



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 4



GM-group

“Man over board” was reported within the first hour today. The board was the second and the man was IM Lars Oskar Hauge, losing in 14 moves as black against first rated GM Andrey Vovk after a rare opening preparation collapse. Vovk following this succeeded winning three games within the first 30 hours after his delayed arrival to Fagernes.

First board GM Erik Blomqvist vs GM Evgeny Postny was drawn some four hours later, as Postny succeeded defending against lasting positional pressure.

Following this and three not too exciting draws on boards 3-5, first seeded Vovk and second seeded Postny now share the lead at 3.5/4 and will play each other in the fifth round. The GMs overall had another good round, as Boris Chatalbashev, Alon Greenfeld and Eduardas Rozentalis late in the evening all succeeded overcoming lower rated opponents in long games.



The first board, Swedish GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) vs Israeli GM Evgeny Postny (2606), made a modest start, with a positional Caro-Kann line in which white plays 2.Nf3 3.Nc3 and 4.h3. White got a pair of bishops, while black for some moves had an extra pawn on e4.

Black for sure was fine after returning the pawn and exchanging one of the bishops.

Postny however played too slowly around move 14-17, and so Blomqvist got the time needed to take control on the d- and e-file.

Black's position looked critical, but Postny had no obvious pawns weaknesses and proved able to defend even against two rooks on the seventh rank. Although a pawn down white was playing for a win all the way into the rook endgame, in which black could return the pawn and confirm the draw early in the fifth hour.

GM Andrey Vovk (2636) and IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) somewhat unexpectedly had a Two Knights duel, in an old and still critical line with 4.Ng5 d5 5.exd5 Na5 6.Bb5+ c6 7.dxc6 bxc6 8.Be2. Hauge himself looked confused about his opening choice, and already found himself in trouble after 10.--- Qd4? 11.c3. Black then was more or less lost after 11.--- Qh4? 12.b4 forking Na5 and Bc5. 1-0 came up on board two after only 14 moves – as black had lost a piece for almost nothing. Obviously this was an opening collapse from Hauge, but still Vovk winning his third game in a row looks very confident so far in this Fagernes appearance.



FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) vs FM Sarin Nihal (2424) finished with a draw within one hour, but still it lasted 27 moves on the board. Arvola repeated his Classical Nimzo-Indian with 5.e4, and obviously well-prepared Nihal spent only two minutes to throw out his first 20 moves. Arvola had spent 20 minutes, but also appeared well prepared. After all minor pieces were exchanged the game soon ended with a check and a draw offer, in a balanced double

rook endgame with four pawns on each side. Both the young players appeared well satisfied to be unbeaten at 3.0/4 after the potentially very tiring double round.

IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) as white against GM Peter Prohaszka (2592) went for a Slav Exchange line, but then accelerated it with 5.f3 6.e4 7.d5. Three sets of minor pieces were exchanged, and the position remained balanced after white castled long and black short. With queen, rook, knight and five pawns left on each side, play from move 22 circled around white's passed and isolated d-pawn. Black was able to block the pawn but not to take it, and as nothing more happened this slow carousel game was agreed a draw after 41 moves.



GM Frode Urkedal (2552) - IM Awonder Liang (2483) was a Grünfeld Exchange with 7.Bb5+, in which something went not according to plan for white. Black did very well after some tactical exchanges. Draw upon white's suggestion after 19 moves, as black was slightly better but still had a long and thorny road to winning chances.

Garg Aradhya (2315) and GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) left theory to play a Marocky-like King's Indian position, in which black probably was fine although white had some space advantage in the early middle game. Allowing bishops to be exchanged on d4 with 28.f4? was an important mistake, as black's queenside attack afterwards was much more dangerous than white's kingside plans. Again running short of time for 40 moves Aradhya blundered an exchange, but his position anyway was very difficult then.



FM Erik Hedman (2367) and GM Alon Greenfeld (2550) tested out an unusual Owen opening line, in which both players castled long. White played e5 with some space, and due to his nice bishop on e4 chances first were about balanced.

Exchanging the bishop for a knight with 16.Bxc6?! however was a positional misunderstanding, as black afterwards had a promising pressure against white's pawns.

Giving up the d-pawn with 28.Rf4? might have been the decisive mistake, but the endgame with rook, bishop and six pawns against rook, knight and six pawns then anyway was very promising from a black point of view.



Rozentalis

GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) as white against WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) and a French opening, decided to leave the theory's main lines with 3.Bd3.

After an early queen exchange white for some moves kept an extra pawn at c5, but black had two bishops and a fine position from the opening. The chances still were considered equal by the computer programs after 20 moves, with two rooks, bishop, knight and five pawns on each side. White for a human eye

however had the slightly better pawn structure, and Rozentalis again introduced himself as a great-grandmaster of endgames by gradually increasing the pressure.

