



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 3



GM-group

The big sharks steam upwards in the GM group: Second seeded GM Evgeny Postny is alone at 3/3 after winning a tight time trouble duel against IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen, while first seeded GM Andrey Vovk heads the group of followers after a bishop pair massacre against IM David Eggleston. The Nordic Champion Erik Blomqvist also joined this group after winning a long and instructive GM duel against Alon Greenfeld.

Yes, the GMs in short had a very good round, scoring 6.5 out of 7 possible points. Still the young norm candidates are very well in the run, as the group at 2.5/3 also includes Benjamin Arvola, Lars Oskar Hauge and Nihal Sarin.



On first board GM Evgeny Postny (2606) and IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) discussed a critical line in an Accepted Queen's Gambit with 3.e4. A tense middle game struggle followed, and many Norwegian chess fans were optimistic for Johan-Sebastian as he after 30 moves was clearly ahead on the clock and had a threatening passed pawn on f3.

Postny was actually playing for a win the whole time, but a loaded position with queen, two rooks, knight and four pawns on each side remained about in balance until 35 moves. Eager to exploit Postny's time shortage, Christiansen then dubiously sacrificed his f3-pawn with Ng4?.

Despite 90 seconds for four moves Postny again made the better calculations.

True enough he missed that 38.Rxf5! intending Qxf3 39.Ng6+ hxc6 40.Rxf3 instead of 38.Ng6+?! would have won on the spot. But white anyway won an exchange, and went on to win the endgame after forcing a queen exchange in the fifth hour.

IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) got white in the young lion duel against FM Benjamin Arvola (2385), and chose an unorthodox start with 1.d4 2.Nc3 and 3.Bf4. White first had a slight initiative after an early queen exchange, but Arvola defended well and was about to take over the initiative when he temporarily sacrificed a pawn on e5 after 30 moves.

Unwilling to return the pawn, Hauge instead sacrificed an exchange, hoping that his passed h-pawn would decide in the endgame with knight and five pawns versus rook and four pawns. Hauge soon realized he was in danger of losing, and Arvola operating with rook and f-pawn versus knight, a- and b-pawns for some moves had a won position.

As Arvola failed to find an instructive win with 50.--- Rg3!, he after the very natural 50.--- f3? instead had to find the right path to sacrifice his rook for both the remaining white pawns. All taken together a draw probably was a fair result in this long and interesting Norwegian duel.

Hauge at 2.5/3 is about on schedule for his GM-norm, while Arvola at 2.5/3 is well ahead of schedule for his decisive IM-norm.



12 year old FM Nihal Sarin (2424) this round himself went for a Classical Nimzo with 5.e4 as white against GM Frode Urkedal (2552).

The pawn on d5 gave white some more space, but black was perfectly fine at least after he could disrupt white's kingside pawns with 13.--- Bxf3.

Sarin later spent much time without finding anything but exchanges, and the game was drawn by a perpetual check between g4 and f3 after 21 moves.

IM David Eggleston (2394) versus GM Andrey Vovk (2636) was a complex Sicilian duel in which tactical exchanges after 25 moves left a materially balanced position with two rooks, two knights and five pawns against two rooks, two bishops and five pawns.

When declaring this position close to equal, computer programs seem to underestimate the long term energy in black's bishops combined with his kingside pawn majority.

Vovk definitely did not underestimate the potential in his position, and although Eggleston made no obvious mistakes he was pushed backward until his defence collapsed in the fifth hour.

The GM duel between Alon Greenfeld (2550) and Erik Blomqvist (2548) started up with a fairly balanced Caro Kann isolated pawn position.

Following some tactical exchanges chances were about equal and the position very drawish, as white had queen, bishop and four pawns against two rooks, bishop and three pawns. Blomqvist however played stubbornly for a win, and after picking up white's extra a-pawn he got the necessary help to force off the bishops.

The remaining endgame with queen and three kingside pawns against two rooks and three queenside pawns first appeared drawish, but in fact was winning for black because white had nowhere to hide his king.

GM Peter Prohaszka (2592) as white against FM Johannes Haug (2297) went for a patient London set up, and came clearly better as his knight on e5 was much better than the black bishop on d7.

