



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 6



GM-group

Top rated GM Evgeny Postny was reportedly “totally lost” after 3 hours and 55 minutes today, but helped by opponent GM Milos Pavlovic’s clock he still won after 3 hours and 59 minutes... Postny after this dramatic game still leads alone, now with an outstanding performance close to 2800.

The most dangerous challenger seems to be third seeded GM Andrey Vovk of Ukraine, following half a point behind Postny after a more patient and less risky white win against GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen. Andrei’s brother, GM Yuri Vovk, failed to win despite an extra pawn against GM Igor Rausis – while GM Peter Prohaszka succeeded winning despite short time and bad position against still unlucky IM Frode Urkedal.

In short all this means that Postny at 5.0/6 is leading ahead of Andrey Vovk at 4.5 – and that the five present members of the 2600-club are placed 1-5 on the result list before the final three rounds. Norm chances I have to admit are not too good, as the only Norwegians not to lose today by the way were some of those playing against other Norwegians...



The top board GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) - GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) was a Classical King’s Indian duel with 6.h3 e5 7.d5, in which white came about one hour ahead on the clock and looked slightly better on the board after 12 moves.

Although having only eleven minutes left on the clock after 15 moves (!?!), Pavlovic during the next 20 moves demonstrated what a great understanding of chess he has got at his best.

While white got nowhere on the queenside, black started a highly dangerous kingside attack. Having half a minute left for twelve moves in a complex position he started making mistakes, but still was an exchange up with a winning attack after 32 moves.

Having ten seconds left for five moves, Pavlovic however blundered terribly as he four moves later left his successful kingside attack to create a queenside pin with 36.--- Bb5??. Although now short of time himself, Postny immediately hit back with 37.Qxg4! – attacking black's rooks on c8 and h3, and in one move turning the position from lost to winning. Pavlovic eventually lost on time while making his move 39, but then white was an exchange up and winning on the board too.

Postny following this resurgence still leads this tournament with half a point and remains undefeated at Fagernes after 24 games. Pavlovic still struggles to pass 2500 and is out of top five in this tournament – due to his strained relations with the chess clocks and despite his real chess strength.



On second board, Ukraine GM Andrey VOVK (2626) and Norwegian GM Torbjørn Ringdal HANSEN (2472) meanwhile investigated a closed and slow Italian line in which black got more space after 13.--- d5. White due to his pair of bishops still looked slightly better, but 16.Qb1?! was a slow move after which black looked fine. White gradually came ahead around move 25-35, as Andrey Vovk efficiently used his chances on the queenside when black

became too eager for a kingside attack.

As black's disrupted queenside pawns were about to fall, while white still had control on his kingside defence, white reached a winning position around move 35. Some mistakes later, black resigned a rook short after 46 moves.

Vovk now at +3 keeps his steady course for a money prize, while Hansen so far jumps in all different directions.



GM Yuri VOVK (2626) versus GM Igor RAUSIS (2600) was a heavyweight duel starting up with a Caro-Kann advance. Both players used much time on the clock from a rare opening line. White with 5.a3?! went slow on the board as well, but still came better after black became a little bit too busy with 7.--- f6?!. After the center opened, white due to his active bishops was clearly somewhat better. Black's position looked critical as white in

the middle game exchanged one of the bishops to win a pawn. Rausis probably playing a great defence game however proved able to walk around on the water all the way into an endgame with rook, bishop and two versus rook, bishop and three – in which black due to his active rook on b2 proved able to stop white's passed pawn at b7...

Both these 2600-GMs are in the fight for top three prizes, but now respectively 1.5 and 1.0 points behind still accelerating Postny.



Hungarian GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607) needed a win with white to increase his chances for top three, while Norwegian IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) needed a win with black to keep his GM-norm hopes alive. Urkedal's chances first looked much better, as Prohaszka continued his slow and shaky play during the first three hours. White played e4-e5 and got some space on the kingside in this Closed Catalan, but black had sufficient counterplay against e5

plus a queenside attack.

15.h4?! and 16.Ng5 was an overambitious pawn sacrifice from white, after which black came clearly ahead on board and clock. After 25 moves whites was a more or less sound pawn up, with 69 minutes against 17 on the clock.

