

FAGERNES CHESS INTERNATIONAL 2022

THE LAHLUM ROUND REPORT

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GM Group

This round again the top three boards were drawn while the next six boards all got a winner, leaving three players at 5,5/7 ahead of eight players at 5,0/7.

GM Alexander Donchenko of Germany and GM Aryan Chopra of India both won very impressive games today, and both also were obvious candidates for top three before the start of the tournament. The 16 year Ukrainian refugee FM Semen Mitusov however was rated as number 28 before the tournament, and remains a true sensation on shared first place after winning as black today. Mitusov following this almost certainly can make a GM norm with 1,0/2 in round 8 and 9, while several other players can reach an IM-norm or WGM-norm if able to score two final wins.

In round 8 Mitusov will play white against Chopra, while Donchenko on the second board will get a critical test as black against top rated Indian GM Arjun Erigaisi.



Hakobyan vs Erigaisi

Armenian **GM Aram Hakobyan (2612)** versus Indian **GM Arjun Erigaisi (2675)** was a Semi Tarrasch line, in which white had a slight advantage with pawns at d4 and e4 against e6. White later played for a queenside minority attack with a4-a5. Although black was left with an isolated pawn at a7, white would have a long road to winning chances without any queenside pawns. After 20 moves chances were balanced on board and clock. Three moves later white set fire to the position by sacrificing his rook for a knight on f6, destroying the pawn shelter of black's king. Although the sacrifice was sound

Hakobyan played inaccurately afterwards. Following this Erigaisi could sacrifice an exchange on f1 to get the more dangerous attack with queen, knight and three pawns against queen, bishop and three pawns. White's king was balancing at the edge of the board after 40 moves. The question was whether Erigaisi had anything more than a perpetual check, as his own king on f8 was also in hot water. Hakobyan looked a little worried, but having parked his queen at f6 and the knight at h6 he coolly moved around the king on the right squares until Erigaisi accepted a draw.



Sasikiran vs Urkedal

GM Frode Urkedal (2539) versus GM Krishnan Sasikiran (2650) was a positional Anti-Meran line in the Semi-Slav opening, in which white came very slightly ahead on the board and clock. Sasikiran caused surprise as he spent only about one hour for his first 17 moves today. 18.f4!? was an interesting decision, as white sacrificed his key pawn to get an attack against the black king.

Sasikiran pulled the brake, sacrificing a pawn to force an exchange of queens. Following this a dead drawn endgame with opposite-coloured bishops was on the board after 35 moves.



Sarin vs Hillarp

Indian **GM Nihal Sarin (2648)** versus Swedish **GM Tiger Hillarp Persson (2511)** was a Dutch Stonewall duel in which white spent almost 50 minutes for his first 12 moves. Sarin still came 20 minutes ahead, as the unpredictable Tiger spent almost half an hour for his move 12. The queenside at that stage was about to open, and black obviously had some questions to answer

about how to handle this. At move 14 white jumped forward to the e5 with his knight and offered a draw, which black accepted.

It came a bit unexpected as Sarin was higher rated, white, ahead on the clock and had a slightly better position according to the computer programs. I still have some difficulties understanding it many hours later, although trying to defeat Tiger of course is always risky.



Can vs Donchenko

Today's opening firework in the GM group came at the fourth board. It started early as **GM Alexander Donchenko (2619)**, handling the white pieces against **GM Emre Can (2578)** in a Semi-Slav opening, went for the critical Marshall-gambit with 4.e4!?. White got a strong initiative and a potentially strong pair of bishops for the sacrificed center pawn. Although Can came ahead on the clock he lagged behind on the board after 13.--- Nh6?.

White after castling long got a direct attack against the black

king at e8. Donchenko within a few more moves smashed through – sacrificing a rook at e6 to hunt the black into a mating net at f4. So far having a rather positional tournament, Donchenko truly demonstrated his tactical abilities when winning this key game in only 22 moves today.

