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WORLD CHECKERS

GUKESH THE GREAT

**18-Year-Old Gukesh Becomes Youngest-Ever
Undisputed World Chess Champion**

ISSN 0964-6221



Jeans Una Sumus - Steve Barrett checks out the World Rapid & Blitz



A Classic Masterclass - Gawain Jones & Michael Adams annotate



Only a Pawn in Their Game - John Henderson on Bob Dylan and chess

Chess

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exchange down, but has a tremendous position.

20 ♟e3

Another move that Ding admitted he had missed. White can also trade off the rooks and retain an edge with 20 ♟xe8 ♟xe8 21 ♟e1.

20... ♟a6

Black wants to prevent a2-a4 and make White keep an eye on the a2-pawn, as well as find the time to play ...♟e4-d6 to blockade, hence White's next.

21 ♟d4 ♟xe1+ 22 ♟xe1!

The a-pawn isn't crucial for Gukesh as he had worked out that he can take over the a-file with very strong pressure.

22... ♟xa2 23 ♟a1 ♟b3?!

If White is forced to spend a tempo to deal with bishop hit, Black will be fine, but Gukesh now found a fine finesse. Perhaps 23...c3 with the idea of 24 ♟xc3 ♟c4 was better. White is nevertheless for choice here after 25 ♟xf6 ♟xf6 26 ♟xa7.

24 ♟a3! ♟b1+ 25 ♟g2! ♟d7

Black is still worse after 25...♟d6d7 26 ♟xa7 ♟xd4 27 ♟xd4 ♟e8 28 ♟xb5, but he would have more play than in the actual game.

26 ♟a5!



Gukesh is in fine form as he eschews

short-term gains. Indeed, Ding would have been back in the mix after 26 ♟xa7?! ♟xa7 27 ♟xa7 ♟a2.

26... ♟b3 27 ♟a3

A small repetition to get closer to the time control.

27... ♟b1 28 ♟a5 ♟b3 29 ♟xb5 ♟d3

Ding tries to bail out with a queen trade. Perhaps here Gukesh missed his best chance to simplify and close out the game.

30 ♟f4?!

Even without queens, Black has no chance to save his a-pawn. After 30 ♟e3! ♟xd2 31 ♟xd2 ♟e8 32 ♟a5 ♟d6 33 ♟e3 White will still snuff out that weakie and maintain strong winning chances.

30... ♟xc2

Stockfish finds a nice active defence with the punt 30...g5! 31 ♟xg5 h6 32 ♟f4 (or 32 ♟c1 c3) 32...♟g6 33 ♟c1 c3 when at least the waters have been muddied.

INTERVIEW: David Howell



During the match Junior Tay caught up with David Howell, one of the official commentators

Junior Tay: Before coming on to chess and how you're finding being in Singapore, let's go back in time a little. My first question is regarding your academic studies. What did you graduate in?

David Howell: "I graduated in English literature and philosophy from Cardiff University, but am more or less a professional chess commentator now."

Do you have any reservations of not going into a mainstream career?

"Big reservations. Actually, when I was 17 or 18, I had just finished school and all of my friends went to university immediately, while I had to decide between chess or studies. I took two years to play chess and I was really enjoying it. I played one tournament: I came third behind Carlsen and Kramnik, and I felt like I was making my big breakthrough. However, the second year, I don't know, I just felt a bit lonely travelling all the time. It was suddenly less fun and my results weren't so good.

"I decided, OK, I want a back-up plan. So, I went to university and studied, but it was during those years that I realised chess is my one true love. And when I finished, I said, OK, I'm going to play for six months. If it doesn't go well, then I'm going to look for a normal job, a conventional one, or maybe continue my studies, maybe try to get a master's, a doctorate or that stuff. But, no, in the end,

the call of chess was too much. And I actually did very well that first year, so I guess I haven't turned back."

What do you enjoy most about being a professional chess commentator?

"I think I just love chess. I should say it was an accident becoming a commentator. I always dreamed of playing my whole life. I didn't have any intention to commentate, or kind of do any writing or make videos. It was just an accident. But during the pandemic, I got into the commentary side of things. I went to Norway for just two weeks. It was supposed to be just one tournament, one job. And then I enjoyed it. They liked me. They were like, oh, do you want to stay two more weeks, then two more weeks and two more weeks? And that was four years ago.

"I guess the main thing I enjoy about the commentary is it keeps me very close to the top players in the world. It gives me front row tickets to fantastic games, so many personalities, and it's also a lot less pressure than playing. I like the fact I don't have to win just to pay my rent anymore. When I was a professional player, it was very stressful. And now it's a good mix."

And what challenges do you face and how do you deal with them?

"Like in all careers, getting going, kind of

getting your first foot on the ladder is difficult. When I was playing, I felt a lot of pressure to win. Now as a commentator, there's pressure to travel and there's a lot of competition. There are a lot of other commentators, fantastic commentators out there. So I think actually the pressure comes mostly from myself. I just want to be the best version of myself whether I'm playing or whether I'm commentating. So I'm constantly trying to push and learn. But it's a fun kind of pressure, and I try to enjoy it."

So are you still doing coaching and playing? Is it difficult juggling all three roles with the commentary the main one?

"Yes, very difficult. I teach a little bit, I have one or two private students. I'm very selective. I want to make sure my student really wants it, that they're not being pushed and that they kind of really love chess. Of course, I still play a bit as well. I played at the British Championship and the Olympiad for England. But these days I just choose the fun tournaments, the big ones."

So, what's a typical day like in the life of a commentator?

"Good question! Here at the world championship, I normally wake up a bit later than normal, about 9.30. I go to breakfast. Then I go back to my room. I do some

31 ♖xf6 ♜f5!



Ding really is thriving in adversity as he prepares an ending where Gukesh will have to play ultra accurately to win. Gukesh had thought that the queen trade here was winning with Black saddled with the weak

f5-pawn, but he did not realise the task would be so difficult.

32 ♜xf5 gxf5 33 ♖xg7

White has better chances after keeping the bishops on: 33 ♖g5! ♗e5 34 ♗e2 c3. Generally, it is risky to allow this pawn to thrive, but White should have it under control after 35 ♗d3, with good winning chances.

33...♗xg7 34 ♖c5 ♗g6 35 ♖xc4 ♗e5 36 ♗d4 ♗c6 37 ♖f4

Gukesh keeps his pawns intact, but White has better winning chances after 37 ♗d2! ♗xb4 38 d6 ♗d8 (not 38...♗a6 as White wins after 39 ♗b7 ♗c5 40 ♗c8 ♗d8 41 ♖xf5 a5 42 ♖c2 ♗b7 43 d7 and Black is just trussed up). If it's a correspondence game, Black can probably hold, but in practice it's not so easy, even if after 39 d7 (or 39 ♗d1 ♗a6 40 ♗c2 ♗f6 41 d7 ♗c7 42 ♗d3 h6 43 ♗a4 and White still has no concrete way of improving his chances) 39...♗a6 40 ♗c6

♗f6 41 h4 ♗e6 42 ♗e2+ ♗d6 43 ♗e8 ♗c7 44 ♗b5 ♗c5 White still has a lot of work to do in his bid to trick Black and so win.

37...♗e7 38 b5 ♗f6 39 ♗d4 h6 40 ♗f1



40...♗e5?

Making the time control with a dodgy



Pictured alongside co-commentator Jovanka Houska, England's highest-rated player, David Howell, is now mainly a chess commentator and very much enjoyed his time working in Singapore.

research. Maybe I analyse the previous day's game or I'll look at some interviews and see what the players have been saying. I also look at some statistics. Then I go to lunch or sometimes if there's time, I'll go to the gym or have a swim beforehand, try to stay fit, as well as focused and fresh. And then when the game starts, full focus on that. And then in the evenings, just nothing much. I pass out."

So much travelling is living out of a suitcase. How do you maintain the family life balance?

"It's difficult. I'm at a crossroads now. I don't have any kids, but maybe in the future... So I'm trying to make the most of it now with travelling. That's why I came to Singapore. It was an opportunity I couldn't let slip. I have a lot of family here in Singapore, and love it. So I only travel now when it makes sense, or when I've got some emotional connection or if it's a place I want to visit. So I'm more selective, but I think if I were to have kids and start a family, then it will be a lot less."

What are your favourite moments that

you've had in your commentary career? Any standout moments?

"One of them would be at the 2021 world championship. With Magnus Carlsen against Nepomniachtchi, there was this marathon game, 136 moves. I was doing a broadcast remotely from Norway at a studio and we were on air for over eight hours. And I've never felt more energetic or never felt more adrenaline in my system ever. It went for eight hours, but I could happily have sat there for another eight because it was so exciting, so dramatic. And just the attention was a lot of fun."

You always come across as being very professional, but do you ever make a faux pas?

"I've made some slips. I've spilt coffee all over my desk and laptop! Also, I've accidentally sworn when I was too excited. Nothing too bad, but there have been moments when the tongue slips or when you get brain freeze occasionally when you're too carried away with calculating. You just have to recover and keep going."

How would you describe your

commentary style?

"I like to be informative, so I try and give as much information as possible, whether it's about the players or the games. I try to be instructive, so there's always something to learn, but in general, I aim to be quite balanced. So always the chess comes first and the players' styles, I hope, can shine through. Hopefully I get a decent mix between the hype, the excitement and also the kind of reality of everything. So I would say it is quite a practical approach."

OK, this could be a politically incorrect question, but who is your favourite commentator and why?

"I like a lot of commentators. I really like Peter Leko, Peter Svidler, Judit Polgar, and there's so many good ones: Naroditsky, Hess, Tania Sachdev... Jovanka, though, is my favourite co-commentator to work alongside."

What are your future plans for after this match?

"I'll commentate on the Champions Chess Finals in Oslo, but after that, I'm going to sleep for three months!"

You're clearly very at home here, but is there anything that you notice in Singapore that you don't see in Europe?

"It's much cleaner than most of Europe here, and people are much more polite. I love the tradition of hosting. People make a lot of effort here to welcome and meet up with me. I have dozens and dozens of cousins here. My mum grew up here, so I have a lot of family and they always make the extra effort. In Europe, everyone's often working a lot. It's a different work-life balance here, which I enjoy, and the food is much better!"

Last question regarding food... What's your favourite food in Singapore?

"Oh, there's too many, too many. My comfort food would be just some kind of Char-siew meat noodles, but I love eating everything."

INTERVIEW: Jovanka Houska

Junior Tay also caught up with the other half of the dynamic commentary duo, Jovanka Houska

Junior Tay: *Before delving into the main reason you're here, did you ever think of doing a legal career after your law degree, and any regrets on not taking a mainstream job?*

Jovanka Houska: "Absolutely not! Legal work is very tough. I've no regrets about doing chess instead of law."

What do you enjoy most about being a professional chess commentator?

"I think the thing I love about commentary is that I simply love watching chess, trying to get into the players' minds and figuring out what they are planning to do. I've been super lucky with my co-commentators. Hand on my heart, they also make the experience incredible. Most of the time, it doesn't even feel like work because it's pure enjoyment."

What are the challenges you face as a professional commentator and how do you deal with them?

"I try to keep a positive mindset. One of the things, especially when it comes to chess commentary, is that you expose your true character, you put yourself out there and it can be quite painful, maybe even hurtful, when people don't like who you are as a person or what product you're giving them. But I try to not let any negative feelings last because otherwise it gets too much."

