



## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 7



### GM-group

Round seven became another extraordinary hard-fought one in this GM-group, as all games except one got a winner. Today's main winner still was the 24 year old Ukraine GM Andrey Vovk, taking over the lead as he became the first man ever to defeat GM Evgeny Postny at Fagernes!

The drawn game was the second board meeting between GM Igor Rausis and GM Peter Prohaszka, and so top rated Postny at 5.0/7 is unshared second, half a point behind Andrey Vovk.

The top five rated players still are in the top five places, and all the boards 3-9 today were won by the highest rated player.

The last standing title norm candidate following this is FM Sebastian Mihajlov – getting one more chance to make his first IM-norm after he today won a convincing attacking game against Lucas Ranaldi.



Today's very important first board meeting between third seeded GM Andrey VOVK (2617) and first seeded GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) not unexpectedly started up with 1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4.

Meeting the Two Knights Defence with 3... Nf6, Andrey Vovk however went for the most critical attacking line with 4.Ng5!?. First it did not look like a good idea, as black

sacrificed a pawn for a lasting initiative, and blitzed out moves much faster than white.

After 18 moves white had spent 55 minutes and black 14. On the board was a position with two rooks, bishop, knight and six pawns versus two rooks, bishop, knight and five pawns, in which black's better pawn structure and active pieces should give him full compensation.

It turned out Postny today was surprised by 4.Ng5, but could follow an old preparation. While Andrey Vovk found all the best moves after his preparation ended, Postny however chose a dubious plan when he took back the pawn with 20... Rad8? and 21... Rxd2?!.

The following position with two rooks, knight and four pawns on each side probably was a draw, but white's more active rooks obviously gave him many practical winning chances.

The next endgame with two rooks, knight and three kingside pawns versus two rooks, one knight and two queenside pawns at first looked drawish, but in reality it was very difficult at best, as black short of time had to look after two scattered pawns and one airy king.

Postny passed 40 moves with two second left on the clock, but as he had lost his f-pawn as well, the position now was not difficult, just lost. Interestingly the computer programs consider 42.h4! a mistake, while Postny resigned as that move forced him into an obviously closed final station with two rooks against two rooks and two connected pawns.

This was Postny's game number 25 at Fagernes, and his first loss. The players switched chairs in the tournament following this result, as Andrey Vovk now leads alone with his +4, while Postny is unshared second at +3.



The second board game GM Igor RAUSIS (2600) - GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607) on the other hand was drawn after 14 moves in a rather symmetric Ruy Lopez Berlin line.

Both players should have won this game still to be in the run for top one, but none of them tried as a draw means both are still in the run for top three.

Prohaszka together with above mentioned

Andrey Vovk now is the only undefeated player in this GM group.



GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) as white against GM Yuri VOVK (2626) played fast from the Sicilian Najdorf opening, but suddenly slowed down around moves 12-16. White found nothing more to do, hence black with a pair of bishop and play against the e4-pawn took over the initiative. Although black had an extra pawn on e4, the position probably still remained roughly balanced until white went for a dubious exchange sacrifice with 23.Re1? and 24.Rxe4?.

Instead of just taking the exchange, Yuri Vovk in an inspired mood (but of course still without moving any muscle in his face) sacrificed his queen. Playing with two rooks, two bishops and six pawns against queen, rook, knight and five pawns, black afterwards had a much easier position to play. Yuri Vovk following this anyway was much better when Pavlovic, now having one minute left for ten moves, fatally weakened his kingside with 31.g4?? and resigned after the accurate infiltration move Rf3!.

Yuri Vovk joined Rausis and Prohaszka on a shared third place after this win, while chess entertainer Pavlovic following his third lost game seems out of the fight for top three.

IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) vs IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) was a meeting between two room mates and best friends, but still an exciting and hard fought game of chess.

Via 1.c4 e6 play transposed into an unusual Queen's Gambit Exchange line with b6, before 20 moves reaching an isolated pawn position which was "clearly slightly better" for white.

Getz however defended well for the next fifteen moves, and the position with queen, rook, knight and four pawns after 33 moves still looked drawish.