The 24 year old German following this became the first player moving up to 5,5/7, although he later was joined by two even younger players.



Kulaots vs Chopra

GM Kaido Kulaots (2529) versus **GM Aryan Chopra (2592)** was a rather closed and balanced Ruy Lopez opening, in which two minor pieces and no pawns were exchanged within the first 19 moves. As the position finally was opened during the next moves, white got a slight initiative.

Computer programs still considered white better after 25 moves, but black had taken over the initiative and put pressure upon white's kingside by then.

A tense kingside struggle followed as black snatched the

h3-pawn with his rook, and then despite white's pawn at g3 sneaked out the rook with h4 and f4. White's 30.Kf2? tried to capture the nasty rook at f4, since white with his king out of the g-file pin was threatening 31.gxf4. It was brilliantly refuted by 31.--- Bh4! – creating a decisive attack as white's king could not survive after 32.gxh4? Rxh4. Although black played inaccurately on the next move he was soon back on track and completed the attack with a flashy (and strong) 38.--- Nxe4!.

Being the best player from India in this tournament is really hard, but 20 year old Aryan Chopra following this win is best among the Indian GMs and sharing first place two rounds before the end.

The teenager duel between **CM Ludvig Carlsson (2411)** and **FM Semen Mitusov (2274)** meanwhile was a somewhat untraditional Queen's Gambit exchange line, in which white put the knight on e2 without trying to play f3-e4 afterwards. White got some 20 minutes ahead on the clock, while the struggle on the board intensified. White snatched a pawn at a6 while black after exchanging three sets of minor pieces went for an attack against the white king with his queen, rook and knight. The position remained in high voltage as white found the best defensive moves for a while. White still had a more difficult position to play when he blundered with 25.gxh4?. Then black suddenly had a decisive attack in the h-file. Mitusov finished the game in an elegant style a few moves later on, first sacrificing a knight at f4 and then the queen at h1 to mate white's king on f1 after 33 moves. The 16 year old sensation man Mitusov following this is still sharing first place, now at 5,5/7 with a performance of 2619. He will make an IM-norm even if losing both the two final rounds – and 1,0/2 now almost certainly will be sufficient for a sensational GM-norm.



Injac vs Sethuraman

WGM Teodora Injac (2406) as white against **GM Sethuraman Sethuraman (2610)** entered a positional King's Indian duel. Both players spent some 65 minutes for the first 16 moves, while white had a slight space advantage on the board.

Pseudo-sacrificing a knight at d5 is a well known possibility in these positions. It worked out fine enough as white's pair of bishops and queenside pawn majority gave her an advantage after black had to pay back a bishop. Black still was the player to leave a repetition a few moves later on.

After 40 moves the position with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns on each side appeared approximately balanced. Although black's pawn structure was disrupted, exchanging the bishops with 44.Bxf6+?! was an instructive mistake: Black's king later was perfectly safe, while white's king at g2 and pawn at a2 both came under pressure in the remaining queen and rook position. With both players running short of time again, black now got the more easy position to play. After winning the white pawn at a2 the GM had no problems winning the rook endgame.

IM Gerard Welling (2261) as white against **GM Erik Blomqvist (2550)** went for his «very positional» Colle system, predictably leading to a rather solid position with a slight initiative for black. Black increased the pressure by mobilizing his forces in the c- and d-file, and then jumped into the e4 outpost with his knight after 30 moves. White's position following this anyway was deteriorating when he blundered with a somewhat naive 32.Rxe4?, overlooking and/or underestimating that black after 32... Qb5! would win white's key pawn at b2. White's position soon collapsed following this, and Welling resigned at move 39 when realizing that he had just blundered a piece.



