



THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT 8



GM-group

Round eight did not change anything of importance between the two main competitors in the GM-group: As both GM Andrey Vovk and GM Evgeny Postny patiently won their games against lower rated opponents, Vovk now at 6.5/8 still leads just ahead of Postny at 6.0.

Top two on the other hand strengthened their positions further compared to the others players. As GM Peter Prohaszka and GM Yuri Vovk made a sound draw against each other, veteran GM Igor Rausis after winning with a creative attack against GM Gergely Antal now is unshared third at 5.5.

Unfortunately the last chance for a title norm in this tournament went lost a few minutes after this round, as FM Sebastian Mihajlov following his loss against Postny got a way too low rated opponent in the last round.



IM Frode URKEDAL (2507) as white against GM Andrey VOVK (2617) met a Dutch opening and went for a Hopton attack with 2.Bg5. Andrey Vovk answered aggressively with 2.... h6!? and 3.... g5, winning much space and at the same time weakening his kingside.

While black left his king undeclared at e8, white castled long and first appeared to be slightly better in a complex position.

22.Re5?! and 23.Nxd5?! although critical

turned out to be a dubious piece sacrifice, as black could return the piece and keep a pawn.

White and his pair of bishops got some compensation as black took the pawn on d4 in an inaccurate way, but the compensation soon vanished. After black just before 40 moves succeeded exchanging off his knight for white's light squared bishop, the remaining rook and bishop endgame was winning due to black's extra pawn and more active pieces.

This became the last game of this round, but Andrey Vovk of course had no problems completing the win. At 6.5/8 following another pole in game, he has both a first prize and a 2800-performance (!?) within reach before the last round.

Urkedal on the other hand fairly typical got another pole out game, and will finish below expected score whatever his result in last round.

On second board GM Evgeny POSTNY (2670) and FM Sebastian MIHAJLOV (2335) started as a closed Slav opening line in which both players looked fairly satisfied from the start: White because he was better, and black because he was not much worse.

15.--- e5!? was a very thematic center break which might have been correct, but if so black after 16.dxe5 had to try 16.--- Qa2!? Instead of 16.--- Be4?. White immediately used his chance to exchange the queens at d5, as a b5 break soon afterwards gave him a pleasant queenside attack. Within a few moves white won a pawn at c6, and Postny before 40 moves forced a won endgame with rook, knight and five pawns versus rook, knight and three pawns.

Start number one Evgeny Postny despite somewhat shaky play earlier in the tournament, has made a great result with 6.0/8 and a performance just below 2700. His only problem before the last round is that Andrey Vovk after winning their internal meeting has done even better.

Definitely this was a honest loss for 16 year old Mihajlov, but still is was a set back and became the last stop for his IM-norm hopes in this tournament. Mihajlov after this game needed to defeat a foreign GM in the last round, but instead got a Norwegian 2000-player.



GM Peter PROHASZKA (2607) and GM Yuri VOVK (2626) via 1.Nf3 transposed into a fianchetto line of Queen's Indian opening, in which black was solid after d5.

11.dxc5 gave an isolated pawn position balancing between slightly better for white and equal. White later kept a slight initiative, playing first against black's isolated pawn on d5 and then against black's hanging pawns on d5 and e6. Yuri Vovk however

defended by sound exchanges, and although white still had the slightly better pawn structure in the queen and bishop endgame, he realized it was too little and too late, and offered a draw after 28 moves.

These two players after sharing this point is now also sharing the fourth place, with chances to reach top three in case of a last round win.



GM Gergely ANTAL (2565) versus GM Igor RAUSIS (2600) was a Scotch opening which looked equal and not that exciting – until black lit up a tactical fire with 11.--- d5!? > 12.cxd5 Nxe4!.

In a messy position white, probably still in shock, made a grave mistake with 15.Kf2?. Black used his chance to hit in on h1 with his queen under favorable circumstances, getting one rook and three pawns for two pieces. In a still complex position both players made some inaccuracies

later on, but black was always winning and neatly finished the game by a rook sacrifice at e2 in move 31.

