

# FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2020

## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

# 3



### GM Group

Although three out of the top five boards were drawn within four hours, the first half of the double round also was a hard-fought one – keeping aside a sensible one hour draw between IM Frode Elsness and GM Frode Urkedal on second board.

GM Simen Agdestein on first board outplayed GM Ilmars Starostits until blundering it to a draw at move 40, while GM Benjamin Notkevich on board five was totally winning against FM Jens Ingebretsen four moves before he had to accept a perpetual check.

First rated GM Evgeny Postny won patiently as black against FM Noam Vitenberg and so did IM Johannes Haug as white against the sensation man FM Gunnar Lund. Consequently first place at 2,5/3 is now shared between Elsness, Urkedal, Agdestein, Starostits, Postny and Haug!



Agdestein vs Starostits

The first GM duel of this tournament took place between Norwegian Simen Agdestein (2552) and Latvian Ilmars Starostits (2464) on first board today. Agdestein followed his good old habits from the eighties as he first came better from a Grünfeld Indian exchange line and then greedily snatched a pawn at c5. After 22 moves white was clearly better on the board, although 25 minutes behind on the clock. The game continued on the same path as black increased his advantage on the clock while white increased his advantage on the board. Agdestein for sure would have won this position without any problems against a

weaker opponent, but Starostits somehow kept the game alive into the fourth hour - although white had an extra pawn, a pair of bishops and all the more active pieces.

The decisive moment came at move 40. Agdestein short of time failed to calculate what happened if he allowed black to play 40... Rc3 (with a pin on Be3), and pulled the emergency brake with 40.Rc1?? instead of cashing in a decisive second pawn with 40.Rxb7!.

Black suddenly got real counterplay due to his new rook in the c-file, and within a few more moves Agdestein had to sacrifice his bishop to force a draw in the rook and bishop endgame.

A busy chess teacher for his 13 pupils this week, Agdestein following this intensive four hours battle very understandably requested a walk over draw for the second part of today's double round.

IM Frode Elsness (2454) versus GM Frode Urkedal (2549) was a meeting between two former teammates from the 1911 club in Oslo. In a classical Nimzo Indian duel, Urkedal as black entered a variation in which white should be a little better after an early queen exchange, while the symmetric pawn structure votes for a draw. Although the world's two best Frode chess players are known to play for a win in almost all their games, no one looked surprised or disappointed when this one was drawn after 19 moves.



**Elsness vs Urkedal**

The junior duel between IM Johannes Haug (2481) and FM Gunnar Lund (2302) made an unorthodox start with 1.d4 d6 2.Nf3 Bg4, after which white established a space advantage with 3.e4 and transposed into some relative of the Philidor opening. Both players spent some 50 minutes for their first nine moves. White obviously made the better use of the time, as black soon found himself a pawn down with an inferior position after an overambitious 8...d5?.

White later returned the pawn for some moves to increase his initiative, and kept an iron grip around the position all the way into a rooks and minor piece endgame in which his two connected passed pawns in the center soon proved overwhelming.



**Vitenberg vs Postny**

FM Noam Vitenberg (2298) and GM Evgeny Postny (2603) in the beginning played even slower than Haug and Lund did, as only eight moves were made two hours after the start of the game.

Vitenberg first went for a solid Italian opening against the top seed, but facing an unusual line with 4...Bb4 he immediately accelerated with 5.f4?!. Postny hit hard back with 5...d5! and came better from the opening, spending more than one hour for the first eight moves.

Later both players reportedly made some

inaccuracies, but black anyway developed a kingside attack and white before 20 moves had to give up an exchange to get off the queens.

Postny continues to spend much time this tournament, but when both players ran short of time for 40 moves this time black was an exchange up with an easy win in the endgame.



**Ingebretsen vs Notkevich**

FM Jens Ingebretsen (2220) versus GM Benjamin Notkevich (2482) was a Symmetrical English opening for the first four moves, but then became much less symmetric as black played 5... e6 and white 6. h4.

Black found a sound kingside set up with h6 and Kh7, and after realizing his d5-break he appeared fine if not already better after 12 moves.

While both players spent much time in a complex position black first took over the initiative and started to kick back the white pieces.

