



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 5



GM-group

Round five became another hard-fought one in this remarkable GM-group, as eight out of nine games got a winner! Top seeded Israeli GM Evgeny Postny further strengthened his hand as he won a five-hour battle as black against second seeded Ukraine GM Yuri Vovk.

Postny now leads alone, as the only drawn game was the second board meeting between GM Peter Prohaszka and GM Andrey Vovk. In two other Grandmaster meetings, Igor Rausis however succeeded squeezing Matthew Turner, while Milos Pavlovic more or less crushed apparently solid Gergely Antal.

Following this Postny at 4.0/5 still is only half a point ahead of Andrey Vovk, Rausis and Pavlovic on a shared second place. Four more exciting Grandmaster meetings are coming up for round six, as the top boards will be Postny-Pavlovic, Andrey Vovk-Ringdal Hansen, Yuri Vovk-Rausis, Prohaszka-Urkedal and Turner-Antal.

The key game between second seeded GM Yuri VOVK (2626) and first seeded GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) made a modest start with a closed Ruy Lopez line. First it was about equal, then white with more space and two bishops looked slightly better. But then Postny demonstrated much better understanding of this position. While white's space advantage in the center made no practical difference, black gradually activated his knights and started a queenside attack.



As white had queen, rook, bishop and six pawns against queen, rook, knight and six pawns without any obvious weaknesses, he still had excellent drawing chances after 40 moves.

41.Be2?? however was a fatal blunder on this level, as white after 41.--- Qb3 suddenly was unable to keep his position together.

Later Postny probably could have won faster than he did, but his road was a very safe one as black's passed a-pawn soon decided after white lost his b2-pawn.

This unexpected collapse from Yuri Vovk means Postny is now alone in pole position at 4.0/5, with excellent chances to improve his Fagernes scoreboard (and his bank account) further.



The second board between GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607) and GM Andrei VOVK (2617) was a Torre, which somewhat disappointingly was drawn by a repetition after only 14 moves.

Andrei Vovk at +2 seems satisfied not to lose with black. Prohaszka at +1 is hardly satisfied to continue drawing as white, and apologized his tame play to the organizer after this game. The young Hungarian GM instead demonstrated his

capacity some hours after the game, as he shared first prize in the blitz tournament.



GM Igor RAUSIS (2600) and GM Matthew TURNER (2493) meanwhile tested an unusual Sicilian in which black played 2...g6 and white 4.Qxd4.

Something went wrong for black, as the d-file and pair of bishops this time gave Rausis a pleasant pressure after an early queen exchange. White seemed close to winning as he intervened on the seventh rank with 21.Rd7. Later white played a little bit too carefully, and so the endgame with rook,

bishop and four versus rook, knight and four looked drawish. Rausis however played on for a win and got his reward, as Turner (in turn) became too passive in between move 30 and 40.

The endgame with rook, bishop and three kingside pawns versus rook, knight and a-pawn later was winning for white, and in the end Rausis apparently had no problems demonstrating a win with rook, light squared bishop and h-pawn versus rook.

Rausis is back on track half a point behind Postny after this win, while Turner instead won some money by sharing first place in the blitz tournament (with Prohaszka, yes, good guess!).



GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) and GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) started up with a Sicilian Taimanov opening, leading to a Maroczy set up. White's situation appeared promising as he had more space on the board and some 40 minutes more on the clock in the middle game.

Obviously well known with the position black however proved able to realize the powerful d5-break, and he suddenly had a promising attack coming up in the a8-h1

diagonal, as white was helpful to open it for the black pieces.

The weakening 31.f4? might have been the decisive mistake, as black later got a killing attack. Both players made some inaccuracies during moderate time pressure, but black was winning all the time and white stopped the clock after 37 moves as he was about to lose heavy material.



The Norwegian duel between IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) and FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) was a key game for the norm chances of both players. It started as a Slav opening line, in which play circled around white's isolated pawn at d4. With control over the d5-square black had a solid position, but white's pair of bishops still gave him an irritating initiative. Following some tactical exchanges the players just before 40 moves reached a drawish rook endgame, but white still had a

very slight edge due to his better pawn structure.