Efroimsky for a while defended well, but under pressure on the clock too she between move 30 and 40 lost the thread and stumbled into a lost endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns against rook, knight and five pawns.



IM John Paul Wallace (2404) and GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) meanwhile discussed a French Winawer line with 4.--- b6, 5.--- Bf8 and 6.--- Qd7. This line is very rare today and probably should continue to be so, as white playing h4-h5 followed by a4-a5 came better on both the kingside and the queenside.

A complex struggle followed after white placed his king on g1 while black had his on a7. White still was clearly better all of the

time, and efficiently combined kingside and queenside pressure to get a winning advantage before 30 moves.

Under pressure on the clock as well, Westerinen gave up a piece on e7 to hunt white's king with his queen, but it was just desperation as black's attack was nothing but a one woman show. White safely evacuated his king over to the queenside and was a lot of material up after the first time control.

FM Anders Hobber (2297) versus IM David Eggleston (2394) was a London system with an early queen exchange on b3. White due to his a-file probably was slightly better first, but black soon took over the initiative after a slow and strange Ba6-Bxc8 from white.

White's position suddenly turned critical after 18.--- d4!, opening the center against white's king on d3 and undermining white's disrupted queenside pawns.

The position was materially equal when Hobber stopped the clock after 24 moves, but still white was bankrupt as his queenside was about to collapse and his bishop on g3 was offside.

FM Johannes Haug (2297) as white against IM Petter Haugli (2257) went for a King's Indian fianchetto line – and a rather heavyweight position in which no pieces were exchanged until move 18.

White got some space on the queenside after d5, while black played Ng4 and f5 in search for kingside counterplay.

As the position finally opened most of the pieces were exchanged within ten moves, leaving a position with two rooks, one knight and four pawns on each side, in which white's better knight and passed d-pawn gave him some advantage.

Black probably should have been able to save this somehow, but became too passive around move 30-40. As Haug efficiently used his chances, he after the time control reached a rook endgame with a- and b-pawns against g- and h-pawns, in which white's much more advanced pawn gave him a win.



Haug



IM Valeryi Kazakovskiy (2454) went for a Catalan as white against Håkon Bentsen (2074), both playing fast from the opening.

13.--- Bb7?! probably came too fast, as white after Bf4 and Qb5 could exchange queens and win a pawn on c7.

White following this was a sound pawn up in the endgame, but black still hoped for a draw due to opposite coloured bishops. These hopes however were crushed well before the first

time control, as white instructively opened the g-file for his attack and undermined most of black's remaining pawns.

FM Luis Couso (2279) versus Trygve Dahl (2099) was a classical English fianchetto race, in which white advanced on the queenside and black on the kingside. White first was ahead, but black got his counterplay with f5-f4 and kept some play against white's king after all the minor pieces were exchanged.

Black definitely came better in the queen and rook position, as white just before 40 moves forced himself to give up the f2-pawn. Dangers for white's king disappeared as he succeeded exchanging the queens.

The remaining rook endgame with an extra pawn for black still was a very unpleasant experience seen from the defender's side, and Dahl went on to win it after 82 moves.



Meanwhile FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) and FM Eivind Risting (2250) discussed a lively Caro-Kann line with 2.Nf3 3.Nc3 4.e5, in which white got a space advantage and attacking chances on the dark kingside squares.

Black bravely snatched a testament pawn with 17.--- Qxb2, but ran into a decisive attack when misplacing his queen on a3 afterwards. White after 25 moves had won two minor pieces for rook and pawn, but the position still was demanding for both players – especially as both ran seriously short of time.

Risting fought on well, sacrificing more material to advance his a-pawn. 31.Qf1? was a much too passive move leaving black with the easier position to play, and although white still had a bishop more he after 40 moves was unable to stop black's a- and d-pawn.

The game Willy Kristiansen (2055) vs Christian Laverton (2159) was agreed a draw after five minutes and six moves. This was no way surprising and very well understandable as the players are roommates, and both before this round had 0.5/3 after wasting too many chances in the first rounds.



WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) as white against FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) played a Catalan with 5.Qa4+, in which white immediately wins back the pawn on c4, but black immediately equalizes after getting bishop around from c8 to Bc6.

16.e4? and 17.e5? was an overambitious plan as the pawn soon turned weak after Ng4.

Sacrificing an exchange on f1 with 21.Qxb5! probably would have been white's last chance to make this game exciting, as black after 21.Rfe1? Rxa4 soon was a pawn up with a totally dominating pair of bishops and an ongoing attack.

Frode Lillevold (2135) versus FM Lucas Ranaudi (2309) started up like a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line, in which white had double c-pawns but probably was better after establishing a space advantage with d5.

15.f4? however was a serious misunderstanding, as black soon had too much counterplay after the thematic 15...exf4 16.gxf4 f5!.