Is it hard juggling playing, coaching and commenting?

"Well, actually it is, because I was a chess coach for a long time, but I had to give it up as then I got the break and there was no time to also do commentary."

What's a typical day like for you when doing commentary?

"Normally I'm early to rise. I like to get up, I like to do some exercise, stretch and then I basically just look at the play from the day before and try to recap it in my mind. I also try to do as much research as possible, listening to interviews and seeing how the players are feeling because I think that is very important. I also try to keep myself updated on the latest opening theory, which takes a long time actually, and then I just get ready for the commentary session, discussing things with David beforehand, which is

always useful and from which I learn a lot."

You have so much travelling, particularly living out of suitcase for weeks on end. Do you miss home life and how do you maintain the balance?

"I miss my balance. I mean, there really is no balance. I do feel the chess commentary is such a new wave in the chess world that I should ride it as long as possible. I tend to say yes to most opportunities, but I'm very, very lucky that I have a husband who is very supportive and he says yes, you can do this, I'm fully behind you. As I'm in it for the long term, I am very happy about his understanding."

"It is a struggle actually to balance family life with chess life. My family did for a while say, hey, try and keep Christmas and New Year for us, but in the end, you know, it's working out OK. That's all I can say. I can't give any advice on it, but I can just say I'm just taking it one step at a time."

When you are doing commentary, what is your number one focus? What's the most important thing you must get done before you start?

"That's a good question about commentary. It's very difficult to give just one thing focus because you are constantly looking at the players. You're looking at body language. You're looking at the moves. You're also listening to what your co-commentator says. Sometimes you have to also integrate links and you have to involve social media. You're constantly having to think about five steps ahead, so it's not as easy as it appears."

"Then sometimes this dead space occurs when the players just settle into the tank and you get exhausted as you talk about the position as much as about everything around you. You constantly have to think about what the audience would like to know. So it very much feels like you're running at like 365 miles per hour, but, yes, I would say the focus is always forward thinking. It's always about anticipating what might happen next, and where."

Any standout moments from your commentary career?

"Being on the Champions Chess Tour was one of the most unbelievable things to have

18 ♖xf6+ ♗xf6 19 ♖e2 ♗g6 20 f3

Ding was very impressed with this consolidating concept by Gukesh. He praised it, stating "♖e2 is a strong positional move, where he just slowly improves his position and my position becomes very uncomfortable. After ♖f2, ♗fe1 and ♖g3, stopping ...e6-e5, my position is very hard to play".

20...♗f8 21 ♗ad1 ♖e7 22 ♖f4!



This audacious bishop punt was planned in advance and typically well calculated by Gukesh. The idea is to get in ♖d6 with a nice advantage.

22...♗b6

There's no way Ding would fall for 22...♗xf4? 23 ♖e5 and one rook will go.

23 ♖c7 ♗b7 24 ♖d6

This was what Gukesh had worked out, though he added: "I couldn't see the knockout blow... maybe there wasn't one".

24...♗e8 25 ♖xe7!?

Gukesh felt that he shouldn't allow ...♖d5, but he should have prevented it with the quiet and powerful 25 ♗fe1!. After 25...♖d7 (or 25...♖f5 26 ♖b4 ♖d7 27 ♖e4 ♗bb8 28 ♗f4 a6 29 ♖f2 ♗bd8 30 ♗e5 and White has wonderful play) 26 ♖xe7! ♗xe7 27 d5 ♗e8 28 ♖e5 b4 29 ♖e4 bxa3 30 bxa3 Black is struggling to survive.

25...♗xe7 26 ♖e5 a6 27 d5 exd5 28 ♗xd5+ ♖e6 29 ♖c5 ♗e8! 30 ♗de1 ♗f7

Even though Black should be able to hold the balance after 30...♖xe1 31 ♗xe1 ♗xe1+ 32 ♖f2 ♗e8 33 ♖e4 ♗be7 34 ♖d6 (or 34 h4 ♗e5 35 ♖c6 ♗d8 36 ♖c7 ♗ed5 37 h5 h6 38 g4) 34...♗e5, you don't want to deal with that queen and knight duo when trying to make time control. Just one slip and it will be over.



31 ♖e4

Ding confessed that he nearly gave up

fighting after Gukesh played this move and set up ♖f6+ tricks. While his time was winding down, he couldn't find a way to survive and stay in the game. As for the watching world held its breath, with seven minutes left on the clock, Ding found the only saving move.

Just for the sake of completeness, the wet blanket engine points out that even stronger is 31 ♖xe8+! ♗xe8 32 ♗e4 ♗d7 (or 32... ♗d8 33 ♗d6 ♗d7 34 ♗d5+ ♖f8 35 ♗f5+ ♖g8 36 ♗e6+ ♖f8 37 ♗d1 ♗c7 38 ♗d5 and White is ready to play ♗d4-f4 to end matters) 33 ♗d6 ♗b8 34 ♗d5+ ♖f8 35 ♗d1 ♖b7 36 ♗e5 when Black is really struggling.

31... ♗f8! 32 ♗d6 ♗c7 33 ♗e5 ♗f6 34 ♗d5+ ♖h8 35 ♗e5 ♗e7 36 ♗fe1 ♗xe5 37 ♗xe5

From now on, Ding unerringly defends with aplomb and managed to trade down to a well-deserved draw. Here I suppose Gukesh could have tried to grind for a couple more hours with 37 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 38 ♗xe5, with a nagging slight plus for White, but it's safe to say the worst was already over for Ding.

37... h6 38 ♗c5 ♗d7 39 ♗e4 ♗f4 40 ♗e7 ♗f5 41 ♗d4 ♗g8 42 h3 ♗c1+ 43 ♖f2 ♗xe4 44 ♗xe4 c3 45 bxc3 ♗xa3 46 ♖g3 ♗b3 47 ♗e7 a5 48 ♗b7 ♗c4 49 ♗e5 ♗c6 50 ♗xb5 ♗xc3 51 ♗a7 ♗e1+ 52 ♖h2 ♗b4 53 ♗xb4 axb4 54 ♗b7 ♗a8 55 ♗xb4 ♗a2 56 ♖g3 ♖h7 57 ♗b5 ♖g6 58 f4 ♖f6 59 ♖f3 ♗c2 60 g3 ♗c3+ 61 ♖g4 ♗a3 62 h4 ♗c3 63 ♗b6+ ♖f7 64 f5 h5+ 65 ♖f4 ♗c4+ 66 ♖f3 ♗c3+ 67 ♖f4 ♗c4+ 68 ♖f3 ♗c3+ ½-½

What a tremendous fightback by Ding, and the French held for a 2/3 score in the match! And so it went all the way down the wire and Game 14. The pressure was immense and the two combatants were "dead men", as Gukesh would put it later.

Ding Liren-D.Gukesh
14th matchgame, Singapore 2024
Tarrasch Defence

1 ♖f3 d5 2 g3 c5 3 ♗g2 ♗c6 4 d4 e6 5 0-0 cxd4 6 ♗xd4 ♗ge7!?

Gukesh's home brewed line. While it looks a bit strange to lose time (in blocking the dark-squared bishop), it has the advantage of side-stepping any Catalan improvements by Ding.
7 c4 ♗xd4 8 ♗xd4 ♗c6

The point of 6... ♗ge7. Black trades on d4 and puts the other knight on c6 to prepare ...d4.
9 ♗d1

Because this was new territory for Ding, he was hard pressed to find the more testing line 9 ♗d3! ♗e5 (this is the crucial continuation which allows Black to grab the c-pawn) 10 ♗c2! ♗xc4 11 e4 ♗e7 12 ♗d1 and White should be better after 12... ♗d6 13 ♗c3 0-0 14 ♗f4.

9...d4!

Gukesh plays to activate his pieces. Instead, Open Catalan type play with 9...dxc4 allows White to press with 10 ♗c2 ♗e7 11 ♗xc4 ♗d7 12 ♗d1 ♗c8 13 h4 0-0 14 ♗g5.
10 e3



Hou Yifan dropped in on the match for Game 11 and joined Jovanka and David in the studio.

ever happened to me. For the first time ever, I was broadcasting in a TV studio with a very professional 30-strong crew. I cannot put into words how unbelievably emotional one feels when sitting under those bright lights. The most striking feeling was we were all part of something that could be groundbreaking even for chess. We were taking commentary to a new level, not using coordinates, aiming it at the general public. And then in season two, I got to do it with Simon and David!

"I have so many fantastic memories on and off screen. The mouseslips, surprising checkmates, the adrenalin of the quick action, and the overwhelming positivity on set. But having said all that, losing a bet and having to dress up as a penguin on air has to be the funniest thing I've done!"

What in your opinion is the most important skill required for the role?

"I would say you've got to be passionate about your subject, you've got to be passionate about the players, you've got to do your homework, you've got to understand what makes the players tick and you've got to convey all that to the audience in a very simplistic manner. You've also got to always keep them updated and try to be yourself, unbiased where possible, but genuine and enthusiastic."

How do you feel about your style of commentary?

"I feel that I am very much a play-by-play announcer, so I'll be there to ask my co-commentators the questions that hopefully anticipate what everyone wants to hear. I want to learn about the way that the players are thinking, the theory, the latest topics, and I very much see myself as a general commentator, ideally bringing good vibes to the production."

Who is your favourite commentator?

"That's a genuinely hard question. I have been very lucky to commentate alongside some of the world's best: Judit Polgar, Peter Svidler, Yasser Seirawan just to name a few! It's actually not an exaggeration to say that all my co-commentators are as wonderful as they appear on screen – amusing, insightful, generous and simply incredible. I guess if you forced me to choose, it would be a tie between my two oldest friends, David Howell and Simon Williams."

How do you unwind after commentary work?

"The funny thing is that sometimes after chess commentary, I just need not to talk. I put on the most brainless TV I can find and just sit there staring into space. When you're constantly having to think on the fly, sometimes for five or six hours, it can then be good just to do absolutely nothing."

What are your future plans following the world championship?

"I honestly don't know. Normally the way the schedule works, my calendar looks relatively empty around January and February, and then hopefully things fill up. But I'm very much one of these people who doesn't plan things that much, because I somehow feel like we're all cats who land on our needs, and something will happen one way or another, and it's key just to be open to the opportunity."

And, finally, how you have been finding Singapore?

"I enjoy the polished way we've been recording here, which involves a local media centre and very professional people. And we have rain outside, crowds everywhere, and I've been loving it."



Ding starts to undermine Black's central stronghold.

10...♟c5

Aiming to improve over 10...e5 (10...dxe3? 11 ♖xd8+ ♜xd8 12 ♟xe3 is the type of Catalan squeeze that is hard to fend off with the two bishops raking the queenside) 11 exd4 exd4 12 ♜e1+ ♟e7 13 ♟g5, as in Sarakauskas-Willow, 4NCL 2023, when an interesting line shown by the engine is 13...f6 14 ♟f4 0-0 15 ♖h5 g5 16 ♟e4 ♜f7 17 ♟d5 ♖f8 18 ♟c1 (not 18 ♟xf7+?! ♖xf7 19 ♖xf7+ ♜xf7 20 ♟d2 ♜e5 and Black has superb light-square control) 18...♟f5 19 ♜d2 ♟g6 20 ♖f3 ♜d8 and I think Black has good play even if he has to give up the exchange at some point.

