



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 6



GM-group

Today we had another long and very exciting afternoon on the top boards in the GM group. While first seeded GM Andrey Vovk wasted a winning attack into a perpetual check against GM Boris Chatalbashev, second seeded GM Evgeny Postny lost a chaotic game as black against the twelve year old whiz kid Nihal Sarin.

Sarin following this has a performance above 2600 and is the best GM norm candidate, after IM Lars Oskar Hauge lost a tight and still somewhat mysterious five-hour battle vs GM Erik Blomqvist.

Following this, the pole position at 4.5/6 is shared between GM Vovk, GM Chatalbashev, GM Blomqvist and FM Sarin. We can definitely look forward to another exciting afternoon tomorrow - as top board pairings for round seven will be Blomqvist-Vovk and Chatalbashev-Nihal.

A six-hour battle between FM Benjamin Arvola and GM Peter Prohaszka ended with a draw after 97 moves – although Arvola within the final minutes transformed an endgame with rook and knight versus rook, bishop and pawn into an endgame with rook and knight versus rook. Arvola following this is again ahead of schedule for his third IM-norm, and several other FMs also might candidate for such a norm following today's results.

The first board duel between GM Andrey Vovk (2636) and GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) started up like a Modern opening, but transposed first into a King's Indian as black played 6.--- Nf6 and then into a Sämisch line as white played 7.f3.

A heavyweight positional struggle followed as white castled long and black short.

After 16 moves black was nearly half an hour ahead on the clock, and also ahead in the attacking race on the board. White however succeeded consolidating his queenside and breaking up the kingside with g4.

24.--- e5?? was a blunder which could have given white a decisive attack after 25.Nfe6+!, 25.Nge6+! or 25.Nxg6!, and even the positional 25.Nd5? gave a clear advantage.

During mutual time pressure, black could have had good drawing chances if exchanging queens and rooks with 32.--- Qxb3+. Avoiding the queen exchange with 32.--- Qf2? soon brought black's shaky kingside to the brink of disaster, but short of time himself Vovk first complicated the win and then threw it all away at move 39.

Realizing that he now could play on only without advantage and with a risk of losing, Vovk decided to force a draw by repetition of checks immediately after the time control.



Postny vs Sarin (front) and Chatalbashev vs Vovk (back)

Today's main drama and sensation came on second board, as twelve year old FM Nihal Sarin (2424) following a chaotic five-hour battle defeated second seeded GM Evgeny Postny (2606).

White made a modest start with a positional b3-Bb2-set up in the Anti-Meran line of a Semi-Slav opening. Black however went active with e5-e4, and the board turned into a positional and tactical mess after white first replied with an aggressive g4-g5 and then snatched both black's center pawns at d5 and e4.

Postny after 19 moves was 40 minutes ahead on the clock, but later he spent much time and sacrificed a third pawn without demonstrating any convincing compensation.

26.--- Qc8? was a mistake, as white after 27.Nf6+ got a dangerous attack on the kingside.

Sarin in turn made some mistakes and offered some counterplay against his own king on d3 instead of continuing his attack.

As Postny this time failed to use the chances he got in the time trouble duel, black after 40 moves was a pawn down with the less active pieces and a wreck position.

Black and his king anyway were in deep trouble after a tactical 47.f4!, but 47.--- Bxf4? became the final mistake – as 48.Rg1 Qh6 49.Bxf6+! was a bishop sacrifice that within a few more moves won back a rook with an ongoing attack.

Postny finally stopped the clock after 56 moves, as his young opponent instructively sacrificed an exchange to force a totally won pawn endgame.

Postny first slowed down and then stumbled after his very promising start on this tournament - while the youngest player in this GM group after this amazing win also is the best candidate for a GM-norm.



IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) as black against GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) went for a closed Ruy Lopez line, in which the players before 20 moves exchanged three sets of minor pieces but no pawns.

After establishing a center advantage with his d4-pawn, black left the f-file to advance his pawns on the queenside. Playing with two rooks, one bishop and seven pawns against two rooks, one knight and seven pawns, he still appeared to be

better after the queens were exchanged at move 30.