Although the GM missed some opportunities to win material, he in the fourth hour found an instructive way to decide a much better engage - sacrificing an exchange to reach a position in which black's passed b- and c-pawns were unstoppable.

With both players having a few minutes left to reach 40 moves, black however became too eager to advance the passed pawns when playing 34... b3?. Consequently white could play 35. Rd1! followed by 36. Rd7!, sacrificing his rook to give a perpetual check with his queen in between f7 and f8.

Sigve Hølleland (2133) and Benjamin Haldorsen (2469) discussed a rare Modern line in which black exchanged his fianchetto bishop for a knight at c3 to disrupt white's queenside pawn structure. Black after 15 moves appeared worse due to his king at c7, and the king was in hot water as white succeeded opening the position a few moves later on.

Sacrificing the key pawn at d5 however was unnecessary at best. Haldorsen after 40 moves had saved his king and balanced into an endgame with rook, bishop, knight and two pawns against rook, bishop, knight and one pawn. It should have been a draw, especially taking into account the opposite coloured bishops. Still the higher rated player now was a pawn up with several pieces left and nothing to lose. He of course played on, and creatively sacrificed his last kingside pawn to get a direct queenside attack against white's king.

Black succeeded getting a winning attack but not to find the winning moves in the attack, hence the position after 60 moves looked more drawish than ever before. Haldorsen however needed a win to be in the GM norm run, and played on until winning the pawn.

As his king still was in danger, Hølleland tried to pull the emergency break and sacrificed his bishop on black's final pawn. Remaining on board after six hours and 95 moves was a classical technical endgame with rook and bishop against rook.

Although white's king position was far from ideal it still was a draw, but Hølleland was short of time and still had to defend for 50 more moves. After six and a half hour and nearly 120 moves Hølleland made the final blunder, overlooking a mate in two which Haldorsen immediately demonstrated.

IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2465) today challenged Ludvig Carlsson (2281) to a positional duel in the Anti-Meran line of the Semi-Slav opening. Due to his control over the important d4-square, white came slightly better in this isolated queen's pawn position.

As black weakened his kingside white created a winning attack with the brilliant maneuver Ne2-Ng3-Nh5-Nxg7, as a minor detail along the road sacrificing his bishop on g2. Having reached g7, white however should have continued the attack instead of exchanging the knight for a rook at e8.

Forced to exchange queens afterwards he suddenly offered a draw in an unclear position with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against rook, bishop, two knights and four pawns. Holm makes many strong moves so far, but should try harder to win such games if playing for a GM norm.

FM Anders Hobber (2386) as white against FM Andre Nielsen (2218) went for a modest Torre attack, but then played d4 and e4 with a space advantage. Hobber again was slow on the clock from the opening, spending some 70 minutes for his first 13 moves, but established pressure on the board. Black's search for counterplay on the kingside turned out to weaken his own king more than his opponent's, hence white after the time control was a pawn up with a decisive attack. Hobber passed the important 2400 mark for the first time following this win, and needs only one more IM-norm to get the title. Not feeling in his best shape after this four-hour game, he still requested a walk over draw for the second half of the double round. Following this Hobber is closer than ever before to the IM title, but it seems unlikely that he can make it this tournament, as he now needs a full one point overscore on eight games.



**Hobber vs Nielsen**

GM Normunds Miezis (2485) as white against Gustav Törngren (2185) went for one of his apparently slow English fianchetto set ups, but then accelerated on the kingside with 17.f4! and got some attacking chances. A tense tactical middle game followed as both players after castling short tried to attack their opponent's king.



**Miezis vs Törngren**

Although an elegant idea, 29.Ne3?? was too clever by half as black could snatch the vital e4-pawn with his queen and get decisive pressure on the white pieces. The position still was difficult to handle for both players with a few minutes left on the clock. After black missed a material win with 32... Rf8! (threatening the white rook pinned at f3), it turned out he had nothing more than a repetition of checks following the very tempting 32... Ng3+?.

The game was drawn by an airy repetition of knight checks since black realized he did not have the time to take the white queen at f1, due to a highly disturbing counterfork at f6. A draw as black against a GM of course still was a promising result for IM-norm hunter Törngren.

