10** ♜e1 ♜e8 **11** d5 h6?!

11...c5 has been played before, when a complex struggle will ensue. The text allows White to develop with tempo.



Prolific author Neil McDonald suffered an unfortunate accident after playing a good game.

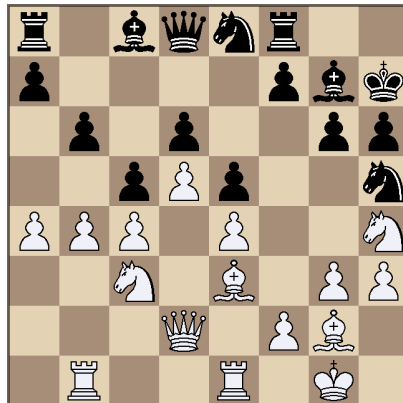
12 ♜e3 ♜c7

Not 12...♜xb2? **13** ♜a4 ♜b4 **14** ♜d2 when the queen will be trapped after either **14**...♜xc4 **15** ♜f1 or **14**...♜a3 **15** ♜e3. Instead, **12**...c5 can be answered by **13** ♜b1, when the queen will soon have to move anyway; compared to **11**...c5, White has gained some time.

13 ♜h4 c5

Black decides he doesn't want to have to continually worry about the centre opening, so he blocks in any case, but as before White has definitively gained something over the **11**...c5 line.

14 a3 ♜h7 **15** ♜d2 ♜d8 **16** b4 b6 **17** ♜ab1 ♜df6 **18** a4 ♜h5



19 a5?!

After Black's slow early middlegame play, White has made significant progress on the queenside. However, this is slightly

careless, as now or on the next couple of moves Black could have played ...♜f4!, forcing White to either sacrifice his h3-pawn or exchange a potentially valuable bishop. Therefore the prophylactic **19** ♜h2 would have been prudent, before continuing with the queenside play. **19**...f5 is never really a problem, as it is always answered by **20** exf5 gxf5 **21** bxc5 bxc5 **22** ♜c2 with strong pressure against the f5-pawn. **19**...cxb4 **20** ♜xb4 bxa5 **21** ♜b3 a4 **22** ♜a3 ♜d7?!

This was Black's last chance to play **22**...♜f4!.

23 c5 dxc5 **24** ♜xc5 ♜a5!

Offering the exchange in a bid to

alleviate his problems.

25 ♜e7

25 ♜xf8? would have been far too cooperative. After **25**...♜xf8 the passed a-pawn, to be supported by the now unopposed dark-squared bishop, becomes a real asset.

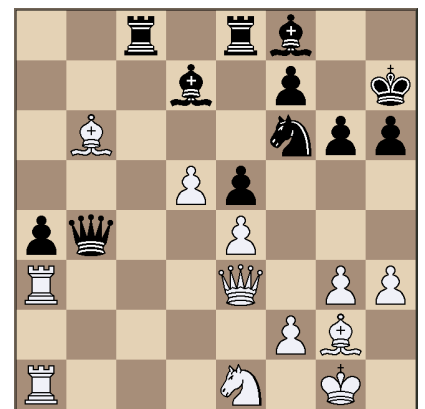
25...♜c7 **26** ♜e3 ♜fc8 **27** ♜ea1 ♜b5 **28** ♜xb5 ♜xb5 **29** ♜f1?!

Black has defended well and by now it was necessary to find the slightly surprising **29** ♜f3! to keep up the pressure. The point is **29**...♜g8 **30** ♜f5! when White's initiative continues.

29...♜d7 **30** ♜f3

Now **30** ♜f3 ♜g8 **31** ♜f5 is answered by **31**...gxf5 **32** ♜xh5 fxe4, when the e4-pawn cannot be recaptured as the bishop is no longer on g2.

