



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 2



GM-group

Second round in this GM group true enough started up with one careful “GM-draw”. But then it turned into a firework, as all the remaining eight games got a winner – and almost all the decided games were long, complicated and entertaining battles!

Despite many nervous moments, the five GMs above 2600 in the end made 4.5/5 from this round. Consequently, two of them are now sharing the lead alone at 2/2.

The slow start of this round was the second board meeting between ninth seeded GM Matthew TURNER (2493) and fourth seeded GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607). Via 1.c4 play transposed into a Slav with Be6, in which white had a little more space.

At move 16 Prohaszka suddenly gave up his bishop for a knight at c4 and offered a draw, which was accepted. The end came a bit early and unexpected, but the result was no surprise and both GMs at 1.5/2 have had a sound start on their first Fagernes tournament.

The first board meeting between GM Andrey VOVK (2617) and GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) was a Sicilian Kan duel, in which a Maroczy set up this time resulted in a fairly balanced isolated pawn position.

20.--- Rxc3?! was a probably dubious exchange sacrifice from black, but still worked out well as white chose the wrong way to return the exchange. The remaining position with queen, rook, two bishops and five pawns on each side looked almost balanced, although white kept a slight pressure. After 35 moves the endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns on each side appeared very drawish – and both players appeared relaxed with two and a half minute left on the clock. Both somehow became too relaxed and then woke up just in time, as white suddenly had two second left and black one second after completing move 40!

While white kept up his play well black gradually lost control on the board, and 40.--- Rd7? was the decisive blunder as black after 41.f5+! found himself caught in a killing d-file pin. The younger Vovk brother following this patient win became one out of only two players to reach 2/2 in this GM-group.

GM Igors RAUSIS (2600) and GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) started up with an open Ruy Lopez Berlin line, but avoided the queen exchange and the heavily analyzed “Berlin wall” variations. Both players apparently left their preparations before move 10, but due to his more active pieces and his better development white soon came clearly ahead on board and clock.

Already having spent nearly 90 minutes, black definitely came worse as he instead of the critical 13.- -- Nxf4!? played the safer but much more cramped 13.--- Bxd7?.

Although all the centre pawns plus the queens disappeared within five more moves, the remaining position was much better for white – as he had the more healthy pawn structure AND the more aggressive pieces.

Black later fought on well and still had some drawing chances with rook, knight and four versus rook, bishop and four, but definitely lost it as he (with 35 seconds left for eight moves) blundered a pawn by overlooking a tactical 34.Bb3!. Pavlovic in desperation gave up an exchange instead of a pawn. Due to his still depressing pawn structure, black had no chances to save the endgame with knight and three pawns versus rook and three. Aged 54 and the oldest player of this group, Rausis has been the most impressive so far. Very well deserved, he will play 30 year younger co-leader Andrey Vovk on first board tomorrow.

First seeded GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) playing white against 15th seeded and 15 year old Lucas RANALDI (2140) was a Goliath versus David battle.

Onlookers on internet for some time probably wondered whether the colors somehow had been reversed. Armed with the better preparation Ranaldi played 14 moves in eleven minutes, and reached an unbalanced Benoni position in which black’s b-file control combined with his fianchetto bishop on g7 gave him a promising position.

Both players spent much time for the next moves, but the 2600-GM unexpectedly became the one to lose control on the pieces. 21.Qd2? was a positional mistake which black immediately punished with 21.--- Nba4!. Then 22.Ne3?? was an outright tactical blunder: Postny (according to Postny) immediately after releasing the knight realized that 22.--- Rxb2! 23.Rxb2 Bxc3 with 24.--- Bxb2 now would win a full piece for black!

Ranaldi (according to Ranaldi) never considered the Rxb2-idea, and after only one minute went for 22.—Na4xc3? with “only” a clear advantage. Postny’s pains were no way cured by surviving this shock, as black later had first a strong positional pressure and then a pawn up. While Postny slowly recovered, Ranaldi gradually lost control while running short of time. Black completed his move 40 with six seconds left on the clock, but 40.--- Rf8? was a passive move allowing white to win a pawn and finally take over the advantage on the board.

Instead of defending a pawn down, Ranaldi afterwards sacrificed his bishop for white’s two last pawns – leaving only rook and knight versus rook and h-pawn. This of course should be a draw, but as Ranaldi continued to use a lot of time, Postny of course continued to wait for a mistake.

As white finally took the h-pawn at move 83, the final countdown started both on the clock and the board. Black had six and a half minute left on the clock, and needed to survive until move 133 to claim a draw by the 50 moves rule.

