



## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 8



### GM-group

In short, round eight of this GM-group became a depressing afternoon for the top rated GMs and a very inspiring one for the title norm candidates.

On first board 12 year old FM Nihal Sarin defended a slightly worse endgame into a draw as black against first seeded IM Andrey Vovk, and third board saw a true sensation as Norwegian FM Benjamin Arvola defeated second seeded GM Evgeny Postny in another long and turbulent game.

In between, third seeded GM Peter Prohaszka despite some advantage had to accept a draw against still solid GM Boris Chatalbashev.

Fourth board was an exciting meeting between two young Scandinavian GMs, in which Swedish Erik Blomqvist succeeded to scrape a draw despite being a rook down (!?) in the final endgame. Following these results Vovk still leads alone, now at 6.0/8, ahead of Sarin, Arvola and Chatalbashev at 5.5/8.

As both Sarin and Arvola can make more or less sensational GM norms in case of a draw (or win), the last round can be a thriller about norms as well as prizes. Top boards in the final round will be Arvola-Vovk, Chatalbashev-Urkedal and Sarin-Greenfeld.

Male IM norm candidates in this group at this stage has either lost the chance or already completed the norm. Sarin anyway had completed all demands for his IM-title before arriving, but Arvola completed his decisive third norm and can be congratulated as a new IM following his win today.

In the shadow of the top boards WGM Marsel Efroimsky not for the first time this week failed to win a won position, but she still has had a very good tournament and can make an IM-norm with a draw (or win) against Postny tomorrow.



Still 12 year old FM Nihal Sarin (2424) took a big step towards his first GM norm (and a top three prize) as he succeeded holding a draw as black against top seeded GM Andrey Vovk (2636). The opening was a Caro-Kann Advance line in which black was sound and solid after exchanging two sets of minor pieces, but white's two bishops and c-file possession still gave him an irritating pull.

Sarin demonstrated that he is already an excellent defender, as he exchanged down to a drawish endgame with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns versus queen, two bishops and six pawns. The queen exchange after 28 moves was an interesting moment: Black accepted temporarily to cripple his pawn structure with axb5, realizing that he could within three moves exchange one of the b-pawns for white's d-pawn.

This opening of the position for a few moves gave white and his bishops some new hope.

But as black's knight was too active, white found nothing better than exchanging it.

White had an extra pawn in the remaining bishop endgame, but still no winning chances whatsoever due to opposite coloured bishops.

A draw on the first board today was excellent news for the tournament as Vovk's lead still is only half a point before the last round, while Sarin still in shared second and can make his first GM-norm with a draw as white against GM Alon Greenfeld tomorrow.



The second board GM duel between Hungarian Peter Prohaszka (2592) and Bulgarian Boris Chatalbashev (2546) saw a Grünfeld-indian opening with 5.Bf4, in which black appeared to have the best preparation and did 20 moves within 11 minutes.

White lagged some 45 minutes behind on the clock, but placing his rook on the seventh rank he had a pleasant initiative on the board with queen, rook, knight and six pawns.

Later white unnecessarily sacrificed a pawn at c3, and although white won back the pawn black for a few moves was closer to something with rook, knight and five pawns on each side.

Draw agreed by a repetition after 34 moves means that Chatalbashev after his last black game still in shared second in the tournament, while Prohaszka still struggles to win his white games.

FM Benjamin Arvola (2385) versus GM Evgeny Postny (2606) from the start was a Caro-Kann main line, which looked about equal and relatively quiet.

24.Ba1?! probably was a dubious pawn sacrifice, but that was never tested out as black decided not to take the pawn on b3. White got his chance for a kingside attack as Postny at move 28 allowed Arvola to exchange his fianchetto bishop for a knight on f6, fracturing the pawn shelter ahead black's king.



With 16 minutes against 6 on the clock, great-grandmaster Postny unexpectedly was the one to collapse during the critical next moves.