Sanal vs Trost

GM Vahap Sanal (2593) as white against **Edvin Trost (2342)** went for a solid Slav exchange line, but after exchanging the dark-squared bishops went for a pawn storm on the kingside. Trost defended well in this untraditional position, and after 28 moves the position with rook, bishop, knight and six pawns against rook, two knights and six pawns was approximately balanced. The GM of course still played on. After 40 moves he was slightly better with bishop, knight and five pawns against two knights and five pawns.

Both the computer programs and I have some difficulties grasping this endgame. It seems however that white had some pressure before black invited to a knight exchange, while the bishop versus knight endgame afterwards was just winning. Sanal still spent a lot of time finding out how, and had only one minute left on the clock towards the end of the sixth hour. Still he finished off the game with style just before 100 moves – sacrificing his bishop to let the passed d- and g-pawns decide alone.



Abdumalik vs Hobber

FM Anders Hobber (2379) as white against **GM Zhansaya Abdumalik (2496)** gave his London system another try, but was remarkably slow on the clock. After 15 moves white had only seven minutes left. Black for sure was satisfied to be some 45 minutes ahead on the clock with a pair of bishops and the better pawn structure, although the computer programs still considered the position approximately balanced. Although the final rook and minor piece endgame after 24 moves almost certainly was a draw, black's

offer came a bit unexpected. Hobber had only four four minutes left on the clock, and Abdumalik had the easier position to play – partly due to her better pawn structure and partly because her bishop in an open position with pawns on both the queenside and kingside was superior to white's knight. Although the game result of course was perfectly fine for Hobber, this draw at the same time was his final goodbye to any IM norm chances this tournament.



Kaasen vs Schwarz

Even another Italian duel for Norwegian **IM Tor Fredrik Kaasen (2465)** – today as white against Slovakian **Dusan Schwarz (2295)**. Both players spent a lot of time in the middle game, although white due to his better pawn structure was slightly better after exchanging all the bishops. After 22 moves white still had the slightly better pawn structure, due to black's backward pawn at e6. Strange things started to happen as black after activating his knights went for a tactical 23.--- Nd3?!. White reportedly could

have had a clear advantage if just taking the knight, but as he instead sacrificed back an exchange at d5, black in turn could have had a clear advantage with 24.--- Nxb2!. Instead 24.--- Nxf2? soon left white with two knights for a rook and a winning position. Both players later ran short of time for 40 moves in a rather open position. Kaasen however had it all under control then, as he was a knight up on the board and had a few minutes more left on the clock.



Abdlauf vs Buchenau

FM Frank Buchenau (2269) versus **FM Elham Abdlauf (2427)** was a key game for black's chances to complete his IM title this tournament. Black started up with the rare Hungarian defence, but with a bishop on e7 the position soon looked a lot like a closed Ruy Lopez. After 19 moves the position was approximately balanced on the board, with both players having about 25 minutes left on the clock. With Buchenau about to run short of time, black had a promising initiative around move 27-33.

Although the attack became less dangerous as white succeeded in exchanging off the queens after 34 moves, black still had promising pressure on the clock as well as the board. Although tempting, 40.--- g4? however was a time trouble mistake from black, more or less forcing white to play 41.Nh4! and 42.Nf5 with disturbing counterplay.

Unwilling to accept a drawish rook endgame a few moves later on, black started to give up pawns. He following this was in danger for a few moves before it all dried up with a drawn knight endgame in which white's two extra g-pawns made no practical difference. Not winning this game following the position in the fourth hour was a hard set back for Abdlauf – but on the other hand a draw was happy news for him following the position later on. Abdlauf might still make his final IM-norm this tournament, but to achieve this he now must win both the remaining games.