11 exd4

The beginner-like 11 ♖h5!? is pretty dangerous and Black must navigate some tricky variations. For example, 11...♖e7 allows White to build up a strong initiative

after 12 ♜d2!? dxe3 13 ♜e4 exf2+ 14 ♟h1 ♟d4 15 ♟g5 ♖c7 16 ♜ad1 e5 and the engine reels out 17 ♜xf2! ♟xf2 18 ♜d6+ ♜f8 19 ♜b5 ♖b6 20 ♟d5 ♟e6 21 ♟xe6 fxe6 22 ♜d7 ♜e7 23 ♟xe7+ ♜g8 when Black survives with an 'equal' assessment.

11...♟xd4 12 ♜c3 0-0 13 ♜b5 ♟b6?!

Gukesh's idea was to free d4 for the knight to occupy, but this gives Ding the time to start pressing on the d-file. It was better to nail down the d4-square with 13...e5!. After 14 ♜xd4 exd4 15 ♜e1 ♟f5 16 b3 ♖f6 17 h3 ♜ad8 18 ♟a3 ♜fe8 Black's activity and strong d-pawn gives him good counter-chances against White's bishop-pair.

14 b3?!

White can put the grind on with 14 ♖e2! e5 15 ♜d1 ♖f6 16 ♟e3 ♜d4 17 ♜xd4 exd4 18 ♟f4 a5 19 ♖e5! when the d-pawn is hard to defend.

14...a6 15 ♜c3 ♟d4! Gukesh seizes his chance to annex central space.

16 ♟b2 e5 17 ♖d2 ♟e6 18 ♜d5 b5



19 cxb5?!

This was the turning point in the game when Ding decided to vacuum as many pieces as possible, which was rather uncalled for, since he doesn't have any problems playing on in this slightly better position. And, to top it off, he soon decided to enter an ending a pawn down. Instead, I thought maybe Ding could press with 19 ♟xd4 ♜xd4 (not 19...exd4? 20 ♜f4! and Black is in serious trouble) 20 f4 to undermine the knight.

19...axb5 20 ♜f4 exf4 21 ♟xc6 ♟xb2 22 ♖xb2 ♜b8 23 ♜fd1 ♖b6 24 ♟f3

I also thought if Ding wanted to go into an ending, he could have stuck his bishop in the centre with 24 ♟d5!?, to invite a heavy piece ending with a queenside majority.

24...fxg3 25 hxg3 b4 26 a4 bxa3 27 ♜xa3 g6 28 ♖d4 ♖b5

Gukesh probably realised that taking on b3 would give Ding the chance to vacuum more bits: 28...♟xb3?! 29 ♖xb6 ♜xb6 30 ♜b1 ♜fb8 31 ♜a8 ♜xa8 32 ♟xa8 and Ding would even get to trade bishops to reach a rook and two against rook and three endgame.

29 b4

Ding invites Gukesh to trade queens and rooks to reach a pawn-up ending. The problem is, with the bishops on the board, there are no 'automatic' moves unlike in pure heavy piece endings.

29...♖xb4 30 ♖xb4 ♜xb4 31 ♜a8 ♜a8 32 ♟xa8 g5!

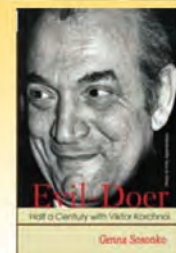
Gukesh creates concrete problems for Ding by not allowing f2-f4 and prepares to press with ...g5-g4.

33 ♟d5 ♟f5 34 ♜c1 ♟g7 35 ♜c7 ♟g6



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Shreyas looks for some activity.

32 hxg6 32 dxe6 is also good, but I thought this gave Black less activity than with the structure fixed,

32...fxg6 33 ♖f1!



A more secure spot for my king. Now the rook on g1 will attack Black's monarch.

33...♗f8

33...♗d7 34 ♕f5 ♗f8 35 ♖bg4 piles up on the pawn on g6.

34 ♕xc5!

A good moment to make this exchange, trading in the bishop-pair for other gains.

34...dxc5

After 34...♖xc5 I was enticed by 35 ♗f3 ♗e7 36 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 37 ♗xf6+, but 36...e4 is not so simple. Instead, the obvious 35 ♖xb7 with the idea of 35...♖xa5 36 ♗f3 is cleaner.

35 ♖b6 ♕d8 36 ♖e6

36 d6 ♖ch7 37 d7 is also good.

36...♗b5 36...♗f7 37 ♗xe5 is deadly.

37 ♗xb5

37 c4 ♗a4 38 ♖xg6 was the alternative, avoiding 38 ♗xe5 ♗xc4+ 39 ♕e2 ♗c1+

40 ♖g2 ♗g5+ which swaps queens.

37...axb5 38 ♖xg6 38 d6 ♖f7 39 ♖xg6 ♖h2 is trickier.**38...♖g7**



39 ♕e6! ♖hh7

39...♖xg6 40 ♖xg6 ♕xa5 (if 40...♖e7 41 ♖g7+) 41 d6! leaves Black paralysed, with very few possible moves, for example, 41...c4 42 ♖f6+ ♖e8 43 ♖f5! collects the pawn on e5.

40 d6 c4

With the time control reached, there is now a direct win available, but instead 40...♖xg6 41 ♖xg6 ♖g7 42 ♖h6! or 40...♕xa5 41 ♖f6+ ♖e8 42 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 43 ♖h6 catches the king in a mating net.

41 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 42 ♖h1! ♖g6 43 ♖h8+ ♖g7 44 ♖xd8 ♖xe6 45 ♖d7+ ♖f6

45...♖f8 46 ♖xb7 ♖xd6 47 ♖xb5 is also simple.

46 ♖xb7 ♖xd6 47 ♖b6 1-0

Black resigned, due to 47...♖e6 (or 47...♖xb6 48 axb6 ♖e6 49 b7) 48 ♖xd6+ ♖xd6 49 ♖e2 ♖c6 50 ♖e3 ♖b7 51 ♖e4 ♖a6 52 ♖xe5 ♖xa5 53 f4 ♖a4 54 f5 ♖b3 55 f6 ♖xb2 56 f7.



Michael Adams looks happy with how the opening is going, while Shreyas Royal is already deep in thought after being move ordered and despite dogged defence would go on to lose.

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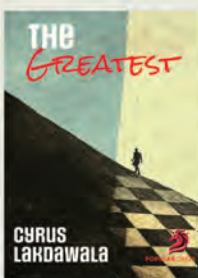


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60 Seconds with... IA Chris Bird

S.Ostapuk-C.Bird
Tucson (rapid) 2024



16...e6?? 17 ♖b2 (1-0, 36)

And a highly memorable opponent? The late Roelof Westra back when I played in Hull in the 1980s/90s. One of the kindest players I ever met and one of the strongest players too, an inspiration to many in the area. I had the honour of playing him many times and it was a major milestone when I eventually managed to score that first half-point against him, but he was just as happy for me as I was.

Favourite game of all time? Karpov-Korchnoi, Candidates 1974, Game 2. One of the first chess books I owned was *The Best of Karpov* by Peter Markland. I liked the white side of the Yugoslav Attack against the Sicilian Dragon and this idea of ♖de2, which apparently was fairly novel at the time, overprotecting the c3-knight against sacrifices seemed to really catch my attention and has stuck with me ever since.

The best three chess books: Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors* series, *How to Reassess Your Chess* by Silman and the *FIDE Arbiters' Manual*.

Is FIDE doing a good job? I try not to get caught up in the politics of the chess world, globally or locally. For what I need them for, mainly arbiter and rules related stuff, they seem to be doing OK.

Or your National Federation? Again, in the areas I need my national federation for, they seem to be doing OK.

Any advice for either? I'd like to see more education and training for arbiters, especially here in the US.

Can chess make one happy? Absolutely, but it can also be one of the most frustrating pastimes too!

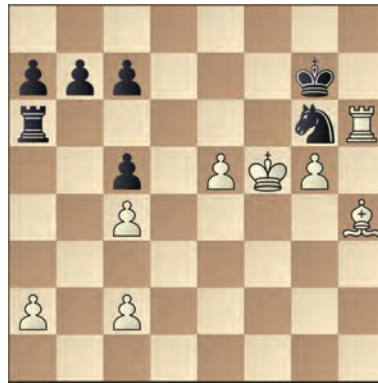
A tip please for the club player: Being a fully immersed member of a good chess club is so rewarding, but running one takes a lot of work, so get involved and help where you can, and you'll get many times the enjoyment out of it than just being a player.



And the worst? Usually losing on time as I really only play blitz nowadays and apparently the older I get, the more I spend too much time thinking about my moves.

Your best move? One I never actually played at the 2014 Sinquefield Cup. As the Chief Arbiter, I was watching Caruana-Nakamura in round 9 when the position after 39...♗g7 arose. I found the idea of 40 ♖xg6+ followed by e5-e6 somewhat quickly and figured Caruana would convert that, but he didn't and they agreed to a draw soon after. I must have mentioned this to Caruana who then stated in an interview afterwards that he was embarrassed he didn't find it as even Chris Bird, the Chief Arbiter saw it!

F.Caruana-H.Nakamura
Sinquefield Cup, Saint Louis 2014



40 ♗f2?
40 ♖xg6+! ♖xg6 41 e6 ♗h7 42 e7 wins.
40...♗e7+ 41 ♗e4 ♖a4 42 ♖e6 ♗c6
43 ♗f5 ♖xc4 44 ♖g6+ ♗f8 45 ♖f6+
♗g8 46 g6 ♖xc2 47 ♗e3 ♗d4+ 48 ♗xd4
cxd4 49 ♖f7 d3 50 ♖d7 ♖f2+ 51 ♗g5
♖g2+ 52 ♗f6 ♖f2+ 53 ♗g5 ♖g2+ 54 ♗f6
♖f2+ 55 ♗g5 ♖g2+ ½-½

But less memorable than your worst move? So many blunders, so I'll provide my latest embarrassment. For some crazy reason I got the urge to play an OTB event last May, so at the last minute I entered a local four-round G/25 event. The last time I'd played a rated OTB game before this was over 12 years ago. In the first round, outrating my opponent by nearly 500 points, I played the amazing 16...e6?? walking straight into 17 ♖b2 (rooks can move backwards?), losing a piece and eventually the game. Thankfully I managed to shake off the cobwebs and win the rest of my games, somehow still finishing tied for first.

Born: Hull, 2nd July 1972.

Place of residence: Tucson, Arizona.

Occupation: Chess arbiter and part-time recreational football referee.

Enjoyable? Yes, at least most of the time.

And home life? Mainly family time and relaxing away from the chess scene.

But sometimes good to escape to: A local game store to play Magic the Gathering.

Sports played or followed: I still play football when I can and follow the Premier League, come on you Irons! I also keep tabs on my hometown rugby league team, Hull FC, and I'll watch NFL or NHL if they're on.

A favourite novel? *The Game of Thrones* series. I wish George R. R. Martin would finish them, but did you know he was also a chess Tournament Director (USA equivalent of an arbiter) back in the 1970s?

Piece of music? Just about anything by The Beautiful South.

