



# Big Two Begin with a Bang

Simon Ansell reports from the first 4NCL weekend

Despite missing several of their big-hitters due to a clash with the European Team Championship, both 2012/13 4NCL Champions Guildford and rivals Wood Green eased to the top of their respective pools with convincing victories in the opening rounds of the new 4NCL season at Hinckley Island in November.

Grantham Sharks I (a merger of Slough Sharks, reprieved from relegation due to the folding of Jutes of Kent, and newly promoted Pandora's Box) fought hard against Guildford, but were ultimately outclassed. Matthew Sadler defeated Ameet Ghasi on board one.

**M.Sadler-A.Ghasi**

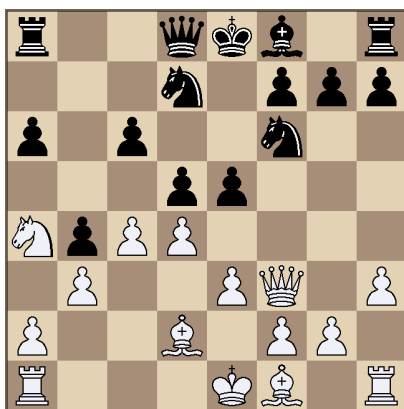
Guildford vs. Grantham Sharks  
*Chebanenko Slav*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 e3 a6 5



Matthew Sadler triumphed in a classy top board battle.

♙f3 b5 6 b3 ♙g4 7 ♙d2 ♘bd7 8 h3  
♙xf3 9 ♗xf3 b4 10 ♘a4 e5



Black has ceded the two bishops, but the point of his play is this pawn break. He must strike before White's slightly awkward pieces are able to coordinate. This has all been played before.

11 ♗d1

Not the most obvious move perhaps, but the white queen will likely have to retreat at some point, so it makes sense to do so immediately while awaiting developments in the centre.

11...exd4 12 exd4 ♘e4 13 g3!?

Clearly g2 is a desirable post for the bishop, but this might be a little slow. 13 ♙d3 involves a pawn sacrifice, but White seems to be very active after 13...♗f6 14 0-0 ♗xd4 15 ♙f4!, even if the queens happen to come off.

13...♗f6 14 ♙e3 ♗e6!

Threatening ...♘g3, so the white queen returns.

15 ♗f3 ♙d6 16 ♙g2 0-0 17 0-0 f5 18 cxd5 cxd5 19 ♗ac1 ♗ac8 20 ♗fe1

Black looks more than comfortable to me here, but Ghasi begins to go astray.

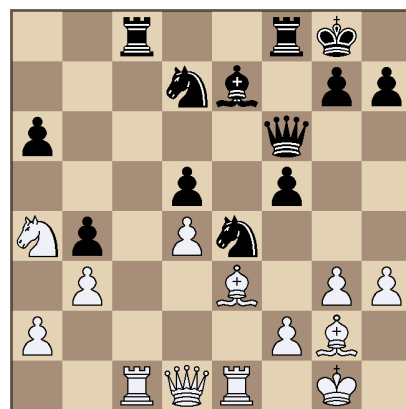
20...♙e7?!

Presumably preparing 20...g5, which immediately

was impossible due to 21 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 22 ♙xg5, but the bishop is already well-placed on d6. Perhaps 20...♗f6 is less compromising, removing the queen from the e-file while pressurising d4 and lending extra support to the ...f4 break.

21 ♗d1 ♗f6

The queen moves anyway, and it seems like 20...♙e7 was a wasted tempo.



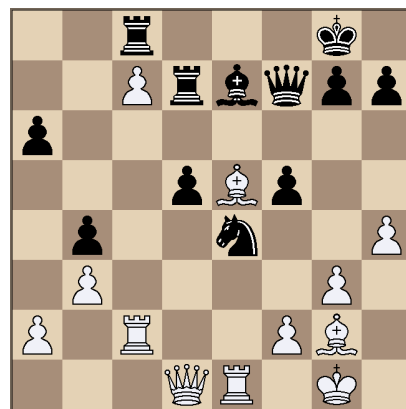
22 ♘c5! ♘dxc5 23 dxc5

Now White's previously dormant bishop finds an excellent post on d4. My engine still claims Black is OK here, but I find it hard to believe and the evaluation must be based on some obscure tactical resource.

3...♗fd8 24 ♙d4 ♗f7 25 c6 ♙g5 26 ♗c2 ♗d6 27 c7 ♗d7

Black has to use a huge amount of resources dealing with the c-pawn.