The Hungarian GM however mixed up something when he after 19 moves went for tactical exchanges, as black although still a pawn short came much closer to a draw in the position with only queens and rooks left on board.

Offering a queen exchange in turn was a mistake from black, as white could safely play for a win with an extra pawn in the double rook endgame. Prohaszka for some strange reason left himself with five seconds for move 38-40. He however accelerated just in time, and within a few moves after the time control forced a won endgame with rook and d-pawn versus rook.

GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) chose a positional Reti set up and got a pleasant pressure as white against FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219).

Although creative, 12.--- Bd6?! probably was a mistake, as the following tactics gave white bishop and knight for rook and pawn, with a clear advantage.

The GM instructively opened the kingside in the fourth hour, and won decisive material in the h-file just before 40 moves.



The GM veterans Heikki Westerinen (2314) and Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) discussed a provocative Caro Kann line with 3.--- c5?!/!?, in which black today did very well after exchanging the queens on b5. Commanding two rooks, one bishop and six pawns against two rooks, one knight and six pawns, black due to his a-file and better piece combination came better despite his two b-pawns. Still a grandmaster of active defence, Westerinen creatively gave up a pawn at h4,

and following some unexpected inaccuracies from Rozentalis got the necessary help to reach a drawn endgame with knight and four pawns versus bishop and four pawns.

IM Awonder Liang (2483) – Frode Lillevold (2135) started as a Ruy Lopez Berlin duel, in which white kept the queens on board and sacrificed a pawn to open lines on the kingside.

Following inaccurate defence from black, white crashed in on g6 after 27 moves and declared mate on e7 six moves later on.

Fun fact: Lillevold aged 45 is older than his three first opponents all taken together!



WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) played for a win as white against IM John Paul Wallace (2404), and had pressure as white in an unusual Sicilian line.

After white wasted several critical possibilities that could have provided her with a lasting advantage, the players before 30 moves landed in a very drawish rook and knight endgame with four pawns on each side. Draw by repetition of checks in the rook endgame after 43 moves was a sensible decision from both players.

FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) got the best part of a Sicilian Alapin opening line as white FM Erik Hedman (2367), after black forced himself to give up the important d5-pawn for inadequate compensation. Following some inaccuracies from both players black first got enough activity to balance the chances, but then had more or less no compensation after three sets of minor pieces were exchanged. 27.f4? however was a grave mistake, and after the thematic 27... g5! 28.fxg5 f4 black suddenly had a dangerous kingside attack coming up. The attack immediately became decisive as a shaken Järvenpää blundered with 29.Rd3? fxg3.

Hedman appeared unshaken, and completed the attack with a mate on h1 after 39 moves.

Trygve Dahl (2099) as white against Garg Aradhya (2315) went for a Four Knights opening, but again played a too passive set up with d3. Black used his chance to play d5 and took over the initiative in the early middle game, but Dahl fought on well and kept the position roughly balanced almost through the fourth hour. Almost that is as white, with only about 30 seconds left on each clock, lost the thread with 39.Nb6? and 40.Qd2?, offering black to play h4 and Qg4 with a winning attack. Aradhya efficiently used that chance, but in turn played some inaccurate moves after the time control. White following this got one last chance to save the game with 48.Kc2?, intending f2 49.Rd6 f1Q 50.Rxg6+ with a perpetual check. Instead 48.Kc3? had the same idea but did not work out that well, as black after 49.--- Qa1+! could decide the game by hunting white's king up to d7.

FM Anders Hobber (2297) as white against WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) first hinted about a London system with Bf4-e3-Bd3-Nf3, but then played c4 instead of c3 and got a space advantage. After 18.e4 the unambitious Nxc3 would have given white a lasting but limited advantage, while Nb4? followed by Nd3 was an overambitious idea which within a few moves gave white bishop and knight for a rook. Hobber had no problems to demonstrate the win following such a start on the morning round.

FM Eivind Risting (2250) versus IM Valeriy Kazakovskiy (2454) was another Classical Nimzo Indian duel, this time in the more uncommon Swiss variation. Black (as usual in this line) did well despite white's pair of bishops, and after 20 moves got the chance to snatch a pawn at b4.

The Belarus IM later pushed on for some 50 moves with his extra pawn. Making use of the pawn however was far from easy.

