

## Report on Divisions 3 and 4 Weekend 1 2016 by Steve Burke

The return to Wokefield Park for the lower Southern Divisions was celebrated by an avalanche of fighting chess and decisive results. Many of the matches were very closely fought but there were few big upsets, though this provided plenty of options for my "Star Game".



I've listed below the teams in order of rating in the first round. Of course these will vary somewhat over the event, but this does give an initial view of the relative strength of all the teams.

It's interesting to note that the average rating of Division 3 South Group A was 2052, almost 50 points higher than Group B. While the average of the top eight teams in the North was 2066 (and for all the teams there it was 1944). There were six teams over 1900 in Division 4, where the overall rating average was 1771.

Mostly things went as expected, but in Division 3Sa Brown Jack and Phoenix will be disappointed with their opening weekend, while Wessex had a good start to their campaign.

Also in 3Sb things went pretty much as expected after Anglian Avengers beat their closest rivals from Leeds in Round 1. Though the biggest surprise in Division 3S was probably Sussex Martlets win against Hackney (170 points above them).

Another big upset was Kent Kestrels win over Wood Green 2 (rated over 200 points higher) in Division 4. And they nearly repeated the surprise, losing narrowly to West is Best 2 on the Sunday.

It'll be interesting to see how things develop in the New Year.

### Division 3 South

#### Group A team ratings

Poisoned Pawns 1	2119
Brown Jack 1	2112
MK Phoenix 1	2091
Wood Green MM 1	2069
Surbiton	2041
Wessex	2023
Rhyfelwyr Essyllwg	2021
The Rookies	1939

#### Group B team ratings

Anglian Avengers 2	2114
Leeds University Old Boys	2082
Shropshire 1	2048
Fermented Sharks	2044
Cambridge University 2	2003
Iceni 1	1983
Hackney	1945
Sussex Martlets 2	1813

### **Division 3 North**

Gonzaga	2185
Manchester Manticores 1	2172
Manx Liberty	2100
Cheddleton 2	2023
Ashfield Breadsall 1	2021
Manchester Manticores 2	2012
Hounds and Bears	2009
3Cs 2	2006
Spirit of Atticus B	1927
Holmes Chapel	1923
Manchester Manticores 3	1921
Ashfield Breadsall 2	1917
Bradford DCA Knights B	1894
Jorvik	1883
Manchester Manticores 4	1827
Enniscorthy	1798
Bradford DCA Knights C	1757
3Cs 3	1623

### **Division 4 South**

Oxford 2	2080
Barnet Knights 1	2060
CSC Rhinos (2)	1993
The Full Ponty	1985
Throw in the Tal 1	1968
West is Best 2	1932
MK Phoenix 2	1868
Brown Jack 2	1855
Poisoned Pawns 2	1852
Oxford 3	1818
Shropshire 2	1806
Cambridge University 3	1790
Wood Green MM 2	1789
Anglian Avengers 3	1771
The Pitstop	1767
Sandhurst Cadets	1761
Iceni 2	1695
Throw in the Tal 2	1664
Wood Green MM 3	1642
Barnet Knights 2	1602
Kent Kestrels	1588
D&D Utd	1573
Sussex Martlets 3	1572
CSC Hippos (3)	1556
Barnet Knights 3	1311

## Star Game

As mentioned above, there were masses of won games and many had exciting climaxes, making it difficult to decide which to present here. However, this was the first one that really caught my eye.

[Download the below game in PGN](#)

**Sygnowski, Tomasz (2104) - Habershon, Paul F (2049) [C02]  
4NCL 3 South pool A Reading, ENG (2.22), 27.11.2016  
[Burke, Steven J]**

**1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.Nf3!?**



White gets a lot of compensation for his pawn, making this a dangerous practical weapon that was used quite often with success by Julian Hodgson and Kevin Spraggett in the past. Even Nigel Short won a game with it in 1991.

**4...cxd4 5.Bd3 Nc6 6.0-0 Nge7 7.Re1 Ng6**



**8.Nbd2** [8.a3 Bd7 9.b4 Qc7 10.Qe2 Be7 11.b5 Na5 12.Bg5 Nc4 13.Bxe7 Kxe7 14.g3 Bxb5 15.h4 Rhc8 16.Nbd2? After this white seems committed to throwing in the kitchen sink! (16.Nxd4~/=) 16...Nxd2 17.Qxd2 Bxd3 18.cxd3 Qc3 19.Qg5+ Kf8 20.h5 h6 21.Qg4 Ne7 22.Nxd4 Nc6 23.Nb5 Qxd3 24.Nd6 Rc7 25.Rad1 Qa6 White is objectively just two pawns down, so 26.Rxd5!? Rd8?-/+ (Black could take the rook, 26...exd5 27.Nf5 g6 28.hxg6 fxg6 29.Nxh6 Qd3-+) 27.Rdd1 As in our game, Nigel's opponent

eventually missed a tactic, 27...Nxe5?? (27...Rcd7-+) 28.Nf5 1-0 (28) Short,N (2660)-Bareev,E (2680) Tilburg 1991. The finale could be 28...Rxd1 29.Qxg7+ Ke8 30.Qh8+ Kd7 31.Rxd1+ Nd3 32.Qd4+ Ke8 33.Rxd3+-]

