

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2020

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

2



GM Group

The second round of the GM-group was a fairly hard-fought one, with no short draws and 14 winners among 23 games. Only three GMs can be found among five remaining players with a 100 % score: Top rated GM Evgeny Postny was lucky to save a draw in a time trouble duel versus FM Anders Hobber, while GM Benjamin Notkevich drew an intense battle versus FM Naom Vitenberg – and GM Normunds Miezis lost a long uphill battle versus FM Gunnar Lund. Overall this round was more promising for the IM-candidates than for the GM-candidates, although Norwegian IM Frode Elness is at 2/2 following a patient black win today.



Abdulrauf vs Agdestein

The generation duel between 15 year old FM Elham Abdulrauf (2362) and 53 year old GM Simen Agdestein (2552) made a slow start on the clock, as both players spent some 55 minutes for the first 12 moves in a rare Italian gambit line. On the board things worked out much better for black, as he came clearly better after returning the pawn. White had ongoing problems finding any safe evacuation for his king at e1, and black soon got a decisive initiative plus two extra pawns after opening up the position with a powerful 16... d5!

break. Agdestein without suffering many nervous moments was one rook and three pawns up in the final position after 31 moves, and has been in truly great shape so far in this tournament.

GM Evgeny Postny (2603) versus FM Anders Hobber (2386) was a Slav fianchetto duel in which black hung on to an extra pawn at c4, but lagged 50 minutes behind on the clock after spending 75 minutes for the first 12 moves. The GM tried to accelerate first on the kingside with h4-h5 and then in the center with e4-e5. It backfired badly as the FM hit back in the d-file, and black was clearly better around move 22-28.

Postny spent much time without finding any defence, and Hobber had a winning attack after playing Rd1 followed by Qb1 after 33 moves. With both players having only some two minutes left on the clock Postny cleverly found counterplay for a draw with a thematic 35.Nef6+!, but missed the plank

afterwards and again was lost after 38.Rxf5??. Having less than one minute left in a still complex position Hobber missed two brilliant wins first with 38.--- Rxc3!! and then with 38.--- Qxf5!!.

Although black eventually won a piece after the time control, he was unable to escape the white mate threat on g7 unless he took or gave a perpetual check.

Hobber in short missed a won position and an excellent chance to pass the 2400 mark today, although he is at 2395 and has had an excellent start on his IM norm hunt following this strong draw. Hobber chose a constructive approach afterwards and cheerfully remarked that he had never made a draw against such a nice GM.



Urkedal vs Randaldi (front) and Lund – Miezes (back)

GM Frode Urkedal (2549) and FM Lucas Randaldi (2334) today discussed a Queen's Indian fianchetto line in which black got the slightly better pawn structure, but still the clearly inferior position, as white had more active rooks and a pressure against the backward d6 pawn.

After 30 moves the remaining queen and rook position was a study in cramp and depression from a black point of view. Urkedal in an inspired mood kept up the pressure and decided the game by creating a passed pawn at c7 after 47 moves.

18 year FM Gunnar Lund (2302) as white against GM Normunds Miezis (2485) went for 1.d4 2.Bf4 3.e3 and 4.Nc3, but then soon accelerated with 5.h4!?. White true enough found no use of the h-file after opening it. After all the more minor pieces were exchanged, he instead kept pleasant pressure against black's backward pawn at c6. Miezis was under pressure on the clock too with only two minutes left after 30 moves, but came up with a creative idea to sacrifice his a-pawn in order to sacrifice a rook in the h-file to reach a perpetual check. Whether Miezis made an overambitious try to win or just failed to find the final saving lines remains somewhat unclear, but Lund anyway got the help needed to hide his king on h1 without returning his extra rook. At move 60 he efficiently decided the game by sacrificing this rook at g6. Lund is the sensation man at 2/2 and well ahead of schedule for his first IM-norm, while Miezis looked everything but satisfied after losing this game.

GM Benjamin Notkevič (2469) as white against FM Noam Vitenberg (2298) tested out a Catalan line in which black's pair of bishops did not fully compensate a lacking pawn and an inferior structure for the remaining pawns. Vitenberg however succeeded messing things up with an aggressive h-pawn attack. After 20 moves both players stared upon a complex position in which white had two minor pieces for a rook, but an airy king. The game suddenly ended with a repetition of moves none of the players could avoid a few moves later on.

