

Report on Divisions 3 and 4 Weekend 4 by Steve Burke

Apologies for not providing a report after Weekend 3, and this brings with it a question of how to cover the changes since Round 4. In the end I decided to take an overview approach. Particularly in relation to Division 3 South, where the initial groups were concluded and the promotion and relegation groups started.

From Pool A, three of the top four maintained their places, but a big push by Cambridge University saw them overhaul the Anglian Avengers. This brings with it safety from relegation, but (like Rhyfelwyr Essyllwg) they bring forward all their losses to the new group and will struggle to make an impact on the top spots.

The first round of matches in the new group went pretty much according to expectation. So the group looks to be a fight between the top five teams, with several of them playing each other, they will all start the final weekend with high hopes.

3 South pool C

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Barnet Knights 1		4½-1½				4-2	3½-2½	4-2	16	8
2 Wessex A	1½-4½				5-1	4½-1½	4-2		15	6
3 Brown Jack 1				3-3	4-2		4-2	3-3	14	6
4 CSC 1			3-3		2½-3½	3-3		5-1	13½	4
5 MK Phoenix 1		1-5	2-4	3½-2½				4-2	10½	4
6 Cambridge University 2	2-4	1½-4½	3-3				3-3		9½	2
7 Rhyfelwyr Essyllwg	2½-3½	2-4	2-4			3-3			9½	1
8 Oxford 2	2-4		3-3	1-5	2-4				8	1

Pool B saw the top four all retain their places, but with differing fortunes. While Brown Jack and CSC stormed ahead, Oxford lost all three matches. So they are safely in the promotion group, but bringing forward only 1 point.

Compared to the group above, this relegation group was full of surprises. The Sussex Martlets and The Full Ponty both overcame serious rating deficits to win, while The Rookies also had a big win in a supposedly even match. Looking forward, it's really hard to say who will finish in the bottom four, but obviously having points on the board already makes the current top four favourites.

3 South pool D

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	GP	Pts
1 Anglian Avengers 2				1½-4½		5-1	3½-2½	4½-1½	14½	6
2 Sussex Martlets 2			3½-2½		2-4		3½-2½	4½-1½	13½	6
3 The Rookies		2½-3½		5½-½	3½-2½			3-3	14½	5
4 Leeds University Old Boys	4½-1½		½-5½			4½-1½	3-3		12½	5
5 Fermented Sharks		4-2	2½-3½			2-4		5½-½	14	4
6 The Full Ponty	1-5			1½-4½	4-2		3-3		9½	3
7 Hackney	2½-3½	2½-3½		3-3		3-3			11	2
8 West is Best 3	1½-4½	1½-4½	3-3		½-5½				6½	1

There's been some jostling for position over the last four rounds, but essentially the top 10 has remained pretty much the same. With anything between 2 and 6 places available in Division 3 South next season, all these teams will be fighting hard to the end.

Division 4 South

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	rd 7	rd 8	P	W	D	L	GP	Pts
1 Iceni 2	ice2	oxf3 2	brj3 5	bkn3 5	pit 4	wat 4½	wesb 3½	csc2 3½	cro 3½	8	7	0	1	31	14
2 Oxford 3	oxf3	brj3 5½	ice2 4	pit 5	bkn3 4	csc2 3	ice1 3½	cro 2	aad 4	8	6	1	1	31	13
3 Iceni 1	ice1	cam3 6	tit 3½	wib4 4	csc3 4½	cro 3½	oxf3 2½	aad 2	fis 4½	8	6	0	2	30½	12
4 Crowthorne	cro	kkg2 4	brj2 3½	bkn2 4	cyj 5	ice1 2½	sur 3½	oxf3 4	ice2 2½	8	6	0	2	29	12
5 CSC 2	csc2	csc3 3½	bkn2 4	psp2 3½	mkp2 5	oxf3 3	aad 4	ice2 2½	sur 3	8	5	2	1	28½	12
6 Surbiton	sur	sxm3 4½	wesb 2½	wat 4½	inv 5	wib4 5	cro 2½	brj2 4	csc2 3	8	5	1	2	31	11
7 All Anands on Deck	aad	ice3 4	psp2 4	tit 3	kkg2 4½	wesb 4½	csc2 2	ice1 4	oxf3 2	8	5	1	2	28	11
8 Throw in the Tal	tit	oxf4 3½	ice1 2½	aad 3	sxm3 5	kes ½	wib4 4	wat 5	brj2 3½	8	5	1	2	27	11
9 Wessex B	wesb	inv 5	sur 3½	kes 5	brj2 3	aad 1½	ice2 2½	fis 3	kkg2 4½	8	4	2	2	28	10
10 Kent KJCA Kestrels	kes	brj2 3	inv 4½	wesb 1	brj3 4	tit 5½	fis 2	kkg2 3	mkp2 3½	8	4	2	2	26½	10
11 Fischer's Catch	fis	wat 2½	bkn4 6	csc3 2	ddu 4½	oxf4 4½	kes 3	wesb 3	ice1 1½	8	4	1	3	27	9

