



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 5



GM-group

The top board meeting between second seeded GM Evgeny Postny and first seeded GM Andrey Vovk not unexpectedly ended up as solid draw. As the second board FM Nihal Sarin vs GM Erik Blomqvist was an even more solid draw, the only player using the chance to catch Postny and Vovk at 4.0/5 was Bulgarian GM Boris Chatalbashev – today defeating Norwegian FM Benjamin Arvola in convincing tractor style.

Arvola despite this loss remains a hot candidate to complete his IM title.

Not to forget: IM Lars Oskar Hauge again is a hot GM norm candidate following a knock out win vs GM Frode Urkedal!



GM Evgeny Postny (2606) vs GM Andrey Vovk (2636) was the second seeded playing white against the first seeded player of this tournament – after both had made a strong start with 3.5/4.

Draw was not an unexpected outcome, and probably a good one from a tournament point of view. Still this was a hard-fought four hours game in which all three results remained a

possibility.

White and his queenside play appeared to be ahead in this version of a Classical King's Indian opening, but black demonstrated enough counterplay and was closer to something in the final position with queen, rook, knight and five pawns against queen, rook, bishop and five pawns.



GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) entered another Slav duel as black against twelve year old FM Nihal Sarin (2424).

After an early queen exchange white had a pair of bishops, but it was not much of an advantage with all 16 pawns on the board. Draw agreed after three hours and 24 moves, not unexpectedly as the position still had 16 pawns and no obvious winning chances.

On third board, GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) and FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) apparently had about equal chances from an English fianchetto opening line. 17.--- Nd4? however turned out to be a strategic mistake, as white came clearly better after exchanging one of his knights on d4 and placing the other one at e4. Black's try to complicate with 22.--- Nxa4? just lost more material than planned, but true enough white was anyway close to winning by then.



GM Chatalbashev despite his rusty start on his first Fagernes tournament now seems to be an accelerating chess tractor, and at 4.0/5 shares first place.

FM Arvola on the other hand finally is back on earth after his fast start, but at 3.0/5 still ahead of schedule for his third IM-norm.



IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) immediately hit back after his opening disaster yesterday, more or less crushing GM Frode Urkedal (2552) following successful opening preparations. White went for a direct attack with 10.f5 in this Steinitz line of a Classical French.

Although black made no obvious mistake, white had a winning attack at latest when he at move 18 hit in with Bxh6.

Although 19.Rf6?! might have been an inaccurate

continuation, white's queen and rooks kept up a decisive attack, and within ten more moves black had to give up his queen with a hopeless endgame to follow.

Urkedal finished second in this tournament with a 2662-performance last year, but following this loss has had a disappointing first half of this year's tournament.

Creative and hard hitting, Hauge despite a somewhat uneven game quality has a performance of 2580 and is fully in the run for a GM-norm following this brilliant win.

GM Peter Prohaszka (2592) as white against IM John Paul Wallace (2404) went for a Queen's Indian in advance, but had no advantage whatsoever after exchanging first a bishop and then a knight on c6.

After 13 moves black could have protected his key pawn on d5 and kept some advantage.

He instead exchanged it to reach a very equal double rook endgame, which was agreed drawn after 19 moves.



GM Alon Greenfeld (2550) and IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) started up with some unusual Benoni-like position, in which white spent 76 minutes and black three minutes for the first 15 moves. Meanwhile black had sacrificed a bishop on f2, but although he got two pawns and some initiative white appeared to be better on the board.

Further complications followed as black sacrificed an exchange as well, but although white's king on e2 remained airy black failed to come up with dangerous threats.

Probably playing a very good defensive game, Greenfeld returned an exchange and gradually secured his king position. In the fifth hour white could finally use his extra bishop to start a counterattack on the black king, and the game anyway was decided when black in move 49 blundered queen and mate in one move.



Awonder Liang

IM Awonder Liang (2483) and GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) discussed a not too exciting Bogo Indian variation for 16 moves, exchanged all the bishops, and then shared the point without wasting any more time.

The position at that stage offered about equal chances, but many possibilities from both players. Liang should have tried to win this game to be in the run for a GM-norm, but has recovered after his second round loss.

The IM duel between David Eggleston (2394) and Valery Kazakovskiy (2454) started up as a balanced Italian opening. White later got a positional grip as black exchanged his d5-pawn and left himself with two ugly looking e-pawns. Black was able to exchange one of the e-pawns for white's pawn on c3, but due to his weak pawns on b5 and e6 he still was clearly worse after 33 moves.