Creative juniors Ludvig Carlsson (2281) and IM Johannes Haug (2481) meanwhile investigated a strange opening in which white's first four moves were d4, Nf3, e3 and g3, while black played Nf6, e6, b5 and a6!? The position later normalized with an approximately balanced position on the board, while white lagged some 15 minutes behind of the clock.

Following some more exchanges the game ended with a sound repetition of moves after three hours and 28 moves. Despite the colours, a draw was obviously more useful for the Swedish IM-candidate Carlsson than for the Norwegian GM-candidate Haug.



From round 2

IM Benjamin Haldorsen (2469) versus FM Jens Ingebretsen (2220) on the other hand was a closed Ruy Lopez duel in which white lagged some 20 minutes behind on the clock, but established a space advantage by playing d5 on the board. White appeared clearly better before opening the f-file and close to winning after intervening on e6 with his knight. Ingebretsen still succeeded establishing a stubborn defensive set up for his pieces behind a rather blocked pawn structure.

As Haldorsen spent a lot of time without finding any breakthrough, white anyway had run out of steam when he overlooked a threefold repetition and had to accept a draw after 79 moves. Lasting five hours and 58 minutes, this was the longest duel of the tournament so far.

FM Andre Nielsen (2218) and IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2465) also took a slow start with a positional Italian opening, in which both players spent a lot of time from the opening. After two sets of minor pieces and one set of center pawns were exchanged, the position after 15 moves appeared balanced – as white had a pawn on d5 and black an active bishop on d4.

The game apparently exploded as white sacrificed a bishop on h6 just afterwards. Then it suddenly finished off with a draw, as both saw a variation in which white could win back the piece with a simplified and probably drawish position. Holm was not worse and might have given up this black game a bit early, as the draw again was much better news for the IM-candidate than the GM-candidate.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2208) today bravely tested how an Owen defence would work out as black against GM Ilmars Starostits (2464). The answer was «not too good», as white first established a sound space advantage and then got a strong initiative after sacrificing his b-pawn.

After 16 moves black had only 30 minutes left on the clock and a hard time saving her exposed bishop at b4. The GM instructively exchanged off the bishops to put the black queen in an offside position at a3, and then smashed through on the kingside by sacrificing a knight on e6.

First round surprise woman Ingrid Skaslien (1976) spent much time on a Nimzo-Indian Rubinstein line as white against IM Frode Elsness (2454). White still failed to find any active plan and after 15 moves lagged some 20 minutes behind on the clock with a passive if solid position.

Elsness later increased the pressure until winning a pawn at a2 after 30 moves. The remaining 20 moves felt like a not too exciting train journey as Skaslien all the time made sensible moves, without being able to create any real chances for a draw.



Kaasen vs Skotheim

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2386) and IM Andreas Skotheim (2120) meanwhile discussed another closed and positional Ruy Lopez line, leading to symmetric pawn structure with a white pawn on e4 and a black pawn on e5.

Still white after 17 moves had a pleasant situation partly due to his slightly better placed pieces, and partly due to his extra 30 minutes on the clock.

Later spending much time without finding any other winning plan, Kaasen after 31 moves went for a

creative exchange sacrifice at d6. Skotheim however defended well during mutual time pressure, and after 40 moves the remaining question was whether black could create winning chances with rook for bishop and pawn. The answer was not necessarily «no», but became so as Skotheim a few moves later returned the exchange to reach a dead drawn rook endgame.

Timofey Galinsky (2370) versus Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2362) became the first IM duel of this tournament, both players coming from a disappointing first round draw against lower rated opponents.

The game was a very closed London System duel, in which white appeared slightly better with 32 pieces on the board after 17 moves. The game lightened up as white sacrificed an exchange for an interesting attack just before 40 moves. Then it burned down as black returned the exchange to reach a very drawish rook and knight endgame.

Black for some moves held an extra pawn in the final rook endgame, but it did not make much of a difference as he played with f- and h-pawn against g-pawn in a dead drawn position.

