



## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 4



### GM-group

Five decided games out of nine is a majority, and should qualify as promising in the second half of a double round. As three out of the top four boards were drawn, this rounds obvious winner was top rated GM Evgeny Postny – suddenly sharing the lead with the Vovk brothers after winning a messy game as white against GM Igor Rausis.



No one looked very surprised (or very angry) when the first board meeting between GM Andrey VOVK (2617) and GM Yuri VOVK (2626) ended with a peaceful draw after eleven moves.

The players are of even strength, from the same country and from the same parents. Today they also were roommates having to play each other in the second part of a double round. Both obviously can be well satisfied to

have reached 3.0/4 and be done with their internal meeting as well as with the double round. The opening by the way was an unambitious French Exchange line and the final position very equal.



GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) versus GM Igor RAUSIS (2600) started as an Accepted Queen's Gambit, in which white played for a win with 3.e4!?. As black played a little inaccurately white had first the better piece development, and then after 13.Bxh6 gxh6 the better pawn structure. The position was not without dangers for white, as black had two powerful bishops and controlled the e-file. Postny had

only 15 minutes left on the clock after 21 moves, but although a pawn down he by then had reached a much better and less risky position. 30.--- Qe5! instead of 30.--- Qf4? probably would have been the last try for black in this game, as he now after 31.Rd4! soon drifted into a decisive attack.

Rausis is down at +1 but still in the run after his promising start. Postny on the other hand has never lost a game at Fagernes, and at 3.0/4 he now shares first place.

Why GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) is always short of time before move 40 might have been illustrated today, as he arrived in time but then spent some nine minutes finding his first move. The move was 1.e4, and as GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607) answered with 1...c6, white gradually decided to go for 2.d3 3.Qe2 and 4.f4.

Black first appeared perfectly fine, but white still came better as 13...cxd4?! 14.Nfxd4 helped him to activate his pieces.

18...Nxd4?! too might have been a mistake, as white increased his initiative further after 19.Nxd4. With both players having only about ten minutes left for 21 moves, Prohaszka threw out a flashy 19...Nb3+ and offered a draw – which was accepted. A sudden end to a mysterious game means Prohaszka is still struggling to win games this tournament, while Pavlovic still is completely unpredictable. Both the highly capable GMs are lurking in the crowd at +1 after round four.



FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) as white against GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) first went for a patient Grünfeld-Indian fianchetto, but then suddenly accelerated it with 11.e4!?

The resulting isolated pawn position probably was about in balance, but white came slightly better as black with 21...Nxe3?! helped him to repair his pawn structure.

26...Rf5? instead of just 26...Rxf1 reportedly was another mistake, after which black's situation with 15 minutes left for eleven minutes was considered critical. Mihajlov did not want to run any risks this afternoon, but still landed a pawn up in the rook endgame, and could have had chances to win the game if pushing his a- and b-pawn immediately.

As he continued too carefully, Antal within a few moves after 40 could exchange his h-pawn for the white b-pawn and force a draw. Draw against a GM of course still brings 16 year old Sebastian Mihajlov one step closer to his first IM-norm.

GM Matthew TURNER (2493) as white against IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) followed the strategy of Antal from last round, and made a safe positional start with 1.Nf3 and 2.g3. As white played d4 some moves later the opening ended up like some kind of Catalan relative, in which white kept a slight initiative after the c- and d-pawns disappeared.

Forcing the queens off board with 24...Qc4?! might have been inaccurate, as black got a new pawn weakness at c4. The rooks and bishop endgame still looked only nominally better for white. As black at move 30 offered a bishop exchange and a draw simultaneously, white decide to refuse the draw offer and accept the bishop exchange.

Although white succeeded opening up the position, black had activated his pair of rooks and looked safe after move 40. That was however before he much too fast blundered by 41...Rc3-c2?!, overlooking 42.Rd4! with the cunning and decisive mating threat 43.g4+!...

Unable to find an escape for his king and unwilling to sacrifice his rook, Getz went mate four moves later on. Turner despite a jumpy first half is still in this race at 2.5/4, while Getz after his black double puncture today probably is out of order as a GM norm candidate.

Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) and GM Torbjørn RINGDAL HANSEN (2472) started up with a Caro-Kann Advance position, in which white greedily grabbed a pawn on c5. Black first got sufficient counterplay and then won back the pawn on h4 with advantage. Nordquelle for a long time played better than the GM in the middle game, and recovered from an inferior position to equal chances in a tight battle with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns against queen, two bishops and six pawns. That was however before white became much too optimistic with 33.Nxc6?. Taking that pawn, white overlooked and/or underestimated 33... Bh4! – winning a piece as 34.Bxh4 failed to Qxg2 mate...

