

## 4NCL Telford - Weekend 1 (by Steve Burke)

Unlike the last few seasons, there was something of the feel of starting a new school (rather than simply returning from the holidays) about last weekend's season opener. The familiar drive down the M1 to Daventry was replaced by the somewhat more varied scenery of the A38 and A5 and, despite a 15 minute holdup for a small hole at the side of the road, we arrived in good time.



The hotel was easy to spot and, after negotiating the car parking procedure, we set off to explore the new surroundings. The playing rooms looked fine, with plenty of space and good lighting, and the tables outside them well stocked with water.



I didn't have a camera with me, but the Hotel's own photographs show the surroundings nicely.

Both rounds were preceded by the usual talk from the arbiter on the logistics. Each time enhanced by a demonstration of the new security procedures. Playing in a different room each day, I had the benefit of seeing two different performances - this was when the lack of a camera was felt most!

Once the chess started, the playing conditions proved to be very good. Not too hot or cold, very quiet, and the water supplies remained well stocked throughout, so far as I could tell.

## **The Chess**

A further change for this season is, of course, the splitting of the old Division 3 into Division 3 South and Division 4. The former taking the same format as the top two divisions and introducing a different feel to the event for those of us involved – and I suspect an added incentive to those playing in Division 4 this year.

My general impression is that the two groups of Division 3 South will be much more closely contested than it seemed at the end of last season. In Pool A the average rating varied from Shropshire (2141) to The Rookies (1955), while in Pool B it was even closer from Surbiton (2072) to BCM Rhinos (1948).

Meanwhile in Division 4, there seems to be a dichotomy between the eight teams who are roughly 1880+ and those below 1700-ish, with a couple in-between. However there are a lot of juniors playing and it will be interesting to see how things develop.

### **Division 3 South**

Pool A favourites, Shropshire, didn't have things all their own way, drawing two hard fought matches. Performance of the weekend for this group was probably Midland Monarchs win over Oxford (who bounced back to draw with Shropshire the following day). West is Best are the early leaders of the pool as the only team with 4 points, while all the teams gained at least 1 point.

Given the closer ratings in Pool B, it is somewhat surprising that we have three teams on 4 points (Surbiton, Wessex and Ashfield-Breadsall) and three yet to get off the mark. Though the spread of game points isn't dissimilar to Pool A and almost all the matches went "with rating". So I'd expect to see this group tighten up too in the coming rounds. The upset of the weekend in Pool B was BCM Rhinos win over Warwickshire Select.

### **Division 4**

The "top eight" are currently occupying most of the top 10 places, but there are a couple of teams around 1800 (Cambridge University and Hackney) who are currently also in amongst that top group.

In Round 1 there were a couple of upsets with Iceni 1 losing to Throw in the Tal 1, whilst there was an even more impressive win for Sussex Martlets against Barnet Knights 1 (the only team rated over 2000 in the division). In Round 2, Iceni 2 beat BCM Hippos to "balance the books" for the Iceni.

The two teams that provided the upsets in Round 1, Throw in the Tal 1 and Sussex Martlets, are joined by The Full Ponty (the second highest rated team) on 4 points.

### **Star Game**

I propose to pick one game from each weekend to analyse and publish here. It might be a very good game in itself, or important as part of a team performance, or just something that takes my eye. If you have any contenders, please let me know.

At the risk of losing my newfound “ace reporter” role, I’m going to start with Mike Truran’s defeat by Maria Manelidou from Greece. It was a one of the games that contributed to Midland Monarchs upset win over Oxford 2, and I hope you will agree was an exciting battle.

The following position after white’s 20<sup>th</sup> move is a taster!

Any idea what the opening was?



My analysis is backed by the tactical skills of Komodo 9, but I do try to understand and point out why its moves may be preferable. One thing to look out for, which I noticed when annotating the game, is that most of the suggested improvements in this game are either developing or attacking moves – something to ponder for us all.

**Manelidou, Maria (2081) - Truran, Michael C (2190) [B22]**

**4NCL Div 3 South, Pool A (Telford) 14.11.2015**

***[Burke, Steven J & Komodo 9]***

**1.e4 c5 2.d4 cxd4 3.c3 Nf6 4.e5 Nd5 5.Bc4 Qc7 6.Qe2 Nb6 7.Bb3 Nc6 8.Nf3 d5 9.exd6 Qxd6**  
Diagram



**10.0-0?! As the game shows, it was dangerous to allow the d-pawn to advance, so 10.cxd4 Bg4 when 11.Bxf7+!?** leads to a very long variation. (A simpler option would be *11.Be3 e6 12.0-0 Be7 13.Nc3 0-0 14.Rfd1=*) *11...Kxf7 12.Ng5+ Kg8 13.Qxg4 Nxd4 14.0-0 Nc2 15.Nf7 Qg6 16.Qxg6 hxg6 17.Nxh8 Kxh8 18.Bg5 Nxa1 19.Rc1 Rc8 20.Nc3+/=*

**10...d3 11.Qe4?!=/+** This looks logical, allowing room for white to bring out her queenside pieces, but Komodo suggests white must play 11.Qe3 to keep her opening advantage, e.g. *11...Bf5 12.Na3 e6 13.Nh4 Qc5 14.Qxc5 Bxc5 15.Nxf5 exf5 16.Re1+ Kf8 17.Be3 Nd7 18.Rad1+/=* completing development.

