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Chess



Solid as a Rock

Hikaru Nakamura gets there in the end at Gibraltar



All the news and the key action from Wijk aan Zee and the 4NCL



Mike Basman: National Treasure - John Henderson pays tribute



Storm Danny hits Hebden Bridge - Dave Shapland explains

Chess

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60 Seconds with...

The English Chess Federation's new Chief Executive,

Mike Truran



Born: 16th March 1956, Liskeard, Cornwall.

Place of residence: Witney, Oxfordshire.

Occupation: Director (part time), consultant (part time), pensioner (much too soon).

Enjoyable? The variety of my work (combined with my various chess endeavours) is great, and keeps me very busy. It's nice to be able to combine non-chess and chess activities in the way I do. The jury is still out though on how much time the ECF work is going to take – it's certainly been fairly time-consuming so far!

And home life? Excellent. I'm not too sure though that Faith is always entirely impressed with the gradually increasing amount of time I spend at home annoying her and generally getting under her feet!

But sometimes good to escape to: New Zealand, where we have a house which we don't spend enough time in.

Sports played or followed: Sports played? At my age?! I do like watching rugby union when I get the chance, particularly the southern hemisphere sides, who sometimes seem to be playing a different game to the one we have up here. I do seem though to have an unfortunate habit of arranging 4NCL weekends to coincide with the Six Nations.

A favourite novel? I'm going to cheat a little bit and go for the Gormenghast trilogy by Mervyn Peake.

Piece of music? This changes regularly over time, but at the moment unquestionably *Shiverman* by Lyall Bay Wellington's finest, Fat Freddy's Drop.

Film or TV series? This one doesn't change over time: *The Shawshank Redemption*.

What's the best thing about playing chess? Still being able to play the occasional good game, and of course meeting up with old friends and colleagues.

And the worst? Being conscious of my waning playing strength as I get older.

Your best move? I did enjoy 26...♖xd4 in my game against Nigel Davies in a National Club Championship quarter-final way back in 1991. But perhaps my memory over the intervening years has added a gloss to the move which it doesn't deserve.

But less memorable than your worst move? I'm afraid my good moves are so few, and my bad moves so many, that the former are remembered in a golden haze of nostalgia while the latter are instantly excised from my memory banks.

And a highly memorable opponent? Nigel Short in a simultaneous display he gave at Eagle Star (I believe as part of the sponsorship deal he had with them), more years ago than I care to remember. I managed to win after his somewhat exuberant kingside attack hit the buffers, but I still remember his graciousness after the game.

Favourite game of all time? Pillsbury-Tarrasch, Hastings 1895.

The best three chess books: Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games*, Bronstein's *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953*, Tiller's *Chess Treasury of the Air*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I plead the Fifth.

Or your National Federation? Given my recent appointment, this one feels a bit like a 'When did you stop beating your wife?' question! Suffice it to say that we can always (and I hope will) do better.

Any advice for either? Try to remember that your colleagues, however exasperating they may be on occasion, are doing their best according to their lights. Nobody deliberately sets out to do a bad job.

Can chess make one happy? Who am I to argue with the Praeceptor Germaniae? "Schach hat wie die Liebe, wie die Musik die Fähigkeit, den Menschen glücklich zu machen."

A tip please for the club player: Win or lose, try to be nice to your opponent.

N.Davies-M.Truran

Atticus v Bristol & Clifton,
Sutton Coldfield 1991

Bird's Opening

1 g3 ♖f6 2 ♙g2 e6 3 f4 d5 4 ♜f3 c5 5 0-0 ♜c6 6 d3 g6 7 c3 ♙g7 8 a4 0-0 9 ♜a3 a6 10 ♜b1 ♜b8 11 b4 cxb4 12 cxb4 b5 13 axb5 ♜b6+ 14 e3 axb5 15 ♜c2 ♜a8 16 ♜fd4 ♜xd4 17 ♜xd4 ♜a4 18 ♙d2 ♜d7 19 ♙c3 ♙b7 20 ♜a1 ♜c8 21 ♜b3 e5 22 fxe5 ♜xe5 23 ♙b2 ♜g4 24 ♙xd5 ♜xe3 25 ♙xf7+ ♜h8 26 ♜e6



26...♖xd4!! 27 ♙xd4 ♙xd4 28 ♜fc1 ♜f5+ 29 ♜f1 ♜xa1 30 ♜xa1 ♙xa1 31 ♜d7 ♜c1+ 32 ♙e2 ♜c2+ 33 ♙e1 ♙c3+ 34 ♜f1 ♙g2+ 35 ♙g1 ♙d4+ 0-1

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Round-Up

A round-up of all the action from the first three rounds of the UK's premier chess league

The 4NCL season is well under way. Indeed, three weekends will have been completed by the time you read these words. We'll have a full report on the February rounds in our April issue, but don't be surprised if both defending champions Guildford and title hopefuls Cheddleton still have a perfect score after six rounds.

Weekend One

Back in November the top flight welcomed four new teams: 3Cs, Spirit of Atticus, Sussex Martlets and White Rose II. Of the two newly-promoted north-west sides, one would expect 3Cs, representing the legendary Greater Manchester junior club, to do the better and even to comfortably survive in the top flight. Headed up by Christian Bauer and Stephen Gordon, 3Cs have a number of teenage stars in their ranks, but began their campaign by becoming but the latest higher-rated side to lose to the ever-dangerous Oxford, going down 3½-4½ thanks to a costly default on 8 and a dark-blue victory for Matthew Rose.

Despite the absence of a female player, 3Cs impressively bounced straight back to overcome their local rivals the next day, edging out Spirit of Atticus 4½-3½, courtesy of wins on the top three boards and a fighting rearguard display from captain Alan Walton. Don't, however, expect Spirit of Atticus to return to the second division without a fight. They took two and a half points off Cheddleton, with the highly experienced John Carleton outplaying Eggleston, and it might have been more.