28 h4 ♙e7 29 ♙e5



29...♗e6?

29...♙f6 was the last chance to elimi-

nate the revitalised bishop and subsequently the c7-pawn, but White still retains an advantage after 30 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 31 ♜d4! ♜dxc7 32 ♜xc7 ♜xc7 33 ♜xb4.

**30 ♜f4 ♜d6 31 ♜c6!**

This pin on the queen is the problem with exchanging the bishops this way. Black is completely tied up and unable to cope with the pressure.

**31...♜cxc7 32 ♜xa6 h6**

What else? There are no moves.

**33 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 34 f3 ♜c3 35 fxe4 fxe4 36 ♜xe4 ♜f6 37 ♜xd5+ ♜h8 38 ♜e8+ 1-0**

Nicely played by Matthew Sadler, after not the best of openings. There were only a couple of small inaccuracies from his opponent and they were punished most efficiently.

Guildford's Canadian Grandmaster Eric Hansen won an entertaining encounter against Richard Pert in Sunday's potentially tricky match against Wood Green's second team, which finished in a 6-2 victory for the champions.

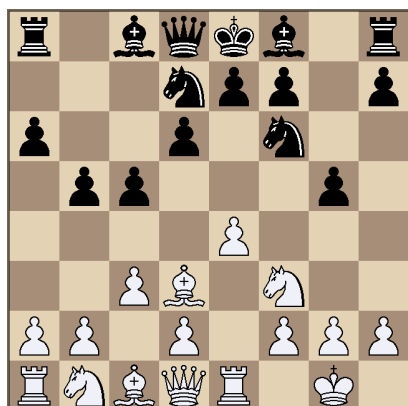
### E.Hansen-R.Pert

Guildford vs. Wood Green II  
*Sicilian, Moscow Variation*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 ♜b5+ ♜d7 4 0-0 a6 5 ♜d3!?**

This strange-looking retreat has been played by Peter Svidler recently. Similar to the line 1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 d6 3 c3 ♜f6 4 ♜d3, the bishop will find a home on c2. Here though, the black knight is already committed to d7; it would rather be on c6 or possibly even b8, so not to obstruct the c8-bishop. 3...♜d7 is hardly refuted by this idea, but it's certainly an interesting way of playing for White.

**5...♜g6 6 ♜e1 b5 7 c3 g5?!**



Richard Pert borrows an idea from similar variations, but I'm not sure it's so effective with the knight on d7, as the c8-bishop doesn't have immediate direct access to the kingside.

**8 ♜c2**

It's usually possible to take such pawns

and here 8 ♜xg5 ♜g8 9 ♜f3 c4 (9...♜e5 10 ♜xe5 dxe5 11 ♜f1 doesn't seem like enough compensation to me, but I'm no attacking genius) 10 ♜f1 ♜c5 11 d4 cxd3 (11...♜cxe4 12 ♜bd2 ♜b7 13 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 14 ♜c2 will force the knight away, when White's structure is the better) 12 ♜xd3 is perfectly playable for White, but Black will claim he has what he wants for the pawn. Hansen prefers to take the centre.

**8...g4 9 ♜h4 c4 10 a4 ♜b7 11 axb5 axb5 12 ♜xa8 ♜xa8**

I'm never sure myself which way to recapture in these situations, but here taking with the queen somehow feels more natural.

**13 d4 e6**

Black's problem is that the b5-pawn is very weak after 13...cxd3 14 ♜xd3, so he has to let White have his centre.

**14 g3**

Giving the estranged knight a route back in to the game via g2.

**14...♜e7**

I wonder if 14...♜g7, to get castled was better, but Pert may have been worried that the d6-pawn would become weak.

**15 ♜h6!**

15 e5 dxe5 16 dxe5 ♜d5 17 ♜xg4 ♜xh4 18 ♜xh4 ♜xh4 19 gxh4 wins a pawn, but it's not much of a pawn and comes at the cost of activating Black's pieces.

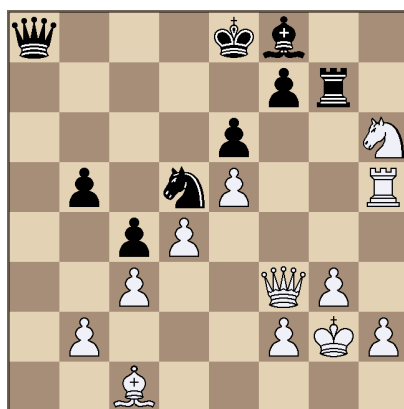
**15...♜g8 16 ♜d2 d5 17 e5 ♜e4 18 ♜g2 ♜b6 19 ♜e3 ♜c6 20 ♜xg4**

White wins a pawn anyway and in much better circumstances than 15 e5 would have done.

