

4NCL British Rapidplay Championship 2023

by Keith Arkell

Let me begin by heartily congratulating the 4NCL, in this case supported by the ECF and endorsed by the British Isles Coordinating Committee, on their diverse selection of playing venues - all of which double up as hotels for the convenience of the participants.

The Mercure Bradford, Bankfield Hotel is a Gothic style mansion in the heart of Brontë country, on the banks of the River Aire, with glorious countryside views in all directions.

With the usual assemblage of highly competent officials in charge we could all look forward to an enjoyable two days of Rapid chess.

A few weeks earlier I had wrecked a long run of weekend tournament 1st places by defaulting round 1 when I boarded the wrong train and ended up at Reading instead of Bristol, but here it was my young opponents who ensured as early as round 2 that I was unlikely to come 1st.

After drawing in round 1 v Sebastian Mokhber-Garcia (born 2010) I got wiped out by Advail Keerthi Kumar (born 2013) in round 2!

To be fair to myself I had just returned from one of the toughest simuls I have ever given where an enjoyable and invigorating display versus the best of the British armed forces took me all day to complete.

Throughout the Championship I continued to play against the country's youngest talents, drawing with Kajus Mikalajunas (born 2010), just about scraping through a tough encounter with the already celebrated rising star Bodhana Sivanandan (born 2015) and finishing with a draw against the already very strong Rajat Makhar (born 2008).

By comparison I had very little trouble against my adult opponents, just dropping a draw against the youngest of these - Luke Lau. So, a respectable 8/11 in the end, but no more than that.

The Championship was dominated by Ameet Ghasi, who racked up an impressive 10 points - 1.5 clear of the field. Recently Ameet scored his 1st GM norm at the age of 35, and I hope he soon makes two more as it would be absurd if someone so talented didn't get there in the end.

Now on to the games.

Ameet Ghasi - Peter Wells

2023 British Rapidplay Ch (10)

The vast majority of Ameet's nine wins were, quite frankly, annihilations, but the penultimate round saw a clash which, in the event of 3-time Champion Peter Wells winning, would have left all to play for in the last round.

1.Nf3 c5 2.g3 Nc6 3.Bg2 g6 4.0-0 Bg7 5.d3 d6 6.c4 e6 7.Nc3 Nge7 8.Bd2 0-0 9.a3 b6 10.Rb1 Bb7 11.b4 Qd7 12.e3 Rab8 13.Na4 e5 14.Nc3 f5 15.Qa4 h6 16.Nd5 Qe8 17.Qc2 Nxd5 18.cxd5 Ne7 19.bxc5 bxc5 20.e4 Qd7 21.Qc4 Ba8



There is nothing much wrong with this, but I would expect a Kings Indian player to get things moving here with 21...g5!

22.Bc3 Kh7 23.Nd2 Rb7 24.Rxb7 Bxb7 25.Rb1 Qc8 26.Qa4 Ba6 27.Nc4 Bxc4 28.dxc4 fxe4



29.Qxa7? Often when a move doesn't look right it is with good reason. Here the straightforward 29 Bxe4 maintains White's positional edge.

29...Qf5 30.Rf1



30...Ng8? This was Peter's chance to keep the game in the balance: 30...e3! to meet 31 Qxe7? (31 fxe3 Qd3 is fine) with 31...e2 when there is no good square for the rook. For example 32 Ra1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Rf3! 34 Ba5 Rd3, or 32 Rc1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Qe3 or 32 Re1 Qxf2+ 33 Kh1 Qxe1+! 34 Bxe1 Rf1+ 35 Bxf1 exf1 #.

31.Bd2 Ghasi now maintains a firm grip until the end.

31...h5



32.Qc7 e3 33.Bxe3 Qf6 34.a4 Rf7 35.Qb6 Bh6 36.a5 Ne7 37.Bxh6 Kxh6 38.a6 Nc8 39.Qb3 h4 40.Bh3 Na7 41.Be6 Re7 42.Rb1 Kg7 43.Qe3 g5 44.Rb7 Kf8 45.Qe4 Kg7 46.Kg2 hxg3 47.hxg3 Kh6 48.Qg4 Rxb7 49.axb7 Qd8 50.Qf5



1-0

Surprisingly this was Ameet Ghasi's first outright British Rapidplay title, though he has shared it a couple of times.

Meanwhile Kamila Hryshchenko took the Women's title with 7½/11.

This flawed but fighting encounter with GM Danny Gormally shows what Kamila is capable of:

Kamila Hryshchenko - Danny Gormally
2023 British Rapidplay Championship (7)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6 3.Nc3 Bg7 4.Be3 a6 5.Qd2 Nd7 6.h4 h6 7.0-0-0 b5 8.f3 c6 9.Kb1 Qc7 10.Nge2 Nb6 11.Ng3 b4 12.Nce2 Nc4 13.Qd3 Nxe3 14.Qxe3 Qa5 15.Nc1 Nf6 16.Be2 h5 17.f4 Ng4 18.Bxg4 Bxg4 19.Rd2 0-0 20.e5 Rac8 21.Ne4 c5 22.dxc5 dxe5 23.fxe5 Bxe5 24.Nf2 Bf6 25.Nxg4 hxg4 26.Nd3 Kg7 27.h5 Rh8 28.h6+ Kh7 29.Rf2 Rhd8 30.Rf4 Rxd3 31.Qxd3 Rxc5 32.Qb3 Rd5 33.Rxb4 Qd8 34.a3 e6 35.Rb7 Rd1+ 36.Rxd1 Qxd1+ 37.Ka2 Kxh6 38.Rxf7 Qd4 39.c3 Qe5 40.Qc4 g3 41.Rd7 a5 42.Rc7 Qf5 43.Rc5 Qf2 44.Qxe6 Qxc5 45.Qxf6 Qd5+ 46.Ka1 Qd1+ 47.Ka2 Qd5+ 48.Ka1

½-½