

TV 2 Fagernes International 2016

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 1



GM-group

Including eight GMs and five IMs above 2400 among only 34 players, this GM Swiss is very strong and offers remarkable title norm chances for the present candidates. Unfortunately there is only a handful of candidates between 2200 and 2350, and 13 players below 2200 means the first round had an ELO difference around 300-400 points in all games. Despite some nervous moments and many interesting games, all eight GMs won their first round games when the first half of the ELO-list defeated the second part 16-1!

Top seeded GM Sam Shankland (2648) won within four hours as white against FM Johannes Haug (2267), but the American still remained critical about his own play after the game. White appeared slightly better from the English opening after realizing d4 with a space advantage on the queenside, but black by e5-e4 got some chances for a kingside attack. As black played too slow around move 25-26, white got the necessary time to place his king on h2 and open the g-file with 27.f3. 30.--- Qh4? later was a non-working tactical shot fired from a strategically crumbling position, and playing with queen and bishop for two rooks Shankland of course had no problems winning the endgame.



Second board meeting between Norwegian IM Petter Haugli (2244) and Ukraine GM Andrey Vovk (2638) started up with 1.c4 f5. Not unexpectedly white later got a positional pressure on the queenside, and Haugli for a change probably was better from the opening.

While white failed to find a plan, black after f4 developed a kingside attack, but the game remained a hard-fought one until white blundered an exchange with 28.Nc4?.





Russian GM Evgeny Romanov (2635) as white against Norwegian junior Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2209) demonstrated the better understanding of a positional King's Indian line, and due to his control on the important d4 square white came much better.

Exchanging the fianchetto bishop with 22... Bxd4? was a decisive positional mistake, after which white's pair of knights dominated the board. In a

winning rooks and knights endgame, Romanov neatly sacrificed an exchange to promote his passed c-pawn before 40 moves.

15 year old Trygve Dahl (2201) bravely challenged GM Yuri Vovk (2611) to a Sicilian Maroczy duel, which backfired for white as black after realizing the d5-break at move 10 got a very active position. The game still could have been interesting if white had tested out an interesting sacrifice with 19.Ncxb5!. Instead 19.Nd5? Nc5 20.Qd1 Be5 soon resulted in an overwhelming initiative for black. Within a few moves black had an exchange plus an ongoing kingside attack, and white's endgame anyway was hopeless when he lost on time after 31 moves.

Latvian GM Arturs Neikšans (2607) as white against Norwegian Jens Hjørt Kjølberg (2164) chose a patient and positional approach with 1.c4 and an English fianchetto. Due to his strong knight on c4 white had a pleasant position edge from the opening, and although black for a while defended well, pressure upon his position increased following a powerful d4-d5 advance in the middle game. White's position turned winning as the pawn at move 27 reached d6, and under pressure on the clock as well black collapsed before 40 moves.



GM Kjetil A. Lie

WGM Anastasia Gutsko (2154) as white against GM Kjetil A Lie (2535) first came better in a Pirc duel.

12.Bc4? allowing Ng4xe3 gave black a pair of bishops plus the better structure, but white fought on well and still had about equal chances after 25 moves.

Having less than three minutes left on the clock after 29 moves, Gutsko however lost the thread as she exchanged her passed d6-pawn and opened the board for black's bishop. As the GM efficiently used his chances, he was a bishop up with a

totally won position when white lost on time at move 38.

American Nick de Firmian (2508) was the last GM to win tonight, and also the one having most difficulties. Opponent Henrik Øie Løbersli (2134) did well from this Closed Ruy Lopez opening duel, and although white with 17.f4 succeeded opening the position, he failed to reach any advantage in the middle game. Instead black had an initiative around move 25-30.

Following some time-trouble mistakes from black, white after 40 moves was no more in danger of losing. The endgame with rook, knight and four pawns versus rook, bishop and four pawns still appeared drawish until black blundered with 52.--- Bc4??, overlooking that the passed pawn after 53.e6! won a piece – and a game.