Afras Mansoor (2117) and Sigve Hølleland (2133) transposed from English into a closed Catalan in which black tried to snatch a pawn at c4, and due to his queenside pawn majority came better after returning the pawn. The game efficiently was decided as Mansoor, lagging behind on clock and board, blundered with 23.Ne5?. Hølleland in an inspired mood cashed in two minor pieces and a pawn for a rook with a neon-blinking 23... Rxd4!. Although the game lasted nearly 40 moves more, it was all a long walk in the park for black's superior forces.

FM Trygve Dahl (2211) immediately hit back following his first round white collapse, and today won a intense 25-move attacking game as black against FM Richard Bjerke (2144).

Dahl went for his favourite Dutch opening and instructively sacrificed a pawn with 18... f4! to open attacking lines on the kingside. The natural 23... Qf5? actually was a serious mistake, as white could have sacrificed an exchange with a messy position after 24.Bg3! Qxd3 25.Qxg4. Failing to catch that last chance Bjerke stopped the clock only two moves later on, as he was about to lose decisive material for nothing.



Dahl vs Bjerke



Shehzad

Shazil Shehzad (2188) also made a successful come back in the second round, winning within 25 moves as black in a Sicilian duel against Håkon Bentsen (2120).

Following a fairly balanced opening, black soon came better following a powerful d5-break. When Bentsen was invited back into the game a few moves later on, he became so thankful that he immediately overlooked an even more powerful e4-break – winning decisive material for black within a few moves.

Swedish junior Gustav Törngren (2185) worked out much better as white against a lower rated opponent today, and got a sound space advantage from the Caro-Kann opening against Sander Fuglestein (2109).

Although three sets of minor pieces were exchanged, black after the position opened had a hard time with his king still stuck on e8. Following this Fuglestein anyway was in deep trouble, when he after 20 moves overlooked a decisive rook sacrifice on f7. Törngren did not overlook it, and in short won very well deserved.

Monika Machlik (2082) and Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2174) discussed a Classical Nimzo Indian line in which white due to her better pawn structure first had a plus - despite her slightly awkward king at e2. Ahead on the clock with the safer king, black left a repetition after 23 moves, but as rooks were exchanged the queen and knight endgame five moves later was drawish. 12 year old Kvaløy played on with youthful optimism. He was rewarded as 22 year old Machlik stumbled on the doorstep to the queen endgame, and had to play with queen and three kingside pawns versus queen and four kingside pawns. Probably this still should have been a draw, especially as black had a double f-pawn. Still the position was much easier and more inspiring to play from the black side of the board, and again running short of time Machlik lost a second pawn. Although Machlik had a second pole out Kvaløy of course won very well deserved, and in the end he instructively returned both pawns to run up the board with his king and escort in the passed h-pawn.

Aleksander Fossan (2171) versus Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2048) saw an unusual French line in which black realized the e5-break at move four, soon leading to a fairly balanced isolated pawn position. White had the isolated pawn at d4, but due to his e-file control came better after all the minor pieces were exchanged.

Black's position seemed critical as white in the queen and rook position could increase the pressure with 23.Re7 and 24.Rxb7. Øye-Strømberg today however defended ice cold, winning back the pawn and finding a set up to hold back white's passed c-pawn and save the following rook endgame.

14 year old Dion Krivenko (2047) as white against Lars Johan Brodtkorb (2166) played 2.Qe2?! against a French defence, and came 15-20 minutes ahead on the clock after his opponent arrived delayed. On the board white due to his more active rooks and e5-pawn came slightly better, although black in return had a nice knight outpost on d5.

White's advantage probably became decisive as he was allowed first to exchange off the knights and then to establish a passed pawn on e6 after 30 moves. Black under pressure on the clock made a dubious decision to exchange off the queens, and although white missed the elegant tactical win (with 32.Rxb5!) afterwards, he soon had a strong pressure in the rook endgame.

Krivenko after the time control decided elegantly by 42.g4! – sacrificing a pawn to establish a decisive pair of connected passed pawns.

Pål Røyset (2150) in the early middle game got the upper hand with the white pieces in a Sicilian against Simen Sørensen (2047), as black's inferior pawn structure and less active bishops gave him a hard time to defend. The clocks created some excitement, as white had five minutes and black four minutes left after 26 moves. White's forces at that stage however dominated the battlefield, and Røyset decided the game well before 40 moves following a strong exchange sacrifice on d6.