30...♜e8 **31** ♜c5 ♜ac8 **32** ♜xa7 ♜f8 **33** ♜b6 ♜b4 **34** ♜e1 ♜f6 **35** ♜g2

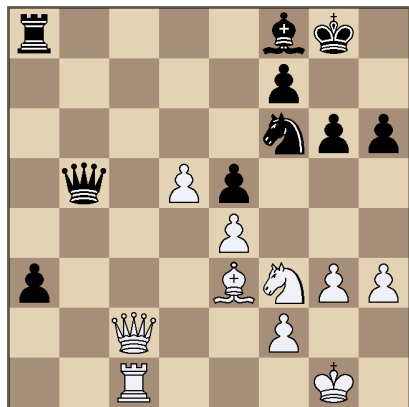


35...♜b5?!

Neil McDonald has outplayed his opponent over the last few moves and here **35**...♜c4! would have increased the pressure on the e4-pawn. After **36** ♜d3 ♜b5 **37** ♜3a2 the surprising **37**...♜xh3! wins a pawn, as after **38** ♜xh3 ♜xe4 the white queen is unable to maintain its defence of the b6-bishop. It's easy for me, annotating on my sofa with an engine running in the background, to spot such tactics or even criticise every move as you see the evaluation shifting a couple of tenths of a pawn. Over the board is a completely different matter, though, especially in a complex position such as this with many options for both sides on every move, and in general I think both players played this game pretty well.

36 ♜a7 ♜d7 **37** ♜f3 ♜g8 **38** ♜e3 ♜c3 **39** ♜xc3 ♜xc3 **40** ♜c1 ♜b2 **41** ♜f1 a3 **42** ♜xb5 ♜xb5 **43** ♜d1 ♜a8 **44** ♜c2 ♜f6 **45** ♜f3?!

45 f3 looks loose, but White is already in trouble and the e4-pawn requires defence in many lines. **45**...a2 **46** ♜a1 ♜b4 **47** ♜f2! ♜a5 **48** ♜d3 ♜c3 **49** ♜xa2 ♜xa2 **50** ♜xc3 ♜a1+ **51** ♜xa1 ♜a1+ **52** ♜g2 ♜d7 leads to an endgame where Black is obviously better, but White has drawing chances.



45...♖b4??

Unfortunate. The simple 45...a2 46 ♖a1 ♖a4 47 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 48 ♘d2 (else e4 falls) 48...♙b4 would have won.

46 ♖c6! ♜b8 47 ♖xf6

White simply wins a piece and worse for Black there are not even any swindling chances with the a-pawn, as once the e5-pawn falls the weakness of f7 decides.

47...♖xe4 48 ♘xe5 ♙g7 49 ♖xf7+ ♜h7 50 ♘d7 1-0

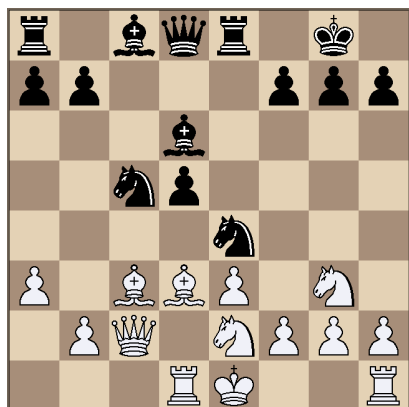
A good fighting game, albeit one unfortunately spoiled by a blunder. This kind of game is typical of team chess and of the 4NCL, and reflects well on both players.

Most of the other round seven matches were dead rubbers, but there was still plenty at stake for several individual players who had decent chances for a title norm. One of Jutes of Kent's Icelandic contingent, Bragi Thorfinnsson, has been in great form this season and now needs only a probable 1/3 for his first GM norm. Here he capitalises on a blunder by Blackthorne Russia's new signing.