**20...♜a4 21 ♜xe4 dxe4 22 ♜c1**

Taking another pawn immediately with 22 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 23 ♜xe4 was possible, as 23...♜xb2 simply fails to 24 ♜b1, but Hansen prefers to be solid and take it on the next move.

**22...♜b6 23 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 24 ♜xe4 ♜a8 25 ♜f3 h5 26 ♜h6 ♜g7 27 ♜g2 ♜f8 28 ♜h4 ♜d5 29 ♜xh5**



Black is now three (!) pawns down, but matters are still complicated.

**29...♜a1**

The only chance.

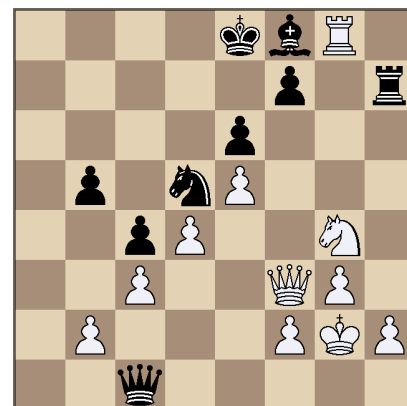
**30 ♜g5?!**

30 ♜g5! ♜xb2 31 ♜g4! seems to end the game immediately, as taking on c3 with either piece loses to 32 ♜f6+.

**30...♜h7 31 ♜g8**

31 ♜g4! was more simple. The key to the position is the black knight. Once removed from its post, the white queen gains access to the black king: 31...♜xc1 32 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 33 ♜a8+! ♜e7 (33...♜d7 34 ♜b7+ ♜d8 35 ♜b8+ ♜d7 36 ♜xb5+ ♜d8 37 exf6 is too strong an attack) 34 exf6+ ♜xf6 35 h4 ♜d6 36 ♜d8+ ♜e7 37 ♜b8! and wins. Black is so tied up, however, that even the text is sufficient.

**31...♜xc1 32 ♜g4**



**32...♜e7**

32...♜h6, trying to prevent ♜f6+ at all costs, was probably best, but after 33 ♜e4! ♜d2 34 ♜f6+ (this must be played now, else Black has ...♜d3) 34...♜xf6 35 exf6 the white queen will gain access to the queenside in any case, via e5, on the next move. Alternatively, 32...♜a1 33 ♜f6+ ♜xf6 34 exf6 ♜a6 35 h4 and neither Black's rook nor bishop will ever enter the game.

**33 ♜f6 ♜h6 34 h4 ♜g7 35 ♜xd5+ exd5 36 ♜f6+!**

Liquidating to a trivial rook endgame.

**36...♜xf6 37 exf6+ ♜xf6 38 ♜xf8 b4 39 ♜e8 b3 40 ♜f3 ♜g6 41 ♜e5 f6 42 ♜xd5 ♜a7 43 ♜c5 ♜a2 44 ♜xc4 ♜xb2 45 ♜b4 ♜b1 46 ♜b5 b2 47 ♜g4 f5+ 48 ♜f4 ♜h5 49 f3 ♜g6 50 ♜b6+ 1-0**

I enjoyed this game, especially the controlled manner in which Hansen dealt with Pert's impudent ...g5 push in the opening.

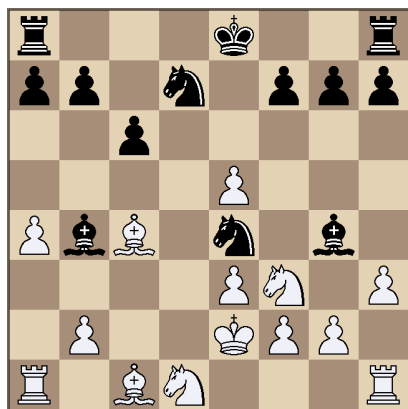
Cheddleton will likely be Guildford's nearest challengers in Pool A, especially after Blackthorne Russia began at our usual slow pace, being convincingly beaten by Barbican II, not helped by my donation of a piece to Simon Knott, albeit in an already difficult position. Cheddleton have retained the core of their squad whilst picking up a couple of Jutes players, most notably Simon Williams who scored two wins. Keith Arkell regularly complains that, of his games, only his losses are ever published, so in my own small way I'll attempt to redress the balance with the following, from Cheddleton's 7-1 thrashing of Oxford.