GM Nick de Firmian and Lucas Ranaldi

The Norwegian duel between Lucas Ranaldi (2132) and IM Frode Urkedal (2507) started as a fairly balanced English fianchetto, but then black in the middle game started demonstrating his better understanding of a complex hedgehog apposition.

Black instructively put his queen on a8, hit in the center with 21.--- d5!, and came clearly better after white replied with the much too weakening 22.e5?.

Later 26.Kf2? was an advertisement for 26.--- Ne4+! – after which black soon had a dangerous attack plus a decisive material advantage.

GM Leif E Johannessen (2497) and Anton Darnell (2110) via 1.d4 e6 2.c4 reached a Nimzo-Indian opening, transposing into a Queen's Gambit Moskow line with a position edge for white. As white had established a pawn on c5 and a knight on e5 while black still struggled to develop his bishop from c8, white anyway was much better when black after 21 moves blundered his key pawn on f5. Johannessen in an inspired mood went on to force a material win and reached a winning endgame before 30 moves.

Norwegian FM Richard Bjerke (2109) and Latvian IM Nikita Meskovs (2469) meanwhile discussed a critical Benoni pawn storm line with 7.f4. White's pawn sacrifice with 13.e5!? dxe5 14.f5 is thematic, and a strong knight on e4 gave him promising kingside prospects around move 18-20. Black however defended well, and soon turned the attack against his opponent after white too loose sacrificed a piece with 23.Ne6?.

IM Johan Salomon (2452) and Sigve Hølleland (2107) tested out a Queen's Indian-like line with 8.d5!? exd5 9.Nh4, in which white's bishops gave him a pleasant pressure after black returned the pawn. Although his position looked too much like a pancake, he was reportedly in the game until 23... f5?? invited white to sacrifice a piece with 24.Bxf5+! g6 25.Bxg6+!. Salomon immediately accepted the party invitation, and despite some inaccuracies he danced through on the kingside within six more moves.



The game between FM Eivind Risting (2102) and IM Nicolai Getz (2407) on the other hand was a Classical Nimzo-Indian duel in which white was better from the opening.

Getz true to his tactical style went for a kingside attack with 12... g5 and 13... h5, but it did not work out too well as black's king became more airy than white's. Exchanging queens in turn was a helpful misunderstanding from white, as black was slightly

better in the double rook endgame afterwards.

Having less than a minute left on the clock, Getz just before 40 moves allowed a threefold repetition. Having less than half a minute left on the clock, Risting in turn failed to demand a draw in time. Sacrificing a pawn to establish a passed c-pawn, Getz came closer to winning chances in the fifth hour of play.

In the sixth hour Risting sacrificed his rook on the passed pawn, and the game dried up with a drawn king and rook versus king and two pawns endgame.

IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2401) as white against Andreas Fossan (2069) played a symmetrical English line and got an edge, which increased after a badly timed d5 from black.

Having the better pawn structure and the better piece squares, white was winning after 25 moves, and completed with a tactical stroke on the kingside after 32 moves.

Joar Gullestad Pettersen (2062) versus FM Lars Oskar Hauge (2393) was a Sicilian with 3.Bb5+, later looking more like a closed Ruy Lopez. White for a long while appeared better in a complex and dynamic middle game.

As Hauge (of course) came up with some counterplay on the kingside in a shaky position, white spent too much time without finding any good play. Having only some 15 seconds left for 10 moves, Pettersen exchanged down to an endgame with rook and two kingside pawns versus rook and three kingside pawns. That endgame is usually a draw, but unfortunately for white this one turned out to be an exception – as white's too advanced e5-pawn now was too vulnerable.



IM Jovanka Houska (2387) and Edit Machlik (2056) for some reason usually meet each other in the first round of international tournaments both play – and then Houska usually wins with white in some Bogó-Indian duel.

As Edit Machlik decided to play the same opening again and as Houska again demonstrated the better understanding of it, white first established a space advantage, and then neatly completed the kingside attack with

a classical queen sacrifice (27.Ng5! > Qxh6 28.Nxf7 mate). Another convincing Bogó Boogie from Houska means that Machlik should consider another opening next time they meet in the first round.