Antal is still not playing close to his usual strength and will finish well below expected score - while the dynamic veteran Rausis is en route for a top three prize and assured some more ELO points.

GM Matthew TURNER (2493) and GM Torbjørn Ringdal HANSEN (2472) started up with a positionally messy Trompovsky opening line.

White had slightly more chances in the middle game, while black looked slightly better in the rooks and bishop endgame. As Hansen played a little too hard, Turner again held a slight initiative for a few moves, before the game was drawn as both players ran out of pawns after 51 moves.

Results are just around expected for both the two lowest rated GMs. Curiously the players after dinner met each other again with opposite colors in the rapid chess tournament – in which Hansen after winning the internal meeting also went on to win the tournament ahead of Turner.



GM Milos PAVLOVIC (2496) as white against WGM Anastasia GUTSKO (2177) started up with a Catalan opening. After white played cxd5 and black c5-c4, a position very close to some Queen's Gambit Tarrasch-lines came on board.

These are usually better for white, and in this case white came better after 17.Bxf6, as black had to destroy her kingside pawn structure by taking back with the g-pawn. Black within a few moves had a hard time

to keep her kingside together, and sacrificing an exchange on the queenside just threw petrol on the flames. Avoiding his usual time shortage cramps, Pavlovic well before 40 completed his attack with a decisive win.

As demonstrated today Pavlovic, despite his mediocre score in this tournament, truly is a great player when he can discipline himself.

This loss with black against a GM of course was not unexpected, but still another loss means Gutsko is down at 1.0/8 and will probably finish eighteenth in this field.

The game between Edit MACHLIK (2034) and IM Nicolai GETZ (2410) was a Classical Nimzo-Indian which made a shocking start, as black after an overambitious 10...f5?! and 11...e4?! soon found himself in trouble. 18 year old Machlik for the first 17 moves just outplayed the IM, and after 18.f6! Qh5 19.fxg7 white would have had two more pawns plus a decisive attack. Instead white became too greedy with 19.Ne6?! and 20.Nxf8?, but with an extra exchange she was still clearly better. Black however improved somewhat after getting out his pieces, and finally recovered as white one hour behind on the clock hesitated too much.

Still with an extra exchange for white, opening the kingside with 35.h3! would have been more or less winning. Having only one and a half minute left for five moves, Edit however made mistakes in all five of them, and so the still tactically awake Nicolai could turn the board all around with material advantage and a killing attack after the time control.

Machlik has spent too much time and wasted too many chances this tournament, but still is slightly above expected score. Getz, gently admitting that he was “totally lost” after the opening today, seems ready to land around zero despite his very promising take-off.



Lucas RANALDI (2140) as white against Daniel NORDQUELLE (2115) and a Benoni opening played a sound positional set up with Bf4-h3-e3.

White despite black's pair of bishops came clearly better around moves 20-25, as his knight first reached the ideal square on c4 and then took an important pawn at d6. For some unknown reason Ranaldi then suddenly chickened out, first helping black to exchange all his bad pieces, and then

accepting a draw while he was still a pawn up in the queen and minor piece endgame.

Ranaldi as well continues to waste some chances, but still is in for a solid 2200-performance.

Nordquelle after saving this “very difficult” position is just above expected score so far.



Sondre Merkesvik

In another Norwegian teenager duel between Sondre MERKESVIK (2190) and Tor Fredrik KAASEN (2168), white made one of his modest positional starts with 1.d4 2.Nf3 and 3.g3. Black had no problems equalizing, and even came better for a moment after white somewhat loose sacrificed a pawn with 11.e4?!. The advantage however disappeared as black made a positional mistake when exchanging his important dark squared bishop with 12.--- Bxd4?.

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Later white first had enough compensation and then won back the pawn at b7 in move 21.

The final of this game came within six more moves, and mixed up errors with brilliancy in a fascinating way. 21.--- Nf6? was a serious mistake, but not due to the greedy 22.Qxe7? – which was white's reply. Black then could have about enough counterplay, but not with the natural 22.--- Bxg2? – which he still played... 23.Qxf6! now looked like a blunder after 23.--- Bxf1? 24.Bb2 Nd7 – but instead turned out to be a brilliant win, as white could now sacrifice his queen to complete the attack with 25.Qg7+!! Kxg7 26.Nf5+ Kg8 27.Ne7 mate...

