

Report 2 on Divisions 3 and 4 Weekend 2, 2017 by Steve Burke

In Division 3Sa Wood Green sits proudly on the top of the table with a full eight points. But Wessex had another good weekend, taking second spot after beating the Poisoned Pawns to leave both teams on six points. Brown Jack will again be disappointed with their weekend, while the rest of the teams sit about where expected. The closeness of the contests is shown by the fact that no team has yet scored more than 4 points in a match.

A quirk of the draw in Division 3Sb meant that in both rounds the four top-ranked teams were matched up against the bottom four. There were no surprise results and so Fermented Sharks and Anglian Avengers 2 remain on 100% with Leeds UOB and Shropshire close behind. I expect there will be some infighting amongst these in the next weekend.



In the North, Manchester Manticores 1 continued serenely to eight points by beating both the Ashfield-Breadsall teams 5-1. The big contest of the weekend was the matchup between Gonzaga and Manx Liberty, which the Manxmen won by the narrowest margin to claim second spot from Cheddleton 2, both on seven points. It's shaping up to be an interesting fight for the top places as the North moves into Swiss System mode and the top teams will be facing off regularly.

Finally, to Division 4S where things are just starting to heat up. Five of the top six ranked teams are at the top, with four of them on 8 points. So Round 5 should be worth watching!

Star Game

What a difference a GM makes!

The only Grandmaster to make an appearance in the North this weekend was the Polish player, Piotr Bobras. This was in the top board game in the big match in the North mentioned above and he gave a masterclass on how to dismantle a slightly misplayed Closed Sicilian by his strong opponent.

This game is much shorter than most of my Star Games, but I was impressed not only by the clinical despatch of black's opponent with a nice finish, but also by the surprisingly crushing position black got after 14...Ng4!

[Download the below game in PGN](#)

Li, Henry (2247) - Bobras, Piotr (2517) [B23]
4NCL Division 3 North Bolton, ENG (3.11), 14.01.2017
[Burke, Steven J]

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Bb5 Nd4 4.Bc4 Nf6!? A move that has been played by none other than Magnus himself, though it will usually transpose into one of the main lines. The normal move order would be 4...e6 5.Nge2 Nf6

5.Nge2 White avoids the temptation to play 5.e5?! d5 when white has no good reply, 6.exf6?? dxc4 7.fxg7 Bxg7-/+

5...e6 6.0-0 a6 7.a4 Nc6!?

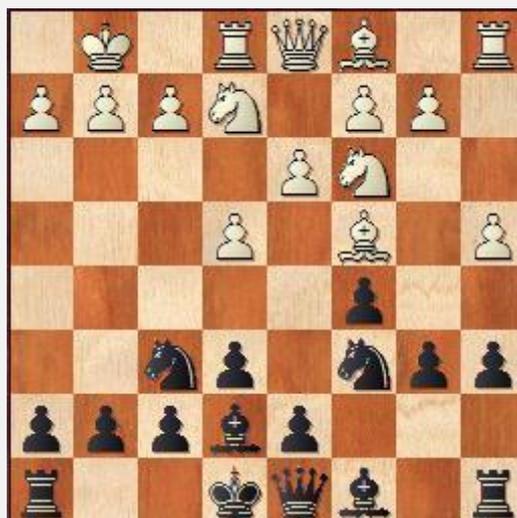


An interesting and unusual decision to retreat the knight. The main line here has been 7...d5 but instead black allows white to transpose to an Open Sicilian with apparently the extra tempo a4 for free. But perhaps it's not so simple...

8.Re1 According to my database, this is the first new move. If white goes for the transposition with 8.d4 perhaps black intended 8...d5 inviting a French Exchange type of game. (8...cxd4 9.Nxd4 as mentioned above.) 9.exd5 exd5 10.Ba2 Be7=

8...Be7 9.d3?! This seems to be heading down the wrong path and white should probably now play 9.d4. The impression I get from Komodo's analysis is that, after black's seventh move retreat of his knight, an Open rather than Closed Sicilian setup seems to be the best way to go.

