

Guildford's 25 Years in the 4NCL: Part I

Nigel Povah and Roger Emerson chronicle the rise of their 4NCL powerhouse team

In this series of articles we will cover the history of Guildford teams in Division One of the 4NCL over the past 25 years, from small beginnings to the powerful squad of the late teens of the 21st century. In many ways this growth has mirrored the expansion of the 4NCL itself into a large, successful and well-managed organisation. While we are now pulling back from our sponsorship, we are confident that the 4NCL itself will continue strongly into the future.

Guildford first entered the 4NCL in 1996 with a team headed up by IMs Andrew Martin, Andrew Kinsman, Nigel Povah and Mark Ferguson, but sponsorship from Nigel didn't commence until the 1999/2000 season when GMs Stuart Conquest, James Plaskett, Daniel King, Jonathan Rowson and Danny Gormally joined the ranks. This enabled Guildford to establish itself as a mid-table team in the highly competitive 4NCL first division.

Slough won the league that year, but Wood Green ran them close, as they had managed to recruit Alexander Morozevich and Nigel Short amongst others. We were due to play Wood Green in round 10 and a discussion arose as to who would play top board with White against Nigel, who was making his first ever appearance in the 4NCL. Jim Plaskett was very keen to take him on, as they had played a number of online blitz games in a particular variation of the Tarrasch French, and Jim felt he had good chances in this line.

J.Plaskett-N.Short

Guildford vs Wood Green, 4NCL 2000



Plaskett now played **18...c2!** with the

idea of **18...c2!**, so Nigel avoids the hit with **18...c2!** which also vacates d5 for his knight. **19...c2!**

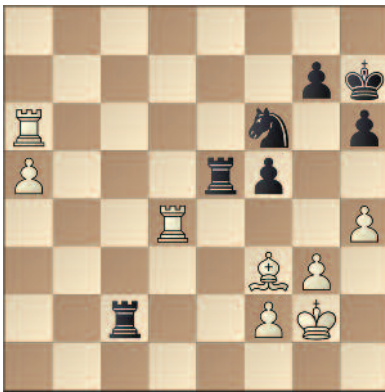
This was played after a long think as Jim was clearly trying to formulate a plan. Much better was **19...c2!** with threats of **19...c2!** followed by **19...c2!**: for example, **19...c2!** **20...c2!** **21...c2!** **22...c2!** **23...c2!** **24...c2!** **25...c2!** **26...c2!** **27...c2!** **28...c2!** **29...c2!** **30...c2!** **31...c2!** **32...c2!** **33...c2!** **34...c2!** **35...c2!** **36...c2!** **37...c2!** **38...c2!** **39...c2!** **40...c2!** **41...c2!** **42...c2!** **43...c2!** **44...c2!** **45...c2!** **46...c2!** **47...c2!** **48...c2!** **49...c2!** **50...c2!** **51...c2!** **52...c2!** **53...c2!** **54...c2!** **55...c2!** **56...c2!** **57...c2!** **58...c2!** **59...c2!** **60...c2!** **61...c2!** **62...c2!** **63...c2!** **64...c2!** **65...c2!** **66...c2!** **67...c2!** **68...c2!** **69...c2!** **70...c2!** **71...c2!** **72...c2!** **73...c2!** **74...c2!** **75...c2!** **76...c2!** **77...c2!** **78...c2!** **79...c2!** **80...c2!** **81...c2!** **82...c2!** **83...c2!** **84...c2!** **85...c2!** **86...c2!** **87...c2!** 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30 ♖f7+ ♔g5 31 h4+ ♔h6 (31...♙xh4 32 ♖f6+ picks up the rook) 32 g4 and Black cannot escape the mating net.

From 2000/01 onwards, sponsorship was increased with Nigel Povah's company, Assessment & Development Consultants, providing the funding. The team was rebranded Guildford-A&DC but still struggled to compete with the might of Beeson Gregory and Slough, as well as the rising star Wood Green. Stuart Conquest had an excellent season, often playing on board one and scoring an undefeated 9/11. He produced this very nice finish against Douglas Bryson.