Risting after a long and strong defence succeeded to reach a queen endgame in which black's extra kingside pawn made no practical difference, as his king could not escape the checks.



Håkon Bentsen (2074) and FM Luis Couso (2287) meanwhile started up with a positional Sicilian 3.Bb5+, and after exchanging the white squared bishops reached a Maroczy set up in which white had the slightly better prospects.

Although a typical plan, black's d5-break after 25 moves in this position only increased the power of white's knights.

White eventually won an exchange, but then became so happy that he immediately helped black to get compensation. Having won back a pawn black had balanced chances after 38 moves, but exchanging queens was a mistake. Commanding rook, knight and three pawns against bishop, knight and four pawns, white probably should have refused the draw offer in the next move, although he still would have had a long and thorny road to win.

Avoiding the main line Sicilians for a positional double fianchetto, IM Petter Haugli (2257) for a change got an advantage out of a white opening. Opponent Mikael Aroven (2097) understandably went for counterplay with e5-e4, but it all backfired as opening the kingside made black's king much more exposed than white's. Having won two exchanges with an ongoing attack, Haugli for some mysterious reason decided to make the game complicated by sacrificing back one of the exchanges at f5 after 36 moves.

Probably missing something tactical, Aroven in turn decided not to take the rook on f5, after which Haugli within a few moves could exchange queens and reach a safely won endgame.

Willy Kristiansen (2055) and FM Lucas Ranaldi (2309) discussed a loose Benoni fianchetto line, in which black within the first 12 moves advanced his rook to e4 and then sacrificed it for a bishop on f4. White in turn went for a kingside attack with e4-e5, and both players spent very much time in a complex position.

Black was probably right to take back the exchange on f1 at move 24, but as he played wrong afterwards white could advance his pawn to e6 and put an octopus knight on f7 with a strong initiative.

Since black without success tried to free himself with another exchange sacrifice, white after 35 moves had a winning attack plus an extra exchange.

With both players having only second left, a comedy of errors followed as white hunted black's king out to g5 - but unsure about the number of moves repeated checks and demanded a draw with 41. Nf7+??, while 41.f4+!, 41.h4+! and various other moves would have won overwhelmingly.

Christian Laverton (2159) and Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032) investigated a Queen's Indian variation in which the main question seems to be whenever black's pair of bishops gives him a slight advantage or a clear advantage.

15.a4? was a blunder, after which black could have opened the center against white's king on e2 with 15... dxc4. Even 15... Qf6? gave black a clear advantage, but Laverton defended well and after sacrificing a pawn on c5 succeeded to get some counterplay in the d-file.

During mutual time pressure, white after intervening on the eighth rank suddenly had a winning attack just before 40 moves. But as he in turn wasted his chances, it all ended with a draw by a relatively sound repetition after 55 moves.

IM-group

The IM-group remains tense, after three out of five games had a winner in the first half of the double round. GM Roeland Pruijssers needed only one hour and 15 moves as white against Thomas Nyland to reach 2.5/3, while IM Espen Lie needed six hours and 103 moves to do the same as black against Sondre Merkesvik.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov is at 2.0/3 and on schedule for an IM-norm after surviving a difficult position as white again GM Ralf Åkesson, and so is FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen after he won a King's Indian duel as black against FM Kalle Niemi.

In short this was another entertaining round, although the game between FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen and IM Nicolai Getz was a not too exciting 22-move draw.

FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) as white against GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) went for a safe and positional Queen's Pawn opening. Although white had the better pawn structure, black in the middle game did very well due to his strong knight outpost. Black had a very promising attacking position when playing 29... f5!, and should have been more or less winning if taking back on f5 with the knight in the next move. Instead 30... gxf5? was an error, blocking the attack lines for black and inviting white into the game again. Mihajlov immediately used his chance, and five moves later he sacrificed his knight on c5 to force a draw by repetition of checks.



Kaasen

FM Kalle Niemi (2337) and FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) both played for a win in a Classical King's Indian race, in which white advances on the queenside and black on the kingside.

The computer programs might well have been right when claiming that white had a much better position early in the middle game, but the position still was complex and black always had his counterplay on the kingside.

Weakening the kingside with 23.g4?? anyway was a very serious misunderstanding from white,

and within three moves black suddenly had a decisive attack.