Shahil Shehzad (2188) versus IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2386) was a 3.Bb5 Sicilian in which black developed by sound means and got a pleasant initiative after both players castled short. White later spent much time without finding any active plan. As black's pieces became all the more dominating, white anyway was in trouble when he blundered with 33.Qf5?, overlooking 33... e4 34.Nd4 Bd7 with a nice queen capture.

Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2174) first got a small advantage from his English fianchetto against IM Timofey Galinsky (2370), but the tide soon turned as white was helpful opening up the kingside when black went for a pawn storm with h5 and g5.

Although white succeeded exchanging off the queens at f3, his king at g1 was in trouble with two rooks, knight and five pawns against two rooks, bishop and five pawns after 24 moves.

Kvaløy found a tactical trick to exchange the rooks and evacuate his knight back from g2, but still failed to save the game as the minor piece endgame was lost.



**Vestby-Ellingsen vs Røyset**

The Tromsø team mate duel between IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2362) and Pål Røyset (2150) transposed from a Reti into a closed Catalan.

The IM first apparently had nothing after opening the c-file by exchanging on d5. White still came slightly better after getting the necessary help to place a knight on c5, establishing a passed pawn as black felt forced to exchange the knight.

White then held a promising pressure for a while, but lost the grip as he exchanged the passed c-pawn and allowed black to create a lot of

counterplay with a d4-advance. Following this black for some moves was a pawn up, but due to his poor pawn structure he could not make any use of it.

Curiously Vestby-Ellingsen for the second round in a row played an endgame with rook and g-pawn versus rook, f- and h-pawn. This time he was a pawn down, but the outcome of course again was a draw.

The young lion duel between Mathias Unneland (2149) and FM Elham Abdulrauf (2362) was a Caro-Kann with 3... c5?!, in which white later won a pawn on c5 with some advantage. His king on b1 still was a little awkward. After 25 moves white returned the pawn to exchange some more pieces and reach a drawish position with queen, rook and five pawns on each side.

The final rook endgame in which each player had one pawn on the queenside and two pawns on the kingside of course was a draw. Unwilling to accept that Abdulrauf sacrificed his rook to get two connected passed pawns on the kingside.

Although very creative the resulting endgame was a draw at best for black. As it turned out black's plan after the sacrifice was inaccurate, Unneland efficiently could sacrifice back his rook on the black kingside pawns and win the remaining run for the queenside pawns.

FM Lucas Ranaldi (2334) and Tobias Lang Nilsen (2146) meanwhile started up with an English opening and reached a Maroczy set up in which white came better due to his pair of bishops and d5-pawn. Caught in a crumbling cockpit, Lang Nilsen tried to find an emergency exit as he sacrificed a pawn to get rid of white's pair of bishops and reach an opposite coloured bishop position. It did not work out too well, as white before 40 moves established a strong passed pawn at c6 in the rooks and bishop endgame.

Lang Nilsen defended creatively as he snatched white's a3-pawn and then sacrificed his rook on the white c-pawn to promote his own pawn. The notable drawback, which Ranaldi demonstrated, was that white playing with two extra pawns and passed pawns on both sides of the board, had no problems winning the bishop endgame afterwards.

FM Trygve Dahl (2211) versus Dion Krivenko (2047) was another junior duel and another complex Sicilian battle, in which white placed his king airy on f2 and put most of his pawns on white squares. Black spent 75 minutes and white more than 80 for the first 15 moves, on a tense position in which black first did well.

Having successfully exchanged the dark squared bishops and evacuated his king to h2 white still got a middle game advantage due to his strong c6-square. Although thematic and classic, 29.Nf5+? in this situation was a dubious knight sacrifice, as white had nothing forcing if black just withdrew his king from the open g-file to f8.

Instead 30.--- Kf6?? was a decisive mistake as black due to a sixth rank pin soon had to return the piece. Later white kept a decisive attack and completed the game with an elegant 41. Qa8 mate (as black's Nc7 was in a pin).



**Dolzhikova vs Skaslien**

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2208) made today's record by spending 90 minutes for the first 15 moves as white against Ingrid Skaslien (1976). White spent the time inventing some kind of pancake set up with 1.b3 followed by an early d3, e3 and h3 (and Nh2). Black meantime used her time to establish a space advantage with c5 and d5, and came better as white suddenly weakened her position with 11.f4?!. White's try to complicate with an exchange sacrifice on d5 did not work out in the short run, as she after 25 moves was an exchange down with less than no

compensation on the board and only three minutes left on the clock.