34.Qe4+? however was a mistake, probably because white overlooked that black with 36... Rxe5! could snatch white's extra pawn and sacrifice one of his rook to force a draw by perpetual check. 16 year old Kazakovskiy has improved his play but still is far behind a GM-norm schedule, while Eggleston should have won this position really to be in that run.



In the FM duel between Norwegian Eivind Risting (2250) and Swedish Erik Hedman (2367), both played for a win in a critical Benoni line with 7.f4 and 8.Bb5+.

Hedman came 40 minutes ahead on the clock, while a tense struggle followed on the board. Black sacrificed a pawn to open the f-file and establish a strong knight on e5, and after exchanging queens still had compensation in a complicated rook, bishop and knight endgame.

Risting for a while again defended well despite pressure on the clock too.

Exchanging knights at move 37 was a dangerous mistake: Black with a king on e5 and a passed pawn on d3 was winning in the rook endgame, although white had an extra pawn and a protected passed pawn on g5.

Suddenly running short of time himself, Hedman however lost the thread with a mysterious and slow Rf7-Rd7-Rc7 maneuver just before 40 moves. Risting after this could have played for a win, but as he remained passive the position was drawn by a repetition of moves and due to a balance of terror after 51 moves.

In short none of the players in this fascinating rook endgame could go anywhere with their king, and while black did not have the time to move around his rook due to white's passed pawn on g6, advancing the pawn to g7 would lose. (Yes white could exchange rooks and reach a queen endgame, but despite an extra pawn he would then have been worse due to black's better king.)

FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) and Garg Aradhya (2315) both needed a win to keep their IM norm hopes alive, and created an exciting five hours battle.

The start was a greedy Slav with 3... dxc4, in which black became so eager to keep his extra pawn at c4 that he instead sacrificed his knight for a pawn on d5. Objectively speaking the sacrifice was dubious and white came better with one piece for two pawns, but black's pawn chain looked very long and the position was demanding to handle for both players.

30... e5? was a powerful break but still a blunder, as white could have had a winning position if taking the pawn.

Although black was allowed to keep the e-pawn and advance it to e4, white remained better until move 40. The idea of returning the piece for some pawns then was a good one, but circumstances would have been much better if white had taken on d5 with the knight instead of with the queen... The resulting position with two rooks, knight and six pawns on each side turned out to be better for black, and although creative white's maneuver with 44.Nf5? 45.Nd6? and 46.Rxe4 turned out to be a

blunder. That mistake was easy to understand, as the refutation was an astonishing tactical stroke starting with 46.--- c3!. Aradhya efficiently used that chance and after winning this turbulent game he is still on the track for an IM-norm.

The Norwegian teenager duel Trygve Dahl (2099) vs FM Johannes Haug (2297) was a Caro Kann line in which white came slightly better from the opening. Black's position however remained solid after three sets of minor pieces were exchanged.

The g-file was filled up with pawns and the open h-file could only be used to exchange rooks.

Taking into account the opposite colored bishops, white offered a draw which was accepted after 27 moves.

Haug is behind IM norm schedule but ahead of his expected score so far, while chronically unpredictable Dahl seems to be a player with strength above 2300 again this tournament.



GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) had another French opening duel today, this time as white against FM Anders Hobber (2297) and with 3.Nd2 a6.

Controlling the d4-square with his knight, white came better in the following isolated pawn position. Black however had sound pieces and no real problems to protect the d5-pawn. After transforming the isolated pawn position into a hanging pawn's position by exchanging the

knight on e6, white was slightly better and could have played for a win by advancing his kingside pawns. Unwilling to risk that much so late in the afternoon, Westerinen instead exchanged some pawns on the queenside before the time control and accepted a draw after 41 moves.

The game between FM Lucas Ranaaldi (2309) and IM Petter Haugli (2257) unfortunately never started, as Haugli a few hours earlier had to withdraw from the tournament for fully understandable health reasons.

WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) was eager to win her first game and got a promising initiative from the Sicilian opening duel against Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032), as white could castle long while black struggled to get the king away from e8.

White's position turned winning at latest when she won a key pawn and removed a barrier in front of black's king with 21.Rxd6. Two moves later Efroimsky overlooked a truly elegant mate with 23.Rxe6+!! fxe6 24.Qa7! (black's only way to avoid Qe7 mate would have been castling, which would instead allow Qg7 mate...)

True enough 23.Qxc3! with the tactical point of Rc8xc3 24.Rd8 mate was an elegant queen sacrifice, which in the game forced a totally won rook endgame.

In short: Marsel Efroimsky's first game win at Fagernes was a very convincing one, while young Ingebretsen so far works out much better with white than black on this level.