9...b6



10.Ng3?! White's best here is still 10.d4 when he is doing fine if black tries for a novel approach to the position with 10...0-0!? (10...cxd4 11.Nxd4= with a balanced Open Sicilian

style position; 10...d5 11.exd5 exd5 12.Ba2 0-0 13.Bg5= is a sort of French Exchange position) 11.d5 Na5 12.Ba2 Bd6 13.Nf4 Qc7=

10...d6 11.f4 h5!? 12.e5?? This forces black's reply, but turns out surprisingly badly. Oddly white has no obviously useful piece moves, but the other pawn break was a better try, 12.f5!? h4 13.Nge2



13...exf5 (Maybe safer is 13...Ne5 14.fxe6 Bxe6 15.Bxe6 fxe6 16.d4 cxd4 17.Nxd4 Qc8 18.Nce2!? with chances for both sides.) 14.Nd5!? fxe4 15.Nxe7 Nxe7 16.dxe4=/+ and white definitely has some compensation for the pawn.

12...dxe5 13.Qf3 Bb7 14.fxe5 Ng4!



The Grandmaster at work! I suspect most of us would settle for winning a clear pawn with 14...Qd4+ 15.Be3 Qxe5-/+ Instead black offers a pawn of his own.

15.h3-+ Accepting the pawn sacrifice with 15.Nxh5 doesn't help, 15...Rxh5 (Apparently also winning is the trickier 15...Qd4+!? 16.Be3 Nxe3 17.Nxg7+ Kd7 18.Rxe3 Rag8 19.Nf5 exf5 20.e6+ fxe6 21.Bxe6+ Kd8 22.Bxg8 Rxg8-+ and the complications continue.) 16.Qxg4 Qd4+

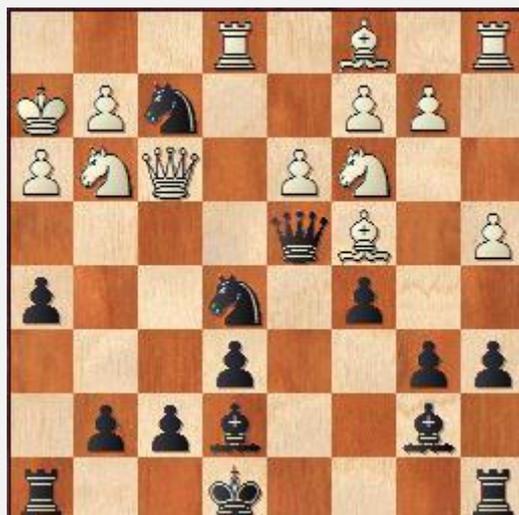
17.Qxd4 Nxd4 18.Bb3 c4!? 19.dxc4 Bc5 20.Be3 Rxe5 21.Bxd4 Bxd4+ 22.Kh1 Rh5 23.Rad1 0-0-0+

15...Qd4+ 16.Kh1 This allows a quick finish but black has a winning advantage anyway. Komodo's "best" way to lose was 16.Be3 Nxe3 17.Qxe3 Rd8



Here material is still level, but white is completely lost. For example 18.Nf1 (18.Qxd4 Nxd4 19.Bb3 Nxb3 20.cxb3 Bh4 21.Re3 Bg5 22.Re2 Rxd3--+) 18...Rh6 19.Kh1 Bh4 20.Re2 Qxe3 21.Nxe3 Nd4 22.Rd2 Bg5 23.Re1 Rg6 24.Ne4 Bxe3 25.Rxe3 Nf5 26.Ree2 Bxe4 27.dxe4 Ng3+ 28.Kg1 (28.Kh2 Nf1+) 28...Nxe2+ 29.Rxe2 a5 Finally black has won the exchange, and with that the game.]

16...Nf2+! 17.Kh2 Nxe5



18.Qxb7 After this it's mate in seven! There's no way out, for example 18.Qf4 Neg4+ 19.hxg4 hxg4+ 20.Kg1 Nh3+ picks up the queen for starters.

18...Neg4+ 19.hxg4 hxg4+ 20.Kg1 Nh3+ 21.Kh2 Ng1+ 22.Nh5 g3+ 23.Kxg3 Qh4#



0-1