

Report on Divisions 3 and 4 Weekend 3, 2016-17 by Steve Burke

In Division 3Sa Wood Green continued their victorious run with wins over their two closest rivals Wessex and Poisoned Pawns. However, with those two both winning their other match they clinched their places in the promotion pool. Looking at the remaining fixtures Phoenix look favourites to join them, but Brown Jack and Rhyfelwyr Essyllwg are still in with a chance.

Fermented Sharks and Anglian Avengers both maintained their 100% records on Division 3Sb, prior to meeting each other in Round 7, and will also be in the Promotion group. The remaining two places will be taken by two of Shropshire, Leeds UOB or Cambridge University 2, who only managed a win and a draw between them this weekend. In the final matches Shropshire play Leeds, so anything could happen, though Shropshire are slight favourites as a drawn match will put them through.



In the North, Manchester Manticores 1 marched on to the full 12 points, beating two of their closest rivals, and look “dead certs” for a promotion place. One of the teams that had been doing quite well, Enniscorthy, sadly only had three players for this weekend and the Hounds and Bears took advantage of playing them and the defeats against the Manticores 1 for Manx Liberty and Gonzaga to leapfrog them into second spot. However that has earned them the poisoned chalice of a match against those frightening beasts at the top of the table!

Division 4S looks set to go down to the wire, with many teams fighting for the promotion places. The three that have made a (small) break for it just now are Oxford 2, the Full Ponty and Barnet Knights 1. They are all on 11 points from 12 and a couple clear of the chasing pack. But with the Swiss system kicking in these teams will be facing their toughest rivals over the last five rounds and at least the top seven teams (and possibly the next 4) have a good chance of making it with a good run.

Star Game

[Download the below game in PGN](#)

**Habershon,Paul F (2041) - Hatchett,Paul (2032) [B02]
4NCL 3 South pool A Telford, ENG (5.24), 11.02.2017
[Burke,Steven J]**

There were a number of hard fought games on the Saturday (Sunday games not yet available) and I chose this one as both sides (and Komodo) came up with good ideas - and I am an occasional Alekhine player myself.

1.e4 Nf6 2.d3 If white declines the challenge (of proving that white is better by chasing the knight around) I am always more bothered by 2.Nc3

2...e5 3.g3 d5



4.Nd2?! This seems to lead into some "French" KIA position where white is a tempo down as black has played e7-e5 in one move instead of two. The major engines prefer to equalise with 4.exd5 Qxd5 5.Nf3 Bg4 6.Bg2 e4 7.Qe2 Nc6 8.dxe4 Qxe4 9.Qxe4+ Nxe4=

4...dxe4 5.dxe4=/+ Again the engines want to simplify here with 5.Nxe4 Nxe4 6.dxe4 Qxd1+ 7.Kxd1 Bc5 8.Ke2 Be6 with an edge for black. With the knights still on the board in the game, black just seems to have more space than white for this extra piece.

5...Bc5 6.Qe2 0-0 7.Bg2 b6 8.Nb3 Ba6 9.Qf3 Nbd7 10.Bd2 Rb8 11.0-0-0 Be7 12.Bc3



12...Qe8?! This takes away the king's knight's retreat square and so strengthens white's g-pawn push. So better was 12...Qc8 which also allows black to answer 13.g4?? with 13...Nxe4 14.Qxe4 Bb7 and the queen is now defending b7 too.

13.g4 Nc5= Here white gets too much material for the queen after 13...Nxe4?? 14.Qxe4 Bb7 15.Qxb7 Rxb7 16.Bxb7+-

14.Nxc5 bxc5!?



Opening the b-file for an attack, at the expense of a ruined pawn structure, sets the board alight with a typical opposite side castling battle ahead.

15.g5 Nd7 16.h4 Nb6 17.Ne2?! Before starting his own attack, white sets out to develop his kingside, as we're advised to do. However, it seems that this is a touch too slow here. Probably white should take prophylactic measures on the queenside with 17.b3 Na4!? 18.Ba1 (18.bxa4?? Qxa4 19.Bxe5 Qxa2 20.Rd5 f6! 21.Bc3 c6 22.Rd7 Qb1+ 23.Kd2 Rbd8+) 18...c4 19.Qg3 cxb3 20.axb3 Bd6 21.h5 Nc5 22.h6<=>

17...Na4 18.Rhe1??