## K.Arkell-K.Smallbone Cheddleton vs. Oxford *Slav Defence*

1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 c6 3 d4 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 dxc4  
5 a4 ♙g4 6 e3 e5 7 dxe5

7 ♙xc4 is more normal, but as usual Keith prefers to play without the queens.

7... ♜xd1+ 8 ♜xd1 ♜e4 9 ♙xc4 ♙b4+  
10 ♙e2 ♜d7 11 h3



11... ♙xf3+?

The immediate 11... ♙xe5! was better: 12 ♙xf7+ ♜xf7 13 hxg4 0-0-0 should be fine for Black, whose activity should at least adequately compensate for the pawn.

12 gxf3 ♙xe5 13 ♙xf7+ ♙xf7 14 fxe4

Black's problem with taking on f3 first on move 11 is that White's central pawns are now extremely mobile, as Keith demonstrates.

14... ♜ad8 15 ♜c3 ♜d3 16 f4 ♜c5 17 e5 ♙b3 18 ♜b1 ♙e6

Remarkably, despite Black's superficial activity and the fact that White's bishop and both his rooks are yet to join the game, the central pawn mass and the squares they control are the only relevant features of the position. Who needs pieces?

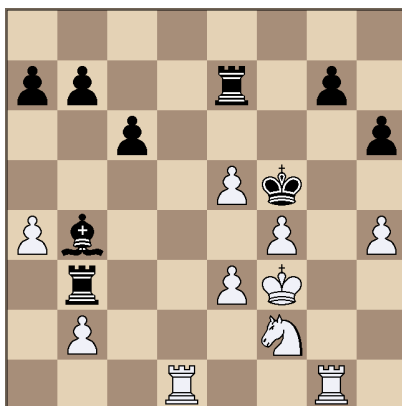
19 ♜e4 h6 20 h4 ♙f5?!



Keith Arkell – probably looking happy because he's reached an endgame.

It's hard to offer Black good advice here, but forcing the white king to its best square can hardly help.

21 ♙f3 ♜d3 22 ♜f2 ♜xc1 23 ♜bxc1  
♜b3 24 ♜cd1 ♙e8 25 ♜hg1 ♙e7



26 h5!

Preparing ♜g6 followed by a short knight manoeuvre to give mate (personally, I would prefer to go via h1), so the black king retreats, only to be soon forced back to meet his fate.

26... ♙e6 27 ♜d3 ♙f7 28 f5 c5 29 e6+  
♙f6 30 ♜g6+ ♙xf5 31 e4# 1-0

It's not often you get to give checkmate with a pawn in the centre of the board.

Wood Green's two victories came against Kings Head who, on their first week-end showing, will find it tough to stay in Division One and a Cambridge side that also had a miserable weekend, missing several of their top players. Dan Bisby was the exception for Cambridge, stepping up to board one to defeat Yang-Fan Zhou on Saturday and then hold Jonathan Rowson with black.

## D.Bisby-Y.F.Zhou Cambridge vs. Guildford II *Sicilian Taimanov*

1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4  
♜c6 5 ♜c3 ♜c7 6 ♙e3 a6 7 ♙e2 ♜f6 8 a3



Avoiding the heavy theoretical lines after 8 0-0 ♙b4.

8... ♙e7 9 f4 d6 10 g4 ♜d7?!

This seems slightly accommodating to me, but is certainly a way of keeping the position complicated. 10... ♜xd4 11 ♜xd4 e5 is the usual recipe.

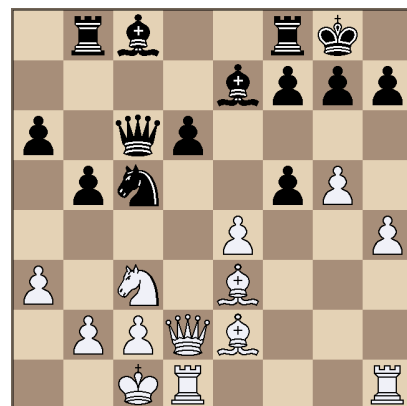
11 g5 b5 12 ♜xc6 ♜xc6 13 ♜d2 0-0  
14 0-0-0 ♜c5 15 h4

Direct, but 15 ♜hf1!, indirectly defending the e4-pawn and lending extra support to f4-f5, might have been even stronger.