Monika Machlik (2055) and Anders Hobber (2326) made a slower start with a Slav in which black played 2...c6 and 6...c5. The resulting position was symmetric and about equal, and black looked slightly better after placing a knight on the c4 square.

A reportedly well-played game was suddenly agreed drawn when both players had five minutes left for thirteen moves. Relaxed looking Hobber still had the more active pieces and considered his position better, but he felt tired and due to his poor pawn structure still would have a long and risky way to win.

Curiously this was the only game with an ELO-difference below 300 points, and not a surprising board for a surprising result.



Monika Machlik, FM Vegar Koi Gandrud and WFM Anita Grønnestad

FM Vegar Koi Gandrud (2300) as white again WFM Anita Grønnestad (1957) demonstrated the better understanding of this Catalan opening, as white's passed pawn on d5 gave him way more space and the much more pleasant position.

Black's try to complicate with a knight sacrifice was very understandable, but still completely insufficient, as white just cashed in the knight on f4 and still had the better attack.

IM-group

Somewhat originally, this closed IM-group does not include any IM. Instead including four GMs and an ELO-average close to 2350 it is still a very strong IM-group, and it will be exciting to see whether anyone except the GMs can meet the IM norm demand of 6.0/9.

The candidates had a fairly promising start, as three young Norwegian FM's reached a draw against three of the GMs. The only GM to win following this was second seeded Aloyzas Kveinys, efficiently squeezing a win out of a drawish endgame against WIM Sheila Barth Sahl.

Tenth rated Eric Moskow on the other hand wasted a promising white position in a complex game against eight rated Sondre Merkesvik. So the youngest player also had a promising start on his search for a norm – while the two lowest rated players were the only ones who lost in the first round.



GM Heikki Westerinen (2319) versus almost 50 years younger FM Erlend Mikalsen (2333) entered a closed and tense Ruy Lopez position, in which both players spent much time.

After 21 moves a draw suddenly was agreed by a tricky repetition, as white moved his knight back and forth between f5 and g7.

Mikalsen understandably was well satisfied with the repetition, as white probably would have

been better if he had instead exchanged his bishop on f8.



In another generation duel, Eric Moskow (2116) as white against Sondre Merkesvik (2230) had the better preparation, and came ahead on the clock. Challenging a Torre attack with an ambitious g5-Nh5-set up black probably was fine on the board from the opening, but then he underestimated white's queenside play with Nb3 and Na5.

White in turn made a mistake as he could have opened up the queenside with some advantage by the simple 20.bxc5!, but instead allowed black to close it with 20.Qa4? c4!. Playing well afterwards, white again was ahead on board and clock in a complex position around move 30.

Exchanging off the white-squared bishops for a knight with 31.Bxc8? however was a positional mistake, as white lost his e3-pawn within a few moves. Probably the endgame with rook, knight and four pawns versus rook, bishop and five pawns still was a draw, but still playing too fast Moskow following another mistake at move 40 slipped into a lost position.

Although exchanging down to a rook endgame was the right plan for black, 54.--- Bxh2? was a mistake as the instructive 55.Rh1!! probably could have saved a draw – the sensational point being that 55.--- Ra2 56. Re1+ Kf7 57.Re7+! etc is a stalemate... Anyway a disillusioned Moskow too fast played the automatic 55.Kxh2?, losing another pawn and the game.

Never known for his hard serve, GM Aloyzas Kveinys (2534) as white against WIM Sheila Barth Sahl (2195) just started up play with a modest and closed Slav line. After white played cxd5, his c-file at best gave him a very slight initiative.

14.Ne5?! although natural was too slow, and as black got the time to exchange some more pieces, the endgame with three minor pieces and seven pawns on each side looked very drawish.

Having three minutes left on the clock Sahl however blundered with 37.--- Nc5?!, somehow overlooking that Kveinys could win a piece and then return in to reach an easily won pawn endgame. The GM did not miss his chance for a smash, and so the game despite many promising moves ended up with a honest loss for the WIM.