Exchanging the knights at move 34 however was a positional mistake, leaving black with a much more vulnerable king. Under pressure on the clock as well, black anyway was in double trouble when he blundered with 38.--- Kh5??. Urkedal (of course) effectively cashed in the material and the full point with 39.Re7 (threatening queen on c7 and mate on h7).

Getz following this has reached an approximately normal result after seven turbulent rounds, while Urkedal still needs a spurt to save his ELO points.



FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) versus Lucas RANALDI (2140) was a Queen's Indian opening, in which 4.a3 reportedly was unknown to black. His try to improvise with 4.--- a5? turned out to be both time wasting and weakening, as white anyway had no intention of playing b4.

White following this came better from the opening, but black was still

in the ring until weakening his kingside too with 13.--- g6?.

Mihajlov within a few more moves had a crushing attack running. Exchanging down from a won kingside attack to an endgame probably was unnecessary, but still definitely a safe and practical choice – as white with an extra exchange had no sorrows in the world as long as this game lasted. Good news for Mihajlov is that 1.5/2 in the end now definitely will give him a performance above 2450, and 1.0/2 might well do.

Bad news is that he will be black against top seeded Postny tomorrow. And good news for Randal is that he remains well above expected score despite this "blackout" game.





Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) and GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) meanwhile started up with a double-edged Scandinavian opening line, in which white castles short and black long. White's idea to go for a queenside pawn storm with b4-b5 was very natural, but the timing at move 15 was not good enough – as black after f5 and e4 soon had the more powerful attack.

The 2100-player later fought on very well against the Grandmaster, but black had a pleasant pressure and instructively increased it as white overlooked a tactical 29.--- Rf4! (> 30.Qxf4? Ne2+). Although white's knight on e4 gave him some compensation for the exchange, black completed the attack before 40 moves. This was a convincing working day win as black for the Grandmaster, but still a very talented game from the 13 year old white player.

Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168) as white against GM Matthew TURNER (2493) allowed a Slav Defence with 4.--- Bg4 followed by e6. Black this way solved his light square bishop problem and equalized without any pressure. He even came slightly better in the following isolated pawn position, due to his strong grip on the important d5 square. Exchanging queens while keeping the isolated pawn on d4 was a strategic mistake from white, as black later had a safe advantage.

White after all had fair drawing chances in the rook and minor pieces endgame, but it was an uphill struggle ending in a very difficult bishop versus knight endgame just before 40 moves.

Probably this minor piece endgame with four pawns on each side was just winning for black, due to his more active king.

Anyway, much like Nordquelle-Antal, this was a game in which the junior with white demonstrated his talent beyond reasonable doubt, but the experienced GM with black still won his case well deserved in the end.

GM Torbjørn Ringdal HANSEN (2472) after late night New Year celebrations had succeeded convincing both himself and his girlfriend that this round started at 14. Fortunately he returned to the hotel only a few minutes after 13 – and took the hint as he saw various other GMs running towards the playing venue...

When Hansen some 17 minutes delayed arrived, his 18 year old opponent Edit MACHLIK (2034) more or less equalized with a sound set up against white's English Four Knights line. Chances remained about balanced for the first 16 moves. Then black however played too passively, while white instructively directed his pieces against the black kingside. As Machlik again was about to run short of time with a demanding position, 26.--- bxa4? was a blunder – allowing 27.Raf2! and 28.Rxf6+ with a winning attack. The rest of the game was more or less one way driven. Machlik reached the time control with a margin of two seconds, but blundering more material at move 40 she resigned two moves later.

Machlik still has a score above expected, but lost her chance for a WIM-norm following this fourth loss. Ringdal Hansen obviously can be well satisfied about his 100 % against untitled opponent, and won a new chance to improve his 25 % score against other title holders.



Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) versus Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) was an Aljechin opening, which looked about balanced after two sets of minor pieces were exchanged.

White created chances for both players as she went for a kingside attack with 16.f4 and 17.f5.

19.--- Nxc4? actually was a blunder, as the ice cold shower 20.Bc1! would have won a piece (or give a decisive kingside attack).

Gutsko understandably preferred winning an exchange with 20.Nd5?!, and her position still looked very promising. But as demonstrated by Merkesvik, the following position with queen, two rooks and five pawns against queen, rook, bishop and six pawns in reality was not much better for white, due to black's better pawn structure and well coordinated pieces.