Black should have been able to save the rook endgame with only three pawns left on each side, but probably made the decisive mistake as he went for active counterplay with 50.--- Rh1? instead of exchanging one more pawn with 50.--- f5!.

In the following race with one rook and one pawn on each side, black's plan was to sacrifice his rook on the white a-pawn, and then scrape a draw with king and g-pawn against rook and king on a7. It seems however that this long race was lost with the bitter margin of one tempo, and white's win became obvious to everyone (including Mihajlov, who stopped the clock in the very next move) after black wasted another tempo with 57.--- Kf6?.

Urkedal desperately needed this win to keep his GM norm hopes alive. While Mihajlov afterwards first looked a bit desperate, but then realized that he despite this loss is still in the run for an IM-norm.

GM Torbjørn RINGDAL HANSEN (2472) as white against Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) made a modest start with an English fianchetto, but then suddenly accelerated on the kingside with h4-h5 instead of castling.

Under unexpected pressure black blundered when playing 14.--- fxg6? instead of 14.--- Qxg6!, as white with 15.Qxc5 won a pawn with an ongoing attack. Still confused black continued with 15.--- h6?, somehow overlooking that white could hit on with 16.Qxe7! instead of withdrawing his knight from g5.

1-0 came on board after only 20 moves, as white was winning overwhelmingly on mate and material. Having nearly one hour left when he stopped the clock, unpredictable Merkesvik for a change played too fast today. Chess artist Ringdal Hansen during his dinner was very well satisfied for having won a game without moving his d-, e- or f-pawn – and still with his king stuck on e1.



Anastasia Gutsko

IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) versus WGM Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) started with a Queen's Indian fianchetto, which for the first ten moves appeared sound for black. But then black suddenly became too eager to exchange off her bishops and create double pawns for white, underestimating white's initiative in the remaining position with queen, two rooks, bishop and seven pawns versus queen, two rooks, knight and seven pawns.

White's activity proved much more important than his inferior pawn structure, and black's position looked critical as white in move 25 intervened on the seventh rank with Rb7.

Gutsko defended stubbornly with her back against the first rank, and got the necessary help to reactivate her pieces as white missed a more or less winning 35.f5!. Getz however kept up the pressure in the fifth hour, and Gutsko anyway was about to fall out of the board when she at move 51 in desperation gave up her queen for rook and bishop. The rest was just cramps, as white's queen could escort in his passed a-pawn.

Still ups between downs for Getz – and still downs without any ups for Gutsko.



The Norwegian teenager duel between 18 year old Edit MACHLIK (2034) and 13 year old Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) made a fresh start, as Machlik gave her aggressive Four Pawns line another chance against black's Benoni.

17.--- f5? although a thematic plan for counterplay proved dubious in this position, as white could (and did) reply 18.e5! with a strong initiative.

Later white should have saved the bishop

with 19.Bb3! instead of 19.b3?, but still white's center pawns and active pieces were about to become threatening when black ruined his kingside in one move with 20.--- g5?.

White had a winning attack after the cool 21.Nxg5! > 22.Qh5. Variations still were complex and both players about to run short of time made some mistakes later on. Still the position was winning or at least very much better for white all of the time.

As black missed the last chance to complicate with 29.--- f4!, white despite time trouble efficiently completed the win after 35 moves.

Machlik is fully in the run for a WIM-norm after this win, while Nordquelle should know this dangerous opening line better before playing it again as black.

13 year old Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168) and 15 year old Lucas RANALDI (2140) started their duel with a Sicilian Najdorf line, which looked roughly balanced until black played 17.--- Nf8? – allowing 18.f5! with a strong attack. Instead 18.Ncxb5?! was a thematic piece sacrifice black could not accept, but after 18.--- Qb6?! 19.Nc3? Bf6! black suddenly had got the more dangerous attack.

Later black played a pawn up with a strong initiative, but white succeeded keeping his position alive in the third and fourth hour. After queens were exchanged, black's passed e- and f-pawn gave him a decisive advantage.