S.Conquest-D.Bryson

Guildford-A&DC vs Poisoned Pawns,
4NCL 2001



Bryson has just played 44...♙h7 and Stuart now finds a nice sequence to force his a-pawn home:

45 ♖xf6!! gxf6 46 ♖d7+ ♔h8
Clearly not 46...♙g6?? 47 h5+ ♙g5 48 ♖g7#. **47 a6 ♖a2 48 a7 ♖ea5 49 ♖d8+ 1-0**

In 2001/02 GM Tony Kosten joined the Guildford-A&DC ranks and immediately made a positive contribution, scoring 7/10 operating on one of the top three boards, including this win against Paul Littlewood.

P.Littlewood-A.Kosten

Guildford-A&DC vs Wood Green II,
4NCL 2001



Black is a pawn behind, but he has managed to damage White's kingside so the position is roughly equal. However, Tony



Stuart Conquest was a key member of the Guildford team once Nigel Povah had become captain, and often led well from the front.

hopes he might be able to create some play. One thing that is true about Tony: he is a fighter and not known to give up easily.

29 ♖bd1 ♙g7 30 h4

This weakens the white king position. 30 ♖a1, preparing to mobilise the a-pawn, was a better try.

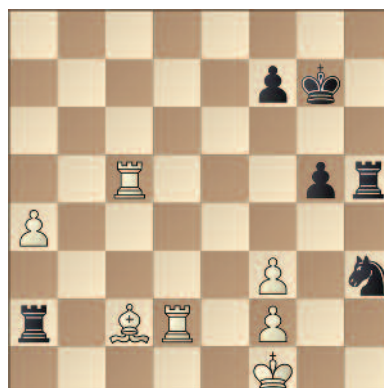
30...♖f5 31 ♖1d3 ♖c1+ 32 ♙h2 ♖h5

Black eyes up the weak f4-square.

33 ♖e3 ♖f1 34 ♙g2 ♖a1 35 ♙c2 ♖f4+ 36 ♙h2 ♖f6 37 a4 h6 38 ♖d1 ♖a2 39 ♖c3 ♖e6? 39...♖e2! was best: 40 ♖c7 ♖xf3 41 ♙g2 ♖aa3 with an edge for Black. **40 ♖d2**

40 ♙b3! ♖xf2+ 41 ♙g3 ♖e2+ 42 ♙xf2 ♖xc3 43 ♖d3 ♖c6 is very promising for White, as the exchange of a pair of rooks reduces the danger to the white king and he can now try to exploit his passed a-pawn.

40...g5 41 hxg5 hxg5 42 ♖c5 ♖h6+ 43 ♙g1 ♖h3+ 44 ♙f1 ♖h5

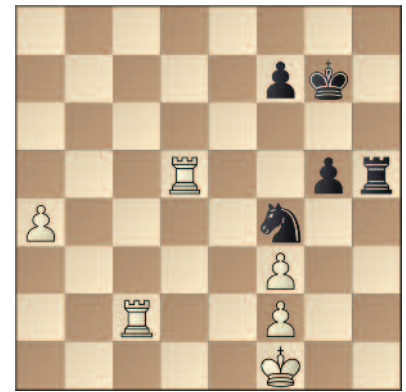


A rather passive looking move, but it anticipates White's reply.

45 ♖dd5 ♖xc2!

A clever resource, but 45...♖f4! was even better: 46 ♖xg5+ ♙f8! when the twin back rank mating threats force 47 ♙e1 ♖xg5 48 ♖xg5 ♖xc2, which is superior to in the game as the white king is prevented from joining the action.

46 ♖xc2 ♖f4



47 ♖xg5+ ♖xg5

Black now has a won position and it is just a matter of technique, although White does at least have his a-pawn.

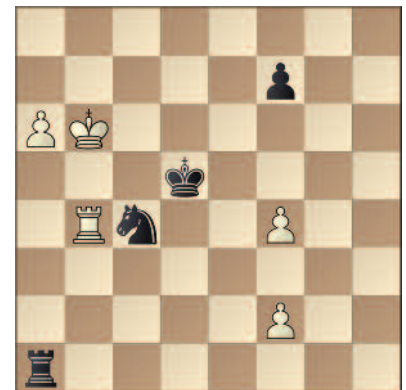
48 ♖c4 ♖g6 49 ♙e2 ♖g1 50 f4 ♙f6 51 ♙f3 ♖h4+ 52 ♙e4 ♖e1+

52...♖g6! was better.