In short Merkesvik of course won fully deserved, as he in time discovered the critical and beautiful line which Kaasen overlooked much too long. Merkesvik after his second win in a row is again in for a clear plus result, while also very talented Kaasen still has a pole out tournament and will finish well below his expected score.

Elo-group

The first prize in the Open group probably was decided today, as so far so great Stein Tholo Bjørnsen following another kingside attack completed his seventh game win.

Although Håkon Bentsen with his nails scraped a draw from a totally lost position, he is now at 6.5 a full point behind Bjørnsen. Bentsen's draw on the other hand means he still has the second prize under control, as the young go-kart Abyl Kizatbay had another sudden stop with a not too exciting draw today.

Only one round left to play now – and still only one draw among ten games in this remarkably entertaining and intense group!



Today's first board duel between Stein Tholo BJØRNSEN (2019) and Afras MANSOOR (1709) made a very aggressive start with a "Double Dutch" 1.f4 f5. Chess wrestler Bjørnsen, still in an inspired mood, hit in with a tactical d5-break after 11 moves. After winning a pawn with 15.Nf5, he immediately went on to sacrifice the knight on h6.

Having deleted all the three pawns which should have protected black's king, white had a winning attack for the piece. Black's defensive plan with 18.--- Nh7 19.--- Qf5 and 20.--- Bf6 turned out to be based upon a misunderstanding, as white came an exchange up with an ongoing attack after finding an elegant 22.Bd3!.

Bjørnsen had to play three hours today, looked a bit tired in the end and prolonged the endgame unnecessary. Still his position was always easily winning then, and 7.5/8 of course is an outstanding result by a blind man having studied chess seriously only for the last two years.

Mansoor, like most of Bjørnsen's opponents, played well below their best against him this tournament. Still the only eleven year old Bergen boy will also win a lot more ELO points.

Håkon BENTSEN (2037) met a Caro-Kann opening from Olav ERIKSTAD (1821), and played for win with 3.Nc3 and 5.Nxf6+. White with a center advantage and a pair of bishops first looked slightly better, but black made sound moves and had equalized after 20 moves.

21.c4? Rxd4 22.Rxa7?? then was a totally misunderstood plan, as black suddenly had a crushing attack after 22.--- Rg4! 23.Qc7 Nh4. After the consequent/desperate 24.Rxb7?, black could have forced white to give up the queen with 24.--- Rxg2+! 25.Kf1 Qe4! – but instead preferred to pick up an exchange with 24.--- Nf3+? 25.Kf1 Nxe1.

Black still had a winning attack and a material plus, but white proved able to let his king walk around on the water while establishing a passed pawn on c5. Although black was still clearly better just before 40 moves, the position was no longer without risks for him, and so both players happily joined a repetition of checks.

Erikstad following this wasted smash has a zero result and is out of the fight for top three, while Bentsen after another miracle is still unshared and undefeated second.

This duel between 13 year old Abyl KIZATBAY (1905) and twelve year old Bjørn ROBERTSEN (1893) first was some rare line in the Sicilian opening, in which black first played e6 and then a closed set up with c5-d6-e5.

After the not too ambitious 11.dxe5 a symmetric and rather drawish pawn structure with a white pawn on e4 and a black pawn on e5 came on board. White had an outpost on d5 but found no use of it, and draw was agreed in a still symmetric position with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns on each side after 26 moves.

Robertsen on fourth place is in for a solid plus result, while Abyl Kizatbay still in unshared third and the young sensation man.



Kai-Roger JOHANSEN (1997) as white against 41 year younger Isak SJØBERG (1963) made a positional English start with 1.c4.

As black played an aggressive set up with 1.- e5, 2.--- Nc6 and 3.--- f5, it followed a typical middle game position pitting white's queenside grip against black's chances for a kingside attack.