As in the game between Turner and Getz, the GM made the more efficient use of his chances and won well deserved in the end.

16 year old Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) and 15 year old Lucas RANALDI (2140) started up with a Queen's Indian Fianchetto. Ranaldi again was successful with his opening preparation, as black was slightly better in the early middle game. A tense and rather closed struggle followed, as white established a stronghold on d5 and black one at d4.

Ranaldi again spent too much time in the middle game, again reached 40 moves with the margin of a few seconds, but again found himself under pressure on the board after the time control.

42... b5?! was a somewhat mysterious pawn sacrifice, but black due to opposite-colored bishops still had fair drawing chances with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns versus queen, rook, bishop and six pawns. Merkesvik in an inspired mood continued to play for a win, and succeeded as Ranaldi in the sixth hour gave up his queenside to go for a non-existing counterattack on the kingside.

The game lasted five hours and 58 minutes as Ranaldi used all his time searching for good moves that did not exist, while Merkesvik waited until he was short of time as well before starting to demonstrate his good moves. Although having only one minute left in the end white was now safely in charge, and black finally resigned as a third queen entered the board after 65 moves.

Merkesvik following this win still is in the run for an IM-norm.



Having played chess for nearly 18 hours without winning any game during the first three rounds, IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) looked very determined both to make it shorter and to win as white in the fourth round against Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168).

Following an apparently modest start with 5.Nf3 and 6.h3 in a King's Indian, white soon accelerated with g4 and went for an all-out kingside attack. It worked out very well as Kaasen failed to find any good defence plan,

and instead helpfully opened the g-file. White for some mysterious reason played the winning 24.Bd4?! instead of the crushing 24.Bh6!, but still landed safely in a totally won rook and bishop endgame before 30 moves.

Despite his two pole outs in the opening rounds, Urkedal following this inspired win will get one more chance for a GM-norm.



WGM Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) versus Edit MACHLIK (2034) was the first woman duel of this GM-group – and unfortunately also for sure the last one...

It started with a long Caro-Kann main line, in which white still looked slightly better after exchanging three sets of minor pieces. Black with her counterplay against the white pawn on d4 in turn looked perfectly healthy after having exchanged the disturbing white knight on e5 too.

During Machlik's obligatory time shortage Gutsko suddenly got one chance to establish a clear advantage in the queen and rook endgame. But as she missed her chance to play 33.g5!, Machlik despite time shortage walked confidently into a drawn rook endgame.

Gutsko improved her play today but still fails to make plus results out of her games, and will definitely not be any IM-norm candidate this tournament.

Machlik after drawing two higher rated opponents today can still hope for a WIM-norm, but 2.5/5 in the second half of this strong field still is much to ask for.

## Elo-group

In the Open, tonight's drama was a shaky top meeting between Håkon Bentsen and FM Ward Al-Tarbosch, in which Bentsen succeeded to win a probably lost endgame. Second seeded Bentsen following this is sharing the lead with blind Stein Tholo Bjørnsen, after Bjørnsen today won very convincing as black against Tor Wetle Hoem. Bentsen and Bjørnsen at 3,5/4 still are only half a point ahead of four players, including three young stars below age 14. The double round became extraordinary hard fought in the Open group, as no game was drawn in a kicking round four.



First board today witnessed the key game between second seeded Håkon BENTSEN (2037) and first seeded FM Ward AL-TARBOSH (2204).

Black first was fine from this French Tarrasch duel, but 17.--- Bxe5?! probably was a mistake. As white failed to make any use of his new attacking pawn at e5, black could regroup to establish a promising attack against the pawn. After the e5-pawn was lost, the endgame with queen, bishop

and four pawns versus queen, knight and five pawns was in the borderline area between draw and win for black.

Having more than half an hour left on the clock for two moves, Al-Tarbosh shockingly spent only one minute before inviting to a tricky queen exchange with 39.--- Qa4?? – missing first that 40.Qe2?! now would assure white a perpetual check, and second that 40.axNb6! Qxd1 41.b7 and 48.b8Q turned the trick and won a piece for white! Bentsen preferred the piece win, and went on to win the endgame without many problems.

If you consider chess a game of luck, then Bentsen at 3.5/4 definitely is the lucky man of this group so far (he himself considered his score to be about one point better than his play so far). But chess is not a game of luck, and while Al-Tarbosh remains Mr Unpredictable, Bentsen remains Mr Efficient – so far...