In the North, there was more external influence on the event as heavy snow on the Saturday night prevented some players from arriving for the Sunday games and a couple of teams didn't even make it at all. That aside...

Gonzaga continue to progress serenely towards the top spot, having already beaten their three closest challengers. While they still have some work to do, it seems that the rest are fighting for the second promotion spot. And what a fight it looks like being!

There are six or seven teams that could possibly take it with a perfect last weekend, and as they will all be facing off against each other, there should be many exciting matches.

Division 3 North

		rd 1	rd 2	rd 3	rd 4	rd 5	rd 6	rd 7	rd 8	P	W	D	L	GP	Pts
1 Gonzaga	gon	soab 4½	ash1 4	brab 5½	cas 4½	ash2 5½	che2 4	shr1 4	3cs2 3½	8	8	0	0	35½	16
2 3Cs 2	3cs2	enn 4½	brab 4½	man2 4	ash2 5½	cas 4	soab 4½	braa 3	gon 2½	8	6	1	1	32½	13
3 Shropshire 1	shr1	man4 5	braa 5	wks2 3	man3 3	brab 3	jor 4	gon 2	soab 3½	8	5	2	1	28½	12
4 Cheddleton 2	che2	hol 4½	man2 3½	ash1 3½	soab 2	shr2 5	gon 2	jor 4	braa 4	8	6	0	2	28½	12
5 Bradford DCA Knights A	braa	ash2 4½	shr1 1	jor 5½	enn 4½	man2 3½	wks2 3½	3cs2 3	che2 2	8	5	1	2	27½	11
6 Warwickshire Select 2	wks2	cas 4½	jor 2½	shr1 3	hol 3½	man4 5	braa 2½	soab 3½	man3 3	8	5	1	2	27½	11
7 Holmes Chapel	hol	che2 1½	3cs3 4½	shr2 4	wks2 2½	ash1 3½	man3 2½	brab 3½	jor 4½	8	5	0	3	26½	10
8 Ashfield-Breadsall 1	ash1	shr2 3½	gon 2	che2 2½	3cs3 6	man3 3	hol 2½	cas 6	man2 4½	8	4	1	3	30	9

Star Game

Having downloaded the pgn for the last weekend and flicked through the games in it, I chose the following game, which shows a nice mating attack after black didn't quite sense the danger quickly enough.

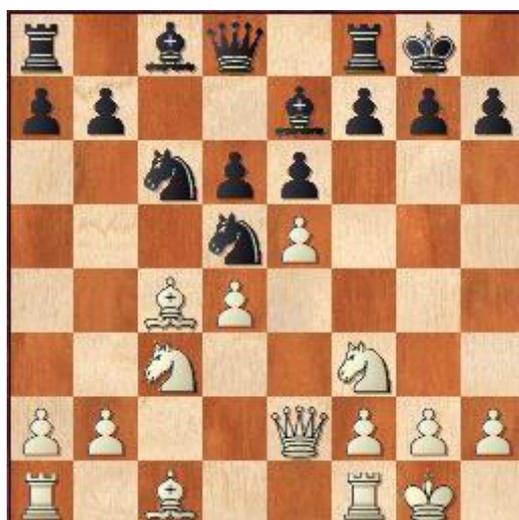
It was only when I came to copy my analysis over to here that I noticed it actually comes from Weekend 2. Well, with apologies to anyone who played a good game in the last couple of weekends, I'm sticking with this as my Star Game for this report.

[Download the below game in PGN](#)

**Niccoli,Tony - Fermented Sharks (2020) v Onslow, Alfie - Brown Jack (2117)
4NCL 3 South pool B Reading, ENG (3.65), 13.01.2018
[Notes by Burke,Steven J with Komodo 11]**

1.e4 c5 2.c3 Nf6 Having chosen this over the main alternative 2...d5 both players head down the main line for several moves.