White came better as he was able to place a highly disturbing knight on e6, and black's

position anyway was hard to defend when he after 21 moves felt forced to sacrifice a rook upon the knight.

Still playing fast and safe technical chess in winning positions, Johansen had no problems completing this win before 40 moves.

Despite his very poor eyesight, Johansen after this game also played the evening rapid chess tournament with a fair 50 % score.



Håkon Abeland MYRHEIM (1595) versus FM Ward AL-TARBOSH (2204) started up with a French Tarrasch, in which the unambitious 4.c3 as usually resulted in an isolated pawn position which was slightly better for black. After black realized a powerful center break with 19.--- e5!, he was anyway clearly better when white blundered a piece the next move.

Myrheim is on expected score after this expected loss. First seeded Al-Tarbosh seems about to recover after some disturbing illness in the middle of the tournament, and today demonstrated some of his normal playing strength.



Tor Wetle HOEM (2004) and Lars Erik BROBAKKEN (1755) discussed a Benkő Gambit line in which white returns the pawn at b6 and hope for some positional advantage.

A tense queenside struggle went in favor of white, as he was able to win black's weak a-pawn while keeping his own apparently loose b5-pawn.

By tripling in the a-file white later forced black to exchange a rook on a6, giving white

a passed pawn on a7.

In the fourth hour black got some more counterplay than he deserved on the kingside, but the conclusion still became a decisive material win for white.

Amalie MERKESVIK (1600) and Lars Martin KROGSETH (1599) tested out a somewhat unusual French Exchange line with 3... Qxd5. Krogseth (again) was allowed to snatch a pawn at d4 in the opening, and succeeded keeping it although Merkesvik got the more active piece.

As white playing with queen, two rooks, knight and six pawns versus queen, two rooks, bishop and seven pawns was about to get an unpleasant light square dominance, black at move 24 sacrificed back a pawn to exchange queens.

The following rook endgame probably should have been drawn, but white had the more active king, and succeeded exchanging a better rook endgame into a won pawn endgame before 40 moves.

Krogseth after this loss got the walk over in round nine, but still finished well above expected score.

Merkesvik has repaired much following a slow start, and is slightly below expected score before the start of last round.



Alseit KIZATBAY (1877) versus Mats NÆRHEIM (1356) was a true Reti game, in which white put his bishops on b2 and g2, while black put his on b7 and g7.

Exchanging the light squared bishops maybe was fair enough, but white anyway got a c-file pressure - and increased his pressure after black exchanged his dark square defender for a knight on f4 after 23 moves.

Black's position soon collapsed after his d5-pawn went lost just a few moves later.

Despite this game result, in the tournament Mats is a little above his expected score and Alseit well below his.



The two oldest players in this group, Leif Edwin WÆRSTAD (1572) and Sturle HÅNES (1214), meanwhile investigated a Queen's Gambit in which white first had a positional pressure and then won a pawn at b5. The rook endgame with four versus three kingside pawns still should be a draw, but Wærstad used his chance to win it as Hånes helpfully exchanged down to a lost pawn endgame.

Both players despite being on the second half of the list are above expected score before last round.



The young chess woman fight between Ariza HINA (1364) and Ida LANDSVERK (1377) started up with a Sicilian Grand Prix attack, in which black after establishing a center advantage, winning a pair of bishops and castling short probably should have been fine.

White however had some pressure in the e-file and the diagonal a3-f8, and suddenly came clearly better after being allowed to pick up a pawn at c5.

Again under pressure on the clock, Ida again lost the thread on the board, and the rook and knight endgame with three extra pawns anyway was an easy win for white when black after 31 move lost on time.

Nothing will work for Ida on the board, much due to her strained relations with the clock, in this tournament.

Still 10 year old Ariza, the youngest player of this tournament, can be congratulated for a very deserved first game win.

Jens Evang INGEBRETSEN (1710) had to accept a walk over in the second last round, as almost all players in the second half of the list has now had it. Fortunately Jens still had three games of rapid chess to play in the evening – and surprisingly he won all three of them!

Last round will start in much too few hours now, and for sure include many more exciting games in both groups!