Whether white tried to win or just to avoid losing when sacrificing her key pawn at d4, remains somewhat unclear. Anyway it did not at all work out according to plan, as black one move later had the more dangerous attack in a materially balanced position.

Running short of time as well white blundered an exchange, after which black effectively exchanged down to a won queen endgame.

0-1 after 40 moves means this nightmare of wasted chances continues for Gutsko, while still jumpy Merkesvik jumped up to a plus result again.

## Elo-group

The top three places of the Open group now seem more or less given, as 50 year old Stein Bjørnsen, 36 year old Håkon Bentsen and 13 year old Abyl Kizatbay all won their games in round seven as well.

This means Bjørnsen has a brilliant 6,5/7, Bentsen an outstanding 6.0 and Kizatbay a very promising 5.5, while none of their competitors are above 4.5.

Still at least Kizatbays's place on top three is not yet given, and the order within top three still remains undecided with two rounds left to go.

The quality of the games (and moves) in this group of course varies a lot every round.

Still the fighting spirit remains outstanding, as eight out of ten games today got a winner.

(One of the two draws by the way came in a totally winning position.)



Johansen and Bjørnsen with arbiter Henrik Sjøl assisting.

Stein Tholo BJØRNSEN (2019) versus Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997) was a duel between the two blind players of this tournament. I find it truly impressive that it took place at board one in round seven. The players by far are the two best blind chessplayers in Norway, and the 2015 championship in that class was decided at Bjørnsen won their internal meeting.

Johansen did not get his revenge today, as Bjørnsen hit with a preparation and came much better from this Scotch opening. Tactical exchanges left black with a weakened kingside after ten moves, and Bjørnsen in an inspired mood immediately sacrificed a piece on g6 – for two pawns and an ongoing attack.

As white made the better calculations for the next moves, 1-0 came on board within the second hour and after only 22 moves.

Johansen although fairly satisfied with 4.0/7 remains below expected score, while Bjørnsen still leads alone – with an outstanding 6.5/7.

Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) versus Håkon BENTSEN (2037) was a King's Gambit duel in which both players moved fast. White obviously moved too fast, as his awkward king maneuver with 7.Kf2? and 8.Ke1? made a dubious line more or less lost. Playing with an extra pawn on f4 and an octopus knight on e3, black anyway was much better when white at move 10 blundered a piece.

The remaining 20 moves were much like eating from the hotel buffet from a Bentsen point of view, as black was a sound piece up with all the more active pieces and the safer king.

Krogseth so far is a bit too shaky against the best players in this group, but still has a clear plus result. Bentsen at 6.0/7 with a performance above 2200 makes his best tournament result for many years, and although still half a point behind Bjørnsen he now has a top three prize and a ticket to the next GM-group within short reach.



On third board, the now 13 year old chess go-kart Abyl KIZATBAY (1877) continued his chess adventures as white against Tor Wetle HOEM (2004).

This game made a very fresh start with a razor blade Sicilian Dragon line, in which white castled long and black short.

14.Nd5? is a thematic move for the line, but in this position it was unambitious, as black

and his pair of bishops came slightly better after the queens were exchanged.

The position however remained double edged, and black played too loose when sacrificing his a-pawn to open lines on the kingside. Sacrificing a rook on a2 was the consequent plan after the pawn sacrifice, but it still failed as white could pay back a bishop and still cash in a full endgame point. In the big shadow of Bjørnsen, young Kizatbay with 5.5/7 and a performance close to 2100 is doing a great result.

Eleven year old Afras MANSOOR (1709) as white against top rated FM Ward AL-TARBOSH (2204) entered a Slav variation offering about equal chances after an early queen exchange. Al-Tarbosh however hesitated too long completing his development, allowing Mansoor to establish a center advantage. As black woke up in time and succeeded blowing up the center while getting out his pieces, the position after 18 moves looked about equal. 19.--- Rad8? however was a blunder, overlooking that white could win an exchange with 20.Bb5+! Kb6 21.a5+ Kxa5 22.Bc7+. Mansoor immediately saw his chance, and despite black's disturbing bishops went on to win the endgame. One of the remaining questions for this tournament after this result seems to be whether Mansoor can win even more ELO points than Al-Tarbosh will lose...