Although white had driven the king to b8, the position still was possible to defend when black at move 120, with one minute left on the clock, blundered and stumbled into a mate in three.

Postny landed on the right foot also in his game number 20 at Fagernes, but really came close to

losing today. Rinaldi apparently handled this bitter six hours loss very well, and although dissatisfied with this game result he can be proud of his play so far.



As Postny and Rinaldi left the playing venue after five hours and 35 minutes, IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) and GM Yuri VOVK (2626) still remained seated and deeply concentrated on the next board. Their game started with a Blumenfeld gambit, in which black reached balanced chances although white correctly turned down the gambit pawn with 5.Bg5.

Although his space advantage on the queenside was not much worth, black with a pair of bishops and a nice knight outpost on d4 probably was better in most of the middle game. Black would have reached a clear advantage if exchanging queens at move 35, but as black's queen instead ran away white's queen could start to create counterattack on the kingside. As black was a pawn up with the more airy king, players continued to dance around on the edge in the fifth hour. White overlooked that black got a very promising exchange sacrifice on d4 after 47 moves - but so did black.

Finally having won back the pawn, white was slightly better with queen, bishop and four pawns on each side after 60 moves. With opposite-colored bishops, two airy kings and many loose pawns, the position however remained very demanding to handle for both players. White had four minutes against ten minutes for black, but still played on for a win with 64.Bh3!?, instead of 64.Qh3 with a queen exchange and a given draw. As black defended excellently, white with two minutes left had to find the bishop sacrifice 67.Bf5+! to force a draw. Instead he lost it all in one move with 67.Qc6+?!, overlooking that white had to give up his queen after the killing countercheck 67... Bf6+!...

Urkedal very understandably looked very frustrated after this six-hour loss, but due to the strength of this field 0.5/2 no way rule out a GM-norm.

Yuri Vovk on the other hand looked remarkably unshaken, and at 1.5/2 he is back on track for a top three prize.

If anyone expected a quiet game between Norwegian IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) and Norwegian GM Torbjørn RINGDAL HANSEN (2472), they were totally wrong (and hopefully not too disappointed). It all started as a rare Nimzovich opening with 1.d4 Nc6 2.d5 Ne5 3.Nf3 Nxf3+ 4.exf3.

Both players used a lot of time from move five, and although white had more space he also had an awkward king on f1.

Sacrificing a piece for two pawns to open up the kingside in this situation was a natural idea for black. His plan turned out to be sacrificing an extra rook to hunt the white king around in the middle of an open board.

Always enjoying an invitation for a tactical party, Getz went out of a repetition and placed his king in a provocative position at e4 in move 21. Although playing a rook and bishop down black played on for a win, and kept a winning attack after white pulled the emergency brake by sacrificing back his queen.

Having eight minutes left for 12 moves in a still extremely complex position, black suddenly collapsed and went first from winning position to chaos with 29.--- h5?, then from chaos to trouble with 30.--- Qxf6?, and then from trouble to immediate bankruptcy with 31.--- Qxb2?.

Although having less than three minutes on his clock, Getz efficiently completed the attack with his rooks and bishops. Meaning in short that Getz with 1.5/2 against an average around 2550 looks like a GM norm candidate.

Ringdal Hansen on the other hand made a dramatic try to accelerate his tournament, but instead lost speed and some more ELO-points. Fortunately, losing some more ELO points is no longer a disaster for Torbjørn, as he earlier this year won the final points and got his well deserved GM title.

The teenage duel between Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168) and FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) started as a Scotch in which black first appeared perfectly fine. 10.--- Nd5?! followed by Nxe3 however was a positionally strange decision, after which white's open f-file and strong knight on e4 gave him pleasant pressure. As white played too slowly the next moves, black could still consolidate and reached a tense hanging pawns position.



The position remained in loaded balance into an endgame with two rooks, knight and four pawns on each side.

With a knight on e6 and active rooks in the c-file white apparently had an initiative around move 35. Black however had enough counterplay against white's key pawn on d5, and soon got a clear advantage as white just before move 40 lost the pawn.

The endgame without the d5-pawn was a nightmare as best from a white point of view, and Kaasen soon stumbled into a decisive a-file pin. Interesting games but still pole out for Kaasen – somewhat shaky play, but still a satisfying result so far for Mihajlov.

The teenage duel between Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) and Edit MACHLIK (2034) started as a Bogó-Indian opening in which something soon went seriously wrong for black – as white with more space and a pair of bishops got a very pleasant advantage.