Brynell vs Sieber

Swedish **GM Stellan Brynell (2406)** arrived some ten minutes delayed for his game against German **WIM Fiona Sieber (2248)**. He still came ahead on the clock as black spent much time in a rare line of the Catalan. Snatching the important pawn at d4 of course was tempting from a black point of view, but still backfired as white within three moves won back the pawn at c6 with a strong initiative. Although black succeeded avoiding loss of material, white after 24 moves had a strong initiative with one rook, two bishops, one knight and four

pawns on each side. The combination of an isolated a-pawn, a weak first rank and a dark-squared bishop locked in by a white pawn at e5 made this position highly unpleasant to defend. As Brynell failed to find the most critical continuations, black could sacrifice her a-pawn and reach a position with only kingside pawns left. White still had some promising variations with rook, bishop, knight and three pawns against rook, bishop, knight and two pawns – but found nothing better than a drawn endgame with rook, bishop, h- and g-pawns against rook, bishop and h-pawn. Although Brynell played on until move 100, Sieber had no problems holding the final rook endgame with one against two kingside pawns. Sieber following this gave herself one more chance to complete her WGM-title this tournament, although she now needs to win both her remaining games.



Øye-Strømberg vs Roy

IM Prantik Roy (2368) versus **Alexander Øye-Strømberg (2157)** was a rather slow Reti opening, in which black first did fine with an ambitious set up with d5-d4-e5. After exchanging the d4-pawn black however was too careless when deciding not to protect the e5-pawn at move 13, since the tactical complications after 14.g4 Bg6 15.Nxe5! was a one way ticket to an endgame with two rooks, bishop and six pawns against two rooks, knight and five pawns. As white also had the more active pieces, he had

few problems winning this within four hours. Øye-Strømberg despite this set-back is not completely out of it as an IM-norm candidate, although he now needs 2/2 including a very high rated opponent in the last round.

FM Ward Altarbosh (2200) versus **IM Mads Vestby-Ellingsen (2370)** was a positionally tense and Classical Sicilian duel, in which both players castled long. Black's pair of bishops and active pieces later approximately compensated for his inferior pawn structure. Both players spent a lot of time in the middle game and had just above 20 minutes left after 20 moves. Altarbosh after 28 moves suddenly had only some two minutes left on the clock – and a difficult position. Black made a good decision when opening the queenside, realizing that white's king would be the more exposed one. Sacrificing an exchange for two pawns probably was a good practical choice from white in this situation. It still proved insufficient as black kept up the pressure and within a few moves after the time control won the key pawn at c2 with a mating attack soon to follow.

Shazil Shehzad (2195) versus **IM Timofey Galinsky (2358)** was a French Tarrasch with 4... Ne4?!. Something following an early exchange of the queens went seriously wrong for black, as white had a very strong initiative in an open position. The wind suddenly turned after white played the greedy 12.Nc7+? followed by 13.Nxa8, allowing black to take white's proud bishop at e4. Although white was an exchange up for the moment, black soon had two pieces for the rook as it (predictably) proved impossible to evacuate the knight from a8. Black in turn made a strange decision to exchange off his rook, as the following position with rook and six pawns against bishop, knight and five pawns was much more unclear. Although black was better most of the time later on, white's two against one majority on the queenside combined with the active rook gave him some counterplay. As white ran short of time for 40 moves, black made the elementary mistake of playing too fast himself. Following this, white suddenly was winning after the time control – as black could not get the king at b8 or the knight at c8 out from their lame duck positions. 15 year old Shezad with a performance of 2323 is doing a great result following this win, although it was still too little and too late to give him any chances for an IM-norm.



Kvaløy vs Poysti

FM Aksel Bu Kvaløy (2330) versus **Nathanael Poysti (2190)** was an interesting positional duel in an open Ruy Lopez. After two sets of minor pieces were exchanged, black had the pair of bishops, but white still was clearly better due to his strong knights at d4 and e3 combined with his better pawn structure and safer kingside. After 24 moves white following this had a clear advantage on the board, although he had only 8

minutes against 30 left on the clock. White following this anyway had a winning attack when black after 30 moves blundered a rook and resigned.