28.--- R8b4? however was a misunderstood plan based upon a tactical misunderstanding. Prohaszka spent six of his remaining twelve minutes, but found the critical counterhit 29.Ng5!. Black in turn much too fast followed his plan with 29.--- Nxe5?? – realizing a little too late that white could sacrifice his queen. The following position with two rooks and knight versus queen and rook in fact was just winning for white, as he had much better coordinated pieces plus a much safer king... Probably still in shock Urkedal made another mistake in the first move after the combination, and a fast accelerating Prohoszka had no problems reaching the time control with an overwhelming position.

Remarkably, being short of time with a lost position turned out to be what Prohaszka needed finally to win a second game this tournament. Now at +2, he is again an obvious candidate for top three. Urkedal following this collapse unfortunately will need at least 3.5 out of 3 in the end to complete his GM-title this tournament...



GM Matthew TURNER (2493) versus GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) was another Caro-Kann Advance duel. Black played a bit too slow in this one, and came under an unpleasant pressure as white kept his center advantage and intervened on c7 with his queen after 20 moves. During the next ten moves white however found no more good plans, and instead became too helpful exchanging pieces.

Black following this escaped into a rook and bishop endgame in which white won a pawn, but due to the opposite-colored bishops still had no chance to win the game.

Draw (immediately) agreed upon white's offer after 37 moves, meaning both Turner and Antal remains in the crowd at 50 % score. If someone asked me who should be most satisfied about this game result, I would immediately answer "all the other GMs".



IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) as white against FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) chose an unusual Anti-Meran line with an early a3. Getting the time to develop and coordinate his pieces, black was close to equal from the opening.

After white realized 12.d5, 12.--- Bg4?! instead of just 12.--- cxd5 might have been inaccurate - as 13.dxc6 bxc6 14.h3 Bh5 15.g4 gave white something to play for on both sides of the board. White in turn might have been slightly inaccurate with 18.Nf5?!,

as Bxf5 19.exf5 e4! gave black thematic counterplay in the center.

The rest of this game looked a bit messy, and among onlookers it was a feeling that white after winning a pawn should have won this game somehow somewhere. Still later computer analyses this time (for a change) confirmed the players' feeling that it had been a very good game by both. When white was a pawn up his pawns were too scattered, and in the final queen endgame black's passed h-pawn arrived just in time.

Draw by repetition of checks after 52 moves means that both players are still above expected score. Mihajlov still is just behind schedule for an IM-norm, while Getz needed the win he did not get in this game to save any practical chances for a GM norm.



The teenager duel Lucas RANALDI (2140) - Edit MACHLIK (2034) appeared somewhat confusing from the opening. Ranaldi was much better on the board and did not have to fear any counterplay, but still played very slow and looked very concentrated, while Machlik played fast and looked relaxed. The explanation was that black, after playing an ambitious Dutch set up against a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line, spoiled all her own preparations as she accidentally took with the

knight instead of the bishop at c3 in move 8. After 9.bxc3 Be7 10.e4 black considered her position more or less lost, while Ranaldi looked around for ghosts and wondered what on earth black had planned now... Black in fact played a little bit too fast, as 14.--- Bg7? was another mistake giving white a strong attack with 15.h4!. Ranaldi on the other hand remained concentrated, and although running unnecessary short of time he completed the direct kingside attack with a decisive material win after 33 moves.

15 year old Ranaldi continued his progress all out in 2015, is unofficially close to 2200, and looks likely to pass 2300 in the new year. Curiously, although Machlik has only played two titleholders so far, the demand of meeting five titleholders to make a nine-round norm will not cause any problem, as she has now played all possible opponents without a title! Reaching a performance of 2250 on the other hand now demands at least 1.5/3 against the upcoming titleholders, and the first one will be GM Torbjørn Ringdal Hansen.

Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) versus Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) was another Norwegian duel between two very promising talents. In a somewhat unusual Catalan line, black went for tactical exchanges and probably was fine until 11.--- Bxb2?. White's pair of bishops then gave him a clear advantage for one move, until he played the too optimistic 13.Ba3? - overlooking or underestimating 13.--- Ba6! with more tactical exchanges to come.

The endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns versus rook, knight and five pawns a few moves later looked drawish. White's try to win it (if that was what he tried) backfired badly, as black suddenly got all the more active pieces.

13 year old Nordquelle after the opening played this game excellent, and after picking up two pawns around white's king he won safely in the knight versus bishop endgame.