D.B.Lund-T.Fodor

Spirit of Atticus vs Cheddleton
Reti Opening

1 c4 e6 2 g3 d5 3 ♘g2 ♗f6 4 ♗f3 d4
5 e3 c5 6 exd4 cxd4 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d3

The players have reached one of the main lines of the popular Reti Opening, or if you prefer it's a reversed Modern Benoni.

8...♗e7 9 ♗a3 0-0 10 ♖b1 e5 11 ♖e1
♗d7 12 ♗c2 a5 13 a3

We shouldn't forget that White is effectively two tempi up on the black side of a Classical Modern Benoni, so Lund was surely right to force the pace. Now he will either get in b2-b4 or be able to use the b4-square for his pieces.



Former World U-10 champion, GM Tamas Fodor of Cheddleton was pushed hard by Brett Lund of Spirit of Atticus.

13...a4 14 ♗d2 ♖e8?!

Natural, but 14...f6 would have been a better idea, followed by 15...♗c5.

15 ♗b4!



15...♗f8

Naturally Black has no desire to trade on b4 and allow White a mobile majority. The text is pretty defensive, but if now 15...f6 16 ♗h4! and, just as in the game, White has managed to seize the initiative.

16 ♗g5!?

The most aggressive and a pretty tempting choice, although objectively speaking 16 ♗e2 might have been stronger, calmly improving White's pieces, keeping ♗g5 ideas in reserve, challenging Black to find an idea, and preparing to meet 16...♗c5 with 17 ♗xc6! bxc6 18 ♗xe5, and if 18...♗c7 (18...f6? 19 ♗xc6 ♖xe2 20 ♗xd8 unfurls a decisive attack down the long diagonal) 19 ♗f4 ♗d6 20 ♗h5.

16...h6 17 ♗xf7!

The creative and dangerous Lancastrian FM was never going to pass over such an opportunity.

17...♗xf7 18 ♗d5+ ♖e6?

The Hungarian GM would love to return the exchange to remove White's monster light-squared bishop, but Lund will be in no rush to take on e6. It would have taken strong nerves and good calculation, but Black had to find 18...♗g6! when White doesn't seem to have anything better than 19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 ♗xc6 ♖a6 21 ♗e4+ ♗f7 22 ♗d5+ ♗g6 23 ♗e4+ with perpetual check.

19 f4!

Blasting open lines as Black suddenly finds himself in serious trouble.

19...g6



20 f5

Tempting and it wouldn't have been at all easy for a human to find the best move, 20 ♗xe6+! ♗xe6 21 fxe5, giving up the monster bishop to allow White's queen to join in the attack. After 21...♗xc5 22 ♗f3 has the simple and very powerful idea of 23 ♖f1, while the king won't get far if 21...♗e7 22 ♗xc6+ bxc6 23 ♗f3 ♗c5 24 ♗xc6) 22 ♗f3! ♖a5 (22...♗e7 23 ♗d5+ ♗e8 24 ♗f4 keeps up the relentless pressure) 23 ♗c2 ♖c5 24 ♗xd4+

♔d6 25 ♖e2 Black's position remains a complete mess with the white b- and d-pawns but itching to join in the attack.

20...gxf5 21 ♖h5+ ♕e7 22 ♖xe6

Lund decides he must now exchange and no wonder. Indeed, only a machine or 2800 would be able to spot 22 ♖xf5 ♖f6 23 ♖xc6+ bxc6 24 ♖xe5+ ♖xe5 and then two key bishop moves: 25 ♖b4+! ♕e8 26 ♖xe5+ ♕d7 27 ♖g2!. Here White trails by a rook, but remains on top according to the silicon monster.

22...♕xe6 23 ♖d5 ♖f6

Black's position was pretty grim in any case, but perhaps 23...♖e7!? was a better try, preventing White's next.

24 ♖g6 ♖d7

Thus far Black has been completely outplayed, but White still has to drive the final nails into the coffin.

25 ♖b4?!

Lund was no doubt seduced by the idea of knocking away the defender and then winning in style with a sacrifice on e5. However, the text gives Black definite hopes of survival, whereas 25 ♖f1! would have increased the pressure down the f-file yet further and after 25...f4 (25...♖e7 26 ♖xf5 ♖e8 27 ♖xf6+! ♖xf6 28 ♖xh6 maintains the killer pin) 26 ♖xf4+ (or just 26 gxf4 ♖e8 27 f5+ ♔d6 28 ♖xf6+) 26...exf4 27 ♖xf4 ♖a5 White's neatest forced win is 28 ♖c7!.

25...♖xb4 26 axb4 ♖f8!

Fodor has become a regular on the English circuit in recent years and a player as sharp as he wasn't going to miss this chance to unravel and force White to find some good moves.

27 b5 ♖e7



28 ♖xe5+?

The point behind White's play, but unfortunately for Lund there is a flaw. The way to do things was 28 ♖xe7! ♕xe7 (28...♖xe7? 29 ♖xe5+! really is strong, and if 29...♕xe5 30 ♖e1+ ♖e4 31 dxe4 ♖b4 32 ♖f2! when it transpires that Black's king is in much the graver danger) 29 ♖xe5+ ♔d6 30 ♖be1, maintaining control of the position with a sizeable if not yet decisive advantage.

28...♕xe5 29 ♖e1+

29 ♖xe7 wouldn't transpose to a line in the previous note on account of 29...♖e8, and if 30 ♖e1+ ♔d6 31 ♖xf5+ ♕c5 when Black is doing more than just escaping.

29...♔d6 30 ♖xe7 ♖e6

Further good defence from Fodor as it becomes clear that it's all gone wrong for White.

