



4NCL Weekend 4, 19th-20th March, Press Report *by Rhys Cummings*

Division 1a

The only match in Pool A without Championship Pool implications featured top placed Cheddleton versus bottom placed White Rose 2. White Rose 2 acquitted themselves well however as they only went down 6-2 with Peter Shaw winning as black against Keith Arkell. 3Cs pulled off the shock of the round as they beat Barbican 1, however it was still not enough to get through to the Championship Pool with other results not going their way. Guildford 2 knew they needed to beat Spirit of Atticus A and they did so 7-1 with only a win for John Carleton saving the whitewash. Guildford 2's fate in the Championship Pool was sealed at Oxford 1's expense as they failed to get a result against Wood Green HK.

Division 1b

5 teams in Pool B went into round 7 unsure of which pool they would end up in. Guildford 1 ended the hopes of this year's surprise outfit South Wales Dragons as they notched up their record 4th 8-0 victory of the season. On the next match along, second placed White Rose matched that score-line as they thrashed bottom of the table Sussex Martlets 1. Barbican 2 versus Grantham Sharks 1 was a straight shootout for the Championship Pool and it was a shootout that Barbican won thanks to wins on each of the top 3 boards, all of which they were out-rated on. In the other game Blackthorne Russia needed to avoid a big loss at the hands of Cambridge University 1 in order to be safe and they did more than that as they cruised to a 6-2 victory.

Championship Pool

The newly formed Championship Pool was formed of Cheddleton 1, Wood Green HK, Barbican 1 and Guildford 2 from Pool A and Guildford 1, White Rose 1, Blackthorne Russia and Barbican 2 from Pool B. The first round of fixtures featured two matches off 1st vs. 2nd team. The Barbican match was a much tighter affair as the 1st team only pulled off a narrow 4.5-3.5 victory. The match between the two Guildford sides meanwhile was unsurprisingly a much smoother affair with Guildford 1 finishing 6-2 winners, including a picturesque game by Gawain Jones featured below. Pool A winners Cheddleton continued to show they are Guildford 1's main challengers by comprehensively beating Blackthorne Russia. The final match of the pool, two fairly evenly matched teams in White Rose 1 and Wood Green HK shared a 4-4 draw to keep them both in the running for 3rd place.

Demotion Pool

3Cs look like they may be the only one of last year's promoted sides to stay up and they increased their chances with an emphatic win over Sussex Martlets 1. Oxford 1 went into the round as strong

favourites fight the drop however a clean sweep on the bottom 4 boards for Cambridge University 1 helped them to a 5-3 victory. Spirit of Atticus A pulled off their first big surprise of the season to shock Grantham Sharks 1, a result which well and truly thrusts Grantham into the fight for survival.



White Rose 2 remain pointless, however this was their closest outing yet as they narrowly lost 4.5-3.5 to South Wales Dragons.

Gawain Jones (2645) – Daniel Fernandez (2472)

1.e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bd7 5. Nf3 Bc6 6. Neg5 Nd7 7. Bc4Bd5 8. Nxf7 Kxf7 9. Ng5 Ke8 10. Nxe6 Bxe6 11. Bxe6 Bd6 12. O-O Ndf6 13. Re1 Kf8 14. c4 c6 15. Bd2 Ne7 16. Qf3 Bc7 17. Rad1 b5 18. Bg5 Ng6 19. Qxc6 bxc4 20. Bxc4 Rb8 21. Bxf6 gxf6 22. Re8 Kg7 23. Rxd8 Bxd8 24. Qd7 Kh6 25. Rd3 Rxb2 26. Rh3 Kg5 27. Bd3 Ne7 28. Rg3 Kh6 29. Qh3#



Diagram after black's 7th move.

8.Nxf7 Kxf7 9.Ng5+ Ke8 10. Nxe6

Division 2

In a very tight pool A, Guildford 3 were edged out of the final place in the promotion pool by Grantham Sharks by virtue of 1 game point as they lost narrowly to Celtic Tigers 1. In pool B, the one place up for grabs was between The AD's and North East England. North East England pipped The AD's to the post as they beat Cambridge University 2 by a score-line of 4.5-3.5 while The AD's could only muster a 4-4 draw with CSC Dragons [1]. Half a game point different in either match would have seen the AD's go through. The close nature of division 2 can easily be seen from looking at the Championship Pool. Round 8 matches all finished either 4-4 or 5-3 and the table as it stands sees just 2 points (1 match win) separate top from bottom after 4 rounds, making it a real 8 horse race for promotion. The demotion pool is also wide open. Guildford 3 and The AD's each won in round 8 to make relegation unlikely, but there is still work for all of the remaining teams to ensure they stay in the division next year.