Sørensen vs Ingebretsen

FM Jens Evang Ingebretsen (2315) today went for 1.e4 and entered a Sicilian Taimanov duel as white against **Simen Sørensen (2070)**. White got a sound space advantage, turning into a direct kingside attack following a tactical 20.e5. Although it took some time to find the decisive breakthrough, white later had a winning kingside attack, while black found no real counterplay. Well ahead on the clock, Ingebretsen neatly finished off the game with 36.Nxg6! – leaving his knight hanging at g6 and his queen hanging at g5!

18 year old Ingebretsen following this convincing win is back on track as an IM-norm candidate, but he still needs at least 1,5/2 and possibly 2/2 in the end.

Max Dahl (2054) versus **WGM Jana Schneider (2263)** was an open Catalan in which chances were about equal after white spent two moves to win back the pawn at c4 with his queen. Black in the meantime found an active square for her dark-squared bishop at d5, and after 17 moves left a repetition to play for a win. White apparently was short of time with 6 minutes against 30 for black after 24 moves – but on the other hand Max usually will be below two minutes at that stage. As white exchanged his dark-squared bishop for a knight at f6, black got the pair of bishops while white had a center advantage limiting the power of the bishops in the short run. Tactical exchanges before 35 moved forced an endgame with queen, bishop and six pawns on each side. Dahl short of time efficiently forced a queen exchange as well. Although black then won white's too advanced pawn at e5, she due to the opposite-coloured bishops had no chance to win the game.



Hagner vs Unneland

The junior duel between **FM Mathias Unneland (2254)** and **Bennet Hagner (2151)** started up with a rather tactical Caro-Kann line, in which white came well ahead in development. Consequently he got a strong initiative after forcing a queen exchange. Unneland later spent a lot of time but kept up the pressure well on the board, while black had a hard struggle for survival as he had ongoing problems developing the kingside. As black after 25 moves suddenly got his kingside pieces into play it was too late: White could just

exchange the rook as well as the knight, and then immediately decide the game by sacrificing his final piece for a pawn. Black's king and knight afterwards were unable to stop white's passed a-pawn and d-pawn at the same time.

FM Trygve Dahl (2252) versus Afras Mansoor (2033) was a Four Knights opening in which the e-pawns and two sets of minor pieces were exchanged early. This left a rather open position in which white's pair of bishops gave him a small plus. True to his playing style Trygve Dahl went for a kingside attack, and after 30 moves smashed in with an interesting bishop sacrifice at h6.

Mansoor although having less than one minute left for the last 6-7 moves before the time control won the bishop for two pawns and saved his king, but before the time control he had a hard time releasing his pieces. After the time control black succeeded in activating his pieces without losing the king and for some moves he probably had a winning position. Lack of pawns however made it difficult for black to win even with an extra piece in the minor piece endgame.

As Mansoor again ran short of time, Dahl in the sixth hour succeeded to exchange off black's last pawn and reach a pawnless endgame with bishop versus bishop and knight.

FM Damien Le Goff (2290) versus Kim Roger Westrum (2046) was a rather heavyweight and closed Dutch opening duel, in which only one set of knights were exchanged after 30 moves. While the kingside was deadlocked, white's better possibilities on the queenside gave him a slight plus.

Two hours of shadow boxing followed as black mobilized his queen and rooks behind the fronts on the queenside. All 16 pawns were on the board in this game until move 58 – when white dubiously but interestingly sacrificed one piece for two pawns at e5. As white's pawns at d5 and e6 locked out black's bishop at c8, the position still was in some kind of balance. That was, until white blundered with 72.Bb1? – allowing black to play 72... a4! followed by 73... axb3 with a dangerous counterattack against white's king at a1. Running short of time both players of course made some mistakes in the final minutes of this game, which became the last of this round. Westrum still played remarkably fast and strong in this situation, and at move 87 forced a queen exchange to reach a won pawn endgame.