31 ♖xb7?

And now the game's as good as over. Lund had to find 31 ♖xe6+! ♕xe6 32 ♖c7+ ♕e7 33 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 34 ♖xf5, netting two pawns for the piece and chances to resist.

31...♖xd5 32 cxd5 ♖xd5

An only move, but a pretty strong one at that. Black's king is now fairly safe and the extra piece will soon count.

33 ♖h5 ♖c8 34 ♖f3+ ♕c5 35 ♖d1 ♖d5

36 ♖c1+ ♕b4 37 ♖d2+ ♕b3!

The king continues its journey and, indeed, will play a pivotal role in the imminent deciding of the game.

38 ♖d1+ ♕xb2 39 ♖d7 ♖c1 0-1

In contrast to the north-west sides, it's hard to see White Rose II doing anything but struggle in what could turn into a long season for the Yorkshire side. Indeed, they began by mustering just half a point against each of the much higher-rated Guildford II and Wood Green. Over in Pool B a similar fate appears to await Sussex Martlets, who were dispatched 6-2 by Cambridge and then found themselves whitewashed by Guildford.

Guildford Come Out with All Guns Blazing

One wonders just what Guildford supremo Roger Emerson was feeding his all-star team (Matthew Sadler, Robin van Kampen, Nick Pert, Yang-Fan Zhou, David Smerdon, Antoaneta Stefanova, Mark Hebden and Glenn Flear) before each match. Their whitewashing of the Martlets was hardly a surprise, but racking up 8-0 too against the ever-dangerous Grantham Sharks in the opening round was certainly a fine effort as the defending champions laid down a tough marker.

Last season's runners-up Cheddleton weren't quite so impressive, but despite lacking a female player and having to default board 8 they did win both matches, their second 5½-2½ victory coming against Oxford. British Champion Jonathan Hawkins led the way with comprehensive victories over Gary Quillan and Justin Tan.

Another team who got off to a flyer was Barbican, who overcame Wood Green 4½-3½ and then Guildford II in another close match 5-3. The return of Jonathan Parker to Barbican ranks undoubtedly played a part. On top board Parker ground down Andrew Greet and then held Daniel Fernandez, whilst lower down Ryan Rhys Griffiths netted two comprehensive victories.

While Barbican and Cheddleton began with 100% in Pool A, over in the slightly weaker looking Pool B, only Guildford could manage that feat. Blackthorne Russia and White Rose might have done so, but a topsy-turvy match between the two ended all square as epitomised by the following no-holds-barred encounter.

M.Gantner-C.Duncan White Rose vs Blackthorne Russia Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 f3 e6 4 ♖e3!?

Consistent with the spirit of the Fantasy variation, but still quite a bold choice, preparing to offer a pawn in Blackmar-Diemer style. More often White allows the Winawer-like 4 ♖c3 ♖b4, after which 5 ♖f4 ♖e7 6 ♖ge2 ♖g6 7 ♖g3 dxe4 8 fxe4 e5 9 ♖d3 0-0 10 0-0-0 exd4 11 ♖xd4 ♖a5 gave Black sufficient counterplay in Biliskov-Postny, Zadar 2015.

4...dxe4 5 ♖d2 exf3 6 ♖xf3 ♖f6 7 ♖c4 ♖bd7

A new move, if clearly a solid and sensible choice. Previously Black had lost further time with 7...♖d5 and after 8 ♖h3 ♖xe3 9 ♖xe3 ♖h4+ 10 ♖f2 ♖e7 11 ♖f3 ♖h5 White likely had enough for his pawn in Oswaldo Valentin-Vela, Lima 2013.

8 0-0-0 ♖b6 9 ♖b3 a5!

Chris Duncan used to be a leading British Dragon aficionado, so clearly didn't fancy just sitting there as Black, gradually trying to soak up the pressure. Moreover, it can hardly be a bad idea to force White to move a pawn in the vicinity of his king.

10 a3 ♖e7 11 g4 0-0

The consistent 11...a4! was well worth flicking in, since after 12 ♖a2 0-0 White can no longer really consider allowing 13 c4! e5 14 dxe5 ♖xg4! 15 ♖g3 ♖xd1, and if 16 exf6 ♖xf6 17 ♖xd1 ♖e8 18 ♖c1 ♖d7 when it's Black, not White, who can look forward to attacking.

12 c4!



A brave and well-judged move, keeping the light-squared bishop active and provoking Black's next.

12...e5!

The thematic break and how else was Black supposed to activate his bishop?

13 dxe5 ♖xg4 14 ♖f2 ♖xd1?

Both sides have played some pretty fearless and decent chess so far, but this is wrong. White now gains a somewhat superior version of our last note. As such, Black should have gone back and after 14...♖fd7! 15 ♖gf3 g6 16 ♖hg1 ♖e6 everything would have been secure and the onus still on White to demonstrate



FM Chris Duncan blundered horribly against the young Swiss FM, Matthias Gantner, who is playing for White Rose while studying in Leeds

compensation for the missing pawn.

15 exf6 ♟xb3 16 fxe7 ♞xe7 17 ♟xb6

A key point and one most likely envisaged by the Leeds student and Swiss FM back at move 12.

17...♞e6

Spotting 17...♟xc4! 18 ♟xc4? ♞e4 was not so hard, but appreciating that 18 ♟c5 ♞e6 19 ♟xf8 ♞xf8 20 ♟gf3 (20 ♟xc4? ♞xc4+ 21 ♞c2 ♞d5 wins for Black) 20...♟d3 21 ♞d4 ♟g6 would have offered Black enough for a piece and been a better try than the game was not so easy.

18 ♟gf3



Now 18...♟xc4? would lose a piece to 19 ♞e1 ♞d5 20 ♞e5 ♞d3 21 ♟e1 as Black finds his offside bishop becoming something of an issue.