29.--- Bf8? was a blunder that could have lost, but it is very understandable that both players missed a complicated tactical win with 30.Ne5!!.. After the more patient 30.Re1? black blundered again with 30.--- Bc5?, and this time he was punished as Arvola immediately went for the critical line with 31.Qxh6! Qxf2+ 32.Kh1 Qb2?! 33.Rxf7!.

Having less than one minute left on the clock, Arvola true enough failed to find the best continuation after the rook sacrifice. The continuation he found still gave white knight, two pawns and an ongoing attack for the rook.

Both players spent a lot of time and made some mistakes in a still complex position after the time control. Black's position however remained a nightmare to defend, and 43.--- Qc5? was another mistake after which white soon had a decisive attack.

Postny stopped the clock after white's move 53 – realizing that was the only way to avoid his airy king on f5 to go mate. Postny has had a disastrous second half after a promising start, and is definitely out of top three following this loss.

Arvola on the other hand is still accelerating, has completed his IM-title – and can make a sensational GM norm tomorrow. Needing only a draw with white helps a lot, but the game will be played on first board and Andrey Vovk of course is a formidable opponent whatever the colour...

The Scandinavian GM duel between Frode Urkedal (2552) and GM Erik Blomqvist (2548) started like an Accepted Queen's Gambit with 3.e4, in which white sacrificed a pawn to get active pieces.

The position remained loaded, with five pieces in the diagonal c2-g6 after 16 moves. Taking back the pawn on b7 probably was a mistake, as black could force a queen exchange on b6. Still white got a pawn up and a clear advantage in the middle game.

The double rook endgame after 40 moves was generally considered lost for black, as white had an extra pawn plus two connected passed pawns on the kingside. In the single rook endgame both players had two connected passed pawns, but white's were ahead in the promotion race. For a few moves the position reportedly still was a draw, as white became too eager to advance his h-pawn – but then it again was winning, as black in turn became too eager to advance his b-pawn. At move 51 black promoted on b1; at move 52 white promoted on h8. White was ahead with a rook plus a passed pawn on h7, but escaping the checks on an almost open board was not easy with only a few minutes left for the game. Urkedal failed to find the computer wins and after 85 moves the position reportedly was a draw, although white still was a rook and pawn up. Urkedal offered a draw four moves later on, as he had only ten seconds left on the clock and even if escaping the checks had no chance to mate his opponent in time.



GM Alon Greenfeld (2550) versus IM Awonder Liang (2483) saw an original opening with 1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.b4!/?/?!.

White spent 66 minutes for the first 10 moves, but black still came slightly better after a thematic queenside counterattack with a5-axb4. Having achieved nothing except exchanging the a-, b- and c-pawns, white admitted the failure

and offered a draw after 15 moves.

20 minutes ahead on the clock and slightly better on the board black could have played on, but without chances for a GM norm 14 year old Liang was understandably satisfied to draw a 2550-GM as black.

GM Eduardas Rozentalis (2540) versus IM Johan-Sebastian Christiansen (2429) was a Ruy Lopez Jänisch Gambit, in which white and his extra pawns probably first had an advantage despite black's pair of bishops. Black succeeded activating his pieces and win back the pawn, but after some tactical exchanges white and his aggressive f5-pawn still had some pressure with queen, two rooks and five pawns on each side.

Although the material remained balanced, black's all the more open king at g6 gave him headache in the fourth hour. Christiansen however still is a very practical young fighter, while Rozentalis this week still struggles to realize his advantages – and consequently the game was drawn by a repetition of checks after 48 moves.

Christiansen later in the evening succeeded to realize his new main goal of winning the blitz tournament.

IM John-Paul Wallace (2404) versus IM Lars Oskar Hauge (2450) started with 1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3, but transposed into some kind of Pirc as white played e4 instead of c4.

White's pawn on d5 gave him a space advantage, and although black got his counterplay on the kingside, white still had the better chances in an overcrowded and complex middle game.