B.Thorfinnsson-D.Gormally

Jutes vs. Blackthorne
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘ge2 d5 6 a3 ♙e7 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♘g3 c6 9 ♙d3 ♙d6 10 ♖c2 ♙e8 11 ♙d2 ♘bd7 12 ♘ce2 c5 13 dxc5 ♘xc5 14 ♙c3 ♘fe4 15 ♙d1



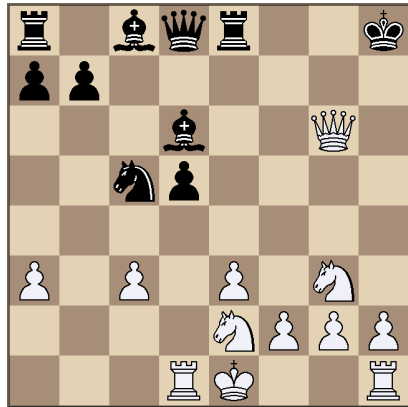
15...♘xc3?

I'm not sure if Danny just missed White's next or thought he had played his c5-knight to e4 instead, but there was no need to play so riskily. Completing development with 15...♙g4 would have been fine, when the position is balanced.

16 ♙xh7+ ♜h8 17 ♖xc3 g6?!

When you overlook something obvious and drop a pawn or seriously compromise your position, sometimes it's best just to take a deep breath, regroup and continue as though nothing has happened. Here 17...b6 18 0-0 ♖f6 19 ♙f5 ♙a6 gives Black decent play for the pawn, as 20 ♖xd5 ♙xg3 21 hxg3 ♙c4! suddenly turns the tables. 18 ♖xd5 is possible too, but not completely clear after 18...♙e6! 19 ♙d4 (19 ♖h5 is answered by 19...♙g4!) 19...♖c7 20 ♙f5 (20 0-0 g6 leads to a much better version of the game for Black) 20...♙b3 21 ♖b1 ♙e5 when Black is very active.

18 ♙xg6 fxg6 19 ♖xg6



The attack is too strong.

19...♙e6 20 ♘h5! ♙f8 21 ♘f6 ♖e7 22 ♖h5+ ♜g7 23 ♘d5 ♖f7 24 ♖e5+ ♜h6 25 ♙d4 ♙f5 1-0

Black resigned, as 26 ♖h4+ is mate in five.

Another player with a chance of a GM norm is Yang-Fan Zhou, who played very strongly to defeat Sam Collins in Guildford 2's defeat of Barbican.

Y.F.Zhou-S.Collins

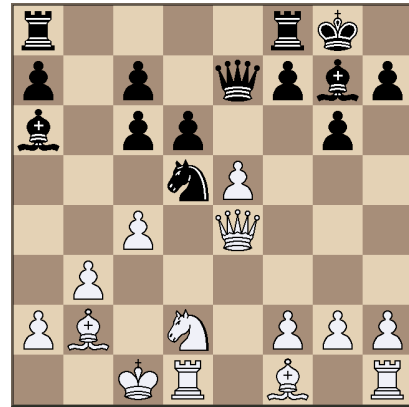
Guildford 2 vs. Barbican
Scotch Game

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 exd4 4 ♘xd4



Yang-Fan Zhao remains on course for a GM norm.

♘f6 5 ♘xc6 bxc6 6 e5 ♖e7 7 ♖e2 ♘d5 8 c4 ♙a6 9 ♘d2 g6 10 b3 ♙g7 11 ♙b2 0-0 12 0-0-0 d6 13 ♖e4



13...f5!?

This looks attractive, but meets with a stunning response. 13...♘b6 was a good alternative. After 14 exd6 ♙xb2+ 15 ♙xb2 ♖xd6 Black's structural weaknesses should be compensated for by his potential queen-side attack and White's backward development.

14 exf6! ♖xe4 15 fxg7!

The real point. White could possibly claim a slight advantage in the endgame after 15 ♘xe4 ♘xf6 16 ♘xf6+ ♙xf6 17 ♙xf6 ♖xf6 18 f3, but the text is much more dynamic.