53 ♙d5 ♖a1 54 ♙c6 ♖f5

Or 54...♖g6 55 ♙b6 ♖e7 56 a5 ♖d5+ 57 ♙b5 ♙e6 and wins.

55 ♙b6 ♖d6 56 ♖b4 ♙e6 57 a5 ♙d5 58 a6 ♖c4+



59 ♙b7?

59 ♙a7! was more tricky, although Black is fine if he plays 59...♖d6 60 ♖b3 ♖c1! 61 ♙b6 ♖c6+! 62 ♙a7 when Black's rook and knight are beautifully co-ordinated to hold up the advance of the a-pawn and allowing him to activate his king: 62...♙e4 63 ♖e3+ (not 63 ♖b6?? ♖c8+ and 63 ♖b4+ ♙f5 64 ♖b3 ♙xf4 65 ♖e3 f5 66 ♖b3 ♙e5 is similar to what now follows) 63...♙xf4 64 ♖e2 ♙f3 65 ♖a2 f5 66 ♙b8 f4 67 ♖a4 (clearly not 67 a7?? ♖c8#) 67...♙g4 68 ♙a7 ♙f5 69 f3 ♙e5 70 ♖a1 ♖d4 71 ♖a2 ♙e3 72 ♖a3+ ♙e2 when Black aims to give up his knight for the a-pawn with a winning rook and pawn ending.

59...♙c5!

The rook has no safe squares.

60 ♖xc4+ ♙xc4 61 a7 f5 62 a8 ♖xa8 63 ♙xa8 ♖d3 64 ♙b7 ♙e2 65 ♙c6 ♙xf2 66 ♖d5 ♙f3 67 ♙e5 ♙g4 0-1

Winning by the single tempo.

It wasn't until 2002/03 when the addition of Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova, fellow GMs Mark Hebden, Glenn Flear, Joe Gallagher and Eric Prié, as well as IM Alexander Cherniaev, ensured that Guildford-A&DC could finally muster a strong challenge to the top seeds, Wood Green, but it still

wasn't sufficient to prevent Wood Green securing their first title. Indeed the two sides went on to have a number of hard-fought, last-round clashes over the next four years.

In 2003/04 it was Guildford-A&DC's turn to win the league for the first time with a final round 4½-3½ victory over Wood Green, thanks to impressive wins from Emil Sutovsky and Danny King, who scored a stunning 9½/10 throughout the season. Alexander Cherniaev also had a good season for Guildford, scoring an impressive 8/10, which included a solid draw against Luke McShane in the final crunch match with Wood Green and enabled him to secure his final GM norm.

E.Sutovsky-A.Morozevich

Guildford-A&DC v Wood Green,
4NCL 2004
Sicilian Rossolimo

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♙c6 3 ♚b5 ♘f6 4 e5

4 ♘c3 is the most popular move here.

4...♙d5 5 0-0 a6?!

5...♙c7 is the more natural continuation.

6 ♙xc6 dxc6 7 ♘g5!?

Sutovsky plays in his typical enterprising style, moving his only developed piece a second time to target the weak f7-square.

7...♙c7

Both players praised this move after the game. One wonders what Sutovsky intended after 7...h6 since 8 ♙h5?! (8 ♙e4 is best with equality) 8...g6 9 ♙h4 e6 sees the knight having to retreat when Black is better. **8 c4**



Sutovsky continues with his direct play.

8...♙b4?!

Morozevich decides on a forcing variation. 8...♙f4! was much safer: 9 d4! ♙e6 10 d5 (10 ♙e6?! ♙xe6 11 d5 cxd5 12 cxd5 0-0-0 13 ♙f4 ♙xd5 is much better for Black) 10...♙xg5 11 ♙xg5 cxd5 12 cxd5 ♙xe5 13 ♙e3 offers dynamic play for the material.

9 a3 ♙d3 10 ♘xf7

Sutovsky had spent a lot of time examining the various lines and only had about 30 minutes left at this stage to reach move 40.

10...♙g8?!

Morozevich is hoping to weather the storm, but he seems to misjudge the coming danger. Both players saw 10...♙xf7 11 ♙f3+ ♙g8 12 ♙xd3 ♙xe5 was possible, with a position that slightly appears to favour White

due to Black's disrupted position despite his bishop-pair.