**11...Qg6 12.Qxg6 hxg6 13.Ng5 Nd8!?!=** Diagram



Black could have returned the pawn for a lead in development with *13...e6 14.Rd1 Bd7 15.Rxd3 Ne5 16.Rd1 Be7=/+*

**14.a4?** Komodo shows the best way for white is active play on both flanks, but it's not immediately obvious, *14.Na3! f6* (White regains the pawn easily after *14...Bd7 15.Rd1 f6 16.Ne4 Bc6 17.Nc5 e5 18.Nxd3=*) *15.Nb5!* (*15.Ne4?! Bf5 16.Ng3 e5 17.Rd1 Bxa3 18.bxa3 Rc8 19.Nxf5 gxf5 20.Rxd3=/+*) *15...Kd7 16.Nf7* (There is even a piece sacrifice here, *16.Rd1!?! fxg5 17.Bxg5* and black needs to find here *17...Ne6! 18.Bxe6+ Kxe6 19.Nc7+ Kf7 20.Nxa8 Nxa8 21.Rxd3~/=*) *16...Nxf7 17.Bxf7 a6 18.Na3 g5 19.Nc4 Nxc4 20.Bxc4 e5 21.Bxd3=]*



**14...f6=/+** Black could take the opportunity to bring out his bishop, before the knight is forced back to d7 blocking it in. So 14...Bf5! 15.a5 Nd7 16.Be3 f6 17.Nf3 e5=/+

**15.a5 Nd7 16.Nf3 e5 17.Bc4 e4 18.Re1 f5 19.Bf4 Nc5 20.Ne5** Diagram



**20...g5!? 21.Bxg5 Nde6?** Black can prevent the Ng6! idea in the next note by preparing this with 21...Bd6! 22.Bf4 Nde6 23.Bb5+ Nd7 24.Nf7 Kxf7 25.Bxd6 Rd8=/+

**22.Be3?-/+** A natural reaction, but better is to counter-attack with 22.Ng6! temporarily blocking the advance of the g-pawn. Then 22...Rh5 23.Be3 Bd6 Here white seems to come out of the complications with an advantage after 24.h3! (A solid option is 24.g3 Kf7 25.Nf4 Bxf4 26.gxf4=) 24...Kf7 25.Nf4 Rh4 26.b4 g5 27.Ne2 Na6 28.Nd4 Kf6 29.Nd2+/=

**22...Bd6! 23.f4** Diagram



**23...Bxe5=/+** Black can keep a (probably) winning advantage with 23...g5! but it is very complicated and has many long variations, e.g. 24.Bd4 (24.g3?? gxf4 25.gxf4 Bxe5 26.fxe5-+ looks similar to the game, but black has exchanged his g7-pawn for the white one on g2. The open g-file makes it very much better for him.) 24...Nxd4 (24...gxf4 25.Bb5+ Bd7 26.Nxd7 Nxd4 27.cxd4 Nxd7 28.Bxd3 0-0-0 29.Bc4 f3-/+ ) 25.cxd4 Ne6 26.Bb5+ Kf8!! 27.Ng6+ Kg7 28.Nxh8 Nxd4 29.Bxd3 exd3 30.Re8 Nb3 31.Ra4 gxf4-/+

24.fxe5 Bd7 25.b4 Na6 26.Bd5 Nd8 27.Nd2 Be6 28.Bxe6 Nxe6 29.Nc4 Diagram



29...f4?!= Black retains an edge by maintaining his pawn chain with 29...g6 For example 30.Nd6+ Kd7 31.Nxb7 Nac7 32.Bd2 a6=/+

30.Nd6+ Ke7 31.Bc1 e3 32.Bxe3 fxe3 33.Rxe3 Nf4 34.g3 Nh3+ 35.Kg2 Raf8 36.Ra2 Diagram



36...Ke6?+/= After a lot of good play by both sides, I guess that the clock may have had something to do with black's demise over this move and the next.

Best here was 36...Nc7! activating the queenside knight, e.g. 37.Rxd3 (37.Nxb7?? Nd5 38.Rxd3 Ndf4+ 39.gxf4 Nxf4+ 40.Kg1 Nxd3-+) 37...Rh5 38.Nxb7 Ne6 39.Re3 Rg5! 40.Rd2 (40.Kxh3?? Nf4+ 41.Kh4 Rg6! 42.g4 Rh6+ 43.Kg3 Rh3+ 44.Kf2 Nd5+ 45.Kg2 Rxe3-+) 40...Nhf4+ 41.Kh1 Ng6~/=

However all that is very complex, so perhaps the easier way to keep near equality might be to activate the other knight and rook with 36...Ng5 37.Nxb7 Rc8 38.Rxd3 Ne4~/=

37.Rxd3 b6?? This allows white to acquire a decisive pair of passed pawns on the queenside. Black could hold the queenside together with 37...Rd8! 38.Rad2 Rd7 and the game goes on,

e.g. 39.Nb5 Rxd3 40.Rxd3 Ng5 41.Nxa7 (41.Rd6+!? Kxe5 42.Rd7 Ne4 43.Rxg7 Kd5~/=) 41...Nc7=

**38.axb6 axb6 39.Nc4!** Black would get at least a draw after the "obvious" 39.Rxa6? Rf2+ 40.Kh1=

**39...Nc7 40.Nxb6 g5 41.Nd7 Rd8** Diagram



**42.Rad2!+-** This is good, but even better is the immediate 42.Nc5+!! Kxe5 (42...Ke7? 43.Rad2) 43.Rxd8 Rxd8 44.Kxh3+-

**42...g4 43.Nc5+ Ke7 44.Rd7+ Rxd7 45.Rxd7+ Ke8 46.Rxc7 Rh5 47.Nd3 1-0** Diagram