Remarkably, after 40 moves only one pair of pawns (and no other pieces) had left the board.

Black at that stage had improved his chances, as it was not easy for white to use his space advantage.

Exchanging a bishop on e4 however was a mistake, as the kingside opened on white's premises.

White finally found a box opener as he after 49 moves sacrificed a knight on d6, and although black got two minor pieces for a rook he soon proved unable to stop white's passed d-pawn.

Wallace for a change succeeded realizing one of his advantages today, and heads for another solid plus result.

Hauge following a too jumpy tournament now seems likely to land just around expected score.

IM David Eggleston (2394) as white against WGM Marsel Efroimsky (2300) went for a Sicilian with 3.Bb5+. Black answered with a hedgehog like set up, and the position probably was about balanced until white went for the greedy 16.Qxd6? – giving black a too strong initiative after Nc5!.

Sacrificing two minor pieces for rook and pawn later was another good practical choice from Eggleston, as black although much better got a long and risky road to win.

Black commanding queen, bishop, knight and four pawns against queen, rook and five pawns still was better after the first time control, but white's passed queenside pawns made it very difficult to win then. In the end black opened the kingside with 42... g5 43.hxg5 h4 only to conclude the game with a repetition of checks.

Eggleston did not feel fit to play the last round and ended with an “exactly average” result.

Efroimsky remarkably is scoring well above expected despite wasting chances all of the time.

Good news for her is that she can make an IM-norm with a draw in the last round (especially as she has drawn five of her first eight games). Not so good news is that she will have to score that draw as black against her second seeded countryman Evgeny Postny.



IM Valery Kazakovskiy (2454) versus GM Heikki Westerinen (2314) was another interesting generation duel, with an age difference on nearly 60 years.

The opening was a King's Indian fianchetto in which black played a tricky but probably dubious Nd4, after which white came better despite a somewhat loose pawn at d5. After queens were exchanged, white won a pawn on the queenside with a clear advantage.

The rook and bishop endgame following this was much better for white, and Kazakovskiy went on the win after picking up one more pawn just before 40 moves.

FM Ward Al-Tarbosh (2219) as white against FM Erik Hedman (2367) went for a slow Sicilian with 3.Bb5. White later accelerated with e5 and went for a kingside attack, but black hit back on the queenside with d4.

Later the position gradually turned in favour of black, as he proved able to advance his queenside pawn majority while covering up his kingside. After black established a passed pawn on b3, Al-Tarbosh in the fourth hour soon ran short of both minutes and moves. In the end he managed to pass move 40, but 38.g3? was a decisive mistake as black could (and did) decide the game with an elegant bishop sacrifice on a3.

Remarkably, Hedman in this tournament made 3,5/4 with black, but still is out of the IM norm run as he only managed 1.0/4 with white.

Garg Aradhya (2315) versus FM Eivind Risting (2250) was a Benkö Gambit in which white went for a positional advantage instead of taking the pawn. White was faster on the clock and first better on the board, but after 24 moves both players had used much time to reach a dynamic balance on the board.

Playing with queen, rook, bishop and six pawns against queen, rook, knight and six pawns, white still had close to equal chances after 30 moves. 31.Qa6?? however was a blunder, overlooking that black could play 31.... Qe4! with a double attack on white's rook on b1 and bishop on a4.

Although his king was a little bit airy, Risting later had no problems converting a full extra piece into a full point.



The FM duel between Johannes Haug (2297) and Luis Couso (2287) started up a symmetric Slav Exchange line with cxd5 cxd5, in which both behaved like if this was a Queen's Gambit Exchange line with exd5.

White got a pleasant c-file pressure after black helpfully exchanged his strong knight from e4 on d2. For a while white kept the pressure due to black's isolated pawn on

d5, but the queen and bishop endgame looked drawish. White suddenly transformed it into a very demanding bishop endgame as he at move 40 helpfully exchanged queens on c3.