11 ♙f3 ♙d7

White is already winning after 11...♙e6 12 ♙g5 ♙xc4 13 ♙e4 ♙xe5 14 ♙e1 h6 15 ♙h3 and 11...♙xe5?? 12 ♙f4.

12 ♙d6+!

12 e6 was the main alternative: 12...♙xe6 13 ♙xd3 ♙xf7 14 ♙b3 with an edge. However, not 14 ♙xh7? ♙f5 15 ♙h4 g5 16 ♙g3 0-0-0 and Black is clearly on top.

12...exd6 13 ♙xd3 dxe5

After the game both players thought 13...♙f5 was best, but the engines still prefer White after 14 ♙b3 b5 15 d3 ♙e6 16 exd6 ♙xd6 17 ♙c3.

14 ♙xh7 ♙f7 15 ♙e1 ♙e6

15...♙e7 16 ♙xe5 ♙f8 17 ♙h5 is only a little better for White.

16 ♙d3!



Repatriating the queen and keeping the black king in the centre. Not 16 ♙xe5? inviting trouble after 16...♙d6 17 ♙e3 0-0-0.

16...♙d8?!

This leaves the king stuck in the centre. 16...♙xc4 17 ♙xe5+ ♙e7 18 ♙e3 ♙d7 19 d3 ♙d5 20 ♙c3 ♙d6 21 ♙g5 ♙ae8 22 ♙e4, when White is clearly better, was probably a better defence than in the game.

17 ♙g3 ♙d6?

The engines prefer 17...♙f5, tempting White to play 18 ♙xe5 ♙f6 intending ...♙d6 with tempo: 19 ♙e3 ♙f7 20 ♙e4 ♙f5 and Black is fighting back.

18 ♙c3 e4 Black cannot allow ♙e4.

19 ♙e3 ♙xh2+

Desperation as if 19...♙h8 20 h3.

20 ♙xh2 ♙h8+ 21 ♙g1 ♙h5



Despite being short of time, Sutovsky

calmly defends.

22 f4! ♙h2+ 23 ♙f2 ♙h4

Alternatively, 23...♙d3 24 ♙xe4 ♙g3+ 25 ♙e2 ♙f7 26 f5! ♙e8 27 fxe6+ ♙xe6 28 ♙xe6+ ♙xe6 29 ♙e4!, winning the rook and leaving White with a massive material advantage.

24 d3

The engines prefer 24 d4!, but the move played also works in that both see f4 defended.

24...♙xd3 25 ♙xe4 ♙g3+ 26 ♙g1 ♙d6

After 26...♙h2+ 27 ♙f1 there is no perpetual or 26...♙d8 27 ♙e3 with an easy win (27 ♙xd3+ ♙xd3 28 ♙d1 also wins due to the extra piece).

27 ♙e3 ♙h2+ 28 ♙f2 ♙g4 29 ♙ad1 ♙g3+ 30 ♙f1 ♙f8

A desperate time trouble shot...

31 ♙xd6 ♙xc4+ ...which is easily met by:

32 ♙e2 1-0

A.Baburin-D.King

Wood Green vs Guildford-A&DC,
4NCL 2004



Having steadily outplayed Alexander Baburin, Danny King finishes the game with a nice tactic.

24...♙xd4! 25 ♙e2

25 exd4 ♙xe1+ 26 ♙g2 ♙e3+ 27 ♙xe3 (if 27 ♙f3 ♙g4+ 28 ♙f4 ♙xf2+ 29 ♙f3 ♙xf3+ 30 ♙g5 ♙f5+ 31 ♙h4 g5# or 27 ♙h2 ♙xf2#) 27...♙xe3 is hopeless.

25...♙f6 26 ♙xb2 ♙xb2

With a safe extra pawn.

27 ♙c2 ♙g4 28 ♙d3 ♙xd3 29 ♙xd3 ♙f3 30 ♙f1 c5 31 ♙g2 d4 32 exd4 cxd4 33 ♙b1 d3 34 ♙xf3 ♙xf3 35 ♙c4 d2 36 ♙f1 g6 37 ♙d1 ♙xd1 38 ♙xd1 ♙e1+ 0-1

The 2004/05 season saw Guildford players achieving some exciting finishes. Nigel had a particularly satisfying weekend in November, winning the following miniature on a Saturday.

