

# FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2020

## THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

# 4



### GM Group

Second part of the double round saw first rated GM Evgeny Postny and third rated GM Frode Urkedal both winning in very convincing style as white. As second rated Simen Agdestein had requested a walk over draw, while GM Ilmars Starostis and IM Johannes Haug made a safe internal draw, Postny and Urkedal are now leading alone at 3,5/4 and will play each other on first board tomorrow. Seven players are lurking in the crowds at 3,0/4, hence the situation can change rapidly tomorrow.



Postny vs Elsness

IM Frode Elsness (2454) has been hunting that final GM norm for many years now, and came truly close when he overlooked a winning combination against Evgeny Postny in this venue in round nine a few years ago.

Winning today instead would have given Elsness excellent chances for a norm. It never felt really close, after Postny got a pleasant edge after taking back the pawn at c4 in this Slav opening. First the pair of bishops and then the d-file gave white promising pressure in the middle game. Sacrificing the e4-pawn to start an attack

on the black kingside squares might not have been the best from a theoretical point of view. It still worked out very well over the board, as Elsness played much too fast and more or less blundered with 29... Qc6?, inviting 30.Rd8 with a winning attack.

1-0 came only three moves later on, as black would go mate or lose about a ton of material.

Postny is still spending a lot of time but finding many strong moves this tournament, while Elsness needs a very strong spurt to fight for the magic third GM norm following this set back.



**Haldorsen**

IM Benjamin Haldorsen (2469) also had a tough challenge this round, entering the podium to play black against GM Frode Urkedal (2549) less than one hour after finishing his six and a half hour win from round three.

Black tried to sidestep with 3... a6?! in a Queen's Gambit, but white got a pleasant pressure following an early queen exchange. Urkedal in an inspired mood turned on the grill, won a pawn before 25 moves, and reached a won knight endgame before 40.

27 year old Urkedal at 3,5/4 is still doing great at Fagernes, while 21 year old Haldorsen at 2,5/4 is slightly below expected score so far.

To be honest, third board became a small disappointment this round. GM Ilmars Starostits (2464) as white against IM Johannes Haug (2481) first played a slow Colle opening and then offered a draw in a fairly balanced position after 12 moves.

Starostits of course did nothing wrong to offer and Haug definitely did nothing wrong to accept, as both remains at +2 and now share third place.



**Notkevich vs Skotheim**

The fourth board game between GM Benjamin Arvola Notkevich (2482) and untitled surprise man Andreas Skotheim (2120) on the other hand was a tight six-hour battle and became the last game of this round.

Skotheim was a hot candidate for another game surprise as he came better from this Trompovsky opening as black, and after exchanging three sets of minor pieces he was a pawn up with an advantage.

Notkevich won back the pawn with a tricky 26.Qg4+!, after which the remaining position with queen, two rooks and four pawns on each

side remained in dynamic balance for a while. After 40 moves the computer programs still considered the position close to equal, but for all practical purposes white was clearly better due to black's more exposed king. 50... Rg6? following this was a blunder under pressure.

Anyway it allowed a forced and elegant sequence in which white could sacrifice his queen on f7 to mate the black king with his two rooks.

FM Gunnar Lund (2302) following his first two wins got a double set back in the double round, this evening losing as white against IM Kristian Stuvik Holm (2465).

Black appeared better prepared than white for this experimental London system duel, and succeeded stabilizing his position with an extra pawn following a loose pawn sacrifice.

After 24 moves white was a sound pawn down and about to run seriously short of time for 40 moves, but a rook blunder still was unexpected from such a tactically gifted player. Lund at 2,0/4 is still in the run for an IM-norm, while Holm at 3,0/4 might still be in the run for a GM-norm.

IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2386) versus FM Jens Ingebretsen (2220) started up with a positional Reti opening, in which white had some advantage after all minor pieces except for the dark squared bishops were exchanged.

Ingebretsen however succeeded getting some counterplay with a bayonet h5-h4 attack.

With the h-file wide open, white felt forced to exchange down to a drawish bishop endgame. Kaasen should have won this white game to be in the GM norm run, while Ingebretsen remains undefeated and in the less demanding IM norm race following this black draw.