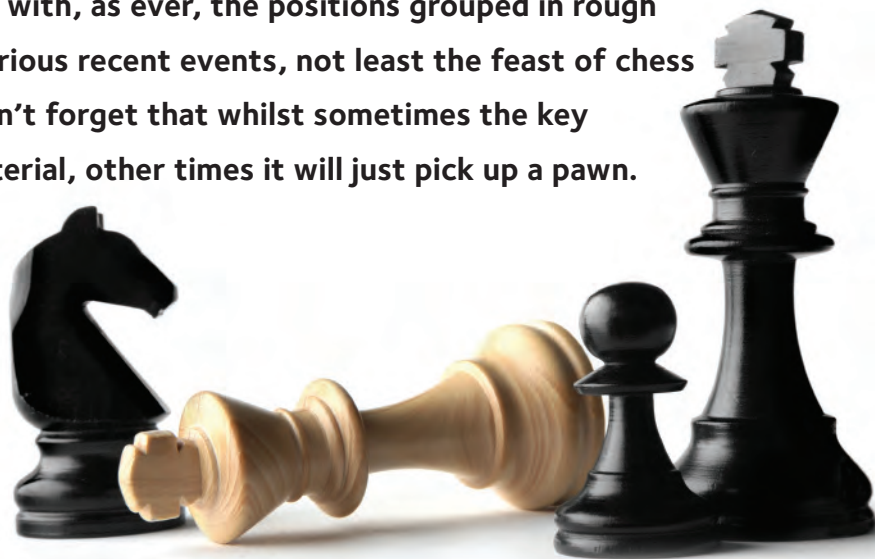
Film or TV series? *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

What's the best thing about playing chess? Having fun because I rarely play 'serious' chess anymore.

Find the Winning Moves

24 puzzles to test your tactical ability with, as ever, the positions grouped in rough order of difficulty. The games from various recent events, not least the feast of chess that was the London Chess Classic. Don't forget that whilst sometimes the key move will force mate or the win of material, other times it will just pick up a pawn.

Solutions on pages 54.



Warm-up Puzzles



(1) P.Roberson-M.Fernandez
London 2024
White to Play



(2) P.Finn-J.Murawski
London 2024
White to Play



(3) R.Kovalskyi-P.Sowray
London 2024
White to Play



(4) C.O'Donnell-V.Barnaure
London 2024
Black to Play



(5) A.Hill-P.Wells
London 2024
Black to Play

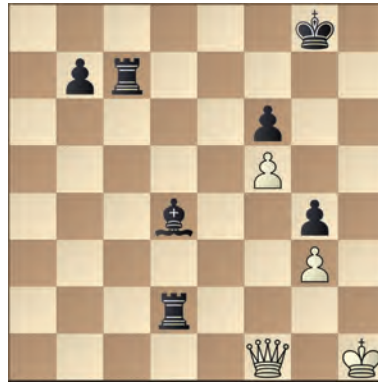


(6) Zhang Pengxiang-T.Venkataramanan
London 2024
White to Play

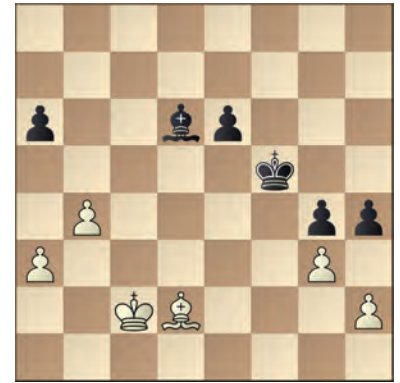
Intermediate Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54



(7) N.Theodorou-E.Park
Charlotte 2024
White to Play



(8) N.Matinian-C.Yoo
Titled Tuesday Blitz 2024
White to Play and Draw



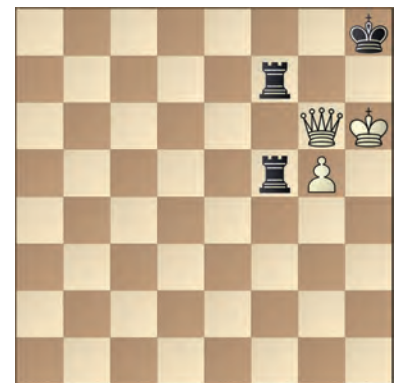
(9) S.Tashkinova-J.Liu
London 2024
Black to Play



(10) I.Smirin-R.Sadhwani
London (blitz) 2024
White to Play



(11) A.Freeland-B.Birkisson
London 2024
Black to Play



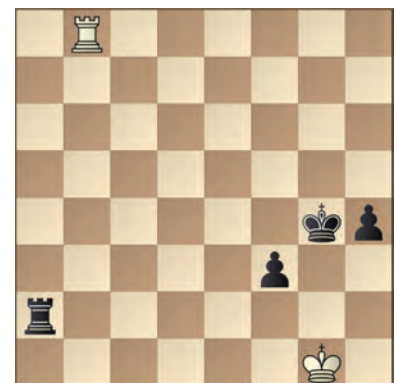
(12) R.Svane-E.L'Ami
German Bundesliga 2024
Black to Play and Draw



(13) J.Gonzalez Garcia-J.Rudd
London 2024
Black to Play

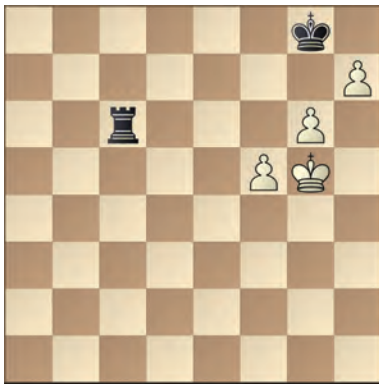


(14) A.Onischuk-W.Graif
New York (rapid) 2024
White to Play

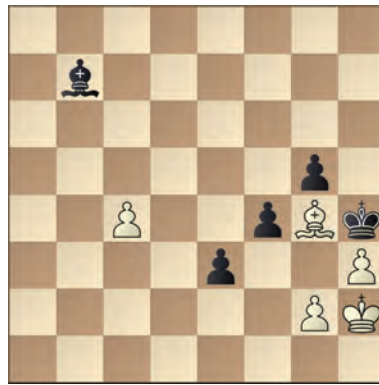


(15) A.Golding-M.Gallana
London 2024
Black to Play

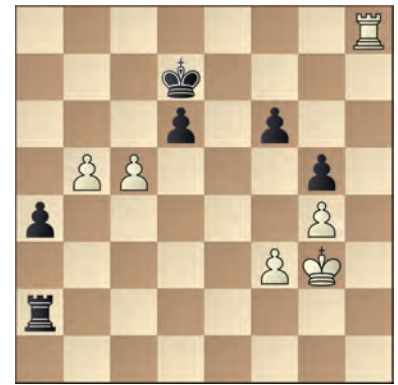
Harder Puzzles for the Club Player - Solutions on page 54



(16) M.Kutowski-S.Cooklev
 Titled Tuesday Blitz 2024
Black to Play and Draw



(17) K.Zhang-J.Carlin
 London 2024
Black to Play



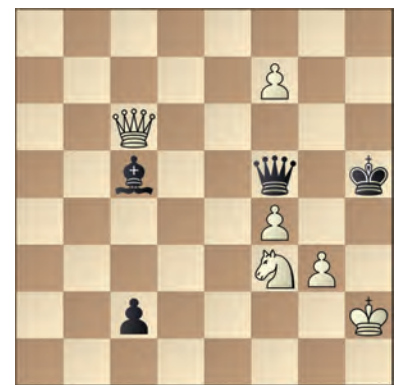
(18) S.Vidit-A.Hong
 London 2024
White to Play



(19) A.Pichot-A.Arfan
 Singapore 2024
White to Play



(20) H.Stevic-F.Svane
 Budapest Olympiad 2024
Black to Play



(21) A.Pichot-T.Stoyanov
 European Individual Ch., Petrovac 2024
White to Play



(22) R.Praggnanandhaa-R.Svane
 German Bundesliga 2024
White to Play



(23) Xiao Tong-Kong Xiangrui
 Chinese Rapid Championship, Hohhot 2024
White to Play



(24) M.Iskandarov-M.Rodshtein
 European Individual Ch., Petrovac 2024
White to Play



Home News

BANGOR – Bangor City Chess Club played host to the Ulster Blitz Championships on December 28th, in which Mandar Tahmankar (Civil Service) prevailed with 15/18, finishing just half a point ahead of Stephen Scannell (Belfast), with Michael Sheerin (Fruithill) back in third on 12½ points.

BRADFORD – Andrew Wainwright and his Ilkley Chess Centre organised the 1st Bradford Blitz on January 5th, which IM Gedaminas Saraukas (Warrington) won with 10½/11, finishing a point ahead of Andrew Bak (Bradford), with the only man to take half a point off the winner, David Burgess (Swinton), back in third on 7½ points.

BRISTOL – The 1st Bristol New Year Open took place at the Bristol Bridge & Clifton Chess Club (December 27–30). 60-year-old Andy Hill had the tournament of his life, belying his rating of 1974 as he raced to 6/6 ahead of drawing with Malaysian student Sebastien Chua to win the £500 first prize. Top seed Keith Arkell was stunned by Bruce Baer in round 3 and only able to recover to a share of second. *Leading scores:* 1 Andy Hill (Horfield & Redland) 6½/7, 2–3 Keith Arkell (Paignton), Sebastien Chua (Oxford University) 5½, 4–9 Oliver Stubbs (Downend & Fishponds), Tim Kett (Cardiff), Michael Ashworth, Zack Norris (both Gloucester), Jai Kothari (Guildford), Carl Bicknell (Horfield & Redland) 5.

CANTERBURY – The Canterbury Congress was a new venture at the University of Kent (November 29 – December 1), one which even attracted a Norwegian IM.

Open: 1 Kristian Stuvik Holm (Norway) 5/5, 2–4 Patrick Damodaran (Coulson), Mike Waddington (Dorchester), Dominik Swiatkowski (Medway) 3½.

Under-1800: 1–2 Aram Swiatkowski (Medway), Ilan Rubin (Bridge) 5½/7, 3 Bohdan Myroshnichenko (Kent University) 4½.

CLEVEDON – The Somerset New Year Congress took place at the Walton Park Hotel, Clevedon (January 11–12).

Major: 1 Benjamin Lappin (Gloucester) 4½, 2 Adrien Allorant (south-east London) 4, 3–6 David Egginton (Clevedon), Mark Abbot (Exmouth), Peter Kirby, Andy Hill (both Horfield & Redland) 3½.

Intermediate: 1 Adrian Lawrence (Billericay) 4½, 2–3 Angok Jok (Gloucester), Kevin Heady (Haverfordwest) 4.

Minor: 1 Henry Burton (Haverfordwest) 4½, 2–3 Paul Collis (Godalming), Shaun Walsh (Downend & Fishponds) 4.

HAMILTON – Several Scottish juniors massively outperformed their ratings and top seed Andrew Greet made hay at the Hamilton Open (January 3–5).

Leading scores: 1 Andrew Greet (Bellshill) 5/5, 2–6 Chrysa Mitraka (Cumbernauld), Ciaran Conway (Troon), Benjamin Saunders (Lanark), Ross Blackford (Dunbar), Neil Irving (Stirling) 4.

HASTINGS – The untitled but 2502-rated Chinese teenager Haowen Xue triumphed with 7/9 at a hard-fought Caplin Hastings Masters, the top section of the 98th Hastings International Chess Congress (December 28 – January 5). We'll have a full report on the Masters next month and there were, as ever, a number of supporting sections.