15...♖g4 16 gxf8♖+ ♖xf8 17 f3!

If White had to take the knight immediately with 17 cxd5, then 17...♙xf1 18 ♖hx1 ♖xg2 crucially gains Black an extra

pawn and weakens the white kingside. This and Yang-Fan's next are highly accurate moves that retain the advantage.

17...♖g5 18 h4! ♜f4

With h2-h4 included, taking on g2 and opening the g-file is now too risky for Black, as he will come under a vicious kingside attack after 18...♜g3 19 cxd5 ♙xf1 20 ♜xf1 ♜xg2 21 ♜d2, with h5 to follow.

19 cxd5 ♙xf1 20 ♜dx1

The smoke has cleared and White has emerged with a material advantage. The game is far from over, though, as the position is open and therefore suits the queen.

20...♜f5?

Probably already the decisive mistake. Black had to be able to contest the e-file with ...♜f7 and ...♜e8, since if a pair of rooks is exchanged, any white attack will be much less strong. The immediate 20...cxd5! was necessary: 21 h5 (or 21 ♜e1 ♜f7) 21...g5 22 ♜e1 ♜f7 followed by ...♜e8 should still be better for White, but in practice all three results are possible.

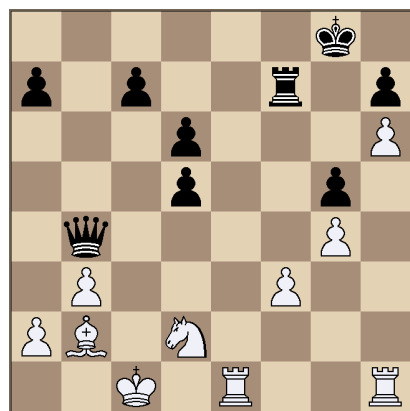
21 ♜e1 cxd5

21...cxd5 22 ♜e2 holds everything together. Black can't create any threats and White will slowly untangle before starting an attack on the king.

22 g4 ♜f7 23 h5 g5 24 h6!

Now the black king is too weak and the threats on the e-file are too much to cope with.

24...♜b4



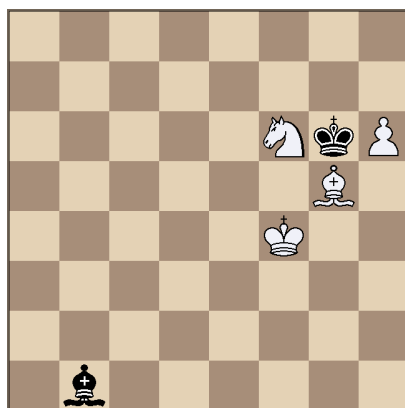
25 ♜h5! d4

After 25...♜f4 26 ♙g7 the threat of ♜e8+ wins another exchange, when White's material advantage will be too great.

26 ♜xg5+ ♜f8 27 ♜e4 ♜e7 28 ♙xd4 ♜xe4 29 ♙g7+ ♜e8 30 fxe4 a5 31 a4 c5 32 ♙b2 ♜f8 33 ♜g7 c4 34 bxc4 ♜xa4 35 ♜xh7 1-0

Sunday's first matches in the Championship Pool generally went to form, with wins for the top teams. Wood Green beat Jutes of Kent 5½-2½, despite Thorfinnsson's second GM scalp of the weekend against Stephen Gordon, while Guildford won by the same score over Cambridge, although in this match Cambridge's Rohan Churm shocked Mark Hebden.

R.Churm-M.Hebden Cambridge vs. Guildford



Can you find the cleanest way to win this endgame?

74 h7 ♙g7 75 ♙h6+! ♜h8 76 ♙f8! ♙xh7 77 ♙g5 1-0

Very nicely done. Of course, Black would much prefer not to have his bishop in the final position.

Aussie GM David Smerdon was one of the Guildford winners.