18...a4 19 ♟g1?

Gantner too still wants to attack, but this allows an awkward pin. Better would have been 19 ♟c5 ♞fd8 20 ♟d4, centralising, and if 20...♞e5 21 ♟b6 ♞d7 22 ♞e1 ♞h5 23 ♟2xb3 axb3 24 ♟xb3 with sufficient control and a plus for White.

19...♞f5 20 ♟xb3

White didn't have to take the bishop, but deciding on a retreat like 20 ♟f1 would not have been easy for a human to undertake.

20...axb3 21 ♟e5 ♞e6?

White is able to coordinate and soon whips up a deadly attack after this. As such, Black should have preferred 21...♞xf2 22 ♟xf2 ♞a4!. His rooks are far from inactive and he does have two extra pawns. Moreover, after, say, 23 ♞g4 ♞e8 24 ♟d7 f5 25 ♞d4 ♞e2 it quickly becomes clear that White is the side who will have to be careful to hold a draw.

22 ♞g3 g6 23 ♟d4

More aggressive than the also reasonable 23 ♞c3 h5 24 ♟f3 followed by picking off b3.

23...♞ad8



24 ♞c3?!

Played with a certain threat. Gantner presumably didn't like 24 ♟c3 ♞f5 25 ♞g2 h5 when Black has things covered, but in the cold light of day it becomes clear that 24 ♞f4! was correct, and if 24...f6 25 ♟xg6 ♞xc4+ 26 ♟c3! (and not 26 ♟b1? ♞d3+ 27 ♟a1 hxg6) 26...♞xf4+ 27 ♟xf4+ ♟f7 when the struggle would have lurched on, if most likely have landed up in an honourable draw.

24...♞f5??

A horrible oversight which decides the game on the spot. Black had to block the key diagonal with 24...f6: for example, 25 ♟g4?! (it wouldn't have been so easy to realise over the board, but 25 ♟xg6? hxg6 26 ♞xg6+ ♟h7 27 ♞g3 ♞e4 28 ♞h3+ ♟g6 29 ♞g3+ ♟f5! would have been pretty good for Black due to the check on f4; however, White might go 25 ♟f3 when 25...♞f5 26 c5 ♞f7 is murky, if likely a bit better for Black) 25...♞e4! 26 ♟xf6+ ♞xf6 27 ♟xf6 ♞d3 28 ♞e1 ♞f4+ 29 ♟b1 ♞xf6 with an extra pawn for the second player.

25 ♟g4

Suddenly there's nothing good to be done about the threat on h6.

25...♞c2+ 26 ♞xc2 bxc2 27 ♟h6# 1-0

In that 4-4 draw Harriet Hunt had defeated your scribe in another wild game, but was unable to play the Sunday too, meaning Blackthorne started one down against the ever-tough Barbican II. In the end and allowing for the default rules, they squeaked home 4-3½ thanks to wins from IMs Andrew Ledger and Richard Bates.

Elsewhere in round 2 the Sharks bounced

straight back to form, seeing off Cambridge 6-2, while White Rose destroyed South Wales Dragons 7½-½, Matthew Webb winning a lively King's Gambit. Having lost 4½-3½ in the opening round to Barbican II, the Dragons were left wondering if they would be relegated for a second season in a row (the leading Welsh side were only reprieved for the 2015/16 season after the unfortunate withdrawal of Sean Hewitt's e2e4).

Weekend Two

And so to late January and another weekend at Birmingham Airport, albeit with the Holiday Inn boasting of its welcome £200,000 upgrade (nicer rooms and a Marco Pierre White restaurant). Perhaps Guildford's 16-0 start was considered something of an overkill, even by a man as determined to win the league as Roger Emerson. Gawain Jones returned to the first team, but their average rating fell a little from 2532 to a still pretty handy 2495 (most first division sides don't even boast one player that high), as Lawrence Trent, despite his duties in Wijk, Gediminas Sarakauskas and Dagne Ciuksyte also came in.

Despite some deep preparation from Romain Edouard in his favourite Queen's Gambit Accepted, which on top board gave him the upper hand early on against Danny Gormally, Guildford were made to work for their 6-2 win against Blackthorne. Harriet Hunt, for instance, playing well to hold Gawain Jones, but wins for Trent, Hebden and Sarakauskas got the champions home.

The Sunday also began well for Roger Emerson's side, Simon Knott defaulting for Barbican II, but after that the captain's heart was to be severely tested. Edouard again won well on top board, but neither Sarakauskas nor Flear handled the opening situation particularly well; the former had to agree to an early repetition, while the latter, also some 200 points up on rating, found himself an exchange down, but solid enough to be able to draw.

The crowd began to sniff an upset as James Jackson went a pawn up against Gawain Jones, Mark Hebden blundered against Peter Poobalasingam and Dagne Ciuksyte found herself being outplayed by Ingrid Lauterbach. Thankfully for Guildford, Jones fought back to draw and Nick Pert's long grind against Martin Taylor bore fruit, which meant that the champions had survived a shock to run out 4½-2½ winners (Barbican losing a whole extra point for being unable to notify their opponents of the default in advance).

White Rose also weren't quite at their fluent best, but remained in second in Pool B after 5-3 and 6-2 victories over Grantham Sharks and Cambridge respectively. In the first of those matches James Adair found his king having to go on an early adventure, but in the 4NCL Adair is simply unstoppable: his king survived and he finished the weekend with 4/4 for the season. The smart money must surely now be on him making his third GM norm in just four years of 4NCL chess.