White instructively increased the pressure with an e4-e5 advance in the early middle game. Merkesvik however (again) used enormous amounts of time, and playing 19.g4? he invited black back to the party with a tactical 19.--- Nxf4!.

White's creative idea turned out to be sacrificing a rook on f7 two moves later on. It did work out as black used 14 of her remaining 26 minutes and then ran into a killing attack by 21.--- Kxf7 – while the ice cold exNd4 would have left a balanced and complex position with an extra pawn for black.

Merkesvik coolly left the board with four minutes left for 16 moves, but then was winning on attack and material. The rest was exciting primarily because both players ran seriously short of time. With less than 20 seconds left on both clocks, black blundered a rook and stopped the clock after 38 moves.

Last but not least exciting, the game between Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) and WGM Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) started as a Caro-Kann advance. Black's plan with 5... Bxb1?! and 6... dxc4?! looked dubious and almost certainly was, as white within a few moves got a promising initiative due to his pair of bishops and center.

White soon started opening up the position against black king, and could have got a winning attack with a tactical 18.e6!. White missed that chance and instead gave black some counterplay, as he for still mysterious reasons allowed black to play 23... gxf2+ instead of just taking back the pawn with 23.fxc3. Due to white's open king, black despite an exchange less probably would have had a clear advantage after the simple 26... Rxc8!.

The game continuation with 26... Qg1+? 27.Ke2 Nf4+? 28.Kd2 f1N+ looked elegant, but in reality only helped white to activate his pieces for an(other) attack. Within a few moves black was forced to exchange queens to save her king, and the following endgame with two rooks and three versus rook, knight and three was totally winning for white.

13 year old Nordquelle continues his progress from this autumn against strong opponents at Fagernes, while Gutsko's bad year still continues in her first Norwegian tournament.

Elo-group

In short: Three out of the top rated players won their games in the open group – although two out of those three were in serious danger of losing. The exception was top rated FM Ward Al-Tarbosh, lagging half a point behind his main competitors after an expected but still unnecessary draw.

First board meeting between Alseit KIZATBAY (1905) and FM Ward Al-TARBOSH (2204) made a promising start for black. The queens true enough left early, but black after a 13 moves Slav opening duel came half an hour ahead on the clock and slightly ahead on the board.

Although sound, 14... Nd5?! however was an unambitious move, exchanging further down to a very balanced rook and bishop endgame. The endgame with rook and two pawns versus rook and two pawns after 40 moves was expected to be drawn within a few more moves – and indeed was. 41.Rb1?? still was a terribly passive move, leaving white more or less paralyzed after 41... Rb4! followed by 42... b2. Al-Tarbosh found the right winning plan, but then for some unknown reason left it – instead forcing a draw by exchanging his b2-pawn for the black h3-pawn.

Håkon BENTSEN (2037) - Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893) on board 2 was a somewhat unconventional Sicilian line with 2... a6 and 3... e6, resulting in a rather conventional position in which white's pressure against the d6-pawn gave him a slight plus. White appeared to have a clear advantage as black played 22... dxc5?, allowing white to establish a passed pawn with 23.Nd5 Nxd5 23.exd5. The very talented twelve year old Robertsen however got some counterplay on the kingside, and creatively sacrificed a pawn on b7 to get a strong initiative in a still dangerous position with queen, rook, bishop and six pawns on each side.

Having regained the disturbing pawn at d6, black after 35 moves had a pleasant pressure for more or less no risk. But then Robertsen suddenly lost his concentration completely, first giving away the advantage as he did exchange bishops and then blundering a mate in one at g7 as he did NOT

exchange rooks... Not having played tournament chess since last Fagernes tournament in the easter holiday, Bentsen appears somewhat rusty – but still he is obviously an efficient heavyweight boxer in this field.



Abyl KIZATBAY (1877) and Stein Tholo BJØRNSSEN (2019) meanwhile started with a closed Sicilian line, in which black reached a pleasant position from the opening.

15.--- a4? however was much too careless as Abyl could – and did – shake up the board with a creative tactical idea: 16.g4! Nxh4 17.Nxh4 Qxh4 18.Nf6+! Bxf6 19.Bg3 – trapping the black queen!