Con Power Under-2150: 1–2 Younggyu Lee (South Korea), Jonathan Arnott (Sheffield) 4½/6, 3 Arthur Kendall (Brighton) 4.

Con Power Under-1950: 1–2 Aram Swiatkowski (Medway), Paul Kelly (Hastings) 5, 3 Ben Sadler (Norwich) 4½.

Con Power Under-1750: 1 Paul Jackson (Coulson) 5½, 2 Erik Heitmann (Germany) 5, 3–5 Zebadiah Taylor (Eastbourne), Advik Saxena (south-west London), William Walshe (Medway) 4½.

New Year Under-2050: 1–2 Oliver Howell (Loughborough), Gerben van Pel (Holland) 4/5, 3–4 Kevin Smyth (Folkestone), Andrejs Gorskovs (Maidstone) 3½.

New Year Under-1850: 1–3 Ben Sadler (Norwich), Chris Howell (Coulson), Louie Ellson (Maidstone) 4.

New Year Under-1650: 1 Erik Heitmann (Germany) 4½, 2–4 Reyansh Saxena (south-west London), Joe Eagle (Kent), Daniel Evans-White (Hastings) 4.

Blitz: 1 Vignir Vatnar Stefansson (Iceland) 8½/9, 2 Mahadevan Siva (India) 7½, 3–5 Kajus Mikaljanus (Loughborough), James Golding (Bath University), Lukas Schimatkowski (Germany) 6.

Weekend Open: 1 Jack Liu (Street) 4½/5, 2–5 Venkataraman Tiruchirapalli (Watford), Zain Patel (Hammersmith), Kajus Mikaljanus (Loughborough), Samuel Alcinder (France) 4.

Weekend Major: 1 Sylvio Prudent (France) 4½/5, 2–6 Hyunbin Choi, Hyunyou Cho (both South Korea), Matthew Masani (Lewes), John Brown (Bromley), Louie Ellson (Maidstone) 3½.

Weekend Intermediate: 1–2 Zoe Pellatt (Brighton), Caelan Rooney (Hastings) 4½, 3 Onbin Lee (South Korea) 4.

Weekend Minor: 1 Daniel Evans-White (Hastings) 5, 2–5 Reyansh Saxena (SW London), Yechu Chen (Godalming), Piermael Raffin-Sumyk (France), Aidan Burnside (Reigate) 4.

HULL – WFM Kamila Hryshchenko remained undefeated and won £200 at the Hull & East Riding Rapid on January 5th.

Open: 1 Kamila Hryshchenko (Hull University) 5/6, 2 John Cooper (Hull) 4½, 3 Sam Milson (Louth) 4.

Major: 1–2 Gary Morris (Hull), Stephen Crow (St Andrews, Hull) 5, 3–4 George Swanson (Sheffield), Ewen Miller (York) 4½.

Minor: 1 Stuart Sharp (Hull) 5½, 2 Ian Scott (St Andrews, Hull) 5, 3–6 Joey Pramana (Gosforth), Kieran Hooton (Hull University), Olaf Duemmer Wrigley, Bertie Leatham (both York) 4½.

Foundation: 1 Jamie Fisher (Beverley) 5, 2–4 Maro Arab, Sebastian Dworniak (both Hull), Ambrose Lam (Warrington) 4½.

KENNINGTON – The latest Oxford Rapidplay took place on November 30th at Kennington Village Hall, just to the south of Oxford.

Open: 1 Connor Clarke 4½/5, 2–3 Jem Gurner, Ryan Pang (all Oxford University) 4.

Under-1850: 1 Jack Virgin (Stockport) 4½, 2 Martin Lambert 4, 3–4 Andrew Humphrey (both Watlington), David Deane (Reading) 3½.

Under-1550: 1 Sean Herrington 5/5, 2 Sebastian Rohan 4, 3 Aditya Tekriwal (all Oxford University) 3½.

Under-1250: 1 Arthur Guindani (Oxfordshire) 4½, 2 Harry Greaves (Oxford) 4, 3 Prakhar Saxena (Brentwood) 3½.

LONDON – We reported last month on the four blitz qualifiers at the Emirates Stadium, which qualified 8 players for the final stages of the Super Blitz at the London Chess Classic. That 32-player event on December 7th began with four all-play-all groups, which largely went with seeding. Nikita Vitiugov and Alireza Firouzja qualified with 6/7 in Group A, a score matched by Maxime Vachier-Lagrave in Group B, from which Michael Adams also qualified with 5½/7.

Group D saw Vidit Gujrathi lose to Ilya Smirin, but finish top with 5½/7, half a point in front of Smirin and Raunak Sadhwani, the former having won their individual encounter and so qualified on tiebreak. There were more shocks in Group C, where Gawain Jones and Icelandic GM Vignir Vatnar Stefansson went through with 5½/7, as Shakhriyar Mamedyarov could only score '+2', losing to Stefansson and also Luke McShane, who finished third.

The resulting Super Blitz Final saw Firouzja lose to Adams, but otherwise impress as he scooped the £5,000 first prize for his 5½/7, which left him a point in front of compatriot Vachier-Lagrave, with Jones and Vitiugov a further half-point in arrears.

An arguably more important event was the Masters (November 29 - December 7), a pretty strong Open, which at the halfway point Stefansson and Marcus Harvey led with 4½/5, the latter having just held top seed Sadhwani. Unfortunately Harvey would be ground down in 125 moves in round 7 by the highly experienced Israeli GM Smirin, while Stefansson went down to Sadhwani, the 18-year-old top seed landing up tying for first with 56-year-old Smirin, which netted them both £7,500.

Leading scores: 1 Raunak Sadhwani (India), Ilya Smirin 7/9, 3-6 Vignir Vatnar Stefansson (Iceland), Ameet Ghasi (Teddington), Matthew Wadsworth (Maidenhead), Oleg Korneev (Spain) 6½.

O.Korneev-R.Sadhwani London Classic Masters 2024



36...c2+! 37 ♙xc2 ♜b7+ 0-1

The University of Westminster's Marylebone Campus played host to the London Junior Championships over the weekend of December 14th and 15th.

Under-14 Major: 1-2 Armaan Nilim (Barnet), Aden Kennedy (Bicester) 5½/6, 3-9 Senith Gunarathne (West Nottingham), Luke Chapman (Bexhill), Ashwin Gopikrishna (Wanstead), Yuk Hei Lee (Wallington), Advait Keerthi Kumar (Watford), Michal Orszulak (Southbourne), Bharath Jayakumar (Harrow) 4½.

Under-14 Minor: 1 Edgar Pack (Tonbridge) 5½, 2 Aadishesh Devalia (Dartford) 5, 3-10 Cedric Demarcus (Hammersmith), Alice Harmer (Basildon), Gautam Sriram (Watford), Gaurav Manikandan (Charlton), Rene Uzdin (Richmond), Jagat Singh (Ealing), Jai Bhatia (Wallington), Kwun Fung Hsu (North London) 4½.

Under-10 Major: 1 Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (Coulsdon) 7/7, 2-6 Ethan Bogerd, William Lin (both Richmond), Krish Keshari (Reading), William Zhang (Maidenhead), Djan Sennaroglu (Wimbledon) 5½.

Under-10 Minor: 1 Kwun Him Hsu (North London) 6½/7, 2 Boyan Spassov 6, 3-9 Max Peach (Barnet), George Brown (Horsham), Patrick Bao (Hammersmith), Zhixing Bai (Leeds), Aron Bertok Szabo (London), Viyaan Goel (Camberley), Ethan Hu (Oxford) 5½.

Alongside those junior championships, a 'Northwick Park' weekend was staged.

Open: 1 Ezra Terryn (Belgium) 4½/5, 2-4

Lion Lebedev (Barnet), Sebastien Chua (Oxford University), Alexey Lapidus (Richmond) 3½.

Major: 1 David Ewart (Oxfordshire) 4½, 2-5 Hooman Honarvarmahalati (Brighton), Oliver Finnegan (Loughton), Vineet Sood (London), Marc Morgan (Hackney) 4.

Minor: 1 Benjamin Carter (Haywards Heath) 4, 2-3 John Sears (Uxbridge), Mason McDermott (Hammersmith) 3½.

Then from December 28th to 30th, the University of Westminster's Harrow Campus staged the remaining sections of the London Junior Championships alongside a Christmas Congress.

Open: 1 Cameron Goh (Cambridge University) 6/6, 2 Nigel Aldritt (Harrow) 5, 3 Isaac Lam (Putney) 4½.

Major: 1-5 Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon), Daniel Longley (Crowborough), Tara Tamiselvan (Leicester), James Ratcliffe (Horsham), Anixton Linton (Hounslow) 4½.

Minor: 1 William Purl 5½, 2-3 David Purl (both Crowthorne), Andrei Laza (Harrow) 5.

Under-12 Major: 1-2 Aden Kennedy (Bicester), Advait Keerthi Kumar (Watford) 7½/9, 3-4 Djan Sennaroglu (Wimbledon), Samuel Shah (East Grinstead) 7.

Under-12 Minor: 1 Adam Sarwar (Cardiff) 8, 2 Aarav Raj (Coulsdon) 7½, 3 Iaroslav Sinkevich (Horsham) 7½.

Under-8: 1-4 Nikesh Acharya (Milton Keynes), Furion Kapitanski (Lewisham), Brannon Bliss (Barnet), Albert Biermann (Nottingham) 6/7.

Tumen Buyandalai (South Norwood) triumphed with 5/5 at the Ealing Rapid on December 1st, finishing a point ahead of Mohammad Mozaffari (Coulsdon) and Boris Pastukhov (Epsom). There was also an Ealing Rapid on January 5th, in which Jovica Radovanovic (British Bangla CA, London) and Ioannis Lentzos (Imperial College London) scored 4/5 in the Open, while the Under-1700 section was won by Torrey Horwood (Westminster) with 4½/5, with Blake Catlett (Imperial College) half a point behind in second.

Another London Chess Congresses event is the Wimbledon Rapidplay, where on December 7th, Epsom IM Peter Large won the Open with 4½/5, finishing a point ahead of Dildarav Lishoy Gengis Paratazham (Coulsdon). There was an Under-1750 section too, in which Ayush Ganbold (Ealing) triumphed with 4½/5, which left him half a point ahead of Ethan Bogerd (Richmond) and Aryan Singh-Raj (Wimbledon) 4.

The following weekend (December 14-15) saw the Sainbayars put on a Southall Congress.

Under-2400: 1-2 Stanley Badaconyi (Muswell Hill), Michael Fernandez (Marple) 4/5, 3-4 James Merriman (Petts Wood), Chukwunos Oragwu (Uxbridge) 3½.

Under-1900: 1-4 David Flynn (Nottingham), Raghu Kamath (West London), Boris Pastukhov (Epsom), Roman Zadvorny (Dulwich) 4.

Under-1600: 1-2 Harish Chockalingam (Greenwich), Guranshvir Singh (Aylesbury) 4, 3-4 James Peel (Rugby), Prakash Chandra (Southwark) 3½.

That same weekend, (December 14-15), also saw the Coulsdon Late Autumn

Standardplay Congress.

Open: 1 Henry Adams (Lewes) 4½/5, 2-3 Robin Haldane (Streatham), Venkata Kilambi (Coulsdon) 3.