FM Luis Couso (2279) as white against Willy Kristiansen (2055) went for a positional Reti double fianchetto – and got nothing whatsoever out of it for the first 20 moves.

21.--- bxc4? however was a positional mistake, after which white soon double his rooks in the c-file with promising pressure.

With a white rook on c4 black suddenly had a hard time to defend his key pawn on d4.

Black still could have had some drawing chances with queen, rook, knight and four pawns against queen, rook, knight and five pawns. But black had lost both a pawn and his optimism, hence white with a pawn and much optimism soon intervened with his pieces and won a decisive second pawn at f7.



Håkon Bentsen (2074) versus FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) was a French Tarrasch duel.

A world top player reportedly has played this gambit line as white, but it still looks speculative at best to me. Al-Tarbosh anyway instructively gave back the pawn to get a strong initiative, and white's try to complicate by snatching a pawn at b7 turned out just to lose a piece.

Christian Laverton (2159) versus Frode Lillevold (2135) started like an orthodox Queen's Gambit, offering about equal chances.

Both players strangely missed a tactical 27.Rc7! which could have given white a decisive advantage.

While white played much too slowly for the next ten moves, black found a strong plan with Rc3-Rd3-Rxf3, and came a pawn up with the more dangerous attack.

Laverton again ran short of time, and forced himself to give up the queen for rook and bishop just before 40 moves. Although the game continued for 30 more moves black was always winning then, and in the sixth hour his passed f-pawn decided.

Anita Grønnestad (1966) had requested a walk over draw, and following this Mikael Aroven (2097) had to take a walk over win. Both will be back for round sixth tomorrow.

IM-group

The fifth round became another uncompromising one in the IM group, as a five hours draw between GM Roeland Pruijssers and FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen was the only undecided game today. As Pruijssers had to fight for a draw IM Espen Lie got his chance to move ahead, and he did so with another convincing win – this time as black against FM Kalle Niemi.

Niemi after this set back again is down at 50 % and more or less out as an IM-norm candidate. Definitely out is Danish FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen, after he today failed to make use of a promising position as white against GM Ralf Åkesson.

Norwegian FM Sebastian Mihajlov on the other hand is well ahead of schedule for his third norm after another inspired win as white against FM Sondre Merkesvik. Not to forget, today's sensation was Thomas Nyland hitting back from the rocks and winning within ten moves after blundering an exchange with black against Nicolai Getz.

IM Lie leads with an outstanding 4.5/5, half a point ahead of GM Pruijssers and FM Mihajlov – while the rest of us are looking forward to follow an exciting second half of the tournament.

GM Ronald Pruijssers (2504) and FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) started up with a Four Knights defence, in which chances remained about balanced for the first 23 moves. 24.g3? however was a blunder from the GM, overlooking that black with a tricky 24.... R1e3! followed by 25.... Rxd3+ could get one minor piece and three pawns for a rook.

Prujssers hit back with tactics and escaped into an endgame in which black had a queen and 1-2 pawns for two rooks, but still found no way to overcome white's simple defence with two rooks on the third rank. Black was clearly better for a very long time in this game, but even in retrospect it is difficult to demonstrate a win for him.

Kaasen probably signed the scoresheets with mixed feelings as this was a very good black game against a 2500-GM, but still an outcome making the road to an IM-norm even longer.

3.5/4 from now on will be needed.



Espen Lie

IM Espen Lie (2449) gave his Aljechin defence another try as black against FM Kalle Niemi (2337). It again worked out fairly well but not overwhelming, as white after exchanging the e-pawns and playing c5 got a slight space advantage.

19.g4?! might have been a turning point, as black's counterattack started with 22.... h5 and 23. --- hxg4. Although black had taken over the initiative and established a slight pressure against white's pawns on d4 and g4, white still was inside

the car until he threw the d-pawn and himself out of the window with 29.Be2?.

Afterwards it was very difficult at best, and Lie instructively won after four hours by starting an attack on the light queenside squares. Playing very well and scoring truly great so far, Lie at 4.5/5 is ahead of both the GMs and has won 12 out of the 51 ELO points he needs to get that title himself.

The game between FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) and FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) illustrated the current trend for both players: Just about everything works out for Mihajlov so far this tournament, while nothing works out for Merkesvik.

White got a strong initiative from the start blocks in a Grünfeld-Indian opening, and the position turned winning with a well timed d5-d6-advance before 20 moves – as white with a tactical Bg5! could win an exchange without losing the passed pawn.

Black threw in the scoresheets after 36 moves, as white's d7-pawn was ready to promote...