[18.Ng3 g6 19.Rd5=/+]

18...Qb5? Black is still better, but timing is everything! Neither player spotted the big tactical shot 18...Bxe2!! 19.Rxe2 Qb5! winning the b-pawn unless white plays 20.Re3 but then 20...Nxc3 21.bxc3 c4 22.Kd2 Rfd8+ 23.Ke1 Bc5 is a massacre as white cannot play 24.Re2?? Rxd1+ 25.Kxd1 Qb1+ 26.Kd2 Rd8+ 27.Qd3 cxd3 28.cxd3 Rxd3#

19.b3 c4! 20.Rd5 [20.bxa4?? Ba3+ 21.Kd2 Rfd8+ 22.Ke3 Bc5+ wins]

20...Ba3+! Good, but black had a queen sacrifice here too that is probably stronger 20...Nxc3!!
 21.Rxb5 Ba3+ 22.Kd2 Nxb5-/+ with rook, bishop and a raging attack for the queen.

21.Kb1



21...Qc6?? Black needed to keep the initiative here, 21...Nxc3+! 22.Nxc3 (22.Qxc3?? Qb6 23.Qg3 cxb3 24.axb3 Bc4-+) 22...Qb4 23.Rdd1 cxb3 24.cxb3 Bc4 25.Nd5 Qa4-/+ Instead white comes close to equalising.

22.Bxe5! cxb3 23.axb3 Bc4!? Komodo has a preference for 23...Bb4 24.Rh1 Rfe8 25.Nd4 Qc3 26.bxa4 Bd6+ (26...Rxe5 27.Qxc3 Bxc3+ 28.Nb3 Rxd5 29.exd5 Bc4 30.Rh3 Be5=/+) 27.Nb3 Qxf3 28.Bxf3 Rxe5 29.Rxe5 Bxe5=/+

24.Nd4? White cannot safely move the rook away, but gets compensation for it after retreating the bishop from e5.

24.Ra5 Rfd8 25.Rxa7 Bxb3 26.cxb3 Rd2;

24.Rd4 Bxe2 25.Rxe2 Nc3+;

24.Rd2 Qe6 25.Qf5 Bxb3;

24.Ba1! Bxd5 25.exd5 Qc5 26.Ng3~/=

24...Qa6?



I guess black may have been worried about 24...Qb6! 25.Rd7 threatening to take the c-pawn, but he has a winning blow with 25...Bb2!! (Also good is 25...Qb4! 26.Nc6 Qxe1+ 27.Rd1 Qe2 28.Nxb8 Qxf3 29.Bxf3 Rxb8-/+) 26.Bxc7 Qb4 with a mating attack.

25.Rd7?? Apparently white has a couple of ways to get equal chances, but neither is obvious.

The first is to sacrifice the exchange with 25.Bxc7 Bxd5 26.exd5 (26.Bxb8?? Rxb8 27.exd5 Qa5!!-+) 26...Rbe8 27.Rf1 Bb2 28.Qd3 Qxd3 29.cxd3 Bxd4 30.bxa4~/=

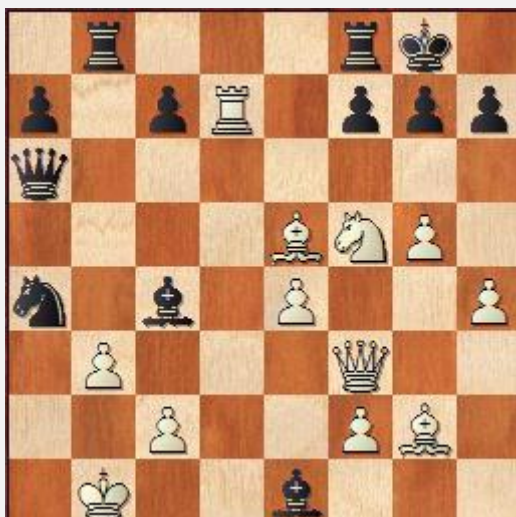
The other avoids the sacrifice with 25.Bf1 Bxf1 and then launches a sudden counter attack with 26.Nf5!! There are a myriad of variations here, but one fun line is 26...Rfe8 27.Bxg7 Bc4 28.Rd4 Bc5 29.Rd7 Qe6 30.Bb2 Qxd7 31.Nh6+ Kf8 32.Bg7+ Kxg7 33.Qf6+ Kf8 34.Qh8+ Ke7 35.Qf6+ Kf8=

25...Bb4?? The wrong piece to attack the rook with, 25...Qa5! 26.Nc6 Qxe1+ 27.Rd1 Be2!!-/+

Black actually has several very good lines, and the best seems to be 25...Rb6!! 26.Nf5 (26.Bxc7?? Qa5!! 27.Bxb6 Qxe1+ 28.Ka2 Qc1 with mate) 26...Qa5!! 27.Bxg7 (27.Red1?? Qxe5-+) 27...Qxe1+ 28.Rd1 Qa5 29.Ba1 Rfb8+

26.Nf5?? Suddenly white is winning after taking the time to save the rook with 26.Re3!!