J.Adair-P.Roberson

White Rose vs Grantham Sharks
French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♖c3 ♜f6 4 e5 ♜fd7 5 f4 c5 6 ♜f3 ♜c6 7 ♙e3 a6 8 ♚d2 ♙e7 9 dxc5 ♜xc5 10 0-0-0 b5!?

Very rare, likely in view of White's next. However, 10...♙a5 11 ♖b1 b5 has been quite topical of late: for example, 12 ♙d3 (or 12 ♜e2!?) b4 13 ♜ed4 ♜e4 14 ♙e1 ♜xd4 15 ♜xd4 ♙d7 16 ♙d3 0-0 17 ♙xe4 dxe4, Mekhitarian-Barbosa, Brazilian Championship, Rio de Janeiro 2016; White can pick off e4, but in the meantime Black will get his a-pawn rolling and shouldn't be doing too badly) 12...♙d7 13 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 14 f5 ♙b4 15 ♙g5 ♙xc3 16 ♙xg7 0-0-0 17 bxc3 d4 and Nepomniachtchi-Meier, Dortmund 2015, unsurprisingly soon ended in perpetual check.

11 ♙f2 ♜a4! 12 ♜e2

And this natural move is already a novelty. White reroutes his knight towards d4 in standard Steinitz French style, rather than open up lines towards his own king.

12...♙c7 13 ♜ed4 ♜a5!

As befits a regular Modern Benoni adherent, Roberson is not afraid to attack, even at such an early stage.

14 ♖b1! ♜c4 15 ♙c1



15...♜axb2?

Extremely tempting, but Adair's judgement that his king would prove safe turns out to be correct. Instead, Black might have regrouped with 15...♜c5 or gone 15...♙b4! when matters would have been most unclear after, for instance, 16 c3 ♙xc3 17 bxc3 ♜xc3+ 18 ♖a1 ♜xd1 19 ♙c2 ♜f2 20 ♙xf2 ♜xe5!

16 ♙xb2 ♜xb2 17 ♖xb2 ♙a3+

The point of Roberson's play, giving up a second piece to make the white king undertake something of a trek.

18 ♖xa3 ♙c3+ 19 ♜b3 b4+ 20 ♖a4 ♙b2

Forcing White's next. Arguably 20...♙b8! was a better try, even if after 21 ♙c5 ♙b2 22 ♙b5+! ♙d7 (22...axb5+ 23 ♖xb4 keeps everything under control) 23 ♙xd7+ ♜d8! (and not 23...♖xd7? 24 ♙xd5+! when it's actually Black who gets mated) 24 ♖a5! ♙a3+ 25 ♙a4 ♙b5+ 26 ♙xb5 axb5



You may not recognise the face but you should know the name. James Adair is currently England's eighth highest graded player with an ECF of 250 on the January list.

27 ♖xb5 ♖c7 28 ♖c5 ♙xa4 29 ♖d4 White's king slides away and his extra material should eventually count.

21 ♖a5! ♙a3+ 22 ♖b6



22...♙d7

Roberson will never manage to involve the king's rook after this, but 22...0-0 23 ♖c5! would also have somewhat sub-optimal as the white king slips away just in the nick of time.

23 ♙c5 ♙c8 24 ♙a5 ♙b2 25 ♜c5

The human choice, although the fearless silicon sees nothing wrong with the greedy 25 ♙xa6! ♙c6+ 26 ♖a7 0-0 27 ♜fd4.

25...♙b8+

This doesn't particularly help matters, but 25...♙xc2 26 ♙d3! ♙c6+ 27 ♖b7 ♙xc5 28 ♙xc5 ♙xc5 29 ♙c1 ♙a5 30 ♙c2 0-0 31 ♜d4 would but have been a lost ending.

26 ♖a7 ♖e7

26...0-0!? was worth a try to scare White, although as good a calculator as Adair likely wouldn't have panicked and would have found 27 ♜xd7 ♙a8+ 28 ♖b6 ♙fc8 29 ♙xa6 ♙c3 30 ♙xc8 ♙xa5 31 ♖xa5b3+ 32 ♖b6 ♙xc8 33 axb3.

27 ♜xd7 ♖xd7

Finally Black has a threat, but there is still a way for White to do more than maintain his advantage.

28 ♙xd5+!

Hitting the nail fully on the head.

28...exd5 29 ♙xd5+ ♖e8

It's going to be mate too after 29...♖c7 30 ♙d6+ ♖c8 31 ♙xa6+.

30 ♙c6+ ♖d8 31 ♙d6+ ♖e8 32 ♙xb8+ ♖e7 33 ♙d6+ ♖e8 34 ♙xa6 1-0

At the other end of Pool B, Sussex Martlets look ripe for a swift return to the second tier after going down 5½-2½ to Barbican II and 7-1 to Blackthorne in January. In contrast, South Wales Dragons did their survival chances no harm at all. Despite being outrated on every board they out-muscled Cambridge to triumph 5-3, veteran IM John Cooper leading the way by grinding down Ravi Haria on top board. Moreover, the Dragons then held their own in a bloody-thirsty match with the Sharks which finished all square.

D.Grant-D.Ledger

Sussex Martlets vs Blackthorne Russia



After a game full of adventures Black has just removed White's final pawn on c5. It's a theoretical win, of course, but could you have won as smoothly as Dave Ledger and at the end of a long afternoon?

73 ♖c4 ♜d3 74 ♖c3 ♙d5

A good start, restricting the white king and so forcing it backwards.

75 ♖c2 ♖d4 76 ♖d2

76 ♖b1 ♖c3 77 ♖a1 would have been a better try, hiding in the 'wrong' corner. After 77...♜c1 78 ♖b1 ♜b3 79 ♖a2 ♙e4 the king is flushed out and crucially 80 ♖a3 ♙b1 81 ♖a4 ♜d4 82 ♖a5 (a better practical try than 82 ♖a3 ♜b5+ 83 ♖a4 ♖c4, which should be compared with the game, albeit with the board turned through 90 degrees) 82...♖c4 83 ♖b6 doesn't see it escaping, since 83...♜b5 84 ♖c6 ♙f5 85 ♖b6 ♙e4 shores up the bars of the cage.

