



TV 2 Fagernes International 2017

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 7



GM-group

Top seeded GM Andrey Vovk continues his solid and dynamic play at Fagernes, and leads alone at 5.5/7 after a convincing win as black against so far so solid GM Erik Blomqvist.

The star of this week still remains the 12 year old FM Nihal Sarin: Shared second at 5.0/7 following today's sound draw as black against GM Boris Chatalbashev, the new Indian whiz kid still is on schedule for a sensational GM norm. Depending upon the opponent in the last round, Sarin will need 1.0/2 or 1.5/2 in the final rounds to complete the norm. Needless to say, Vovk - Sarin tomorrow will be the most important game in the tournament so far.

In the shadow of Sarin and Vovk, almost all the GMs now are lining up before the spurt for the prizes. Behind Vovk at 5.5/7 and Sarin and Chatalbashev at 5.0, the group at 4.5/7 includes GMs Blomqvist, Postny, Prohaszka, Greenfeld and Urkedal, plus the very young American IM Awonder Liang – and the young Norwegian FM Benjamin Arvola. Well above 2500 in tournament performance and well above 2400 in ELO after winning another six-hour drama as black against IM David Eggleston today, 24 year old Arvola now needs only half a point more to complete his IM title.



Today's first board meeting between GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) and GM Andrey Vovk (2636) was a complex Sicilian Paulsen line, in which both player spent much time from the opening. White might have had a tiny edge first, but black had an open h-file and was not much worse after exchanging queens on c7 at move 15.

Black's c-file possession later gave him a slight initiative, which developed into a clear advantage when he got the chance to

undermine white's kingside pawns with 24.--- g4!. Vovk in an inspired mood confidently sacrificed his pawn on b6 to intervene with his rook on h2 and his bishop on e4, and in the end just before 40 moves sacrificed an exchange to reach a totally won endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns against two rooks and one pawn.

Following helpful results on the other boards, Vovk with a performance well above 2700 now leads alone at 5.5/7 – despite his walkover draw in the first round.

GM Boris Chatalbashev (2546) as white against FM Nihal Sarin (2424) went for a patient English fianchetto line.

Black lagged half an hour behind on the clock, but was equal on the board after exchanging the light squared bishops on g2.

As white played too slowly on the queenside, black and his accelerating f-pawn had an initiative in the second half of the middle game.

Chatalbashev defended well and succeeded

stabilizing his kingside while advancing on the queenside, hence the position appeared balanced again in the fourth hour.

31.--- Ng3+!? was a creative knight sacrifice from black, but still it gave only a tricky draw by repetition as white refused the sacrifice with 32.Kg1. No one objected as Chatalbashev after the game gently praised his opponent as a “genius” young talent.

12 year old Nihal Sarin has had a great tournament, remains undefeated at 5/7, and will play for his first GM-norm in the two final rounds! Obviously enjoying very much to play chess at Fagernes, he later in the evening won the rapid chess tournament with 5.5/6.



Evgeny Postny (2606) versus Alon Greenfeld (2550) was a duel between two solid GMs that knew each other well in advance, hence the draw no way was unexpected.

Still it came only after a tense four hours fight, and then in a dead drawn endgame with opposite coloured bishops.

Postny and his two bishops played for a win as white in a Catalan, but black and his active knights kept the balance after an early queen

exchange. White actually came in danger as he with 20.Bxb7 and 22.b5?! became too optimistic for his queenside attack, and black had an initiative after winning back the pawn with 22.--- Ng4! and 23.--- Nxf2. Postny however defended well when he had to, and the opposite coloured bishops more or less guaranteed a draw after the knights were exchanged.

Following this internal draw both the Israeli GMs are still in the fight for top three, but both should have won this game to candidate for first prize.

IM Awonder Liang (2483) versus IM John Paul Wallace (2404) after 1.d4 2.Bf4 3.Nc3 transposed into some relative of Pirc Defence as white played 5.e4.

10.O-O-O?! and 11.Nf3?! was an overambitious plan, and white suddenly had problems saving his f2 pawn after 11.--- Ng4!. Giving up the queen for rook and knight was a practically good choice from Liang, but black still came clearly better then and had a decisive advantage after getting the necessary help to open the center with 20.--- d5! and 21.--- e4!.

As black after 30 moves had queen, rook, knight and three pawns against two rooks, knight and five pawns, he was obviously winning – but obviously he also had some practical problems to solve with seven minutes left for ten moves...