Rahul vs Roulet-Dubonnet

Emerik Roulet-Dubonnet (2050) versus Kumar Rahul (2204) saw a Modern opening, in which exchanges at d4 resulted in a fairly balanced position with two rooks, bishop, knight and seven pawns on each side after 18 moves.

Sacrificing a pawn at g4 to disrupt white's pawn structure and exchange off the knights reportedly was fine from a black point of view. Within a few moves black won back the pawn at g4 with a drawish rook endgame. Exchanging black's

f-pawn for white's c-pawn with 35... f5? however was too clever by half, as white suddenly came much better with his rook in the open e-file. Roulet-Dubonnet became too slow and careful as he safeguarded his pawn at b5 with 40.a4? instead of moving forward to e7 or e8 with his rook. Following this the game immediately was drawn by a sound repetition.

WIM Rakshitta Ravi (2240) and **Eivind Grunt Kreken (2088)** meanwhile discussed a closed Ruy Lopez line in which black first had no problems and some promising prospects on the queenside. Inviting a queen exchange with 22... Qb3? however was a mistake as white could play 23.Qe2! and switch to a kingside attack. Sacrificing a bishop at h6 the next move was elegant, but in no way the best continuation as black could refuse the bishop sacrifice and force off the queens. The endgame with two rooks, one bishop and four pawns against two rooks, one knight and four pawns after this was approximately balanced. With both players running short of time for 40 moves the advantage jumped back and forth a few times. White still had a pressure with rook, bishop and three pawns against rook, knight and three pawns after the time control.

Spending too much time searching for a winning plan without finding one, white later blundered it all away with 60.Rg1?. Black following this could pin white's bishop at e3 with an alert 60... Ra3! and then force a winning rook endgame. 15 year old Kreken has used his chances efficiently the last rounds, and following this win is in for another clear plus result.



Martinsen vs Grønnestad

Stig K. Martinsen (2155) as white against **WFM Anita Grønnestad (1941)** arrived some 25 minutes delayed and soon lagged behind on the clock. The board was a very different story: As white went for 1.f4 and a slightly provocative Dutch Leningrad in advance, Anita blew the whistle and started an aggressive kingside attack with her h-pawn. Following a tactical Ng4+ she succeeded in opening the h-file, but white's king at g2 was pretty safe and he could consolidate the position with an extra pawn. White's extra

pawn increased in importance as black was helpful to exchange off the queens. As black's remaining pawns were scattered, the rook and minor piece endgame after 40 moves was just winning for white.

Sverre Lye (1994) as white in the talented 15-year old duel against **Saad Elmi (2092)** went for 3.Bb5+ in a Sicilian, but without much success as black soon took over the initiative early in the middle game. White however was able to exchange the dangers, and after 25 moves a fairly balanced position with queen, rook, bishop and five pawns on each side was seen on the board. Then black for unknown reasons allowed white to advance the passed b-pawn to b6. White thankfully wasted some chances to play on for a win, before the game after 53 was drawn by repetition with queen, rook and four pawns on each side.

Andreas Skotheim (2206) versus **Andreas Skrede Hausken (1991)** was a Ruy Lopez duel in which black creatively sacrificed a pawn at b5. Hausken got more than sufficient compensation due to his chances for a kingside attack with the queen and pair of knights. Black clearly had the better chances after white felt forced to return the pawn at f4. Although 40 minutes ahead on the clock, Hausken as black against a much higher rated opponent was satisfied to draw the game by a repetition after 26 moves.

Vetle Bjørge Strand (2018)

as white against **Monika Machlik (2122)** remained true to his pet system with 1.d4 2.Nc3 and 3.Bf4.

Machlik had prepared a rather unorthodox set up with 3... a6 and 4... b5, and got a pleasant initiative in the middle game.