While black lost her thread white however succeeded realizing the potential in her pair of bishops by pushing the d-pawn forward a few moves later on. Black felt forced to return the exchange and fight on a pawn down. Skaslien however managed to reset herself and came up with enough activity to draw the rook and minor piece endgame by a repetition after 65 moves, as Dolzhikova again ran seriously short of time.

All taken together draw for sure was a deserved result in this shaky and interesting game.

Having scored 1,5/3 against one IM, one WGM and one FM, 17 year old Skaslien so far has a performance close to 2300 and is ahead of schedule for her first WIM-norm.

Andreas Skotheim (2120) and Sondre Melaa (2210) also spent much time from an open Ruy Lopez line, in which white after exchanging two sets of minor pieces got a better position due to his pawn at a5 and knight on d5. As Skotheim increased the pressure he anyway was close to winning with queen, rook and five pawns on each side when Melaa blundered with 28... Qd8? – overlooking and/or underestimating a tactical 29.Rxd4! which within four moves forced black into a lost pawn endgame.

Halvard Haug Flatebø (1877) and Andreas Fossan (2171) meanwhile discussed a Grünfeld Indian exchange line, leading to a roughly balanced position as white had a center advantage and black a pair of bishops. After black exchanged one of the bishops for a knight, white first came better for some moves – but then permanently worse as he for unknown reasons gave up his d4-pawn for nothing. On the board after 30 moves was an endgame with rook, bishop and five pawns against rook, bishop and four pawns – probably drawn due to the opposite coloured bishop, but still a long nightmare to defend from a white point of view.

Fossan of course played on, even with two kingside pawns against one, and finally was rewarded after five hours as Flatebø chose the wrong plan and lost control of black's passed h-pawn.



**Grøver vs Mansoor**

Sigurd Løe Grøver (2145) bravely entered a Classical King's Indian race against Afras Mansoor (2117).

White's c-file control probably gave him a slight advantage seen from a theoretical perspective. Black however had the much easier position to play from a practical perspective, due to his kingside attack. As white failed to find the best defence plans, Mansoor efficiently transformed the kingside into a revolving door and smashed through well before 40 moves.

Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2048) as white against Andreas Tenold (1935) went for an original 2.a3 and 3.b4 in a Sicilian, but without much of a success as black came better with a sound fianchetto set up. The opening went from dubious to disaster from a white point of view as he after 14 moves allowed black to play Ba2, capturing the rook on b1 and winning an exchange for black.

The remaining endgame with two rooks, bishop and five pawns against rook, two bishops and four pawns was won for black, although white had barking bishops and a disturbing passed pawn at c6. The final rook endgame had about three extra pawns for black, and was a trivial win although white's passed pawn at d7 was slightly disturbing.

Black however first unnecessarily forced himself to sacrifice the bishop for the d7-pawn and then chose the wrong play when playing with two passed pawns against bishop.

Consequently white after all was able to catch the last pawn and scrape a draw.

Lars Johan Brodtkorb (2166) versus Monika Machlik (2082) was an English fianchetto in which both players soon left the opening books. Brodtkorb spent 45 minutes for the first 12 moves, but established a big space advantage on the board after black played a too passive d6 - allowing white to play d5 under promising circumstances.

Black later had too few squares for too many pieces, but still white played remarkably slow until having only one minute left after 20 moves. Machlik for a change found herself far ahead on the clock, but the position then was bankrupt.

White speeded up in time to crash through on the kingside well before 40 moves, and although taking his time played a very good game this round.



**Brodtkorb vs Machlik**



**Sørensen vs Bjerke**

Simen Sørensen (2047) followed the first round example of Elsness, and entered a Queen's Indian fianchetto duel against FM Richard Bjerke (2144). Bjerke improved his treatment of it today, and following another early queen exchange he even came better due to his strong knight outpost at d3.

Defending by sound means, Sørensen after 30 moves had succeeded exchanging the octopus knight and reached a balanced rook and bishop endgame. The endgame still was drawish when the players passed the time control. It did not last long as Bjerke at the very next move

became too careless and blundered a pawn. Sørensen immediately saw his chance and later increased the advantage by forcing a rook exchange.