It soon turned out that black's passed pawn on c3 was much more strong than weak, and for some moves it gave him a decisive advantage.

Couso became so happy (and/or so tired) about this gift that he blundered it all back with 47.... h5??.

Haug immediately used his chance to reply 48.f6! – and black was lost as he could not reply 48.... gxf6 due to 49.gxh5 with a decisive passed pawn...

Frode Lillevold (2135) versus FM Jari Järvenpää (2244) was a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line in which white had the typical double pawns at c3 and c4, but also a space advantage due to his pawns on d5 and e4.

Sacrificing a bishop for three pawns on e4 was a creative solution from black, and also a practical one as he was half an hour ahead on the clock. Chances late remained balanced for 10 moves.

At move 33 black sacrificed his pawn on b6 to bring his queen into the kingside game.

Taking the pawn with 34.Rxb6 probably was fine, but 35.Qb2?? was a blunder due to the brutal 35.... f2! – and then there was no move 36.



The Norwegian teenager duel between Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2032) and FM Lucas Ranaldi (2309) was a Sicilian with 3.Bb5, in which white came half an hour ahead on the clock and slightly better on board after the center disappeared. His c4-pawn however was a weakness, and black came better as white sacrificed the pawn without having any real meat on the kingside.

Black following this was anyway a sound pawn up, when white still searching for a kingside attack blundered a piece with 31.Nh5??. The remaining 25 moves were not too exciting, as Ranaldi armed with an extra bishop of course had no problems to win the queen and bishop endgame.

FM Anders Hobbler (2297) made another slow start with 1.d4 2.Bf4 3.e3, but then accelerated with 9.0-0-0 10.g4 11.g5 as white against Christian Laverton (2159). The resulting position was a positional mess, but white most of the time did better with his two bishops versus two knights.

The number of pieces and pawns remained balanced after all the minor pieces were exchanged, but white looked close to winning due to black's airy king.

Laverton in a very demanding position succeeded surviving ten moves of mutual time pressure, and this impressed a disillusioned Hobbler so much that he offered a draw in a still clearly better position after 45 moves.

Trygve Dahl (2099) as white against Mikael Aroven (2097) entered a slow King's Indian Advance a la Sicilian and castled short. Then he suddenly accelerated with an aggressive kingside attack, which backfired as black and his pair of bishops hit back against white's king.

As black in turn wasted his chances and gave up most of his advantage when accepting a queen exchange, the endgame with two rooks, two knights and six pawns versus two rooks, two bishops and six pawns was only marginally better for black.

Although the position after four hours looked drawish, black and his passed a-pawn continued to push for a win. Black could have been somewhat better with 50... Kf8!, Ke8! or Kd8!. Instead 50... Kd6?? however was a tactical blunder losing a piece and the game, as white could (and did!) reply 51.Rxc1 > a1Q 52.c5+ Ke6 53.Rxa1 Rxa1 54.cxb6.

Dahl has had his ups and downs this tournament, but following this up he will score very well above expected whatever his result in round nine.



WFM Anita Grønnestad (1966) versus Håkon Bentsen (2074) was a London system in which black had an isolated pawn on d5.

White following this came slightly better with two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side. White's advantage clearly had increased in the endgame with bishop, knight and six pawns on each side, and she got the chance to reach a close to winning knight endgame with 27.Bb5+!.

Missing that chance white again had only a slight edge, and a draw was agreed after 33 moves.

Willy Kristiansen (2055) was in turn to get a walkover win this round, but will be back in the playing venue for another game of chess tomorrow.

## IM-group

40 % draws in the IM-group this round as well - but both draws were hard-fought and important. Both also worked out well from a tournament point of view. GM Ralf Åkesson succeeded defending a demanding double rook endgame as black against IM Espen Lie, while FM Sebastian Mihajlov and GM Roeland Pruijssers in the third hour stepped into a tricky and forced repetition of moves.