Black for a few moves had an extra pawn at c3, and kept a slight initiative after returning it.

While Blomqvist played close to perfect for the rest of the game, Hauge well ahead on the clock lost control on a still very complex board in the fourth hour.

40.--- Rad7?! might have been an important mistake, as 40.--- Bd8! would have avoided many problems by preventing white's rook from intervening on b6.

After white had put his rook on b6 and exchanged a-pawns, the remaining endgame with rook, knight and three pawns against rook, bishop and three pawns should somehow be a draw.

Blomqvist however increased the pressure with a tricky d4-break at move 45, and within a few moves black stumbled into a rook endgame in which white's connected passed pawns on d5 and e5 were decisive.

Blomqvist continues to be Mr Efficient and shares first place at 4.5/6 following this win, while Hauge following this complex collapse is lagging behind his GM-norm schedule.

The fourth board GM duel between Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) and Alon Greenfeld (2550) was a Sicilian Alapin, in which both players were slow from the opening. White got some more space after playing e5, but black due to his d-file control was healthy on the board - after spending 57 minutes for the first 12 moves.

White's draw offer nine moves later came a little bit unexpected, as he was about to win back a pawn on b7 with a structural advantage. Black's acceptance definitely was no surprise, and neither was the game result.



On fifth board FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) and GM Peter Prohaszka (2592) meanwhile investigated a "greedy" Catalan line, in which black after dxc4 plays Bd7-Bc6 and try to hang on the extra pawn at c4. White first had obvious compensation due to black's three c-pawns.

After some more exchanges the compromise became that white won back the pawn, but black exchanged all his weak c-pawns and came slightly better in the remaining endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns against rook, knight and four pawns.

With both players running short of time for 40 moves, 30.g5? was a mistake as black won the pawn within a few moves.

Arvola in the meantime however succeeded activating his pieces, and Prohaszka under pressure gave up most of his advantage with 34.--- e5?.

Black under some doubt left a repetition of moves just before 40 moves, but as the e5-pawn went lost the materially balanced endgame after the time control was close to equal. Still unwilling to accept that his winning chances were gone, Prohaszka in the sixth hour



played on first a very drawish endgame with rook, bishop and a-pawn versus rook and knight – and then an even more drawish endgame with rook and bishop versus rook and knight.

Black tried to get some attack against white's king with his rook and bishop, but succeeded only to blunder his bishop.

Arvola looked a bit confused – but suddenly a knight up with two minutes against 40 seconds on the clock, he played on without offering a draw. Prohaszka woke up just in time when seeing his bishop leave the board, threw out one good defensive move every second – and stopped the clock to demand a draw when he after move 96 had 14 seconds left for the game.

The arbiter postponed the decision and asked the player to continue. Realizing he had only 40 seconds left on his own clock and had made no progress whatsoever for the last 25 moves on the board, Arvola sportily offered a draw the very next move.

Draw probably was a very fair result of this six hours game, which although far from perfect was a great fight with many good moves from both players. Arvola moved one step closer to his IM-title, while Prohaszka although still undefeated at Fagernes still has a hard time winning games here.

The young lions Garg Aradhya (2315) and IM Awonder Liang (2483) after 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 a6?!/!? transposed into some kind of Semi-Slav with an early a6. It looked risky, but Liang was obviously well prepared and came ahead on the clock with a balanced position on the board.

Both players spent much time in a very complex middle game position.

White was a pawn up and probably better around move 15-20, but the very unbalanced position was difficult to handle for both players.

Fairly illustrating for the position, white had a four to one majority on the kingside, while black had a four to two majority on the queenside – after both players castled long.

The position became less chaotic after all the bishops were exchanged, and after 30 moves black's octopus knight on d3 compensated for the pawn deficit.

After the first time control queens were exchanged, black had won back the pawn and obviously was the one playing for a win – as his passed pawns on c3 and d4 were more threatening than white's lone pawn at f7.

Still white could have had drawing chances and a long fight ahead with 45.Rd7+!.

Instead 45.Kc2?? lost in a few moves as black after 45.--- Ne1+ soon was ready to play d3 and march in the pawns.