Stein still got one bishop, one knight and two pawns for the queen. Probably disappointed by not getting more out of

such an elegant queen capture, 12 year old Abyl failed to find any good plan afterwards – and so an awake Stein could start a dangerous queenside attack without much of a risk. The game was definitely decided as white just after 40 moves blundered his bishop in the rook and bishop endgame, but then black was anyway winning. Blind but still optimist Stein admitted being in trouble today, but stayed at 100 % in this tournament – and prolonged his long streak of undefeated tournament games. It will be very exciting to follow his next test as white against Big Bentsen.

Tor Wetle HOEM (2004) and Olav ERIKSTAD (1821) started up with a Queen's pawn opening, in which white got a slight initiative. 11.--- Nxe5? still was unnecessary panic from black, as white with one piece for two pawns suddenly was more or less winning.

Hoem instructively used the extra piece to start a decisive kingside attack, and joined the small 2/2 club after his second very convincing win. (Some red marks from the computers towards the end of this game are nothing but nonsense and no understanding, as the position was totally winning anyway and Tor Wetle's moves won just as safely as the computer "improvements".)

Lars-Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) and Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997) started up with an Anti-Meran Semi-Slav line, in which black placed his bishop slightly inaccurately at e7 instead of d6. White without showing any kind of respect started a bayonet attack on the kingside with g4-g5 AND grabbed space on the queenside with c5.

As white also had a strong knight on e5, his initiative in the middle game looked very dangerous, and his position was reported winning after he cashed in an exchange by a tactical 29.Sf7+. Kai-Roger however fought on brilliantly for a virtually blind player in a virtually lost position, and in the fifth hour got the necessary help to create counterplay against white's king. About to run short of time with a somewhat shaky king position, Lars Erik after 60 moves sacrificed a piece to exchange off the queens. Since white had a three to one majority on the queenside, the remaining endgame still was not without risks for black.

As Kai-Roger continued to defend well and as Lars-Erik ran all the more short of minutes, he after 73 moves neatly pulled the emergency brake and forced the draw by sacrificing an exchange to kill the last enemy pawn.

15 year old Håkon MYRHEIM (1595) and 12 year old Isak SJØBERG (1963) meanwhile discussed a Scotch opening line, which first looked about balanced after three sets of minor pieces were exchanged. White's try for a pawn storm on the kingside however turned out to weaken his own king much more than black's, and an inspired Isak instructively demonstrated how opposite-colored bishops can give a decisive attack. After 26 moves black won an exchange without losing his attack, and the remaining nine moves were not too exciting.

11 year old Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) and 77 year old Sturle HÅNES (1214) today played a long, exciting and tense game, starting up as Caro-Kann Panno line. The isolated pawn position first appeared about balanced, but white gradually came better as black helped him to build up a strong center. The endgame with rook, knight and six pawns on each side probably still should have been a draw, but white definitely was better and probably had a winning position after he broke up the black queenside with a4. In the fifth hour Jens impressed with accurate calculations, transforming an extra pawn in the rook endgame into a won pawn endgame.

Ida LANDSVERK (1377) versus Afras MANSOOR (1709) was a Caro-Kann line in which black greedy snatched a pawn at d4 in move 7. White got some compensation due to her better development, and after black felt forced to return the pawn, the endgame with rook, bishop and six pawns on each side looked drawish. While Afras methodically activated his pieces, Ida chose a misunderstood defence plan when placing her queenside pawns on the dark squares. Black after winning both pawns so could overcome both his opponent and the opposite-colored bishop problem.

Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) and Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) started up with an interesting Scandinavian opening, which took a tragic turn as 13 year old Mats too fast played the positionally natural 7.d3?? – overlooking that 7... Bb4! captured the queen on c3 and the king on e1 in the same diagonal... Having won a queen for a piece before ten moves, Lars Martin in an inspired mood went on to win the game by mate before 20.

Amalie MERKESVIK (1600) and Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) entered the feared and celebrated Sicilian Dragon variation, but white then slowed it down by castling short. Black got a pleasant position due to his pair of bishops and play on the dark squares, as he was allowed to play Ng4 and exchange white's key bishop on e3 within a few moves after the opening.

Amalie again made many reasonable moves today, and her position was well worth fighting for until she blundered an exchange with a too loose 19.b4?. But later black was safely in charge of this game, and Leif Edwin completed a good game by returning the exchange to let his passed d-pawn decide within 30 moves.

The tournament's youngest player, ten year old Ariza Hina (1364), today was unlucky to get a walk over win. But do not worry. Ariza, together with all other participants in this very mixed and still very friendly open group, will be back for two more exciting rounds tomorrow...

And strangely it seems that "tomorrow" at this stage of the round report writing already means "today"!