



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT **1**



GM-group

The first round on this year's GM-group unfortunately was a bit reduced on the top boards, as first seeded GM Andrey Vovk and third seeded GM Peter Prohaszka due to team matches both had to start up with a walk over draw.

Still the remaining 34 players made a promising start out of the first round, with many hard-fought games and a fair number of surprises. While second seeded GM Evgeny Postny and sixth seeded GM Erik Blomqvist both won convincingly within three hours, four other GMs had to accept a draw against much lower rated opponents. Most players from the first half of the ELO list won their games in the end, but the players from the second half finally got their win after 5 hours and 57 minutes - as FM Jari Järvenpää after 111 moves succeeded to realize his win against IM Valery Kazakovskiy.



GM Evgeny Postny (2606) of Israel apparently enjoyed being the highest rated player in the first round.

As white against talented FM Lucas Ranaaldi (2309) in a Queen's Indian, white first established a positional pressure and then made the better calculations.

After a tactical 12.--- Nc3? black in the short run got rook and two pawns for two minor pieces.

But within a few more moves white used his minor pieces to create a decisive kingside attack, while black's queen was totally offside at a6.



WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) and GM Frode Urkedal (2552) tested a Four Knights line in which all queens and knights were exchanged within the first ten moves, leaving a rather dry and balanced position with two rooks, two bishops and eight pawns on each side.

Following sensible moves from both players, chances remained about balanced into a pawn endgame – in which it soon turned out that white could achieve a fortress draw by letting black

establish a protected passed pawn on d4.

In today's third duel between Israel and Norway (!?), GM Alon Greenfeld (2550) and FM Johannes Haug (2297) exchanged three sets of minor pieces in a Queen's Gambit.

White due to pawns on d4 and e5 kept a space advantage afterwards, but black probably was healthy until he became too eager to exchange rooks.

The remaining endgame with queen, bishop and six versus queen, knight and six first was cramped for black. While the FM fought on well the GM became too busy with his d5-break, hence black got the help needed to free his pieces and force a draw before 40 moves.

FM Anders Hobber (2297) versus GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) was a short but intense Slav duel.

White after c4, d4 and e4 got more space. Having exchanged his bad bishop for white's good one on d3, black appeared well satisfied. Still white was no way worse before he suddenly turned himself into a gorilla with 15.Nxf7? Kxf7 16.Rxe7+? Kxe7.

What white overlooked remains somewhat mysterious, but anyway it is a fact that he resigned a hopeless position with only one pawn and some air for a piece after 19 moves.

GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) and FM Luis Couso (2287) meanwhile transposed from 1.c4 into a Queen's Gambit Exchange line, in which white is considered pleasantly better due to black's double f-pawn and inferior bishop. Couso however succeeded both to exchange one of the f-pawns and to activate his pieces, and a tight five hours battle followed.

After the first time control white still appeared close to winning chances with two rooks, bishop and three pawns versus two rooks, knight and three pawns, as black's advanced pawn on f3 was weak. The endgame with rook and three pawns versus rook and three pawns also appeared very difficult for black, as white had the more active rook and king.

Couso however was paid well for his optimism today, as the GM was the one to stumble in the sixth hour: Advancing the king to f5 was an overoptimistic plan, after which black could (and did) force a draw by a counterattack against white's pawn on f2.



Norwegian veteran IM Petter Haugli (2257) and Lithuanian veteran GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) have met surprisingly many times.

This time they started up with 1.c4 e6, but transposed into a Classical Nimzo-Indian duel in which white has a pair of bishops and black some chances for a kingside attack.

Black looked closer to something in the third hour and definitely was closer to something in the fourth hour.

Playing with an extra c-pawn in the fifth hour, black still had a hard time overcoming white's stubborn and active defence. After 44 moves, Rozentalis suddenly pulled the brake by returning the pawn, the idea turned out to be exchanging it all down to a draw.



The American-Norwegian teenage duel between IM Awonder Liang (2483) and FM Eivind Risting (2250) started as a Caro-Kann with 2.Nc3 and 3.Nf3. Black's d5-d4 probably was too ambitious in this position, as white's strong square on e4 combined with his pawn on e5 later gave him a pleasant kingside pressure. Black escaped the direct attack by exchanging both the queens and the e5-pawn, but the price was too high, as

white afterwards had all the better pieces and promising pressure against black's backward pawn on e6. The rest was a study in cramp, and Risting anyway was in deep trouble when he short of time blundered decisive material at move 39.

FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) and IM Valeriy Kazakovskiy (2454) started up with an O'Kelly Sicilian, in which white after an early queen exchange on d7 had both the better pawn structure and the better pieces. 13.--- Nb4? probably was overambitious, as white came clearly better after 15.Nc5!, but a hard struggle followed as Kazakovskiy gave up first one pawn and then another one to get counterplay on the queenside.

After 40 moves white was clearly winning, but as the time trouble duel continued for some more moves, black eventually won back one of the pawns on b3. The following knight endgame with knight and two pawns versus knight and three pawns still was a nightmare from a black point of view, as white had a passed c-pawn and the more active pieces. In the sixth hour Järvenpää played very well on the board, efficiently deciding the game as he after 69 moves won a second pawn on h5. For unknown reasons he however continued to play slow even with less than two minutes left to complete the game.

Having knight versus knight and three pawns on the board with five minutes against less than 20 seconds on the clock, Kazakovskiy from 85 moves gave it a good try and threw out all his remaining moves. It turned out Järvenpää accelerated just in time, as he after 111 moves had three seconds left on the clock but only one move left until mate...

IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) – FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) was another hard-fought meeting between two club mates from Oslo SS. The start was a modest Slav exchange line, but the game suddenly accelerated as white played e4 and sacrificed a pawn to open the position.

Al-Tarbosh for a long time defended well, and succeeded reaching a drawish endgame with two rooks, knight and five versus two rooks, knight and four pawns. White however kept up his pressure, and efficiently used his chance as black in the fourth hour first returned the pawn in the wrong way – and then stumbled into a hopeless pawn endgame.

Christian Laverton (2159) and IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) discussed a classical Benkö Gambit position in which black's active pieces turned out to be more important than white's extra pawn at b5. Instructively having opened up the position for his machine gun bishops, Christiansen played too fast and invited white into the game again.

Laverton on the other hand played too slowly, and having three minutes left for ten moves he blundered with 31.Rb2??, overlooking 31.--- Ne2+ with a decisive win of material – while 31.Re1! would have protected the e2 square, returned the pawn and prolonged an uphill struggle.



The game between 12 year old Indian FM Sarin Nihal (2424) and 45 year old Norwegian Frode Lillevold (2135) started as a Positional Queen's Gambit, in which white played c5 with some space advantage on the queenside. Black and his d5-pawn in turn had more space in the center, and probably a fine position after 16 move. Lillevold however used way too much time on the clock, and 17.--- e5? followed by 19.--- e4?! was a too

weakening plan. White within a few moves efficiently cashed in the backward pawn on d5, and with 52 against 2 minutes left on the clock he never appeared worried about black's try for a kingside attack. 30.--- Ng5? was a somewhat misunderstood attacking plan, as black was the one to go mate four moves later on, but white anyway was winning then.

Trygve Dahl (2099) and IM John Paul Wallace (2404) discussed a Sicilian version of a King's Indian Advance in which white put no pressure whatsoever, leaving black with a pleasant initiative after queens were exchanged in move 17.

Both players used much time and made some mistakes afterwards. Black methodically increased his advantage and anyway had an overwhelming positional advantage when white collapsed under time pressure just before 40 moves.

IM David Eggleston (2394) versus Mikael Aroven (2097) was a a Sicilian Kalashnikov duel in which white first had a positional plus, as his knight on d5 was better than the black knight on c5.

Following up by directing his other knight to f5 and his queen to f3, white anyway had some chances for a kingside attack when black fatally weakened his kingside with 21.--- g6?.

White later could have made it easier for himself, as black's pair of bishops apparently offered some counterplay when the position opened. Still his position was winning all of the time, and white remained two pawns up with an easy winning endgame after black survived the time control with a one second margin.

Håkon Bentsen (2074) arrived Fagernes as a modest optimist after playing more than 20 games in a row without a loss, but soon was brought down to earth in the thin air of this GM-group.

FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) two weeks ago made his second IM-norm in Cuba, and with the black pieces succeeded to make an inspiring start out of a Caro-Kann with 5.Nxf6+ gxf6.

After three sets of minor pieces were exchanged white appeared close to equal, but his king on e2 still gave him some worries. They turned into a real headache following white's much too lose f3-g4 set up. After instructively opening the center with e5 black had a winning attack before 20 moves, and completed it before 25 moves.

Willy Kristiansen (2055) was supposed to be top rated in the Open group, but immediately accepted the invitation for a promotion when one player in the GM group had to cancel shortly before the first round.

As black against FM Erik Hedman (2367) and his Catalan, Kristiansen went for a solid line in which white has some more space after winning back the pawn on c4. 17.d5?! opened the position too early, and chances for some 15 moves afterwards remained about balanced.

With both players short of time for 40 moves Hedman however succeeded in maneuvering his pieces for a kingside attack, culminating with 36.Nxh6+ and 37.Nxf7.

Hedman himself was not sure what would have happened if black accepted the knight sacrifice, but for sure he would have had three pawns and a strong attack. As black short of time did not take the knight, white instead came two pawns up with an accelerating attack.



Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032) versus Garg Aradhya (2315) was a Norwegian-Indian teenager duel, starting with an Italian opening. White won some space with his c3-d4 set up, but black had more than enough counterplay and came better after a pseudo-sacrifice on e4.

19.--- Nxe5? was a mistake inviting white into the game again, but black's queenside pressure and pair of bishops afterwards proved more important than white's not too dangerous kingside plans. White after this anyway was under double pressure on clock and board when he blundered with 26.Re2?, somehow overlooking that the direct Rd1+! won a lot of material.

In the shadow on the seventeenth board, GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) and WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) made a slow positional start on their tournament with a 3.Bb5 Sicilian.

White had only a very slight initiative from the opening, in which both spent 60 minutes for 14 moves.

72 year old Westerinen efficiently used his chances to accelerate on the queenside around move 20-25, and all the board opened up for his pair of bishops as black lost her key pawn on d4 at move 30.

IM-group

As three out of five games in the end were drawn, the IM-group made a somewhat hesitant start. The two hottest norm candidates both got an average start in today's Norwegian duels, as FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen made a draw in a not too exciting game against IM Espen Lie, while FM Sebastian Mihajlov made a draw in a very exciting game against IM Nicolai Getz.

The young Danish candidate, FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen, meanwhile had a promising start and could have had a fantastic start – as he drew a turbulent game against top rated GM Roeland Pruijssers after wasting some winning chances.

The norm candidate from Finland, FM Kalle Niemi, also had a promising start as he squeezed a win out of a probably drawish rook endgame against Thomas Nyland. Niemi following this share the lead with Swedish GM Ralf Åkesson, the latter finally succeeded winning a won endgame after an entertaining five hours struggle as black against Norwegian FM Sondre Merkesvik.



From a critical start as black against Dutch GM Roeland Pruijssers (2504), the young Danish FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219) definitely was today's start rocket as he threw out 21 well-prepared moves in a tight Ruy Lopez duel.

The position afterwards was promising for black, but demanding to handle for both players. Playing with an airy king on g1, white succeeded advancing his kingside pawns further and get some

counterplay against black's king. With both players having a few minutes left on the clock, Pruijssers two pawns up left a repetition of checks to play for a win. It proved in fact too risky, as he within three moves had to return both pawns and play on in a more or less lost position.

Taking a third pawn after 39 moves was a mistake from black, but still he would have been close to winning if keeping the queens on board instead of exchanging them off after 42 moves.

Finally having cured his problem with the king, the GM without too many problems saved the remaining endgame with rook, bishop and two pawns versus rook, bishop and one pawn.

FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) versus GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) was a rather open minded Queen's Indian line, in which white's pair of bishops from the start probably was more important than black's better pawn structure. White became too eager to exchange queens, but his pair of bishops still gave him an edge afterwards.

In the third hour the GM demonstrated better understanding than the FM and gradually took over the initiative. With both players about to run short of time Merkesvik however defended by active means, sacrificing a pawn to double his rooks on the seventh rank and activate his bishop in a tense endgame with four rooks and opposite colored bishops.