Although white did not find the easiest win in the remaining bishop endgame, he in the end found an instructive maneuver to win black's last pawn on b5 (the key idea was marching the king around to a5 and then play Bc4 – as black could not take it without losing his cramped a4 bishop).

Thyra Kvendseth (2017) and Håkon Bentsen (2120) today discussed a closed Ruy Lopez line in which white first had a slight initiative. As white found no better plan than exchanging off her slightly better pieces, black due to his d-file possession came better in the endgame with two rooks, equal colored bishops and six pawns on each side. Since Kvendseth defended well and exchanged one set of rooks, the endgame remained very drawish. That is until white stumbled with 39.Bb1?? - overlooking a tactical 39...c3! which immediately won a pawn and created a monster passed pawn.

Sander Fuglestein (2109) versus Sergey Eliseev (2025) was a duel between two young Rogaland lions, but still started up with a patient closed Catalan opening. Black was much more on the spot when the center pawns suddenly disappeared after 15 moves, and his very active pair of knights later dominated the board until black won decisive material some ten moves later on.

# Open Group

The open had an even more hard fought round three, with seven decided games on the top ten. At the first board Misha Galinsky (1876) for 30 moves had a tense Benkö duel as white against Thomas Berg (1719). In the fourth hour black however cramped, and white by nice tactics cashed in first a piece and then an exchange more.

Second board meeting between grown-ups Johannes Melkevik (1858) and Rune Kleiven Rynning (1678) first was winning for white after black blundered a piece, but after 26 moves was drawn in a balanced position as black helpfully blundered it back.



**Melkevik vs Rynning**

Third board was a generation duel and attacking duel between 57 year old Ingvar Gundersen (1781) and 15 year old Brage Modell (1844), in which black instructively castled long and opened the kingside to attack white's king.

Fourth board duel between Olav Erikstad (1736) and Mathias Lind Schouten (1822) made a dramatic start as 15 year old Schouten for temporary allergy reasons was unable to start playing at 10.00 and had a hard time to reach the 60 minutes deadline at 11.00.

Erikstad was eager to play and sportily offer to postpone the start. With approval of everyone the game finally started at 11.40, with one hour extra on the clock for Erikstad. Curiously Schouten despite starting with an hour less was ahead on the clock after 40 moves. A hard-fought game finally ended in a draw around 16.15 as Erikstad overlooked a threefold repetition and had to accept a draw in a won (but still not trivial) endgame with rook, knight and h-pawn against rook. Both players should be praised for their sporty attitude to this game.

Fifth board duel between Mikkel Lien (1677) and Sverre Lye (1799) was a messy Sicilian battle in which the advantage jumped back and forth several times.

Lye was winning or clearly better more often than Lien, and got the last laugh as he ended up with an extra bishop in the rook and bishop endgame. S

Sixth board meeting between Egil Melkevik (1725) and Alisha Shehzad (1660) to the contrary was a long and dry endgame. The 54 year old instructively used his chance when the 15 year old after six hours and nearly 100 moves lost her defence line, in a theoretically dead endgame with rook versus rook and g-pawn. It should be mentioned that Melkevik had a won position before 20 moves and all taken together of course won the game well deserved.

The youngest generation had their revenge some hours in advance on board seven, as highly talented eleven year old Louis Khoo-Thwe (1835) won an inspired three hours attacking game as black against Australian surprise man Jamie Cross (1711).

When top rated Terje Lund (2104) finally arrived he introduced himself with a sound black Sicilian game. Although clearly better for several hours in the endgame, Lund in the end failed to overcome the stubborn and creative defence of his young opponent Amadeus Hestvik Evenshaug (1520).

On the lower boards today we noted many entertaining games but no very surprising results.

Curiously one of the last games to finish was a hard-fought five-hour draw between chess daddies Ståle Jan Evenshaug (1293) and Eivind Anfindsen (unrated).

This group overall has a remarkably high percentage of young lions and a remarkably low percentage of draws. Consequently three upcoming stars, 17 year old Misha Galinsky, 15 year old Brage Modell and 13 year old Sverre Lye, still have a 100 % score at 3/3.

Fourth place is shared between six players at 2,5/3, hence nine players can be found within half a point after the first third of this very open group.



**The open group**

**All photos by Malgorzata Kopaczek-Styczen and Tom Eriksen**