Liang's practical defence paid off as Wallace blundered a knight with 33.--- Nxc6??.

Although white later captured with the wrong piece, he suddenly was only an exchange short and still had some play against black's airy king.

Commanding one queen, one rook and three pawns against two rooks, one knight and three pawns, black continued to play for a win in the fifth and sixth hour. The final endgame with queen, f- and g-pawn against rook, knight and a-pawn probably was a win, but in the final chapter of it the a6-pawn became too disturbing and so black was right to force a draw by perpetual check. Both these IMs following this turbulent draw are out of the run for a GM norm, but still on schedule for a plus result.



GM Peter Prohaszka (2592) and IM Valeriy Kazakovskiy (2454) meanwhile discussed a Catalan with 3.--- Bb4+ and 5.--- Bxd2+, in which white got a pleasant space advantage. Prohaszka instructively opened the position and increased the pressure with a c5 break followed by a e5 advance, and anyway was clearly better when black at move 19 offered two rooks for the price of one queen with 19.--- Rad8?.

The rest was downhill from a white point of view

and mountain climbing from a black point of view, as Prohaszka's active rooks and knights within a few moves won a lot of material.

Third seeded Prohaszka looked relieved finally to win a game again, and at 4.5/7 he might still candidate for top three.

FM Erik Hedman (2367) and GM Frode Urkedal (2552) entered the board with a Queen's Indian 4...Ba6 line. A tense positional struggle followed as only one set of minor pieces were exchanged after 17 moves, and white's pair of bishops first gave him a tiny edge.

Although critical, 18.d5? exd5 19.c5?! turned out to be a dubious pawn sacrifice, and following another one white anyway was two pawns down when he blundered a rook and resigned after 28 moves.

Hedman following this third lost game is out of the run for an IM-norm, while Urkedal after this win is still in the run for the money prizes.

Needing a win to keep his GM norm hopes alive, IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) as white against GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) started up slow with 1.d4 2.Nc3 3.Bf4 – and then suddenly accelerated with 5.g4 and 6.g5.

Both player's chances for a kingside attack disappeared as the queens were exchanged on f4 after 16 moves, and the remaining position despite the confusing white pawn at g5 was about balanced. As black's minority attack on the queenside halted, white came slightly better.

The position with two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side still was rather static, and although the computer programs still gave white a plus, the draw after 43 appeared reasonable. Hauge following this draw cannot make a GM-norm this tournament, but despite somewhat uneven play he is en route for a solid plus result. Rozentalis on the other hand is rock solid, but drifts apart from the top three prizes as he still struggles to win games.



English IM David Eggleston (2394) and Norwegian FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) tested a quiet (read: boring) looking Italian opening line, including an early queen exchange and a symmetric center with e4 versus e5.

White first had a slight initiative, and might have been clearly better when he at move 30 gave black a double e-pawn by exchanging the white-squared bishops. Eggleston became so thankful that he immediately invited black to

destroy his pawn structure in exactly the same way.

In a somewhat unusual position with four isolated e-pawns on the board, black later had a slight initiative. It developed into an extra pawn in the fifth hour. With both players short of time for the game Arvola after five and a half hour continued to play for a win, and offered his passed c-pawn to activate his pieces and attack white's kingside pawns.

For some moments it seemed that Arvola, for the second round in a row, would end up with rook and knight versus rook. Eggleston however believed he had a shorter way to a draw, and made the decisive mistake as he gave up his bishop in the wrong way – to late realizing that black could save his last kingside pawn with 71...Rc7!.

Although Arvola had only one minute left for the game, he had no problems demonstrating the win with rook, knight and h-pawn versus rook, h- and g-pawn. Eggleston in understandable frustration played on with king versus king, rook and knight, but Arvola still had some 20 seconds left on the clock when he after 107 moves had only one move left until mate on the board.

Arvola at 4.5/7 following this is very close to his third and decisive IM-norm.

But depending upon his last round opponent he might need half a point more – and Postny tomorrow of course will be a demanding challenge even with white.

Anyway Arvola after another 5 hours and 58 minutes game should be assured the honour prize for most hours in the playing room.

Finn FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) as white went for a careful Reti opening, while Norwegian IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) as black went for an aggressive set up with c5, e5 and f5.

Black had a long term asset in his pair of bishops, but in the early middle game white had a slight advantage due to his pressure against black's center.

White's decision to sacrifice an exchange probably was good from a positional point of view, but practically the situation was not easy to handle for white with 19 minutes left for 18 moves.