Following this Lie as 6.5/8 still is “only” one point ahead of Åkesson, Pruijssers and Mihajlov – and consequently all four can end up on a shared first prize if Pruijssers defeats Lie in the last round! Mihajlov anyway was a winner this round as well, as he now needs only a draw in the last round to complete his third IM-norm.

The three decided games somehow were less important today, and none of the outcomes were unexpected. FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen arrived half an hour delayed and somewhat confused, but still won in confident style as white against Thomas Nyland.

FM Mikkel Jacobsen again did fine from the opening but against stumbled in the middle game, this time as black against FM Kalle Niemi.

And IM Nicolai Getz, finally accelerating after six nightmare rounds, won an attacking game as black against FM Sondre Merkesvik.

IM Espen Lie (2449) as white against GM Ralf Åkesson (2452) started up with 1.g3, but then transposed into a hedgehog-like English. White had more space, but black due to his pair of bishops had an acceptable position.

White with an e5-pawn and a d-file control was slightly better after exchanging the white squared bishops. Black in this situation chose an active defence, giving up his d7 pawn for white's c4 pawn. The idea probably was correct but the realization was not, as black should have taken the time to save his a7-pawn before taking back the pawn on c4.

Probably the double rook endgame with four pawns on each side still was a draw, but white's passed a-pawn and more active rooks definitely made life difficult for black. Lie rightfully turned down a draw offer at move 25.

28.h4? might have been a turning point – as white if immediately playing Rc7 and Rbb7 could have forced a promising double rook endgame with three versus two kingside pawns. As black now got the time to regroup, he succeeded reaching a slightly unpleasant but still much more convenient double rook endgame with three kingside pawns for each player.

Showing no respect for his GM opponent, Lie played on when he was slightly ahead with rook and e-pawn versus rook and h-pawn. Åkesson defended it safely into a draw, and still remains on shared second place one point behind Lie.

Lie following this will need a score as black in the last round to assure an unshared first prize.



**Pruijssers, Lie and Mihajlov**

The very important game between FM Sebastian Mihajlov (2367) and GM Roeland Pruijssers (2504) was a complex Grünfeld Indian duel. White had pawn on c5 and a rook on d6, and probably did fine despite his double f-pawn and king on e1.

The game turned tactical as black played 20... Nd4 to answer 21. Bxh6 with Nf5 – forking white's rook on d6 and queen on g3. White appeared to be in trouble, but coolly played 22. Bxg7! Kxg7 23. Nf6 with a counter threat against black's queen on e8.

Black spent some time but played 23... Qe7 24. Qg5 Be6 – and forced white to take out a repetition of moves with 25. Nh5+ Kh8 26. Nf6. Mihajlov did not hesitate using this chance, as he to complete his norm now needs only a draw against Jacobsen in the last round.

Chances for a Norwegian IM-norm should be very good following the results so far this tournament, but needing a draw as black against an unpredictable opponent in the last round always feels a bit risky...

FM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2410) today had a stressfull start of his game, as he while doing the final preparations in his apartment suddenly learned on internet that all games except his own had started one hour earlier today.

Arriving nearly 30 minutes delayed for his white game against Thomas Nyland (2104), Kaasen still came slightly better from the predictable French opening duel.

Black's only asset was his pair of bishops, hence he definitely came worse after exchanging one of them on c6. Kaasen within a few moves picked up the pawn target on c6, then agreed to exchange queens, and due to his more active pieces and big queenside majority had no problems winning the rook and bishop endgame with six against five pawns.



FM Kalle Niemi (2337) and FM Mikkel Manosri Jacobsen (2219) made an unusual start with 1.Nf3 f5?! 2.d3. Following an early queen and bishop exchange on g5 black was still fine, but 19.--- h5?! soon turned out to be weakening after 20.h4!.

Due to his strong knight outpost on g5 white within a few moves established a clear advantage, and within very few more moves he won black's key pawn on e6 with an ongoing attack.