76...♙b3

If you like aide memoires, this position might be remembered as the T-shape.

77 ♖e2 ♜e5 78 ♖d2

Again, White might have tried to run, but he wouldn't have got far after 78 ♖f2 ♖e4 79 ♖g3 ♙d1.

78...♜f3+ 79 ♖e2

79 ♖c1 was still worth a try, even if 79...♖c3 80 ♖b1 ♜d2+ 81 ♖a1 ♙c2 82 ♖a2 ♜b3 does but rather echo an early note.

79...♖e4

Now the white king is driven into the 'right' corner for Black's bishop.

80 ♖f2 ♙d1 81 ♖g3 ♜d4!

There's to be no escape.

82 ♖f2 ♙f3 83 ♖e1 ♖e3 84 ♖f1 ♜e2

85 ♖e1 ♜f4 86 ♖f1 ♜g2

Black preferred to play it safe with 7...h6 8 ♙g1 e5 9 ♙d2 e4 10 ♜h4 g6 11 h3 a6 in Nakamura-M.Muyzchuk, Gibraltar 2016, and after 12 0-0-0 b5 13 c5 ♙h2 14 ♙h1 ♙c7 15 f3 lines were opening in any case.

8 ♙g1 ♜xh2 9 ♜xh2 ♙xh2 10 ♙xg7 ♜f8 11 ♙g2 ♙d6



12 ♙d2

Preparing long castling so seems sensible, although the immediate 12 e4!? is also possible and after 12...♜g6 13 ♙g5 ♙e7 14 ♙e3 dxe4 15 0-0-0 f5 16 d5! matters were most unclear in Rapport-Eljanov, Biel 2015.

12...♙d7 13 e4 dxc4 14 ♙xc4 ♜g6 15 0-0-0

White enjoys attractive compensation for the pawn, although after 15...♙c7 followed by ...0-0-0 Black would have been pretty solid. Jameson, however, preferred to try and disrupt.

15...♜h4!? 16 ♙g4 h5 17 ♙g5 f6?

The critical mistake. Instead, 17...♙e7 18 ♙xe7 ♙xe7 19 ♙g1 0-0-0 20 f4 would have left everything to play for.

18 ♙xh4 fxg5 19 e5!



The blow Black must have missed.

19...♖f7

This runs into a further rook sacrifice, but it would soon have been all over in the event of 19...gxf4? 20 ♙g6+ ♖f8 21 ♙d3.

20 ♙dh1!

Even 20 ♙f4+!? was possible, and if 20...gxf4 21 ♙f5+ ♖e8 22 ♙g6+ ♖f8 23 exd6 followed by ♜e4.

20...gxf4?

This gets butchered, although in any case



South Wales Dragons did their chances of survival no harm at all. Despite being outrated on every board, they overcame Cambridge 5-3 with their top board, IM John Cooper, leading by example with a win over IM Ravi Haria

after 20...♙e7 21 ♙xh5 ♙xh5 22 ♙xh5 ♙g8 23 ♙h7+ ♖e8 24 ♜e4 one doubts that Black would have survived.

21 ♙f5+ ♖e8 22 ♙g6+ ♖f8 23 ♙h3

This rook lift swiftly proves decisive.

23...♙e8 24 ♙f3+ ♖e7 25 ♙f6# 1-0

Pool A

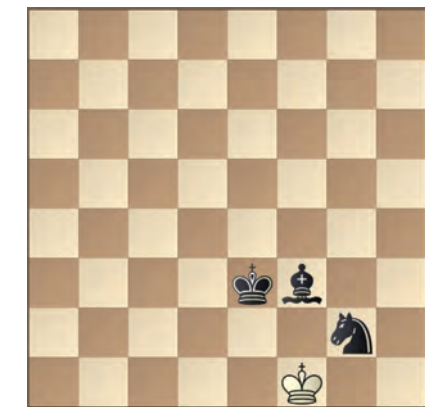
Cheddleton welcomed back captain Fiona Steil-Antoni for the second weekend as they ground down Wood Green 5-3 in determined fashion, aided by crushing early wins from Tamas Fodor and David Eggleston over David Fitzsimons and Benjamin Arvola. The former champions are far from the force of old, but are at least stronger than at this stage last season. Indeed, with Jon Speelman, who drew with David Howell in a Classical Dragon structure of all things, and John Shaw, who held Jonathan Hawkins, on the top boards, Wood Green averaged 2369 to Cheddleton's 2446.

Fellow leaders Barbican were missing Jonathan Parker, but now have Alan Merry in their ranks and warmed up for a top-of-the-table clash in round 4 by demolishing Spirit of Atticus 7-1. That one point for the Liverpool-based side must, however, be one of the best games our very own endgame expert has played in recent years.

N.Ivell-S.Collins

Spirit of Atticus vs Barbican
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♜f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♙e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0



The king's cage grows yet smaller as Dave Ledger finishes precisely.

87 ♙g1 ♙d5 88 ♖f1 ♖f3 89 ♙g1 ♙g3

90 ♖f1 ♙c4+ 91 ♙g1 ♜f4 92 ♖h1 ♙b5

93 ♙g1 ♜h3+ 94 ♖h1 ♙c6# 0-1

Fine technique.

P.Cumbers-D.Jameson

Grantham Sharks vs
South Wales Dragons
Semi-Slav Defence

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 e3 ♜f6 4 ♜c3 e6 5 ♜f3 ♜bd7 6 ♙c2 ♙d6 7 g4!?