15... ♜b8

15... ♙xe4 16 ♙xe4 ♜xe4 was possible, but risky: 17 ♜hf1 ♜f5 leaves the queen with few squares, but it's not clear how White exploits this.

16 f5 exf5



17 h5

Once again this was possibly too direct. 17 exf5 ♙xf5 18 ♜hf1 ♙e6 19 ♙f3 followed by ♜d5 is very nice for White.

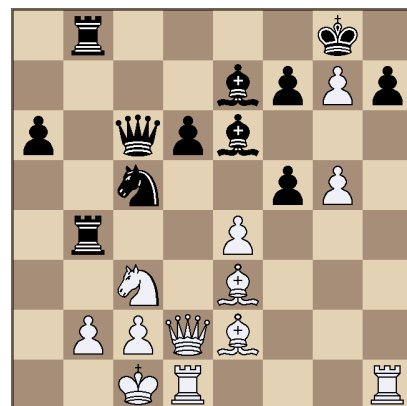
17... ♙b4?!

17... ♙xe4! 18 ♜d5 was presumably the idea, but Black survives after 18... ♙d8 19 ♜d4 ♜c5! (19... ♜g3 20 ♙f3 ♜c4 21 ♜a7 is ridiculously complicated, and I leave it as an exercise for the reader to work out) 20 ♜d3 ♜c4! 21 ♜xc4 bxc4 22 ♙xc4 ♜xg5 23 ♜hg1 when White still has an attack of sorts, but whether it's worth two pawns with the queens off the board is not clear.

18 axb4 ♜xb4 19 h6 ♙e6?

19...g6! 20 ♙xc5 (20 ♜d5?? ♙b3+ wins the white queen) 20... ♜xc5 21 ♜d5 ♜xe4 22 ♙f3 ♙e5 23 ♙xe7+ ♜xe7 24 ♜xd6 ♜xd6 25 ♜xd6 leaves Black with all the chances.

20 hxg7 ♜fb8







Dan Bisby had an excellent weekend at the 4NCL.

## 21 ♖b5!

White gains a vital tempo for the queen transfer to the h-file. By way of contrast, 21 ♖f3 ♗xb2 22 ♗h2 ♖b3+ is only a draw after 23 ♖xb2 ♖a5+ followed by perpetual.

**21...♖d3+ 22 ♖xd3 fxe4 23 ♖xh7!**

Obvious, but deserving of an exclamation mark in any case.

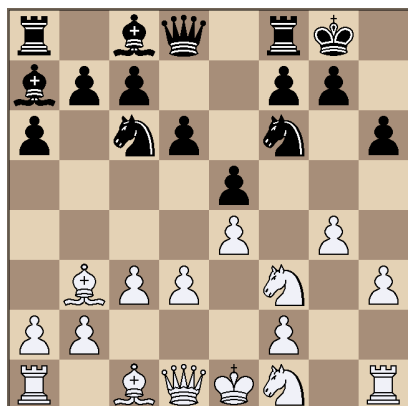
**23...♖f5 24 ♗h2 f6 25 ♖h8+ ♔f7 26 ♗xb8 ♗xb8 27 ♗h8 ♖g8 28 ♖e2 ♗c8 29 ♖h1 d5 30 ♖xd5 ♖d6 31 ♖xf6 1-0**

Oldham's 3Cs make a welcome return to Division One this season. Despite losing both matches in a tough first weekend, there were several individual highlights and their combination of experience and youth should be enough to stay in the division.

## A.Ashton-G.Flear

Oldham 3Cs vs. Guildford II  
*Giucco Piano*

**1 e4 e5 2 ♖f3 ♖c6 3 ♖c4 ♖c5 4 d3 ♖f6 5 c3 a6 6 ♖b3 ♖a7 7 h3 d6 8 ♖bd2 0-0 9 ♖f1 h6 10 g4!?**



An interesting if standard way of starting a kingside attack. White can play similarly in the Worrell variation (the 'slow' lines with an early ♗e2 and usually d2-d3) of the Spanish Game, and I have done so myself on several occasions, winning some nice games,

but also losing a couple. The problem is that if the attack doesn't succeed, White's king can become exposed in the centre of the board.