WGM Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) and Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168) started up with a 3.Bb5+ Sicilian line. 9.--- Nc5 probably was dubious, but still worked out as 10.e5? only helped black opening the position for his pieces. Black following some more inaccuracies from white anyway was clearly better when white blundered with 18.Re4?, somehow missing that black could win an exchange and get an overwhelming position with 18.--- Nxc3!.

Kaasen in an inspired mood later had no problems forcing a won endgame well before 40 moves, and playing his by far best game today he can still make a plus result out of this. Gutsko on the other hand looked all the more depressed, and despite a good travel companion seems to have got a nightmare tournament.

Elo-group

Four draws among ten games in the Open group today, but the entertainment still was great as all of the draws were long and hard fought. One of them was the first board Bentsen – Kizatbay, in which Bentsen scraped a draw in the endgame after being much better in the opening and lost in the middle game.

The great winner of this round became Stein Bjørnsen, now leading alone at 5.5/6 – after he needed less than two hours to defeat top seeded FM Ward Al-Tarbosh with black!



In the first board game between Håkon BENTSEN (2037) and Abyl KIZATBAY (1877), both players soon slowed down after throwing out eleven moves in a positionally complex Sicilian line. White castled long, started a pawnstorm on the kingside and came better, as black's undeclared king on e8

was more exposed than the white one on b1.

White's try to open the kingside with 21.f4? however turned out to be a positional mistake, as black's bishop on g7 was transformed from a lame duck into an angry eagle. As black instructively activated his pieces during the next five moves, he was anyway much better when white made a tactical blunder with 26.Nc5?.

Black correctly sacrificed an exchange with 26.--- Rxc5!, but after 27.Bxc5 preferred to take back the exchange instead of winning a second piece for the rook with 27.--- Qc7!. Black still was a sound pawn up with the safer king, and came close to winning with queen, rook, bishop and six versus queen, rook, bishop and five.

Exchanging rooks was a mistake from black, as opposite-colored bishops combined with black's now airy king gave white excellent drawing chances. White in turn became too eager to exchange off queens, as the remaining endgame with three versus one pawn probably was winning for black – despite the opposite-colored bishops. After black unnecessary gave back one of the pawns, white at move 60 could sacrifice his bishops and claim a draw with lone king versus king, dark squared bishop and h-pawn...

This means Bentsen remains undefeated, but heavily underrated Kizatbay remains the sensation man and nightmare opponent in this group.



Stein Tholo BJØRNSSEN (2019) was excited to play a 2200-player for the first time, as he entered the ring against FM Ward AL-TARBOSH (2204). The game however lasted only one hour and did not become much of a critical test. Al-Tarbosh played way too fast in this closed Sicilian opening, and

black anyway was better when white played a much too optimistic 14.d4?? – overlooking a tactical 14.---Nxf3!. As white lost a pawn with an awkward position he was anyway in trouble. Al-Tarbosh still continued to throw out moves, while Bjørnsen took his time but coolly picked up two more pawns and then sacrificed an exchange to force a totally won endgame.

0-1 after 24 moves means Al-Tarbosh at 3.5/6 is more or less out of the fight for top two, while Bjørnsen at 5.5/6 finished the year without losing any tournament game and is now leading this tournament alone. Everyone is truly impressed by the 50 year old “bear”, having been the best player of this group with a performance of 2340 – and without being able to see any of his pieces any of the rounds...

Still of course three rounds to go, and another strong opponent coming up tomorrow.

Olav ERIKSTAD (1821) had another Sicilian Alapin duel today, this time as white against Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997).

The players opened the c-file and then castled long, leaving an open position in which black soon got the more active pieces.

While black's king watched it all from a shelter at b8, white's king on c1 for good reasons became all the more nervous.



The white king finally went mate on d2 after 31 moves – as black with instructive attacking chess opened the board for his machine gun bishops.

Still stubborn Johansen after all will get his chance against Bjørnsen tomorrow, and seems about to repair his tournament after a slow start – while still undrawn and still entertaining Erikstad might be about to go the other way around.



Twelve year old Isak SJØBERG (1963) and eleven year old Afras MANSOOR (1709) tested out an unusual Caro-Kann line with 3.- -- g6.

White first probably came better, as he played 6.e5 and black did not reply f6. For some reason white spent 63 minutes and black 53 for the first eleven moves. White then spent nine minutes more to play 12.Nd4?, not realizing that black came better

with a promising pressure against white's e5-pawn after the knight was exchanged.