Still undrawn Aradhya following his third loss needs a very fast spurt to reach an IM-norm. Liang still needs an even faster spurt to reach a GM-norm, but anyway has repaired much following his second round loss.



The grown-up IM duel between John-Paul Wallace (2404) and David Eggleston (2394) made a positional start with a Queen's Indian. As black first played inaccurately and then in panic decided to sacrifice his key pawn on d5, white had a very good start on this afternoon and was more or less winning after 20 moves. Although Eggleston succeeded activating his pieces and get some counterplay, two extra queenside pawns should have been sufficient for

a win with queen, two rooks, knight and five pawns against queen, two rooks, knight and three pawns.

White however became too eager to exchange queens with 32.Qd4?, probably overlooking that black could win back one of the pawns with a tactical 32... Nd3+!

Later white's extra a-pawn was not at all easy to realize, and soundly defending Eggleston proved able to hold the rook endgame without too many problems.

The duel between 1911 teammates GM Frode Urkedal (2552) and FM Eivind Risting (2250) made a fresh start with a Benkő gambit, in which black played 5... g6?! instead of taking back the pawn at a6. White inserted 6.a7, and got a strong initiative after he returned pawn with a thematic 11.e5!?. 17... f6? later was a positional disaster, after which white was a pawn up with all the more active pieces.

Urkedal made a few inaccuracies, but was much better before black weakened his kingside further with 26... g5? – and won by a crushing attack later.

The teenager duel between IM Valeriy Kakakovskiy (2454) and Trygve Dahl (2099) was another King's Indian fianchetto duel. 14.Qg5?! probably was inaccurate, but still gave chances for a kingside attack as black replied 14... Qb4?.

Black's search for counterplay with a tactical 17... Ne4? was understandable but still dubious, and gave white a definite advantage. White probably could have played on for a kingside attack instead of exchanging queens with 21.Qxe4, but the rook and bishop endgame with an extra pawn at c6 was close to winning despite opposite coloured bishops.

32... Kg7 instead of 32... Bc5?! would have been the last try to save the game, as black could (and soon did) resign after white with 33.Rxh7 won a second pawn.

IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) started up with 1.c4 against WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300), but later transposed into some kind of King's Indian double fianchetto.

Black due to her strong knight square on e4 did well despite her backward pawn on d6.

Having exchanged off the queens, white kept a slight pressure into a still rather closed endgame with two rooks, bishop and seven pawns against two rooks, knight and seven pawns.

Failing to find any good plan to develop his advantage, white in the fifth hour instead started finding dubious plans making his king at a4 all the more vulnerable.

To get out of a mating net he himself had created when playing 47.a3?, white at move 51 had to play b4 and sacrifice two pawns.

53.--- c5! or 53.--- Rxa3+! probably would have won this game for black, but as Efroimsky instead played the slower 53.--- bxa3? white escaped with a healthy king and only one pawn less.

White afterwards raised a stubborn defence with his barking rook and bishop, and failing to find any way forward Efroimsky accepted a draw by repetition after 68 moves.

Unpredictable Christiansen has hit the wall after his speedy start on this tournament, but still has a fair result. Predictable Efroimsky on the other hand is doing very well above expected, although still struggling to realize her advantages. Her chances for an IM-norm might be good, but are anyway not too relevant as she already has made all the necessary norms.



Efroimsky

The FM duel between Lucas Ranaldi (2309) and Erik Hedman (2367) via 1.Nf3 transposed into a complex King's Indian fianchetto line, in which black delayed his castling and played for a kingside attack with 10.--- h5 and 11.--- Bh3.

After 15 moves the position was about balanced on the board, while Hedman was some 45 minutes ahead on the clock.

Inviting for a queen exchange with 23.Qb3? and 25.Qd3 looked like a strategic mistake from white, as black got a pleasant queenside initiative in the remaining endgame with rook and bishop versus rook and knight. Although white's position already was ill, giving up the b5-pawn to win black's pawn on c4 definitely was the wrong medicine – as black got a killing advantage after intervening on b2 with his rook. Realizing that he was about to lose his rook in the rook endgame, Ranaldi's first reaction after getting the new hour was to stop the clock.