Tor Wetle HOEM (2004) as white on board two somehow still appeared shaky after his blunder from last round, and played too tame as white in a Queen's Pawn Opening against Stein Tholo BJØRNSEN (2019). Given a pair of bishops and a pawn on e4, black soon took over the initiative, and white anyway was a pawn down with a difficult position when he stumbled into more problems and resigned after only 27 moves.

The double round became a double disappointment for so far so good Tor Wetle, but 50 year old Stein's ability to improve his chess without being able to see his positions truly is amazing (as well as inspiring).

Abyl KIZATBAY (1877) and Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997) discussed a Classical Sicilian Najdorf line, in which white is allowed to play e5 with a space advantage.

Having placed his knight on d6 in a position with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side, white apparently had the better chances when he offered

a draw at move 30. Black refused, but probably soon regretted that decision as white a few moves later found his way to a much better knight endgame.

Remarkably gifted from a tactical point of view, twelve year old Abyl neatly decided the game by sacrificing his knight to escort in the b-pawn with his king. Kai-Roger pushed it too far today, but his will to win still is amazing.



Lars Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) versus Isak SJØBERG (1963) started with a closed Ruy Lopez opening in which white came somewhat better, but black looked fine after the passive 15.Nf5-e3?!

Black later realized f5 and took over initiative, but the position remained roughly balanced until white left track with a strange 30.Bb1?. That mistake turned out to be the beginning of an all the more accelerated tactical fall, as Sjøberg within ten moves was a rook up with an overwhelming position.

Brobakken's collapse was disappointing, but twelve year old Sjøberg despite his late arrival definitely is an outsider to watch out for. Tomorrow he will get his chance on the first board, as black against Bentsen.

18 year old Alseit KIZATBAY (1905) and 12 year old Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893) produced the probably most entertaining game of today. It all started as a wild Slav duel, in which black became too greedy when snatching a rook on h1 with his queen in move nine. Four moves and some mistakes later, white would have had a crushing attack on black's king if checking with 13.Bf4+! instead of 13.Nb5+??.

As white checked on b5, and failed to repair by checking on c3 the next move, black's king could escape via e4 to f5 – after which black about a ton of material up suddenly was winning.

Robertsen played very well in the second half of this game, and forced the end after 23 moves, as white to avoid mate would have to give up his queen as well. It will be very exciting to follow creative Robertsen in the upcoming rounds – including his fifth round game against Stein Tholo Bjørnsen.

Håkon Abeland MYRHEIM (1595) versus Olav ERIKSTAD (1821) was another Caro-Kann Advance duel. Black greedy snatched an exchange for a bishop and pawn just after the opening.

Although white probably had enough compensation in the middle game he failed to make any use of it, leaving an endgame in which white's rook and bishop was unable to compete with black's active rooks.

Two long wins for Erikstad in the double round means he at 3.0/4 also is a challenger for the top prizes, and will get another try with white against Abyl Kizatbay tomorrow.



Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) and Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) chose a Sicilian Dragon as their weapon today.

White after castling long demonstrated the better touch with this very dynamic position, and won two pawns with the more dangerous attack.

Black still was inside the game until he at move 19 blundered a piece with 19.--- Qxd5?, overlooking 20.Bd4xf6 Qd5xd2 21.Bxg7+...

Eleven year old Jens after this inspired win should neither be forgotten on the list of possible challengers.

Eleven year old Afras MANSOOR (1709) and 13 year old Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) meanwhile investigated a rather creative Trompovsky line. The game was more or less decided after 20 moves, as Mats hesitated too long getting his king out of the center, and lost a piece to an e-file pin. Afras, a very solid and patient player for his age, later had no problems winning the endgame.



Lillehammer player Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) as black against Ariza HINA (1364) gave his Scandinavian opening another try. Black snatched a pawn at d4 in the opening and defended it all the way into the rook endgame, although white had a threatening initiative for some moves in the middle game. The rook endgame still could have given some drawing chances. Ten year old

Ariza however ended up with another honest loss as she again became too impatient, and without any protests exchanged further down to a hopeless pawn endgame.

Finally the game between 13 year old Amalie Isabel MERKESVIK (1600) and 77 year old Sturle HÅNES (1214) today was a lively Italian opening, in which white after the opening was a pawn up with a more or less won position. Amalie temporarily lost her concentration and invited black into the game again as she unnecessary returned the pawn, but woke up in time to pick up two more pawns before the endgame. Amalie following a slow start had an excellent double round, while Sturle as the oldest player in the tournament looked a little tired tonight.

And not to forget, Ida Landsverk (1377) had to take the walk over this round. Hopefully, second part of the double round neither is the worst round to miss. The Open group will be back for round five within a few hours – when six players found within half a point will face each other at the three top boards...