N.Povah-A.Walton

Guildford-A&DC vs Numerica 3Cs,
4NCL 2004
Dutch Defence

1 d4 e6 2 ♙f3 f5 3 e4!?

This gambit, which I christened 'The Deferred Staunton Gambit', was a line I had found after looking for a way of meeting the



Can you name all the Guildford stars from the 2004/05 season? Standing (from left to right) we have Plaskett, Rowson, Conquest, Efimenko, Svidler, Shaw, Gallagher, Kosten, Howell and Flear, and seated (l-r): Yurenok, King, Hebden, Charbonneau, Lautier, Krush, Sutovsky and Povah.

Dutch after 1...e6 and 2...f5, and at the time there were fewer than 30 games on the *Mega Database*. I ended up playing the line 10 times between 2002 and 2016, scoring 70% and wrote an article on it for Volume 5 of *Secrets of Opening Surprises* in 2006. Even today the online database only gives 64 games, with White scoring reasonably well.

3...fxe4 4 ♖g5 ♕f6

4...d5 is the much less popular alternative.

5 f3

Playing in true gambit style.

5...exf3

5...c5 is Black's most popular reply: 6 fxe4 cxd4 7 ♖d3 ♕c6 8 0-0 ♖d6 when White can continue with either 9 ♖a3 or 9 ♕d2 with reasonable prospects.

6 ♖xf3



White intends ♖d3, 0-0 and ♖h3 with dangerous kingside threats.

6...c5?!

This is too slow. 6...♕c6 is best: 7 c3 ♖e7 8 ♖d3 0-0 9 ♖h3 h6 10 ♖g6 e5! (10...hgx5 11 ♖xg5 is much better for White) 11 0-0 exd4 12 cxd4 ♕xd4?! (12...d5! is excellent for Black) 13 ♕c3 d5 14 ♖d3 hxg5 15 ♖xd4 g4 16 ♖g5 c6 17 ♖f2 ♕d7?? (a terrible blunder; 17...♖b6 18 ♖e3 ♖b4 19 ♖h4 ♖e6 retains the upper hand) 18 ♖f7+ (18 ♖h4! is even stronger) 18...♖xf7

19 ♖xf7+ ♖h7 20 ♖xe7 ♖b6+ 21 ♖h1 1-0, Netusil-Vavruska, Czech League 1992.

7 ♖d3 ♖e7?

This doesn't help at all, although White should be winning after 7...♕c6 8 ♖xh7 ♕xd4 9 ♖g6+ ♖e7 10 ♖f2.

8 0-0 ♕c6



9 ♖xh7! ♕xd4 Alternatively, 9...♖xh7 10 ♕xh7 ♕xd4 (or 10...♕xh7 11 ♖h5+ g6 12 ♖xg6+ ♖d8 13 ♖f7) 11 ♖d3 or 9...♕xh7 10 ♖h5+, winning in both cases.

10 ♖g6+ ♖d8

Alan had used over an hour by this point, compared to my 13 minutes.

11 ♖d3 ♕c7 12 ♕f7 ♖h4??

Overlooking the simple fork, but 12...♖g8 13 ♖f4+ ♖b6 (or 13...♖c6 14 ♖d6 when White wins after 14...♖xd6 15 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 16 c3 ♕f5 17 ♕a3 or 14...♖e8 15 ♕e5+) 14 b4 is overwhelming with threats like c3 and ♖d6 in the air.

13 ♖g3+ d6 14 ♖xh4 1-0

Then on the following day Nigel managed to execute the following strong finish:

N.Povah-J.Sisask
Guildford-A&DC vs Bristol, 4NCL
2004



White has just captured on b6, so Black decides to challenge the invader.

31...♖fb7?

However, with all of Black's pieces on the queenside, he is vulnerable to a kingside attack. 31...f6 was better, although White still enjoys a significant advantage.

32 ♖xh6!!

I'd seen that this and my next move would create a very powerful attack.

32...gxh6

Alternatively, 32...♖b2 33 ♖xf7! gxh6 (33...♖xf7 34 ♖h5+ ♖e7 35 d6+ mates again) 34 ♖h5 ♖b6 35 ♖f5 mates or 32...♕xc4 33 ♕xc4 gxh6 34 ♖f6 ♖g7 35 ♖f3 ♖f8 36 ♕xe5 ♖a7 37 ♖f4 with a crushing attack.