3.e5 Nd5 4.d4 cxd4 5.cxd4 e6 6.Nf3 d6 7.Bc4 Nc6 8.0-0 Be7 9.Qe2 0-0 10.Nc3



10...Nxc3 Here Anand preferred 10...dxe5 11.dxe5 Nxc3 12.bxc3 and now 12...Bd7 13.Rd1 Qc7 14.Bd3 Rfd8 15.h4 Be8 16.Qe4 g6 17.h5 Rd5 18.hxg6 hxg6 19.Re1 Rad8 20.Bc2 Rc5 21.Qe3 Nxe5 22.Nxe5 Rxc3 23.Bd3 Bf6 24.Bb2 Bxe5 25.Bxc3 Bxc3 26.Rac1 Qa5 27.Red1 Bd4 28.Qe2 Bc6 29.Be4 Rd6 30.Bxc6 bxc6 31.Rb1 c5 32.g3 Rd5 33.Kg2 Re5 34.Qd2 Qd8 35.Rb3 Qd5+ 36.f3 Qc4 37.Rd3 Rh5 38.g4 Rd5 39.a3 Qb5 40.Qc2 Rd8 41.Rb3 Qa6 42.Rc1 Kg7 43.Qc4 Qd6 44.Rh1 Bf6 45.Re3 Qc7 46.Re2 Rd4 47.Qc1 Qc6 48.Qh6+ Kg8 49.Rb1 Rxc4+ 50.Kf2 Bh4+ 0-1 (50) Istratescu,A (2670)-Anand,V (2773) London 2013

11.bxc3 b6!? This is where the game departs from main line theory. After 11...dxe5 12.dxe5 Grischuk chose 12...b6 13.Rd1 Qc7 14.Bd3 Bb7 15.h4 Rfd8 16.Bf4 Rd5 17.Bc2 Rxd1+ 18.Rxd1 Rd8 19.Rc1 Rd7 20.Nd4 Nxd4 21.cxd4 Qd8 22.Be3 Bxh4 23.Kh2 g6 24.Qg4 Be7 25.Rh1 Rc7 26.Bxg6 fxg6 27.Qxe6+ Kh8 28.Kg1 Qg8 29.Qg4 Bd5 30.Bg5 Qe6 31.Qg3 Kg8 32.Rh4 Bxg5 33.Qxg5 Qe7 34.Qh6 Rc8 35.a4 Rf8 36.f3 a6 0-1 (36) Vachier Lagrave,M (2758)-Grischuk,A (2810) Beijing 2014

12.Bd3

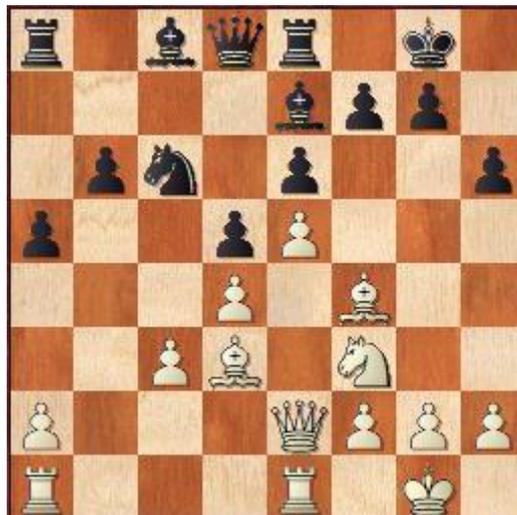


12...d5? This transposes to a dubious French position. Whereas 12...Bb7 stays flexible.

13.Qc2 h6 14.Bf4+/= White could probably save a tempo with 14.Qe2+/=

14...a5?! If black could follow this up with Ba6 it would be fine, but white prevents this, so better was 14...Na5 15.Qc1 Qc7+/=

15.Qe2! Re8 16.Rfe1



16...Bf8?! Premature prophylaxis? 16...Nb8 17.Bc2 Ba6 18.Qd2 Bf8+/=

17.Rab1 Bd7?! [17...Nb8 18.g4 Be7 19.Kh1 Ba6+/-]

18.Bc2!?