As black felt forced to return the exchange, white after 29 moves was a pawn up and clearly better – but still in a very unclear position and under pressure on the clock.

Time took its toll as Järvenpää between move 30 and 36 made several mistakes, helpfully exchanging down to an endgame with queen, knight and four pawns versus queen, bishop and three – in which it turned out that black had a decisive attack against white's king on h1, while white's queen was offside at a8...



FM Luis Couso (2279) – Garg Aradhya (2315) was an English double fianchetto, in which black did well after exchanging white's strong bishop on b2 with Ba3. White in reply interestingly went for a pawn sacrifice with 17.b4!?.

Black for some moves later had an extra a-pawn, but white's active rook compensated. At move 27 Aradhya returned the pawn, with the idea of exchanging some more pieces and offer a draw - which was accepted.

WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) as white against FM Johannes Haug (2297) went for a well-known French Tarrasch line, in which white exchanged queens instead of playing for a kingside attack after 10 moves.

The remaining position with two rooks, three minor pieces and six pawns on each side should be considered equal - if black plays accurately for the next moves. Haug did not, and so the position due to black's king on e7 became a little better for white. White's advantage became

obvious as black after 17 moves felt forced to give up his white squared bishop for a knight.

Efroimsky demonstrated a good technique as she later increased the pressure. Apparently black after giving up a pawn finally had got some counterplay around move 40.



In reality, white was a pawn up with a winning attack, as her two rooks and bishop coordinated better than Haug's two rooks and knight. Following some inaccuracies from both players, the game ended in a rook endgame in which white had two more pawns and a comfortable win.

Efroimsky probably will need 1,5/2 more for an IM-norm. Winning a lot of ELO currently is more important for her, as she before this tournament had enough norms but lacked 100 ELO points to get the IM-title. Haug following this loss will not make his first IM-norm this tournament, but might well increase his ELO.

FM Lucas Rinaldi (2309) and FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) started up with an approximately balanced English opening. Black and his pair of bishops had no problems after two sets of minor pieces were exchanged, but chances remained about balanced as white had an isolated pawn on d4 and black an isolated pawn at c6.

Following many sound moves from both players, black still was closer to something in the start of the endgame.

The rook endgame after 35 moves was unpleasant at best for white, as black had both the more active pieces.

Black following this was right to leave a repetition of checks, but wrong to place his king in the center instead of on the kingside. White following this could save the rook endgame by giving up a pawn, as his passed h-pawn became all the more. Draw agreed after 65 moves, as the players were about to run out of pieces. Curiously, the players met each other again in the rapid tournament a few hours later, and again played a draw as they ran out of pieces after a long and very interesting endgame.



Ward Al-Tarbosh

The generation duel between 72 year old GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) and 16 year old Trygve Dahl (2099) was a Sicilian duel in which white left the main lines of theory with 3.g3 and 4.exd5.

White in the early middle game had a slight initiative due to his knight on e5, but black did fine after exchanging the knight - as white took back with rook instead of the pawn.

The endgame with rook, bishop, knight and five pawns on each side following this appeared drawish after 28 moves.

Exchanging the bishop with 29.--- Bb5? however was a very bad idea, as black within three more moves lost his very important d5-pawn. White's passed d-pawn probably was decisive after this, and following some inaccurate moves from black it anyway decided the game before 40 moves.

FM Eivind Olav Risting (2250) as white against Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032) avoided a theory duel by playing a Trompovsky opening with 2.Bg5 and 4.Bxf6. Black and his pair of bishops first did fair enough, as his pair of bishops approximately balanced white's space advantage in the center.

11.--- d6? however underestimated fatally the dangers, as white after 12.f4! and 13.Rf3! had a dangerous initiative which soon developing into a direct attack. Black's king escaped from e8 to b7, but that did not help for long as black's queenside all collapsed. 1-0 after 33 moves, as white following a very good game from his side had a decisive attack and was about to win heavy material.

Håkon Bentsen (2074) versus Christian Laverton (2159) was a Sicilian, starting modest with 3.Bb5 and 4.Bxc6. Later white failed to find anything but sound exchanges. Black if anyone had a slight initiative when a not unexpected and somewhat disillusioned draw was agreed after 20 moves.

WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) and Frode Lillevold (2135) tested out an English double fianchetto, in which white soon became way too passive. Black established a sound space advantage with d4 followed by e5.

While white later lacked the resources for a kingside attack, black crashed through on the queenside and after four hours landed in a totally won endgame with queen, knight and six pawns versus queen, bishop and four pawns.