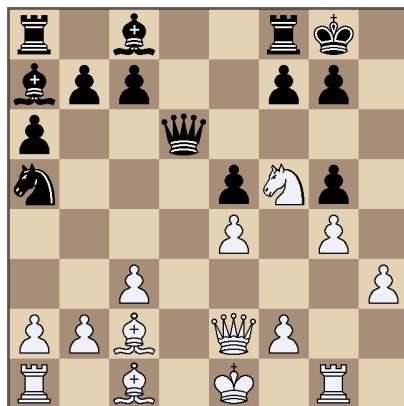
**10...♖h7**

10...d5, immediately challenging the centre, is the standard response and one that follows the rule that "an attack on the flank should be met with activity in the centre". White continues with 11 ♗e2, keeping the queens on the board and trying to keep the centre closed. The text attempts to stop g4-g5 at all costs, but has its drawbacks, namely easing the pressure on the white centre.

**11 ♖g1 ♖a5 12 ♖c2 d5 13 ♗e2 dxe4 14 dxe4 ♗d6?**

The queen will be hit here by a future ♖f5 and there was no need to defend the e5-pawn in any case. Completing development was better. After 14...♖e6 15 ♖xe5 ♗e8 Black's play along the e-file should be sufficient compensation for the pawn, while 15 ♖e3 ♖g5 16 ♖xg5 hxg5 is much better for Black than the game continuation.

**15 ♖e3 ♖g5 16 ♖xg5 hxg5 17 ♖f5**



**17...♗d8**

The g5-pawn needs defence and 17...♖xf5 18 gxh5 is just horrible for Black, as after 18...f6 19 h4 he will very likely get mated. The consequences of White's bishop returning to the a2-g8 diagonal do not bear thinking about.

**18 h4! gxh4 19 g5**

The attack is already too strong. White's ideas include g5-g6, ♗h5 and also b2-b4 followed by ♖b3, when the light-squared bishop will join in.

**19...♗e8 20 ♗h5 ♖xf5 21 exf5 ♗d5 22 f6 e4 23 fxg7 f5 24 g6 1-0**

It's unusual to see a grandmaster lose in such fashion, but credit for such a well-played game is due to Adam Ashton.

Barbican, as always, will be tough and are sure to push Wood Green hard for top spot in Pool B. Their narrow victory over White Rose will no doubt be important for the final standings at the end of the season. Lorin D'Costa's game in this match was nothing short of a demolition of his opponent's king position.

## L.D'Costa-M.Gantner

Barbican vs. White Rose  
*English Opening*

**1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♖f6 3 ♖g2 ♖c6 4 ♖c3 ♖b4 5 ♖d5 ♖c5 6 e3 0-0 7 ♖e2 ♗e8 8 0-0 a5?**

A surprisingly serious inaccuracy. 8...d6 is usual, when if White continues as in the game with 9 f4, Black can answer 9...♖xd5 10 cxd5 ♖e7 when he will be quite happy.

**9 f4! exf4**

Now 9...♖xd5 10 cxd5 ♖b4 is impossible due to 11 fxe5 ♖d3 12 ♗c2, winning, so Black must cede the centre. 9...d6 just allows 10 fxe5 dxe5 11 ♖xf6+ gxh6 12 ♖c3, ruining the black pawn structure.

**10 ♖exf4 ♖xd5 11 cxd5 ♖b4**

Now the knight gets kicked offside, but 11...♖e7 12 d4 ♖b6 13 d6! cxd6 14 ♖d5 was even worse: f7 is horribly weak and Black will never develop his queenside.

**12 a3 ♖a6 13 b3 ♖f8 14 ♖b2 d6 15 ♗c2 ♖d7 16 ♖e4 h6**

16...g6 was no better. There are various ways to break through the defences here, the most brutal being 17 ♖e6! fxe6 18 ♖xg6! e5 19 ♖xh7+ ♖h8 20 ♗g6 ♖g7 21 ♗f7 with mate to follow.

**17 ♖h7+ ♖h8 18 ♖h5 ♗e7**



**19 ♗f6! ♖g4 20 ♗xh6 f6 21 ♗g6**

Simon Williams often says you need a minimum of three pieces in the attack to give checkmate. Here White has five.

**21...♖f3 22 ♖g8+ gxh6 23 ♖xf6+ 1-0**

The season continues in the new year with matches in all of January, February and March. I usually sign off with "See you there!" or something similar, but due to prior commitments this may not be the case next time, so I'll instead wish you all a happy holiday season and ask only that plenty more entertaining chess is played.

*Ed. – While Simon is welcoming a new addition to his family, Divisions One and Two of the 4NCL return to Hinckley, January 11-12. Keep an eye on [www.4ncl.co.uk](http://www.4ncl.co.uk) for all the latest news and live games.*