After the queens were exchanged, some tactical exchanges left black a fairly sound pawn up. White still came up with some counterplay on the queenside in the rooks and minor pieces

endgame. After the remaining minor pieces were exchanged as well, the question was whether white's passed pawn at b6 in the double rook endgame was disturbing enough to save a draw. Advancing the passed pawn to b7 reportedly was a correct plan. If so white made a mistake afterwards, as Machlik after playing Kc7 followed by Rb6 succeeded in winning the key pawn at b7. White true enough soon won back the pawn at e6. Due to black's passed d-pawn Machlik still had a straightforward win the remaining endgame, with rook and four pawns against rook and three pawns.



Machlik vs Strand

FM Nikolai Zadruzny (2258) as white against **Sondre Melaa (2120)** started up with 1.c4 but then transposed into a Queen's Gambit Exchange line, in which white went for a kingside attack with Ne5 and f4. The position would have been very complicated if black after playing his queen out to b6 had continued with the critical and consequent 17... Qxb2!?. As he instead played 17... Ne4?, white suddenly had a decisive attack after the straightforward 18.Qh5!.

The game was considered more or less over after 26 moves: White had won black's important pawn at h6 and intervened with his rook at f6, with tough pressure against the black king at g8. Sacrificing an exchange to defend with queen and two bishops against queen, rook and knight, Melaa somehow succeeded to bolster his own king. White's king on the other side was a bit open, but still white due to his material advantage was winning both before and after the queens were exchanged.

With a few minutes left on the clock Zadruzny however lost his concentration for some critical moves when playing with rook, knight and three pawns against two bishops and two pawns, putting his knights in a troublesome pin. Following this Melaa's barking bishops after all saved him a half point in a pretty illustrative end.



Andersen vs Le Montagner

Yoann Le Montagner (2035) versus **Morten Andersen (2190)** was a Pirc opening in which white played for a kingside attack with e5-f4-g4. Andersen came up with sufficient counterplay against the white center. The game was intense as tactical exchanges after 30 moves resulted in a drawish endgame with queen, knight and five pawns against queen, bishop and five pawns. White had slightly the better piece combination and clearly the better pawn structure, but soon concluded

that his king was too open for any winning attempts.



Dolzhikova vs Verbin

WGM Olga Dolzhikova (2131) as white against **Valentina Verbin (2037)** started up with a very conventional 1.e4, but then soon left the theory's main road with 2.Nc3 and 3.g3. White got some space advantage after playing f4 followed by f5, but black after castling long got the better of this as white had a big problem to solve regarding her king at e1. Verbin creatively sacrificed a knight at f5, winning three pawns with an ongoing attack. As Dolzhikova would not exchange queens to play an

inferior endgame, black after 23 moves could bring her queen around to the kingside with a decisive attack. After 27 moves Verbin was about to run short of time, but still – correctly – left a repetition of checks to play on for a win. Having only one minute left on the clock after 30 moves, black however chose the wrong way of pushing forward her e- and f-pawn against the white king. The position following this was unclear when black at move 33 blundered by returning her queen from h7 to e7, allowing white to play 34.Rd7! with a counterattack on the seventh rank.

White also short of time failed to find the instantly winning 36.Rxc7! afterwards. As black's queen and rook now were almost paralyzed, white and her extra piece still had few problems picking up the scattered black pawns and winning the game.



Nikolic vs Kvendseth

Thyra Kvendseth (1941) versus **Vladan Nikolic (2247)** was a Ruy Lopez in which something went wrong for white, as black was allowed to play 5... Be7 followed by 6... Nxe4.

White won back the pawn but had to exchange the light-squared bishop for a knight at c6 after first having returned the bishop to a4 – meaning black came out with a pair of bishops and the better development. Although white later made many good defensive moves, black upheld the pressure and around move 35 was about to increase it with a kingside pawn storm.