FM Hedman succeeded hitting back with a third game win after his second loss, and might still candidate for an IM-norm if he can get a score as white against GM Urkedal tomorrow.



Ranaldi (left) and Haug (right)

FM Johannes Haug (2297) versus GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) was a very important game for the norm chances of Haug and for the tournament of both players.

It started as a King's Indian fianchetto in which white established a space advantage on the queenside while black went for counterplay on the kingside with Nh5-f5.

Black first did fine, but became too loose as he allowed white to exchange pawns first on e5

and then on c5.

The straightforward 23.bxc5! bxc5 24.Nd3! with a double attack on black's pawns would have made his position critical. Instead, the complicated 23.Bxe5? some tactics later resulted in a messy endgame with rook, bishop, knight and four pawns on each side. White could have some winning chances, but as black's pieces were about to become disturbingly active white just before 40 moves accepted a repetition of moves.

Haug following this draw is behind his schedule for an IM-norm, but has not lost it out of sight. Westerinen on the other hand scores below expected, but aged 72 remains a formidable fighter against players from three younger generations.



FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) and FM Anders Hobbler (2297) not unexpectedly went for a French exchange line, in which black blitzed out 11 moves in an ambitious long castling set up. White avoided the main line theory and kept a slight initiative, but the pawns were symmetric and black was well inside the game - until he blundered two pawns in one move with 23.--- f6?.

Al-Tarbosh efficiently used that chance and was obviously winning with two extra pawns in the queen and rook position.

True enough he made it much more complicated than necessary by exchanging rooks and blundering a pawn at move 40, and due to white's open king black appeared close to a draw ten moves later on. Out Syrian chessfriend still played stubbornly on for a win – and was rewarded as Hobbler in the fifth hour made some inaccuracies, after which his queenside pawns collapsed.

FM Luis Couso (2279) as black against Frode Lillevold (2135) went for a modern and mysterious Slav line with 4.--- a6. White fixed a space advantage on the queenside with 5.c5 and then went for a kingside attack.

A tense struggle followed as black in the early middle game snatched a pawn on b2 with his queen. White first appeared to have sufficient compensation due to his queenside pressure, and chances remained balanced after he at move 26 won back the pawn at c6.

Forcing an exchange of rooks with 31.Rb2? followed by 32.Nd7? and 33.Rb8? however turned out to be a very misunderstood plan – as white due to his weakened kingside was unable to save both his king and his kingside pawns in the remaining endgame with queen, knight and six pawns versus queen, bishop and six pawns.

Mikael Aroven (2097) as white against FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) went for an English fianchetto. White first had slightly more space for his pieces after exchanging one set of knights and the light squared bishops.

Black gradually took over the e-file and the initiative, but the position still was about in balance after 33 moves. Aroven's defence however collapsed as he ran short of time: 34.Ba1? allowed black to increase the pressure with 34.--- Re3!, 36.Kh1? stumbled into an unpleasant threat against f2 after 36.--- Re8! – and 37.Bd4?? blundered the key pawn on d5 due to Qxd5+.

Järvenpää in short used his chances very efficiently today, and after the time control black was two pawns up in a totally won rook and knight endgame.



Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032) and WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) discussed a Sicilian with 4.Qxd4.

Black chose a hedgehog set up with a6-b6-d6-e6-g6, and white did not hesitate establishing a space advantage.

The position clarified with a material balance and some initiative for white following a pseudo sacrifice with Nb5-Nxd6-e5, but after 25 moves the result still was wide open.

27.--- Bh6? however was a blunder, overlooking that white could win a pawn with 28.Bxh5! since 28.--- gxh5?? 29.Rg5+! would win black's queen on b6.

Later white had an extra pawn plus the more active pieces.

Following some time trouble mistakes from black, white went on to win an exchange and force a totally won endgame.

Willy Kristiansen (2055) versus Håkon Bentsen (2074) was "even another Catalan duel".

In this one white played Ne5 and got a pawn on e5 after black exchanged the knight.

Black after exchanging the fianchetto bishop on g2 still did fine with sound pieces and a queenside pawn majority.