The endgame with two rooks and five pawns versus rook, bishop and five pawns later was a sober win for white, although it took some time demonstrating it.

Niemi at 4.0/8 is doing very much as expected, while Jacobsen at 2.0/8 still is wasting much too many chances in the middle games and endgames.

FM Sondre Merkesvik (2239) versus IM Nicolai Getz (2403) was a King's Indian Fianchetto line, in which white from the start was slow on the clock with a space advantage on the board.

White first was slightly better, but black made the better moves in the middle game and came up with a lot of counterplay on the queenside.



24.--- Qg5?! probably was a dubious attacking move, but it forced white to find 25.Qc1! – which he did not, and then black was totally winning after 25.Rf2?? Bxf3!.

Winning two games in a row, Getz following his disastrous start finally is recognizable towards the end of this tournament. Merkesvik with a remarkable exception for round six has had a pole out tournament, but can make an average result out of this if winning last round.

## Elo-group

In a shaky time trouble duel on the first board today, Aleksander Lindbøl as black against Ingrid Greibrokk escaped from a lost position into a draw – after he in between had missed two chances to win a rook.

As Anton Darnell succeeded winning his game, Lindbøl at 7.0/8 following this leads only with an unsafe half point before the last round.



Finally having reached first board, Ingrid Greibrokk (1929) as white for a long time dominated the game against the strong and lucky leader Aleksander Lindbøl (1971).

After 33 moves, white was two pawns up with a winning advantage in the rook and bishop endgame. Black still had some active pieces, and Greibrokk made the win more difficult as she during mutual time pressure became too eager to get rid of the remaining black pawns.

With black's king on e4 and white's king on e1, both players in the final moves before the time control probably became too focused on mating nets.

39.d5?? true enough threatened the black rook on d2 by opening the diagonal from white's bishop at g7, but it also opened the diagonal between e3 and a7 for black's bishop. Black moved his rook away from the danger with 39.... Rh2??, not noting that 39.... Rb1+! 40.Ke2 Bxa7 would win a rook without losing one.

White missed her chance to save the rook with 40.Kd1??, but black in turn again failed to see that he could take it – and instead look well satisfied after taking a pawn at h5.

After the time control Ingrid woke up in time and saved her rook with 41.Ra4+!, after which the game was soon drawn by a perpetual check.

The result of these two talented 16 year old players' game probably was fair all taken together. Anyway it meant that Lindbøl kept his unshared first place, but his margin was reduced to half a point as 19 year Anton Darnell (1959) succeeded realizing his extra exchange in a complex endgame against Hell's representative Torbjørn Dahl (1962).

Before the last round Lindbøl is alone at 7.0/8, Darnell is alone at 6.5/8, while third place is shared between Ingrid Greibrokk, Kai-Roger Johansen and Tor Wetle Hoem.

Unpredictable Hoem (1965) has improved his play during the final days of this tournament, and today won a close to crushing 26 moves game as white against so far solid Tomi Tocklin (1812).

Virtually blind Kai-Roger Johansen (1929) overall has been playing very good this week, and increased the pressure until winning by a well calculated kingside attack as white against Snorre Skrede (1920).

Three female teenagers all played on the top boards of this group today, and although the games were far from quiet all three of them made a draw in the end.

16 year old Sara Næss (1909) following a time trouble duel was lucky to get a draw from a more or less lost endgame against the chess federation office representative Kristoffer Gressli (1752), while 14 year Amalie Merkesvik (1714) had a somewhat better position before overlooking a tricky repetition of checks against the Swedish veteran Hans Rånby (1891).

We can look forward to more exciting games AND a final decision about the top four prizes in round nine, when the top board pairings will be Aleksander Lindbøl versus Kai-Roger Johansen, Tor Wetle Hoem versus Anton Darnell and Torbjørn Dahl versus Ingrid Greibrokk.



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All photos: Tom Eriksen