With only 20 minutes left on each clock, black looked more or less winning as he after exchanging queen at b6 in move 16 could win the pawn at e5. Black for unknown reasons preferred to block the pawn instead of just taking it, and as white defended well the players later exchanged down to a rook ending with four pawns on each side, which was agreed drawn after 41 moves.

Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893) and Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) meanwhile tested out a Budapest Gambit with 3.--- Ne4?!. The variation is considered dubious, and white in this game succeeded opening the kingside with a promising attack. White however made a tactical miss with 19.Rf5? and 20.Rg1?, overlooking that the counterhit 20.--- Nxe3! won an exchange for black. Black's king still remained somewhat airy.

Although forcing himself to give up an exchange, black still came a pawn up in the queen and rook position, as white mysteriously played 27.Qb3? instead of taking a pawn with 27.Qxc7. The comedy of errors continued as black paralyzed himself in the queen and rook position, allowing white to pick up two pawns with a winning advantage.

White in turn wasted his chances in a won rook endgame with two versus one pawn. Black woke up in time to reach an endgame with king and g-pawn versus rook and distant king – draw by a one tempo margin as black could promote the pawn into a knight with check (instead of going mate by promoting it to a queen). As black defended inaccurately, white still missed a few chances to win with rook against knight. The final position after 87 moves was a draw, and somehow I guess that was the fair result. Both players definitely can play much better, but true enough the game was very entertaining and exciting – plus instructive if you can learn from mistakes. While Robertsen is doing about as expected so far, Krogseth at 3.5/6 is well above expected score

The game between Tor Wetle HOEM (2004) and Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) on the other hand was a rather safe and sound one, almost without obvious mistakes. It started with an Orthodox Queen's Gambit line, in which white's pleasant knight on e5 gave him a slight initiative. Remarkably enough, white kept a slight and stable edge about all the way from the opening, through he middle game and into an endgame with two knights and five pawns versus bishop, knight and five pawns. This for sure should have been a draw. Hoem however kept up his play much better than Wærstad in the fifth hour, and got the necessary help to win after establishing a passed pawn on e5 and disrupting black's pawn structure. Fourth seeded Hoem following this win is still in the run for top three, although still somewhat under his expected score.



Young Alseit KIZATBAY (1905) and even younger Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) discussed a Semi Slav Meran position, which suddenly became tactical after black opened the position with 9... e5!?. Black controlling the open e-file still looked fine with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns versus queen, rook, knight and five pawns after 20 moves. After black helpfully exchanged the rooks, white succeeded in demonstrating why

queen and knight usually works out better than queen and bishop in endgames.

Having lost a pawn black finally succeeded exchanging off white's disturbing knight, but then white's passed a-pawn soon decided in the queen endgame.



Amalie MERKESVIK (1600) and Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) opened with a Sicilian Dragon line, in which 14.Nd5? was a positionally natural move losing a pawn on c2.

Black's winning chances appeared very good as he kept the pawn while exchanging almost all the pieces. But Amalie truly has improved her defence play, and fought on well this in game as well. In the end she and her all the more active king got the necessary help to draw the rook endgame, despite 1-2 extra pawns for black.

Lars Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) and Ida LANDSVERK (1377) started up with an English fianchetto line, in which black just after the opening went for tactical complications.

The outcome became an open position in which white's two minor pieces was much more worth than black's rook and pawn. White's pair of bishops combined with a passed pawn on c6 later gave him a winning position. After black had to give up an exchange more on c8, white with an extra minor piece had no problems winning the rook and minor pieces endgame.



Sturle HÅNES (1214) aged 77 is the oldest player of this tournament, while Ariza HINA (1364) aged 10 is the youngest. Still, in our wonderful sport they could play an interesting four hours game against each other today.

The starting point was a very symmetrical English opening, in which white's set up was c4-d3-e4 and black's c5-d6-e5. As black later hit in at d4 with his e5-pawn, white got some play on the kingside after realizing f4.

30.e5!? was a creative attacking plan from white, which worked out well as black saw some ghosts and sacrificed an exchange. The game was decided as Ariza short of time for move 40 lost her vital g5-pawn as well, after which white crashed through on the kingside.

A very well deserved first game win for Sturle – but still it includes many promising moves from very young Ariza.

Håkon Abeland MYRHEIM (1595) was unhappy to get a walk over, as he wants to play as much chess as possible this week. Fortunately still three more exciting rounds to come for him (PLUS if you want six rounds of rapid chess in the evenings).