Major: 1 Paul Jackson (Coulsdon) 4, 2 Charlie Wannasin Bell (Crowborough) 3½, 3-8 Gary Slegg (Wrexham), Paul Braithwaite, Amit Athawale, Dominic Warner (all Coulsdon), Thomas Holmes (St Neots), David Howes (South Norwood) 3.

We should also pay tribute to Baker Street regular, Paul Haddock (1964 - 2024), who was remembered by his good friend Stuart Conquest:

"It is with profound sadness that I record here a few words in tribute to my friend Paul Haddock, whose recent death came as such a shock. Paul was a staunch supporter of congress chess in London, particularly one day rapid events, and many will remember him, indeed will have played Paul in tournaments at Ealing, Muswell Hill, Kensington, Golders Green, and Docklands, to name just a few.

"Paul had a deep love of chess, found the game absorbing and kept his bookshelves stacked with chess material, from new publications to second-hand treasures he sometimes came across. He would never be seen without a bag - anything from the plastic supermarket kind to a smart briefcase - and if the bag contained an old chess magazine or Fred Reinfeld book and a small chess set (with perhaps a bar of chocolate and a paperback novel) then all was well. There was also the question of dinner. If a tournament was not going well, Paul might skip the last round or two and head to one of his favourite restaurants, The Punjab in Neal Street or nearby Masala Zone, and enjoy a fine meal (the waiters practically knew his order by heart) before returning home.

"Like Dr. Johnson, Paul did not tire of London. His career in the Metropolitan Police led him all over the city, and after taking early retirement one of his simple pleasures was to amble its streets, his peregrinations often bringing him to Chess & Bridge from where he would seldom leave without a purchase. But Paul also played chess overseas. His favourite event (he called it 'chess heaven') was Gibraltar, which he returned to year after year.

"He played in Las Vegas in 2008, in Sardinia, 2009, and two years later, in the company of this writer, was in Otranto, Italy, for an inaugural event there. An abiding memory is of how we spent the evening back in London on our return, singing Elvis Presley songs in Paul's front room (aided by a duty-free item I had chosen to open), after which, suitably fortified, we headed out to an Indian restaurant Paul knew at Marble Arch. I should add that Paul was blessed with a fabulous voice and could impersonate Elvis (one of his heroes: another was Freddie Mercury) almost to perfection.

"Paul played Garry Kasparov in a simul at the House of Commons in May 1989, lasting 33 moves. He also played Anatoly Karpov in Gibraltar. Other simul opponents included Ray



Paul Haddock – ever an enthusiastic presence at any chess board, or chess shop.

Keene, Jon Speelman, Neil Carr and Jonathan Levitt. He played many matches for the Metropolitan Police. He helped and encouraged juniors and was always happy to offer advice and go over their games. I gave Paul lessons too, in London, with our first session (I believe) in May 2010, at a pub near Victoria station. The pattern of such meetings – and there were to be many – was quickly established: analyse a game or two of Paul's, unravel a few puzzles or an endgame study perhaps, then off for an early dinner!

"When Brian Callaghan in 2016 organised a special chess trip to Marrakech, with Nigel Short as top billing, Paul signed up. I know he looked back on this experience fondly. Paul would attend any major chess event in the capital, and was a recent visitor at the Global Chess League, as well as at Hans Niemann's match against Nikita Vitiugov. December's London Classic was in his diary. He popped by at ChessFest in Trafalgar Square in July.

"Norman Went, Docklands organiser, describes Paul as 'a one-off, liked universally by other players', who 'lit up the atmosphere at any tournament he had chosen to enter.' His friend Michael Inzani would meet Paul for chess in Walthamstow, where they played five-minute games using Paul's home-made board (its squares, says Michael, 'neatly coloured in with pink highlighter'). They would use Paul's 'slightly mismatched set of wooden chess pieces' and sit outside on a pub bench when the weather permitted, or in the cafe of a local church.

"One of Paul's favourite expressions, at least to me (and usually uttered in a restaurant or over a game of chess) was 'This is the life!'. He loved reading (he seemed to know everything by Stephen King, but would happily dip into the classics), films (he was a member of the Prince Charles cinema by Leicester Square), and Indian food. He was a keen and accomplished golfer before chess took over.

"I close with a game won by Paul in concise fashion, displaying his eager eye for the attack."

P.Haddock-R.Goodfellow

Kingston (rapid) 2019

Sicilian, Morra Gambit

1 e4 c5 2 d4 cxd4 3 c3 dxc3 4 ♗xc3 ♗c6
5 ♖f3 e6 6 ♗c4 a6 7 ♖e2 ♗c7 8 0-0 ♗d6
9 h3 ♗ge7 10 ♗e1 ♗a5 11 ♗d3 ♗ac6

After finding an interesting set-up against the Morra, Black loses time.

12 ♗e3 0-0 13 e5!?

Perhaps not strictly correct – but the evergreen sacrifice which follows was too tempting.

13...♗xe5 14 ♗xh7+ ♗xh7 15 ♗g5+ ♗g8?

After 15...♗g6 there is no mate. A piece down, White would struggle to justify his cavalier approach.

16 ♖h5 ♗e8 17 f4

Now White has an overwhelming position.

17...♗5g6 18 ♗c4! b5?



Missing the main threat.

19 ♗ac1

Paul harshly awards himself a question mark for this move in his scorebook. This is a typical exaggeration: he only spotted the winning tactic on his next turn.

19...♖b8 20 ♗f6+! 1-0

Mate is unavoidable.

Paul was a regular at the Baker Street chess shop and member of staff Joao Santos added the following tribute to him:

Paul used to delight us with his presence and dry sense of humour as he dropped by as part of his daily routine on the way to Oxford Street. He would keenly challenge all-comers to a game or two and browse our rare and second-hand collection of books. He was a gentleman on and off the board with his captivating smile and soft spoken nature, who will be both remembered and sorely missed among the chess community.

MANCHESTER – Swinton Chess Academy staged a Rapidplay on December 8th.

Open: 1-2 Jacob Boswell (Cheddleton), Paul Macklin (Swinton) 5/6, 3 Ethan Norris (Atherton) 4.

Under-1850: 1 Alannah Ashton (3Cs) 6, 2 Aram Marsh 5, 3 Julian Alderton (both Chorlton) 4½.

Under-1450: 1 Muhammad Zairudin (Manchester University) 5½, 2-4 William

Bartlett (Ashton-under-Lyne), John Donegan (Chorlton), Ryan Chattopadhyay (Swinton) 4.

OLDHAM – Our congratulations to 3Cs and their secretary Steve Rigby, who was awarded the British Empire Medal in the King's New Year's Honours, for services to chess and his work with young people in the community. Despite now being retired, Rigby is still actively involved in 3Cs, regularly making the 200-mile round trip from his home in Wales to Oldham and the highly successful club which he was a co-founder of in 1978.

SUTTON COLDFIELD – We were delighted to see a strong turnout for the Keith Escott Memorial Congress in Sutton Coldfield (December 14-15), where even such players as Mark Hebden and Koby Kalavannan would finish outside the prizes.

Open: 1 Tarun Kanyamarala 4½/5, 2-3 Ilia Malinovskii (London), Adam Nawalaniec (Peterborough) 4.

Under-2000: 1-2 Doruk Unver (Central Birmingham), Dmytro Romaniuk (Frome) 4½, 3-4 Shahab Quraishi (West Bromwich), Golam Ali (Sutton Coldfield) 4.

Under-1600: 1 Matthew Rowe (Longbridge) 5, 2-3 Ron Cooper (Kettering), Waylon Chan (Newport) 4.

TELFORD – The popular Shropshire Congress once again took place at the Wrekin Housing Group (January 3-5).

Open: 1-2 Shabir Okhai (Syston), Tim Kett (Cardiff) 4/5, 3-6 Tomasz Sygnowski (Wolverhampton), Nathanael Paul, Phil Zabrocki (both Telepost, Shrewsbury), Rudy van Kemenade (Oswestry) 3½.

Major: 1 Glyn Pugh (Maddocks, Telford) 4½, 2-3 Carmelo Tirado Simarro (Birmingham), John Cawston (Selby) 4.

Intermediate: 1-3 Neil Homer (Swindon), N. White (Wycombe), Waylon Chan (Newport) 4.

Minor: 1 Cesar Pileggi (Darwinian Knights, Shrewsbury) 4½, 2-3 Margaret Gretton (Nott-ingham), Sam Bartlett (Ashton-under-Lyne) 4.



Steve Rigby has given his life to helping the young people of Oldham, not least at 3Cs.



Solutions

to Find the Winning Moves (pp.26-28)

1) Roberson-Fernandez

1 ♖h7+! ♜xh7 2 ♙xg7# 1-0

2) Finn-Murawski

1 ♜f6+! gxf6 (or 1...♙h7 2 ♜h6#) 2 ♜f4# 1-0

3) Kovalskiy-Sowray

1 ♜f8+! 1-0 Not the only winning move, but the best and prettiest, as if 1...♜xf8 2 ♜g7# or 1...♙xf8 2 ♜c7#/g7#.

4) O'Donnell-Barnaure

1...♜f4+! 0-1 White must part company with his queen in view of 2 gxf4 ♜xh4#.

5) Hill-Wells

1...♙g2+! 0-1 Even more clinical than 1...♜h3+ 2 ♙e1 ♜xf2!, as 2 ♙xg2 ♜xf2+ is mate next move.

6) Zhang-Venkataraman

1 ♜h6! 1-0 Black must give up the queen as it would be mate after 1...gxf5 2 ♜h5.

7) Theodorou-Park

1 ♙d5+! 1-0 Mate follows on g7 or h8.

8) Matinian-Yoo

1 ♜c4+! ♜f7 (1...♜xc4 would be immediate stalemate and 1...♙f8 2 ♜xc7 wouldn't exactly be a winning try for Black) 2 ♜xf7+ ♙xf7 ½-½

9) Tashkinova-Liu

1...♙xg3! (1...h3 also wins, as does 1...hxg3 2 hxg3 ♙xg3 3 ♙d3 ♙f4, although here Black would have work still to do, unlike after the text) 2 a4 (2 hxg3? h3 will queen) 2...♙xh2 3 b5 axb5 4 a5 ♙g1 5 ♙e1 g3 6 a6 ♙g4 7 ♙d3 h3 0-1

10) Smirin-Sadhwani

1 ♜xf7! ♜xf7 (1...♙h8 2 ♙xh6 doesn't really help Black) 2 ♜e8+ ♙g7 3 ♙xh6+! ♙xh6 4 ♜xf7 gave White a winning attack, play concluding: 4...♙g7 5 g4! ♙xg4 6 ♜xa8 b5 7 ♜a7 1-0

11) Freeland-Birkisson

1...♙xh2+! 2 ♙xh2 ♜g4+ 3 ♙g3 g5! 4 ♜h1? (4 ♙f5! gxh4+ 5 ♙h3 h5 would only leave Black clearly better) 4...gxh4+ 5 ♙f3 (or 5 ♜xh4 ♜xe3! 6 fxe3 ♜g5+) 5...♜g5 6 ♜f4 ♜xe3! 7 fxe3 ♜g3+ 8 ♙e2 ♜xe3+ 9 ♙d1 ♙g4+ 10 ♜ce2 ♜xf4 11 ♜d2 ♜f2 12 ♜xh4 h5 0-1

12) Svane-L'Ami

1...♜xg5! (not the only move that draws, but by far the simplest, in view of the upcoming stalemate trick, as well as 2 ♙xg5

♜g7 and 2 ♜xg5 ♜h7+ 3 ♙g6 ♜g7+) 2 ♜xf7 ♜g6+! 3 ♙xg6 ½-½ Unfortunately for White, there's nothing better as after 3 ♙h5 ♜g5+ 4 ♙h4 ♜g4+ the rook would just continue to place itself en prise on the g-file.