The Shabalov-Shirov Attack.

7...♜xg4

Quite a rare choice in practice, if obviously quite critical. A few days later in Gibraltar



We'd like to think that our Executive Editor and the manager of the Guildford team, Roger Emerson (right), were studying a line in the Nimzo-Indian, but we secretly suspect they were checking the football scores.

9 h3 ♖a5 10 ♙c2 d5!?

A truly 21st century gambit, echoing the Marshall, although 10...c5 does remain the main line of the Chigorin, after which 11 d4 ♗c7 12 ♖bd2 ♙d7 13 ♜f1 ♖c4 14 b3 ♖b6 15 ♗e3 c4 16 ♙a3 ♗fe8 17 ♗d2 ♙f8 was all fairly standard and about equal in So-Carlsen, Doha 2015.

11 ♗xe5

Not the most common choice by some margin, but a very sensible decision when encountering 10...d5 for the first time over the board. More greedy would be 11 exd5 when 11...e4 12 ♙xe4 ♗xe4 13 ♗xe4 ♙b7 sees Black regaining one pawn and enjoying decent activity for the other.

11...dxe4 12 d4



12...♙b7?

Sam Collins is normally very well prepared, so may have mixed up his lines. Now e4 comes under pressure, so Black should prefer to strike out with 12...c5.

13 ♖d2 c5 14 ♗xe4 cxd4 15 ♗xf6+ ♙xf6 16 cxd4 ♗c8 17 ♙f5

Taking stock, the opening has not gone particularly well for Black. His pieces aren't so badly placed, but fail to fully compensate for White's extra pawn.

17...♗d5 18 ♙e4

Naturally White is happy to exchange pieces.

18...♗d6 19 ♙xb7 ♗xb7 20 ♙f4 ♗fe8?!

Rather listless. Black would have had better chances to resist with 20...♗d5, and if 21 ♗f3 ♗xf3 22 ♗xf3 ♗fd8 23 ♗ac1 h6, grim though his position remains.

21 ♗f3!

Now it's White who controls some key light squares with this active choice (and not 21 ♗d3 as wrongly input in the official score).

21...♗b6



22 ♗d7!?

A Fischer-like decision and a good one in my view; Ivell returns the extra pawn to force an extremely promising endgame. Normally such decisions are accompanied with an exclamation mark, but here 22 ♗ad1 ♖d6 23 d5 also seems very strong, since something like 23...♙xe5 24 ♙xe5 ♗d8 25 ♗g3 ♖f5 26 ♗a3 dashes Black's hopes of a successful blockade.

22...♗xd4 23 ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 24 ♗d1

The point of White's play: a double attack.

24...♗e4 25 ♗xf6+ gxf6 26 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♙h6

And this is the second point: White enjoys the superior minor piece and the better

structure, not to mention the safer king and an active rook.

27...♗h4

27...♗e6!? might have been more stubborn. It does allow 28 ♗d7 ♖d6 29 ♗d8+, but after 29...♗e8 30 g4 f5 31 g5 f6 Black can unravel to an extent.

28 ♙e3 ♗g7 29 ♗d7 ♖a5 30 b3!

Good prophylaxis, keeping the knight under control before identifying targets.

30...♗e4 31 ♗a7 ♗e6 32 ♙d2 ♖c6

Black might have tried to simplify with 32...b4, although White doesn't have to take. Indeed, 33 ♗f1!? followed by expanding on the kingside looks quite unpleasant for Black who continues to have to take good care of his king.

33 ♗xa6 ♗d6 34 ♙f4 ♗d1+ 35 ♗h2 ♖b4



At the cost of a pawn, Black has managed to drum up some activity, although unfortunately for him White remains in full control of the position.

36 ♗b6! ♖d5 37 ♗d6 ♗f8?

Sam Collins has played and will play many better games. This further slip speeds up the end. Instead, 37...b4 would still have offered Black some hope of eventually saving the game after, say, 38 g4 ♗f8 39 ♙g3 ♗e7 40 ♗a6 ♖c3 41 ♗g2 ♗d3.

38 a4!

Having been right on the ball from the word go, Ivell was never going to miss this. The a-pawn is more than Black can handle.

38...♗d3 39 a5 ♗e7 40 a6 1-0

If Barbican were to have a chance of disturbing the status quo at the top of the league, their Sunday match was to be pretty important. However, Cheddleton have formed a real team spirit in recent seasons, partly due to a collective desire to qualify for the European Club Cup. Howell and Hawkins won well on the top boards, with further victories for Vladimir Hamitevici and Fiona Steil-Antoni helping last year's runners-up to a 5½-2½ win, with only Isaac Sanders replying for the Londoners.

Elsewhere in this pretty competitive pool Guildford II edged out Oxford 4½-3½ before drawing a pretty evenly-rated encounter with 3Cs. Star player Christian Bauer came up with some attacking magic, but Alberto Suarez Real replied for Roger Emerson's men.

Y.F.Zhou-C.Bauer
 Guildford II vs 3Cs
Pirc Defence

1 e4 d6 2 f3 d6 3 d4 f6 4 c3 g6
 From the Nimzowitsch to the Pirc.

5 e3 g7 6 h3 0-0 7 a4 b6
 Far from forced, but by merely hinting at setting up a Hippo formation (...e6, ...b7, ...d7 and ...d7), Bauer spurs Zhou into committal action.

8 d5!? b4 9 a5 bxa5
 9...b7? 10 a6 c8 11 b1 would not have been wise, but after the text Black will obtain a decent enough Benoni or Dragon-type position should White take on c6 en passant.

10 xa5 c5 11 a3 d8
 There was also nothing much wrong with 11...e6, and if 12 dx6 xe6 13 e2 e7 followed by ...d5, but Bauer wants to retain the tension in a bid to exploit his extra 150 rating points.