Having only some 32-40 seconds left for each move, Merkesvik became too passive around move 36-40. As black after the time control had secured his passed pawn on e3 and was about to win a second

pawn on g3, white's decision to go for a tactical transition into an endgame with two rooks and two pawns versus queen, bishop and two pawns was perfectly understandable. It was of course still winning, and although Akesson could have won faster he won safe enough in the final endgame with queen and g7-pawn versus rook and h5-pawn



14 year old FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) came to this tournament a few weeks after making his second IM-norm in Kragerø, while 33 year old IM Espen Lie (2449) in the same tournament made his third GM-norm.

Their meeting at Fagernes started with an Aljechin duel in which black first appeared healthy, but having played Bh6 to exchange black's key bishop on g7, white had some more space and some chances

for a kingside attack. Kaasen however became too careful when exchanging queens after 20 moves, and only had a very slight space advantage when a draw was agreed upon Lie's suggestion two moves later.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) and IM Nicolai Getz (2403) play for the same Oslo club, but that was no way visible in today's very hard-fought duel. The start was a Queen's Gambit Exchange line in which white first had a slight pressure, but black probably was fine after exchanging the queens on g4 in move 16.

White appeared close to winning after being allowed to hit in at g6 in move 25, but the position remained messy as black had a piece for two pawns – with his king walking in the air on h5.

Getz defended well and succeeded to exchange it down to a promising endgame with rook and three pawns versus knight and five pawns. In a close to lost position Mihajlov in turn fought on well with a creative knight sacrifice. As Getz way too carelessly snatched the knight, white escaped into a strange endgame with king and five pawns against king, rook and two pawns.

For some moments both Getz and qualified spectators believed that white with passed pawns on c7, f7 and h7 could have a study like win by marching his king up to a6. It was instead a study like draw, as it turned out black could not make progress unless white became too ambitious and marched too far with his king...

FM Kalle Niemi (2337) and Thomas Nyland (2104) discussed a French with 3... dxe4, in which black played faster and appeared healthy from the opening.

Exchanging queens after 18 moves probably was fine from a black point of view, as black's pair of bishops later about compensated for white's d-file control. Later black however became too eager to exchange pieces, and the rook endgame at best was highly unpleasant for black, due to white's active rook on d7.

Niemi patiently increased the pressure, and after picking up black's queenside pawns he in the end after 54 moves had everything under control.

Elo-group



First rated Afras Mansoor (2037), second seeded Alf W. Lundberg (2011) and most other favourites of course won in the first round. The first six boards went 6-0 in favour of the favourites.

The most exciting of these games probably was the third board: The capable but rusty Swedish player Hassan Kashwan (third seeded in this comeback tournament following an estimated strength of 2000) was under serious pressure as black against unpredictable Erling Skjelstad (1671), before he efficiently turned the tide and undermined white's center in the fourth hour.

Today's sensation came on board seven, as Tor Wetle Hoem (1965) in the fifth hour overlooked a tactical stroke and lost as black against underrated and inspired Trondheim player Sondre Stai (1644). Hoem before his blunder was a pawn up in endgame, but probably not close to winning chances.



Today's surprise woman became eleven year old Ariza Hina (1525) - following a shock as she tried to do an illegal move in the opening against Ingvar Gundersen (1825). Whether Gundersen following this underestimated his young opponent is unknown, but Ariza definitely took the cold shower as she captured a stranded black knight on h4, crashed through with a tactical 20.Bxe5!, and went on to win the game with inspired attacking chess.

No complaints about the fighting spirit, as 27 out of 29 games in this group had a winner today. About the two surprise draws, the one between Tomi Tocklin (1812) and Sigurd Lauvås Gaure (1504) truly was a surprise – as it came after 21 moves in a lively position.

The teenager duel between Rasmus Arvola Gabrielsen (1484) and Andreas Sebastian (1810) following a dry start finally appeared interesting with queen, bishop, knight and five pawns on each side after 30 moves, but then it was immediately drawn by a repetition of checks.

The five players without a FIDE-ELO all played reasonable chess, but all still lost in the end today. In short it was a hard fought and entertaining first round in an uneven and unpredictable Open.

All photos: Tom Eriksen