**8...Be7?! This allows white to regain his pawn without trading off his white squared bishop.** 8...Qc7 9.Bxg6 (9.Qe2?? Nf4 10.Qf1 Nxd3 11.cxd3 Be7-/+ ) 9...hxg6 10.Nb3 Bb4 11.Bd2 Be7 12.Nbxd4 Nxd4 13.Nxd4 Qb6; 8...Nb4 9.Nb3 Nxd3 10.cxd3 Be7=

**9.Nf1?** White continues to sacrifice the pawn, though now black should be able to hold it and defend successfully. 9.Nb3 is at least equal as 9...Nb4 can be met by 10.Bf1 Bd7 11.Nbxd4

**9...0-0 10.Ng3!?** It's too late to equalise by taking the pawn back, 10.Bxg6 hxg6 11.Nxd4=/+

**10...Bd7-/+** There's nothing wrong with black's move but, as a French Defence player, this looks like the time to play 10...f6!? 11.exf6 Bxf6 12.Bxg6 (12.Nh5 e5 13.Nxf6+ gxf6-/+ ) 12...hxg6 13.Qd3 Qe8-/+ and black keeps the pawn and has a big pawn centre in exchange for a weakened kingside.

**11.Nh5 Rc8 12.a3**



**12...Qe8=/+** Black plays solidly, but here can get in the move 12...b5!? due to the common tactic 13.Bxb5?? Ncxe5 14.Nxd4 Bxb5 15.Nxb5 Bc5-/+; White's best option against 12...b5!? (according to Komodo) is the "non-human" 13.Qd2! though black is preferred after 13...Qe8! =/+ with a similar advantage to the game.

**13.b4 a6 14.Bb2 Na7? =** This gives back the pawn to exchange some pieces. Black can keep the pawn and put pressure on the white centre with 14...Bd8! 15.Rc1 (15.Nxd4?! Ncxe5 16.f4 Nxd3 17.cxd3 Bb6-/+ ) 15...Bc7=/+

**15.Nxd4**



**15...Nb5?!** It looks like black should fight against white's thematic f-pawn advance with 15...Bg5 and if white renews the threat with 16.Rf1 he can redevelop the bishop with 16...Bd8 17.f4 Bb6 when white's e-pawn is no longer backed up by the rook.

**16.f4 Nxd4 17.Bxd4 Bb5 18.f5 Bxd3 19.Qxd3 exf5**



**20.Qxf5=** White has the attractive looking 20.Nf6+!? Bxf6 (20...gxf6?? 21.exf6) 21.exf6 Qd7 22.Rf1 Rfe8 23.Rxf5 but black seems to be doing okay after 23...Re2! 24.Qxe2 Qxf5 25.fxg7 Nf4 26.Qf3 Qe4=

**20...Qc6 21.c3 Qe6=** Offering an exchange of queens that white declines at the expense of a retreat.

**22.Qf3 Nh4 23.Qf2**



**23...Qg4?!** This isn't fatal, but does give white some initiative again. Rather than chase the white knight to where it wants to be anyway, black could activate his bishop and prevent this with 23...Bg5 24.Rf1 (24.Nf4 Bxf4 25.Qxf4 Nf5=) 24...Ng6=

**24.Nf4 Qd7 25.Rad1 Ng6 26.Nd3 Rc6 27.Qe2 Re8 28.Qh5**



**28...Nh4?** White's probing has induced this more serious error. Black should fight for the c5 square with 28...b6 and follow up with defensive ideas like 29.-- Bd8 30.-- Bc7 31.-- Nf8

**29.e6!** White spots the opportunity to break through, now that the knight is not on g6 defending the king. I guess that black was hoping for 29.-- Qf5 30.Qe2 Rg6=; Or possibly 29.-- g6 30.Qe2 Nf5=

**29...Rxe6 30.Rxe6?** This works out well, but should have been fine for black. Instead, after 30.Ne5! g6 is forced. (30...Qc8?? 31.Qxf7+ Kh8 32.Nd7! Rg6 33.Rxe7+-) Now 31.Nxd7 gxh5 32.Rf1+/- is a nice ending for white, though black may still hold.

**30...fxe6??**



This seems a strange choice. Even if the game finale didn't work, this gives white a great square on e5 and shuts off the black pieces' activity. I guess there may well have been time pressure, but I wonder what black was worried about after 30...Qxe6. Perhaps he was concerned about missing some tactic after 31.Nf4 (31.Re1 Qd7! 32.Rf1 Rf8=) 31...Qf5 32.Qxf5 Nxf5 33.Nxd5=

**31.Ne5! Qc8** Maybe black thought he could defend with 31...g6 which loses to 32.Qxh4 Bxh4 33.Nxd7+- or perhaps he just didn't see the mating attack.

**32.Qf7+ Kh8 33.Ng6+!**



and whichever way black captures the knight, he is mated next move. **1-0**

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Next 4NCL Division 3 and 4 Weekend, 14-15 January 2017