D.Smerdon-A.McClement Guildford vs. Cambridge c3 Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5 4 ♘f3 d6 5 d4 cxd4 6 cxd4 e6 7 ♙c4 ♘c6 8 ♜e2 ♙e7 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♘xc3 11 bxc3 dxe5 12 dxe5 ♜a5 13 ♜b1 ♘d8 14 ♜e4 ♜xc3

Black doesn't have much choice other than grabbing this pawn, as it's hard for him to develop his queenside.

15 ♙e3

This has all been played before, but 15 ♜b3 ♜a5 16 ♙g5 was the previous continuation.

15...♘a5?

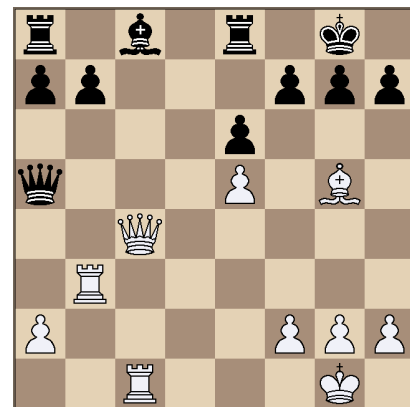
15...♘d4! is a small tactic that enables Black to exchange a pair of minor pieces – often a good idea for the defender. 16 ♜fc1 (16 ♘g5 ♜c2! 17 ♙d3 ♜xd3! more than defends) 16...♘xf3+ 17 gxf3 ♜a5 still leaves White with certain Benko Gambit-style compensation on the queenside, but with the knights off the board Black won't get mated.

16 ♜fc1 ♜a3 17 ♘g5! ♙xg5 18 ♙xg5 ♘xc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜e8?!

Black has managed to exchange some pieces, but has had to give up his dark-squared bishop, a key defensive piece. It's generally accepted that the presence of opposite-coloured bishops is beneficial for the attacker, and this game does nothing to challenge that notion. The last chance was

19...b5!, attempting at least to develop some pieces or deflect the white queen from the kingside: 20 ♜c7 (20 ♜g4 ♘d5 21 ♙f6 ♜f8 defends) 20...♜e8 21 ♜b3 ♜f8 still gives White excellent compensation and he can win the pawn back immediately with 22 ♜c6, but the game is far from over.

20 ♜b3 ♜a5



21 ♙f6! gxf6

Now it's mate in seven, but there was no defence to the coming ♜g4 in any case.

22 ♜g4+ ♜f8

Or 22...♜h8 23 ♜g3 which nails the black king along the g-file.

23 exf6 ♘d8 24 ♜g7+ ♜e8 25 ♜g8+ ♜d7 26 ♘d3+ ♜d5 27 ♜xf7+ ♜d6 28 ♜c7 mate 1-0

The remaining two matches saw Barbican 1 defeat their second team, while White Rose were held to a draw by a late Cheddleton rally. Guildford remain a point ahead of Wood Green at the top of the table, and it is likely that the title will be decided in the final round when the two teams meet. Barbican are just a further point adrift, but will have to defeat Wood Green to have any chance.

The Relegation Pool table makes interesting reading. No team is yet safe and some of the highest-rated teams, Guildford 2, Blackthorne Russia and e2e4, currently occupy three of the four relegation places. Blackthorne and Guildford 2 fielded sides with average ratings of 2392 and 2369 respectively on the Sunday. Whilst, happily for me, Blackthorne returned to winning ways against e2e4, Guildford surprisingly went down to Warwickshire.

Blackthorne and Guildford will meet in round 9 in a real relegation four-pointer, as they say in football, with the losers unlikely to survive. With it likely that as many as seven, or perhaps even eight points will be required to stay up, it should be the most tense relegation battle for several years. Combined with the traditional strengthening of the top teams in the Championship Pool, it promises to be an exciting final weekend on 4-6 May back at Hinckley Island.