Niemi defended creatively by sacrificing his queen for two bishops. The bishops combined with a rook on a7 and a passed pawn on d5 gave him some play against the black king on g8.

Still it was of course lost, and although Kaasen made some inaccurate moves he before 40 moves transposed into a totally won queen versus rook endgame.

FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) versus IM Espen Lie (2449) was another Classical King's Indian duel, but in this version both played on the queenside. Following a tactical queen exchange, the position for a few minutes after 20 moves was in balance, as black clearly could not save his extra a-pawn at a5 for long. 22.Rfd1? however was a serious mistake, inviting black to play Na2-Nc3 with a clear advantage. Merkesvik gave up an exchange for the knight and tried to scrape a draw by controlling the white squares and keeping the position closed.



Maneuvering around with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against rook, bishop, knight and six pawns, Lie appeared to have found the box opener when he at move 40 opened the h-file with h6 and hxg5.

Merkesvik however came up with some counterplay on the queenside, and Lie in the fifth hour gave back an exchange to get rid of white's passed b-pawn.

The following minor piece endgame with bishop and five against knight and four was difficult to win for black, but about as difficult to save for white.

With both players having less than two minutes left on the clock, Lie after 75 moves misplaced his bishop at h2. But as white failed to use his chance and keep the bishop locked in, black after 103 moves finally had forced his way to a won pawn endgame.



True to his openings, Thomas Nyland (2104) as black against GM Roeland Pruijssers (2504) gave his modest French with 3... dxe4 another try. Obviously well prepared, the GM threw out his first nine moves and mobilized for a kingside attack.

9... c5? probably was a serious mistake, as white castled long and had a strong initiative after opening the d-file.

14... g5? was a positional panic reaction after which white for sure had

a winning attack, although black's resignation the next move came a bit unexpected.



FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219) again hit with one of his opening preparations, and came nearly half an hour ahead on the clock as white against IM Nicolai Getz (2403).

On the board was a Queen's Indian line that first gave white more active pieces. Getz however defended well, and out of his preparation Jacobsen found nothing better than exchanging the remaining minor pieces.

This left a not too exciting position with queen, two rooks and seven pawns on each side, which was agreed drawn after 22 moves.

Elo-group

The top three seeded players has had a demanding start in the Open, and following another hard fought round five players seeded within 4-14 share the lead with a 100 % score.



Today's star on the top boards in the open was 16 year old Alta girl Ingrid Greibrokk (1929), winning on attack and material following another powerful game as white against third seeded Hassan Kashwan ((2000)).

The second board became much more tight, as virtually blind Kai-Roger Johansen (1929) all into the queen and knight endgame held an initiative as black against Mathinas Nesheim (1996). Johansen however lost the thread in a complex position in the fourth hour, and just before move 40 blundered into a mate net.

Third board meeting between Snorre Skrede (1920) and Alena Ayzenberg (1992) probably was a very good game by both players, but the result for the spectators became a long, sound and rather dry draw.

More firework on the fourth board as 16 year old Aleksander Lindbøl (1971) established a strong initiative from the opening, and went on to mate also 16 year old Sara Næss (1909) after 28 moves.

The fourth player on 3/3 a bit unexpectedly became the Swedish veteran Hans Rånby (1891), after opponent Torbjørn Dahl (1962) went astray with a loose Nxf7-sacrifice before ten moves. And fifth player on 3/3 became the Swedish junior Anton Darnell (1959), outplaying his opponent Karim Ali (1841) from the opening and winning material early in the middle game.

Second seeded Alf Lundberg (2011) took a walk over draw this round, but at 2.5/3 is very much in the run for the prizes.



First rated Afras Mansoor (2037) on the other hand lags further behind, as he today spent way too much time and in the end barely scraped a draw with knight against rook. Opponent Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1859) should be praised for his sportsmanship as he in no way tried to exploit Mansoor's time shortage, and although Mansoor was out of time on the clock decided to accept a draw when realizing that the position on board was a theoretical draw. (Mansoor demanded a draw before the flag went, but the arbiters did not have to conclude about the demand as Rasmussen decided to accept the draw offer.)

Still a lot of entertaining and exciting games in the Open, as 23 out of 28 games got a winner in the first half of the double round.

All photos: Tom Eriksen