The game between Mikael Aroven (2097) and Willy Møller Kristiansen (2055) started as an English double fianchetto. Black had no problems equalizing, came better after accepting the invitation to establish a center advantage with 13... d4, and around moves 25-30 still had the better kingside attack.

Although he this time had a lot of time left on the clock, Kristiansen again started to make mistakes around move 30. As black

underestimated the dangers in the open g-file, white got several chances to launch a decisive attack. After 40 moves black had succeeded stabilizing his defensive line, but it did not last long as 41... Qb6? 42.f6! Bxf6? fatally opened the kingside for white.

Aroven this time immediately used his chance with 43.Bh6+! followed by 44.Nf5+!, and about to lose a ton of material black stopped the clock two moves later on.

IM-group

For a change we had two draws in the IM group today. The second one true enough was a Danish accident, as FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen in the very last moment lost his concentration and blundered in a totally won pawn endgame against FM Sondre Merkesvik.

The first draw on the other hand was well planned from both sides of the board: FM Sebastian Mihajlov offered after ten moves to improve his chances for an IM-norm – and IM Espen Lie accepted to improve his chances for the first prize.

After Mihajlov's early draw, the remaining IM norm candidates had a depressing day.

FM Kalle Niemi actually got his chance to win as GM Roeland Pruijssers blundered during mutual time pressure. But as Niemi returned the favour and lost the game, the 6.0/9 needed for a norm now is definitely out of his reach.

So is the situation for FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen, today outplaying himself in a fairly balanced endgame against IM Nicolai Getz.

Lie at 6.0/7 leads a full point ahead of Mihajlov, Pruijssers and Swedish GM Ralf Åkesson, after the latter today won a patient positional win as black against Thomas Nyland.

Lie's first place still is far from safe, and we can look forward to an exciting finish as he will have to play the GMs in his two final games.

Mihajlov meanwhile needs 1.0/2 against Pruijssers and Jacobsen to make his third IM-norm.



First board meeting between FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) and IM Espen Lie (2449) was drawn within 10 moves and half an hour. Mihajlov first raised expectations that he would play for a win as he entered the razor blade Four Pawn's attack in the King's Indian (in which white is playing 1.d4 2.c4 4.e4 and 5.f4!?), but then immediately pulled the brake and offered a draw at move 10.

The decision to take a short draw today was rational for both players as Mihajlov moved

one step closer to his IM-norm, now needing only 1.0/2, while Lie got ridden of a dangerous black game and still is leading with a full point at 6.0/7.

This draw means that Mihajlov if losing as white against GM Pruijssers in round eight, still has a chance to make the norm if he can win as black against FM Jacobsen in round nine.

While Mihajlov seems very focused on his third IM-norm, it should not be forgotten that 1.5/2 in the final rounds will lift him above 2400 in Elo for the first time.

Even with 6.5/9 or 7/9 Mihajlov however cannot complete his IM-title this week: A fourth norm (or an eleven rounds third norm) will be needed, as one of his first two norms had only seven games.

IM Nicolai Getz (2403) and FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) was a Scotch with a lot of early exchanges, after which white had a pleasant advantage with two rooks, one knight and seven pawns on each side. Taking into account that Kaasen needed a win to keep his IM-norm hopes alive, the opening choice hardly can be called a success.

The rook and knight endgame around move 25 still looked pretty equal, but that was before black went astray in the wilderness with a mysterious a5-b5-a4 attack on the queenside.

Getz for some minutes looked a bit confused about what was going on, but then he efficiently cashed in the two pawns and decided the game by advancing his queenside pawns.

Kaasen at 3.5/7 is well below expected score and definitely out as an IM-norm candidate, while Getz finally played a good game and doubled his sum of points today.

Thomas Nyland (2104) as white against GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) played 2.g3 and 3.d3 in a Sicilian. It was unambitious at best, and black came slightly ahead in development after exchanging queens on d1 move 5. Nyland later for a while made sound moves without too many exchanges, and the game around move 20 was about balanced on clock and board.

While white found no active play black methodically opened up the position for his bishops, until white's position collapsed just before 40 moves.

Another honest loss means Nyland stays at a honest 1.5/7, while Åkesson after winning his third game in a row now is shared second at 5.0/7.



Nyland – Åkesson (front) and Getz – Kaasen (back)

Roeland Pruijssers (2504) as white against FM Kalle Niemi (2337) went for a Caro-Kann Advance, in which white was slow on the clock but ahead on the board after black weakened his kingside with h6-g5.