21.--- f5?! to me still looks like an unnecessary weakening of the kingside after 22.exf6 e.p.

As black could protect the pawn on e6 with an active rook on f6, white still offered a draw in a balanced queen and rooks position a few moves later on.



As the GM group now has only 35 players left, and as none of them requested a walk over draw today, somebody had to accept a walk over win.

The unlucky player was Christian Laverton (2159), who is still present and will be back tomorrow.

IM-group

Once more – only one drawn game in this remarkably hard-fought IM-group. That draw was a Norwegian miracle and a Finnish disaster: FM Sebastian Mihajlov scraped a draw with a pawn less in the endgame, after being completely outplayed and lost in the middle game against FM Kalle Niemi. FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen on the other hand had no problems to completing a winning attack against FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen.

The nightmare continues for Norwegian IM Nicolai Getz, as he today blundered tactically after losing a strategic King's Indian battle against GM Ralf Åkesson.

IM Espen Lie on the other hand still has a dream tournament, and is at an amazing 5.5/6 after he today patiently realized his opening advantage as white against Thomas Nyland.

Lie now leads with a full point, as today's sensation was top seeded GM Roeland Pruijsers losing after a blunder against FM Sondre Merkesvik.

While Lie following the results so far is an obvious favourite for the first prize, we can expect an exciting run for the second prize as well as for the title norms. Following today's results Mihajlov needs "only" 1.5/3, but that will be no walk in the park as he has Lie and Pruijsers coming up for the next two rounds.

Kaasen will need 2.5/3, which obviously is very difficult, but maybe not unthinkable with Getz and Nyland coming up for the next two rounds.

Niemi after his wasted chances today needs 3/3 for an IM-norm, and black against Pruijsers in that situation might not be the ideal pairing for round seven...



IM Espen Lie (2449) as white against Thomas Nyland (2104) transposed from 1.Nf3 2.g3 into a Catalan in which black first played a closed set up and then exchanged at c4, leaving white with a center advantage and a pleasant bishop pressure after exchanging all the knights.

Black avoided dangers for a direct attack by exchanging queens and one set of rooks.

The endgame with rook, two bishops and six

pawns on each side still was a nightmare to defend, since white started with three active pieces while black still had all his pieces on the first rank.

Exchanging off the light-squared bishops on f7 at move 29 might have been the final mistake, as black soon lost his b7-pawn in the remaining rook and bishop endgame.

1-0 after 40 moves, as Nyland suddenly running seriously short of time in a difficult position blundered two more pawns.

Lie at 5.5/6 continues his very strong play from this come-back spring and now leads this IM-group with a full point, while Nyland back on earth at 1.5/6 still is well above his expected score.

FM Kalle Niemi (2337) versus FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) was Scotch opening in which white blitzed out ten moves, but black balanced the chances after exchanging queens plus one set of bishops and knights.

White gave up a pawn on c5, but had full compensation due to his better structure and development. Black made an acceptable decision to return the pawn on e6, but as he played a terribly slow plan with g6-h6-g5 afterwards, white came a pawn up with an ongoing attack. While Niemi somehow lost his concentration in a “too good” position, Mihajlov was wriggling brilliantly in the second half of this game – and in the end escaped into a drawn rook endgame with advanced g-pawn versus a- and b-pawn.

Following this miraculous save Mihajlov still needs only 50 % from the remaining rounds to make his third IM-norm, while Niemi following this badly timed cramp needs a 100 % score from now on.



FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) and GM Roeland Pruijssers (2504) entered the ring with a Dutch Leningrad duel, in which white played an ambitious set up with 8.d5 and 12.e4. Black's 12... f4 should give him enough kingside counterplay, at least after white's 13.gxf4?!

Chances later remained about balanced until move 22, when white threatened black's bishop on c4 with 22.b3 – sacrificing his knight on e2 to

get a perpetual check with Qe6+ Qf6+ etc. Pruijssers following the ELO and the tournament situation understandably was not ready for a draw in this game, but definitely pushed his luck too far as he turned down the offer with 22... Bf7??.