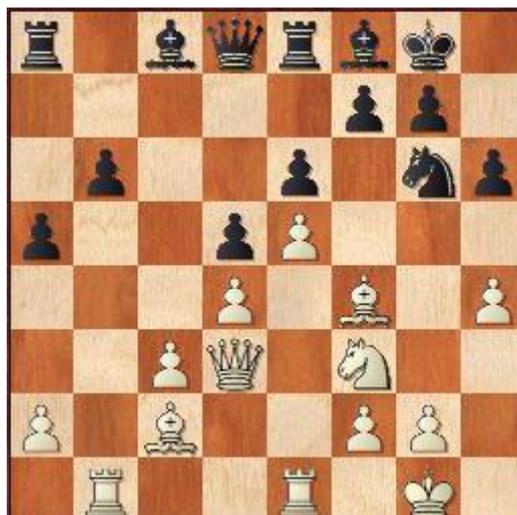


Setting up a "Fioni Attack"!

Komodo gives 18.g4! Ne7 19.Bd2 g6 20.h4 Qc7 21.h5 g5 22.Nh2 Rac8 23.f4 gxf4 24.Qf2 Bg7 25.Bxf4+-

18...a4?? This appears to be a fatal loss of time.

Black needed to bring reinforcements to the kingside, 18...Ne7 19.Qd3 Ng6 but does need to see how to deal with 20.h4!? (20.Bd2 Be7+/-) 20...Bc8!



Here white needs to find 21.Bg5! though over the board it would be a leap of faith to offer this piece sacrifice. (21.h5? fails to 21...Ba6! 22.Qe3 Nxf4 23.Qxf4 b5=/+)
21...Be7 (The refutation of 21...hxg5?? depends on some lengthy variations, starting

with 22.Nxg5!! Qd7 23.Qf3 Ba3 24.Qh5 Nf8 25.Bh7+ Nxh7 26.Qxh7+ Kf8 27.Rb3 Qa4 28.h5 Ke7 29.Qxg7 Kd7 30.Qxf7+ Kd8 31.h6+-) 22.Bxe7 Rxe7 23.Qd2+/=

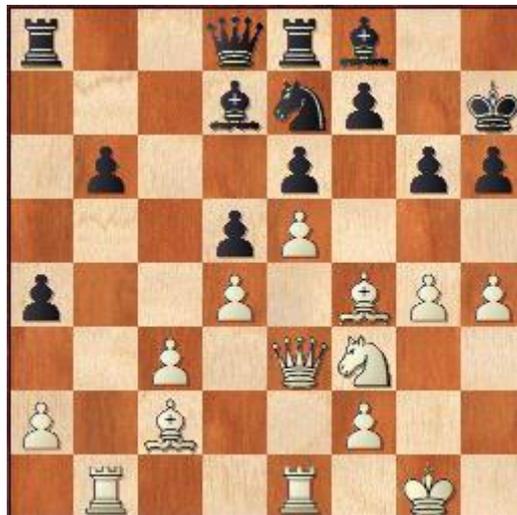
19.Qd3 g6 20.Qe3



20...Kh7? This looks the natural defence, but black has much better chances of surviving after 20...h5! and for example 21.Ng5 Qc7 22.Bd3 Reb8 23.Qh3 f5! 24.Qg3 Bg7 25.Nh3 Be8+/- though it might still be losing.

21.h4!! White is clearly better, but this thrust is needed to take full advantage.

21...Ne7 22.g4



22...Qc7 Black might hold the kingside better with 22...Bg7 23.h5 Rh8 24.Kg2 Kg8 25.Rh1 Qf8 26.Rxb6+- but then he loses a pawn and the attack still rages.

23.h5 Rec8 24.Rbc1+- Trying to create some counter-play. White could ignore this with 24.Kg2 Qxc3 25.Bd3+- but white has plenty of time to defend the pawn first.

24...Bg7



25.Kg2 White has several ways to break through, e.g. 25.g5 hxg5 26.Nxg5+ Kg8 27.hxg6 fxg6 28.Qh3 Qxc3 29.Qh7+ Kf8 30.Re3 Qb2 31.Rf3 Rxc2 32.Rxc2 Qxc2 33.Bd2+ Nf5 34.Bb4+ Ke8 35.Qg8+ Bf8 36.Qxf8#

25...Rh8 26.Rh1



26...Ng8 Running with the king doesn't save black, 26...Kg8 27.hxg6 Nxg6 28.Bxh6 Kf8 29.Bxg6 fxg6 30.Qf4+ Ke8 31.Bxg7+-

27.Ng5+ Here 27.hxg6+ fxg6 28.Ng5# would be a nice finish, but how often do you get the chance to give mate with a pawn check?

27...hxg5 28.hxg6#



1-0