Black sacrificed a pawn as he allowed dxc5 followed by c5xb6 after the opening, and for a while had enough compensation. As white after 25 moves had stabilized the position with an extra pawn and was about to activate his pair of bishops, black tried to get counterplay with an exchange sacrifice. The exchange sacrifice worked out as black later got some tactical chances, but in the end did not work out as he short of time failed to make use of them.

28.Rd6? was a mistake from white, as black with a tactical 28.--- Nxe5! instead of 28.--- Nh4? could have made the position unclear.

With Pruijssers running short of time in a still complex position, 32.Bc6?? was an outright blunder that could have given black a winning counterattack after 32.--- Bxe5! or 32.--- Nh3+! 32.Kh2 Nxf2. Short of time himself Niemi missed his chances in the critical moments.

Although Pruijssers in turn could have decided faster with the queens on board, he before 40 moves landed safely in a won endgame with rook, knight and two pawns against two knights and two pawns.

Prujssers is still playing a bit shaky, but still scoring fairly well at 5.0/7. Missing his unexpected chance today, Niemi at 3.0/7 is out as an IM norm candidate and fighting for his Elo in the two final rounds.

FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219) as white against FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) had prepared for a Grünfeld Exchange variation. White came 35 minutes ahead on the clock, while the position on the board was about balanced.

17.--- Rf8-e8?! was a positionally strange choice from black, and white's bishops became active after 18.Bb5. Remarkably Merkesvik this time did not use a fairly good option to sacrifice his queen for rook and bishop with 20.—Bxc4!?.

Both players made some mistakes during the following tactical complications, and after 30 moves black could have been a pawn up with some advantage if just exchanging off white's knight with Bxg5. Instead offering a queen exchange with 30.--- Qc7? was a time trouble blunder, as white won an exchange after jumping the knight in on e6 afterwards.

The remaining endgame with two rooks and three pawns versus rook, bishop and three pawns probably was a technical win for white, although black's passed a-pawn gave him some practical chances.

Jacobsen this time played well until he reached a won pawn endgame with g- and h-pawns versus g-pawn. But that did not help, as 55.g3?? in the pawn endgame was a final and fatal mistake that allowed black to exchange off all the remaining pawns.

Elo-group

In the seventh round of the open, Aleksander Lindbøl for a change failed to win a won position, and in the end had to accept his first draw. Lindbøl at 6.5/7 still leads with a full point, but will get a critical test as black against still impressive Ingrid Greibrokk tomorrow.



Lindbøl

On first board, 16 year old Aleksander Lindbøl (1971) as white against 19 year old Anton Darnell (1959) went for a positional King's Indian line. It soon turned tactical, and making the better calculations white came an exchange and pawn up.

Playing with a knight stranded on a8 for more than ten moves, white had something to worry about, but the position was won or clearly better for a very long time. Not losing his youthful optimism due to a lost position, Darnell fought

on very well – and only one pawn down he succeeded saving the rook and bishop endgame.

16 year old Ingrid Greibrokk (1929) meanwhile returned to the tournament with a two-hour win as black against Jonas Hodneland Rasmussen (1859). Black was better prepared for this duel in the complex Noteboom line of a Semi-Slav opening.

Although a pawn down, white still had reasonable drawing chances until he at move 34 played much too fast and blundered his bishop in the rook and bishop endgame. Greibrokk did not need many seconds to call the blunder – and Rasmussen did not need many more moves to sign the scoresheets.

Second place at 5.5/7 now is shared between Darnell, Greibrokk and Torbjørn Dahl (1962), as the latter got the help needed to transform a drawish rook endgame into a won pawn endgame against Snorre Skrede (1920).

First seeded Afras Mansoor (2037) is out of the fight top three despite a convincing win today, and second seeded Alf W. Lundberg (2011) is out of it because he today lost as white against the heavily underrated 13 year old Knut Syse (1534). The latter game was a much too loose French Wing Gambit, in which white sacrificed both a pawn and an exchange. Syse in a very convincing debut on the live boards later had no problems converting his material advantage into a full point.

Third seeded Hassan Kashwan ((2000)) unfortunately is not only out of the top boards, but also out of the tournament and out of the country, as he for family reasons had to leave Fagernes and return to Sweden before the start of this round.

The fighting spirit of this group today was illustrated by the game Næss versus Næss, in which 16 year old Sara (1909) with the black pieces defeated her 14 year old sister Maria (1659) – by a nice tactical hit in an intense three-hour game.