**Kaasen vs Ingebretsen**

IM Timofey Galinsky (2370) and FM Trygve Dahl (2211) were expected to create an entertaining attacking battle even in the second half of the double round. Their game made a promising start as white entered a sharp London System line with an early g4.

Opening the kingside in the short run was more unhealthy for white's king on f1 than for black's king on g8, but white still came better since black helpfully exchanged queens. As black apparently had defended his kingside, he suddenly opened about all lines for white with a creative but still dubious 26...g6?. White hammered in with 27.Rxh7+ and within five more moves came two pawns up in the rook endgame.

The IM still had some technical problems to solve due to his fragmented pawns, and the FM somehow escaped into a drawn endgame with two versus one kingside pawns. Odds were high for a draw in this game, but on the other hand odds were not too high that only the kings would be left on the board in case this game ended with a draw ... That was what happened after 68 moves, as both players had to sacrifice their last rook on the opponent's last pawn.



**Carlsson vs Ranaldi**

Ludvig Carlsson (2281) versus FM Lucas Ranaldi (2334) was another long and hard-fought game in which white was closer to winning than black. White first came better from this English fianchetto duel due to his light square pressure, and then had a clear advantage in the rooks and bishop endgame due to his passed pawn at b5. Although the bishops were opposite-coloured black's position looked critical as the passed pawn reached b7 in the rook and bishop endgame just before 40 moves.

Ranaldi however defended very well, and in the fifth hour succeeded keeping control over the

vital b8 square while creating some counterplay on the kingside.

Draw agreed by repetition after 54 moves, meaning none on the players are ahead of schedule for an IM norm – but both are still in the run.



**Nielsen vs Unneland**

FM Andre Nielsen (2218) as white against Mathias Unneland (2149) went for an open Sicilian, but black and his pair of bishops probably did fine in a dynamic position. Exchanging light-squared bishops and then queens was not a promising plan from a white point of view, as black due to his e-file possession had the initiative in the remaining endgame with two rooks, one bishop and five pawns against two rooks, one knight and five pawns.

The double rook endgame with three pawns on each side somehow should be a draw.

One hour behind on the clock white still had a hard time defending his too advanced d-pawn and soon ended up in a lost rook endgame with two against three pawns.

Nielsen probably is out of the IM norm run following this loss, while Unneland following his very strong double round currently has a sensational performance above 2450.

Pål Røyset (2150) against GM Normunds Miezis (2485) was another complex Sicilian battle, but this one was a closed opening leading to a very closed middle game with 30 pieces still on the board after 25 moves. When the position opened, it was on the kingside and against the white king.

Although Miezis took his time to complete the attack with a mate at move 52, he had the less exposed king and a winning initiative for the last 20 moves.

IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2362) as black against Aleksander Fossan (2171) tested out a hippopotamus-like Modern set up, in which black after 10 moves had moved no piece ahead of the third rank. Fossan got some space advantage in the middle game, but playing against an IM he looked well satisfied to reach a safe rook and minor pieces endgame. Vestby-Ellingsen's fourth draw was the shortest one so far, signed after 32 moves in a very balanced position.



**Mansoor vs Vitenberg**

Afras Mansoor (2117) as white against FM Noam Vitenberg (2298) started up with an English fianchetto, but transposed into an open Catalan. Then black came better after a series of tactical exchanges in the early middle game. After all the minor pieces except for the dark squared bishops were exchanged, white sacrificed first his b-pawn and then an exchange on the queenside to play for a mating attack on the dark kingside squares. With white running seriously short of time, black succeeded to advancing his passed c-pawn while avoiding a decisive Qh6 followed by Qg7

mate. The position still remained tense all until 40 moves. Black then accurately sacrificed his queen upon white's rook, to calm down his king and reach a won endgame with two rooks and four kingside pawns against queen and three kingside pawns.