33 ♖f6!



A quiet move which takes control of the sixth rank and allows my queen into the game. I can't claim to have seen all of the variations in depth, but I was very confident that my three remaining pieces would combine effectively against Black's lone king, particularly as all of his forces were out of play on the queenside.

33...♟f8

Alternatively, 33...♟g7 34 ♖xh6! ♖g8 (or 34...♟h6 35 ♜f5+ ♟h7 36 ♖h5+ ♟g8 37 ♖h6 with an inevitable mate on g7) 35 ♖h5 ♟f8 36 ♖h7 ♖a7 37 ♖h6+ ♟e8 38 ♖d6! with threats of ♜g4-f6#, or ♜f5-g7+ followed by ♖h8 mate, as well as ♖b8+: for instance, 38...♖d7 39 ♖b8+ ♖d8 40 ♖xe5+ ♟f8 41 ♜f5 ♖d7 42 ♖h8 and it's all over. Here 34 ♖f3! is also winning: 34...♖d7 (or 34...♖a7 35 ♖xh6! ♖g8 – 35...♟xh6 fails to 36 ♖f6+ ♟h7 37 ♜f5 – with mate to follow) 36 ♖f6+ ♟f8 37 ♜f5 ♜xc4 38 ♖h8 ♜e3+ 39 ♟f3 ♜xf5 40 ♖d8+ ♟g7 41 ♖xg8+ ♟h7 42 ♖h8+) 35 ♖d6 ♖c8 36 ♖h5 and wins.

34 ♖h5 ♖d7 35 ♜f5

Not the most accurate, but good enough, with the engines now giving mate in 17. They prefer 35 ♖xh6! with mate in nine: 35...♖b6 36 ♖h8+ ♟g7 37 ♖h7+ ♟f8 38 ♜f5 when Black has to give up material to delay mate.

35...♟e8 36 ♖xh6 ♜d8 37 ♖d6 ♜b7

37...♖b7 holds out a bit longer, but is still pretty hopeless after 38 ♖f8+ ♟c7 39 ♖xd7+ ♟xd7 40 ♖xa8 with mate in 11.

38 ♖f8+ 1-0

Black had had enough, as 38...♟c7 39 ♖xd7+ ♟xd7 leads to mate as given in the next note and the pointless 39...♟b6 40 ♖h6+ doesn't last much longer. Instead, 38 ♖f6+! led to the same mate without giving him the ...♟b6 option: 38...♟c8 39 ♖xd7 ♟xd7 40 ♖e7+ ♟c8 41 d6 ♜xd6 42 ♜xd6#.

The big clash between Guildford-A&DC and Wood Green in the final round ended 4-4, enabling Wood Green to win the title on game points. However, the standout game of the match saw Emil Sutovsky at his spectacular best, with this sparkling finish, perhaps one of the best ever seen in the 4NCL, which arguably deserved to see Guildford win the crown, but it wasn't to be.

E.Sutovsky-I.Sokolov

Guildford-A&DC vs Wood Green,
4NCL 2005



Wood Green scraped home with a 4-4 draw in the final round of the 2004/05 season, despite Guildford's Emil Sutovsky producing a brilliancy to defeat Ivan Sokolov in that pivotal match..

22...♟f8

Played to avoid the loss of the queen to ♜f6+, but Sutovsky is not deterred.

23 ♜ef6!! gxf6

23...♖d8 24 ♜xh7+ ♖xh7 25 ♜xd8 wins.

24 ♜xf6 ♖c4

Black is helpless too after 24...♖d8 25 ♜h6+ ♟e7 26 ♖f3! d2 27 ♖xc6!! dxe1 ♖+ 28 ♖xe1 ♖g8 29 ♜d5+ ♖xd5 30 ♖xd5.

25 ♖e4 ♜cd4! 26 ♜h6+

26 cxd4 h6 27 ♖c1 ♖xa2 28 ♜e3 is also winning for White.

26...♟e7 27 cxd4 ♜xd4 28 ♖c1 ♖xa2 29 ♖xd4 ♖hd8!



Sokolov is relying on his powerful passed d-pawn, rather than 29...♖ad8 30 ♖a1 ♖e2 31 ♜d5+ ♖xd5 32 ♖xe2 dxe2 33 ♖xd5 when White wins.