12 a4?!
 Sending the knight out on a limb in a bid to trap its compatriot. However, White must have overestimated his position or underestimated what follows. Better was 12 c4 followed by 0-0, d2 and maybe fa1, with a small edge.

12...f5! 13 c3 fxe4 14 g5 d3+ 15 xd3 exd3 16 xd3 c7



Something of a transformation has occurred and the French GM must have been delighted, since he excels in such creative and dynamic positions.

17 h4?
 Far too ambitious and only one king will get into trouble after this. White should have played against the knight on c7 with 17 c4 f5 18 d2 h6 19 f3 g5 20 0-0!, which might still have been OK for him, as if 20...hx3? 21 gx5.

17...f5 18 d2 b8 19 f3 e8! 20 c4
 Black's last had prepared to meet 20 0-0 with 20...b5 21 d1 c4, threatening the h4-pawn as well as ...h6, but arguably better this for White than what now occurs.

20...b4 21 b3 b8 22 a2 h6 23 h3
 A most sub-optimal retreat, but White would have been butchered after 23 d4 xd5! 24 cxd5 xe4 25 fxe4 xe4.

23...e6!



Our endgame columnist Nick Ivell (left) proved his credentials, by liquidating an advantage and going into an endgame to get the full point against IM Sam Collins.

Ripping open further lines. White has been totally outplayed.

24 dx6 xe6 25 d2
 Allowing a strong exchange sacrifice, but it's hard to view something like 25 0-0 d4 26 xd4 xd4+ 27 f2 d5! as an improvement.
25...d4! 26 f2
 Of course, 26 xb4? cxb4 badly embarrasses the rook on a3 and already White might well have resigned.
26...c2 27 g4



27...xg4!
 True to style, Bauer finds a way to finish crisply.
28 xc2 xf3+ 29 g2 b7 30 xc5 g3+! 0-1

It's shortly going to be mate after 31 xg3 f3+ 32 h2 xh3+ 33 g1 d4+.

3Cs followed up by butchering the hapless White Rose II 6½-1½, which was half a point more than Oxford had managed against the same opposition the day before. Another side destined to land up in the relegation pool are Spirit of Atticus, who went down 6-2 to Wood Green on the Sunday, Nick Ivell this time finding himself on the wrong side of a scintillating attacking display from John Shaw.

J.Shaw-N.Ivell
 Wood Green vs Spirit of Atticus
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 f3 e6 3 b3 c6 4 b2 a6 5 c4 d6 6 d4 cxd4 7 xd4 d7 8 c3 f6 9 e2 e7 10 0-0 0-0 11 h1 b6 12 c2!

Keeping pieces on to emphasise the Maroczy Bind. While Black's position is fully playable, he is some way from realising ...b5 or ...d5 and White should stand a little better.

12...c7 13 f4 ad8
 13...fe8 14 d3 ac8 would be a more normal set-up, perhaps, but after 15 f3 a5 16 g4! White would be pretty quick.

14 d3 c8 15 e3 b4 16 b1 b6
 Ivell prepares to regroup in classic Scheveningen style, but that knight on e3 continues to stymie Black's hopes of an active break.

17 a3 c6 18 d3 b7 19 c1 b8?
 The wrong way to deal with the positional threat of d5. 19...b8! would have avoided it and continued the standard regrouping, although even here Black looks a little slow after 20 g4!?



20 d5!

Olé!

20...exd5 21 cxd5 ♖a7 22 ♖f5

Black is a piece up, but that's the end of the good news. Indeed, do just note White's powerful centre, excellently placed pieces and attacking potential.

22...♗fe8 23 ♗f3

Far from terrible, but 23 e5! dxe5 24 fxe5 would have been an immediate knockout, as if 24...♗xd5 25 ♖h5 and there's absolutely no way that the black king is going to survive.

23...♙c8

Trying to bring one of his three offside pieces into play. Initially the engine touts 23...♙f8, but then it begins to appreciate the strength of 24 ♗xg7! ♙xg7 25 e5.

24 ♗xe7+!

Simple chess. And very strong chess to boot.

24...♗xe7 25 ♙xf6 gxf6 26 ♗g3+ ♙f8

Running away won't particularly help matters, but 26...♙h8 would have been cleaned up by 27 ♖h5 ♗g8 28 ♗xg8+ ♙xg8 29 e5.

27 ♖h5 ♗c7 28 ♗e1 ♙e7 29 e5!



Finally the breakthrough arrives and with maximum impact.

29...dxe5 30 fxe5

30 ♗g7! ♗f8 31 fxe5 would have prevented the defence Black now employs.

30...♗xd5 31 exf6+ ♙d6 32 ♖f3 ♙e6 33 ♙e4!

We've already appreciated a fine piece of meistering from Nick Ivell himself in these pages and this too has been a lovely display from John Shaw. Here too I shall assume there's been an input error (please tighten your act 4NCL!), and that White didn't allow Black the possibility of 33 ♙c4? ♗xc4 34 bxc4 ♗d4.

33...♖d8 34 ♙xd5 ♙xd5 35 ♖xd5+!

The human way to finish crisply, even if the machine does make a good case too for 35 ♖f4+ ♙c6 36 ♗c3+ ♙b7 37 ♗xc7+ ♖xc7 38 ♗e7.

35...♙xd5 36 ♗d3+ 1-0



GM John Shaw of Wood Green put on a fine attacking display against Nick Ivell to help his team to a comfortable 6-2 win over Spirit of Atticus



IM Harriet Hunt doesn't play as much these days, but still finds time to turn out for Blackthorne Russia I in the 4NCL, and with impressive results. Unfortunately, we don't know the name of her son but we're guessing if he decides to take up the game it won't be long before we learn it!