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2208) and Sigve Hølleland (2133) meanwhile discussed a French Winawer line in which something went seriously wrong for black around move 10-15, as white first missed a probably very strong tactical 12.Nc6! and then found a definitely strong 16.Nd5!. Within six more moves white's initiative became so powerful that black felt forced to give up an exchange. Although the game lasted some 40 more moves and Dolzhikova lagged more than 45 minutes behind on the clock, the outcome never really was in doubt.

Gustav Törngren (2185) versus Ingrid Skaslien (1976) was a duel between two class mates from NTG, starting up with a positional English line. Black's position was healthy in the early middle game, although white kept a slight initiative after exchanging queens and three sets of minor pieces. The game developed slowly until after 40 moves. Then both players missed that white for a moment had a winning attack in the e-file, after which white instead found an interesting exchange sacrifice at c5. Materially black did fine with two rooks and four pawns against rook, knight and five pawns, but she still had a difficult position due to her loose pawns and exposed king at a4. Whether the exchange sacrifice was theoretically correct remains unclear, but anyway it gave a practical jackpot as Skaslien stumbled at the first hurdle and went mate within three more moves.



**Abdulrauf vs Øye-Strømberg**

FM Elham Abdulrauf (2362) today was white in a French Advance line against Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2048).

Before 15 moves white had made both a dubious pawn sacrifice at d4 and a strong knight sacrifice at d5. As white failed to find the critical continuations after the knight sacrifice, black succeeded evacuating his king to b8 without losing the extra piece. Further complications followed as black creatively gave up his queen for rook and bishop, reaching a materially favourable position in which black had two rooks, bishop, knight and four scattered pawns

against queen, rook and five pawns. Black and his more numerous forces, including a passed b-pawn, probably were winning both before and after the exchange of white's remaining rook.

Computer programs considered black to be totally winning when a draw was agreed by a repetition after 49 moves. It should be mentioned that the mixed material combined with white's two passed kingside pawns makes that position looking much more messy with a human eye.

The very young lions Dion Krivenko (2047) and Shazil Shehzad (2188) today discussed a loose Sicilian position. Black demonstrated the better understanding as he sacrificed his backward d6-pawn to direct a powerful pair of bishops against white's king on c1.

White later helpfully opened rook lines by snatching black's a- and b-pawn too. Shehzad at his best first won an exchange and then used it to direct decisive threats against white's king well before 40 moves.

40 year old Håkon Bentsen (2120) meanwhile lost a long discussion with 12 year Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2174) about a Sicilian Najdorf: Although the queens were gone, black came better following a thematic exchange sacrifice at c3. White within a few moves felt forced to return the exchange, after which black with a pair of bishops and an extra pawn was obviously much better. Play later circled around black's passed d-pawn in a borderline endgame.



**Bentsen vs Kvaløy**

Kvaløy due to his active king reportedly could have won even in the final rook endgame with two kingside pawns on each side, but he spent much time without finding the right plan. In the bitter end after nearly 70 moves, black found nothing better than exchanging down to a dead drawn endgame with rook and g-pawn versus rook and h-pawn.

Sergey Eliseev (2025) had the much better preparation for today's French Winawer duel against Lars Johan Brodtkorb (2166), as he hammered out moves and was an hour ahead on the clock before 20 moves. Brodtkorb for a while found the best moves, but after allowing a queen exchange he had less than nothing for the sacrificed pawn. White following this anyway was clearly better when black went for a defect pseudo-sacrifice with 20.--- Rxh2??, and within a few more moves more black was a bishop down in the rook and bishop endgame. Eliseev made a great double round today, but Brodtkorb really should study this opening line more before giving it another practical test.

Tobias Lang Nilsen (2146) versus Simen Sørensen (2047) was another junior duel and another messy Sicilian duel. This one made a jumpy start as white after castling long first blundered a pawn at a2 and then got some compensation for it. Both white's king on c1 and black's king on h8 looked a bit scared around move 39. Although black probably was clearly better due to his extra pawn, he decided to return the e4-pawn to force a queen exchange and reach a drawish endgame with rook, bishop and three pawns on each side.