30 ♖f4

Sutovsky rejected 30 ♖xd3 because he couldn't find a suitable follow-up after 30...♖xd4 31 ♖xc7+! ♜d8! 32 ♖d7+ ♟c8 33 ♖xd4? ♖a1+!, but instead 33 ♖f3! ♖b1+ 34 ♟h2 ♖xh4+ 35 ♟g3 ♖g6+ 36 ♟xh4 ♖xh6+ 37 ♟g3 ♖g5+ 38 ♟h2 wins, as does 30 ♜g5 ♖xd4 31 ♖f3 ♖b8 32 ♜d5+ ♟e8 33 e6.

30...d2 31 ♖c3!

White also wins with 31 ♜xh7 dxc1 ♖ 32 ♜g5+ ♟e8 33 ♖xc1 ♜d7 (33...c5 to prevent ♖c6+ runs into 34 e6! ♖xe6 35 ♜f6+ ♟e7 36 ♖e4) 34 ♖d1+ ♟c8 35 ♖xd8+.

31...♖a4!

Sutovsky had a long think here. He was running out of time and I remember thinking his position was looking pretty grim, but he played:

32 ♜g8+ ♟e8

Best and clearly not 32...♟e6? 33 ♖f6+ with mate in three against either 33...♟xe5 or 33...♜d7.

33 ♜f6+ ♟e7



Here Nigel thought Emil was going to take the perpetual, but he suddenly played a stunning sacrifice:

34 ♜d5+!! ♖xd5

Note that 34...♟e8 allows 35 ♖xd2.

35 ♖xf7+!!

And now he goes all in with another sacrifice. The engines already announce mate in 8!

35...♟d8

If 35...♟xf7 36 ♖f3+ ♟e8 (36...♟e6 37 ♖f6+ ♜d7 38 ♖f5+ transposes or if 36...♟g8 37 ♖xd5+ ♟h8 38 ♖xa8#) 37 ♖f8+ ♜d7 38 ♖f5+! ♟e7 39 ♜g5+ ♟e8 40 ♖e6+ ♟f8 41 ♜h6# or 35...♟e6 36 ♖g4+ ♟xf7 (or 36...♟xe5 37 ♖e7+ ♟f6 38 ♖e6#) 37 ♖f3+ ♟e8 38 ♖e6+ ♜d8 39 ♜g5#.

36 ♖f8+ ♟e7 37 ♜g5+ 1-0

It's mate in six after 37...♟xf8 38 ♖f3+ ♟g8 (or 38...♟e8 39 ♖h5+ ♜d7 40 ♖g4+ ♟e8 41 ♖e6+ ♟f8 42 ♜h6 mate) 39 ♖xd5+ ♟g7 40 ♜h6+ ♟xh6 41 ♖e6+ ♟h5 42 ♖f5+ ♟xh4 43 g3 mate.

After the game Sutovsky explained that he had seen this winning idea back when he played 31...♖c3, but he then doubted himself after 31...♗a4, forgetting that after his ♔d5+ a king move would allow the simple and winning ♗xd2. An amazing finale to a highly entertaining game.

Wood Green managed to retain their title in 2005/06 after another 4-4 draw against Guildford-A&DC, enabling them to win the league by a single game point, with both teams having won their other 10 matches.

In 2006/07 Wood Green temporarily lost their sponsorship from Brian Smith, who had supported them so impressively for many years, and this left the field open for Guildford-A&DC to 'sweep the board' with its first team winning the title with 11/11 and its second team coming second with 10/11. It is also worth noting that 11 Guildford-A&DC players occupied the top 15 places for the highest percentage scores in the first division.

This feat of taking the top two places was repeated again in 2007/08 and in 2014-15 under Roger's stewardship. No other team has ever managed to take the top two places in the 4NCL.

The final round clash of the 2007/08 season with Hilsmark Kingfisher proved to be rather one-sided as Guildford-A&DC emerged as 7-1 victors with Eric Prié winning the following interesting game.

E.Prié-R.Britton

Guildford-A&DC v Hilsmark
Kingfisher, 4NCL 2008
London System

1 d4 ♗f6 2 ♗f3 d5 3 a3

One of Eric's many offbeat ideas which he has played countless times.

3...g6

3...e6 is most common when Eric has played both 4 ♗g5 and 4 ♗f4.