At move 40 black decided the game by an instructive exchange sacrifice on d5, destroying white's knight to promote the pawns. Black's play later on true enough was not perfect, but the endgame with bishop and two pawns versus four pawns still was an easy win.

Still pole out almost every round for very talented Kaasen, while Ranaldi seems to continue his progress all the way out this year.

Elo-group

In short, round five in the Open group became a much better one for the established heavyweight master players than for the rising young stars. 50 year old Stein Bjørnsen just crushed 12 year old Bjørn Robertsen, while 36 year old Håkon Bentsen (again) landed on the right foot after a demanding five hours battle against 12 year old Isak Sjøberg.

Overall the big sharks now steam upwards in this group too, as first seeded FM Ward Al-Tarosh recovered from last round's shocking blunder with a sound working day win. The 13 year old attacking machine Abyl Kizatbay however gave himself the best birthday gift by winning another very tactical game, this time as black against 28 year old Olav Erikstad.

Top boards pairings for round six following this will be Bentsen versus Abyl Kizatbay and Al-Tarbosh versus Bjørnsen – and already look very exciting.

On the first board today Isak SJØBERG (1963) and Håkon BENTSEN (2037) discussed a Closed Ruy Lopez line, in which white came slightly better despite a slow set up with 5.Qe2, 6.Bb3 and 7.c3. When the position opened after 14.Bd5 Bxd5 15.exd5, both players considered white to be somewhat better.

Bentsen however came up with counterplay on the kingside, and after 25 moves black playing with f5 and e4 versus c4 and d5 had reached balanced chances in a double edged position.

Within the next ten moves the tide definitely turned as white failed to find any plan on the queenside, while black methodically increased the pressure on the kingside. Inviting a queen exchange with 38.Qe4! (instead of blundering material with 38.Ne4?) was the last chance for white in this game, although black's passed pawn at e3 then should be decisive anyway.

Bentsen still is critical of his own play, but probably his position never was much worse today – and his score of 4.5/5 definitely is nothing to be critical about.



Blind but still hard-hitting Stein Tholo BJØRNSSEN (2019) today went for 1.e4 and a straightforward Winawer line as white against the French defence of Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893).

White and his bishops established some pressure from the opening, but black still was in the game until he blundered a piece with 15.--- Lb5??. Probably still in shock

black blundered an exchange as well, and the remaining moves were not much to talk about – as white overlooked nothing, and efficiently used his extra rook to complete the attack.

Highly talented Robertsen obviously still is a bit uneven, while Bjørnsen still is rock solid and has increased his score to 4.5/5.

The third board game between Olav ERIKSTAD (1821) and Abyl KIZATBAY (1877) was a Sicilian Alapin which first appeared promising for white. As black played 11.--- dxe5, classical violent tactics with 12.Bxh7+! instead of the automatic 12.dxe5?! would have given white a very promising advantage. Instead white blundered with 14.Qc2?, allowing 14.--- Bxc3+! 15.Qxc3 Rxf4 with an extra pawn for black. Black instead played the more complicated 14.--- Nb4?! - winning an exchange, but inviting white in on h7 with some compensation.

During the following complications, white for some unknown reason remained a rather extreme opponent of castling. In the end he instead placed his king on e2, gave up the rook on h1, and so came a rook down in endgame after his own attack dried up. Abyl Kizatbay definitely is the go-kart of this group, and tonight can be congratulated for his 4.0/5 even more than for his thirteenth birthday!



FM Ward AL-TARBOSH (2204) and Lars Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) meanwhile discussed a Sicilian Kan line with 2.--- e6 and 3.--- a6. White chose a fianchetto set up, spent only 15 minutes for his first 20 moves, and came slightly better due to his pair of bishops. Black still was close to equal before 27.--- Ng4?, which turned out to be a creative but still dubious tactical hit.

White coolly cashed in two bishops for one rook, and won the endgame without too

many problems after black was helpful enough to exchange queens.

Top rated Al-Tarbosh at 3.5/5 is still a full point behind the first prize and has lost against Bentsen, but will get his chance against Stein Bjørnsen tomorrow.

Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) versus Tor Wetle HOEM (2004) started up with a Pirc opening – and an early queen exchange. White in the middle game then had some initiative due to his d-file possession and more active bishops.

Hoem however defended well, and the symmetric pawns voted for a draw in the endgame with rook, two bishops, knight and five pawns on each side. The endgame finally seemed to offer some chances around move 30-40, but then the rook and bishop endgame (probably for good reasons) suddenly was buried as a draw after 41 moves.



Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997) entered another long Slav duel as white against Amalie MERKESVIK (1600), and made his first 24 moves within 18 minutes.

As black defended patiently and well, white kept only a slight edge all the way into a knight endgame with five pawns on each side.

While watching this game, I concluded that 13 year old Amalie truly has improved her play much since her last start at Fagernes nine months ago.

Fifth seeded Kai-Roger, a very stubborn technician much enjoying to play with small advantages, in the end still managed to win a pawn and the game. And I am still impressed that Kai-Roger has succeeded keeping his playing strength more or less unchanged compared to 15 years ago, although he has in the meantime lost almost all of his eyesight.



Alseit Kizatbay

Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) versus Alseit KIZATBAY (1905) was a Sicilian Scheveningen line, possibly transposing into some kind of Classical Najdorf as black later played a6.

White according to the structure of this opening had some more space in the middle game and started a kingside attack, but the game became complex as black came up with some counterplay on the queenside.

Around move 25 black's attack apparently was the better one. Still Alseit lost the game within six more moves as he made the well known mistake of becoming too obsessed with his own attack – overlooking the dangers around his own king all until his opponent demonstrated on the board a mate in three with 30.Qf7+ Kh8 31.Qf8+ Rxf8 32.Rxf8...

Pole out for Alseit, but true enough Lars Martin deserved a tactical win today after his tactical loss yesterday. Curiously, his opponents in these two games were brothers, and Lars Martin lost to the younger brother while defeating the older.

Eleven year old Afras MANSOOR (1709) and 15 year old Håkon Abeland MYRHEIM (1595) investigated a Queen's Gambit Exchange line, in which white tries to build up his center with f3 and e4. Black succeeded exchanging white's light squared bishop for a knight, and looked perfectly fine after 17 moves.

While black started to lock in his own pair of bishops, white however found a direct attack after e4-e5 followed by f4-f5. Before 30 moves he smashed through on the kingside by placing a knight on h5 and a rook on f5 – despite black's pawn at g6...

I am very much an optimist about the long term perspectives for both players, after learning that this is Håkon's first full week tournament.



59 year old Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) and 10 year old Ariza HINA (1364) in a friendly but concentrated spirit played an interesting game for five hours today.

White after 9.c5 got some space advantage on the queenside after this Bogo-Indian opening, but black instructively hit back in the center with 10... e5.

After 22 moves and with three sets of minor pieces exchanged, chances still were about balanced. 23... a4? however proved overambitious, as the pawn went lost within three moves.

The game definitely looked over as Ariza a few moves later stumbled into a knight fork and lost an exchange as well. As Leif Edwin later became much too careful and slow, Ariza succeeded getting some counterplay against white's king, and after 50 moves won back the exchange.

The remaining queen endgame with two extra pawns true enough still was winning for white.

In short Leif Edwin probably had control for the last 40 moves of this game, but Ariza still demonstrated her talent.



Ida Landsverk

Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) and Ida LANDSVERK (1377) started up their game with a King's Indian Advance a la French, in which white play e5 with some attacking prospects on the kingside.

Ida not for no reason was critical about her own play today, as black did nothing while white built up a promising attack around move 10-15.

Still Mats played his by far best game of this tournament, and well deserved the piece he won after a tactical 16.Nf6+!.

Afterwards black to avoid mate had to exchange queens, and white had no problems winning a rooks and knight endgame in which he was the only one to have a knight...

The oldest player of the tournament, 77 year old Sturle HÅNES (1214), in vain had tried to request a walk over draw for round four after the pairings were published. He did not at all look angry when instead getting a walk over win in round five, and will be back for round six in a few hours...

Pictures: Tom Eriksen