Narciso Dublan vs Nilsen (front) and Sahl vs Kveinys (back) with arbiter and organizer Hans Olav Lahlum.

FM Joachim B. Nilsen (2397) versus GM Marc Narciso Dublan (2549) was a heavyweight duel starting up with a long theory discussion of a critical Pirc line. Both players spent much time from the opening, but found a lot of good moves as white sacrificed a full rook on f7 after 12 moves and got it back five moves later on. Then a draw was agreed after 24 moves in a fairly balanced position with king, rook, bishop, two knights and four pawns on each side.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2387) and GM Stellan Brynell (2417) meanwhile discussed an Accepted Queen's Gambit line in which black appeared satisfied to reach a solid position, while white appeared satisfied to get a slight initiative without risks.

Snatching a pawn at d5 in move 18 looked greedy from a black point of view, but the idea turned out to be giving up the queen for rook and bishop. Playing with queen and five pawns versus rook, bishop and six pawns white obviously was the one trying to win, but black with a sound pawn structure probably had a fortress.

Satisfied to start up his IM norm hunt with a GM draw, Mihajlov despite having won back the pawn offered a repetition just before 40, and Brynell of course had no objections.

Open Norwegian Championship

In the **Open Norwegian Championship**, number 23 Bjarne Engevik (1780) jumped into a lead in the second hour of playing – efficiently mating his opponent’s king on f7 following an entertaining game against 14 year old Sigurd Lauvås Gaure (1360). The outcome could very well had been different if Gaure had taken some minutes more and exchanged the queen with 14.--- Nxd5!, instead of running his king out on a much too airy board with 14.--- Kg6? 15.Qxe4+ Kxg5.

Anyway Engevik’s lead of course did not last long. The Open includes 61 players spread out across some 60 years and some 1500 points of ELO. Almost all games had an odds one favorite in the first round, and all but two of the favorites won in the end.

Top seeded Johannes Kvisla (2253) first established a positional advantage, then won some material and then completed the win within reasonable time without too many nervous moments.

So did second seeded FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2160) and third seeded Terje Lund (2157).

Fourth seeded Christian Laverton (2096) appeared a bit more unsecure from the opening as black, but still won within three hours as his opponent too loose sacrificed a rook.



Arne Hagesæther

Fifth seeded Arne Hagesæther (2081) in an aggressive mood won a piece before ten moves and mated his opponent after 18. And so the round went on.

The only surprising result on the first ten boards was eight seeded Johannes Melkevik (2049) drawing as black against Jostein Sørhus (1627). Melkevik won an exchange with a probably winning position, but hard-fighting Sørhus came up with some counterplay, and might have missed some winning chances before the game was drawn by a repetition of checks in the fourth hour.



Ralph Palmeri

On the neighboring board seventh-rated Håkon Bentsen was reported to be under pressure against the longest travelling player of the open, 67 year old American Ralph Palmeri.

Playing black in a complex Sicilian Najdorf, Palmeri had the better attacking prospects in the early middle game.

Bentsen however efficiently turned the tide as black went astray with a too loose rook sacrifice.

The second draw surprise instead came on one of the lowest boards, between unrated chess daddy Karl Sebastian and the very talented twelve year old Afras Mansoor (1747). No shame for Mansoor as Sebastian made a sound comeback game, balancing a Caro Kann duel all the way into a drawn bishop versus knight endgame.

The third draw surprise never came, although several others players from the second half played well above their ELO. Per Magnus Larsen (1404) succeeded reaching a dead draw endgame with rook versus rook and g-pawn against Jan-Arne Bjørgvik (1827), but the oldest fox of the group somehow still succeeded to win.

And in the last game of the round, around 23.00 this Saturday evening, eleven year Alisha Shehzad (1430) became too passive and after all lost a drawn rook endgame against Kimiya Sajjadi (1835).

In short, the players from the first half of the ELO list in the end won this first round 29-1, without losing any game. But anyway: Many entertaining games in the first round – and many more rounds to come for all players!

All photos: Tom Eriksen