4 ♗f4 ♗g7 5 e3

Eric is playing a London System set-up, which he is very familiar with, but here he has committed to a3, which may or may not prove helpful.

5...♗bd7 6 h3 c6

This is rather passive. 6...b6 aiming to fight for the e4-square was an option. So too was 6...c5, as was 6...0-0, deferring the decision about how to play on the queenside.

7 ♗bd2 0-0 8 ♗e2 ♗e4

8...c5 was played against Gata Kamsky, another London System expert: 9 c3 b6 10 a4 a5 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 ♗b3 ♗c8 13 ♗b1 ♗e4 14 ♗a3 ♗c6 15 ♗b5 e6 16 ♗fd1 ♗b7 17 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♗b5 and White won in 44 moves, Kamsky-Chirila, Philadelphia 2014.

9 0-0 ♗b6

A common idea in these London set-ups, targeting the b-pawn.

10 ♗xe4 dxe4 11 ♗d2



Eric offers the pawn and it looks like it can be taken. Black has lost all three games here when he did so, but White is already better due to the weak e4-pawn

11...♗xb2

Or 11...c5 12 ♗c4 ♗d8 13 c3 cxd4

14 cxd4 with a clear structural advantage.

12 ♗b1 ♗xa3

12...♗c3 13 ♗c4 with ♗b3 to follow is even worse, as White has retained more of his pawns.

13 ♗c4 ♗a4 14 ♗a1 ♗b5

14...♗b4? led to even quicker disaster: 15 c3 ♗xc3 16 ♗c1 and the queen was trapped in Hoang-Makropoulou, Mardin 2011.

15 ♗a5 ♗b4 16 c3 ♗xc3 17 ♗b1!



There's to be no escape from ♗c1.

17...c5

White also wins after 17...♗b6 18 ♗xb6 ♗xa5 19 ♗xa8 e5 20 dxe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗xe4 ♗xf4 22 ♗xf4.

18 ♗b5 cxd4 19 ♗c1 ♗xc1+

19...a6 20 ♗b3 ♗xb3 21 ♗xb3 was hopeless too in Mohr-Bratovic, Bled 2002.

20 ♗xc1 d3 21 ♗d1 b6 22 ♗a3 ♗b7?

The engines suggest the clever 22...♗c5! when the b6-pawn is tactically taboo due to the monstrous d-pawn after 23 ♗xb6? axb6 24 ♗xa8 ♗d7 25 ♗a7 ♗xb5 26 ♗xb6 ♗a4 27 ♗xc5 ♗xd1. Similarly if 23 ♗xb6? axb6 24 ♗xa8 ♗a6 25 ♗d5 e6, but there is no need to take on b6 and White can continue with 23 ♗e5 ♗e6 24 ♗xg7 ♗xg7 25 ♗d2 ♗d5 when 26 f3 is just one illustration of White's superiority: 26...exf3 27 e4 ♗c6 28 ♗xc5 bxc5 29 ♗xc5 ♗fc8 30 ♗xe7 and wins.

23 ♗xe7 ♗c6 24 ♗b1 ♗fe8 25 ♗a3 ♗d5 26 ♗d6 ♗e6 27 f3 f5 28 ♗b5 ♗c5 29 ♗xc5! bxc5 30 ♗xc5

The bishop is in trouble and Black isn't saved by 30...♗xd6 31 ♗xd6 ♗f7 32 fxe4 (or 32 ♗d7, preventing the rook on a8 getting active) 32...fxe4 33 ♗c6 ♗e8 34 ♗b3. **30...♗a2 31 ♗a5 1-0**

In 2008/09 the final match was contested with the newly formed Wood Green Hilsmark Kingfisher (WGHK) and it resulted in another 4-4 finale, enabling WGHK to take the title, which Guildford-A&DC would have taken had they won the match.

By 2009/10 and 2010/11 work pressures forced Nigel Povah to reduce his sponsorship, with him having to withdraw altogether in late 2011 due to illness. Fortunately, Nigel's close friend and Guildford and former Streatham & Brixton club-mate, Roger Emerson, stepped in.

Ed. – Nigel and Roger will continue to pay tribute to Guildford's fine record in the 4NCL, picking up with the 2011/12 season in our October issue.



Ever a friendly rivalry between Guildford and Wood Green supremos Nigel Povah and Brian Smith.