As both players ran short of time for 40 moves black made the first mistake, inviting white back into the game by allowing her to exchange off all the rooks. White following this had fair chances for a draw with queen, bishop, knight and six pawns against queen, two bishops and six pawns. White in turn however placed the knight in a vulnerable position at f3 and then allowed black to destroy the kingside pawn structure by exchanging the knight for the bishop. Following this white again was in trouble when she at move 42 sacrificed her bishop for a perpetual check with turned out not to exist.

Laurin Perkampus (2061) versus **Ola Liabøtrø (2101)** saw an Accepted Queen's Gambit in which white established a space advantage due to his pawn at e5. As black helpfully weakened his kingside with 11... g6?, white soon had a clear advantage with promising attacking prospects.

Already under pressure to find acceptable moves, black then just blundered with 15... Nc5? – overlooking that white had a nice tactical strike with 16.Nd5! exd5 16.e6. Black in desperation tried to give up his queen for rook and bishop, but as black's king still was under heavy fire he stopped the clock only a few moves later on. Although Liabøtrø still is playing far below his usual strength, it should be mentioned that this was a great attacking game from Perkampus.



van den Berselaar vs Bentsen

The Colle system obviously is some kind of Dutch speciality in this tournament. The worst test so far came in the game between **Jeroen van den Berselaar (2173)** and **Håkon Bentsen (2078)**.

All the knights were exchanged, white blew up the center – and then black by natural moves managed to hang on his extra center pawn at d4.

The extra pawn was worth a clear advantage as black after 16 moves could castle his king out of all e-file dangers. As black had snatched a second pawn at a2, white anyway was

in deep trouble when he after 20 moves blundered a piece and resigned.

Thomas Sekkingstad (1979) versus **Pål Røyset (2133)** was a Bogó-Indian Defense in which white wasted time by playing g3 followed by e3 in the opening. Meanwhile black opened the queenside with a promising initiative. Black went on to win a pawn and had good winning chances from the start of the endgame. Nothing however will work out for Røyset this tournament, and Sekkingstad in a borderline knight endgame managed to scrape a draw by exchanging all the pawns.



Open Group

The Open still has a remarkable fighting spirit, and all the top four boards today got a winner. 11 year old **Evsuld Myagmarsuren (1888)** as white outplayed the so far solid 12 year old **Nicolai Østensen (1875)** on the first board, and anyway was two pawns up with a winning position when black blundered a rook.



Myagmarsuren vs Østensen

Second board meeting between 13 year old **Martin Holten Fiskaaen (1895)** and 16 year old **Ask Amundsen (1838)** was an extremely exciting and complex endgame race, which in the fifth and sixth hour first was winning for white and then for black. In the dramatic end after 54.--- Rb1+, with both players having less than two minutes left for the game, 55.Kh2! would have been a draw – while 55.Kg2? (as played) lost.

Third board meeting between **Heine N. Johannessen (1907)** and **Kristoffer Wang Strømhaug (1767)** in the end gave a convincing attacking win for white, although black had wasted a promising position earlier on.

Fourth board between **Max Moe Pedersen (1789)** and **Ulrikke Langvik (1563)** was even more exciting: Black first had a winning kingside attack, but after she missed that chance white soon reached a winning endgame with an extra piece.

While fifth and sixth board both were drawn, German **Johannes Reinhardt (1893)** won another counterattacking win on the seventh. On the eight board, the unpredictable junior **Misha Galinsky (1748)** as black succeeded in winning a drawish queen and minor piece endgame.

Following this Mygmarsuren has recovered completely from his second round loss and now suddenly is leading the Open alone at 6.0/7, half a point ahead of Amundsen and Johannessen, while Fiskaaen, Reinhardt, Østensen, Galinsky and Pedersen at 5.0/7 also have a top three prize within reach. We are looking forward to an exciting round eight, when top three boards will be Mygmarsuren-Johannessen, Amundsen-Galinsky and Reinhardt-Fiskaaen.



H. Johannessen vs Strømhaug



Hina vs Strømsodd

Photos by Tom Eriksen