Due to black's vulnerable second and first rank, white suddenly had a winning attack after 23.Qe7! - threatening both Rd8 and Rd7. Feeling the pressure during the next moves Merkesvik made some mistakes and prolonged the game unnecessarily, but still he reached a won knight endgame before 40 moves and won it before 70 moves.

Merkesvik tripled his score and repaired much of his damage with this win against the top rated GM, while Pruijssers now is 1.5 points behind Lie and probably should focus on second prize.

GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) as white against IM Nicolai Getz (2403) and a King's Indian Defence, went for a positional Sämisch line in which white in a Karpov style is playing on the queenside with Nc1-Nb3. White had a positional edge in the early middle game, and got lasting pressure due to his strong knight on e4. Exchanging the black pawn on d5 for the black pawn at b5 later was too tempting for black, but still a mistake as white's passed b-pawn soon became another problem.

White was obviously better, but black still obviously in the game before he blundered with 27... Rd7? – overlooking a flashy 28.Nf6+! which won an exchange.

The remaining seven moves was a routine transport for Åkesson, who is back on track and shares third place with Pruijssers at 4.0/6. Getz on the other hand remains derailed and is playing far below his usual standard in this tournament.



FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) and FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219) tested out a Semi-Slav Botvinnik line.

White went for a positional 6.a4 instead of the critical main line with 6.e4, and came better after regaining the pawn on c4.

White by a thematic e5-Ne4-Qg4 started a kingside attack, which turned winning at latest after a tactical 20.Bxh6.

1-0 after 31 moves as white was two pawns up with a decisive attack.

Kaasen following this impressive win kept his chance for the decisive IM-norm alive, but still needs 2.5/3 from now on.

Jacobsen has had a demanding start on the chess year 2017 and this seems still to be the situation, despite his promising first round here at Fagernes. After losing this depressing game today, he however demonstrated his potential by winning all his first three games in the evening's rapid chess.

Elo-group

16 year old and sixth seeded Aleksander Lindbøl continues to walk on water in this Open, and has an outstanding 6/6 following a 19-move win today.

His game against Anton Darnell tomorrow might very well be decisive for the first place, as Darnell following today's results is the only player at 5.0/6.

First board meeting between Tor Wetle Hoem (1965) and Aleksander Lindbøl (1971) lasted only 19 moves, but white still was only slightly worse before he blundered a piece with 19.Qd3??.

Lindbøl efficiently used his chance with 19.--- Rxc5! and at 6/6 remains Mr Efficient in this group.

His tournament position improved further as Ingrid Greibrokk (1929) due to a long planned family arrangement had to take a walk over draw today.



Darnell - Rånby

Second board meeting between Torbjørn Dahl (1962) and Jonas Rasmussen (1859) ended up like a 34 moves draw, as Dahl by a counterattack on the seventh rank succeeded to save an uphill game.

The next challenger for young Lindbøl following this will be the nearly as young Swede Anton Darnell (1959), today winning very convincingly as white against his 40 year older countryman Hans Rånby (1891).

Virtually blind Kai-Roger Johansen (1929) also is playing very well, and can be found among the seven players on a shared third place after he and his active pair of bishops today gradually outplayed very talented Sara Næss (1909).

Our Finn chessfriend Tomi Tocklin (1812) in his wheelchair also had a successful appearance on the live boards, winning safely after a much too loose rook sacrifice from third seeded Hassan Kashwan ((2000)).



Næss – Johansen

Fifth board also had a surprising result, as Erling Skjelstad (1671) following a dubious opening and a painful middle game went on to win a rook endgame with one pawn less against Mathias Nesheim (1996).

Far behind the top boards, the top rated players still has a hard tournament:
First seeded Afras Mansoor (2037) failed to win despite an extra pawn in the endgame today,
while second seeded Alf W. Lundberg (2011) before tonight's guitar concert more or less
miraculously saved a totally lost endgame with rook versus rook and pawn.

As usual, many young players in this group are scoring well above expected. One of them is 14 year
old Amalie Merkesvik (1714), true enough winning luckily today as her opponent Alena Ayzenberg
(1992) from a winning position overlooked a tricky mate in two moves...



From round 6 in the Elo-group

All photos: Tom Eriksen