13) Gonzalez Garcia-Rudd

1...♙xb2+! 2 ♜xb2 ♜g1+ 3 ♜b1 ♜f6+ 4 ♜d4 ♜xd4+ 5 ♜xd4 ♜xb1+ 6 ♙xb1 cxd4 0-1

14) Onischuk-Graif

1 ♜xe6+! fxe6 (or 1...♙f8 2 ♜xd6+ ♙g7 3 ♜g6+! fxe6 4 ♜e7+ and mates) 2 ♜xe6+ ♙f8 (if 2...♙d8 3 ♜xd6#) 3 ♜f4+ ♙g7 4 ♜e7+ ♙g6 5 ♜f7# 1-0

15) Golding-Gallana

There are a few ways to win, with 1...♜g2+! the simplest, and if 2 ♙h1 (2 ♙f1 h3 will be an easy win once the pawn reaches h2) 2...♙g3 3 ♜g8+ ♙f2 4 ♜b8 ♜g1+ 5 ♙h2 ♜e1 6 ♜b2+ ♙f1 followed by ...f2. Instead, the game saw an instructive, if painful, slip: 1...♙g3? 2 ♜g8+ ♙h3 3 ♙f1 ♜g2 (how else to try to get the black king off the h-file, but now White is saved by stalemate) 4 ♜xg2! fxe2+ 5 ♙g1 ♙g3 ½-½.

16) Mutowski-Cooklev

1...♙h8! (1...♙g7? 2 f6+! ♙h8 3 f7 ♜xg6+ left White winning in the game, only for him to stumble into the stalemate with 4 ♙xg6? ½-½, rather than reach queen against rook after 4 ♙f5!) 2 f6 (or 2 ♙h6 ♜xg6+!) 2...♜xf6! would have exploited the potential stalemate to save the day.

17) Zhang-Carlin

1...♙c8! (a well-calculated, forcing finish; 1...♙a6 2 ♙e2 ♙c8! also works, and if 3 c5 ♙b7 4 ♙b5 ♙d5) 2 ♙f3 (and not 2 ♙xc8?? e2) 2...g4! 3 hxg4 (or 3 ♙e2 gxh3 4 gxh3 ♙xh3 5 c5 ♙d7 6 ♙f3 ♙c6! when the connected passed pawns are too strong) 3...♙xg4 4 ♙xg4 ♙xg4 5 ♙g1 ♙g3! 6 ♙f1 e2+ 7 ♜xe2 ♙xg2 8 c5 f3+ 0-1

18) Vidit-Hong

1 c6+! (the only winning move; Black would be in time to save the day after 1 ♜h7+? ♙c8 2 c6 ♜b2) 1...♙c7 2 ♜h7+! ♙b6 3 ♜b7+! ♙a5 4 c7 (the first non-only winning move as 4 b6 also wins; the connected passed pawns will prove too strong) 4...♜c2 5 b6 a3 6 ♜b8 a2 7 c8 ♙a1 ♜8 ♜a8+ ♙b4 9 ♜xc2 ♜g1+ 10 ♜g2 ♜c1 11 b7 ♜e1+ 12 ♜f2 ♜e5+ 13 ♙g2 1-0

19) Pichot-Arfan

1 ♜d7? ♜xd7! 2 ♜xh8 e5 wasn't at all clear

in the game, but 1 ♜b1! ♜h7 (or 1...b5 2 axb6+ ♙b7 3 ♜a3! followed by ♜xa6 or ♜d3) 2 ♜b6+! ♜xb6 3 axb6+ ♙b8 4 ♜bd1 would have been a classic case of pin and win.

20) Stevic-Svane

1...♜de3! 2 fxe3 ♜xe3 3 ♙xe3 (3 ♜b3 ♜xf1+ 4 ♙xf1 ♜c5 is also very good for Black, not least in the event of 5 ♜h3? h4 with a huge attack) 3...♙xe3+ 4 ♙h1 ♙xg5 5 ♜ad1 ♜xd1 6 ♜xd1 h4 7 g4 (there's no defence, as shown too by 7 ♙g2 ♜d8 8 ♜b3 ♜d2 9 ♜f2 ♜c5!) 7...♜d8 8 ♜a4 ♜e5 0-1 Mate even follows if 9 ♙f3 ♜d2 10 ♙g2 h3!.

21) Pichot-Stoyanov

1 f8 ♙! (1 ♜e8!? ♙h6 2 ♜g5 ♜f6 3 ♜g8 ♜g7 4 ♜e6! also wins) 1...♙xf8 (or 1...♜xf8 2 ♜e6 ♜g7 3 ♜e5) 2 ♜e5 ♙d6? (even 2...c1 ♙!?) 3 ♜xc1 ♜e4 4 g4+ ♙h6 5 ♜c6+ is an easy win) 3 ♜e8+! 1-0 3...♙h6 4 ♜h8+ ♜h7 5 ♜f6+ is the end.

22) Pragganandhaa-Svane

1 c5! (the closely related 1 ♙xe5!? fxe5 2 ♜g6+! hxg6 3 c5! also works) 1...bxc5 2 ♙xe5! fxe5 3 ♜g6+! hxg6 4 ♜h3+ ♙g8 5 ♙a2+ 1-0 Revealing the point behind 1 c5! Mate follows after 5...♙f8 6 ♜h8#.

23) Xiao-Kong

1 ♜xg6! hxg6 (not forced, but after, for example, 1...cxd4 2 ♙f4! dxc3 3 exf6 ♙b4!? 4 ♙d1 ♙d6 5 ♙xd6 ♜xd6 6 ♜xf8 cxb2 7 ♜xb2 White should also be winning) 2 h7+! ♙h8 (2...♙g7 3 ♙h6+ ♙xh7 4 ♙xf8+ ♙g8 5 ♙xe7 ♜xe7 6 ♜f2 would give White the initiative and an extra exchange) 3 ♜h4 (the point) 3...♙xh7 (3...♙g7 4 ♙f4 ♜d7 5 ♜xg6! ♙xg6 6 ♜f2 is pretty brutal too, as pointed out by John Watson on ChessPublishing) 4 ♜xf5+ ♙g8 5 ♜xf6+ ♜xe7 6 ♜xg6+ ♜g7 7 ♜xg7+ ♙xg7 8 ♙h6+ ♙f7 9 ♙xf8 ♙xf8 10 ♜h8+ (invading with decisive effect; White will quickly have far too many extra pawns) 10...♙e7 11 exf6+ ♙d7 12 dxc5 ♜c4 13 ♙xc4 1-0

24) Iskandarov-Rodshtein

1 ♙xe4!! (1 ♜f1 ♜xd2+ 2 ♜xd2 ♙e3 3 ♜e2 ♜h7 4 g3! gives White a strong initiative for the pawn, but the text is somewhat more brutal) 1...fxe4 2 ♜xe4 ♙xg1 (White's attack is also too strong after 2...♙d4 3 ♙g5 ♜g6 4 ♜f1 e5 5 ♜xf4! or 2...♙xe4 3 ♜xe4 ♜a7 4 ♜xf4 ♜g6 5 ♜gf1) 3 ♜d6+ ♙f8 4 ♜e5! (powerful centralisation and an essential follow-up to the rook sacrifice) 4...♜e3 (4...♙d5 5 ♙g5 leaves the rook without a single good square in view of 5...♜g6 6 ♜h8+ ♜g8 7 ♜f6# and 5...♜h7 6 ♜f6+ ♙g8 7 ♜d5! exd5 8 ♜e6+ when mate follows, be it with 8...♙f8 9 ♙h6+ ♜xh6 10 ♜f7# or 8...♙h8 9 ♙f6+ ♜g7 10 ♙xg7+ ♙xg7 11 ♜f5+ ♙h8 12 ♜e5+ ♙h7 13 ♜g7#) 5 ♙e7+! ♙g8 (5...♙xe7? 6 ♜g7+ ♙d8 7 ♜b5+ would lead to another neat finish, and if 7...♙d5 8 ♜c7+ ♙e8 9 ♜d6+ ♙f8 10 ♜f7#) 6 ♜g5+ ♙h7 7 ♜f5! 1-0 A further and quite deadly blow, with the point 7...exf5 8 ♙f6 followed by ♜g7# or ♜d7+.

This Month's New Releases



Reimagining 1.e4

Nikolaos Ntirlis, 304 pages

Quality Chess

RRP £24.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.49**

Reimagining 1.e4 is definitely one of the most eagerly-anticipated books on chess openings in recent times. This is because of the traction gained by some of Ntirlis's posts on X (formerly Twitter, as everyone still feels obliged to say). Those typically offer fairly straightforward-looking lines, sometimes with a twist as early as the third move, such as 1 e4 d5 2 exd5 ♖xd5 3 h3!?, with no-nonsense explanations as to why the lines are worth a try. Followers on X receive the suggestions very enthusiastically and often post games of their own using the suggestions of Ntirlis.

According to the blurb: "*Reimagining 1.e4* offers the Holy Grail of a simple, easy-to-learn White repertoire, which packs a punch against all of Black's main defences. In some lines, White unleashes a surprise as early as move 3. In others, White follows the known paths for a little longer, but only when there are big rewards to justify a modest effort."

Of course, the author has form for writing excellent repertoire books for the same publisher and these include *Playing 1.e4 e5 – A Classical Repertoire* (Quality Chess, 2016), and *Playing 1.d4 d5 – A Classical Repertoire* (Quality Chess, 2017), both of which are highly recommended. Distilling the salient points of a 1 e4 repertoire into a single volume is a taller task and a different approach has been utilised, based partly on the sort of early twists mentioned earlier and partly on taking the bull by the horns for the main black defences (1...e5 and 1...c5), only somehow managing to keep on the accessible side of the memory game, by dint of slightly off-centre lines which never border on the temporarily useful or frivolous side of things.

Indeed, Ntirlis has left no stones unturned in his quest to present an accessible repertoire, even calling for the resurrection of an old Paul Morphy idea against Owen's Defence, 1 e4 b6 2 d4 ♗b7 3 ♗d3 e6 4 ♗h3!?. One line becomes sharp very quickly: 4...c5 5 d5! exd5 6 exd5 ♗xd5 7 ♗c3 ♗xg2 8 ♖g1 ♗xh3 9 ♖f3! and White is having all of the fun.

Of course, not everyone is going to face Owen's Defence very often (Paul Morphy did – against the Reverend Owen himself!), and the big hitters are always going to be 1 e4 e5 and 1 e4 c5, as dictated by history and ongoing grandmaster trends. There is no beating around the bush here. It is straight into the Open Sicilian with 1 e4, 2 ♗f3 and

3 d4, and also the Spanish Game.