Twelve year olds Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893) and Isak SJØBERG (1963) made an interesting if risky start with a King's Indian Four Pawns attack.

The middle game position circled around white's hanging pawns at d5 and e5, which definitely turned out to be strong as white could play 19.d6 and 20.Nd5.

20... Qxd6? was a creative try to get rid of the pawns, but it turned out Robertsen had

it under control, as the following tactics ended up with an extra piece for white.

1-0 after 28 moves means Robertsen despite some wasted chances are continuing his progress in this tournament, while Sjøberg now needs a very strong spurt to save his ELO.

Lars Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) and Alseit KIZATBAY (1905) discussed a Queen's Indian line.



For some reason the older Kizatbay brother as black wanted to discuss a line in which white realizes d5 with a pleasant space advantage, and the only question use to be whether black can defend to a draw.

The defender succeeded in this case, as white played too carefully and waited too long to double his rooks in the e-file.

Black following this could release his tight position somewhat by exchanging off the

rooks. As the queens left as well, a draw fair enough was agreed in a minor pieces endgame just before 40 moves.



Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) versus Olav ERIKSTAD (1821) was a French Exchange variation with a very symmetric (read: boring) pawn structure. White had a pair of bishops, but white's pinned knight on f3 proved more important in this semi-closed position.

Black due to the pin succeeded to win the d4-pawn by a tactical 23.--- Nxd4. Despite white's barking bishops, black in the fifth hour succeeded squeezing a win in the endgame.

Eleven year old Ingebretsen keeps his mood very well, although he has lost speed after the promising start.

41 year old Erikstad remains undrawn – and still jumps up and down at or just above 50 %.

Ida LANDSVERK (1377) as white against Håkon Abeland MYRHEIM (1595) went for an English fianchetto line, but white's search for a queenside attack ended up like a loose pawn sacrifice.

Then white's search for counterplay on the kingside with 19.Ng5? turned out to be defect tactics after the excellent reply 19.--- Bb7!.

White creatively (or desperately) tried to sacrifice her queen, but was anyway bankrupt on material when she blundered a mate at move 25.

The pieces will not cooperate with Ida this tournament, but this loss was no shame as underrated Håkon played a very good game.



Ten year old Ariza HINA (1364) and 13 year old Amalie MERKESVIK (1600) made a very exciting start with a King's Gambit, but then slowed down a little as white just took back the pawn on f4 with an about balanced position.

Black after realizing a d5 advance had a pair of bishops plus a little more space.

Very young Ariza however made many sensible moves in this middle game, and exchanged down to a drawish endgame with rook, knight and six pawns versus rook, bishop and six pawns.

Due to her control over the a-file black still had a slight initiative, and succeeded increasing the pressure until white after 30 moves stumbled into tactical threats and lost her knight.

None of these young ladies will reach top five in this tournament, but for sure we will hear much more about both of them in the upcoming years.





13 year old Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) and 77 year old Sturle HÅNES (1214) made a modest start with a 3.Bb5-line in Sicilian opening, but the game soon accelerated as white transposed into some kind of Grand Prix- attack with f4 and e5. With an extra pawn on d6 white came better after the queens were exchanged, as his pair of knights was not inferior to black's pair of bishops in this rather closed

position.

Black succeeded getting some counterplay as the position opened, and had fair drawing chances in the endgame with rook, bishop and four pawns versus rook, knight and five pawns. Exchanging rooks looked strange, and white probably had winning chances in the minor piece endgame. That was however before white blundered his knight with 34.Nd4??, overlooking a not invisible 34.--- Be3+!. The game still became one of the very few draws today, since Hånes after 40 moves offered in a totally won position with bishop and two pawns versus two pawns.

I should mention that such "over sporty" behavior should be avoided in tournament chess.

This time fortunately the negative consequences for other players were minimal, as this was the second last board in the third last round. Sturle's intentions obviously were the very best, and Mats of course did nothing wrong to accept the offer he got.

Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) gently accepted a walk over without any complaints, and after some hours as a spectator instead played three rounds of rapid chess in the evening. Two rounds before the end, this Open group in short remains very mixed, very exciting and yet very friendly.

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Pictures: Tom Eriksen