Meaning that Mihajlov has had a dream tournament so far, and at 4.0/5 now needs only 2.0/4 to make his third IM-norm. The nightmare meanwhile continues for Merkesvik.

Probably eager to avoid the long preparations of FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219), GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) as black today went for a slow Modern set up with g6-e6-d6-a6.

It was not an obvious success, as white after playing e4 and e5 came clearly better before ten moves. Sacrificing the pawn on e5 was no disaster for white, as he after winning back the pawn could push a new pawn to e5. Exchanging queens however became a turning point, as black in the rooks and bishop endgame had the better bishop and a promising pressure against white's advanced pawns on h5 and e5.

Åkesson instructively increased the pressure, and after getting the necessary help to exchange off the bishops he reached a totally won rook endgame well before 40 moves.



Thomas Nyland

IM Nicolai Getz (2403) started up with a positional Reti opening as white against Thomas Nyland (2104).

The position varied back and forth between slightly better for white and equal, but looked about equal before Nyland at move 17 blundered an exchange by allowing 18.Nd6 with a double attack on black's rooks at c8 and e8.

Although black got an extra pawn on d3 for the exchange, white for some moves after this was obviously better.

Getz however played much too carelessly when weakening his kingside with 23.h3?! and 24.f4?, after which the e3 pawn suddenly became an Achilles heel.

White's try to solve the problem by advancing the pawn with 25.e4?? made everything worse, as he somehow overlooked and/or underestimated a highly disturbing Ne3-Nxg2 maneuver.

White following this was anyway lost when he in frustration blundered more material and resigned after 28 moves.

Nyland must still win all the remaining four rounds to make an IM-norm, but on the other hand he now needs only one draw more to score above expected.

Elo-group

The 16 year old 1911 comet Aleksander Lindbøl was on the brink of losing today, but hit back from the ropes and strengthened his lead after efficiently turning the game in the endgame.

The top placed players among the top five seeded now can be found at 3.5/5, 1.5 points behind Lindbøl, and so we can look forward to a very exciting and unpredictable second half of this Open.



Sixth seeded Aleksander Lindbøl (1971) as white against fourth seeded Mathias Nesheim (1996) today got nothing from his opening, was slightly worse during most of the middle game, and had to struggle a very sound pawn down in the first part of the rooks and knight endgame.

While Nesheim first unnecessarily gave back the pawn and then failed to find any good plan for the rest of his pieces, Lindbøl

accelerated just in time and went on to win after picking up black's queenside pawns.

On second board Ingrid Greibrokk (1929) as white against Anton Darnell (1959) declared herself satisfied with an 18 moves draw, although she continued her impressive play and already had established a positional advantage.

Lindbøl after winning all his first five games now has a full point lead.

The group at 4.0/5 includes six players, but interestingly none of them are seeded within top five.

The top seeded 13 year old Afras Mansoor (2037) finally won a game again today, but at 2.5/5 still had a long way to reach top three.

Second rated Alf W. Lundberg (2011) was just outplayed by the still unpredictable and capable Swedish veteran Hans Rånby (1891), and third seeded Hassan Kashwan ((2000)) was under pressure before landing in a dead drawn pawn endgame as black against still sound and solid Snorre Skrede (1920).



Rasmussen - Ayzenberg

A young, underrated and fast player worth following for the next rounds might be Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1859), today giving Alena Ayzenberg (1992) her first loss in a long and strong game.

Uneven but efficient Tor Wetle Hoem (1965) also can be found in the group at 4.0/5 after he today defeated Ingvar Gundersen (1825) by another counterattack, and will be tomorrow's challenger for Lindbøl on the first board.

Many exciting and entertaining games can be found also on the lower boards in this very mixed Open.

Amalie Merkesvik (1714) immediately hit back following yesterday's blunder, and won in a smashing style as white against Norway top rated chess arbiter Karl-Johan Rist (1563).

Among the unrated players Rune Kleiven Rynning by far seems to be the strongest, today noting his second attacking win against an opponent above 1500.

And in case anyone wonders what happened with yesterday's sensation man, 83 year old Aage Mella (1724): Aage today played for another win, but in the end lost another fascinating struggle against virtually blind Kai-Roger Johansen (1929).

Sitting in his wheelchair behind his master table beside the door, our disabled Finn chessfriend Tomi Tocklin (1812) today won his second game and at 3.5/5 candidates for the top boards tomorrow.

In short: Many different profiles can be found in this Open, and for sure they will provide much more fighting chess in the four remaining rounds!



All photos: Tom Eriksen