Andreas Tenold (1935) and Hallvard Haug Flatebø (1877) are the two lowest rated players in this group, and none of them knew they would play in the GM group when arriving Fagernes three days ago. Still they tonight played hard for a win against each other in an exciting Nimzo Indian game. White went for an ambitious set up with 4.f3, and after realizing the e4-break got a powerful attack in the middle game. A short comedy of errors occurred as both players overlooked a trivial winning combination with 28.Rf8+!. White anyway had a winning kingside attack and went on to win decisive material within five more moves.

In short: The game between Sondre Melaa (2210) and Sigurd Loe Grøver (2145) started up with an about balanced French Tarrasch isolated pawn line. Following sound moves from both players, the game balanced all into a rook endgame which was agreed draw just after 40 moves. Probably a good game from both players, but definitely not very exciting for anyone else.



**Bjerke vs Kvendseth**

FM Richard Bjerke (2144) as white against Thyra Kvendseth (2017) first went for a Reti double fianchetto, but soon established a space advantage as he played d4 followed by d5. White increased the pressure by e4-e5, and as black still failed to come up with any disturbing counterplay white before 20 moves developed a strong initiative. White within ten more moves won first a pawn and then an exchange, and later had no problems winning the endgame as well.

Monika Machlik (2082) and Sander Fuglestein (2109) both had lost all their three first games. Still both played for a win and created a very interesting five-hour game tonight.

Fuglestein as black in a Queen's Gambit exchange line played much faster, and appeared to have planned sacrificing a pawn at h7. Still Machlik bravely snatched the pawn. She was rewarded, as white proved able to keep the pawn with a clear advantage.

Black admitted the failure as he had to give up his bishop for the white knight at e5 after 23 moves, but white despite an extra pawn at e5 still had a long road to win. Machlik later increased the pressure by intervening on the d6 outpost with her knight. During the final tense moves before the time control, white succeeded forcing exchanges leading to a more or less won rook and bishop endgame in the fifth hour.

In case anybody now wondered about GM Simen Agdestein (2552) and/or FM Anders Hobber (2386): They both had requested a walk over draw in the second half of the double round – and both will be back at 3,0/4 next round.

Urkedal will get white against Postny on the first board then, while other top board pairings in round five are Holm versus Agdestein, Unneland versus Notkevich, Haug versus Hobber and Miezis versus Starostits.

# Open Group



**Modell vs Galinsky**

In the open group, 15 year old Brage Modell (1844) tonight won very well deserved in an intensive first board duel against 17 year old Misha Galinsky (1877). White developed a strong initiative from the opening. After winning two minor pieces for a rook in the middle game, he was a full bishop up in the final position after 32 moves.

Modell is now leading alone at 4/4, since 13 year old Sverre Lye (1799) had to be well satisfied with a draw following a long and tense struggle against Johannes Melkevik (1858) on second

board. Lye was close to winning in the middlegame, but in the end was lucky to save a draw with two pawns less in the rook endgame.

Also at 3,5/4 after this round is eleven year old Louis Khoo-Thwe (1835), today landing safely in a won endgame after winning decisive material by a powerful kingside attack in the middle game against Olav Erikstad (1736).



**Schouten vs Egil Melkevik**

The third challenger at 3,5/4 is Egil Melkevik (1725), who aged 54 curiously is older than Modell, Lye and Khoo-Thwe added together (and exactly the same age as his twin brother Johannes Melkevik).

After winning a six-hour endgame last round, chess allrounder Egil Melkevik this round instead won by mate after 19 moves as black against 15 year old Mathias Lind Schouten (1822).

Rune Kleiven Rynning (1678) and Sivert Ihlen (1871) made a rather safe and sound draw on fifth board, and both following this can be found in the group of eight players at 3,0/4.

First rated Terje Lund (2104) is lurking at 2,5/4 following a convincing win today, and so is second rated Elias Hestvik (1893). None of them are yet out of the fight for the first prize, but both obviously need to win more games soon.

The open again had many hard fought games, few draws and almost no big surprises tonight. We look forward to an exciting and very important round five, when top three board pairings will be Louis Khoo-Thwe versus Brage Modell, Egil Melkevik versus Sverre Lye and Misha Galinsky versus Rune Kleiven Rynning.

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