26...Bxe1-/+



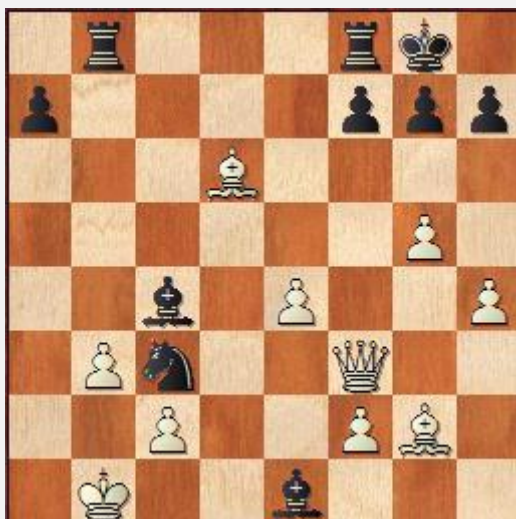
This allows white to try an excellent swindle that could be avoided by starting with 26...Bxb3!
 27.cxb3 Bxe1 as now 28.Rd6 is met by 28...Nc3+! 29.Qxc3 Qxd6-+

27.Rd6!? Qxd6 Forced - but good!

The point is that black is mated after 27...cxd6?? 28.Ne7+ Kh8 29.Bxg7+ Kxg7 30.Qf6#

Moving the queen away is similarly fatal, 27...Qa5?? 28.Ne7+ Kh8 29.Bxg7+ Kxg7 30.Qf6#

28.Nxd6 cxd6 29.Bxd6 Nc3+



30.Ka1?? [30.Kb2 is probably still losing, but offers better prospects.]

30...Rb6 31.Bxf8 Ra6+ 32.Kb2 Ra2+ 33.Kc1 Ra1+ 34.Kb2 Rb1+ 35.Ka3



35...Nb5+ This doesn't yet spoil the win, but more clinical was 35...Be2! 36.Qe3 (36.Qh3 Bd2 37.Kb4 Nxe4+ 38.Ka3 Bc3 39.Qxc3 Nxc3-) 36...Ra1+ 37.Kb2 (37.Kb4 Nxe4+ 38.c3 a5#) 37...Nd1+ 38.Kxa1 Nxe3 39.fxe3 Kxf8-+ I'm guessing that both players were short of time as we approach the first time control.

36.Ka2 Nc3+?? The only winning move here is 36...Be2! 37.Bxg7 (37.Qe3 Nc3+ 38.Ka3 Ra1+ 39.Kb4 Nd5+) 37...Bxf3 38.Bxf3 Rc1 39.Kb2 Rxc2+ 40.Kxc2 Kxg7-+

37.Ka3?? It was literally a 50:50 shot and white picked the wrong one. The game goes on after 37.Qxc3 Bxc3 38.Kxb1 Kxf8 39.bxc4



but this opposite bishops ending is most likely a draw.

37...Be2 38.Qf5 Nb5+ Black presumably repeats moves to get closer to the time control.

39.Ka2 Nc3+ 40.Ka3 Ra1+ 41.Kb2 Ra2+ 42.Kc1



42...Bd1!-+ After this black plays out the ending a piece up and, with some care here and there, the result is never really in doubt. It's a pity that black didn't finish off the game here with the pretty mate 42...Bd3!! 43.cxd3 Bd2#

43.e5 Rxc2+ 44.Qxc2 Bxc2 45.Bc5 Bxb3 46.Bxa7 Bd5 47.Bh3 Nb5 48.Bc5 Bc3 49.f4 Bd4 50.Bxd4 Nxd4 51.f5 Kf8 52.h5 h6 53.g6 Bf3 54.f6 Bxh5 55.fxg7+ Kxg7 56.gxf7 Kxf7 57.Kb2 Nf3 58.e6+ Kf6 59.Kc3 Ng5 60.Bg2 Nxe6 61.Kd2 Kg5 62.Ke3 Bg4 63.Kf2 Kf4 64.Kg1 Kg3 65.Bf1 h5 66.Bg2 Nf4

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