Røyset

Sergey Eliseev (2025) versus Mathias Unneland (2149) was a closed Sicilian in which something went seriously wrong for white, as he before 20 moves played against a powerful pair of bishops with an extra black center pawn at d4. Lagging further far behind on the clock and board, 13 year old Eliseev understandably tried to complicate by sacrificing both his knights for a rook. As the black bishop power only increased further, white however succeeded only to shorten his pains.

Tobias Lang Nilsen (2146) and Thyra Kvendseth (2017) meanwhile discussed another closed Ruy Lopez opening line, suddenly accelerating with tactical exchanges. It turned out black should not have entered the complications starting with 10... Nxa5?, as white came a sound pawn up when the smoke left some eight moves later on.

As Lang Nilsen also got the better pawn structure and soon started up his kingside pawn majority, he safely landed in a won knight endgame in the fourth hour.



Kvendseth vs Nilsen

Andreas Tenold (1935) and Sigurd Løe Grøver (2145) entered a French Tarrasch isolated pawn position, in which black appeared better as he eventually won the white pawn at d4.

Black however allowed unnecessary counter play against his king.

Left after 30 moves was a drawish position with queen, two rooks and three pawns on each side, but black obviously had to be more careful than white. White still was slightly better when entering a repetition of moves just before 40 moves, but black should hold then and getting a score obviously was a relief for the lowest rated player.

Towards the end of second round it was confirmed that 17 year old Sondre Melaa (2210) could enter the tournament from round three (and very much wanted to do so).

Instead of running both groups with a walk over, the organizer decided to promote a second substitute player from the open.

After first rated Terje Lund (2104) and second rated Elias Hestvik (1893) both declined, the offer went to third rated Halvard Haug Flatebø (1877) – who accepted the challenge after considering it for a lengthy 0,3 seconds.

Following this Melaa and Flatebø both will enter the field at 0,5/2 tomorrow, and the GM-group now includes 48 players.

Open Group

In the open group the first board meeting between above-mentioned Hallvard Haug Flatebø (1877) and Jamie Cross (1711) was a five-hour long and rather shaky draw.

White was much better in the early middle game, while black due to his strong bishops was much better in the endgame – and then missed a win in the final chapter with bishop and two pawns against four pawns.

Cross, a 30 year old Australian now playing for Stjernen chess club in Oslo, might well be a dark horse in this group.



Cross

It illustrates the fighting spirit in the open that boards 2-15 all got a winner today. Up and coming juniors Misha Galinsky (1877) and Brage Modell (1844) won confidently on the second and fourth board respectively. Senior Johannes Melkevik (1858) on the third board however was lucky to squeeze a full point out of a drawn rook endgame against ten year old Evsuld Myagmarsuren (1678), in a marathon game lasting 82 moves and well into the sixth hour.

Fifth board got a surprise winner as Rune Kleiven Rynning (1678) made the better calculations and soon got a winning material advantage following dubious early tactics from David Nesse (1836). The older and lower rated white player also won the sixth board duel between Mikkel Lien (1677) and Andreas Skrede Hausken (1823), after Lien hit in with a classical knight sacrifice on f6.

A surprise win for the younger player came on board eight, as 15 year old Alisha Shehzad (1660) in the fifth hour magnifically transformed a lost endgame into a won endgame against Guttorm Andersen (1800). True enough Alisha less magnifically had transformed a won middle game into a lost endgame during the past two hours. But anyway she in the end won well deserved, after keeping up concentration much better than her nearly 40 year older and much more experienced opponent.

Overall this was a normalizing round as most of the surprise winners from round one lost, while most of the surprise losers won. Second seeded Elias Hestvik (1893) however had another uphill day and was lucky to scrape a draw with two rooks for queen and two pawns in the endgame against Sara Marie Skaug Bjørkly (1439).

The mysterious first rated Terje Lund (2104) for working reasons had to take a walk over draw in the second round, but Monday evening he arrived well in time for the upcoming double round. Lund following this starts up his tournament one point behind eleven players sharing the lead at 2/2. 25 out of 27 games in the open group got a winner in round two this Monday, and we look forward to many more exciting games in the double round Tuesday.

All photos by Malgorzata Kopaczek-Styczen and Tom Eriksen