Trends and chess players being what they are, it would be surprising if some heads were not turned by Ding Liren's surprising and successful use of the French Defence in his 2024 world championship match with Dommaraju Gukesh. Maybe the trend will indeed change, and it is worth remembering that "in the days of Steinitz and Lasker, long before detailed opening books – never mind analysis engines! – the French was the second-most-popular defence to 1 e4."

This has extra relevance here, as Ntirlis wrote an excellent book – with Jacob Aagaard – on this defence (*Playing the French*, Quality Chess, 2013). Therefore, he has to 'play against himself' to some extent. The book's recommendation is the classical approach with 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♗c3, meeting the sharpest of all French variations, the Winawer with 3...♗b4, with the somewhat seldom-seen 4 ♗e2 – an old favourite of David Bronstein.

Back in 2013, the author's own recommendation for Black was to play 3...♗f6, leading specifically to the line 4 e5 ♗fd7 5 f4 c5 6 ♗f3 ♗c6 7 ♗e3 a6!?. "Its appeal is obvious, as Black strives for queenside counterplay as quickly as possible. But the landscape is always changing, and recently I saw an extremely pretty idea which gives White excellent chances." The idea in question is 8 ♗e2 b5 9 a3 ♖b6 10 ♗f2!.



There are several subtle points to this move, which ensures the d-pawn remains pinned against the queen after ...cxd4, which gives White the time to arrange the most judicious moment to recapture on d4, sometimes nudging away a black bishop from c5 with a timely b2-b4.

Incidentally, back to X, another interesting option against the French Defence, suggested by Ntirlis, is 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5

4 h3!?, which is mentioned in passing in this book, with a reference to Magnus Carlsen using the idea shortly afterwards. Anyway, readers will want to know what is in store for the Berlin Defence against the Ruy Lopez and how we intend to meet the Najdorf Sicilian; questions which tease chess players at all levels. As for the Berlin, the recommended line is 1 e4 e5 2 ♗f3 ♗c6 3 ♗b5 ♗f6 4 O-O ♗xe4 5 ♗e1 ♗d6 6 a4!?



There are two main points to this move: using the lead in development to build an initiative and trying to trick Black into lines in which they kick the bishop away with ...a7-a6, after which White forgoes the usual retreat square on a4 in favour of the f1 bolt-hole. It may not sound like much, but it is known that the insertion of the a-pawn moves favours White in some lines, as ably demonstrated in the book, and, at the very least, it gives Black something else to think about rather than the refuge afforded by the mainline Berlin endgame.

The Sicilian Najdorf – "the Blue Chip on the chess opening market" – is met by 1 e4 c5 2 ♗f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 a6 6 ♗e3!, countering 6...e5 with 7 ♗f3! which "is an annoying line for Black."



Believe it or not, Black already has to be

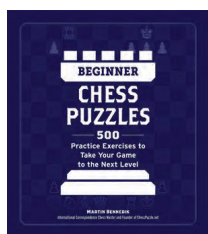
careful here, as the natural-looking Najdorf moves 7...b5? and 7...e6? just do not cut the mustard, as the book shows.

Incidentally, in former times, there was a 'forced' draw in this line with 6...g4 7 c1 f6, which was trendy for a while when players fancied a day off. There are no drawing lines here; the full-blooded 7 g5 is the line advocated in the book.

It is by no means an easy task to present a full, accessible e4 repertoire without resorting to catch-all solutions such as the King's Indian Attack, or avoiding the main lines of the Sicilian with b5(+). Yet Ntirlis is more than up to the task. This is an excellent book and one which reinforces just how good a writer he is. Black is constantly thrown on to slightly unusual territory, which means they will struggle to stick to their favourite plans and positions.

It is no mean trick to produce material which appeals to and entices players ranging from club players to grandmasters, but this book does exactly that and, as such, comes highly recommended.

Sean Marsh



Beginner Chess Puzzles

Martin Bennedik, 256 pages, paperback
RRP £10.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £9.89**

The founder of the popular Chess-Puzzle.net, Bennedik presents 500 positions for beginners to solve in this well-priced book. Along the way, they will learn much about forks, pins and skewers, as well as basic mating patterns and undefended pieces, with the handy 'Workout' sections made up of a wide-range of different tactical motifs.

Benedik and publisher Adams Media, an imprint of Schuster & Schuster, have also teamed up to produce a sequel, with *Intermediate Chess Puzzles* too containing 500 positions to solve, while retailing at £10.99 or £9.89 for Subscribers.



Get to Know Your Chess Troops! – Part 1: Everything About the King

Boroljub Zlatanovic, 250 pages, paperback
£32.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £29.65**

This is the first volume of a new series on strategic play from Informant Publishing, beginning with the most important of all the pieces, the king. Zlatanovic, a Serbian IM and professional chess trainer, begins by looking at the importance of an active king in the

endgame, before devoting a fair chunk of the book to the topic of attacking. He doesn't fail to discuss when the king should be evacuated from an attack, before finishing with some highly inspiring king walks.



Magic Chess Moves

Michal Konopka, 368 pages, paperback
RRP £24.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £22.49**

A more advanced puzzle work than the Bennedik duo is this new release from Quality Chess, with "puzzles powering practical improvement". The long-time captain of the Czech team and a noted trainer, IM Konopka presents 317 positions, which range from average to pretty tricky and which all come with detailed solutions, as well as, in some cases, interesting asides, be it on an endgame study composer or how best to teach a certain type of tactic. Note too that a hardback version is also available from Chess & Bridge: £29.50 or £26.55 for Subscribers.



Modern Classics

Dorian Rogozenco, PC-DVD; running time: 10+ hours

RRP £34.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £31.45**

This a follow-up DVD to Rogozenco's *Chess Classics* sees him cover 33 highly instructive games played between 1935 and 1999. As ever, Rogozenco's material is well researched and presentation clear, while there is a useful bonus section devoted to Petrosian's famed use of positional exchange sacrifices. The DVD also incorporates all the latest ChessBase technology, including the new CB-Books format.



The Complete Paul Keres

Jimmy Adams, hardback, 4 Volume Set, 4,000 pages, 500 sets available worldwide
RRP £225.00 **SUBSCRIBERS £202.50**

This is something unusual and an extremely impressive production from our former Editor. Paul Keres (1916 – 1975) is widely considered one of the strongest players never to become world champion and Adams's labour of love is a fitting tribute to

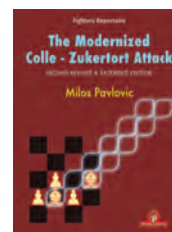
him. The first two volumes contain over 550 games, annotated by many of his contemporaries, before the final two volumes cover – in English for the first time – his biography, as well as a very large selection of his own games annotated by Keres himself. Each volume runs to over 900 pages and with a great many photographs sprinkled throughout, this truly is a special set of limited edition hardbacks.



The Greatest

Cyrus Lakdawala, 352 pages, paperback
RRP £19.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £17.99**

Chess players rarely tire of discussing who was the stronger or even the greatest player of all time. To help, in this new release from Popular Chess, Lakdawala has come up with a number of categories, including the best attackers of all time, which players were most ahead of their peers and who were the best risk-takers. You may not always agree with his conclusions, but this is a fascinating read, as well as a enjoyable, instructive and original collection of 80 annotated, world-class games, which aren't accompanied by too much flowery prose. Note too that a hardback version is also available, retailing at £24.99 or £22.49 for Subscribers.

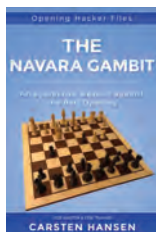


The Modernized Colle-Zukertort Attack

Milos Pavlovic, 228 pages, hardback
RRP £31.95 **SUBSCRIBERS £28.75**

Thinkers Publishing are rarely afraid to put out fully revised, second editions, as is the case here. Pavlovic's focus is on 1 d4 d5 2 f3 f6 3 e3, but despite the title he examines not only systems with d3, b3 and b2 for White, but also ones with d3 and c3, the original Colle. Both versions remain popular at club level and those looking to update their repertoires may be especially keen to learn that Pavlovic doesn't only examine the main lines, but also Slav and Queen's Indian set-ups from Black.

There's also been another release in the *Thinkers' Chess Academy with Grandmaster Thomas Luther* series, *Volume 7* from Thomas Luther and Heinz Brunthaler (296 pages, paperback, RRP £29.95, Subscribers £26.95), presenting 365 daily challenges, ones designed here to help readers anticipate typical mistakes and learn how to exploit the opponent's errors.



The Navara Gambit

Carsten Hansen, 108 pages, paperback
RRP £17.99 **SUBSCRIBERS £16.19**

Carsten Hansen remains impressively busy as an author and publisher, with this latest work part of his 'Opening Hacker Series'. As seen in these pages, Ding Liren struggled against 1 ♖f3 d5 2 c4 d4 3 b4 in the latest world championship match, but according to Hansen the solution is straightforward: 3...g5!?, the brainchild of David Navara. Most usefully, Hansen doesn't only examine that variation, but also has aggressive ideas in mind should White prefer the more restrained 3 e3 or 3 g3.

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londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress

February 1-2 Kidlington Congress
kidlingtonchess.org.uk

February 2 Nottingham Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/481/home

February 2 Wigan Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/548/home

February 4-6 Cheadle Open
ukchess.fillout.com/t/cYxqpi4SW4us

February 4 Muswell Hill Rapid
muswellhillchess.blogspot.com

February 7-9 Blackpool Chess Conference
blackpoolchess.org.uk

February 7-9 Dyfed Congress, Aberystwyth
welshchessunion.uk/calendar/

February 8 Earsfield Rapidplay
londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-rapidplay

February 8 Golders Green Rapidplay
goldersgreenchess.blogspot.com

February 9 Greenwich Rapidplay
gpchess.com

February 9 Norfolk Rapidplay
norfolkchess.org

February 11 Muswell Hill Rapid
muswellhillchess.blogspot.com

February 14-16 London Chess League Weekender
londonchess.org.uk; venue: London MindSports Centre

February 15 Cheam Rapidplay
congress.org.uk/congress/525/home

February 15 Popular Rapidplay
www.spanglefish.com/docklandschessclub/

February 18-23 Isle of Wight International
iowchess.com (Masters, Holiday U2000, Weekend Congress)

February 21-23 Doncaster Congress
mannchess.org.uk/doncong.htm

February 22-23 Coventry Open
warwickshirechess.org/2025-coventry-open/

February 22-23 Southall Congress
londonfidecongress.com/southall-congress

February 22 Crowborough Congress (rapid)
crowborough.org/club/41st-Congress.html

February 22 Stroud Rapidplay
www.stroudchess.club/spring-2025-rapid-tournament

February 23 Greater London Rapid, Orpington
congress.org.uk/congress/545/home

Feb 28 - Mar 2 Simon Bartlett Memorial Congress, Torquay
congress.org.uk/congress/471/home

February 28 - March 1 Earlsfield Congress
londonfidecongress.com/earlsfield-congress

March 1-2 British Rapidplay, Peterborough
englishchess.org.uk/british-rapidplay-championship-2025

And for the Online Connoisseur:

Jan 17 - Feb 2 Tata Steel Chess, Wijk aan Zee
tatasteelchess.com; Abdusattorov, Caruana, Erigaisi, Giri, Gukesh, etc.

February 26 - March 2 Prague Masters
praguechessfestival.com; Keymer, Le Quang Liem, Navara, Wei Yi, etc.

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