26.Qa2? blundered a piece, but having all the more active pieces and all the better pawns black anyway was winning at that stage. Ranaudi later just accelerated, and after giving up his queen for two rooks he went on to mate the white king on h6 (!?) at move 38.

Jens Evald Ingebretsen (2032) and Mikael Aroven (2097) tested out a Pirc defence in which black plays a demanding set up with d6-g6-c6-b5. Playing with more conventional means in the center, white was clearly better before black at move 15 sacrificed his d6-pawn – and just winning afterwards.

Ingebretsen in an inspired mood coolly let black hit in on with Qxf2+, and having placed his king safely on h1 he smashed through with his kingside attack before 20 moves.

Probably a very good game by 13 year old Ingebretsen, but Aroven should repair his opening and then try to forget this game.

IM-group

Second half of the double round became a very tough one in the IM-group: The first and only draw came when Thomas Nyland after 96 moves was stalemated by FM Mikkel Manrosi Jacobsen. Jacobsen should have won that endgame still to be in the run for an IM-norm, but FM Kalle Niemi is back on track after a nice attacking win against FM Sondre Merkesvik – and FM Sebastian Mihajlov is ahead of schedule for the magic 6.0/9 after winning a roller coaster game against FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen.

The IM duel between Espen Lie and Nicolai Getz also became a rather chaotic battle, which Lie succeeded turning from an ugly loss to a brilliant win within five moves of time trouble.

Lie at 3.5/4 shares the lead with top seeded Roeland Pruijssers - as the Dutchman dominated the GM duel against Ralf Åkesson from the opening and finally won it in the fifth hour.



The GM duel between Ralf Åkesson (2452) vs Roeland Pruijssers (2504) started up as an Anti-Dutch opening, in which white played 3.Bg5 and 4.Bxf6. Both spent a lot of time upon a positionally complex opening, in which white had the better pawn structure and black the pair of bishops. White later became much too passive, and with the white queen stuck on h1 black was more or less strategically winning after 20.--- f4!.

Prujssers in turn started a somewhat mysterious Qe8-Qf8-Qd6-maneuver that invited white into the game again, and the queen and rook position around move 30-35 looked drawish.

White was a pawn up but had a hard time to save his scattered kingside pawns on h4, f4 and f2, and giving up the h4-pawn after 36 moves was a decisive mistake that soon gave black a winning attack.

The Norwegian IM duel between Espen Lie (2449) and IM Nicolai Getz (2403) from 1.Nf3 transposed into a symmetrical English opening. Chances probably were about balanced after white played e4 and black c5-c4. Due to his d4-square white came slightly better in the middle game, and black spent 80 minutes for the first 15 moves. Black however got enough counterplay on the queenside after opening the b-file for his rook with b5-bxa4.

Exchanging queens on c5 was a mistake from white, leaving black with the initiative in a complex position with two rooks, two bishops and five pawns on each side.

The following passed pawns run between white's c-pawn and black's a-pawn reportedly first was a draw, but sacrificing an exchange with 29.Ra1?? Bxa1 30.Rd8 was a blunder black could have revealed with a brilliant 30... Bd7! 31.Rxe8+ Kg7!.

Black's a-pawn amazingly gave him enough counterplay to draw after white got a new queen in on c8, but having less than one minute on the clock Getz made the decisive (if very understandable) blunder with 33... a2??. Still having a few minutes left on the clock, Lie found the refutation with 34.Qxe8+ Kg7 35.Bc5! Rxf1+ 36.Kg2! Rg1+ 37.Kf3: Black does not have the one move needed to get in his queen, as white is threatening mate on f8...

The Norwegian FM duel (and teenager duel) between FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) and FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) was a Semi-Slav Meran, in which black played 6... Bd6 instead of the main line 6... dxc4. White in turn chose a slow set up with b3-Bb2 instead of the direct and critical e4. White played e4 followed by Ne5 a few moves later on, but then black had the time to play b6-Bb7 followed by c5 with an equal position.

Keeping the queens with 20.Qg4? was too ambitious from white, as black suddenly was much better after he played Bd4 and exchanged off white's strong fianchetto bishop on b2.

Black developed a strong initiative after doubling his rooks in the d-file strong, but then both players missed 27... Nxf3! 28.gxf3 Qg3! with decisive threats against white's king. Instead the plan with Qh5-Rxh2+ was a serious misunderstanding, as white could keep his king on g1 and take over the d-file with a clearly better position.

A few moves later the tide again turned as white overlooked a tactical 32... Rxg2+. Black in turn found the rook sacrifice, but not the best way of continuing the attack afterwards.

After 40 moves the remaining endgame with bishop, knight and two pawns against rook and six pawns might have been a draw, but black definitely had the much easier position to play and marched his army of kingside pawns into a win in the fifth hour.

By far not the best game of this round, this definitely was one of the most interesting and entertaining ones. The outcome left Mihajlov ahead of schedule for his IM-norm at 3.0/4, while Kaasen needs a very strong spurt with 4.0/5 to complete his IM title this week.



FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) versus FM Kalle Niemi (2337) was a Closed Slav duel in which white first might have been slightly better, but black's position was at least fully acceptable due to his strong knight on e4. While white's b5-c5-advance did not give him much more than some air on the queenside, black started a bayonet attack on the kingside with h5-h4-hxg3 – and then was allowed to continue his attack by a very thematic knight sacrifice on f2.

Merkesvik once more defended creatively by sacrificing his queen. Although white got three minor pieces for her majesty it did not help much, as black's queen and rooks combined with advancing kingside pawns still gave him a decisive attack.



Thomas Nyland (2104) as white against FM Mikkel Mansori Jacobsen (2219) went for a Caro-Kann line in which white's pawn on e5 gives him a space advantage, but black in this game was very healthy after exchanging two set of minor pieces.

Not for the first time Nyland became too eager exchanging pieces: Black definitely came better after exchanging queens on b6 – especially after he was also allowed to fix a pawn weakness by exchanging bishops on d3.

The double rook endgame with six pawns on each side after this was clearly better for black, but still not without chances for white.

Black appeared closed to winning as he after 40 moves had exchanged one set of rooks and won the white d-pawn. Despite time pressure Nyland however continued to fight on well in the rook endgame, and had a draw within reach when defending with one pawn against two.

That was before he short of time gave black the chance to force an endgame with rook and e-pawn versus rook - won for black as white's king was locked out by black's rook on d4. 71.--- Ke4?? however was a careless and instructive mistake from black, allowing white to save a draw by checking the king from the first rank after 72.Rb1!.

Elo-group

A lot of draws on the top boards today left the 16 year old SK 1911 player Aleksander Lindbøl alone in the lead at 4.0/4 – ahead of three players at 3.5/4 and ten more at 3.0/4...

Today's biggest surprise in the open at the same time also was the most fascinating game.

The open slowed down a little in the second half of the double round, as the number of drawn games increased from five to eleven.

First board of Anton Darnell (1959) vs Mathias Nesheim (1996) was a yo-yo draw game in which white first wasted a decisive advantage. As black in turned failed to fulfill his attack, white at move 38 got one final match ball – before it dried out with a perpetual check.



Ayzenberg - Greibrokk

Third board of Alena Ayzenberg (1992) vs Ingrid Greibrokk (1929) became a more sensible draw with a small initiative for black.

This left the road open for young Aleksander Lindbøl (1971), returning from an inferior opening to win a somewhat better double rook endgame against the Swedish veteran Hans Rånby (1891) on the second board. Lindbøl following this is now leading alone at 4.0/4, half a point ahead of Darnell, Greibrokk and Nesheim.

On fourth board, second seeded Alf W. Lundberg (2011) was lost for some moves before reaching a drawn rook endgame against Snorre Skrede (1920).

Lundberg following this is lurking in the group of players at 3.0/4. So is the third seeded Swede Hassan Kashwan ((2000)), after winning a double edged four hours battle against Ida Lahlum (1742).

Today's greatest robbery came on board six, as 14 year old Amalie Merkesvik (1714) with the black pieces just outplayed Tor Wetle Hoem (1965), and was totally winning until she at move 44-45 stumbled into a mating net...

Another young and very talented women player also had a pole out tonight, as 16 year old Sara Næss (1909) failed to win an overwhelming position against Erling Skjelstad (1671).

Among the players without a FIDE-ELO, Florø representative Rune Kleiven Rynning is ahead of schedule to get a nice rating after a perpetual check draw against Paul Emil Hjelm-Hansen (1611)



Aage Mella

Today's biggest surprise and most fascinating meeting came on board 15, as Aage Mella (1724) in the second last game of the round succeeded defeating Afras Mansoor (2037). The game probably was a very good one from white's point of view. Obviously it was a big disappointment from black's point of view, as top seeded Afras at 1.5/4 following his second loss seems more or less out of the fight for the top prizes.

But most fascinating and most important, surprise man Aage is aged 83 while the losing favourite Afras is aged 13! To illustrate this age difference, the Second World War in Europe had just ended when Aage had the age Afras is today. Still they could, in our wonderful sport, have both a friendly meeting and an exciting five and a half hour long game against each other tonight.

Playing his first tournament game aged 21 back in 1955, Aage started his chess career too late to become a top player, but he has remained a strong amateur player for seven decenniums and won the Norwegian senior championship several times in the nineties.

Twenty years later, we are both happy and impressed that this legendary chess gentleman decided to spend this Easter holiday together with us at Fagernes!



All photos: Tom Eriksen